

CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into country football

Leongatha – 7 April 2004

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Witness

Mr G. Wright, president, Leongatha Football Club.

Mr WRIGHT — My name is Glen Wright, and my address is 24 McCartin Street, Leongatha. I am the vice-president of the Leongatha Football Club.

I want to briefly comment on some things that Peter Walsh mentioned before — that is, why should governments throw money into country football? Is it going to be used properly? If I can be a little bit flippant, I think governments throw money into inquiries on police corruption even though they know it is going to continue, so there is a thing there that says, ‘All right! We do not just let it go. We will try and do something about it’.

I do not know whether governments understand the importance or what I think country football means to country communities, to the community in general and to the whole nation. Our volunteers have been mentioned and the numbers of players, both netball and football. I believe if you stop and they think about what is happening to some towns which are losing football and netball clubs, you should see the consequences in the country of what these kids have got left. In the cities there are other things kids can do — transport and whatever.

If we lose our football and netball in the country and you put these kids on the street, then you will find out how much you have to spend on crime, drugs, rehabilitation and whatever. That is the importance and that is why you should throw some money into football, netball and sporting facilities. All right, there will be some of it misused — there might be a player who gets a few dollars because money has gone from other areas — but in general, as with the police corruption inquiry, you are going to stop it a bit, so in the country you are going to do some good with the money you put in.

I believe it is mainly in facilities. Water has been mentioned as a huge issue. We have that health and safety thing at this stage, where really our games could be stopped through health and safety if the grounds are too hard. I think it is happening up north — the seasons are starting later because of that. For both sides, no matter which foot you kick with — if I can use a footy term — it is just so important, and I do not think people realise.

You put money into other things. We are talking about obesity and general health. I would guarantee that down at Leongatha in seven days — and I have been spending probably 30 hours a week myself voluntarily, because a lot of work is going on down there — there is not one day when there is not someone on that oval training, whether it be under-12s, under-14s, under-16s, under-18s, right through and a number of people use it. That is the importance in the country that people really need to take note of. That is all I would like to say. Thank you.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much.

Witness withdrew.