

CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into country football

Horsham – 11 March 2004

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Witness

Mr G. Burdett.

The CHAIR — I wish to advise you that all evidence taken by this committee, including submissions, at these hearings is, under the provisions of the Constitution Act and the Parliamentary Committees Act, granted immunity from judicial review. I also advise witnesses that any comments made by witnesses outside the committee's hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. We are having an inquiry into country football. Could you tell us your name and address before making your remarks?

Mr BURDETT — Geoff Burdett, 6 Harmer Court, Horsham.

The CHAIR — Can you keep your comments as brief and to the point as possible? We will take note of your comments, but we probably will not ask questions; it depends on what you bring up. Your comments will be recorded and a transcript of those comments will be forwarded to you, which will become a public document. You will receive a copy of that in about a fortnight or so. You can correct any errors of fact or grammar, but not matters of substance.

Mr BURDETT — No doubt a lot of it has been covered, but I have a few things that should be brought up. Obviously farm size is one problem; we all know that. Certainly part-time jobs has become a big factor in country football. I think you will find that yes, young people are being involved there rather than doing sport. Obviously some older people do a second job, therefore they cannot take their children to football on a Saturday, a Sunday or whenever it may be.

Seven-day trading has not helped. I know we have to go with the times, but sometimes bigger is not always better. Seven-day trading has had a big impact on football and sport generally in country Victoria. The old days when it was a five-and-a-half-day week, a half day of sport and one day of recreation are completely gone, much to a lot of people's disgust, I suppose. I think that is one of the big problems up here in the country.

Another problem is the single-parent problem. Nowadays we have a lot of those. I suppose it is all about commitment. We do not get people committed in sport, and we do not get people committed to a marriage and things like that. So if one breaks down they go hand in hand.

I think teenage drinking is a problem in sport, and that is probably not country Victoria — I think it is metro. But when you see these companies making cruisers — vodka cruisers and raspberries, lemonades or whatever they may be — they are cheaper than soft drink to buy, so we have got a problem. I certainly would like to see the government step in and do something about that, because it is an issue, along with obesity. Our organisation promotes eating well and playing well, and that should be promoted heavily through all organisations.

Female PE teachers are a problem that they do not like taking football for sport, as was stated earlier. Certainly the overload on volunteers is a big thing in country sport. There is always a lot of red tape involved. You only have to sit here today to see the things that I had to go through just to make a comment to you people. It is an issue, and I think if we can certainly not have volunteers overloaded with red tape we will get volunteers who are prepared to help out. They are there for the benefit of sport, and they want to do it because they love it.

Certainly the TAC has had a fair hit-out. I am not sure whether you realise, but when the under-19 program was in circulation — 10 or 12 years ago now — there were more footballers playing under-19s and affecting country football than there are now with the TAC. I say that because they went to Melbourne to play under-19 football, so they left the area and did not return. Now with the TAC they are in their country areas — sometimes they relocate, but not everyone — and they come back and play with their local club when they are not playing TAC. It is a bit of a misquote when you say that the TAC Cup is wrecking country football, because it is certainly promoting a lot of good football in terms of what they learn in leadership, time management, nutrition and fitness. That is certainly of benefit to a club when they do go back. I know that a small majority are drafted, but there are a lot who get a lot of benefit out of it, and the clubs get that benefit in the long run.

The byes were mentioned. There are four byes in the TAC, and they coincide with school study issues. So when it is coming up to SACs and school commitments, that is when they have a bye, so I think we are looking after young players in that respect. That is about all I wanted to say. People have talked about the grounds and things like that. There was probably poor planning 30 years ago, when everybody wanted their own tennis courts, football grounds and netball courts, but now we have come to a stage where everybody is amalgamating and the councils and shire are not saying, 'Let us build a complex which has four or five football fields, or heaps of tennis and netball courts so we can integrate everything in the one set-up'. It is all very well for me to say that, but I think had

we planned it better earlier perhaps we would not have the problems we have now. Certainly we cannot do much about water. If we have not got the water we cannot get it, so that is relying on nature. But from a government point of view, I think insurances and water costs can certainly be exempt a little bit or lowered because it is a big factor in a country club, especially a small country club.

Mr INGRAM — You mentioned an organisation that you are from; what is the organisation?

Mr BURDETT — I work for Football Victoria Development. I am a football development manager up in the Wimmera, so I look after a fair area of kids. You look at Auskick programs, there are 60 000 kids in the program. We have spoken about numbers rather than quality. I think the quality is there. You only have to see the kids who play it Australia wide, I suppose. Auskick is a program which started. Now we have netta netball, T-ball, Goalkick — all through Auskick. Even overseas our program has been adopted. We certainly do run programs, including school football.

On my part in the Wimmera, I run a wide variety of programs. I run Auskick, coach education through the Australian Football Coaches Association, school football, and all the development programs — which are all part of football for our area. Obviously we have seen the benefits of a lot of players go through and certainly get the benefit of players playing in the AFL now. We have spoken about Jordyn Burke. He is one of our boys, obviously, going through the system now. That is the comment I would like to make. I am not sure whether it will help or hinder. I am certainly keen because I am country at heart. I do work for Football Victoria Development, I am a country development manager with my grassroots here too.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. That was great. That has confirmed quite a few things.

Committee adjourned.