



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG

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SPORTS DRUG TESTING AMENDMENT BILL

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—NPA) (6.26 pm): I rise to support this bill before the House. Australia is known as a great sporting nation. For a small nation of approximately 20 million people we bat well above and beyond any nation's expectations. We compete with the very best and we win world titles and Olympic gold, and all in the spirit of fair competition and sportsmanship.

Sport is an integral part of Australian life and is interwoven into the social fabric of Queensland. Sporting activities blanket the whole state of Queensland and those who play sport are represented from the youngest toddler to the oldest competitor in the Masters Games. When Billy Moore yelled out 'Queenslander' as he was entering the field for State of Origin, we could feel all Queenslanders lift their heads, look each other in the eye and unite as one against a common foe.

This state has a great climate and no other activity undertaken by Queenslanders is so widely supported as sport. Sport builds our community and absorbs much of family time. Sport creates passion; it creates commitment; and it creates winners and losers. Two of the many emotions it creates are memories and dreams: memories of past challenges and dreams for the future—dreams not just for our own future but the futures of our young people and the coming generations because we want them to have the same positive experiences and challenges.

This legislation will assist in the fight against drugs and will also assist in creating a level playing field for all competitors. Legislation is one means of protecting our beloved sport, but we also need administrators and sponsors to put community values ahead of monetary values. It is not only important that we do well in sports but also important that we keep our international reputation as an honest and fair competitor and that we continue to hold the confidence of the sporting community and the international community.

To match our sporting achievements, we also hold our own on the international field in antidoping technology and administration and we have one of the strongest commitments to removing drugs and illegal substances from sports and competition at all levels. Australia continually aims to meet world standards on antidoping and is a signatory to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's International Convention Against Doping in Sport. We also adopted the World Anti-Doping Code in March 2003.

Amphetamines are powerful stimulants. They elevate mood, prevent sleep, suppress appetite and stave off fatigue. During the Second World War the armed forces of many countries provided their soldiers and pilots with amphetamines—pep pills—to combat fatigue, elevate mood and increase endurance. In Japan at the same time, amphetamines were widely distributed to civilians working in factories, and at the war's end Japanese drug companies unloaded their massive stockpiles onto the demoralised populace as the ideal way to replenish the spirit. By the late 1940s five per cent of Japanese adults were dependent on amphetamines. Elsewhere, particularly in America, pep pills started appearing on the black market. Soon they were being used by students to help with their study, by truck drivers to stay awake on long hauls and by athletes to sharpen their performance.

In the 1950s American soldiers in Korea and Japan began mixing amphetamines with heroin to make speedballs that were taken intravenously. In the late 1960s amphetamines were prescribed by doctors for the treatment of depression and obesity. Widespread abuse of diet pills by housewives led to the re-examination of amphetamine use. The more it was studied, the more its dangerous similarity to cocaine use became apparent.

Drugs in sport must be stamped out, but in doing so we must help those affected by its usage and educate the whole of the community about its dangers. The question of drugs in sport constantly appears in the news. It is reasonable that those who seek to gain an advantage by taking performance-enhancing drugs be penalised. But what about recreational drugs? Should athletes be penalised by the sporting body for taking recreational drugs either in season or out of season? Clearly most of these drugs do not enhance performance and probably do the opposite. We should not put sporting bodies in the position that they are the sole resistance and promote them as the prohibition police.

Recreational drugs are an enormous social problem and should be approached in a collaborative way with the cooperation of all stakeholders. Sporting associations in Australia seem to be trying to promote a puritanical image. But players can still use one recreational drug to excess—alcohol. It is the largest killer in Australia, with over 3,000 related deaths last year. Many do not see the hypocrisy, but it is there nevertheless.

Role models do come in many forms and young people are not influenced by just one so-called role model. They are influenced by family, school and friends. They may also see pop singers or bands as idols. Others will admire artists or writers or important community leaders. A number of these latter groups have taken illegal drugs and vilifying them does not diminish the contribution they have made. One cannot, for example, take away the contribution that William Wilberforce made by outlawing the slave trade simply because he was addicted to an opium substance. The worth of the person should not be diminished because they have used an illicit drug. Individuals and governments need to take responsibility and government should not be simply using sport and athletes as a mask for the broader failings of drug policy in our society.

By working with an interdepartmental approach in partnership with the community we will reduce the effects of drugs, not only in sport but also in our communities. Sporting events are not only for our social benefit but also for our economic benefit, with events bringing millions of dollars into our community. We need to do whatever we can to protect our sporting assets, but most importantly we must support all people involved and that includes the perpetrator.

