



Speech by

KAREN STRUTHERS

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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SPORTS DRUG TESTING BILL

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (12.51 p.m.): We have a proud sporting culture in Australia and a world-class record across a range of sports to boast of. Whether as spectators or active participants, we love our sport. For most members in this House now, it is as spectators, but we do have many former champions across a range of sports in our midst in this House. We also demand honesty and a spirit of fairness in sport. I rise to support this bill as it makes a determined effort in Queensland to combat the use of performance enhancing drugs in sport.

ASDA, the Australian Sports Drug Agency, is a world leader, being one of the few independent drug testing agencies. It has supported the world antidoping agency in its development of a universal world antidoping code as a framework for effective antidoping rules and programs across all sports and countries. One of the major problems, though, that we have in Australia and across the world is the inconsistency, the potential for conflict of interest, at times self-interest, in relation to drugs testing, reporting and implementing of sanctions against those found to be breaching codes. That is one of the major problems.

Australia does not have a totally clean record in this regard either. I remember a couple of decades ago when we were complaining about the broad-shouldered Chinese swimmers, particularly the women, and saying that they were on drugs and therefore beating our competitors and it was not fair. In fact, we have had our own sports men and women who have not been playing according to the rules, and thankfully ASDA has been taking the lead across the world in picking up on these unfair practices.

The Queensland regime has been a good system, but as other speakers have said it is a system that has one major flaw and that is the fact that it is voluntary. Those sports where offenders are likely to be trying to hide their practices can be getting away with it in that it is purely a voluntary practice. It is good to see this legislation tightening up the rules and providing a more consistent approach across Australia and within Queensland.

It is important, though, that we keep a watchful eye on the implementation of sanctions. It seems to be that at this stage there is more a reporting on a register and other actions being taken, but it will be important over coming months and years to make sure there are determined sanctions taken against sports men and women who are not playing fair by the rules.

Today we have seen some of the inconsistencies at an international level. I think Carl Lewis had his name cleared this morning, but sadly one of the Spanish cyclists is banned from participating in the Tour de France because of testing positively for an anti-asthma product which he had a prescription for. In some senses people are saying that is quite unfair and that Carl Lewis should not have been let off as well. Those inconsistencies will remain for years to come, but I think it is very important that we take these steps in Queensland to tighten up the system and make a very determined effort to make sport a level playing field.