



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## Votes and Proceedings

### Hansard

**WEDNESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2008**

#### **CORRECTIONS**

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**Wednesday, 17 September 2008**

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BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**PROOF**

### **Knox Little Athletics Centre**

**Mr PEARCE** (Aston) (7.30 pm)—Little Athletics is an institution in Australia. It provides invaluable opportunities for children to engage in regular exercise under adult supervised conditions. In an age of creeping childhood obesity, ‘Little Aths’ is more important now than ever before. In particular, I want to pay tribute tonight to an outstanding chapter of the Little Athletics community in my electorate of Aston. The Knox Little Athletics Centre will be celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, and I am delighted to be attending a function on Saturday to celebrate this auspicious occasion. Knox Little Athletics Centre is a chapter where local families and children all participate the children compete in the sporting events and the families administer these events. This engenders a feeling of belonging and mutual responsibility amongst local families. Local families get to know one another and each other’s children. Friendships grow and flourish, and a feeling of community and kinship is nurtured. The children are also significantly advantaged, as the skills they develop provide superb platforms from which they can pursue other sporting endeavours.

Little Athletics evolved during an era when organised out-of-school sport was not readily accessible for children attending primary school in Australia. There were objections to children participating in such sporting endeavours, ranging from the view that the intensity of the physical activity would be harmful for young children through to a lack of suitable equipment and facilities, compounded by a lack of experienced parents to administer track and field events. The success of the Little Athletics movement in Australia was in no small part due to the tenacity and leadership demonstrated by the Billingham and Triscott families and, on behalf of all Australians, I place on record our thanks and appreciation.

It was the success of the Little Athletics program that encouraged many other sporting organisations to devise junior programs for primary-school-aged children. The Knox Little Athletics Centre was started at the height of the Little Athletics phenomenon. The Little Athletics motto, ‘Family Fun and Fitness’, has been the guiding light of the centre since its inception in 1968. The Knox Little Athletics Centre is made up of 11 clubs within the City of Knox. This is somewhat like a football league which is made up of its various clubs or teams, often competing against one another in healthy competition.

The Knox Little Athletics Centre is a remarkable success story, made all the more impressive because reportedly 13,000 children have participated under the centre’s banner over the last 40 years. The Knox Little Athletics Centre was the result of a close collaboration involving the Knox Shire, local primary schools, parents, the Victorian Egg Board, who were the Little Athletics sponsors, and the Victorian Little Athletics Association. A series of meetings were held at the then Knox Shire offices during August and September in 1968. This resulted in the Knox centre being inaugurated as the 23rd centre in Victoria. This was during the lead-up to the Mexico Olympics, so honourable members can imagine the great enthusiasm amongst the community for athletic competition.

The foundation clubs for the Knox centre were Bayswater, Boronia West, Dorset, Fairpark, Knoxfield, Rangeview, St Johns, St Josephs, Studfield and Wantirna. Today only six of these clubs survive, with a seventh, the Fields, made up from the merger of the Studfield and Eastfield teams. This first season started on 2 November 1968 at the old Boronia High School oval opposite the Knox Leisure Centre in Tormore Road, Boronia, which today is a housing estate. The running track consisted of a 200-metre lap grass track and a separate 100-metre straight grass track, with age groups from under eights to under 12s.

The Knox centre competed for the first time ever as a team at the Ringwood Highland Games, which was held at Jubilee Park on 1 March 1969. A new site was approved by the new Knox City Council, which had just been promoted from shire status, in July 1969. They allocated Chandler Park, Boronia, which was to be the Knox centre’s home for the next nine seasons. The Knox Little Athletics Centre has produced wonderful heroes through the years. One such hero is former Olympian Jane Flemming, of whom our community is very proud.

While we celebrate athletes as they strive to become the best in the world, I think the greatest achievements are those that result in children developing an appreciation of healthy active lifestyles and in the sense of community and kinship that forms when local families work and play together. It is with this view in mind that I congratulate the Knox Little Athletics Centre on 40 years of community building and sporting endeavour and wish the centre all the very best for a long and continually successful future, not just on the field but also off the field.