



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Motions

25 October 2018

FOOTBALL IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) :

I move:

That this House:

(1) Notes that 863,210 people played football in New South Wales in 2017, an increase of 44 per cent over the previous year.

(2) Notes that \$417 million was contributed to the economy last year from football, which would increase by \$202 million if demand for football facilities was met.

(3) Encourages the Minister for Sport to unlock this economic potential by investing in football facilities.

I have heard through the grapevine that the Government is supporting this worthy motion, and I appreciate that. I will disappoint Government members and say that I know that the Jets are going to win the next season, so I am sorry for all those who support every other team.

Football Federation Australia [FFA] announced that football was Australia's number one club-based sport in 2017. Northern NSW Football statistics show that there were 75,722 soccer players in the State's north last year. When we add that to the other New South Wales figures, more than 10 per cent of our population play soccer. We know the benefits of soccer and football are many. Social benefits include having a stronger sense of community as people identify with their clubs and build local connections, teamwork and commitment. People of all backgrounds, ages and genders are brought together on the pitch and in the stands. Many multicultural communities call Wallsend home, and we are lucky for that. The world game unites long-term residents and new arrivals like few other sports can. One participant told Football NSW:

As recent migrants, it's helped us to gain a sense of belonging and connectedness.

There are positive health benefits as well. The lifetime contribution of football to the health of people in New South Wales has grown 42 per cent from 2015. That saves our healthcare system almost \$63 million to more than \$89 million. Football NSW estimates that the game's impact on the physical health of the New South Wales community has increased by 16.2 per cent. Given that a lack of physical activity and obesity are major health issues, we cannot overestimate the importance of a healthy, active lifestyle. Crucially, Football NSW estimates that the benefits of football have decreased expenditure on mental health in the State by 15.8 per cent. Northern NSW Football Chief Executive Officer David Eland stated:

Football's appeal as the most popular sport in NSW makes it the ideal vehicle to support the development of healthy and inclusive communities, providing improved social, health, educational and cultural outcomes for all.

And we all agree. Then there is the positive economic impacts of football in our communities. New figures from Football NSW estimate a yearly community impact of almost \$520 million. In 2018 in Wallsend alone, peak bodies, associations and clubs pumped a total of \$1,782,689 into the economy. Over the same period, football participants, members, supporters and volunteers added another \$4,575,232. This comes on top of an estimated \$1,740,568 in business and multiplier indirect contributions. That is an impressive \$8.1 million contributed to the Wallsend electorate economy.

In Newcastle, football contributed \$9.25 million. A staggering \$17.57 million was injected into the Lake Macquarie economy, thanks to the Northern NSW Football headquarters being located at Speers Point Park. I wish it were in Wallsend. I am jealous of the member for Lake Macquarie, but I am pleased for him too. According to projections from FFA and Football NSW, hundreds of millions of dollars would be injected into the economy if facilities matched demand. However, as the sport is growing facilities are not keeping up with demand. Every season 2,500 players are turned away as more Australians become fans of football. More will be turned away, robbing them of the sport's benefits and keeping money out of our local economies. Football NSW Chief Executive Officer Stuart Hodge said:

Further investment by governments is clearly justified and will empower football to grow the game and build stronger communities for all.

The FFA has highlighted the importance of investing in women's facilities to help tap into this economic potential, making building women's participation a priority. Football is on track to have the highest female participation in the country. The Westfield W-League is in its tenth season and crowds are growing for every game. Our national women's team, the Matildas, have accomplished extraordinary skills on the pitch and are now ranked fourth in the world. After Matildas hero Sam Kerr became the first female recipient of the FFA fund, Chief Executive Officer David Gallop said:

We truly hope that historic days like today will ensure we create an important legacy for professional female players in the future.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) (13:10): I too support the motion of the member for Wallsend. I thank the member for Wallsend for not giving up her sources when she said she had heard it on the grapevine. Guilty as charged—we will be supporting her today. The member for Wallsend is very solid; she does not give up her sources. I acknowledge the Jets season last year. I am happy to be corrected, but I think they were awarded the wooden spoon the previous season and were a game away from the title this season. That is an outstanding effort and says so much about the coach and the culture, because I believe the playing roster was very similar but a few changes were made at the top. I too commend the Jets for the wonderful season they had. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful Sydney Football Club [FC]. I believe their number one badge holder is here—I see him at many games. He sits in much more expensive seats than I do.

