

NORTHBRIDGE YOUTH DIVERSION PROJECT

523. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

The minister has spoken in this place before —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston, I formally call you to order for the first time today. Member for Midland, I formally call you to order for the first time today.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: I will start again. The minister has spoken in this place before about the Liberal–National government’s investment in programs aimed at delivering real social and justice dividends for our community. Can the minister please update the house on the progress of one of the cornerstone projects in this area—the Northbridge youth diversion project?

Mr T.K. WALDRON replied:

I thank the member for Swan Hills for the question. Before I answer, I wish Claremont and East Fremantle all the best in the WAFL grand final on the weekend, with a little bit of emphasis on Claremont!

I am grateful for the opportunity to draw attention to this important program. The member is right. Our government has taken a stance in utilising sport to try to address some of the antisocial behaviour that occurs and provide strategies to try to assist and get better social and justice outcomes. I have always had a strong belief that sport has a lot to contribute in this area. That is why we are focusing on this area. The kids in sport area highlights that. I think we will have some outstanding long-term benefits to our society as a result.

I remind members that the Northbridge youth engagement project commenced in January 2010. The Cities of Swan and Armadale took up the state government’s initiative to reduce the incidence of youngsters travelling into Northbridge, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights. A lot of kids used to be picked up there. This initiative was set up to try to divert these kids from Northbridge and give them something to do in their local areas relating not only to sport and recreation but also cultural activities and getting together on Friday and Saturday nights. To target the right range, we do not just limit activities to one thing. We provide a range of activities such as dance, acrobatics, pool, table tennis, music and basketball, which was one of the key planks. This is also complemented by skilled workshops, evening meals and a lift home to make sure they get home. It is quite comprehensive. Since 2010, the Department of Sport and Recreation has formed a partnership with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Culture and the Arts, the Department of Training and Workforce Development, WA Police, the Job Seeker Network, Drug ARM, Armadale Youth Accommodation Service as well as our state sporting associations and the Perth Redbacks basketball team. Over \$300 000 has been invested in these programs. We have worked with a lot of service providers. I also give credit to the great work they have done.

Mention has been made of PCYCs. The City of Swan, in particular, in partnership with the Midland PCYC and the City of Armadale with the Armadale PCYC, has done a lot of great work. In fact, the Midland PCYC recently won the JP Stratton Youth Services Award for its Friday night program. It received that award over 22 other PCYCs across the state. The midnight basketball program is designed to keep 12 to 18-year-old kids off the streets on a Saturday night. It involves basketball, team building exercises, skill seminars, meals et cetera. For some of these young people, member for Collie–Preston, this is sport actually delivering.

Mr M.P. Murray: How is it going to work in Collie when you’re shutting it down?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Some of these young people engaged in this program have gone on and demonstrated great leadership qualities and taken on leadership roles. Some have gone on and done things like umpire accreditation classes and some of kids who first took part are now running the program. That is a fantastic result. It shows that if we provide a nice, safe environment with good activities, kids who sometimes come from tough circumstances will grab the opportunity. I am delighted also that a team of Aboriginal boys who participate in midnight basketball will now compete in the Asia Pacific Basketball Youth Cup in Singapore in October. What a great opportunity for those kids and what great development in their lives. The players chosen have had to maintain 80 per cent attendance at school, training or employment and attend all team meetings and training sessions. Well done to those youngsters. I hope they have a wonderful time.

Briefly, just as important, member for Armadale, is the Ignite basketball program in Armadale. It is a 40-week program, delivered by the City of Armadale on Saturdays. The highlights of this program have been an increase in the number of partnerships formed across non-government organisations to support children in the city.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The member for Albany needs to think about what he is saying at times. This is a good program to help kids who do not have much of a chance, and I am very proud of it. It is a program that is succeeding. The member for Armadale has a great approach to these matters and will be excited about the Friday night events in Armadale, including BMX, scooters and skateboarding, which is attracting 45 to 50 young kids at the wonderful skate park that I was privileged to open earlier this year. They have done really well. It clarifies to me that if we give these youngsters—we need to do more of this and I intend to do as much as we possibly can—the opportunities, they will become engaged and make better citizens and make better communities.

The uptake in the KidSport program of 50 per cent of the nearly 10 000 kids who have never been part of a sporting club illustrates that. Since these programs have been in place there has been a 75 per cent decrease in the number of young people from Armadale presenting in Northbridge and a 50 per cent decrease in the number of Midland young people presenting on the streets of Northbridge. During some of the months no people have been picked up from those areas. It is having a result. I acknowledge all the project partners, and say thank you very much. This government is committed to sport and recreation and utilising it to giving our youngsters a chance by helping them on their way to becoming good citizens.