

# CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

## RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into country football

Leongatha – 7 April 2004

#### Members

Mr M. P. Crutchfield	Mr R. G. Mitchell
Mr B. P. Hardman	Dr D. V. Napthine
Mr C. Ingram	Mr P. L. Walsh
Mr J. M. McQuilten	

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

#### Staff

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

#### Witness

Mr C. Howard.

**Mr HOWARD** — I am Chris Howard of 80 Smirls Road, Leongatha North 3953. Mr Chair, just a couple of quick comments because I know you guys are packing up and you want to get away, it is obvious.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — No, I have to go and meet with your shire.

**Mr HOWARD** — I think footy is people and today I do not think people have been mentioned enough. I was at a game at the weekend for the start of the Leongatha season and it was fairly average. I would hate to be the treasurer trying to add up the dollars to make the day pay, because he would not have been able to do it.

Gippsland Power is fantastic. It is really impressive, what goes on and what is available to kids, but there is a cost. If we went back to when Bairnsdale last won a premiership, they probably would not have won it if Gippsland Power had been in place, because two of the players came out of the area and went to very great careers in league football. One was Brian Royal at Footscray and the other was Tommy Alvin at Carlton. They would never have played with Bairnsdale, and I am sure they would never had won a premiership. I will leave that where it lies.

The Traralgon issue should have happened. It should have been given more support. It was the ideal set-up for football in this region, for players to be able to take the next step to go and play at the VFA level. Unfortunately, as I said earlier in a comment, it was not fair dinkum; no-one was really pushing it hard enough, other than a few people at Traralgon. If you were going to make it, you would not have kept the side in its own itinerary in the Latrobe Valley and split the club. It was a natural stepping stone for boys from this side.

To finish up, there are geographics in our league. The other one that affects us is man made. You have probably heard enough of the man-made one if you have travelled around. From where I sit what I say to you guys is if you went back to Melbourne and you went to the AFL, I would say to them, 'Get off your butt; do something for country football that you have not done before; leave Saturdays alone so that country football can be played on Saturdays'. They play just about every other day and every other night of the week, why do they need Saturdays? Why can country people not go back to what we traditionally had many years ago, country football on Saturday? The VFL could play on Sunday, traditionally the VFA day. I think that there is an answer there somewhere, but I think also at the same time that the AFL is far too greedy.

The VCFL people are sitting on their hands over here regarding the league that we play in and the league that they want other clubs to come out of to bolster a major league. I think that needs to be seriously looked at. If anyone can tell me how any league can tell a club that it should come out of that league and go somewhere else and play at a standard that the club may not want to play in, I would like to see that tested in a court of law.

I thank you for your presence today. I do not think there have been as many MPs in Leongatha at one time as there have been today, and I thank you for your attention.

**Mr CRUTCHFIELD** — All from country Victoria.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Chris.

**Witness withdrew.**