Mr John Sidoti: Name the players.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: I know them backwards.

Mr Stephen Bali: You've got to now mention Western Sydney Wanderers.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: "Criticised" is a strong word, but coming from Camden I have had it pointed out to me that I should be a Wanderers supporter. Forget the flares, forget the Red and Black Bloc, forget all the reasons I would not be a Wanderers supporter; it is more for the reason that you never change your team—the member for Wallsend would agree—and we were always Sydney FC supporters. After a one-all match against Adelaide last week, I look forward to the local derby this week and I look forward to Sydney FC quite rightly stamping their authority on the pitch this weekend.

The member for Wallsend made some great points. This year nearly one million people are playing football in this State—the member for Wallsend quoted figures of close to 900,000 in 2017—and it is growing exponentially. All credit to those in the hierarchy who came from the grassroots levels. Two of my four children now play football every season, one child plays cricket and one is doing their Higher School Certificate. Last year Sophie had a fantastic season with the Macarthur Rams. We went to the stadium that the member for Wallsend spoke about at Lake Macquarie and it was fantastic. The member for Lake Macquarie came and watched. We played the emerging Jets and I think the score was 7-1. The member for Lake Macquarie was quietly gloating to all those around and introducing me as "The member for Camden, the father of a player in the losing side."

The facilities there are beautiful and what the member for Wallsend said is correct. We drove up the day before, so we needed accommodation; we ate in one of the clubs; we needed petrol on the way home; and we had lunch after the game. The point is that football games are fantastic for local economies. In the second round, when the emerging Jets came to our stadium, I am sure visitors did similar things. The Minister for Sport is extremely supportive of football and growing sport. One only has to look at Penrith Stadium where we hosted two sellout games of the Matildas last year. I am happy to be corrected, but I believe 16,000 people attended. As the member for Wallsend quoted the FFA chief executive officer as saying: this is women's sport. But it is fantastic that it is not just women's sport; this is mainstream sport. We are filling stadiums with our outstanding women athletes and we are very proud of that.

We are achieving more in women's football and cricket than we are in men's football and cricket. As proud Australians and proud New South Welshmen, this is wonderful to see. I am the father of two boys and two girls; I have a twin boy and a twin girl who are 15. Every thing my son Tom has afforded to him—he loves his cricket—my daughter Sophie is entitled to and she should be receiving exactly the same, and that gap is getting narrower. Although this motion is not specifically about women's events, we are saying let us grow the sport. If we grow the sport we will grow female participation in the sport and that is a win for everybody involved. As a father of four kids, the \$100 rebate for each child from the Active Kids program helps. Max's rebate goes to the Camden Tigers Soccer Club, and last year Sophie's went to the Rams. It is a big help because it is a big expense for families to get their kids on the paddock playing sport. This is a good motion and the member for Wallsend has our support. The Minister for Sport does a great job, he is very encouraging, and together as a House we must do everything we can to get our kids playing sport.

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (13:17): I thank the member for Wallsend for moving this motion highlighting the positive impacts of football. Football contributes to significant community-building and social cohesion, which everyone in this place understands, but this motion also highlights the significant positive economic impact which sometimes is lost when considering the impacts of sport on the community. The economic impact of purchasing jerseys, footballs, football boots, nets, equipment, food, et cetera, has a significant impact on the retail economy. There are also support services involved, such as physios, doctors, allied

health practitioners, coaching, personal trainers, sports administrators, specialised sports coaching in skills development and others in the services industry. The member for Camden spoke about petrol and hotel costs when attending away games.

