

GIRLS IN SPORT — TELEVISION COVERAGE

Statement by Member for Belmont

MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont) [12.58 pm]: I rise today to speak about girls in sport on behalf of my two girl guides, Olivia and Libby, who are participating in “Girls Take Over Parliament” today. Despite the significant number of highly successful female athletes and female sporting teams in Australia, women’s sports are rarely shown on free-to-air television. By not showcasing women’s sports on TV we are discouraging young girls and women from getting involved and participating in what has historically been male dominated sports such as rugby, football, cricket and soccer. According to the Women’s Sports Foundation, girls have 1.3 million fewer opportunities to play high school sports than boys. Schools often fail to provide a girls team for particular sports, therefore, young girls have to look elsewhere to participate in sports. These opportunities simply may not exist or can be costly for families. Research conducted by the Women’s Sports Foundation also highlighted that schools have a limited budget to put towards sports classes and school team sports, and often focused on more traditionally male-dominated sports.

Young girls are often inundated with images of external beauty and are rarely shown images of strong and confident female athletes whom they can look up to as a role model. Many girls in high school often do not have a female sports teacher to encourage and motivate them to engage in physical activity and education classes. Sports organisations and schools should have strong female role models and highlight the social and health benefits of being involved in sport as key motivators for young girls and women to be active. Through participation in sports, girls can learn important life skills such as teamwork, leadership and confidence. I thank Olivia and Libby for sharing their passion for gender equality in sports with me today. I hope they continue to enjoy their favourite sports of cricket and soccer and do not let gender limit their participation.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm