



Speech by

Paul Hoolihan

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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SPORTS DRUG TESTING AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (5.59 pm): The Sports Drug Testing Amendment Bill 2006 will bring Queensland into line with Commonwealth legislation which recognises international standards. One of the things that this House is aware of is that there is a passion in Queensland, and that passion is about our sport. We place a trust in athletes to represent the state to the best of their ability, not only in terms of achievement but in their conduct as well. This bill will continue to support the Bligh Labor government's ongoing commitment to fairness and to the health of athletes. Queensland's sporting identity has always focused on and valued the concept of fair play. Cheating has no place in Queensland sport and the use of prohibited drugs and doping methods to gain an unfair advantage is deplored by the vast majority of athletes and the public. We have heard a lot about Marion Jones, but it is fairly instructive when one sees what the International Olympic Committee has to do as a result of Marion Jones, because the second-placed runner in the 100 metres was a Greek athlete who was already under suspension because she did not turn up for a drug test. It appears that the records will show that the bronze medal for the 100 metres in Athens will be the only medal ever issued.

The use of performance-enhancing substances has been banned in Queensland for many years for ethical, health and legal reasons. Drug cheats not only rob sport of its integrity; they tarnish the reputation of athletes who rely on hard work and dedication to achieve their results, and aren't there some of them! The achievements of Queensland's champions, particularly the best known and most successful athletes, have the power to motivate Queenslanders, particularly children, to take part in healthier, active lifestyles. They inspire new generations to strive for excellence and they build Queensland's profile around the globe as a formidable centre for sporting success. It is fairly instructive when one looks at the medals achieved in Athens by central Queensland athletes, and none of them had to cheat—the Meares sisters, Anna and Kerry, and our two gold medal hockey players Ryan Knowles and Jamie Dwyer and Ben McEachran, a boxer from Gladstone. If one looks at the medal tally from the Athens Olympics in 2004, they will find that if central Queensland had competed as a separate country we would have been 26th on the medal tally. That is a little piece of history for this House to check on. They are the athletes who are the examples for our children.

The government's commitment to antidoping in sport instils in children the values that drugs are not okay in any form—recreational or in sport. The benefits for children and young people from witnessing their sporting heroes perform in a drug-free environment should encourage and inspire them to get active and to participate in sporting and recreational activities. We know that our community is suffering an alarming rise in obesity which occurs as a result of consuming more calories through diet than are expended through physical activity—and I would remind some others in this House besides myself that we probably need to have a look at that. The Bligh government has made a commitment to curbing this trend through its Eat Well, Be Active initiative which provides advice and information on healthy eating and physical activity. Children should be encouraged to eat well—this program is going through schools now—and keeping our sporting environment free from doping is vital if we want our community to continue to draw inspiration from the examples of great athletes in living healthy, active lifestyles. On that basis, I commend the bill to the House.