

FOOTBALL VIOLENCE

Statement

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan) [5.20 pm]: I rise tonight to talk about an appalling incident that happened in my electorate, not very far from where I live. It is the assault of a young football umpire at Mills Park in Beckenham. Some members may have read about it in the newspaper yesterday. I know that young umpire. He is a tremendous young man. He did not deserve to be assaulted by anybody under any circumstances. It is a sad indictment on our society that people feel the need to express their frustration by taking it out on those who give up their time to adjudicate our great game. My son is part of the same association as the young umpire who was assaulted—the Demons District Football Umpires Association. My son was involved in a game earlier that day. Fortunately, he was not involved in any bad actions with the crowd or the players on the field because he had come home by that stage. I will read from the report in *The West Australian*. It says that the West Australian Football Commission —

... is investigating whether a Belmont player —

I might add it is the Belmont Redcliffe Junior Football Academy joint club —

punched the umpire to the head and neck while another two players pushed and shoved him after the final siren.

Belmont spectators are also accused of running on to the ground after the match to confront and threaten umpires and officials.

...

A witness said all umpires at the game had to run from the ground after the final siren.

This is appalling behaviour in any circumstance. Young boys and girls umpire these games. They are learning the game, like the players are learning the game, and they will make mistakes. They do not deserve to be assaulted and chased off the ground by angry parents, spectators and players, under any circumstance. Until we change our culture and attitude towards umpires at all levels of the game, unfortunately these kinds of events will happen. As I said, these children give up their time to volunteer to adjudicate games and they deserve our full support.

I am here tonight to offer my full support to the Demons District Football Umpires Association umpires and all junior umpires, as well as all senior umpires. I wish them well on the weekend. I hope they get their calls right; and, if they do not, they are only human. The rest of us could put on the green jumper and try to umpire a game. We would see how hard it is and what it is like to run up and down the oval all day and try to get every call right when 36 players around us are trying to go after a slippery ball. I cannot emphasise enough my admiration and support for members of the Demons District Football Umpires Association for their dedication and professionalism. I hope the young fellow concerned is not put off. He is in the junior development squad for West Australian Football League umpires and he will be the goal umpire this weekend, I think in the Reserves or the Colts. I wish him all the best and I hope he never has to go through that again.