



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

ADJOURNMENT

Fairfax Electorate

SPEECH

Thursday, 14 February 2019

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date	Thursday, 14 February 2019	Source	House
Page	13532	Proof	No
Questioner		Responder	
Speaker	O'Brien, Ted, MP	Question No.	

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (12:46): I confess to being concerned at times about an erosion of what we sometimes refer to as civil society. We see a breakdown in the family unit. We see a drop in spirituality among most Australians at the moment. We see traditional community groups lacking the volunteers to continue. Volunteering in Australia is wonderful, but demand is exceeding supply. And it's easy to get down, believing that our civil society is eroding and people are going to fall through the cracks and wondering what's going to happen.

But there are also times when I think each of us who is honoured to represent local communities gets that inspiration from their own community; I know I do on the Sunshine Coast. Let me use three examples today, one based on a town where people are getting together geographically; another one based on where people are unleashing their talents, particularly through sport; and then, thirdly, an example of social inclusion, where people are coming together.

When it comes to a community working as one in a town, I use the example of a project called Reimagine Nambour. Reimagine Nambour is an activity now owned by the community of Nambour, on the Sunshine Coast, where they are working as a united force to paint a vision for their future and then to formulate a road map to get to that vision. They're doing so with the community, the political sector, the business sector and residents working as one because they believe that their town can be transitioned economically while maintaining a very proud and strong distinct identity. Nambour will pull that off because it is working as a united force, and that is Reimagine Nambour.

Secondly, I want to use the example of people who unleash their talents, particularly in sport. I recently attended the 25th annual Sunshine Coast Sports Awards, and there is no doubt that the depth of sporting talent on the Sunshine Coast is second to none. It starts at the grassroots. That's where it's at. I want to pay tribute to local legend—in fact, an Olympian—Benny Pike, who has recently stood down as Chairman of the Sunshine Coast Sports Federation. Benny has put his heart and soul into helping people in sport, and he should take a bow because he's done everyone proud. He wears it on his sleeve. A big congratulations to Benny.

While I'm talking about sport, let me also mention the emergence of women in sport. My electorate is home to the Lightning on the Sunshine Coast. I'm pretty proud of our track record—and we want three years running, by the way! Again looking at grassroots sport: recently, I was very proud to announce federal funding for the Maroochydore Swans. Some would wonder, 'Is he talking about the Swans Rugby or the Swans football/soccer?' Well, both, actually, because the federal government has extended grants to improve the changing rooms and facilities so that the women who are playing rugby and footy can actually have the dignity of their own changing rooms. It is so important that we support women in sport.

Lastly, I want to pay tribute to the Coolum Women's Shed. That's right: not the Coolum Men's Shed—which is going great guns, by the way—but the Coolum Women's Shed. It's now underway. They had their opening day just last weekend, with hundreds of women walking through the door. This is yet again an example of how the local community are coming together with local leadership. Social inclusion and friendships—those are what's holding our civil society together. Full credit to them.