



# ***STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKS COMMITTEE***

Mr JJ McDonald MP—Chair  
Ms JM Bush MP (via videoconference)  
Mr TA James MP  
Mr D Kempton MP  
Mr SR King MP  
Mr J Kelly MP  
Ms B Asif MP (via videoconference)

**Staff present:**

Ms S Galbraith—Committee Secretary  
Ms R Duncan—Assistant Committee Secretary

## **PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE QUEENSLAND ACADEMY OF SPORT BILL 2025**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Tuesday, 25 March 2025**

**Brisbane**

## TUESDAY, 25 MARCH 2025

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**The committee met at 10.30 am.**

**CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare open the public hearing for the inquiry into the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025. I am Jim McDonald, the member for Lockyer and chair of the committee. With me here today are: Mr Terry James, the member for Mulgrave; Mr David Kempton, the member for Cook; Mr Shane King, the member for Kurwongbah; and Mr Joe Kelly, the member for Greenslopes, who is substituting for Mr Bart Mellish, the member for Aspley. Also joining us online is Ms Bisma Asif, the member for Sandgate, who is substituting for Ms Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper.

The purpose of today's hearing is to assist the committee with its examination of the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025. This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee.

These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Please turn off your mobile phones or put them on silent mode. Finally, please remember to turn on your microphone before speaking and turn it off when you are finished.

**PERKINS, Mr Kieren, OAM Chief Executive Officer, Australian Sports Commission (via videoconference)**

**CHAIR:** Good morning. Would you like to make an opening statement before we start our questions?

**Mr Perkins:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to be here. Thank you all for having the Australian Sports Commission participate in the public hearing for the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee's inquiry into the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill. The ASC provided a submission to the inquiry in consideration of our relationship with the QAS and the critical role they play as part of Australia's high-performance sports system.

The ASC's role is to increase involvement in sport and enable continued international sporting success through leadership and development of the sports sector as well as targeted financial support and the operation of the Australian Institute of Sport. When established in 1981, the AIS was unique as the only sports institute in Australia and now, of course, there are sports institutes or academies in every state and territory. These institutes and academies are all united with the ASC under a formal arrangement of the National Institute Network.

The ASC invests in sport through a variety of grant programs including investment in high-performance and other national sport participation programs, performance pathways, people development and wellbeing, and research and innovation. The ASC individually supports thousands of athletes to over 60 Australian sports. In addition to athletes and sporting organisations, we collaborate closely with state and territory agencies of sport and recreation, the other academies and institutes of sport within the National Institute Network as well as key high-performance games bodies, which include the Australian Olympic Committee, Paralympics Australia and Commonwealth Games Australia.

The Queensland Academy of Sport is a critical part of Australia's high-performance system and has signed on to the Win Well Strategy alongside the other state institutes and academies of sport, all high-performance funded national sporting organisations, the games partners and the ASC. The ASC encourages consideration of the nationally agreed priorities and roles and the responsibilities of the Win Well Strategy in the finalisation of the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill

2025, and the ASC looks forward to continuing strong collaboration and cooperation with the QAS to deliver sustainable success for Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games sports towards Brisbane 2032 and beyond. That concludes my opening statement.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much and thank you for the services you are providing. You mentioned in your opening statement that you have targeted investment in sports. Can you talk to the committee a little bit more about that and how that engages with the Queensland Academy of Sport?

**Mr Perkins:** I will narrow it down, in the interest of brevity, to the high-performance system specifically. Within our federal appropriation budget we have high-performance grant programs that then work with each of the national sporting organisations and the national sporting organisations for athletes with a disability that sit within the performance benchmark events that the system more broadly has agreed to, being the Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games events. We work with those sports through the AIS to develop a 'what it takes to win' strategy that is part of the commitment under the Win Well Strategy that everybody has agreed to. Within the 'what it takes to win' strategy there is agreement and work that is done with each of the state institutes and academies to recognise and acknowledge that the daily training environment for athletes exists nationally. We are a decentralised system—we have been a decentralised system for well over a decade now—and that decentralised system demands that the requirements of sports for the delivery of high-performance services must be supported where possible within the areas where their athletes are domiciled. Our grant funding goes to those sports and they then utilise that funding to buy the provision of services across all performance, support and delivery programs, coaching and others that they need.

On top of that, we also have multiple program arrangements where we work directly with the academies and institutes nationally on the delivery of different programs. As a good example, I saw yesterday a press release that came from the Queensland Academy of Sport and the Queensland government highlighting four coaches who are going into the Gen32 program as part of the para-sport uplift that is being done there. I should say: those four positions are being paid for by the QAS and the Queensland government. The program they are engaging with is the nationally delivered program that the AIS runs through our services.

Another major part that is worth recognising through our recent significant uplift of funding at the federal level is the commitment as part of the Win Well Strategy to build more equity in our system across both Olympic and Paralympic sports and the Para Sports Unit's program, which is an agreement across the National Institute Network to significantly uplift and improve the daily training environment for athletes who are competing in para-sports to help address some of the 160 systemic barriers to entry that athletes have in order to enter into our para system. As it stands at the moment, as was recently announced, a little over \$2.125 million from that grant funding from the AIS is going to the Queensland government to be delivered through QAS to help with that para uplift.

They are only a couple of examples. There are dozens that I could give you on how the system works together and how that federal funding that goes to the national sporting organisations then filters through into the provision and delivery of services at the state level as well.

**Mr J KELLY:** Thanks for the work you and your organisation do in helping our elite athletes prepare for competitions right around the globe. In terms of this proposed change, I note from the policy objectives that we are trying to create a statutory body with the purpose of allowing the academy to act with agility, efficiency and flexibility. How do you see this new structure allowing for those things to be achieved in terms of a comparison with the existing structure? What about the structure is going to allow that to occur?

**Mr Perkins:** One of the things that is always an area of tension with our system—if I talk about the Australian Sports Commission as a statutory body that has responsibility for all levels of sport performance and delivery—is that high-performance sport has a mindset and an attitude around being able to make quick, fast decisions and implement those decisions as needed. That is often in contrast with the more bureaucracy-led decision-making processes that come from government and organisational delivery, and there are always tensions between those two things. To be honest, they are both right, and one of the great challenges that exists consistently with being able to provide the appropriate delivery of services for sport across all levels of delivery, whether that be participation pathways right through to elite, is that, when you are talking about Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games sports, our system is significantly and most predominantly funded by government and requires taxpayer support to survive and to enable itself to deliver and thrive. Whenever you are receiving taxpayers' funds you need to, very appropriately, ensure that the

utilisation of those funds fits within good governance, appropriate risk management and the right operating policies, procedures and processes. For instance, in the case of the Australian Sports Commission, it sits within the PGPA Act to ensure that as an organisation we are doing the right thing.

The skill that is required from management is to deliver all of those obligations—ensure we operate under good governance with the right risk processes, we deliver to our legislative requirements as well as all of the operational requirements that come with running an organisation but we create the right operating procedures and flexibility to allow the high-performance environment to work as quickly and seamlessly as it possibly can. The separation out to becoming a statutory body to enable that obviously has merit. That is why we are having this conversation here today. What I would highlight is that one of the most significant elements of concern that those of us who operate organisations like this would have is that the single mantra and mandate that this is required to enable high-performance sport to operate with speed and flexibility to innovate cannot supersede the requirement for appropriate governance to ensure that the organisation is safe, is well run and is able to ensure that its ongoing environment is able to support the system it is designed to support and to do that extremely well.

