



Speech by

**Liz Cunningham**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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## **SPORTS DRUG TESTING AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (6.38 pm): I rise to support the Sports Drug Testing Amendment Bill, particularly in light of some of the previous speakers listing, as has the member for Bundaberg, a very envious and impressive list of people—

**Ms Spence:** You are not going to read out a list, are you?

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** No. It was a very impressive list of people who have excelled in sports because of their own hard work and effort.

**Mr Lawlor:** It had nothing to do with the bill, though.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** Maybe not, but it is about sports drug testing. The Gladstone electorate, like other electorates, is a very sports orientated electorate, with people who have excelled in basketball, volleyball, surf-lifesaving, gymnastics, Rugby League, cricket and cycling and they have done it without any performance-enhancing drugs.

I listened to the member for Gregory's contribution. As always, it was well thought through and very passionate. It is disappointing that we have seen over the last couple of years a procession of professional sporting people who have been caught out as drug users in the past. The problem with that is that it taints so many good sportspeople who have attained their high achievements without anything other than hard work and perseverance. It makes me wonder, though, whether we need to have a look at the pressure we place on elite sportspeople.

The member for Gregory talked about the fact that it is so easy to criticise these elite sportspeople when they fall off their perch without knowing the circumstances that created the environment where they commenced their improper drug use. Yes, the rules are very clear and it is very plain. Drugs are not to be tolerated in sport, but we would have to walk a mile in their shoes to know how it started. In saying that, I do not for one second condone drug use in any form or in any way. However, if there is an increasing number of elite sportspeople who are taking illicit drugs for assistance, perhaps we need to have a look at our expectations of our high-achieving sportspeople to see if it has reached a plain that is no longer acceptable. Has the fun gone out of it and is it orientated towards the economy, making money, selling sport and selling TV programs so that the pressure on these usually young people is so great that they have little option but to crumble? The corollary of that is that there are many good sportspeople who do not crumble, but perhaps, as I said, it is time we re-examine our expectations of these young men and women who are in the prime of their lives. In many instances, the lives of those who capitulate and take the illicit drugs are ruined both in the present and in the future.

The only other comment I want to make is that we commend and congratulate all of those athletes, both non-professional and professional, who have achieved their status because of their hard work, perseverance, early morning training and all of those things. The Sports Drug Testing Amendment Bill will go some way to ensuring that they will have to face fewer competitors who have been assisted by performance-enhancing drugs.

I would love to see the day when drugs in sport are completely annihilated. I was disappointed to hear the comment of a very prominent Australian coach on TV. I did not really see the context of his

comment in the clip that I saw, but he said that perhaps we just have to relax the rules a little bit. I think that would be a travesty. These achievements need to be on the basis of the merit of each of these sportspeople and in an environment where they can still enjoy the sport that they are so competitively involved in. I support the bill.