

CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into country football

Shepparton – 14 April 2004

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Witness

Mr B. J. McKee, president, Mulwala Football Club.

The CHAIR — It might be useful to make the following remarks before we go on to the comments from the floor section. Welcome everybody. I wish to advise all those present at these hearings that all evidence taken by the committee, including submissions, is, under the provisions of the Constitution Act, granted immunity from judicial review. I also wish to advise witnesses that any comments made by witnesses outside the precincts of this hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege.

Mr McKEE — I am Brian James McKee, 52 Wanani Road, Mulwala, New South Wales. I am president of the Mulwala Football Club. I have had an extensive read of the VCFL submission over the last three weeks. I believe it is a handy document. I was quite surprised by how relevant it is to my own club. I have spent 22 of the last 30 years in the administration of the Mulwala Football Club, including the last 6 as president. A couple of the issues raised tonight that need some government help to get some commonsense into the thing.

I cannot understand how the tax department can see umpiring as a hobby and playing the game as employment. We are all trying to battle through with volunteers; not too many clubs have an accountant as the treasurer of their club. We have a bloke who does the best job he can, and that is the same at most clubs. He has to get our group certificates; he has to get these blokes to do the right thing and fill their tax in properly so they can get 61 cents a kilometre back — these young blokes do not even know how the system works.

The point needs to be made that in footy clubs — I include netball — we take these kids, certainly at our club, at 10 or 11 years of age. We have them under our wing while they go through puberty, buying cars, learning to drink, girlfriends, having babies, getting married, buying houses — the whole lot — and we put up with an open stick approach from every media organisation that likes to have a whack at a footy club. My own club has been a banner headline in recent years for a gentlemen's-only day. When we opened up the paper we got a 3-inch by 3-inch article that said we had an amicable resolution to the problem with the local police. That gutted me. I work very hard to get our club to where we are, we are not in crisis, we have plenty of numbers. When I took the job on we had 50-year-old blokes playing in the reserves, we had no money, no nothing. Now we are trying to build new clubrooms.

We are in New South Wales so some of my comments are probably directed at the wrong target here, but I notice that Victoria has a Community Support Fund. New South Wales has one too, and it is worked out on 1 per cent of poker machine turnover. We are in a town that has a poker machine turnover of about \$40 million, but we are not eligible for one cent of it because we are a football club. In my time growing up we used to have the swimming club, the scouts, the guides, the youth club — we have had all sorts of things over 50 years. The only thing that remains is the footy club, yet we are not eligible. The one organisation in town that is trying to build a bit of character and a bit of good citizenship and sportsmanship is not eligible for a cent. I assume it is the same in Victoria. But if we were alcoholics or wife bashers or dropouts of some sort, there would be a government fund throwing money at us. I just think it is absurd, and it needs to have a bit of fair dinkum treatment. That will not help my case in New South Wales, but I hope you take it back to the people who make your decisions.

The other thing that has been mentioned tonight concerns one of our young players, Mark McGough. We have had our full payment for Mark McGough being on Collingwood's list and it was \$11 200. Mark McGough played all his junior football with our club bar one season with the Murray Bushrangers. He had seven years with Mulwala. We get \$11 200. One season with the Murray Bushrangers and they get \$44 800. How that is an equitable arrangement is beyond me!

I draw your attention to page 60 of the VCFL submission about volunteers. It talks about all these accreditations and things. Since prior to Christmas any member of our committee in New South Wales, because we hold a liquor licence, must have a responsible service of alcohol accreditation by 1 July this year. We spent \$3200 in one night getting everyone on our committee qualified to stand behind the bar. That includes the president of the netball club and people who are never going to be there in their whole lives. But the annoying part is what is on page 60 because it is so true. It says:

Of course these new regulations and programs are all for the better. However, the volunteer at a football club traditionally just wants to help out where they can and not drown in bureaucracy and basically carry the responsibility for implementation of vital and broader community issues.

I think that is absolutely the truest thing I have ever read. You go to a bloke and you say, 'Listen, can you help me out here or there?', or whatever. He turns out to be the old bloke who has been on the gate. As soon as you go through the gate on a footy ground, you are on licensed premises. According to our police you must search the

vehicle. If you have an 80-year-old bloke and he is going to try to search the vehicle of four young blokes of 19 or 20, he is going to get abused. You are not going to have him the next week. If he wants to cook a hamburger, he has to put plastic gloves on that he has never worn in his life. If he wants to stand behind the bar, he has to go and do an RSA certificate. They are making it so hard to get volunteers, not to mention the smarties in the club — donkeys like me — who have to do all this bookwork. This is about the fifth meeting I have been to in about seven or eight weeks — one with the tax department, a league meeting, this meeting here tonight. It is no wonder you cannot get volunteers. You have to line up just to be compliant, and that is all it is. It is trying to save your backside all the time from whatever is around the corner. Big Brother is killing us. That is basically all I would like to say. Thank you for your time.

Witness withdrew.