

CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into country football

Kerang – 23 March 2004

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Witness

Ms A. Hird.

The CHAIR — Ms Hird, as you have been here for the whole public hearing and would have heard it already, I will not repeat my statement about the powers of the committee and parliamentary privilege. I now invite comments from the floor. I ask that those speaking give their name and address and then make their comments.

Ms HIRD — My name is Angela Hird. I live at 407 Craig Road, Kerang. I am here as a netball person. I have been in netball since I was quite young. I see that netball is basically tied to football, so I care about football — I have children that play both. I am just here as part of the crowd.

My concern is about something that has not been mentioned or touched on a lot: risk management. We have trouble in netball. At the moment we are faced with implementing a lot of risk-management procedures and member protection — the regulation is coming into force this year. We are finding that people are daunted. They feel that the legislation is there for when something happens rather than being a procedure to make sure that nothing ever happens. So suddenly people are thinking that at some point in time if they take on an office-bearing position they will get sued; that if they take on a position as a secretary, for instance, that exposes the family business or the farm if anything should happen. So I would like to see some way that we can make a move back to people playing just at their own risk. I accept that if I walk onto a netball court there may be an element of risk, and I take that on board and that is the way I play. That would be better than the other way of coming at people and saying, 'We will protect you and look after you and make sure that when you are hurt you can sue us, and we have all the insurance in place so that when something happens, go for it'. I believe that concern about the area of risk management and the protection of the committee members is big in both sports.

Dr NAPHTHINE — I presume any organisation involved is an incorporated association?

Ms HIRD — Yes, and people still have the perception that paying an incorporation fee is paying an insurance fee and that that means our committee is insured for any liability. They do not understand that it makes the committee a separate entity altogether. People still feel that, in taking on the role of president, for example, if the committee or club is sued and we have \$500 worth of assets, they may lose their family home.

Dr NAPHTHINE — So it is about communication of information?

Ms HIRD — And learning, yes. There have been a lot of cases reported in the newspapers of, say, Mary Smith being able to sue and get \$80 000 from a basketball association because she broke her elbow jogging backwards. That adverse publicity is not helping us in trying to get people to play the sport.

The CHAIR — I thank everybody very much for their interest.

Witness withdrew.