

CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into country football

Wangaratta – 15 April 2004

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Witness

Mr P. Gambold.

Mr GAMBOLD — My full name is Philip Gambold, I live in Whitfield. Thank you very much for the opportunity. I was not scheduled, and I am even more appreciative for it. I have a few points I will try and get across as quickly as possible. I am a long-time farmer, footballer, woodchopper and amateur boxer, so I have been around a bit. At the moment I am helping young fellows who are trying to get going with farming and anyone keen on football, trying to get them going, and trying to pick up a few sheep shearers along the line. It is not real easy.

What I wanted to tell you all this morning is that the main cause of all this is that farming is not prosperous enough. You have young fellows and young girls growing up and they have got it in their head that they want out; they do not want to be in this place any more. You people would have noticed farmers are getting terribly old. I came across a fire truck and the crew were all over 70. I said, 'Where are the young fellows?'. They said, 'There aren't any. They have gone to Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and won't come back'. The main thing is we somehow have to get farming prosperous and up in the thinking of the young people, otherwise anything else we do will not really work very well.

There are things we can do. One of them is the imbalance of football. You have some pretty good teams and half a dozen young fellows left over. Another team will be hopelessly weak, getting flogged by 20 or 30 goals, which is no good to anybody because the forward lines are not getting any work. You want to field an even contest on the forward and back lines. There should be some day-to-day permit where the club says to a car-load of those fellows — or netballers could do it if they have netballers to spare — 'Go and help the other club out, just for the one day'. It makes it more competitive, and those people nearly always go well because they have a point to prove. Those footballers and netballers who have missed out on selection will play like champions to try and impress people.

In addition you have the Ovens and King league with nine teams. Beechworth and Chiltern have every right to go, that is okay, they had a number of reasons. The Tallangatta league has 11 teams; it does not really want 11, it wants 10 teams where it can play two rounds of nine games. Everyone knows that two rounds of nine and then the finals is the perfect set-up. So what could be done and should have been done is to ask the 11th team of the Tallangatta league to play with the Ovens and King league. The teams would get a trip to Whitfield and Bright, which would not hurt them. It is only once a year. They would see a bit of scenery, and buy a bottle of wine while they are there. Then you have two lots of 10 teams. Those little things all help to make the whole thing more workable and enjoyable.

With the shortage of young fellows we will not see any change for a few years, but if we can do something now to make farming more prosperous and have it move up in the prestige of young people I think from five years on hopefully we will start to come up again. That is my main message this morning. I wish to you all the best. A lot of people here today have done great things for football and farming and I hope they continue doing it. One little thing I wanted to add: whatever we are doing this morning, there is one last very good reason. The statistics taken recently show an appalling crime rate among young people; among the sports-playing people the rate was a quarter of the rate of that of the non-sports-playing people. Thank you.

Witness withdrew.