



Speech by

Phil Weightman

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Tuesday, 16 October 2007

SPORTS DRUG TESTING AMENDMENT BILL

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (9.47 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Sports Drug Testing Amendment Bill 2006. The aim of the bill is to bring the state's antidoping legislation into line with the Commonwealth's Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority Act 2006—the ASADA Act. The ASADA Act was designed to ensure Australia's compliance with its international obligations under the International Convention Against Doping in Sport and the World Anti-Doping Code. The Sports Drug Testing Amendment Bill will bring Queensland into line with the Commonwealth government and the international law. It will also benefit our local communities and ensure consistency across Australia.

Sport is an essential part of Australian culture. As a former participant and a coach in competitive sports, I have seen firsthand the effects of drugs in sport. Not only do drugs—

Mr Bombolas: And a good one at that.

Mr WEIGHTMAN: I take that interjection. Not only do drugs remove the notion of fairness and fair play from Australian sport but also they do damage to the athlete taking those drugs. Thus we need to take a strong stance and reaffirm our aim of eliminating doping in sport.

In regard to drugs and playing sport, there have been some very high-profile instances of people who have been caught out doing the wrong thing. I have always told the people I have coached that playing sport is all about having fun and about developing a sense of community.

Mr Reeves: Except when we beat New South Wales.

Mr WEIGHTMAN: That is a different proposition. I have given that advice to athletes at all levels, whether they are junior sports people—

Ms Jones: Amateur squash players.

Mr WEIGHTMAN: Yes, those just starting out in sport or those trying to make their way in the professional ranks. I give them that advice to help them keep focus on what they are supposed to be doing in sport.

The Queensland government is actively trying to encourage our children to take up sport, and we rely heavily on the current crop of sports stars as role models. When a Wendell Sailor or an Andrew Johns are caught out with recreational drugs or a Marion Jones confesses to taking performance enhancing drugs in the 2000 Olympics and offers to give back her medals, we are not left wondering what impact that has on children who are starting out in sports, let alone their parents who are placing their children with trust into those sports.

That is why these laws are so necessary and the level of cooperation between state and federal government is imperative. Antidoping is a national issue and can only be addressed through cooperation between the Commonwealth and state governments. It is essential that the bill be passed to ensure uniform laws relate to antidoping across Australia, not just Queensland. This bill is the only way for this House to preserve the sanctity of sport, a notion that Queenslanders and, indeed, all Australians hold dear.

The practical changes to the present regime are minimal. The Queensland government will incur no new or additional costs. Only minor changes to the present laws will be effected. However, the bill sends a clear message that doping in sport will not be tolerated. This bill is not just about enhancing drug testing; it is also about education. Without educating our young athletes, there is no use putting in this strong regime of antidoping. The idea is prevention.

Drugs hurt both athletes and the sports in which they participate. Sport is something that touches the lives of almost every family throughout Queensland. It is a popular past time, a career for many, a community builder and an Australian value. I am a strong supporter of sport in my electorate and I am sure many other members in this House are. The intergovernmental cooperation contained in the bill sends a clear message that at no level of government will doping in sport be tolerated. I commend the bill to the House.