

# **Victorian Government Response to the Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee Inquiry into Country Football**

## ***Introduction***

The Government welcomes the report of the Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee Inquiry into Country Football.

In particular, it welcomes the Committee's finding that although there have been club amalgamations or mergers since 1990, football is not in decline in rural and regional Victoria and that unprecedented numbers of young people are playing.

The most significant impact on country football has been due to population shifts and an ageing of the traditional volunteer base. The Government's response is therefore centred on the long term sustainability of country football.

It is well recognised that participation in sport and recreation provides social, health and economic benefits. Football, in particular, plays a central role in the lives of Victorians; it is an important source of self-esteem and identity.

At the community level, football is instrumental in developing a sense of community identity and bonding, especially in rural communities experiencing isolation or facing challenges arising from environmental factors or demographic shifts.

The Committee's finding that football participation rates in country Victoria are substantially higher than in metropolitan Melbourne, especially amongst young people, instils confidence in the strength of country football to continue to contribute towards the development of strong communities.

The Government is committed to building a country football sector that is sustainable well into future generations.

Since 2000 the Government has invested over \$10 million through its Community Facility Funding Program towards the development of community football facilities. Importantly 73% or over \$7 million of this funding has been towards country based football facility projects. A further \$13.5 million has been invested in the redevelopment of Kardinia Park in Geelong, an investment in the region that will pay dividends well into the future.

In response to early findings of the Committee's Inquiry into Country Football, the Government in April 2004 set up the Country Football Grounds Assistance Program with a \$1 million commitment over two years to assist country football clubs to tackle the impact of drought. This has seen funding allocated to 89 ground rehabilitation and water related projects across country Victoria.

In 2004, the Minister for WorkCover announced a new \$1.05 million, three year Worksafe naming rights sponsorship of the Victorian Country Football League (VCFL). This sponsorship recognises the important role country football can play

in raising the profile of workplace safety in local communities throughout regional Victoria.

At the elite level, football draws large attendance numbers at AFL matches and generates discussion and interest across the community. The Government's contribution of \$77 million towards the \$430 million Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) redevelopment recognises Victorian's love of sport and will ensure that this world renowned stadium continues to provide state of the art facilities for sporting and other events, including football.

The Government congratulates the Committee for undertaking a thorough approach to assessing the role, strength and long term viability of country football and in identifying the factors in the decline in club numbers.

The Government also acknowledges the Committee's consideration of netball and cricket competitions where there was an existing relationship with football. In this regard, the Committee found that netball is vital to the ongoing viability of country football and that partnership between netball and football leagues and clubs result in benefits for both the clubs involved and the local communities.

The Committee made 34 key recommendations. Thirteen recommendations are addressed to organisations operating outside the jurisdiction of the Victorian Government (including 19a). Comments received from the Australian Football League (AFL) and the VCFL are included in the response (for completeness) or were considered when developing the Government's response.

Where considered appropriate, the Government will initiate discussions with relevant external organisations to progress the Parliamentary Committee's findings and/or recommendations.

The Government fully supports, supports in principle or supports the intent of 20 recommendations (including 19b). Two recommendations are not supported.

In summary, the Government is committed to ensuring the future success of country football. It proposes to use various mechanisms to achieve this, including engaging with, and helping the football sector to engage with, a range of stakeholders.

A key element of *A Fairer Victoria*, the Government's action plan addressing disadvantage, is a commitment to encourage corporate social responsibility, and develop new ways of working with local government, community groups and the business sector to tackle local community issues by drawing on each others' expertise.

The Government recognises the impact of demographic shifts and population decline on rural communities, and in particular on country football as identified by the Committee. Through *A Fairer Victoria*, new place-based approaches will support rural communities to overcome disadvantage caused by population decline, including greater investment in new and redeveloped services and infrastructure.

The challenges facing football volunteers (including umpires and coaches) and the state of sports grounds and associated facilities will, in part, be addressed through the following initiatives developed or announced since the Inquiry commenced:

- \$21 million Volunteering and Community Enterprise Strategy. This strategy includes a range of programs which will provide financial and other support to community based organisations
- Review of the Sport and Recreation Community Facility Funding Program
- The Multicultural Sports Project being implemented in partnership with the AFL.

In light of the Committee's findings, the Government will inject an additional \$2.3 million towards:

- upgrading country football and netball facilities, and
- supporting the recruitment and retention of umpires, coaches and officials in country Victoria.

In conclusion, the Victorian Government is committed to:

- the development of a sustainable sport and recreation sector, including the football sector
- facilitating community building and strengthening efforts at the grassroots level, and
- contributing to the economic growth and development of rural and regional Victoria.

