

CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into country football

Ballarat – 27 April 2004

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Witness

Mr M. Martin, secretary and public officer, Maryborough Castlemaine District Football League.

The CHAIR — We will now take comments from the floor, and I believe we have some people who would like to participate. Again I need to let you know that evidence taken by the committee, including submissions is, under the provisions of the Constitution Act, granted immunity from judicial review, but any comments made by witnesses outside the committee hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. When you come to the table we will not be taking notes under oath or affirmation, but you need to state your name and address before making remarks. Committee members will take note of your comments, but in general will not ask questions. Your comments will be recorded in the transcript of the hearing and will become part of a public document in due course. You will receive the same as the other witnesses receive — a copy of the transcript. Any matter of fact or grammar may be corrected but not matters of substance.

Mr MARTIN — My name is Max Martin, I am the secretary and public officer of the Maryborough Castlemaine District Football League. My address is 2A Bryant Street, Maryborough, Victoria 3465.

There are four leagues in the Ballarat region; three of them have been heard, and we unfortunately did not. We have, I believe, a lot to contribute. We consist of 10 teams, and the questions I could ask are — let me start from the beginning. We try to be very innovative. One of the things we do is to conduct a combined police effort called Blue Ribbon with our football league. We are trying to get it to go right throughout the VCFL. Every netball player — first, seconds, under-17s — and every football player who is best on field receives one of our medals. It is from the Blue Ribbon Foundation. The sergeant of police usually bounces the ball or tosses the coin at the start, and a senior officer presents the medal to each of the winners. One of the players who won this recently said, ‘Gee, I wish I had had that last week’, when I assume he got stopped in his car somewhere by the police and wanted to produce the medal, but could not!

We have discovered that there are teams called Woodend, Lancefield, Heskett and Macedon that are in the metropolitan league. As far as I am concerned if you look on the map they appear to me to be country. It is always a worry as to why they are affiliated with the metropolitan football league. As a group, as a state, we should look at where that boundary ends. Does the metropolitan league extend right up to a little team called Trentham? A few years ago, probably in the 1980s, Trentham had no football team and we spent a lot of money going to Trentham, conducting public meetings and we reformed the team. The reason it could not function, I believe, was that it was part of a metropolitan football competition. They have been with us every since, they have won premierships, they have had their ups and downs, but it is our belief that all of those teams, the ones I have mentioned, should be VCFL teams and there should be another league in there. There are enough teams with Woodend, Heskett, Lancefield and so on, including Trentham, to put in another league. They are 80 kilometres from us. It is the only long trip we make. We do not want to lose them, but we believe they are travelling that every second week. Is that good for first, second and under-17s, including under-17 girls, to be travelling such a long distance every week? Football is a local competition; it should be supported by local people.

One of the local politicians, a man named McQuilten — there was a football team called Dunolly which was on the point of collapsing — —

Mr MCQUILTEN — I was too old to play for Dunolly.

Mr MARTIN — They were having a real struggle and looked like disbanding, so outside the regulations, in March, they applied to join us. We said, ‘Welcome.’ They are now part of us. But it was not easy because that club was about to collapse. It would have collapsed but we took them on board. You have already heard from other people that other clubs have wanted to join us. The disaster of the Avoca club not getting in after two applications to our league has put a lot of pressure on that community — on education, on trade, and on the commercial basis for that little town. All of the young men, parents and members of the community train in one of our centres. It is a point of concern to us that clubs like Trentham are so far away, and others that want to join us, so close, cannot do so.

The other thing we like to do for junior sport is to produce a most disciplined certificate. It is awarded to two players from every team every Saturday. They are not given the certificate on the day, but they are published on a weekly basis and also on the program, and then at the end of the season along comes a sergeant from the local police station who lines up about 104 under-17s each year to receive the certificate. He has on it his name, the days he was awarded the most disciplined player, and he takes it home; it is framed and this is one of their treasures. It is part of our contribution towards discipline at that age. A kid does not get it if he kids Umpire Whacko, or he does not respect the opposition or shake hands at the end of the game.

The other thing our league has done and we continue to do is sponsor AFL games. We did that a couple of years ago. Melbourne played Carlton. It was a great day with a lot of money made by various people. We did not get much out of it though. Last year we conducted the only Victorian country football league interstate game. We conducted the game and played Western Australia. This year it is being played in Bunbury, Western Australia. We would like to see the VCFL continue that sort of competition for players who are not AFL players but district league players. We want to see that happening.

In confidence we also have a project which I cannot declare at this stage but which involves our league, a ground and the Victorian Cricket Association. Victorian cricketers are always looking for a ground during the period from 1 April to 1 October. We believe we can provide a ground for the Victorian cricketers to practise on in September, but we need support. It needs to be confidential because if somebody thinks they can outdo others, they will try. But we believe we can offer it to the Victorian cricket team, which last year came to our league, and played its matches over two days. We would love to see Shane Warne because he was under suspension last year; it would be good if Shane could come up and be part of our country community. But we need to get some water to the ground and we think we have some ideas.

Dr NAPTHINE — Do you therefore believe there ought to be a total review of leagues, and who is in what league across country football?

Mr MARTIN — No, I think it should be done at the grassroots. We know our communities; we know what we want; we know where we are going. Big Brother coming in and telling you is not what we believe to be the right thing.

Dr NAPTHINE — So if Big Brother came in and said that Avoca could not transfer or that the Hamilton Imperials could not go to the Hampden league — —

Mr MARTIN — We keep at them. Big Brother has done that to us. We should have been able to say that they should come to us, not Big Brother.

The CHAIR — Max, thank you very much.

Mr MARTIN — Thank you for hearing me out.

Witness withdrew.