Behind all these goods and services is much research. The pursuit of technology in assessing and enhancing performance is amazing and can range from Fitbit watches through to technology incorporated into clothing and the various allied health fields. The Blacktown District Soccer Football Association that I am associated with has 23 clubs and more than 10,000 registered players. This number greatly expands when all the support personnel, such as the volunteer committee members, coaches, managers, groundspeople, registrars, referees, sponsors and spectators are included and the numbers can swell to in excess of 30,000 people.

The growth of football has its challenges. The old amenities blocks must be changed dramatically. There is an active and growing population of women playing football, whether as players or officials. Amenities buildings have to be changed to match modern usage. The days of only having one set of change rooms for home and away teams need to make way for two sets of change rooms because men's and women's games can be played simultaneously if more than one field is available or when games are scheduled consecutively. Change rooms for game officials also have to be reconfigured given the officials for one game can have a combination of ages and sexes. Better accessibility on footpaths around fields and new-style stands are needed to allow wheelchairs and the elderly to attend games of their children or grandchildren.

This all costs money. The Government talks about accessible issues, but it fails to match the funding. Councils cannot pay for upgrading all existing change rooms that are many decades old as well as pay for new change rooms required in growth areas. The old style \$300,000 amenities blocks are outdated and do not match the modern needs of the community. Amenities buildings now cost around \$900,000 to build. I have not touched on the requirements for synthetic fields or car parks. The Government must meet with local government representatives and sporting associations and decide the best way to address these important issues. Football has a significant effect on social enhancement, cross-culture inclusion and the economic bonus of over half a billion dollars per annum. The Government should make an allowance in future budgets based on fairness, equity and usage to upgrade amenities buildings and accessibility to all football fields across the State. It must deliver the required upgrades of facilities. It is time for the Government to deliver and put its money where its mouth is rather than make simple platitudes of how important sport is.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (13:22):The motion moved by the member for Wallsend centres around football facilities in New South Wales and the economic contribution made to the State as a result of participation in football. This is a great motion. Members on this side of the House do not just talk the talk, we walk the walk. Whether we finance local sport at a grassroots level or a professional level, members on this side of the House give their support. Members on the other side of the House are against stadiums. It is hypocritical that they support sport, then they do not support sport. Opposition member try to differentiate between the different levels of sport. The Government has been sensational across my electorate, supporting the knockdown and rebuild of Abbotsford Soccer Club, which was an investment of more than \$1 million; the knockdown and rebuild of the Concord Soccer Club, another \$1 million investment; the renovation of Ron Routley Oval, dedicating \$6.2 million to an individual sporting facility with services and amenities that are available 24/7; the \$30 million plus investment in Concord Oval, which has a special focus on the Inter Lions female team. This Government has delivered. It has given a commitment to the Wanderers and Sydney Football Club that we have the greatest stadiums in this State for Australian and international games.

Unfortunately, members on that side of the Chamber are against stadiums. They do not want to spend money on stadiums because it does not suit them politically. The Government supports stadiums and participation in sport, whether it be from males or females. The

Government is forming that bond to encourage participation. We can all be proud of the Government's commitment to support the Matildas by making McDonald Jones Stadium available to host international fixtures. As the member for Blacktown said, there is off spin to those events, which is great for the economy and that is what this Government is about. As outlined within A Vision for the Hunter Sports & Entertainment Precinct, Venues NSW is currently positioning McDonald Jones Stadium as an important sporting and entertainment infrastructure in Newcastle, seeking to draw national and international events. This is a great achievement.

