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PORT PIRIE GYMNASTICS ACADEMY

Mr BROCK (Frome) (15:36): Today I would like to talk about Port Pirie Regional Gymnastics Academy, which was formed in 2004 to develop and grow the sport of gymnastics in Port Pirie and the region. The academy started with just 35 children who enrolled in programs that were originally operating outdoors at a local park until the John Pirie Secondary School stadium became available for lease. New club members were keen to develop and raise the profile of the academy in Port Pirie and the region and also to increase the academy's membership.

This was achieved by media promotions and also by attracting more competitors and visitors to the annual Port Pirie Invitational Championships. The Port Pirie Invitational is now the largest and most prominent ongoing gymnastics event in South Australia. Since the inauguration of the academy, club membership has increased to approximately 150. The club has also launched several new programs since 2004, including a gym sport program for boys, preschool kinder gym programs (Tumbling Tots, Tumble Bugs, Twinkle Toes), and also adult gymnastics and, most recently, Launch Pad, targeting schools and kindergartens throughout the region.

The academy has also worked with special needs children in a program that was run previously for the Port Pirie Special School. These, as well as the highly valued competitive men's and women's programs, are currently operating from two facilities. One is the John Pirie Secondary High School gymnasium, which involves an extensive set-up and pack-up of equipment to operate programs from this facility. Unfortunately, due to this process the valuable equipment used at this venue has suffered a high rate of wear and tear, which has been costly to repair and replace. It has also taken up lots of time for volunteers over the past 10 years. The academy does not have access to the stadium during school hours and has a limit on the amount of use after school to run programs due to other users.

The other is the YMCA building, which is currently owned by SA Health. Although the academy has access to this venue during school hours, the ageing facility does not allow all gym programs to operate from the one room. This puts strains on coaching, and there is also limited safety matting available in this venue, so equipment is constantly being shifted from one room to the other. The academy was fortunate to be able to use the Port Pirie Regional Council's old library building. However, since December 2012 they have had to be removed from this building due to council plans.

The academy operated its preschool program from this building, and as a result of this the preschool programs were forced to reduce the number of activities offered to the community. As the preschool programs currently operate at the YMCA, it has now been taken over as offices for building

contractors working on the GP Plus centre at Port Pirie. All three of these venues housed equipment owned by the academy, which is worth approximately \$100,000. Also, the academy has been forced to store another \$150,000 worth of equipment in two containers.

The academy is almost entirely self-sufficient, apart from occasional financial assistance. It's a major fund-raising event the Port Pirie Invitational, which attracts more than 400 competitors from around the state and interstate. This prodigious event also attracts up to 2,000 visitors to the city and the region over three days, injecting approximately \$300,000 of new money into the local economy.

The academy is a multi-award winning organisation: as a three-times winner of Regional Advantage SA and also achieving induction into the Advantage SA hall of fame; a two-times winner of the Gymnastics SA Club of the Year; Port Pirie Sporting Association Team of the Year 2011; Port Pirie Sporting Association Administrators of the Year 2011; semi-finalists in the Medibank Community Healthy Participation Award; Candetti Sports Award finalists; 2011 and 2012 Country Champion Club; South Australia's first club to launch the new national LaunchPad program for schools; and two-times winner of the Australia Day Community Event of the Year Award in Port Pirie.

The academy is also a mentor club. Coaches Garry and Lee-ann Nayda travel throughout the region, setting up new clubs and training facilities. After travelling to and from Jamestown for 10 years, the Jamestown Gymnastics Club is still operating with its own accredited coaches. The Clare Gymnastics Club, although still in its infancy, is up and running, also with coaches trained by Garry and Lee-ann Nayda. Gymnastics was taken to many towns throughout regional South Australia by Garry and Lee-ann.

The club is enthusiastic to continue its development as a major regional training centre for gymnastics in South Australia. They currently have gymnasts coming from as far away as Clare, Jamestown, Laura, Port Augusta, Napperby, and so forth. Now that gymnasts train on a weekly basis for almost 50 weeks a year, and as the education department becomes more aware of the benefits of gymnastics participation for pre-school, primary school and secondary school, a purpose-built facility would accommodate the growing needs of the sport of gymnastics in Port Pirie and the regions.

The Port Pirie Regional Gymnastics Academy administrators and coaches have been lobbying for a gymnastics multi-use facility to be built in Port Pirie over the past nine years. I commend the organisations and the voluntary work that they do.