From my perspective, I always reinforce with the system that I am engaging with. We need to ensure that all areas of responsibility are well managed. Being a statutory body does not absolve or diminish those; it just creates the opportunity for the different environment where the board and the CEO can take on more of that accountability—in fact, in a statutory authority the board and the CEO take on all of the accountability—for how the organisation is operating and being run.

I would also argue that there is an escalated and uplifted responsibility for the board and the CEO of a statutory body to work significantly harder to engage government, to engage departments and to engage the people who ultimately are allowing us to exist by their good graces and funding us. They are providing those taxpayer funds, so they should have the confidence and the awareness that everything that is being done is being done appropriately and is delivering on the outcomes that the legislation requires and that our athletes and coaches require. Fundamentally, they are the most important people in the delivery of services here. When we talk about making gold medals, it is athletes who make gold medals and coaches who make gold medals. Everybody else around them plays a supporting role to deliver an environment that enables them to do what they need to do. We need to do that safely and in a way that ensures we can all be proud of the performance that we see in 2032 and beyond and that the impact on those people we meet through influence and support has been positive.

**Mr JAMES:** Well said, Kieren. I think Australian sport has come a very long way in the last 45 years. It certainly does bring communities together. You see that more so these days than in earlier days. If you had a blank cheque, what would be No. 1 on your wish list and how would you innovate?

**Mr Perkins:** That is a loaded question. Thank you. To be honest, I would actually argue that probably the biggest gap in our system right now is being able to provide resources and support to athletes to live. It is one of the things that is quite unique and interesting more broadly in the way that our system is designed and the success that that system creates. We need to acknowledge and recognise that, based on the population we have and the work of the broader environment, because we often overlook but should never forget that professional codes in this country are larger and more successful and we have more of them than any other country in the world relative to our population size. The draw of talent, the draw of resources and capability within our sport system is stretched very broadly because of the strength and the power of those professional codes which, while being not for profit, are all billion dollar businesses that have an enormous amount of resource at their disposal and they utilise that resource extremely well to convince everybody to give them a whole lot more support than they probably need from the public purse.

The system that QAS supports, that the Australian Institute of Sport supports and that we are looking at more broadly is underfunded. It is constantly challenged, but we deliver great services around coaching, sports science and medicine, performance support, facilities et cetera. There is always more we can do. There is always more that needs to be done. I could talk for hours about the gaps within that system or barriers that cause us concern. All things being equal, probably the greatest stress that has existed in our system over a longer period of time is that, generally speaking, our coaches and our athletes are not particularly well funded from a cost-of-living perspective—just being able to put food on the table, which then enables them to dedicate the time, effort and resource that they need to be able to do what they need to do. That is an area of support that I think we could probably look at a little bit closer.

What we really want is those athletes—if I focus on them, firstly—to have the capacity to dedicate their time and effort to deliver what they need to do but also to dedicate time and effort to development as human beings. It is a core part of the Win Well Strategy. Whether that be study, career development or part-time work—whatever that looks like—the well-rounded, whole human being needs to be able to develop, and that will create better athletic outcomes. If they are struggling to put food on the table, as many of them are today, then that creates stress and diversions of effort that are not necessarily helping. If we are able to support that better and they come out the other side of it well-rounded, strong human beings who have had a great experience and performed at the highest level to the best of their ability, their transition into performance support, coaching roles, administrative roles or whatever it is they go on in life to deliver in the future will be significantly better and then contribute to the overall capability, capacity and resource release that we need in our system to make it more sustainable.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Kieren. It is a point very well made.

**Ms ASIF:** I have a question around some of the systems changing and how important governance and transparency are when it comes to this. How is this going to impact the relationship you currently have with the QAS and do you see that changing? Secondly, what are the recommendations you would like to put forward in terms of how the CEO or the board is decided, given you have worked so closely with them and as a member it would be incredibly important to make sure you can see some of your core programs continue to be delivered through this?

**Mr Perkins:** As I mentioned in my opening statement, fundamentally the greatest strength of the Australian sport system within these sports that we are focused on referring to is actually national collaboration. We can never ignore the fact that the population of Australia is geographically diverse. The major population centres tend to be a long way apart from each other and, as a consequence, we need to have a national system that is well serviced and supported that enables us to find talent wherever it exists, nurture it, develop it, harbour it and then enable it to come together at the elite level to deliver national outcomes. The way that the National Institute Network works together is fundamental to that because we just do not know where the next Ariarne Titmus is coming from. The first one came from Tasmania and has been supported on her journey to where she is today. That collaboration, that engagement, is imperative. That needs to be maintained and supported in an ongoing way.

I would highlight and acknowledge that the relationship we have today with the QAS across the National Institute Network has never been stronger, has never been more functional and has never delivered better alignment of key outcomes and goals than we are seeing right now. Taking that, understanding that and projecting that forward, I do not see that there is any real risk in terms of the creation of a statutory body to deliver that, as long as there is clear guidance and understanding within the legislative framework that a part of the responsibility that QAS has is to continue to engage in the national system for national delivery of success outcomes, because when we get to Brisbane in 2032 and we see our team dressed in the green and gold and we are cheering them on through their success, we will only be truly successful if we have been able to draw the best talent from the whole country, so that engagement matters.

The other thing I would highlight and stress is that the creation of a statutory body does dramatically change the role of what I think is now an advisory committee but would become a board, in the future what that board would look like, and then the CEO's role. Those two groups of people are taking on significantly more accountability for the organisation that they run than exists today with the way the QAS is structured. Being really clear on the breadth of skills required across the board, that board needs to have governance, it needs to have risk management, it needs to have financial services, it needs to have legal and it needs to understand how to work with government—how to engage government to ensure that the ongoing support and resourcing of the QAS is secured through those appropriations that would come—but also have high-performance sporting understanding so that the strategies the organisation is putting together align to the outcomes of the cohorts of people you most need to influence.

Then the same goes for the CEO. The CEO's role will obviously have a very significant uplift in responsibility around all of those corporate services, legislative requirements and operational engagements that are currently held within the department and delivered by the department. All of that is going to be separated, from an accountability perspective, away from the department into the organisation. Therefore, a CEO that is delivering that work needs to obviously have much more spread of strength and capability than just being a sport deliverer, as has probably traditionally been the focus of the role while the QAS has been a part of the internal division. We see that across other similar statutory bodies so it is not a surprise. It is just an acknowledgement that that is important.

**Ms ASIF:** It sounds like you and I both hope that it is picked out through a merit-based process that is transparent and based on experience as well.

**Mr Perkins:** It is a government agency. I am not sure how we can do anything other.

**CHAIR:** We are starting to run out of time, but the member for Cook has a burning question.

**Mr KEMPTON:** In your Win Well Strategy horizons, at the top of the list is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Of the 16 Indigenous communities in Queensland, 11 are in my electorate. Could you walk us through how a budding young athlete might be identified in a community, how that person would be encouraged and supported into a career at a professional sports level and then what happens at the end going back into that community, because I feel perhaps they are way under-represented in our sporting arena?

**Mr Perkins:** Thank you very much for the question. Before I answer maybe what it should look like or what we aspire for it to look like, I need to acknowledge that the underpinning intent of your question is absolutely correct that Indigenous Australians are dramatically under-represented when it comes to our Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth sport system. The professional codes are much stronger in their ability to deliver programs and engage into those communities and environments. There has probably also been, from a government perspective, over time a stronger connection and focus to those professional codes because the professional codes have historically done a much better job to engage in building programs, supporting that work and getting the appropriate funding.

