Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Gold Coast Commonwealth Games

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games) (10.02 am): From day one the Palaszczuk government has been committed to delivering the best Commonwealth Games ever. Well, on top of that we are also ensuring that the Gold Coast 2018 games will be the biggest games ever.

On Commonwealth Day on Monday, I was joined by my colleague the Minister for Disability Services, Coralee O'Rourke, in announcing our record-breaking parasport program for the 2018 games. I am very proud of the fact that this will be the biggest parasport program in Commonwealth Games history. We will be setting a new record in Commonwealth Games history in hosting up to 300 parasport athletes and holding 38 medal events across seven sports. That is 45 per cent more parasport athletes and 73 per cent more medals on offer compared to the parasport competition staged at the Glasgow games.

I was also pleased to announce that there will now be an equal number of men's and women's events across all seven parasports consistent with a strong commitment to gender equality.

Ms Fentiman: Hear, hear!

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I acknowledge the acknowledgment by the Minister for Women. It was appropriate that Minister O'Rourke and I made this announcement on international Commonwealth Day as the theme for this year is 'An inclusive Commonwealth'. This is a step in the right direction for the games because we know an inclusive games will be a great games. I wish all the athletes the very best of luck as they gear up for the competition and I know they will do themselves and the nation proud.

This announcement means that parasport at the games will reach its widest audience ever, with an estimated global TV audience of over 1.5 billion people, as the first ever wheelchair marathon at a Commonwealth Games takes to the streets of the Gold Coast as part of the free road events. That will be a real highlight for everyone to enjoy. I do not think there could be any better sight than a great Australian like Paralympic and Commonwealth Games champion Kurt Fearnley powering across the finish line to the roar of the crowd and the amazing backdrop of the Gold Coast.

Having more world-class athletes here competing at the pinnacle of their sport is great for our games, great for spectators and great for the Gold Coast. This announcement means that the swimming and athletics program will double in size from previous games. On top of that, with the inclusion now of beach volleyball, this will be the biggest Commonwealth Games program held since its inception in 1930.

Last week I was excited to announce that beach volleyball will be the 18th sport in the program. This is the first time ever that the sport will be included in the Commonwealth Games, so it is truly an historic occasion. Beach volleyball is a high-energy and exciting sport, and everyone remembers the

impact when it was played on Bondi Beach at the Sydney 2000 Olympics. It was terrific to be joined at the announcement by Olympic gold medallist and beach volleyball advocate and a real advocate of including this sport in the Commonwealth Games Natalie Cook and an aspiring member for the team for 2018—and I should note former Craigslea State High School product—Phoebe Bell. Both are very proud Queenslanders.

What better advertisement for Queensland and Australia, and our beach culture, than to have this in the program. The event will showcase the Gold Coast to a worldwide audience, highlighting the spectacular beaches and surrounds. Again, this will contribute to the 2018 games being the biggest and most extensive in the history of the games—and they will be held right here in Queensland, something we can all be proud of. Mr Speaker, we are going for gold, and I can assure you and the people of Queensland that this will be the biggest and the best games ever, jam-packed with exciting sport and a celebration of Queensland and the Gold Coast.