MEDIA RELEASE

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**House doing country Australia proud ahead of AFL Country Festival**

It’s a long way from the Western Australian wheatbelt where he grew up, but Geelong draftee and proud Gnowangerup local Timm House is exactly where he wants to be – playing footy with the Cats.

In November last year, the 21-year-old’s life changed when he was picked up at 68 in the AFL draft. “I was driving a truck for Dad during harvest, delivering the grain to the silos and a mate actually rang me and told me that I’d been picked up by Geelong,” said Timm. “I couldn’t quite believe it.”

This weekend at the MCG, both the AFL and event sponsor Case IH will be celebrating players like Timm, and communities like Gnowangerup at the second annual Country Festival game between Geelong and Essendon.

“We’re thrilled to be involved in such a great event, recognising the great players and supporters from country communities,” said Bruce Healy, Case IH Brand Leader – Australia & New Zealand. “It’s great to see the AFL, including the Geelong Football Club supporting country kids in achieving their dreams.”

Timm is equally excited to celebrate the game’s strong country connections. “So many great players and people in the AFL have come from regional towns, and I think this event is an opportunity to recognise the role that country people play in our game.”

Back in his days playing footy for the Gnowangerup Bulldogs, Timm would look forward to playing all week. “It was certainly the dream growing up, my brother and I were on the back lawn everyday for hours playing footy together,” said Timm. “Our winter sort of revolved around local footy. Mum and Dad would drive us around the countryside to play.”

Like in many regional communities throughout Australia, Timm said the footy club was, and still is, a place for locals to gather each week.

“Whenever I go back, I always to try to catch a game and still see a lot of the people that I grew up playing footy with who are now playing in the senior side,” he said. “I go watch them and catch up with them after the game. Everyone’s very welcoming and glad to see me back, and I’m glad to see them.”

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According to Kevin Newman, Manager of Case IH dealership Farmers Centre 1978 in Katanning, WA, sports clubs are important for the survival and growth of country communities. For this reason, the dealership has sponsored the Gnowangerup Bulldogs for over a decade, and is proud to continue supporting players like Timm.

Timm agrees. “Gnowangerup has a really strong football club, and we have netball and hockey as well,” he said. “I think it means quite a lot to the community and the town. You see a lot of new people that come to the town and they come down to footy training and meet all the locals and they get involved. I think without footy in the country, it’d be a lot harder to socialise and have an outlet besides work.”

Flying the flag for regional communities, and celebrating them on occasions like the Country Festival, is something Timm is more than happy to do. “I’m really proud to be from the country because of the community spirit that country towns have,” he said. “I really enjoy going back to Gnowangerup, it still feels like home, and it’s a very easy-going place with a really good lifestyle. I enjoyed it growing up and I still really enjoy it now.”

“The Country Festival is a celebration of regional communities and an opportunity to recognise the contribution they make to our game of AFL and our nation,” said Geelong Cats Chief Executive Brian Cook. "We thank Case IH for their support and look forward to our relationship continuing to flourish in years to come."

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