What we need, obviously, is, firstly, community-level delivery of sport that provides an engaging and barrier-free entry to being involved, because if young people do not get the opportunity to try lots of different sports, if they do not get the opportunity to develop all of the fundamental skills of movement and the physical literacy that is required, and do that in an encouraging, supportive and safe environment then they will not play sport to begin with. Once they are in that environment and they learn the skills and they grow the flexibility to move into different sports that they show aptitude for or are personally engaged with, they need to be supported through that participation environment and then enabled through a pathway that gives athletes a very clear understanding of 'once I get to a certain level, if I make it to that next path here is how that operates', and how it is supported through state-based programs, through junior development programs and through services that are provided through, for instance, the QAS, which then shows a clear pathway to enable us to the national level.

Through Win Well we talk a lot about our connections to country and we talk a lot about the work we can do to make sport a much more inviting and culturally safe place, because it is significantly not that today. By doing that work, that will enable us to see more kids having a go, getting involved and making their way through sport. There are a number of different programs and engagements that we do already with the National Institute Network that are designed to help support that, but it goes without saying that there is a lot more work that needs to be done. Having a nationally aligned system around that strategic intent and work to me is another reinforcement of why the national conversation needs to be accounted for within the state-level conversation.

**CHAIR:** Unfortunately, the time allocated for this session has now expired. Thank you for appearing before the committee today and providing your evidence. There are no questions on notice. Thank you for your contribution and being a champion in the pool and continuing that in your professional life.

**Mr Perkins:** Thank you very much for giving me the time to chat today. I know that I and the whole sport system look forward to continuing to work with the QAS and we are looking forward to seeing us all drive great success into the future. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, kindly. Jonty Bush, our deputy chair, is online now. Thank you, Bisma, for filling in.

**CROSS, Mr Dane, Chief Operating Officer, Sporting Wheelies**

**KELLY, Ms Jacqueline, General Manager, Para Sports, Health and Fitness, Sporting Wheelies (via videoconference)**

**MOSS, Ms Michelle, Chief Executive Officer, Queenslanders with Disability Network**

**CHAIR:** Welcome. Would each of you like to make an opening statement before we ask some questions?

**Mr Cross:** I will be speaking on behalf of Sporting Wheelies and Jacqueline will be supporting me with the questions later. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. Sporting Wheelies is Queensland's longest standing provider of sport and active recreation opportunities for people with disability. Let me start by clearly stating that we support the intent of the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill and the move to formalise the QAS as a statutory body. As the state looks towards Brisbane 2032, this reform has the potential to provide the flexibility and autonomy to deliver lasting impact across the sporting landscape. But legacy is not just built in a stadium; it is built in schools, in communities and in everyday participation, and the legacy that we build must be inclusive from the ground up.

As a quick background, as mentioned, Sporting Wheelies is Queensland's longest standing provider of sport and active recreation and participation opportunities for people with disability. We were established in the 1960s and have proudly supported dozens—many scores—of Queensland-based Paralympians and engaged many thousands more Queenslanders with disability over the last 50-odd years. We are formally recognised by Disability Sports Australia, which is Australia's peak national sporting organisation for people with disability, as the peak organisation for adaptive sport in Queensland. Our programs reach from hospital wards to regional community courts. We work in partnership with allied health providers, schools, councils and sports organisations to promote participation, independence and excellence.

Our capacity to deliver this work, however, has over the last number of years diminished or steadily eroded due to a shift in funding models—from dedicated investment in us and in inclusion to mainstreaming that funding through NSOs and SSOs. It has meant that the disability-specific programs that we deliver have struggled for support. While we have adapted through time-limited funding of grants et cetera, philanthropy and diversification of revenue streams, the result has seen a system under strain. At the same time, though, the interest in para-sport has never been greater. The opportunity is clear, but it must be matched with commitment.

We acknowledge the committee's response to our organisation's submission, primarily stating that, as the bill stands, it gives the QAS board flexibility to support inclusion. History has shown, however, that flexibility does not guarantee outcomes. It does not mandate collaboration, grassroots investment or representation. I would therefore like to reiterate the following points for the reconsideration of the committee. The first is grassroots para-sports pathways. We just heard Kieren Perkins speak about the importance of that community-level engagement of Indigenous Australians. Similarly, people in the para-sport space—people with disability—need that grassroots engagement also. Elite athletes, Paralympians included, do not appear overnight. Their journeys begin in communities—school programs, social sports and inclusive clubs—but these critical grassroots pathways currently fall outside the QAS's direct scope. Without deliberate investment and alignment between community sport and high-performance sport, we risk weakening the pipeline that this bill seeks to support. We urge the committee to consider how the QAS, even with its elite focus, can help nurture these pathways through strategic partnerships and support.

The second is inclusive governance. The composition of the QAS board will shape its direction for decades. We strongly recommend that at least one board position be designated for someone with lived experience in para-sport or disability inclusion. Representation at the table matters. It ensures that decisions are made not just about people but with people with disability. Lived experience brings insight, innovation and a deeper understanding of barriers and opportunities.

The third is formal partnerships with disability sport organisations. Sporting Wheelies has the infrastructure, programs, scale-up capacity and reach to be a valuable partner to the QAS. We have a long history in delivering proven participation and talent development programs across Queensland, particularly in regional and remote areas where opportunities are otherwise limited. Rather than reinventing the wheel, we encourage the QAS to build on this existing capability. A formalised partnership model backed by shared goals and strategic investment would enable a more integrated and effective para-sport system in Queensland.

The last is inclusive employment. The QAS can and should lead by example. Employing people with disability not just as athletes but as coaches, administrators and leaders sends a powerful message. It also creates post-competition career pathways for Paralympians, enriching the broader sport ecosystem with their experience and perspective.

In closing, I would like to be clear: we are not asking the QAS to become a community sport provider, but we are asking that it recognises where elite athletes come from. As part of the Brisbane 2032 bid, there was a commitment made to engage 500,000 Australians with disability in sport by the time the games arrive. Queensland shares a substantial portion of that and it will not be achieved by focusing on high-performance alone. Non-disabled athletes do not call the QAS out of the blue to start their sporting journey; they begin at school and at the local club in casual weekend competitions. Para-athletes are no different. Their pathway is often longer, less visible and more reliant on tailored support. If we want Queensland to lead, our systems must reach further and start earlier. The QAS can be a driver of this inclusive legacy. Sporting Wheelies is ready to partner in this effort. We ask the committee to consider embedding these principles into the bill to ensure its legacy is truly inclusive. Thank you. Both Jacqueline and I welcome your questions.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Dane. I will go to Michelle for her opening address.

**Ms Moss:** Thank you, Chair. QDN is an organisation that has been established for the last 25 years. It is a member-led and member-driven organisation. All of our members are people with diverse disability. QDN is also the executive peak for Queenslanders with disability and provides an overarching leadership and coordination function across the 17 funded disability peak and representative organisations around the state. Our work is driven by the principles of inclusion, co-design and collaboration and we see the utmost importance of the opportunities that sport brings to enriching people's lives through not only health and wellbeing but also social connection and, as Dane has talked about, that important pathway from community participation to elite sports participation and para-sport for people with disability.

We see Brisbane 2032, as others do, as a real driver of change around inclusion and accessibility and the importance of the legacy that is left. We thank the committee for the opportunity to present this morning and start by saying that we support and acknowledge the bill and its functions to move the Queensland Academy of Sport to a statutory body and the intention of that to deliver better outcomes. However, like our colleagues at Sporting Wheelies, we also see that it is critical that there are measures put in place within the bill to ensure that disability inclusion is embedded within the governance and the operational structures and frameworks to ensure that people with disability are given equal focus, support, investment, resources and opportunities.