The Government thanks the Committee for its timely and comprehensive review and report and looks forward to working with peak sport organisations and local government agencies with a view to progressing the Committee's findings. The Government considers these organisations best placed to facilitate the flow of information, resources and other benefits to the club level.

The Government's response to each recommendation is attached.

### **Recommendation 1**

**That the State Government write a brief letter to all Victorian sporting clubs, explaining in simple terms the protection afforded volunteers under the Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic).**

### **Response**

SUPPORT

The Victorian Government supports the promotion of the volunteer protection provisions in the *Wrongs Act 1958* to sporting clubs. The volunteer protection provisions only apply to community organisations that are incorporated associations or bodies corporate, local government bodies or public agencies (Section 34 *Wrongs Act 1958*).

The Department of Justice currently has a webpage addressing volunteer protection under the *Wrongs Act 1958* which can be accessed at [www.justice.vic.gov.au](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au).

In addition, the Minister for Sport and Recreation is currently writing to state sports associations and regional sports organisations regarding insurance related issues, including the volunteer protection provisions. Associations will be asked to include the information provided in newsletters and similar communications to clubs.

The Government will examine a range of methods to determine how best to communicate the information to clubs.

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### **Recommendation 2**

**That the State Government undertake consultation with Volunteering Victoria or other appropriate bodies on any legislative proposal that is likely to have an effect on volunteer recruitment and retention.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT

The Victorian Government supports consultation with relevant bodies on legislative proposals which may have significant impacts on the volunteering sector.

The creation of the Community Strengthening and Volunteering Division within the Department for Victorian Communities will provide an avenue for increased and ongoing consultation and liaison with volunteer organisations.

### **Recommendation 3**

**That when undertaking an assessment of proposed regulations through the Regulatory Impact Statement process, specific consideration should be given to the impact of those regulations on volunteers and voluntary organisations, and in particular, whether proposed regulations will have a detrimental effect on volunteer participation, recruitment, and retention.**

#### **Response**

SUPPORT

The Victorian Government supports all significant impacts of regulation being assessed, including effects on volunteer participation, recruitment and retention. A fundamental requirement of the Regulatory Impact Statement process is that no significant impact of a regulatory proposal is overlooked.

The Government advocates that agencies preparing statutory rules draw on information and comment from the widest possible sources to ensure that all relevant costs and benefits of regulation are identified, particularly indirect costs and benefits which may not be readily apparent.

To help ensure that all effects are identified, agencies are asked to consider the impact of a proposed statutory rule on individuals who are directly affected, on particular industries or sectors, and on the economy and the community at large.

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### **Recommendation 4**

**That in addition to its current recognition of service awards, the Australian Football League (AFL) examine practical means to support and recognise grassroots football volunteers, such as complimentary match day passes, opportunities for country football volunteers to observe AFL and AFL club officials at work, or the integration of a broader range of training programs into AFL club forums and regional visits.**

#### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to the Australian Football League (AFL).

In response, the AFL has indicated that consideration of this recommendation could be broadened to include offering discounted club memberships to community football volunteers.

In addition, the AFL's Training Program has been extended to now include coaches, umpires trainers and officials. The AFL's Club Management Program, which was recently distributed to 3000 community clubs across Australia, will be delivered by AFL Club Officials at events such as Community Camps.

The Victorian Government currently recognises and supports the volunteer sector through the annual *Sport and Recreation Industry Awards* and the *Volunteering and Community Enterprise Strategy*. Details of these programs are provided in responses to related recommendations specifically addressed to the Government.

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### **Recommendation 5**

**That the State Government develop and fund a multifaceted media campaign, to encourage, recognise and promote the recruitment and involvement of volunteers in clubs and associations of all sports, and that this campaign be linked to the program outlined in Recommendation 14.**

### **Response**

#### SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

The Victorian Government acknowledges and values the contribution volunteers make to building confident and resilient communities through a number of programs.

The Government recognises volunteer achievements in sport and recreation through the annual *Sport and Recreation Industry Awards*, managed by the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC).

DVC also implements the recently announced \$21 million *Volunteering and Community Enterprise Strategy*. The Strategy is designed to encourage, support and extend opportunities for people to volunteer across a range of activities in their communities, including sport specific activities. This will be achieved by investing in infrastructure, coordination and brokering services.

Further, the *Go For Your Life* media campaign which is a component of the Victorian Government's \$22 million *Healthy and Active Victoria* strategy supports, promotes and encourages the recruitment and involvement of volunteers across community organisations and activities, including those specific to the sport sector.

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### **Recommendation 6**

**That the State Government provide funding for research to capture historical information about leagues, clubs and competitions (including competitions and premierships, best and fairest, leading goal kickers, life members, captain, coaches etc.) and that this information be offered as a free, public online resource.**

### **Response**

#### SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

Individuals and groups seeking to document the history of football and football organisations frequently approach the Government for financial support.

