

OLYMPIC GAMES — WESTERN AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVES AT BEIJING

348. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

I applaud the selection of Collie's Kobe McGurk in the Australian women's Olympic hockey team. Can the minister advise the house of the full status of Western Australians selected to represent Australia in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

I thank the member for his question, obviously resulting from his own sporting prowess and his pride in having people from his own area representing Australia at the Olympics. At 8.00 pm on 8 August 2008 the opening ceremony for the Beijing Olympics will commence. While China has done much work preparing for the games, many Australians have also worked long and hard to achieve their goal of representing their nation. The hard work, perseverance, sacrifice and dedication is being recognised for some of those elite athletes who will be proudly representing Australia at the Beijing Olympics. While we recognise our Australian athletes and we are very proud of them, we can also be a bit parochial and show pride in the Western Australian athletes who will be representing Australia at the Olympics. I am pleased to inform the house that, to date, 12 Western Australian athletes have been officially selected by the Australian Olympic Committee to participate in the games. Among them are history makers, experienced campaigners and world record holders. As this is the last sitting day before the Olympics commence I will recognise those who have already been selected, and I am sure they will have the good wishes of all members.

Eamon Sullivan is arguably the hottest property in Australian swimming at present after blitzing the field to qualify for both the 50 metres and 100 metres freestyle events. Eamon broke the world record for the third time this year in the 50 metres final when he touched home in a time of 21.28 seconds. That is absolutely marvellous. Travis Nederpelt is the second Western Australian Institute of Sport swimmer in the Australian Olympic squad and he will compete in the 400 metres individual medley and the 200 metres butterfly events. Beijing will be his second Olympic appearance. Sally Foster, who trains with the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra, was the third Western Australian swimmer to qualify and will make her first appearance at an Olympic Games, swimming in the 200 metres breaststroke event.

In 470 sailing, Elise Rechichi and Tessa Parkinson were the first WAIS and Western Australian athletes to be officially welcomed into the Australian Olympic team when they qualified last October. The talented duo will be looking to reproduce the exploits of WAIS sailing coach Belinda Stowell, who claimed gold in the same event at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. WAIS shooter Robyn Van Nus had to endure the agony of a legal challenge from a non-selected team member before being granted her spot in Beijing, and will compete in the 50 metres rifle event. Van Nus will make her Olympic debut in 2008 and follows in the footsteps of her mother and trainer Tricia Van Nus, who was also an international shooter.

Anthony Little made history when his Olympic confirmation made him the first Indigenous Western Australian to qualify for two Olympic campaigns. Little is a talented boxer and will complete in the 60 kilogram lightweight category. In taekwondo, Tina Morgan, who also represented Australia at the Athens Olympic Games in 2004, was named as a member of the four-person Olympic taekwondo team last month. The former world championship bronze medallist was the eighth Western Australian athlete to be officially named for the 2008 Australian Olympic team. Just this week, four WAIS hockey players were named in the Hockeyroos squad for Beijing. They are Kim Walker, Kobe McGurk, Hope Munro and Emily Halliday. Western Australian women hockey players have a fantastic record going back over many Olympics, and we will be hoping for the very best from the Australian women's hockey team at this Olympic Games.

Western Australia is on target to have 48 athletes in the total team of 434 for Beijing, or 11.25 per cent of the total team, which will exceed the target of 10 per cent of the national team. That would beat our previous representation in Athens four years ago, when 54 Western Australian athletes were included in Australia's team of 482. Congratulations to all those athletes and the sporting associations that have supported them, and to Steve Lawrence and the staff of WAIS, who do a fantastic job in encouraging and supporting them. I am sure that many more athletes will be added to those 12. The Premier has just drawn my attention also to the many organisations that support our athletes, particularly the Chung Wah Association, the Mainland Chinese Association and the Western Australian Chinese Chamber of Commerce, which are also fundraising for Western Australian athletes to help them on their way to Beijing. I am sure that all members will congratulate these and other Western Australian athletes who will join the Australian Olympic team to Beijing.