

RIO PARALYMPIC GAMES — WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ATHLETES

621. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

The much anticipated Rio Paralympic Games open tonight. Can the minister please update the house on the Western Australian athletes competing over the next 10 days?

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the second time. Repeat your question, member for Moore.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The much anticipated Rio Paralympic Games open tonight. Can the minister please update the house on the Western Australian athletes competing over the next 10 days?

Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:

I thank the member for Moore for the question.

I point out that Western Australian shooter Anton Zappelli was born in the midwest town of Mullewa. He is one of the 18 Western Australian Paralympians about to compete in Rio. We have a number of Paralympians from regional Western Australia, including three-time Paralympic medallist and the Rollers captain, Brad Ness, who was also announced as the flag bearer. He is an amazing individual and a true champion. There is the Bunbury-bred para-athlete, who also happens to be a triple medallist, Brad Scott, and triathlete Brant Garvey, whom many members will be familiar with through the HBF advertising role and his —

Mr P.B. Watson: He's an Albany boy!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: He is Albany born and bred, and very proud of it!

Mr P.B. Watson: Buy one of his hats or T-shirts, because it goes towards his funding. They're on his website.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: He is very proud of it. A number of those athletes have had to self-fund and rely heavily on community to get them to where they are today. Certainly, from a regional perspective, those communities have come in behind them. More than 4 300 athletes from 160 countries will compete in 528 medal events in 22 sports. I am sure that every Australian, just as they were for the Olympics that have just concluded, will be right behind those Paralympians.

Most importantly, these athletes have made an enormous commitment to get themselves to this point in their careers, overcoming challenges that many of us will never understand. We are about to be truly, I think, inspired by watching them on the world stage in the world's biggest sporting arena. I think our Western Australian athletes will have enormous success because some significantly talented individuals are part of that contingent. They will be inspirational. After they return, I hope that we will be able to use them as role models going forward for this generation and the next. The state government supported the Australian Paralympic Committee team appeal, just as we did with the Olympic appeal, with a \$150 000 donation to add to the fundraising that the Olympic committee had to put together itself. Before I sit, I will very quickly wish them all the very best. I am sure that all their families and friends will be watching intently. Sign in for the opening ceremony, when we will see Brad Ness holding that Australian flag.

It was wonderful to welcome our Australian Olympic athletes back on the weekend. The shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation joined me at a very special function. They are truly inspirational. There are few things in this world that draw together a nation, and the Olympics and the Paralympics do exactly that. The immense pride that we feel as a nation as being part of the journeys of those individual athletes is, I think, very special, and I am looking forward to watching the Paralympics over the next two weeks.