Over the past 4 years, the Victorian Government has provided financial support to community organisations for the capture of historical information through the Local History Grants Program administered by the Public Record Office Victoria.

There is a clear need within Victorian communities to document the history of people and place. Many organisations are interested in local history, including local historical societies, museums, schools as well as country football clubs.

The Government is currently examining ways to assist local organisations to capture historical information, including developing linkages with the "Revitalising Victoria's Community Museums" project and the Cultural Broadband Network which is currently being developed.

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### **Recommendation 7**

**That the Australian Football League (AFL) employ current and retired AFL umpires to travel around rural and regional Victoria to provide advice, support and skills development to people currently umpiring country football.**

### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to the Australian Football League (AFL). In response, the AFL has indicated that:

*"Football Victoria currently spends more than \$800,000 per annum on umpiring and employs one full time Umpiring Manager and one full time Development Officer who deliver a range of development programs including the basic umpiring course, training for club umpires, the AFL Umpire Mentor Program and umpire accreditation amongst others. All programs support the development of country umpires.*

*The AFL also provides AFL umpires to country umpiring groups "free of charge" to conduct promotions, clinics and presentations. In addition the AFL heavily subsidise or provide at no cost a range of umpiring development resources including uniforms, curriculums and promotional items."*

The Victorian Government currently provides support to peak sports organisations (including Sport Education Victoria and Regional Sports Assemblies) to provide training and skills development opportunities for coaches and umpires.

However, in light of the Committee's findings, the Government will commit an additional \$215,000 towards the development of a program focussing on recruiting, educating and supporting umpires, coaches and officials in country Victoria. This program will also be linked to Recommendation 8.

### **Recommendation 8**

**That the Australian Football League and Victorian Country Football League continue to develop programs to foster respect for, and retention of, football umpires.**

#### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to the Australian Football League (AFL) and the Victorian Country Football League (VCFL). In response, the AFL has indicated that:

*"In 2004 the AFL launched its National Umpire Mentoring Program and trained over 40 mentors and 150 umpires in country Victoria. These umpires wear a green shirt which signifies their stage of early development and has been very successful in controlling and moderating the behaviour of coaches, players and supporters towards developing umpires. Much work still needs to be done and the AFL is in the process of refining its 2005 communication strategy which will build on the "Respect the Game. Respect the Umpire" which was used in 2004."*

The Victorian Government, through the Department for Victorian Communities, (DVC) recently funded research into spectator behaviour in sport, focusing particularly on junior and local sport. This project also includes consideration of issues relating to umpires and officials.

In addition, DVC recently produced and distributed copies of *Keeping Sport Fun and Safe* which details codes of behaviour for user-friendly junior sports clubs.

In light of the Committee's findings, the Government's new commitment of \$215,000 in response to Recommendation 7 will include a component focussing on increasing respect for, and retention of, football umpires.

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### **Recommendation 9**

**That umpires, like country and suburban players, be considered 'contestants' for the purpose of the WorkCover scheme, and that adequate insurance be obtained by umpires' associations to provide appropriate cover for football umpires.**

#### **Response**

NOT SUPPORTED

The Victorian Government does not support this recommendation.

The definition of "worker" for WorkCover purposes includes persons who work under a contract of service i.e. an employer/employee relationship. The term

“employee” is not defined in the WorkCover legislation and it is therefore necessary to have regard to common law.

The Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA) interpretation of the common law is that umpires are employees and if injured in the course of performing umpiring duties, they are legally entitled to compensation under the WorkCover legislation. Accordingly, premiums are payable in respect of that coverage.

As a general principle, the VWA scheme does not exclude common law employees from coverage and to do so for football umpires may cause unintended consequences, such as other employers seeking to have their common law employees excluded from coverage by WorkCover.

This interpretation is consistent with the views of the State Revenue Office, which regards umpires/referees as employees for payroll tax purposes.

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### **Recommendation 10**

**That further activity, such as coach mentoring programs, be undertaken to support coaches in rural and regional football clubs to improve coaching competencies.**

### **Response**

#### SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

The Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) and the Australian Sports Commission currently fund Sport Education Victoria to provide advice and support to Victorian State Sporting Associations and Victorian based National Sport Organisations through the provision of services, including coach training and mentoring programs and resources.

Sport Education Victoria is also funded by DVC to deliver the *Women In Sport Education Project*, which aims to deliver coaching and officiating training to women, particularly in regional areas, in conjunction with a number of sporting bodies, including Football Victoria.

The Australian Football League has indicated that more than \$800,000 is allocated annually towards Coach Education in Victoria. Other initiatives such as the AFL Community Camps and the AFL Coaching Ambassadors David Parkin and Stan Alves add further value to coach mentoring programs.

