

SPORT, TRAVEL COSTS

Statement by Minister for Sport and Recreation

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Sport and Recreation) [12.25 pm]: I take this opportunity to share with the House the outcomes of the Sport and Recreation Ministers Council meeting held last Friday, 12 September in Brisbane. The agenda of the meeting was wide ranging and included the consideration of issues papers on a range of subjects, including the World Anti-Doping Code, the 2006 Commonwealth Games, the development of adventure activity standards, the Physical Activity Taskforce and the National Obesity Taskforce, and a review of soccer in Australia.

I am particularly keen to share with the House the outcome of one agenda item. As Minister for Sport and Recreation, I am frequently contacted by Western Australian sportspeople who are seeking funding assistance for travel costs associated with representing our great State in events held on the eastern seaboard. In seeking this assistance, many athletes explain that Western Australian sportspeople are discriminated against because they must pay disproportionately high travel costs every time they travel to interstate competitions. No doubt that is exacerbated for the sportspeople in your area, Mr Speaker, with the additional costs they face in travelling to Perth. I raised this issue with the Department of Sport and Recreation, which advised that a few sports - most notably netball - have schemes in place which aim to equalise travel costs for all competitors in national competitions, regardless of where they live. It is the Government's view that such a scheme, commonly referred to as a fare equalisation scheme, is a fair and equitable way of ensuring that Western Australians have equal access to participation in sporting events. I congratulate the sport of netball for its far-sighted policy.

I raised the issue of fare equalisation schemes with the commonwealth, state, and territory ministers. I am delighted to report that the ministerial council has agreed to examine the feasibility of both state and commonwealth policies to support the fare equalisation concept. It was further agreed that the Commonwealth and State Governments would speak to relevant national and state sporting organisations about adopting fare equalisation policies. It was fantastic to be able to take Western Australia's case to the meeting and be given support by both the commonwealth and state ministers.

I thank and congratulate the federal minister, Senator Rod Kemp, and each of my state and territory colleagues for their commitment to work to ensure that young Western Australian sportspeople are given a fair opportunity to develop their skills. I am particularly pleased with the bipartisan support for Western Australia's case, which demonstrates that developing young talent comes before politics. I am now looking forward to working with state sporting bodies in WA to ensure that the campaign succeeds at an individual sport level.