



## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### Stadium Upgrade

### 14 September 2006

**Ms GRIERSON** (Newcastle) (12.32 pm)—I rise to applaud the wonderful spirit of Newcastle. Two events last week reminded me just how passionate, proud and committed Novocastrians are to giving something back to their community. Last Friday I was privileged to present the 2006 Newcastle Community Volunteer Awards at a special ceremony and then in the evening to sit in a sell-out crowd at EnergyAustralia Stadium and cheer the Newcastle Knights home against Manly. The community volunteer awards recognised over 50 individuals and groups for their contribution of time, energy, expertise and passion to making our city a better place. It was a privilege to have Kaye Duffy, one of Newcastle's most active and recognised volunteers, with me to help present the awards. Ceremonies like that are important to give public recognition to those people who so quietly work away and whose help binds the fabric of our community.

Our volunteers help out in the aged and community sector for groups such as St Vincent de Paul, the New Lambton Community Centre, Lifeline, Wallsend Area Community Carers, Neighbourhood Watch and the Volunteer Support Group. They do important work in healthcare for ARAFMI, the Advocacy Partners Program, our cancer, post-polio, Alzheimer's and Paget's disease support groups and our hospital volunteer network. Volunteers from the wetlands centre and our Bushcare groups were awarded, along with many of those who help to make our schools such wonderful places for children to learn and grow.

Awards were presented to volunteers from the Migrant Resource Centre, Ethnic Communities Council and the other community based support networks, many of them organised through our religious orders who do great work in supporting new settlers in Newcastle. Many members of our veteran community—those involved in the RSL, TPI and the WAAF—were awarded alongside those involved in youth organisations such as YNOT, YUM and the CLASS scheme.

Indeed, there were too many award recipients to list, but I want to point out one—Steve McLennan, who juggles his work and university commitments to coach the New Lambton South Public School soccer team. Many of Steve's young players come from disadvantaged backgrounds and he often provides equipment for them personally. More importantly, he provides leadership and instils a strong sense of

sportsmanship, commitment and confidence in these students. I am happy to report that the New Lambton South Public School team won their grand final this year—so a big congratulations to them. I hope that some day some of those young players will aspire to becoming members of our Newcastle Jets football side in the A-League.

I also hope that in three weeks time I can come back to parliament to report on another grand final success, that of the Newcastle Knights in the National Rugby League. Sadly, the whole of Newcastle is facing the prospect of the loss of a very wonderful player Danny Buderus, one who has always set the highest example in the game and has always been an excellent role model. I very much dispute that he was deserving of a six-match suspension. My sympathy, and my respect for his wonderful contribution to the sport, is recorded here today.

I desperately hope though that one day I might be able to report that the federal government has finally provided some funding to finish the upgrade of the EnergyAustralia Stadium. The case has been made, with a Newcastle University study finding that the economic activity that would centre around the upgrade would exceed \$130 million. That was told to the Howard government in 2002 and we have been waiting ever since for any investment from the federal government into our economy through the stadium upgrade. The Howard government just will not listen to the very united voice of the regions fans, players and administrators. It will not listen to our tourism and recreation sectors or to those who are committed to our economic development in the region. It will not listen to the roar from the 26,000 people who were at the sold-out EnergyAustralia Stadium last Friday or the 6,000 more who could not be there because the upgrade has not been completed. The government will not listen to the 9,621 people from all over our region whose petitions I have presented to parliament over the last past two years calling for federal funding. After all, the state government put in over \$34 million. It is time the feds matched that.

When I tabled the most recent petitions in June this year the Minister for Sport responded that sporting stadiums are not a federal responsibility—except that John Howard's team, St George, and Jackie Kelly's team, Penrith, got federal funding for their stadiums, and more recently the Treasurer's team, Cronulla, got federal funding for its stadium. So it really is sneaky and entirely unacceptable for the Howard government to wash its hands of our stadium, particularly when we now see plans for an Australian bid for the 2018 Soccer World Cup and speculation about a possible move from Africa to Australia for the World Cup in 2010. We do not want to miss out on those sorts of opportunities. We deserve to be part of those international sporting events and our football stadium definitely deserves to be supported by the federal government. I call on John Howard and his team to get the ball rolling with a commitment for federal funding for this very worthy project.

Go Newcastle! Go the Knights!