

GRAHAM “POLLY” FARMER — TRIBUTE

Statement

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [5.30 pm]: Thank you, Madam President. It was a hard choice, I know.

The PRESIDENT: I know; so much choice.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Today I will talk about the late great Graham “Polly” Farmer, who sadly has just passed away. He had an amazing life. Polly Farmer started playing senior footy at Maddington Football Club, he went on to East Perth Football Club and then moved over to Geelong Football Club. He came back to play and coach at West Perth Football Club before retiring. During that time, he played for Victorian and Western Australian state teams. In his career, he won many Simpson Medals for being the best player in a state game and many premierships, and received multiple fairest and best awards as well. He also won three Sandover Medals. There are not too many players who have had a career like his.

He started with a disadvantage in life. He was from Sister Kate’s charity and had some physical disabilities, yet he rose to be possibly the greatest player of Australian Rules football—the Victorians may not agree, but I would say every Western Australian does. That is something to say about a player, because that game has been around for a long time and many fantastic players have played the game.

Polly Farmer is well known for his football, but he is less well known for the work he has done for Aboriginal people over the years. He established the Polly Farmer Foundation. That foundation, along with a few other sponsors, gave me a chance 21 years ago to get involved in Aboriginal football. The foundation was a sponsor of a program I was running at the time. The program was about education and health—it was about helping young Aboriginal boys and girls get back into sport and school and to stay healthy. Going back 20-odd years, there were some very average communities in the regions that needed a great deal of assistance. Lots of the programs Polly was involved in have now been taken over by fantastic organisations like the AFL, with Kickstart and many other programs. We have seen what Ricky Grace has done with basketball programs. Many sporting programs started with support from the Polly Farmer Foundation.

Our sympathies go to his family and loved ones. He will be remembered for a long, long time as a great Western Australian and the greatest footballer in Australian history.