QDN's motto is 'nothing about us without us' and there is a really strong mantra within the disability community that you cannot be what you cannot see. I want to start particularly with the governance that is outlined in the bill and reiterate what Kieren and Dane have both talked about in terms of the importance of that board having really strong corporate governance structures, but within that it is important that there is the representation of people with disability and Paralympian sport. The current wording in the bill talks about Olympic or Paralympic sport, and we would really strongly recommend the committee to consider the inclusion of one member to represent people with disability.

It is often left up to discretionary decision-making, and we know from past experience and history that that inclusion is not always translated into action, so it is critical that there is consideration given to specific, dedicated para-sport expertise and disability inclusion on the board and also those advisory committee mechanisms. Noting that, yes, the bill incorporates the discretion for the board to establish the mechanisms it sees fit, we strongly recommend that safeguards need to be put in place that would emphasise and require the establishment of those.

We would certainly echo Dane's points around the community-level participation and pathways and support what he has talked about, because we know that community participation is a critical element of the pathways to elite performance. I think naming within the national and state sporting organisations disability sport organisations as a key stakeholder and function within that and formalising those partnerships is critical, as are the partnerships to maximise the opportunity for the academy to engage in commercial and philanthropic partners. We know that often disability sport and Paralympian sport receive a lot less investment and focus than other sport and we think it is critical that there are safeguards put in place around this and around the investment that would go from those channels into Paralympians.



**CHAIR:** Thanks, Michelle and Dane. I will go to the member for Kurwongbah for the first question. If they are complicated questions, there is an opportunity to take them on notice, just bearing in mind the timeframes that we have today.

**Mr KING:** I am really interested in the grassroots aspect of what you were saying. You also mentioned the barriers. I was just wondering if you could help the committee understand some of the barriers you face, even registering or getting to and from games and that sort of thing. We are agreeing with what you are saying, but I ask you to enlighten us a bit more.

**Mr Cross:** You have touched on it there. It is a whole-of-journey experience, attending a sporting competition or even a social sporting engagement. It starts at home and it starts with arranging carers and arranging adaptive equipment and bringing it with you via whatever means of transport is accessible and available to you. Often we note the barriers of the public transport system. It is not always accessible. Venues are not always accessible. When we run our programs we are delivering them from venues that have been identified, assessed and audited as being accessible, but that is not always the case. Especially in regional and remote communities, it is not always easy to attend these venues.

Some of the other barriers are cost, support and qualified support. We have participants with very high needs. They are on a scale from mild impairments through to high needs. However, those people with high needs require that wraparound support, which is staff and resource intensive as well. They require adaptive equipment such as sports wheelchairs. In other sports there are other types of adaptive equipment that needs purchasing or supplying or providing by an organisation like ours. They are some of the barriers that come to my mind. Jacqueline might be able to add to some of those.

**Mr KING:** I am glad you mentioned the financial barrier, because I imagine that is a fair cost element.

**Mr Cross:** Yes, absolutely. A sports wheelchair at a base level starts essentially at about \$7,000 each and upwards from there—up to about \$35,000 or \$40,000.

**Mr KEMPTON:** Thank you very much for your presentations. Obviously your organisations do a lot to raise the profile and opportunity for disabled sportspeople. If I understand what you are saying, this bill not only helps to bridge the divide but with participation you think you can do even better. Is that generally closing the gap, for want of a better expression?

**Ms Moss:** Yes, I think so. It is critical that some cultural awareness and understanding around inclusion and disability by the broader community is enacted. I think that is one of the other critical barriers, to add on to what Dane has described. I think there is a lot of goodwill and good intention by sporting clubs, particularly at that grassroots level, but there is also a lack of knowledge about what to do, how to ensure inclusion can occur and what is the best way to support people in that. There is a lot of capacity building that we need to do in mainstream and general sporting clubs because, as Dane said, they are part of the pathway to elite performance. There are a whole range of different things that people experience within those settings.

**Ms BUSH:** Thank you so much, Dane, Jacqueline and Michelle for coming in. You have put forward, I think, a compelling argument around where we could really meet the future needs of para-athletes. With the one question I have time for, I want to focus on that. I also want to draw out the point that, under the bill as it currently stands, the board will be appointed by the minister. It will control its own agenda. It will control its own finances. There is no explicit function to oversight either women or para-sports and there is no obligation on them to report publicly on any of those outcomes. How important is it, do you think, to get some of those safeguards in place in this bill for Queensland for our Olympic and Paralympic Games and for para-sports in Queensland?

**Mr Cross:** I acknowledge that we have not heard from Jacqueline. I might let Jacqueline have a crack at that one.

**Ms Kelly:** Sorry, Jonty. It was cutting out a little bit at my end. I need you to say the last bit again.

**Ms BUSH:** No worries. The question is: essentially, what is the risk to Queensland if we do not put those safeguards into this bill to protect, enhance and uplift the visibility and participation of para-athletes?

**Ms Kelly:** I think I got the hardest question.

**Ms BUSH:** I believe in you!

**Ms Kelly:** Thank you. If I understand correctly, you are asking: if we do not ensure that we make these changes now, how is that going to impact come 2032 and our participation in para-sport? Is that correct?

**Ms BUSH:** Yes.

**Ms Kelly:** The importance here is that a lot of people living with a disability do not necessarily see themselves as athletes. It is very important that we change that message and we help young people especially and their families understand that they have the opportunity to participate in sport firstly but also to go through to the Paralympics as an athlete.

We talked about the barriers before. Another barrier there is around understanding what is available to people in the community in terms of sport and how they can become an athlete. If we want more people playing sport and we want to see our Queensland athletes competing in Brisbane 2032, we need to be showing them what it looks like to be an athlete. We need to be supporting them at the grassroots through well-supported, very accessible programs in the community, not just in metropolitan areas but in regional areas as well. We need to be providing education and support now for the people who support them—their carers, their coaches, their teachers and the community more broadly—to make sure they see themselves as an athlete and ensure they feel supported.

We can help them see themselves as an athlete. We can do everything we can to provide the opportunity but, when they get to that sport, when they get to that participation opportunity and we say the words 'inclusive' and 'all abilities'—buzzwords in our community—it has to be true to what we promote. It has to be inclusive for all disabilities and for all abilities. I think with that comes a lot of education around our coaches, our carers and our allied health staff. The importance is that we start that now and we help people with a disability to see themselves as an athlete for the future.

**Mr Cross:** If I can just add to that around the element of risk, acknowledging that flexibility enables action but does not guarantee it, our recommendation would be that it be mandated in there to have representation.

**Ms Moss:** QDN would certainly support that as well.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Michelle, Dane and Jacqueline. Unfortunately, the time allocated for this session has now well expired. Thank you for appearing before the committee today and for providing evidence. There are no questions on notice. Thank you very much for your advocacy for your sectors. I can assure you that we are very focused on accessibility for these games.

**HENNING, Ms Wendy, President, Isolated Children's Parents' Association Queensland (via videoconference)**

**PANKOWIAK, Dr Aurelie, Private capacity (via videoconference)**

**QUIGLEY, Ms Alison, Private capacity**

**ROBERTS, Dr Victoria, Private capacity (via videoconference)**

**CHAIR:** Welcome. Ms Henning, would you like to make an opening statement? After that, I will ask Ms Quigley to make an opening statement.

**Ms Henning:** Good morning, Chair and members. Thank you very much for your time today. ICPA Queensland is an apolitical, non-profit, volunteer parent organisation that has been a voice for rural and remote children throughout Queensland and Australia for 53 years. Thank you for your time for this.

