



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sporting Schools Day

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to report to the House that more than 50,000 Queensland school students experienced the Goodwill Games via free tickets to events thanks to Project Goodwill. A further 89 students from far-north Queensland schools in Cape York, the gulf and the Torres Strait Islands travelled to Brisbane to see the world's best athletes in action thanks to Education Queensland, Queensland Rail and the 2001 Goodwill Games. This investment in our young people was in the true spirit of the Goodwill Games.

School students from all over Queensland gave gold medal performances as enthusiastic spectators, cheering on our competitors in a full range of events. But that was not their only role. Last week Goodwill Games track star Michael Johnson visited Sunnybank Hills State School for a special student sports clinic. The far-north Queensland students were also participants in this event. Michael Johnson took about 60 budding track stars through a series of activities, but undoubtedly the best outcome was the strong sense of belief he inspired in these students that they really could reach their full potential.

Michael Johnson's clinic at Sunnybank Hills State School was part of the countdown to Sporting Schools Day. I was there at the clinic, and the look of enthusiasm and the incredible commitment of these young athletes to see a sporting hero such as Michael Johnson on their school oval was really incredible.

Tomorrow is Sporting Schools Day—a day for schools to celebrate the benefits of sport, with the emphasis on participation rather than competition. It is not about winning or losing but about being involved, having fun and reaping the benefits of sport. From the gulf to the Gold Coast, schools across the state will be holding a range of activities that celebrate the benefits of physical activity and encourage children to take part in school sport.

To give a few examples, the students from Sunnybank Hills State School will hold a whole-of-school relay involving 1,100 students; Goondiwindi State School will hold fun runs for students, parents and teachers, from 500 metres to two kilometres; and Toowoomba East State School has organised every class—that is 700 students—to be involved in sporting activities throughout the day.

Members would be aware of the growing concerns that children are opting out of physical activity and that this may have serious long-term health implications for our young people. The government's commitment to the Smart State is not focused solely on academic achievement in schools, although this of course remains a high priority. We recognise that sport is also a valuable part of the broader school experience.

Sporting Schools Day is an initiative of the Queensland School Sports Foundation, which was very wisely established by my predecessor in January last year to raise funds to foster and develop sport for children in state and non-state schools. Education Queensland administers the foundation through an advisory committee. I am pleased to say that former cricket great Ian Healy chairs the foundation.

Students who take part in Sporting Schools Day activities tomorrow will be invited to make a gold coin donation, with the proceeds divided equally between the school and the foundation. The foundation gives financial assistance to children who would otherwise not be able to take part in

representative school sports due to cost, isolation or other factors. Many of our most successful sports people can trace their careers back to school sport, and the funds raised tomorrow will go towards helping our future champions.

There can be no better example of the worth of school sport than Melissa Rollison, our international steeplechase champion, who is a local high school student on the Gold Coast. Regardless of financial circumstances, all kids deserve the chance to aspire to representative and elite sports, and this equitable program gives them that chance.

As the spirit of the Goodwill Games lingers in Queensland, I thank the many athletes who have given up their time to ensure that tomorrow's Sporting Schools Day is a success, in particular basketball great Brian Kerle, who will tomorrow be at the northern region secondary track and field trials, and swimming star Susie O'Neill, who will be guest speaker at a Sporting Schools Day breakfast tomorrow and will visit the Fig Tree Pocket State School. Other Olympians, such as Glynis Nunn-Cearns, and officers from state sporting organisations will also visit schools throughout the day to conduct sport clinics. Thank you to all of them. I encourage as many schools and students as possible to take part in tomorrow's inaugural Sporting Schools Day.