### **Recommendation 11**

**That greater funding and support be provided by the Australian Football League, Football Victoria and the Victorian Country Football League for coaching development programs at junior and Auskick levels of football, so that these programs can be provided at no cost to participants.**

### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to the Australian Football League (AFL), Football Victoria (FV) and the Victorian Country Football League (VCFL).

In response, the AFL has indicated that coaching courses are heavily subsidised.

In late 2004, the Victorian Government announced a \$600,000 partnership with the AFL. There are four elements to this partnership, one of which includes offering parents, volunteers and community leaders from diverse communities increased access to training and development opportunities that lead to involvement in local sporting clubs, including coaching and officiating.

The Government will commence discussions with the AFL with a view to identifying further avenues of reducing costs associated with undertaking coaching development programs.

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### **Recommendation 12**

**That the Australian Football League (AFL) develop a system to ensure that AFL clubs establish ongoing relationships with specific districts, leagues and/or clubs in country Victoria, and provide AFL club-based mentoring and support to coaches, trainers and medical staff associated with those country football districts, leagues and/or clubs.**

### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to the Australian Football League (AFL).

In response, the AFL has stated that Community Camps and a revised, comprehensive player appearance program are considered to be working effectively. Currently each AFL player spends one full day in country Victoria. In 2004 this practice enabled 27,000 children in 43 towns to be involved.

This practice of spreading attention across the state is preferred to allocating clubs or players to a specific region by the AFL.

In addition the AFL's network of training courses is readily available for all club officials.

The Government acknowledges the AFL's efforts to date with regard to establishing links between AFL clubs and players and country football clubs.

Discussions will be commenced with the AFL with a view to identifying how this could be further enhanced.

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### **Recommendation 13**

**That the Australian Football League ‘Club Start-up Kit’, or a version of that document, be adapted to provide assistance to existing and emerging clubs, and that it be:**

- (i) expanded to include consideration of issues relating to the payment of players; and**
- (ii) that sections of that document describing financial activities and reporting requirements for football clubs provide more detailed descriptions and templates of how to manage complex financial transactions and regulatory requirements; and**
- (iii) that this resource be offered on-line, in electronic form, and in hard-copy.**

### **Response**

#### SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

The Victorian Government (Department for Victorian Communities) recently commissioned a sports club “start-up kit” which will be produced in English and five other languages catering specifically for culturally and linguistically diverse clubs.

In 2002, the Government produced the *User Friendly Sport* publication aimed at assisting clubs to develop a friendly club culture, and associated policies and practices.

With regard to player payment and financial reporting information, the Australian Football League (AFL) advised that the Victorian Country Football League (VCFL) has recently removed its statewide salary cap after VCFL member clubs spent an estimated \$20 million on player payments this year.

The AFL has also indicated that the diverse levels of club operations across the state render it very difficult to provide effective templates and that clubs operating at the “high business” level have the capacity to, and do, secure professional specialist advice.

The Government will commence discussions with the AFL and the VCFL to identify any further means of supporting football clubs in this matter.

## **Recommendation 14**

**That in the order of \$2 million per annum over five years be made available by the State Government to develop and provide a comprehensive, integrated program to assist volunteers in community sport in the following areas:**

- (i) sports administration;**
- (ii) understanding and managing volunteer liability insurance issues;**
- (iii) alcohol and food handling competencies;**
- (iv) awareness of current grants and resources available to sports organisations;**
- (v) general sports administration and organisation skills acquisition;**

**and that programs should be run in rural and regional centres across Victoria to ensure reasonable access for all people.**

## **Response**

INTENT SUPPORTED IN PRINCIPLE

The Government supports in principle the intent of this recommendation.

The Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) was established to deliver government services through an integrated approach to planning, funding and service delivery at the local level.

DVC currently assists community sport organisations through a number of funding programs and information/training opportunities, including:

- Financial support through the *Regional Sports Assembly Program* and the *Country Action Grants Scheme*;
- Resources such as *A Guide to Grants and Funding Programs for Victorian Sporting and Recreation Service Organisations*; *User Friendly Clubs*; and
- Training opportunities and programs such as *Risk Management Workshops* and *Bouncing Racism Out of Sport*.

In 2004, the Victorian Government launched the \$21 million *Volunteering and Community Enterprise Strategy* which will support volunteering and community enterprise in Victoria. DVC is leading the implementation of the volunteering components of this strategy which include the following six elements:

- Development of vibrant and accessible Volunteer Resource Networks
- Financial assistance through the Volunteer Small Grants program
- Training and Skills Development for Managers and Volunteers
- Supporting Leadership in Volunteering
- Volunteering in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities
- Commonwealth Games Volunteering Legacy.

