



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONDOLENCES

McCarthy, Mr John

SPEECH

Monday, 10 September 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Irons, Steve, MP

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Mr IRONS (Swan) (21:26): Mr Deputy Speaker, on indulgence, I rise to support the words of condolence spoken by the member for Port Adelaide, the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing. As most members in this place would know, my son is a rookie at Port Adelaide. I was fortunate enough to meet John McCarthy recently. We sat together with a group of Port Adelaide players at Norwood Oval to watch some of their teammates play in the SANFL on a cold Friday night. As I am sure the member for Port Adelaide would be able to tell you, it can get really cold at Norwood Oval during winter.

The message the minister gave, in speaking about John, his playing history and where he had been, is something this parliament should recognise. At the same time, I would like to speak not only on behalf of my son but on behalf of parents who have lost children at an early age. I sit next to the member for Longman who, at the age of 22, is the same age as John. For anyone who has experienced the loss of a child, whether it be at birth or at the age of 22 or 35, it is a tragic loss. So my heart goes out to John's parents, Shane and Cath; his brother, Matt; his sisters, Frances, Elizabeth and Jane; his girlfriend, Dani; and to his extended family and network of friends.

I know Dani spent time at Alberton Oval with the Port Adelaide player group this afternoon. My son relayed the fact that the players gathered today and the players have asked me to deliver a message on their behalf to this parliament. They asked me to say that they are deeply saddened and shocked by John's death and that they will do whatever they have to do to keep their club together—the tight-knit club that they all play with, work with and spend more time with than they do with their own families—through this difficult time. The player group will support in any way they can the family and extended family of John McCarthy. That is the message the player group asked me to deliver to the parliament tonight.

As the minister said, we cannot speak too much about the actual incident; it is still being investigated. But any death, whether or not it is accidental, is still a tragedy. I know from the member for Dunkley that John was from his district, a Pensinsula old boy, and he knows John's parents, and I am sure he wishes to have the opportunity to pass on his condolences to them as well.

One of the things that Australians do is put our sportspeople up on a pedestal, and we saw that after the recent Olympics. Every parent of every athlete who competed in the Olympics would be proud. As the parent of an AFL player I can tell you that one of the proudest moments I have ever had was when I saw my son debut in the AFL as an elite sportsman. We wish the best for our children. No matter what level they are at, we want them to excel and to achieve their dreams. John McCarthy, I am sure, reached his dreams and those of his parents. For his life to end in what was a time of celebration—the end of the season, looking forward to a new season—is an absolute tragedy. I am blessed just to be able to stand here and say to his family and to the Port Adelaide Football Club: the parliament is with you and thinking of you, and the grief that you feel is felt by all of us as well.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): I thank the members for their gracious words on this very difficult occasion.