

# Bulldogs save Dromana RSL

By Mike Hast, Peninsula Weekly, 8 September, 2010

THE Western Bulldogs Football Club has thrown a lifeline to Dromana-Red Hill RSL sub-branch, saving the RSL from oblivion after it was forced to close in July.

The Bulldogs will buy and operate the RSL premises in Noel Street, Dromana, where it has been since 1963, and allow the RSL to function on a limited basis.

The building will become the AFL club's new Mornington Peninsula base.

Western Bulldogs chief executive Campbell Rose said the club was delighted to support the 800 members of the RSL and "help breathe life back into the venue".

"The venue will also service the local community as a community-based organisation."

The Bulldogs hoped to open next week and other clubs would be invited to use the premises.

"Appropriate building permits and licences will then be sought before the venue is closed for about a week for minor renovations ahead of the summer holiday period," Rose said.

"We have a rapidly expanding member and supporter base on the peninsula and this proposal will allow the club to commit to long-term community development in the region."

Bulldogs president David Smorgon said: "We are very excited about developing the existing facility into a real community hub for locals."

Kangerong Ward councillor Graham Pittock said it was exciting news. "The Bulldogs are not doing this to make money but to expand their supporter base."

He said the RSL would not be a full service sub-branch but would mark major events such as Anzac Day and continue running its much-praised scholarship program for primary and secondary school students.

Its members last financial year volunteered 3400 hours for home and hospital visits, respite care and transport for senior citizens.

Cr Pittock said it was a wonderful early birthday present for Dromana, which celebrates its 150th anniversary of founding next year.

Dromana RSL has had a rotten year after being told in early March by RSL state headquarters that it had to come up with \$200,000 by March 23 to repay debts or close down.

The sub-branch was the latest peninsula RSL to face forced closure, with Sorrento-Portsea closing in November 2007 with debts of about \$150,000, but being rescued in early 2008, and Mornington being saved the same year.

Factors leading to the Dromana-Red Hill debt included high costs associated with running the gaming room and extensions made to the members' bar and gaming room in 2008.

The RSL staved off closure for about four months but was finally forced to lock its doors in July.

# Western Bulldogs secure pokies venue

By Sam Edmund, Herald Sun, September 10, 2010

THE Western Bulldogs will spend nearly \$1 million on a new pokies venue that will further secure the club's financial future.

The Dogs are set to take control of the Dromana/Red Hill RSL on the Mornington Peninsula this month after it was forced to close due to financial reasons in July.

It is believed the Bulldogs will double the amount of pokies at the 900-member venue from 20 to 40 after re-opening on September 23, with a facelift planned before summer.

"We will give some thought as to whether we can put more (pokies) in there, but that's not an immediate thing," Western Bulldogs chief executive Campbell Rose said.

"Our core business is football . . . however you do need to develop alternative revenue streams that insulate you from the vagaries of on-field performance."

The RSL purchase comes five months after the Western Bulldogs were stripped of gaming income by former Carlton director and pokies king Bruce Mathieson.



Mathieson stunned the Dogs in April by transferring the lease on the Victoria Inn in Williamstown, that was controlled by the club, to the Blues.

The Victoria Inn is owned by the powerful Mathieson/Woolworths venture.

But the Dromana/Red Hill RSL has emerged as the ideal replacement.

It is believed the Dogs will change the venue's name to the Peninsula Club or the Dromana Club, with Rose describing the purchase as a "very good win-win" for the AFL club and the community.

"We've got a partnership with RSL Victoria and when venues like this come up and in the event it works then we look at them, but it's got to suit everybody," he said.

A Bulldogs party travelled to the Mornington Peninsula to first inspect the building three weeks ago.

Sub-branch president Lindsay Edgerton was overjoyed the RSL had been saved by the Dogs.

"We were in the process of closing and this has come out of left-field," Edgerton said.

"The Western Bulldogs have bent over backwards to help us out as a sub-branch and from the situation we were in, we were gone.

"They have been fantastic for us. It's just great."

Edgerton said the RSL would still operate as a sub-branch within the newly controlled club and would retain its boardroom for operational purposes.