

**MATT HODGSON**

*Statement by Minister for Sport and Recreation*

**MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston — Minister for Sport and Recreation)** [12.13 pm]: I rise today to recognise a special guest in the Speaker's gallery, the one sitting right in the middle of the front row on the left-hand side, Mr Matt Hodgson, Wallaby great and a Western Force legend. I want to say thank you to Matt, who played his last game of rugby with the Western Force in June. As a foundation member of the team, the 36-year-old has played more than 100 games for the Force, proudly represented Australia numerous times and sustained injuries that would have made even the hardest of us give up. Matt had to fight and work hard to gain his spot in the Western Force and the Australian Rugby Union team, and was widely considered to be the heart and soul of the team. Matt personifies resilience, bravery and strength of character, which has made him a good role model for young aspiring players. When the decision was made to cut the Western Force from the Super Rugby competition, Matt took the fight right to the Australian Rugby Union and, alongside several other influential Western Australians, is passionate about helping shape the next step for rugby in WA and indeed Australia.

I would like to publicly salute Matt's dedication and willingness to speak up for the sport that he loves and has given so much of his life to. I know his kids are involved in the game, so it is never far from his heart. As a qualified mental health first aider and ambassador for the mental health support group LIVIN, Matt is also advocating to destroy the stigma around mental illness, which I, as the Minister for Sport and Recreation, commend him for.

Matt, on behalf of the people of Western Australia, I thank you for everything you have given to rugby, both on and off the field. I, for one, look forward to hearing more about your next exciting chapter in life. Matt, we salute you.

[Applause.]