This integrated strategy will support volunteering and volunteer-involving organisations across all sectors, including the sport sector.

DVC is also represented on the Good Sports Advisory Group convened by the Australian Drug Foundation to provide advice and comment on the implementation of the *Good Sports Accreditation Program*. The Program aims to address issues associated with alcohol management in amateur sporting clubs. The majority of program funding is allocated to providing an accreditation and recognition framework for clubs which implements appropriate alcohol policies and provides training to club and staff members (including volunteers) of sporting clubs in the responsible serving of alcohol.

Food Safety and Water Regulation is a responsibility of Department of Human Services (DHS). Training for food handlers is provided by registered training organisations including the TAFE sector.

DVC's integrated service delivery approach, together with its links with DHS, has led to the development of an integrated program targeting volunteers in the manner recommended by the Parliamentary Committee.

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### **Recommendation 15**

**That the Municipal Association of Victoria work with local councils and the Victorian Country Football League to develop a system to reduce the number of ground reports required before a game from two to one.**

### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).

The Department for Victorian Communities (Sport and Recreation Victoria) and the MAV are two key players in a Working Party looking at conditions of council tenancy agreements for sports facilities. The Working Party's original terms of reference focus on insurance and indemnity clauses but the issue of sport organisations' risk management practices is now also being considered.

The Government has allocated \$400,000 over four years to help sporting clubs and organisations address insurance and risk management issues. These funds will be used to evaluate current risk management practices in sport and, subject to the findings of the evaluation, to develop and pilot new sport-specific activity standards.

Furthermore, new comprehensive insurance programs developed by Football Victoria, Cricket Victoria and Netball Victoria are more likely to focus the sports, councils and their respective insurers on identifying the optimum number and type of insurance reports required for those sports.

### **Recommendation 16**

**That the State Government make representations to the federal Treasurer, the Australian Taxation Office and other appropriate authorities to have participants in local football competitions, namely umpires and players, who receive less than the tax free threshold per annum (currently \$6000) declared as engaging in a hobby and therefore not subject to taxation, superannuation contributions and other associated requirements for these payments.**

### **Response**

NOT SUPPORTED

It is noted that individual clubs and associations are able to apply directly to the Australian Taxation Office for such a ruling and that an association has been successful.

It is considered that the most appropriate mechanism is for individual organisations to apply directly to the Australian Taxation Office.

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### **Recommendation 17**

**That Sport and Recreation Victoria undertake a review of the current application process for Minor Facilities grants with a view to simplifying the process and reducing the administrative burden on local sporting clubs.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT

The Victorian Government supports a review of the application process for the Minor Facilities Grants, which is a component of the Community Facility Funding Program (CFFP) managed by the Department for Victorian Communities.

In 2004, the CFFP guidelines were reviewed and simplified in line with the Department for Victorian Communities Grants Management System. This System has been developed to improve and streamline grant making processes, improve accountability and transparency, and enhance reporting and analysis of all grant activities and investments across the Department.

Measures identified in the 2004 CFFP review included simplifying the guidelines, producing an electronic version and developing the ability to accept online applications from Councils.

A further review of the CFFP will be undertaken in 2005 with the view to identifying any other means of simplifying the process and reducing the burden on grant applicants.

### **Recommendation 18**

**That local government give consideration to introducing a two-stage application process for Minor Facilities grants, whereby short listed applicants are given assistance to prepare detailed funding submissions where required.**

#### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to local government.

The Victorian Government encourages local government to adopt a two-stage application process when making applications under the Community Facility Funding Program (CFFP). The Government understands that some local government authorities currently adopt a two stage process.

The Government will further consider this recommendation during the 2005 review of the CFFP with a view to identifying its role in facilitating this process.

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### **Recommendation 19a**

**That when corresponding with applicants for Minor Facilities grants who have not been selected for consideration by Sport and Recreation Victoria, local government identify why the application was not successful and how the funding submission could be improved in the future.**

#### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to local government.

The Victorian Government considers local government best placed to provide feedback to unsuccessful grant applicants and acknowledges that this may have resource implications for councils. The Government provides assistance in this regard when requested.

The Government will further consider this recommendation during the 2005 review of the Community Facility Funding Program with a view to identifying any further assistance that may be provided to Victorian local government authorities in this regard.

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### **Recommendation 19b**

**That when corresponding with local councils that have unsuccessfully applied for Minor Facilities grants, Sport and Recreation Victoria identify why the application was not successful and how the funding submission could be improved in the future.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT

In the 2005/2006 Community Facility Funding Program round, Sport and Recreation Victoria, within the Department for Victorian Communities, wrote to the councils who had unsuccessful applications. The correspondence identified the reason why the application was unsuccessful and encouraged council to contact an officer within the Department for Victorian Communities to discuss how the application could be improved in the future.

