

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **Fadden Electorate: Beijing Olympics Sport and Fitness**

**Mr ROBERT** (Fadden) (12.20 p.m.)—I rise to acknowledge the sterling efforts made by young people of Fadden in the recent Beijing Olympics. Amidst the world's best, these impressive young people from the northern Gold Coast achieved so much, not only for themselves but for the nation's pride and for the children of this nation to admire and aspire to. Their hard work and sportsmanship are truly inspiring and should encourage us all to do more with our own personal gifts.

Meagen Nay made the 200-metre backstroke final with an impressive seventh place in the world. Ashley Callus earned a bronze medal as part of the four-by 100-metre freestyle relay and earned a fourth in the 50-metre freestyle final. Sara Carrigan was awarded a 38th place on the cycling road race. Samantha Stosur made the second round of the tennis doubles. And of course Sally McLellan earned a silver medal in the 100-metre hurdles. Before Sally travelled to Beijing in preparation for her competition in the hurdles, I had the opportunity to correspond with her. She expressed her natural strong desire for the Australian team to do well, but also the need for increased funding to support athletes.

Periodically arguments arise in the press against the support we as a nation give to our elite athletes. I would like to remind the chamber, however, of the words of the 26th President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt. He said:

*It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.*

Some recently put a dollar value on Olympic gold through a major newspaper outlet in this country. I do not think this is helpful, nor do I think it is a valid method of gauging the value of our investment in elite sport or sport in general. While we may not be the most overweight nation in the world, despite what you might read or hear, we are perhaps getting close. It is undeniable that Australia has serious issues with lifestyle diseases arising from poor diet or lack of exercise. I firmly believe that the lifestyles that create these problems are rooted in influences placed upon children during their early development. To put a dollar value on a gold medal devalues the positive influence that our sports people have on our young people, not only on the need for healthy diets and physical activity but on working hard to pursue a dream. How can you put a price on inspiring young people to strive to achieve great things? The skills kids learn from sport help them in all facets of life.

One of the better ways to avoid lifestyle diseases is an active lifestyle. The Australian Sports Commission, the body that supports our sporting elite, also funds programs such as the Active After-school Communities program, a national program that provides Australian primary school aged children with access to free, structured physical activity programs and is designed to engage traditionally inactive children in structured physical activities and build links with community based organisations to create ongoing opportunities for increased participation. The program just reached the target of 150,000 kids participating, with 85 per cent of these kids previously classified as inactive.

I applaud the indomitable and determined efforts of all our Olympic competitors, especially the athletes who hail from the northern Gold Coast electorate of Fadden. I ask that we consider the return on investment of funding our determined athletes and look

not just to the colour and volume of their medal haul but, at a greater depth, to the inspiration given to our children in their drive and dedication. Let us look to the wider opportunities that the inspiration of our athletes gives to our young people for an active lifestyle and to sports in general. That is a healthy debate, not a debate on the cost of a gold medal or the cost of funding elite athletes. There is no cost that inspiration cannot overcome.