We welcome the introduction of the bill to establish the Queensland Academy of Sport, QAS, as a statutory body. ICPA Queensland strongly supports the bill's objectives of assisting emerging and elite Queensland athletes in developing their abilities with the goal of representing the state and the country at the Olympics and Paralympics, specifically Brisbane 2032. We urge the committee to ensure that the bill explicitly includes children and young people from rural and remote parts of Queensland. These communities frequently produce talented and future athletes who, due to geographical isolation, do not always have the same pathways and opportunities as their urban counterparts—but not for a lack of talent.

Knowledge of opportunity is needing to be filtered through to schools, communities, sporting groups and families to ensure they are aware of programs, carnivals and coaching, as a few examples, as well as any extended outreach programs that children can participate in, mindful that they are not always school programs. They need to emphasise this with layers of support and encouragement for families, as we know that for every young person to become an athlete they need support, and in rural and remote areas that is often the family who has to be the driver. Not every family is in a position to be able to fund and facilitate transportation to training or financial support which, in turn, then limits the—

**CHAIR:** Can you hear us, Wendy? Wendy, if you can hear us, maybe turning off your video might help. We have lost sound. Ms Quigley, would you like to make an opening statement on behalf of your team?

**Ms Quigley:** Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this bill. My name is Alison Quigley. I am a former gymnast now undertaking a doctorate in law and working for the National Office for Child Safety. With me today is Dr Aurelie Pankowiak, a former athlete and researcher on abuse prevalence and disclosure. Also with me today is two-time Olympian and four-times world champion Dr Victoria Roberts, an academic with a leading research paper on the drivers of abuse in sport.

Today I will summarise the submission we have made, noting the key points, and respond to the government responses provided earlier. Before I begin, I would like to pay our respects to the hundreds of athletes who have bravely spoken out about their experiences of abuse in sport. They take on faith that people will act on what they say and do to best fix the system. Our advocacy honours the trust they place in us to raise the issues we see as critical to child protection in sport.

Let's have a look at the evidence. Abuse in sport is a recognised global concern. Athletes in Australian sport, from grassroots to high-performance environments, experience abuse frequently and at high rates across a variety of sports. The QAS Bill aims to regulate high-performance environments. Research shows us that high-performance centres are fraught with structural and social factors that enable and motivate abuse of athletes including the isolation of athletes, a lack of independent organisational oversight, hierarchical power relationships, a culture of silence, a fear of repercussion, the normalised use of psychological and physical violence to reach performance outcomes, and a 'win at all costs' approach. Researchers, athletes and survivors alike now understand the harms that are promulgated in the 'win at all costs' system. We need to see strong, effective, transparent mechanisms that demonstrate to those who have been abused that the new system has got it right.

Let's have a look at the QAS Bill. Let's have a look at section 9, 'Functions', which is to provide programs to future talented children. The Queenslanders envisaged in this bill will be children and young adults and, because of this, the government must pay due regard to the Child Safe Standards

engineered by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse located in volume 6. These standards aim to give holistic expression to child safety in its organisational remit. Our submission focuses on three of those standards, but all must be seen to be addressed in the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill.

Three standards we look at today are governance—and I know there is the resounding theme here on governance, thank you—protection of children's rights and child focused complaints mechanisms. We now take each in turn. The first Child Safe Standard states that child safety and wellbeing must be embedded in the entity's organisational leadership, governance and culture. The child-safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels including the board. Additionally, there must be risk management strategies focused on preventing, identifying and mitigating risk to children and young people.

The relevant section is part 3, 'Board', under 'Establishment, functions and powers'. If we look at section 15(3), quoted by colleagues earlier, we will see that the skills, qualifications and experience the board members of the QAS must satisfy are—

- (a) business or financial management;
- (b) corporate governance;
- (c) high-performance sport;
- (d) law;
- (e) Olympic or Paralympic sport;
- (f) another area the Minister considers relevant or necessary to support the board's functions.

We note that there is no child-safe representative, child-safe advocate or survivor advocate. Further, the wording of (f) is too broad and vague to represent a guarantee of this nature. When examined through a child-safe lens, the bill leaves child safety to the vagaries of individuals in power whose interests and needs are going to vary. When it comes to assessing risk, it is unclear how the board will understand what constitutes a risk to child welfare and athlete wellbeing if the term is not defined. To date, there is no definition in the QAS Bill or any adjacent policies. This means the board will not know or understand clearly what they are striving for. This means their efficacy will be undermined.

At section 19, we note the bill prohibits those with criminal convictions from holding government positions. However, we are acutely aware, through the literature on this point, that convictions are notoriously difficult to achieve and offenders may be charged but the process abandoned for various legal reasons. Given this, we argue the provision does not go far enough. We want to see a more comprehensive approach to investigating applicants' probity before they are appointed.

Still in relation to governance, it is unclear how committees, noted at part 3, division 4, will have any substantive decision-making powers. Reporting pathways from committees to the board are not regulated by the act and can be subject to change so, to be aligned with Child Safe Standard 1, which this is required to do under law, a child-safe committee would need to be embedded in the legislation, with guaranteed pathways for reporting to the board. Still on governance, it is unclear how the bill positions itself in relation to whistleblower functions and protections for any athlete whistleblowers in this system.

In terms of children's rights, we are looking at standard 2: children are required to be informed about their rights. It is unclear from this bill how this requirement would be met. No committees represent the rights of children, which is a considerable blind spot when we consider how many children will be using the QAS. For this reason, we argue a child safety committee needs to be embedded in the legislation; alternatively, part 5, an athlete rights division with reporting rights to the board.

In terms of complaints mechanisms, we would like to see that the legislation embeds trauma informed practices which are best placed to encourage full disclosures for athletes. The act does not address how complaints processes will be trauma informed. Policies adjacent to this act also do not address this. A key feature of a complaints mechanism is to inform continuous improvement. Although the policies provide for a QAS national integrity manager, known as a NIM, this is not the same as a child-safe complaints manager. We argue that an athlete rights division could provide the board with issues within the complaints system as seen through a child survivor lens, rather than the NIM's lens. This approach would provide a more sure-handed way to provide continual improvements to policies.

We support the bill, but our request is: the government appoint a committee comprising child-safe experts, researchers and survivors to further review this act because of the clear and manifest deficits that mean it does not align with the Child Safe Organisations Act 2024; and this committee

be tasked with aligning the bill with the standards required to be met under that governing legislation, the Child Safe Organisations Act. The advantages to doing this will include the improved reputation of the QAS, enhanced capacity to manage risk, better outcomes for children and parents, enhanced stakeholder trust, and happier, healthier athletes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Quigley. I can tell you that your colleagues online, Dr Roberts and Dr Pankowiak, were vigorously agreeing with you. We now have Wendy Henning back online. You got about 2½ minutes through your opening address. Would you like to pick up from there or would you like to send us the opening address and we can certainly have it incorporated into the proceedings?

**Ms Henning:** I can do that. In closing, it is about making sure that, regardless of where a child is, they are recognised and have the same opportunities, and their families, and that support is spread throughout the state so that anybody representing their state or country can have the opportunity regardless of their geographical location and their family's financial capability.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. It was quite interesting reading the statistics about the regional representation of kids in elite sport. Deputy Chair, would you like to ask the first question?

**Ms BUSH:** Thanks, everybody, for your submissions. Alison talked around the child-safe aspects. I thought your submission was great. You made the point that, given the timing of the Olympics, this bill is actually a bill about children. That really was very compelling to me. Alison, have you had a chance to review the department's responses to your concerns and do you have anything further to add to that? Essentially, they say that, while it is a public entity, they have to prescribe to child-safe principles anyway. I think you are saying that you need that detail and assurance. Do you want to comment on that?

**Ms Quigley:** Thank you, Jonty. That is a fabulous question and I am glad that you have given me the opportunity to speak on that point. We note that responses to date from the government are an acknowledgement that the Child Safe Standards do apply to the act. That is a good start. The response indicates that the government thinks it is sufficient to have national integrity standards without anything more. We do not agree with this approach. It takes more than tacked-on standards to make an organisation safe.

The government also notes that a reportable conduct scheme and the working with children legislation apply to the QAS. We believe this does not go far enough. As we see in the childcare industry and more recent developments in the *Four Corners* ABC report, it takes more than mere legislation to make a place safe for children to be in. What does make it safer is structural assurances like a part 5A athlete rights division, a position for a child-safe expert or survivor on the board and a committee to protect interests and have direct reports to the board. Without those sufficient board protections and structural protections for athletes inside the tent, we are not giving child safety the opportunity it needs to take hold and to flourish. We regard far more critical work is needed to be done to integrate the 10 Child Safe Standards.

**CHAIR:** Alison, I was interested in your submission and particularly the amount of research that you had done in terms of that. Could you tell the committee about that research, particularly around the historical nature of these things and the more recent experiences? Has there been a decline in the abuse?

**Ms Quigley:** I will pass over to see if Victoria or Aurelie may like to answer.

**Dr Pankowiak:** I can take this one. This is a very difficult question to answer because the way violence against children is measured across countries and in Australia is quite new and researchers use different methodologies, so we cannot compare statistics. There is only one study, which my team led, done on the statistics of child abuse in sport in Australia and focusing on the community level. We know that, obviously, it happened at the elite level, with all of the commissions that have been conducted on Swimming Australia, Gymnastics Australia and the Western Australian Institute of Sport highlighting how the elite environment contributes to the perpetration of abuse against child athletes.

The UK, which is one of the most advanced nations in terms of child safeguarding legislation and regulation, including in sport, have been putting in place a child safeguarding system for maybe 10 to 20 years. Recently, they have done a review. The review has shown that, despite those safeguarding mechanisms that are in place, child abuse and abuse against young adult athletes continues to exist.

As Ali was saying, it has to go beyond regulation and legislation, which is incredibly important. It also has to be embedded throughout the culture of the organisation. The Child Safe Standards can do that, but it has to go beyond compliance. People have to take responsibility for child safety and include children and young people in decision-making.

**Ms BUSH:** Alison, you have mentioned a couple of things: the part 5A section on athletes' rights, a dedicated board position and a dedicated committee. Would those recommendations, in your view, be compatible or erode any of the other powers and functions of this bill or of the QAS? Obviously you see them as complementary powers and functions.

**Ms Quigley:** Vicky, would you like to answer that?

**Dr Roberts:** I am happy to make a comment. It is entirely complementary and, in fact, what we know about the experience of prolonged abuse of children and young people is that their experience is one of intense fear, high levels of post-traumatic stress disorders, high levels of self-harm and also an eroding of performance. In fact, given that the overall intent of the bill is to maximise performance, it actually is a very positive inclusion and what we argue to be necessary for the safety of children. May I quickly respond to the previous question around the prevalence and whether we are seeing it going up or down?

**CHAIR:** Yes, you can.

**Dr Roberts:** There are two statistics that might be of use to you. Sport Integrity Australia, in the year 2023-24, received 608 complaints. Approximately 300 of them were related to abuse and 100 related to child abuse. We know it is highly likely to be under-represented. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission report into gymnastics, for example, 50 per cent of clubs self-reported that they had not disclosed experiences of child abuse in their organisations, obviously anonymously.

We also see an increasing level of historic complaints now coming through, consistent with research that we know about various forms of abuse, not just child sex abuse but also various forms of trauma, including the types of psychological abuse that athletes are systematically exposed to in regular training practices. They are now coming forward 20 years later. We have the tip of the iceberg happening. For example, volleyballers who were former Australian representatives at the Australian Institute of Sport at the time I was there, as well for rowers, spoke up for the first time about their experiences of coercive control. The New South Wales government recognised that coercive control does happen in contexts other than simply intimate partner violence. They are testing the laws currently in that domain. Volleyball Australia, after an investigation of those complaints, apologised for what they understood to be experiences of coercive control.

Therefore, you actually have an integration of historic complaints increasing in response to the Australian Sports Commission introducing the redress scheme for athletes who were abused at the Australian Institute of Sport and now you have seven years, of course, until the 2032 Olympics. We now have a greater level of understanding of integrity. Within sports, integrity managers are being implemented and we are seeing a growing number of complaints coming through from the grassroots. In Rowing Australia alone, we have an estimated \$500,000 to \$1 million worth of revenue that is being required to manage these complaints. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that these types of statistics and this type of cost to the organisation are going to decrease; they will only increase.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Wendy. We understand that that is a very important point. Wendy, with regard to the isolated children's network, are you aware of the emerging athletes programs and the different opportunities across the state for identifying talented youngsters?

**Ms Henning:** Yes, we are aware of that. What we have found from our member base is that not everybody is aware of it, though, and that the opportunity for them to then have their children or students be a part of it is limited with how far the outreach of knowledge goes. There might be talent in a little town or with a distance education child or somewhere else, but we are needing to make sure information is filtered out and then there is the support, if not from a family then from somebody else, to get those children to be able to participate in those programs.

**CHAIR:** Wendy, we might get you some more information on that which you can distribute through your networks.

**Ms Henning:** That would be great. We would be only too happy to pass that out to make sure it is getting out to all the families that need it.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for all the work you do for the isolated children out there. It is very great.

**Ms Henning:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Alison, in terms of your and your colleagues' research, thank you. I understand the issue of reporting and the standard of abuse that occurs across different jurisdictions from my many years as a police officer. It is a great challenge for you to grapple with that. Thank you very much for your advice regarding the governance. Do you have anything else you would like to add to the committee? We have about two minutes to go.

**Ms Quigley:** I will throw over to colleagues if they have anything. I did want to underline the critical importance of this. Also I think what I have done is skimmed the surface and hence there is a need for a more thorough going-through. I suspect that I have found three large holes; I am probably going to find 10. My supervisor says 'slow haste'. Let's proceed with slow haste, because I think we need to just slow down and pause. I am not clear on why we need to have the deadline that we have set for this bill, particularly if you consider what is at stake if we rush over these provisions. We are going to have a lot of damaged children coming through the system. It is not what we want. This is not what we are here for. Did you want to add anything, Victoria or Aurelie?

**Dr Roberts:** I will add a comment on the level of complexity of managing an organisation like the Academy of Sport and the reality of the training experiences of athletes, as Wendy was saying, and often in very remote communities. It takes an enormous amount of expertise to manage the number of moving parts and the changing nature of these risks. Once again, I reiterate the need to have those levels of expertise on the board.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. The time for this session has now expired. Thank you for appearing before the committee today and providing your evidence. Wendy, we will get that information for you. I thank you for the work that you do and the advocacy that you have all made.

**NUNN, Ms Glynis OAM OLY, Executive Director, Gold Coast Academy of Sport (via videoconference)**

**CHAIR:** Good morning, Glynis. Good to see you.

**Ms Nunn:** Good morning, thank you.

**CHAIR:** It has been a few years. We were almost neighbours in Toowoomba a few years ago. I invite you to make an opening statement before we have questions.

