



Cadel Evans

Chamber of the House of Representatives

25 August 2011

Ms Grierson (Newcastle) (12:18) — I congratulate Cadel Evans on his wonderful achievement. I am not a bike rider, which is obvious to everybody here, but my alter ego is a fit person and I am an Australian who is inspired by the efforts of people like Cadel Evans. I congratulate him as well as his team, BMC, who were all active contributors to Cadel's win. I congratulate also SBS on its wonderful coverage on the Tour de France each year.

Cadel does epitomise the Australian story. Born in Katherine in the Northern Territory, he spent his first four years growing up in the Indigenous community of Barunga, 80 kilometres outside Katherine. I am sure that when he began at the age of two riding a 16-inch BMX bike he never imagined the heights he would achieve in the cycling field. To go from that little boy of two in Katherine to the man standing on that podium on the Champs Elysees is a dream that again says Australians can achieve whatever they want with the right courage, conviction and support.

The Tour de France this year covered more than 3,430 kilometres in 21 stages. I confess I only watched 11 nights of it continuously. It was

arduous for the riders and a little arduous for federal members of parliament as well, who were quite addicted to it. It is the world's most competitive cycling race and Cadel Evans is the first Australian to win the Tour de France. He is also the oldest first-time winner at the age of 34.

Starting that last full day of the tour almost one minute behind the leader, Cadel finished second in the time trial and secured his victory in the tour overall. I think we also feel very proud that Cadel was very gracious in victory. Not only did he pay tribute to his team and to the other competitors; he dedicated his win to his late mentor, Aldo Sassi, who died of cancer in 2010. His career has been a most interesting one. Going from 1998-99, the first overall in the Mountain Bike World Cup, second in 1997 and 1999 in the under-23 World Championships, and he won the young riders competition of Australia's very own Tour Down Under in the Adelaide Hills before converting to road racing full time in the summer of 2000.

But then, of course, he made that wonderful transition to Tour de France-type events, going away from mountain bike riding. He achieved high placings in the Tour de France in 2005, coming eighth; in 2006, fourth; in 2007 and 2008 he came second; and in 2007 he was named Australian Cyclist of the Year. In 2009 he won the World Championship road race in Mendrisio, Switzerland. All of us wanted him to win. He has come so close so many times. To watch him make that additional effort this time was quite amazing.

The ABC termed Cadel the thinking man's champion after he wore a T-shirt in support of Tibet and the Tibetan people's struggle with mainland China during the 2008 Tour de France. It was a gutsy thing to do. At the time Cadel commented that trying to bring awareness of the Tibet movement is something someone in his position can do. It is good to know that he is also associated with causes that he believes in and has the courage to be a well-rounded person rather than just a single-interest cyclist. Cadel is currently competing in the US Pro Cycling challenge. Cadel finished the first stage in fourth place, 17 seconds behind the leader, Levi Leipheimer. We wish him well in this ongoing event.

I would also say to Cadel Evans, thank you on behalf of all Australians, cyclists and non-cyclists for the pleasure you gave us, and to SBS. The viewing is a pleasure. As a member of parliament, I am sorry but I can see such parallels in the clever tactics that have to be used to win such races. It is not always about speed and skill. It is a tactical game. I get a bit hooked on that sometimes too. We would like to see more of that perhaps here in this place.

I would also not so much thank Cadel Evans but acknowledge that because of him and a little contribution from the coverage of the News of the World investigations and the committees in England, in the UK parliament, I did suffer jetlag for at least a week after going to sleep at 2 o'clock for 10 days. I agree with some of the things that have been said and published about Cadel. An editorial published in the *Age* said that his victory in the 2011 Tour de France entitles him to a place

alongside the world's leading cricketer Donald Bradman; billiards wizard Walter Lindrum, swimming legend Dawn Fraser and the crew of the America's Cup winning yacht *Australia II* on the list of Australian sporting heroes who have taken on the world's best in their field and prevailed. An editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* likewise described it as one of the greatest wins in Australia's illustrious sporting history.

Congratulations, Cadel. May your career deliver to you the satisfaction and success that you have achieved so far, and may you continue to bring great pride to the Australia people.