

FRIENDS OF CRICKET

Statement

HON COLIN HOLT (South West) [9.55 pm]: Often members in this place get invited to join certain groups, like Friends of Palliative Care, Friends of India and a number of others.

Hon Nick Goiran: Cricket.

Hon COLIN HOLT: I am a co-convenor of Friends of Cricket, or friends of the WACA. Myself, Glenn McGrath—sorry, John McGrath, “ooh, ah, McGrath”! John McGrath; the Minister for Transport, Rita Saffioti; and I are co-convenors of Friends of Cricket. We had an event at the WACA yesterday. Every MP was invited and a number turned up. It was related to the project to redevelop the WACA ground. Although it is centred on cricket, the project is much broader than the home of cricket in Western Australia, which is an important outcome. We met to talk about how it can take its game into the twenty-first century in Western Australia, maintain its position as a key sport in this state and continue to contribute not only at the elite level, both at the state and international level, but also develop the game at the grassroots level. It is doing some fantastic things. It is one of the fastest-growing participation sports in Western Australia, which may surprise people. In fact, women’s cricket is one of the fastest-growing participation sports in Western Australia. A lot of young girls are taking up cricket and going through to the elite levels.

One of the things that came through to me yesterday through the engagement was that the WACA ground itself, the playing arena, is held in extremely high regard throughout the world. Everyone wants to play on the WACA. Every bowler wants to bowl on the pitch to see the amazing bounce, and every batsman wants to test themselves against the best bowlers on the best pitch in the world. But the facilities leave a lot to be desired. We heard that the WACA is experiencing an embarrassing state of affairs in that its facilities have not yet come into the twenty-first century. When we compare it with facilities in other states around Australia, we are very much behind. I asked Mitch Marsh how the facilities are received by visiting teams, including the Australian team, when they use them. He basically said that they think they are rubbish and quite embarrassing. That is the purpose of their redevelopment, as well as investigating other opportunities around the community hub in East Perth that redevelopment could provide. The WACA is working very hard to engage with all sectors of the community. It is trying to build a project that will deliver state-of-the-art facilities for not only cricket, but also the community of East Perth. Even if members do not have an interest in cricket, I encourage them to engage with the group next time they have the opportunity and to hear about its plans for that part of our city and how it will contribute to the broader wellbeing of not only the game of cricket, but also Western Australia itself. It is much more than just a cricket project. It is a project that wants to deliver for the state of Western Australia, just as Optus Stadium across the road has delivered in other sporting fields. This is the next cab off the rank, and it needs some attention. I therefore ask members to please engage with the opportunity that is presented by the WACA board and chief executive officer, who are doing as much as they can to engage in the process of getting this project up and attracting funds so that they can deliver on it.