

OLYMPICS, WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT

172. Mr J.R. QUIGLEY to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

With the Athens Olympics soon approaching, will the minister advise how the Western Australian Institute of Sport is contributing to Australia's Olympic team?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for Innaloo for his question.

I was very privileged this morning to be asked to welcome home the Western Australian Olympic swimming team from the national championships. This year, for the very first time, eight members of the WAIS squad will represent Australia as Olympians. That is tremendous. I was absolutely blown away this morning by the attitude of these young people. Questions were put to them at the press conference about the recent issue involving Ian Thorpe. Members of this House can stand proudly and hold their heads high given the calibre of these young Australians and the dignity with which they approached an issue that almost split Australia for a couple of days; they were quite amazing. The maturity these young people showed was outstanding and we can all be justifiably proud of them.

We have a proud record with WAIS. This year it has doubled the number of young Western Australians in the Australian swimming team; it has gone from four to eight since the last Olympics. More importantly, in addition to the seven young people who were at the press conference this morning - the eighth swimmer is still with the Australian Institute of Sport but is a product of WAIS - were four young Paralympians, who made my heart feel good to see them there. I am sure every member of this House will congratulate all of these young people for the effort and commitment they have given so far. It is expected that the Paralympics committee will ratify the places of these four young people in the near future.

The Gallop Government is proud, as I am sure is every member of this House, to support this group of young people. On behalf of the Western Australian Government, I congratulate all of the athletes. I also congratulate their coaches who attended the press conference this morning. A message to the Premier from one coach, Mr Roger Bruce, is that the Premier must move over a bit in his lane at Somerset Street to allow the kids to come through! I also congratulate the fantastic group of mums and dads whom I met this morning who have given up so much so that these young people can represent their nation.