

# **Western Australian Olympic Council**

## **WA Olympic Team Appeal Launch**

### **Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC Governor of Western Australia**

**Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019**

I would firstly like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Whadjuk Noongar people – and pay my respects to their elders past, present and future.

It is with great pleasure that I formally welcome you all to the Government House Ballroom for the official launch of the Western Australian Olympic Team Appeal Launch and the ‘One Year to Go Celebration’.

Among us here this evening are some of Australia and Western Australia’s most inspiring Olympians who are each a source of National and State pride. Together you serve as ambassadors of your respective sports and of Australia.

The dedication, resilience and commitment of Australian athletes is both admirable and inspiring to all ages.

Many athletes, here and abroad, are currently undergoing rigorous training with the sole focus of achieving their dream and competing in the Olympics in Tokyo. Several have participated in international sporting events, claiming medals, personal bests and some achieving Doha World Athletics Championships and Tokyo qualifying times.

Behind the 2020 Olympics Games in Tokyo are three core concepts; achieving personal best, unity in diversity and connecting to tomorrow.

The theme ‘unity in diversity’, reminds me of the words of Nelson Mandela:

*“Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.”*

Modern examples of the unifying power of the Olympic Games can be found in the following:

- In August 2016, the first-ever Refugee Olympic Team competed at the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro.

The Tokyo 2020 games will also host an IOC Refugee Olympic Team.

- North and South Korea first marched under a unified flag at the Opening Ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

North and South Korea again marched under a unified flag during the opening ceremony of the 2018 Winter Olympics with a united Korea team competing in ice hockey.

Both countries also plan to march and compete together on occasions during the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

I was also pleased to read that the 2020 Olympics Games in Tokyo are set to be the most gender equal Olympic Games yet, with a predicted 48.2% participation by women.

I look forward to the 2020 Games which organisers say are set to be “the most innovative in history”, incorporating some of the world’s best technologies both in the development of competition venues and in the operation of the Games.

What I most look forward to are the displays of comradery and the portrayal of Olympic spirit. Like that of New Zealand runner Nikki Hamblin and U.S runner Abbey D’Agostino. Both fell during a qualifying heat at the women’s 5,000 metres at the 2016 Rio Olympics, but they helped each other to stand again and supported and encouraged one another to reach the finish line.

Encouraging also are the stories behind each and every athlete. Stories of dedication, persistence, resilience and the pursuit of personal bests.

Former, current and aspiring Olympians can help to effect positive change in the lives of young people. To quote Nelson Mandela again, sport “*speaks to youth in a language they understand.*” Through exhibiting commitment, resilience and dedication, Olympians help to encourage and inspire young students both to participate in sport and to pursue their personal goals.

Behind an Australian athlete’s journey to Tokyo stands families, friends, coaches, sporting institutes, sponsors, and communities. Sport is what has brought us all here this evening.

I was pleased to hear that the State Government has announced a direct-to-athlete funding program for WA athletes, as well as an additional lump sum contribution to be split between the Olympic and Paralympic team appeals. This will certainly help with reaching WA’s target.

Let’s continue this support for our athletes tonight as they prepare for their journey to the Games.