The Government will further consider this recommendation during the 2005 review of the Community Facility Funding Program with a view to identifying any further assistance that may be provided to unsuccessful applicants.

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### **Recommendation 20**

**That in continuing recognition of the reduced fundraising capacity in rural and regional areas, the current funding ratio for Minor Facilities grants, whereby the State Government contributes \$2 for every \$1 locally raised for projects in rural shires and \$1.50 for every \$1 locally raised for projects in regional cities, be retained.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of providing minor capital works grants, particularly to rural communities where sport is a strong focus of community life. The current funding ratio was introduced in recognition of the difficulties faced by rural and regional communities and growth suburbs on the fringes of Melbourne and to provide an additional boost to developments in these areas. There are no plans to change the funding ratios.

The Government will further consider this recommendation during the 2005 review of the Community Facility Funding Program with a view to identifying any other means of increasing the effectiveness of these ratios.

### **Recommendation 21**

**That the State Government review the structure and maximum number of grants available through the Minor Facilities funding program to reduce inequities between smaller and larger shires and to ensure that grants are meeting local needs.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting the development of facilities throughout rural and regional Victoria in a manner which reduces inequities between smaller and larger shires. The current application assessment process for all components of the Community Facility Funding Program (including the Minor Facilities component) requires applicants to demonstrate that the proposed facility or project addresses the participation and access needs of the local community.

It is envisaged that the 2005 review of the Community Facility Funding Program, will include an examination of the current structure with a view to identifying means of further reducing inequities and simplifying the process.

The review will be conducted in consultation with Local Government Victoria.

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### **Recommendation 22**

**That the State Government establish a new multi-million dollar grants scheme for the upgrade of football and netball facilities in rural and regional Victoria, to be allocated over four years. Grants should be made available to rural shires on the basis of \$2 for every \$1 raised locally and to regional cities on the basis of \$1.50 for every \$1 raised locally, and the State Government should negotiate with the AFL for a matched funding contribution.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT

The Victorian Government will inject \$2 million towards the upgrade of football and netball facilities in country Victoria. It is intended that funding will be allocated to address priority areas identified by the Committee in Recommendation 23.

In determining the best way to address the future facility needs of country football and netball, the Government has:

- commissioned a \$90,000 Study into Turf Sports Ground Conditions and User Safety Guidelines. This study will investigate the relationship between sports ground conditions and their influence on injury.

- commenced a review of the Community Facilities Funding Program (CFFP). This review will, among other things, identify the types of sport and recreation facilities that should be prioritized in any future CFFP funding rounds.

The CFFP currently supports and provides opportunities for local councils to plan and develop solutions to the sport and recreation needs of their local communities, including the upgrade of football and netball facilities.

During the financial years 2000/1-2003/4, over \$10 million was provided through the CFFP towards the development of community football facilities by local government. Of this funding, over \$7 million (73%) was provided to country based football facility projects. A further \$13.5 million has been committed towards the redevelopment of Kardinia Park in Geelong.

In addition, the Government's \$1 million Country Football Grounds Assistance Program allocated funding to 89 ground rehabilitation and water related projects across country Victoria.

The Government will commence discussions with relevant football organisations (including the AFL) with regard to their involvement and/or contribution to any future investment in country football and netball facilities.

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### **Recommendation 23**

**That in considering applications for grants for upgrading football and netball facilities, the State Government give priority to applications that seek to address particular areas of need, including:**

- (i) appropriate netball facilities;**
- (ii) appropriate facilities for umpires;**
- (iii) shared community, club and social facilities;**
- (iv) multi-use facilities;**
- (v) lighting; and**
- (vi) health and safety improvements.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT

It is intended that the Victorian Government's injection of \$2 million will give priority to those areas identified by the Committee.

In the first instance, the funding will focus on priority areas (i) to (v). The \$90,000 Study into Turf Sports Ground Conditions and User Safety Guidelines will inform best practice in making health and safety improvements.

## **Recommendation 24**

**That local sporting clubs and local government be encouraged to apply for funding through the *Planning Projects Funding Program* to develop strategic facilities plans and give consideration to sharing or co-locating sporting facilities and resources where appropriate.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT

The Victorian Government currently encourages a planned approach to sport and recreation development through the Planning component of the Community Facility Funding Program (CFFP).

CFFP provides financial assistance towards recreation planning and facility feasibility planning.

Supporting local councils to encourage growth in the sport and recreation sector through an integrated planning process remains a priority for the CFFP.

The key objectives of the Planning component are to encourage local councils to undertake planning that is linked to other planning processes and utilises partnerships and/or strategies for community strengthening. Subregional and regional planning and development, and thorough feasibility analysis and business planning for all major facility developments are also encouraged.

The CFFP allows for each local council to submit an annual application to its planning category. Councils often apply to undertake broad municipal recreation plans which then form the basis for many lower level plans such as facility master plans.

The 2005 CFFP review will investigate how a more strategic approach to facility planning could be achieved.

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## **Recommendation 25**

**That the State Government provide financial incentives to local councils and water authorities in rural and regional Victoria to develop and implement initiatives using recycled and grey water for sporting grounds, in consultation with sporting groups.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

The Victorian Government currently supports local councils in the use of recycled and grey water for sporting grounds.

In 2004, the Victorian Government's Country Football Grounds Assistance Program allocated \$1 million towards 89 ground rehabilitation and water conservation and recycling projects across country Victoria.

This program was implemented through a partnership arrangement between the Victorian Departments of Industry, Innovation and Regional Development, Sustainability and Environment, and Victorian Communities. The Victorian Country Football League and the Municipal Association of Victoria were extensively consulted and involved throughout its implementation.

The Government's *Our Water Our Future* is a comprehensive action plan which details initiatives for enabling smarter water use and management. The plan includes initiatives such as the *Stormwater and Urban Water Conservation Fund*, being implemented through the Department of Sustainability and Environment. The Fund supports local scale innovative water sensitive initiatives, stormwater conservation and water recycling initiatives. Local Government water conservation and recycling demonstration projects, including use of recycled water on sporting grounds and in parks will be considered through this Fund.

Further, Victorian urban water authorities are required to assess opportunities for use of alternative water supplies (recycled water, stormwater, rainwater and grey water) as part of developing their Water Supply-Demand Strategies.

It is possible that recycled water schemes could be established that service open space/recreational areas including football grounds, but this will be determined on a case by case basis and funded in line with pricing principles outlined in the *Our Water Our Future* action plan.

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## **Recommendation 26**

**That the Australian Football League increase its involvement in, and support for, school football competitions.**

### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to the Australian Football League (AFL). In response, the AFL has indicated that it provides considerable human resource hours in supporting school football.

The Victorian Government (through the Department of Education and Training) currently has a three year partnership arrangement to conduct the Statewide Primary School Football Program for all Victorian Primary Schools.

This partnership includes the Collingwood Football Club, the Club's sponsor and the Victorian Primary Schools Sports Association. In addition to supporting and expanding existing school programs, this partnership allows country schools greater access to football opportunities.

The Government acknowledges the efforts of the AFL in supporting school football competitions and will commence discussions to determine any further opportunities in this regard.

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### **Recommendation 27**

**That the Australian Football League ensure that Football Victoria Development and the Victorian Country Football League are adequately resourced to enable them to work in partnership with schools, country football clubs and community groups to encourage and promote football in schools, particularly in schools in rural and regional Victoria.**

### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to the Australian Football League (AFL).

In response, the AFL has indicated that it currently undertakes significant work in this area. The AFL considers that demand is strong due to the game's popularity and that assistance from the Education Department would be welcomed.

In response to the review of Physical and Sport Education in 1993, the Victorian Government (through the Department of Education and Training) provided seed funding through the Exemplary Schools Program for a range of initiatives which encourage partnerships between schools and local sporting clubs. The ongoing success of these partnerships relies on the resourcing and commitment of local sporting clubs and associations.

The Exemplary Schools Program will continue throughout 2005 and will then be reviewed to inform its future direction.

In addition, the Australian Sports Commission's *Active After-school Communities Program* aims to develop closer links between sport and schools. The Departments of Education and Training and Victorian Communities are supporting implementation of this program in Victoria.

The Government would welcome any increased involvement in partnership programs relating to Australian Rules Football.

### **Recommendation 28**

**That physical education continues to be mandated as a compulsory part of the school curriculum, and that the physical education curriculum contains two components:**

- (i) generalised movement; and**
- (ii) modified games for skill acquisition.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT

The Victorian Government supports physical education being mandated as a compulsory part of the school curriculum.

Since 1993, all Government schools have had a mandatory time allocation for all Prep to Year 10 students in the area of physical and sport education. All students have access to a balanced and comprehensive physical and sport education program. The program aims to give students exposure to all aspects of the Fundamental Motor Skills Program.

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) outlining Prep to Year 10 curriculum is designed around three core strands, each of which includes knowledge, skills and behaviours. Each of these core strands is essential; each has standards. The first of the three strands is Physical, Personal and Social Learning. Within this strand, Health and Physical Education is an essential domain. The VELS in the “movement and physical activity” dimension of the Health and Physical Education domain contains both components identified.

