




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Modified Rugby Program

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (2.54 pm): The spirit of inclusion is alive and well in the electorate of Clayfield. The Modified Rugby Program, which started at the Brothers Rugby Club in 2014 at Crosby Park, continues to grow. Last Saturday was no exception. Last Saturday Brothers hosted the inaugural Modified Rugby showcase, powered by the Classic Wallabies and the Classic Wallaroos. On the day there were teams of Modified Rugby players at colts and junior levels. There were exhibition 10s matches between the Classic Wallabies and the Classic Wallaroos.

Some of those who turned up to support were Classic Wallabies ambassadors Nathan Sharpe, Tim Horan and others. We had people like Mark Connors, who had 20 Wallabies caps, playing for the Greens. We had the Classic Wallaroos women's teams—people like Ash Hewson, who was captain, and Bronwyn McArthur, who played. It was a terrific day for people who wanted to support children with learning and perceptual difficulties to be part of the mainstream.

This is a testament to the hard work of the GingerCloud Foundation, set up by Megan and Anthony Elliott. Their son, Max, was 10 in 2013 when they realised he had learning and perceptual difficulties and he was being excluded from being part of the mainstream. They wanted their son to play football, so they got him speech pathology, physio and other assistance and a modified program was put together. Megan and Anthony approached Ross McLennan, the president of Brothers Rugby Club, to start off a team. One team of 16 people started playing down at Brothers. Now, due to the work of the GingerCloud Foundation, due to the work of Megan and Anthony Elliott, there are now 24 teams playing across three divisions including in the ACT and up at Toowoomba. The sport continues to grow. They are a division of the Australian Rugby Union now. They have the ambassadors I have mentioned, who are there every time. I have been proud to be associated with them since the commencement of the program in 2014 at Brothers in my part of the world.

More important is the involvement of the kids and their mentors. The mentors get as much out of it as the kids who are playing. To see 15- and 16-year-old boys and girls—it covers the spectrum—going onto the field and working with their charges to develop their skills, to turn them around, to point them in the right direction, to carry them on and off the field, to share the hugs and the joys of victory and the lows of losses, is part and parcel of it all. It is a tremendous program. It has been supported by the federal government. It is supported by the ARU. It deserves to receive the continuing support of the community. I congratulate the GingerCloud Foundation, Brothers and all those involved in the Modified Rugby Program.