

## ANTARCTICA CUP SOLO YACHT RACE

### *Statement*

**HON MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM (South West)** [9.45 pm]: In recent times Albany and the south coast have been very much in the news. The unfortunate incident of schoolteacher Jason Cull being bitten by a great white shark aside, I must inform members that all the other news has been good. One such good news event was the Anzac Day commemorative services that were held in Albany, which attracted literally thousands of people from all over Australia and New Zealand to the south coast. The inaugural Festival of the Sea was an outstanding success, and I thank the minister very much for attending.

However, perhaps an even more notable event was the completion of the inaugural Antarctica Cup solo yacht race around the southern most points of our continents. On Wednesday, 7 May, after some 102 gruelling days, Russian sailor and adventurer Fedor Philippovich Konyukhov completed the first solo non-stop circumnavigation of Antarctica—truly an effort that rates him amongst some of the world's greatest ever adventurers and explorers. I would like to draw members' attention to this Russian hero by reading out a bit of a biography, if members will allow me to. It states —

Fedor was born on December 12, 1951, on the coast of the Sea of Azov (part of the Black Sea). He graduated from Odessa Navigation College and Leningrad Arctic College. He studied in the Theological Seminary and in the Arts College in Bobruisk . . . Since his childhood, Fedor Konyukhov had a goal of traveling and discovering the entire diversity of the world. He accomplished his first expedition at the age of fifteen having crossed the Sea of Azov on a fishing rowing boat. By the age of fifty he had made more than forty unique trips and climbs expressing his vision of the world in paintings and books.

Fedor is the first and so far the only person in the world to have reached the five extreme Poles of the planet:

**North Geographical Pole (3 times)**

**South Geographical Pole**

**Pole of Considerable Inaccessibility (Arctic Ocean)**

**Mt. Everest (Alpinists pole)**

**Cape Horn (Yachtsmen pole)**

Events such as the 2008 solo challenge do not just happen. It requires people of vision, energy and resources to bring about these sorts of events. Let me say that the Antarctica Cup is a credit to the promoter, a gentleman by the name of Bob Williams. As some members may know, Bob is particularly noteworthy in the business world, but also, I believe, was one of the original owners of the Perth Wildcats. Bob Williams chose Albany as the ideal location from which to stage what hopefully will become a truly iconic, world-class yachting event. The event will be permanently based in Albany, having enormous business and tourist potential for both the great southern and Western Australia generally. I congratulate Bob Williams on his vision, commitment and endeavours. The Antarctica Cup yacht race stands poised to attract the attention of the international yacht-racing community for many years to come.

Some of the facts about the race and the course over which the Antarctica Cup is run are as follows —

The 'Antarctica Cup 2008 Solo Challenge' is a solo non-stop sailing time trial to establish the inaugural track record around the Antarctica Cup Racetrack and proclaim the first holder of the Antarctica Cup.

The Antarctica Cup Ocean Race event is similar in concept to the coveted Blue Riband Trophy, the Transatlantic Crossing Speed Record that has been competed for since the mid nineteenth century when Tea Clippers raced their cargoes from The Americas to Europe.

It is a challenge to be the fastest yacht (solo or crewed, monohull or multihull) to complete the Antarctica Cup Racetrack, crossing the Start/Finish line in King George Sound, sailing east around Antarctica between latitudes 45-60 degrees and re-crossing the line in King George Sound. Boats sail above and below the Antarctic Convergence (Polar Front) passing the three most notorious capes on the planet—Cape Leeuwin, Cape Horn and Cape Agulhas.

The race will be over 23 300 kilometres. Truly, this is an enormous challenge, particularly given the cold, mountainous and treacherous seas, the ever-present icebergs, freezing winds and eerie loneliness experienced by somebody over more than three months. It is no wonder that Fedor Konyukhov is a hero in his native Russia.

I will conclude with a couple of points about Fedor Konyukhov's sailing exploits to give members an idea of the talent of this man. In 1990-91 he was the first Russian to complete a solo non-stop circumnavigation on the maxi

yacht *Karaana* in 224 days along the route from Sydney to Sydney. In 1993-94 he was involved in the circumnavigation against the prevailing winds on the *Formosa*, his second circumnavigation of the globe. In 2004-05 he was part of the solo round the world on an open 85-foot maxi yacht along the route from Falmouth, in England, to Hobart and back to Falmouth via Cape Horn. It was his fourth successful solo round-the-world sailing.

The spin-off from the Antarctica Cup yacht race will be felt for many years to come. As an Albany resident and member of the South West Region I would like this house to note the enormity of Fedor Konyukhov's achievements, together with the vision and promotion of Bob Williams. His team put together an outstanding event and it is something that all Western Australians can be very proud of. I look forward to future events with much confidence and I congratulate all involved.

*House adjourned at 9.53 pm*

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