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### **Recommendation 29**

**That the State Government develop a generalised sports program, based on Auskick, to be offered through Victorian primary schools.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

Auskick is a very successful AFL initiative implemented by the Victorian Football Development Foundation. It offers school children an ideal pathway to community sport. Building links with the community through sport is a key element of the Department of Education and Training’s philosophy in developing active healthy lifestyles for children.

There is a host of sports that offer modified skill based opportunities as an entry to their sport. The choice of sport that schools include in their programs and by which they develop community links is an individual decision based on teacher strengths and student interest, tradition and local community opportunities.

The Victorian Government (Department for Victorian Communities) will commence discussions with sports associations and educators with the view to developing a generalised sports program which could be offered to primary schools.

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### **Recommendation 30**

**That the Department of Education and Training develop and implement a training program to encourage all teachers to obtain practical experience in physical education and selected sports, with the intention that:**

- (i) most teachers acquire general physical education and sports coaching skills; and**
- (ii) these programs be made available through regional centres to ensure all teachers are able to undertake physical education training programs where necessary.**

### **Response**

#### **SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE**

The Department of Education and Training (DE&T) currently has an agreement with the Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) for the training and retraining of teachers in physical and sport education through the Physical and Sports Education (PASE) Professional Development Program.

PASE is aimed at increasing the knowledge, skills and confidence of teachers in delivering quality physical activity and sport education programs. PASE has a strong practical focus. It includes a wide range of skill development and movement experiences. Fundamental motor skills, fitness education and basic movement are also integrated throughout the program components.

PASE is offered to all schools. It is a DE&T accredited professional development program supported by quality and current teacher resources. Traditionally all government teachers have participated for free. PASE Professional Development is available to teachers in regional Victoria on request. In 2005, it is expected that 1,200 teachers will participate in professional development courses. Specifically, three multi-sport coaching courses will target approximately 150 teachers.

The Program is developed by ACHPER and delivered by State Sporting Associations. There may be opportunities for the Victorian Country Football League to offer professional development sessions for teachers as a means of updating skills and enhancing knowledge in areas such as game sense, officiating and administration.

### **Recommendation 31**

**That the Department of Education and Training actively encourage all teachers, particularly those without a strong sporting background, to become involved in physical education and development programs for selected sports, including Australian rules football.**

### **Response**

SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

The Physical and Sports Education (PASE) Professional Development currently supports Principals' efforts to engage all staff in learning new skills required for the implementation of a quality physical education program.

Details of the PASE program are provided in response to Recommendation 30 above.

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### **Recommendation 32**

**That the Australian Football League give consideration to the special needs of country football when allocating funding, similar to the way that consideration is currently given to the special needs of developing states such as the Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales.**

### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to the Australian Football League (AFL).

In response, the AFL has indicated that over 50% of AFL Development Grants is spent in country regions nationally.

The Government will commence discussions with the AFL to identify any further means of supporting country football clubs in Victoria.

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### **Recommendation 33**

**That the Australian Football League examine ways of strengthening links between AFL clubs and rural and regional areas, so that AFL clubs provide clubs and players from those areas with support, assistance and mentorship;**

**and,**

**that as an incentive for AFL clubs to provide such assistance, the Australian Football League consider introducing a mechanism to allow these AFL clubs preferential draft picks from their allocated rural and**

**regional area, to be selected after the completion of round one of the draft, in exchange for their round three or four draft picks.**

### **Response**

This recommendation is addressed to the Australian Football League (AFL).

In response, the AFL has indicated that changes to the current draft system are considered unnecessary to engage AFL clubs and players.

The Government considers that AFL clubs have much to offer rural and regional football and sporting clubs. Mentoring of young people by AFL players, trainers, etc. provides important benefits for young people and contributes to community strengthening within these communities.

The Government will commence discussions with the AFL to identify any further means of supporting country football clubs.

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### **Recommendation 34**

**That Tattersall's and the State Government undertake discussions with Football Victoria to consider ways in which the Tipstar football tipping competition could be modified to provide revenue to country football clubs by providing a mechanism for local football clubs to sell and promote Tipstar to their supporters and members.**

### **Response**

Any modification of the delivery of the Tattersall's TipStar football tipping competition, so as to use local football clubs to sell and promote TipStar to their supporters and members, is a commercial matter for Tattersall's. It is outside the jurisdiction of the Victorian Government. However, the Government will convey the recommendation to Tattersall's for its consideration. Any commercial arrangements entered into by the parties would be conditional upon all probity and legislative requirements being met by Tattersall's.

It is worth noting that under the Gambling Regulation Act 2003, the Victorian Government's share of turnover from the Tattersall's TipStar competition (24%) must be directed to grass roots sports development, health, women's sports and sports medicine.

A number of football related injury prevention research initiatives currently being undertaken by the Department for Victorian Communities are also funded from the Government's share of competition revenue.