Sport is the great divider. Whether it be football or any other sport, it is a great community builder for many that have no alternatives or interests. In a recent documentary, Johnathan Thurston attributed his success to his love for sport. He said without sport he would probably be in jail. That is remarkable. Football is life-changing. Every member of this House should get behind football in Australia and promote this great sport. I am happy to say football is busting at the seams, particularly at a local level because this Government is encouraging participation in sport through the Active Kids \$100 voucher rebate. Public transport is busting at the seams in this State because the Government is encouraging people to use public transport. It is growing at unprecedented rates. This Government is promoting sport at both the grassroots and professional levels.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Disability Services) (13:26): I make a brief contribution on behalf of the benefits of football to the entire community. I imagine the favourite sport of all the young people in the gallery would be football, otherwise known as soccer. As the Minister for Disability, it gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of an organisation known as the Pararoos. The Pararoos have been inspirational. Two weeks ago I attended the annual awards of the Pararoos at the Novotel Sydney Norwest. I joined David Gallup Chief Executive Officer of the Football Federation of Australia and Peter Hugg Chief Executive Officer of Football NSW, together with Matt and Charlotte from Football NSW—who work very hard on behalf of that organisation—to acknowledge the wonderful Pararoos players and present excellence awards. The Player of The Year award was presented to David Barber. He has been an inspiration, captaining the Pararoos for many years. Ben Atkins and Benny Roche are famous players that have played for the Pararoos year after year. The Pararoos are achieving great things. In a couple of weeks they will travel overseas to Iran for the Asian Cup and hopefully qualify for a place in the World Cup in Spain.

The Pararoos are an inspiration not only to every person who plays soccer in this country but also to people with a disability. Many of those players have cerebral palsy. It is inspiring to the people of New South Wales to see them find a new purpose in life through the great foundation of sport. It is a wonderful achievement for them. I wish the Pararoos all the best. I acknowledge the 12,500 football players in my backyard who participate under the banner of the Hills Football Association.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:29): In reply: I thank the members for Camden, Blacktown, Drummoyne and Castle Hill for their contributions to the debate. I welcome the students from Nowra who are in the gallery: I am sure many of you are interested in a debate about the benefits of football, and I am sure many of you—both boys and girls—play soccer. I acknowledge the member for Wyong. He did not have an opportunity to speak because of limited time. I know he is a keen Central Coast Mariners supporter and follows soccer closely. The member for Fairfield is a Western Sydney Wanderers Football Club [FC] supporter. He was in the Chamber to contribute to the debate but time did not allow it.

I thank each member who contributed to the debate for their positive words. The member for Drummoyne was a little bit offside, but otherwise positive in his speech. I know that both Government and Opposition members love soccer, and that is a wonderful thing. I

acknowledge Peter Tuziak, Chamber attendant. We have had many discussions about the Football Federation Australia, soccer in general and his support for the Sydney FC. Peter has more knowledge about soccer in his little toe than I will ever have. I acknowledge the Newcastle Jets FC, their coach and manager Ernie Merrick and their Chief Executive Officer Lawrie McKinna. They are wonderful and doing great things. As the member for Camden mentioned the improvement throughout the last year is due to good leadership. Wonderful leadership is important.

I thank the member for Blacktown. As he is a modest man, he did not mention that his son is a talented soccer player. I wish him well in the future. It is nice to have that involvement within the family. I note that the member for Blacktown is a keen soccer supporter himself. I thank the Minister and member for Castle Hill, who said many positive things about soccer in New South Wales and soccer teams in his electorate. Those who will benefit from the growth in popularity of football are the girls who want to participate. The success of the Newcastle Westfield Matildas has encouraged many young girls to play soccer. We take our hats off to them. The Matildas will play Chile in Newcastle on Tuesday 13 November. Unfortunately, Parliament will be sitting. I wish it were on a different date so that I could attend. We wish the Matildas well, and we know that it will be a fantastic game. The crowds that attend such games are phenomenal. I conclude by saying that I am pleased the Government supported this motion. I wish everyone well. Go, football!

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Before I put the question, I compliment the pupils from the Nowra Anglican School on their exemplary behaviour. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.