

COUNTRY ATHLETE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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

As the minister knows, I am strongly supportive of the government's effort to encourage community athletic and sporting participation. With this in mind, can the minister please outline to the house the outcomes of the 2013–14 round of funding for the country athlete scholarship program and how this program supports our talented regional athletes?

Mr T.K. WALDRON replied:

I thank the member for her question and for her great support of this program. This really is a fantastic program. The country athlete scholarship program used to be supported by Healthway. This program has been supporting regional athletes since 1995. In that time, approximately 3 200 athletes have been assisted through these scholarships. This represents a total investment of \$2.5 million. It helps those athletes in their pursuit of state and national selection, and particularly with their access to training et cetera. The program provides a great opportunity for sub-elite athletes to access training, competitions, development camps, coaches and facilities to improve their performance, help them advance their sporting talents and go on to represent Western Australia and, hopefully, Australia. These scholarships are now supported as part of the \$3.6 million statewide regional talent development program that is funded through royalties for regions. I thank the Minister for Regional Development for his great support of this program and other sporting programs, because they really are important not just in country WA, but also right across WA. In some of those areas in country WA, that extra support enables those youngsters to have the same opportunities.

For the information of members, in the 2013–14 round, there were 242 applications across 37 state sporting associations. We have a state review panel that makes the selections. It recommended 233 for scholarships, which is an increase on the 192 scholarships the year before. Only nine were ineligible. I want to thank our regional offices and the regional office managers out there who work through this process. We are doing it really well. In total, \$260 000 has been provided for these 233 scholarships. I will give a couple of examples. The member for Albany is not in the chamber, but 18 scholarships, totalling \$12 600, were awarded across the great southern. For the information of the members for Dawesville and Mandurah, there were 39 scholarships, totalling \$37 300, in the Peel region. There were 117 scholarships, totalling \$114 800, in the south west, and 20 scholarships across the midwest, Pilbara, Gascoyne and Kimberley areas.

What I am really delighted about, Mr Speaker and members, is the number of scholarships being awarded to girls. There were 131 in total to girls and 102 to the guys. It is good that women's sport and young girls coming through are getting these opportunities. The breadth of sports covered is also really wide and includes basketball, cricket, hockey, netball, squash, surfing and tennis. It is a great program. It is very well supported and greatly appreciated in country WA, and it gives those kids that opportunity.