



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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OLYMPIC MEDALLIST, MR KEN WALLACE

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (10.47 pm): Tonight I pay tribute to the Australian Olympic team for their remarkable effort at the Beijing Olympics and, in particular, kayaker and Gold Coast lifeguard Ken Wallace, who thrilled us all by winning both gold and bronze medals in the K1 1000 and K1 500 kayaking events at the Beijing Olympics last weekend.

I am very proud to say that Ken is a member of the Tugun Surf Club and the Currumbin Creek Canoe Club, and his parents, Trevor and Margaret, live at Elanora in the electorate of Currumbin. Right from his childhood years, Ken displayed incredible talent on the water. When he was 11, his parents took him down to the beach at Tallebudgera, where the local nippers happened to be having their championships. As history tells it, Ken won a number of events that day and wanted to continue in the sport. We are glad that he did.

In 1998 he moved to Tugun Surf Club, where he has competed ever since. A competitor at the Australian Surf Life Saving Championships in the Iron Man, Ken was keen to improve his surf ski leg, and in 2000 started kayaking as a means of getting better. At the age of 16 he began with Olympic gold medallist Mario von Appen and spent many gruelling hours on Currumbin Creek to help his surf ski leg. In his first year of kayaking he competed at the 2000 Australian championships in the under-16s, winning three national titles and then went on to junior world cup events in Europe. The following year at the Australian junior championships he won nine out of nine events before going on to win the junior world K1 1000 title.

While Ken was kayaking, he was also still competing in surf-lifesaving and was competing each weekend. He has won 15 national titles, including five straight Aussie titles with the Tugun taplin team in surf-lifesaving, which puts him amongst the most successful 15 of all time.

Leading up to the Olympics, Ken based himself at Budapest in Hungary to train for these events. His achievements are too numerous to list, but needless to say his friends and members of the Tugun Surf Club have been celebrating his wins since last weekend. This weekend I hope to join them in an official celebration where I am sure there will be many a story to tell about the amazing record of the club's most famous kayaker, Ken Wallace. Well done, Ken. We are all so very proud of you.

Perhaps now this stingy government that likes to claim status through its medal-winning Olympians will see fit to fund Surf Life Saving Queensland adequately instead of the meagre handout it expects this iconic volunteer organisation to survive on. It is worth remembering that many of our record-breaking swimmers start out as nippers yet this Labor government also angered thousands of Queenslanders when the *Courier-Mail* revealed the minister would not maintain the little funding that swimming receives and would in fact cut it. It certainly put a dampener on the high spirits around our great state to think that our state Labor government would be so mean.