



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Hindmarsh Electorate: Soccer Unites Program

SPEECH

Wednesday, 23 June 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Georganas, Steve, MP

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Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (9.45 am)—On the weekend I had the privilege to attend the launch of a project with the Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, the Hon. Laurie Ferguson, in my electorate at the South Australian Amateur Soccer League Association headquarters, which is based on the corner of Trimmer Parade and Military Road in Grange. The magnificent project that was launched on the weekend was an Australian government initiative to provide \$135,000 of funding to a program called Soccer Unites. This program is about assisting young refugees in the western suburbs of Adelaide who are new arrivals or new settlers.

As I go around the electorate and visit amateur soccer clubs—I have got many of them in the western suburbs—I see refugees who are playing soccer with these clubs. Every team has five or six Africans or people from the Middle East and Afghanistan. They seem to gravitate to these clubs. They become part of the community and enjoy being part of a team. I suppose they are drawn to soccer or to sporting clubs because when you are playing football or soccer it does not matter what colour you are, what your religion is or what your race is; all that matters is that you can kick a ball. You become part of that team and you also become part of that community. It is very important to support these clubs because they do some great work. Apart from providing the sporting facilities, they also assist many of these new arrivals with their everyday needs, like housing et cetera. I get calls constantly from committee members of amateur soccer clubs in my electorate who are seeking assistance and services for some of their players who are new arrivals.

They do some great work and the federal government has recognised this by providing \$135,000 to the Soccer Unites program. It was great that it was announced and launched on the eve of Refugee Week and at the same time the world is embracing soccer fever, with the World Cup in progress. The Soccer Unites South Australia project will engage over 10,000 participants and 110 clubs, giving those involved a chance to inspire their fellow Australians. The project will also allow a sharing of experiences and cultures and will help create common ground among people of different backgrounds. On Saturday morning there were people there from Burundi, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Middle East, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. It was great to see these young people, who have gone through horrendous situations, playing soccer.