**Ms Nunn:** I just really wanted to thank you for the opportunity to talk to the bill. As a representative of the Gold Coast Academy of Sport, I think the objectives that have been put forward in the bill in relation to the QAS exactly mirror what the academy here on the Gold Coast is focused on, and I think that looks towards regional academies becoming a bridge between the regions and the QAS and offering a stronger pathway from grassroots to elite sport, if it is possible that we can develop Queensland and have more regional academies open throughout the state, because we are a big state.

**CHAIR:** It is a very good point. I note in your submission you talk about the New South Wales academy. I never like to look at New South Wales for things they do well, being a parochial Queenslander, and I have to say that the success of the Queensland Academy of Sport has been remarkable compared to other academies, but would you like to share with the committee some of your thoughts or ideas about the New South Wales model, particularly around funding and philanthropy?

**Ms Nunn:** I think New South Wales have a great model in that they have a strong relationship between NSWIS and the 11 regional academies. They actually receive government funding, which is something that we do not receive here in Queensland as one of the original regional academies developed here in Queensland. The 11 academies in New South Wales all receive funding through government, they also receive grants through council and then obviously there are the various sponsors that they can align with in their regions. They have a wonderful ability to offer the pathways between their region and NSWIS and they also offer the opportunity for athletes to access testing facilities. Even for coaches in the regional areas being able to develop their potential as a coach, I think that is wonderful because it offers a legacy for the regions, and that is something we need to develop here in Queensland.

**Ms BUSH:** Thank you, Glynis, for your written submission and for coming along today. I think a lot of what you said integrates really well. I do not know if you had the chance to watch QDN and Sporting Wheelies or to read their submission, but they—

**Ms Nunn:** I did.

**Ms BUSH:**—talk as well about the importance of getting integration between elite sport and grassroots sport and thinking about those opportunities for coaches and for athletes all the way through. Two areas that really interest me and concern me a little in this bill are: putting safeguards in to protect and uplift women's sport and make sure they remain viable and seen; and para-sports, disability sports. Do you have any comments on that?

**Ms Nunn:** One of the things the academy works on is the Olympic and Paralympic sports that are operating within, particularly in that lead-up to 2032. I come from a region. I was born and bred in Toowoomba. As a 10-year-old, all I wanted to do was to go to the Olympics and to be a phys. ed. teacher. One of the things that I think is really important is that we acknowledge that rural and remote areas have a problem with trying to integrate young, developing athletes into a big sport. Again, I am going to push the same barrow: we need to develop regional academies throughout Queensland to help develop these young kids and female athletes as well as coaches. Particularly in my sport, track and field, there are not a lot of female elite coaches because we have to make a choice between family and coaching. I made a choice to try to do both. It is one of the things where we have to make a choice, and it would be great if there was more opportunity in regional areas for females to have access to further development, not only in their athletic career. Let's face it, in regional areas young females make a choice of going to work or pursuing their dreams, and, if they do, a lot of them have to move to a major city.

**Ms BUSH:** What you have said is really powerful. Recognising that there is no explicit board position or obligation on the board to develop, protect and really champion women's sport, is that something you would like to see baked into this legislation? I know that your focus is on regional sport, but, supporting women in the regions and women throughout Queensland, would you like to see something baked in that would give them some greater protections?



**Ms Nunn:** Absolutely. There is a development that the AIS had not so long ago with The Secret Burden. They had some seminars there on developing young females and the different pressures that are placed upon them. They have reached out to us at Gold Coast to develop these seminars as well. I have not had an opportunity to respond because I have been alone in the academy for a few weeks, but now that I have someone else working with me it is going to help. We also have links with Her Medical, which is one of our in-kind sponsors on the Gold Coast. When we run programs for girls—with netball, for example, and other sports—we try to put forward the basis that, as a female, we are challenged with more pressures, medical issues and so forth that we have to deal with, and we try to face those and talk to the girls about those.

**CHAIR:** I want to ask about the independent authority of the Queensland Academy of Sport as we are proposing and comparing that to other academies of sport in terms of the opportunity for fundraising or philanthropic contributions, whereas the bureaucratic model is very challenging in that space. Do you have any thoughts around that?

**Ms Nunn:** I can only speak to what we do on the Gold Coast. We are funded primarily from the Gold Coast city council. Because we have had new councillors come on board and they look at what we do, and they look at what we do within the Gold Coast and surrounding areas, they have actually said that in the coming years they feel it is more a government obligation to help us. They are suggesting that this year and next year they are opting to not support us as much, which means we now have to go out and look for further sponsorship. While there is only me and a programs manager working at the academy, it makes it very difficult for us to continue to deliver programs for developing athletes as well as go out and look for sponsorship. It is a really hard thing to try to balance. We are having difficulty with that. That is one of the reasons I think there might be an opportunity for us to have a stronger pathway and a link if QAS became a statutory body.

**Mr KING:** You have probably answered it already, but I would love to tie together better the matter of female participation and disability participation in regional sport. We have so many talented people out there, but some of the imposts to getting them involved I know would be financial, travel and everything else that makes it more difficult. If you could elaborate on that, I would really appreciate it.

**Ms Nunn:** We have a program with the academy called Future Stars. That encompasses a number of athletes that come from various different sports. The one thing they have in common is that they are trying to achieve in their sport. In that particular program we have had a number of para-athletes. We have had a swimmer and a tennis player and so forth and we have tried to integrate them into that program. It is great because the other athletes then see that the athletes with a disability have the same problems they have. One of the things we have also tried to do is apply for grants. I tried last year to see if I could purchase sporting wheelies for the Sporting Wheelies to get some wheelchairs to have young athletes who do not have the opportunity to purchase wheelchairs—because they are quite expensive—come and have a try so that then we can interest them in a sport that they might never have had an opportunity to do. For us to get those grants is really hard because sometimes we are a round peg and we do not fit into that square hole.

**CHAIR:** Glynis, have you turned your mind to the model of regional academies versus the existing programs to unlock or look for talented individuals, as in the YouFor2032 model and extending that?

**Ms Nunn:** Yes. We actually went to a couple of the days that YouFor2032 ran. I do not want to talk out of turn, but I found it a little bit hard to stand and watch some of the testing that was undertaken because I did not think it was apples versus apples because there were too many different testing regimes and not everyone was looking at the same thing. We think there is an opportunity for regions to identify talent themselves. When we run our programs we do some testing. We have some testing attributes that we can go out and test the athletes with so we can see what their strengths and weaknesses are, because that is where we move forward. We address the athlete's weaknesses so that we can make them stronger and also give them the tools they can work forward with so they can advance themselves in their athletic journey. I hope that has answered your question.

**CHAIR:** It does, and you make the point well in your submission where it is a 10- to 12-year effort for a young athlete to progress to the elite stage.

**Ms Nunn:** Yes. I never had these opportunities as an athlete when I was young and I am very passionate about trying to offer young athletes not necessarily an easier way but to offer them tools they can then use to make that journey less challenging, if that makes sense.

**CHAIR:** Yes, absolutely it does. Deputy Chair, do you have any other questions?

**Ms BUSH:** No, I do not. I think Glynis has done a fantastic job of outlining her case. Thank you very much for your time. You are clearly very passionate about what you do and about developing our next talents, so thank you for everything that you have done and continue to do.

**Ms Nunn:** Thank you so much. As a Gold Coast academy we have tried to foster this interest in the Gold Coast and surrounding areas and it is something that we want to do throughout Queensland. I think it is a great opportunity to look at the FTEM model that New South Wales put into place en suisse and the model they have in New South Wales. All we need is a little bit of support from the government.

