

PETER BOL — TOKYO OLYMPICS

Statement

HON AYOR MAKUR CHUOT (North Metropolitan) [9.47 pm]: On Sunday, the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 ended. The organisers are to be commended for making these games a remarkable success for our community. Australians are very proud because the Australian Tokyo Olympic campaign has been one of Australia's most successful. Outside the medal wins, these games have been very uplifting for our community, with our athletes' sheer grit, determination and heart-warming camaraderie on show. It was something special to see, as was the diversity of the Australian team. Today, in thankfulness of Australia's Olympic spirit and thriving multiculturalism, I acknowledge an athlete who is close to me and my community. He is Australia's favourite athlete and he has made us very proud. At the Tokyo Olympics, Peter Bol broke his own record in the men's 800 metre semifinal. Peter Bol was the first Australian to qualify for the men's 800 metre final since 1968. He came fourth, and his achievement was celebrated by our nation.

I will tell members a little bit about Peter Bol. He was born in Khartoum, Sudan. His mother, Hanan Kuku, is a South Sudanese Nubian, and his father, Abdalla, is also South Sudanese. Due to civil war—Peter and I have the same story—Peter and his family went to Egypt in 1998 and stayed in a refugee camp before coming to Australia in 2004 on humanitarian visas as migrants. First, Peter and his family lived in Toowoomba, Queensland, where his dad worked on a farm. They then moved to Perth, where they were very lucky and found many opportunities, including for his father.

Peter's career started with the support of his community and, of course, his parents' blessing. At the age of 16, through another student at a sports carnival, a teacher from school, Helen, learnt of Peter's ability to run fast. She encouraged Peter and asked him to run a 400-metre and 800-metre race. Luckily, Peter did an incredible job and he won. Helen's father, Brian Moore, became Peter's mentor. He bought him sports shoes for his first-ever exciting event and enrolled him in an athletics club. Later on he helped Peter find a national competition class. In 2015, Peter moved from Perth to Melbourne to train under a very successful coach called Justin Rinaldi, and he trained to run for 800 metres. Within a short time, he had accelerated in his sport and competed in the world championships. In 2016, he ran in the Rio Olympics and now with Tokyo over, I am sure that Peter's main focus is to break a brilliant record for Australia at the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

Along with his athletic accomplishments, Peter has a degree from Curtin University in construction management and is planning to become an engineer in the future. He is also an ambassador for Pushing Barriers—a not-for-profit organisation that helps refugees by providing them with funding and opportunities for youth to be included in Australian society through sport.

Peter Bol's journey is a wonderful example for our community and of the gift that comes from embracing multiculturalism in our community. The value of diversity is very important in our society, socially and economically. When government, the private sector and not-for-profit organisations provide opportunities for refugees and migrants in our community, the benefits are great for many. When children are involved in developmental programs through sport, the arts and technology, it results in participation and representation in the community and in the workforce. If we strategically invest in our children from refugee and migrant backgrounds in the school system and outside of it, they will become the contributors and the leaders of our future in the community. They will know that they matter, that they belong and that they have possibilities. They will become the pride of their communities and, like Peter Bol, inspire a nation like Australia and the world.

May I congratulate Peter Bol; you are a champion for all Australians. I wish you many blessings as I wish all Australian Olympians the very best in the future. I congratulate you all on your great accomplishments. You have done us proud as Australians and together we have plenty to be thankful for; thank you.