

CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into country football

Shepparton – 14 April 2004

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Mr B. Tuhan, senior vice-president, Picola and District Football Netball League.

Mr TUHAN — I seek permission to table a brief report on our league, the Picola football league, and perhaps two or three areas where your inquiry may be able to support our clubs.

I just want to make one comment. We are just a little bit disappointed and perhaps disturbed that in this inquiry tonight you have invited two major leagues to make submissions but you have not invited the three minor leagues that come under the same Goulburn Murray umbrella to make submissions. We are right at the coalface of the problems facing country football at the moment, as is shown by the demise of clubs in small village areas around the state and in New South Wales. Probably my colleagues do not class it as a village competition but I do, because several of our towns have only 100 people.

We are very proud of our 13 clubs. We are putting almost 1000 footballers out every Saturday and 900 netballers, and that is a remarkable achievement in those little communities, some of which in the next 15 to 20 years will fall by the wayside, no doubt, with the population movement to capital cities. Having said that, I must briefly mention that I acknowledge Mr Briggs indicating that Cumeragunja was operating in our area back in the period 1910–20. In fact Cumeragunja's last president in the forerunner to our current league was a Mr Tom Dunnolly, who was the president in 1931. Proudly this year we have another Koori president in the Mathoura club, the first time in 70-something years we have had a Koori president in our league and we are very proud of that fact.

A little-known fact of district league competition is that our sister or brother leagues — whichever term you might choose — Kyabram and Central Goulburn, are in exactly the same boat, in that of our 13 clubs only one club is able to shop for its resources in its local town. In other words, the other 12 clubs provide, if you like, succour for the major league clubs around the area and in turn that helps those clubs. I do not think that fact is recognised by Murray and Goulburn Valley league, that all our income is virtually spent in their towns. That is another problem we face.

In general terms we would welcome any assistance through local government for significantly increased expenditure on our facilities. I think Mr Bott on behalf of the Goulburn Valley league covered a lot of the general areas that I have included in this report and I do not intend to go over that ground, but the reduction in the amount of money available for our small clubs through the various grants has meant that little or no improvement or even maintenance has been able to be undertaken. We would welcome increased funding in that area, and obviously some relief from the constantly changing rules and regulations, which places a great deal of pressure on our volunteers. I guess also some concessions would be welcome in concessional charges for services such as power, water, ground rental and the like.

That is it, basically. I do not agree with one point made by my friend and colleague from the Murray league that our young players who are touching on elite level and do not make the grade are ashamed to come back home, but I will take it up with him later. That is a wrong assessment of the position. It is a bit like saying federal politicians when they are finished their time do not come back to the job they had before they went into politics, that they go into overseas postings, or that perhaps when state politicians finish they go into bank directorships or something. When you have young elite footballers who make the grade briefly or perhaps do not quite make it, it is understandable that they when they are making their next move down the ladder, they will take into account the commercial situations that may be available to them, the education systems and so forth. But eventually many of them do come back to their home area. It is understandable in my view why they do not come back immediately and I think that is commonsense, commercial business acumen.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Mrs POWELL — May I thank members of the committee for coming to Shepparton. Kristen said they would come if we gave them enough information. As you can see from the number of people here — you did say it is the most you have ever seen — we have a total of 50 clubs, and you can tell from the evidence that has been given to the committee that we are very passionate about our community and about our football and our netball in this whole region. I would like to thank the committee for coming here and giving us the opportunity of providing evidence. We hope it will be worthwhile and helpful.

Committee adjourned.