

SOUTHERN WHEATBELT SPORT AND RECREATION PROJECT

178. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

Can the minister inform the house of the progress made in addressing social issues in my electorate through the Southern Wheatbelt Sport and Recreation project?

Mr T.K. WALDRON replied:

I thank the member for Central Wheatbelt, who is involved in and understands the project, for the question. Members were just talking about doing things in the country and wheatbelt areas that really make a difference, and this is just another example of that.

Back in January 2012, I approved a grant of \$310 000 from the sports wagering account to the YMCA to coordinate the Southern Wheatbelt Sport and Recreation project. Today I want to update the house on that project. This project is a whole-of-community initiative aimed at increasing sport and recreation activity and participation rates and skills but targeted at particular groups in the towns of Narrogin, Wagin, Brookton, Pingelly and those regions. This project resulted from a thorough community analysis. Intensive community engagement occurred as a result of a move to address some of the suicides particularly in, but not limited to, the indigenous community. This is another example of how seriously we take suicide prevention. Yesterday, the Premier met with the Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation about its suicide issues, and the Minister for Mental Health also has a program running in the wheatbelt, which shows that we take this matter seriously.

The issues in the southern wheatbelt have required community involvement. Local members know that some of these programs work really well when the community takes ownership of them, which has been the case in this instance. The YMCA and the Kaata-Koorliny Employment and Enterprise Development Aboriginal Corporation—KEEDAC—which operates out of Narrogin, coordinate this project. To date we have succeeded in achieving well-developed partners with other sporting clubs in the area and support from community organisations and local governments, which is the key to making this project count and involving the kids. We have had leverage through our KidSport program, which I often talk about. To date the YMCA and KEEDAC have referred 104 young children, 80 per cent of whom have not been previously registered with sporting clubs, and YMCA-KEEDAC is the third highest referral agency across the state in 2012 for KidSport. Kids are becoming involved and we are trying to ensure they have good lives and social contacts to help minimise the suicide risk. An example of this is the Friday night Beatball program that attracts over 60 kids. Mental health forums have been held across Narrogin and Wagin, and more are planned. Guest speakers have included people such as Heath Black, a footballer who the youngsters really respond to, and a mental health professional Charmaine Clarke. The project has also secured Lotterywest funding to purchase a community bus, which is essential to get these kids to play sport, and it has also established a reference group.

This project has started really well and it is really encouraging to know we are already getting results, but we have a long way to go. This is only the start and we will continue to focus on some of the key areas identified, which are KidSport and the involvement of the local sporting clubs, et cetera. This is a really good investment by government and it is the great collaboration within the community sector that will make this program work. It is only a small program but it is really making a difference, and I will keep the house informed about it.