

One day in September – but which September?

L ove it or hate it, football is a large part of our culture.

In a conversation with Martin Flanagan, whom I regard as the best sports writer in the country, he spoke of his formative years as a young journalist with *The Age*. A bloke who'd grown up and been educated in Tasmania he soon became aware of the importance of the common language of football as he made his way as a country boy in the metropolis of Melbourne. This 'game of our own' permeates our culture much more than most sports, even so-called national sports.

It has now become a big business and is widely viewed around the world though the insatiable medium of cable sports television. The game is also far more of a national game through the efforts of the Australian Football League to bring the game to the 'non-football' states of Queensland and New South Wales. Alas for Tasmania! Still no team of our own.

The AFL is a successful business though there would appear to be darker clouds on the financial horizon. There are certainly rumblings in the large media organisations about declining profitability and it is conceivable that there might be less money available to purchase television rights. There is also growing community concern about the marketing of alcohol being linked

to elite sport. It may well be, in the uncertain future following the global financial crisis, that *community* support for football and other sports will return to its traditional importance.

I, like a majority of Tasmanians, believe that it is high time we had our own team. This is an opinion that is shared by a majority of politicians of all political persuasions, many in the business community and by supporters like me. In this Issue there are fascinating stories from the past that show how greatly this sport pervades our culture.

In the current financial world of mega-bonuses and small-nation-GDP-sized remuneration 'packages' there seems less awareness that people are still required in an economy. Businessman Henry Ford was pilloried by his tycoon contemporaries when he doubled the wages of his production line workers. His response was: 'If I don't pay ... who the hell is going to buy the cars?' Ford understood 'the market'.

If sport is indeed a metaphor for life, then in the current economic climate, ignoring the people who play and support the game might be a financial disaster let alone a loss of an important part of our culture.

Dear Mr AFL, give us a team of our own! Can we do it in Tasmania? Yes we can!

