

# Stockyards stadium push

By **STEVEN WILSON**

ST Kilda and Hawthorn football clubs have expressed an interest in plans to build a stadium in Dandenong.

Both clubs have said they would meet representatives of the City of Greater Dandenong to learn about the proposed stadium.

The city's chief commissioner, Mr Ian Cathie, said he had written to the clubs and other councils in the area to arrange a meeting about the proposed stadium.

With enthusiasm from the clubs, Mr Cathie said he was waiting for the councils of Monash, Kingston and Cardinia to indicate their support of the project.

The City of Casey, which covers the Berwick region, had said it was willing to discuss the proposal.

Mr Cathie said the meeting was likely to be held after Christmas.

"If that meeting is supportive, we would then approach the State Government for money to determine the feasibility of it," he said.

The site for the pro-



posed stadium is the stockyards land on Cheltenham Rd.

The 26.2ha site was large enough for a ground and parking, Mr Cathie said.

Because the site was split by Cheltenham Rd, it was thought the ground would be on one side and the car park on the other.

As well as being serviced by major roads, including the South-Eastern Freeway, Princes Highway and Cheltenham Rd, it is beside the Dandenong railway station.

The shortage of public transport to Waverley Park has long been seen as one of that ground's greatest deficiencies.

Mr Cathie said the ground would have to be large enough to seat 35,000 to 40,000 people and would have lights.

The area surrounding the stockyards is mainly zoned industrial.

St Kilda and Hawthorn, as well as Collingwood, Western Bulldogs and Essendon, have had initial discussions with the AFL about the costs associated with playing home games at the proposed Docklands stadium.

The newly appointed chief executive of Hawthorn, Mr Morton Browne, said there were many possibilities for the club and the Dandenong option was one of them.

"Our interest is very minor at this stage," Mr Browne said.

"I am prepared to hear what they have to say.

"At this stage we are at Waverley and so is St Kilda.

"But we are waiting to hear back from Greater Dandenong."

He said Hawthorn was heading for its best membership figures following the success of the anti-merger faction, led by former club captain Don Scott.

"The best the membership figures have ever been at the end of December is 1300," Mr Browne said.

"It is now 3500, so you could say we are heading for a record year."

The chief executive officer at St Kilda, Mr Don Hanly, said he was happy to hear what the council had to offer.

He said St Kilda membership had increased from 12,500 during its last year at Moorabbin to 14,300 in the season just ended.

St Kilda president Mr Andrew Plympton said he was willing to listen to any proposal, but said the club had a 30-year lease at Waverley.

AFL spokesman Tony Peek was aware of the proposal, but questioned how such a large project would be funded.