




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Mount Ommaney Electorate, FairPlay Vouchers

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (2.31 pm): It is my year of living dangerously, so I have signed up to play sport for the first time in a very long time at the St Catherine's United Football Club as part of the women's team. I am very lucky to play alongside an amazing group of women, and I have loved my time on the women's Reds team so far. What I get out of being part of this team is the same thing that pretty much everybody who plays team sport gets out of playing in a team: a sense of camaraderie and friendship, a chance to work on my physical fitness, very occasionally a sense of achievement if I do something good, a strengthening of my teamwork skills and a bit of old-fashioned fun, which is really important for everyone's mental health and wellbeing.

St Catherine's is just one of the many fantastic sporting clubs in my community. It caters to almost 1,000 kids, and that number has been growing consistently since our government introduced the FairPlay vouchers. It has been especially fantastic to see the number of girls playing increase after a concerted effort by this amazing club and many others in my community as well.

In Mount Ommaney there are many wonderful places that FairPlay vouchers can be used: the Centenary Archers, the Jindalee Girl Guides and the oldest soccer club in Brisbane, Oxley United, where my boy used to play. I make special mention of the Centenary Stormers Football Club at Darra, which takes so many of these vouchers. Many of those vouchers come from young people who have recently arrived in Australia as refugees or migrants who do not speak English. They are assisted to attend the games and training by a wonderful local charity called Pushing Barriers. Playing sports assists young people to stay meaningfully engaged in our community. The vouchers add so many layers of value to our community, ensuring these young people have a real chance to integrate successfully into our community, which is, I am sure, what every single member of this House would want.

Everyone in my community is very keen for so many reasons to see the FairPlay vouchers continued in this upcoming budget. Our government introduced broader guidelines for FairPlay vouchers and the pay-off for local families has been huge. The president of one of my local clubs texted me earlier this year to say that they have taken over \$45,000 worth of FairPlay vouchers, allowing hundreds of children to play. I am calling on the government to recognise the huge value these vouchers hold for families. They do not just help financially; playing sport from a young age improves mental health and physical fitness and teaches life skills. In my view, which is the same view of my community, the FairPlay vouchers are absolutely non-negotiable. They need to be locked into this year's budget. In a cost-of-living crunch, we know that discretionary spending can be the first to go from family budgets. We need to continue the vouchers so that those kids have the opportunity to keep playing.