

# CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

## RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into country football

Leongatha — 7 April 2004

#### Members

Mr M. P. Crutchfield  
Mr B. P. Hardman  
Mr C. Ingram  
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Chair: Mr B. P. Hardman  
Deputy Chair: Mr C. Ingram

#### Staff

Executive Officer: Ms K. Murray  
Research Officer: Dr V. Koops

#### Witness

Mrs M. Flett, secretary, Foster Football Club.

**The CHAIR** — We now have a session which we call ‘Comments from the floor’. I wish to advise all present all these hearings that all evidence taken by this committee, including submissions, under the provisions of the Constitution Act is granted immunity from judicial review. I also wish to advise witnesses that any comments made by witnesses outside the committee’s hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. We are hearing evidence into the inquiry into country football. When you come to the table please clearly state your name and address before making remarks. If possible we will take notes of your comments. Obviously they will go into a transcript of which you will get a copy. In general we will not ask questions, unless there is some new information that we have not heard before. It is a public hearing and your comments will be recorded and become a public document. It is important to know that if you are going to make some comments. You will also receive a copy of the transcript, and the same rules apply in the sense that obvious errors of fact or grammar may be corrected, but not matters of substance.

**Mrs FLETT** — My name is Marilyn Flett and my address is 43 Devlin Road, Foster. I am the secretary of the Foster Football Club and a league director in the Alberton Football League.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. I have written to you, but I do not have a formal submission today; however, I would like to congratulate you on having this inquiry. People at my level are very passionate about their football, and we believe we are an important part of the community, so it is great to think that you are actually acknowledging that. I would also like to commend the VCFL report. That gives you an excellent overview, as many people before me have discussed today, in what is happening in country football. I have been quoted in the VCFL submission, and the line it has quoted is that ‘We enrol, we encourage, we equip and we educate in the promotion of the game. We are your grassroots football’. And by the ‘we’ I mean clubs like mine, which has a 100-year history — the Foster Football Club. It is the country community clubs that you need to be looking at. In speaking to you briefly today and being aware of your time frame, I am going to cut to the chase and say that I would like to see some realistic outcomes from your inquiry. You need to help clubs at my level because we are absolutely struggling at the moment.

The recommendation of water and its availability for our grounds is absolutely essential. Our club is on town water, but we virtually have no means of getting that water onto the ground. For most of us our grounds are run by the shire and we might get \$5000 or \$6000, but that does not realistically bring these grounds up to a standard that is a requirement now in our risk management strategies, so actually getting that into place would be very important. Employment is a huge problem in our area. We cannot keep kids here, and we cannot keep people here because of employment. At one stage in the under-18 AFL teams they were offering traineeships with business people and with AFL players; and would that not be wonderful if that could happen in country football and we could see some traineeships in the community to support businesses and to support country football clubs.

My biggest suggestion to you today is to support the volunteers. To run a home game we require 100 volunteers, and that is from the scoreboard attendant to the trainers. That is just for our club in each of our home games. For volunteers to actually open the doors of our football club they need to be accredited, so our trainers are required to do trainers courses. To do so they need to have level 1 or level 2 workplace first aid, and this all costs money. They keep telling us we are getting subsidies, but in my 10 years I am yet to see a subsidy for any of our trainers’ requirements. Each club three needs to have three or four trainers, so this is just basic funding that we have to struggle for all the time.

We have talked about responsible serving of alcohol. Our licensees are required to have this, and they are now talking about new licensees having to attend a TAFE course in Melbourne. Again you are not only asking a person to volunteer, but you need money to actually pay for their training, and in each club we would have 10 people who have the responsibility of doing serving-of-alcohol course, so it is again money that we need to find. To operate our canteen and catering, again with food handling it is having access to these courses and the cost of them, if you can get somebody to volunteer for them and to pay for it. So clubs struggling at this level are actually paying. If people are good enough to become volunteers they should not have to pay out of their pockets for it. This is something that our level struggles to provide, but it is a necessity. Today I am asking you to provide us and to provide our grassroots football clubs with something realistic in the way of assistance. Even if it is in a small way, it will help us. Thank you very much.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much, Marilyn. That was great.

**Witness withdrew.**