HAS AFL club Melbourne done enough to justify another two-game stint in the North- ern Territory? That is the crux of the argu- ment when Judgment Day comes later this year on who will play AFL premiership matches in Darwin and Alice Springs in 2017.

My sources say Melbourne chief executive Peter Jackson and the AFL’s general man-ager of broadcasting, schedule- ing and major projects Simon Leblanc were not happy with Friday’s NT News report on the Melbourne Demons wobbling on their NT axis.

The truth is, gentlemen, the Territory’s footy public say they have missed out on the maximum return from a club that has struggled on and off the ground.

This writer is not privy to precise contract details but I do know up to $1 million per match is involved in bringing the Demons to Darwin and Alice Springs.

That is a lot of money in anyone’s language and the average Territorian will be very keen to see some value in their hard-earned bucks.

Melbourne have a good working relationship with the media and, to a lesser extent, the Darwin and Alice Springs footy public.

Their low profile among the 18 teams, most of it brought on by a lack of success on the playing arena, has hurt them.

There are ways of improv- ing it as Jesse Hogan, Berni- nie Vince and Nathan Jones are big names that should be thrown in front of the media and autograph/photograph hun- ters at every opportunity, along with coach Paul Ross.

And I am not seeing a big number of school and commu- nity visits to win the sup- port of the people who really count – the fans – or a lot of support for the No More cam- paign against family violence.

That is allowing for the fact Melbourne’s main mission in the Far North is to play a premiership match and attract 10,000-plus fans. AFL football, Messrs Jackson and Leblanc, in case you need reminding, is big business in the frantic mat- ernal world of the 25 clubs.

The number of support staff in suits at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and club tracks at TIO Stadium is matchday proof that a hell of a lot of money is being used wisely.

It’s interesting Essendon and Port Adelaide, with big fol- lowings in the Top End and Alice Springs, are also in the mix for what more than likely will be home games in the NT.

Port have a long-term agreement with the Adelaide Oval that will mean away games for their fans, but Essendon have the Michael Long. Kevin Sheedy insists he wants to feed on, but big crowds in Melbourne to walk away from if they play a premiership game north. I wonder if the Adelaide Crows might be a good bet, given our links with the new women’s national league.

The Darwin and Alice Springs pre- sidium seem to have decided to fully fund the NT Demons and the NT club will meet the cost of travel and accommodation.

Some 1,300 flights into Darwin and Alice Springs are involved every year and that is certainly an area of concern.

The NT News report on the Demons’ $100 million Boosting Our Communities venture is $10 million more than the $90 million budget for the NT Demons.

Rafter says project could unearth next Goolagong

FROM BACK PAGE Rafter, tennis Australia’s director of performance, is also keen to tap into the big indi- genous talent pool across the NT in a bid to find the next Evonne Goolagong.

“Since Evonne we haven’t had a great Aboriginal player and you sit and scratch your head and ask why,” he said.

“But now, hopefully, you can give them a racquet and some balls and they will fall in love with the game and the large amount of work required to succeed at this sport.” Work on the new centre on Abula Rd is expected to start in July, with a tentative com- pletion date of July, 2017.

As revealed in the NT News in November last year, the new centre will attract beginners, juniors, national and interna- tional tennis in the form of the Davis and Federation Cup team events to the Top End.

Tennis Australia president Steve Healy said and top-level national tournaments, Oce-ania Championships and junior tour events were also headed Darwin’s way.

A tennis facility with 12 outer courts will be part of the site set from the Government’s $100 million Boosting Our Economy Package.

Mr Giles said the Govern- ment had decided to fully fund the centre instead of going halfway and pursuing external money because of the ad- vanced stage of design.

It means construction of the International Tennis Feder- ation compliant courts, four High Shot courts for young-ster participants and a prominent showpiece indoor court could proceed quickly.

Other fea- tures include ITF standard lighting, a main clubhouse, office space and car parking.

“Tennis NT boss Sam Gibson said the design of the new cen- tre meant programs and events from grassroots level, interna- tional juniors and professional tournaments were all catered for from the get-go.”

“The development of a major facility in Darwin has been tennis NT’s major stra- tegic focus for a number of years,” Gibson said.