Speaking of people getting involved in sport, Bundaberg is a wonderful sporting town and we continue to churn out athletes who, through hard work and dedication, keep on conquering up to the highest level. Our newest star on the world stage is 21-year-old Kate Juillerat, who played an integral role as Australia defeated Russia in the women's basketball grand final at the Special Olympics in Shanghai last week. The result is a great credit to Kate who only took up intellectually disabled basketball four years ago. I had the privilege of presenting Kate's Australian team uniform to her in conjunction with the police torch relay early last month and she is certainly an outstanding young person and an inspiration to all who know her. Kate has continued a proud tradition of Bundaberg disabled athletes after Chantel Wolfenden's heroics in the pool at the 2004 Paralympics in Athens where she snared a swag of medals, including gold.

Tracey Oliver started the Bundaberg run of Paralympic success at Barcelona in 1992 and backed it up in Atlanta four years later. Troy Elder led the Bundaberg charge at the Sydney Olympics, bagging a hat-trick of goals as the Kookaburras clinched the men's hockey bronze medal. Troy also savoured glorious gold with the Kookaburras in the 2004 Olympics. While he has now retired from top level sport, Bundaberg has many rising hockey stars who could follow in his footsteps in the coming years, such as dual Australian schoolgirl representative Brittany Cramer and her brother Cale, who has achieved Australian country selection and has now moved to Brisbane to chase even higher honours in sport.

Three more Bundaberg young guns each returned from the recent Australian Schools Hockey Championships with gold medals—Emily Clark, Sarah Pohlmann and Zoe Jones. There were also some amazing stories of triumph against all odds in the Bundaberg hockey grand finals last month, including great role models, father and son, Andrew and Matthew Pearce, in the thick of things as Arrows/Athletics secured the division 1 men's premiership. Andrew, who is 45 and who has also given long, highly distinguished service to district lifesaving, packed his bags the following week to head south and make his Queensland representative debut at the Masters Nationals, together with team mates Keith Scherer and four times Bundaberg Golf Club open champion John Kirchner. Matthew is also part of a vintage crop of young district surf-lifesaving multitalents and the sky is the limit for him after a stunning gold medal performance in the under 19 men's beach sprint at the Australian Championships in Perth.

The district has also produced the past two Pelerman Queensland Nippers of the Year—Riley McGregor and Scott Boon. These are two truly outstanding young men. Bundaberg also boasts a long list of able-bodied swimming high achievers over the years, including Olympic medallists Michelle Pearson, Justin Lemberg and Rosemary Lassig. With highly skilled and dedicated coaches, the quality of Athens

Paralympics Australian team coach Paul Simms and Tracey Oliver, Teenage National Championships gold medallists from earlier this year, Brooke Taylor, Emily Goddard and others look set for another bumper season. Still in the water, Sophie Jarvis stamped herself as a special talent in rowing with her success in the under 14 girls' single scull at the Queensland Schools Championship Regatta at Bucca.

Bundaberg has produced a number of volleyball Olympians, such as Anita Palm-Spring, Daniel Ronan and Stephen Keir, while Tom Edgar, who is doing big things at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra, could match their feats in years to come and also become a household name. In touch football, Bundaberg duo Alyce McCloskey and Kirsty Beer also picked up gold medals at the recent under 18 nationals at Coffs Harbour. In football, or soccer as it was formerly known, Bundaberg's Australian Young Soccerroos goalkeeper Mitchell Langerak has joined glamour club Melbourne Victory, putting him on track to emulate the feats of another of Bundaberg's favourite sons, NSL and A-League premiership winning custodian and occasional Soccerroo, Clint Bolton.

Meanwhile, 11-year-old Julian Reynolds, whose father Colin is a former Queensland senior Rugby League representative star and state Colts cricketer, could be a name to watch in the future, albeit in a different sport: tennis. Julian is the only junior tennis player in the central Queensland region to be undefeated in any age group this year, and he has been rewarded with CQ age best and fairest honours and team selection.

All of these athletes contribute to their sport and their community in a positive manner without the use of performance-enhancing drugs. It would be unfair to allow anybody to make a mockery of the time and effort they put into training and competing, as well as the time and effort put in by their teachers, coaches and parents. From the group of people I have mentioned above, members can quite easily come to the conclusion that Bundaberg is a proud sporting city. In closing, we need to protect the youth of our community who are our greatest assets. I support the bill before the House.