**CHAIR:** Glynis, I echo Jonty's remarks thanking you for what you are doing now in sport. Congratulations on all you have achieved. I would like to ask you one further question with regard to the Academy of Sport and the current model. As you identified in your submission, it takes 10 to 12 years to develop somebody in terms of elite sport. Kieren Perkins mentioned that, through the Win Well program that we have all signed up to, it is believed that athletes will become more rounded human beings and on their pathway to the future as coaches or other contributors to elite sport—like a continuous improvement model. Do you have any thoughts on that in closing?

**Ms Nunn:** I think there is an opportunity when we look at talent across various sports. If we see someone come into a sport and we think their body type or whatever indicates a talent transfer, we will have a great opportunity to look and say, 'Have you tried this sport?' and so forth. On the coast we offer something like 17 different programs through different sports. One example is BMX, where we have had athletes travel for four weeks—coming down to the program that we run from four hours away because there is nothing offered in other regional areas. This is a great opportunity to see what they have got. They are young, too. They can be only 10, 11 or 12. That is the future of the sport. Only last week I had people from Caboolture asking if they can come down to our sprint clinics that we are holding in a couple of weeks because there is nothing offered up there. We need to broaden our tentacles to offer these different sports to various areas because you never know what you are going to find out there.

**CHAIR:** Very true. I think we have exhausted our questions for you, Glynis. There being no further questions, we will bring this session to an end. Thank you for appearing before the committee today. Congratulations on being the elite athlete that you were and also contributing to finding the next lot of successful stars.

**Ms Nunn:** Thank you so much for the opportunity.

**GARARD, Ms Renita AM OLY, Private capacity**

**SHAKESPEAR, Ms Wilma AM, Private capacity**

**STOCKWELL, Mr Mark, OLY DUniv, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Welcome. Would you like to make an opening statement before we start our questions?

**Mr Stockwell:** I am here today really to give this committee my experiences. I was asked to chair the first statutory body that became Trade and Investment Queensland and I oversaw the extraction of Trade and Investment out of the Public Service and into an organisation similar to this. I also had experience in setting up the Commonwealth Games act in 2011 or 2012 and as chairman presided over many government acts. The other thing of particular note is my experience as the deputy chairman of the Australian Sports Commission. At that time the federal minister for sport and health asked me to take over and set up a board for the Australian Sports Foundation and we extracted that out of the bureaucracy, out of the Sports Commission. When I took that over we were turning over \$17 million and raised \$17 million for sport, and I am very proud to say that last year we raised over \$100 million for sport. If it is set up correctly, the power of what we are doing can be enormous and I am happy for you to tap into my experience.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. I am sure we will have a number of questions for you.

**Ms Garard:** I am responding on behalf of the people who made the submission that came through to the committee. I guess we will take it as read. It was pretty brief. There are just a couple of things to reiterate from discussions today. I think those who signed our document firmly believe that this bill giving the governance and accountability and making it fit for purpose will actually help deliver the agile governance we need to address many of the matters that have been raised today. I think they are not counterbalancing; they are actually all supporting. Having the right people around the table and giving them the accountability and the flexibility to do what they need to do will address many of the issues that have been discussed today.

There is one other thing that struck me while listening today. I think it is important that we are aware—it is very much known to us who live in sport—that Queensland has historically developed amazing sporting administrators who have gone and designed sporting systems all around the world. In Queensland we have plenty of these people who are probably more qualified than those in a lot of other states in Australia. When we are asking questions about who potentially will be sitting in these governance chairs, we have some really super humans to choose from. We also have these humans who are incredibly well balanced, very aware of para-sport, very aware of Indigenous and very aware of female sporting endeavours. Having sat on the QAS board too, I dare to say that we may have supported more female athletes than male athletes in the last Olympiad. I think it is really important that we are aware of that. We are doing really well in these spaces now and we already inherently do that in Queensland. We are super confident that we have the people to help deliver what needs to be delivered.

Interestingly, listening to the guys from the disability sector, Queensland for over 25 years has had someone from the para-sport space on the QAS board. We have been leading the way in that space, which is important to recognise. The final thing I want to note is that we have had a lot of discussion today, and there has been lots of information and submissions, about the pathway system. I know that Wilma will talk a little bit about this, but it is very important to see where the QAS sits. Dr Bridie Kean, who was on the QAS board with me, once said to me that participation and elite both need to shine together at the same time. I think a lot of the discussion we have had today about regional athletes, regional coaches and regional sports administrators—there is a whole sporting system in Queensland and it is about what we do with that landscape as well. The QAS to me is the shining light, and this is going to show all of the Indigenous kids, the para-kids and the kids from the regions that they can be these people. In my mind, the QAS under this structure will be that shining light and then the rest of the sporting system will be uplifted and will come along with us for the journey. We are very supportive of this bill and moving quickly, because 2028 is not far away.

**CHAIR:** Nor is 2032. Do you have an opening statement, Wilma?

**Ms Shakespear:** My background is that I was the founding director of the QAS. About 12 months ago, we lost the director who had come here to bring the organisation back to the world-class operation it once was. It had slipped enormously. When we lost her, a group of us were so concerned at what had happened. We went to both the government and the opposition and expressed our concerns with how a bureaucrat could just step in and we lose a great leader who was doing really good things. It gives me a lot of heart that the government are now following up. They

were very supportive when we had that initial meeting; they were really tuned in and asked some good questions. It just gives you heart to think politicians can deliver and will deliver. I thank that government so much. I think it is great that you are having a look, but what we want is to make it happen and get it out of bureaucracy as quick as possible.

**Ms BUSH:** Mark, in your submission you made the statement that the remit of the board needs to be broader to include non-Olympic and non-Paralympic sport. Could you expand on that position?

**Mr Stockwell:** There are Commonwealth Games sports that are not Olympic sports. Netball is one of them. There is cricket, which is going to be an Olympic sport but is not at the moment. There has been Rugby League, and there are programs in under-19 Rugby League that we have been running. What I would like to see is Olympic sports, Paralympic sports, Commonwealth Games sports and sports that are important to Queensland. That should be the remit of what the QAS is doing.

**Ms BUSH:** Mark, you might not have heard but when the department briefed us on this they kind of disclosed that under this bill the QAS sets their own priorities and is not required to publicly report on those priorities. Do you feel it is important that there is some kind of accountability about how they prioritise which sports, why and in which way?

**Mr Stockwell:** I think that is a decision for the board. There are a few things where I think we can get it right and make it better, but I would counsel against making the board too big. Renita's point is very well made: there are so many laws and so many national sports that have programs around women, Indigenous and child protection, and I think we have to be very careful we do not try to make the QAS Bill all things to all people. It needs to be a very focused high-performance environment to deliver athletes. The thing about delivering athletes is: when the Olympic final is on, it happens at a point in time regardless of who is in government, what ministerial reviews happen, what election is on or what the director-general does. This is why we need a QAS that is a statutory body.

There are some things that are very important. One is that we put in place a four-year funding program that aligns with the Olympiad, because when you are in high-performance you are trying to get talent from all over the world. Unless you can give certainty around employment terms and certainty to get you through the Paralympics or the Olympics, it is very hard to do that when you are on an annual budget trying to get money out of the government.

I think we should have an annual review process. That is one thing that I think should go into the act and has been a problem for the QAS in the past. I think we have all talked a bit about the skills matrix of the board. There is probably coaching, innovation and a few other things I have mentioned in there.

Some of the biggest things will be about long after this goes through parliament and how this thing acts and how it gets to play out. In my experience, the CEO must be appointed by the board; they must report daily to the chairman but be accountable to the board. The way the bill is at the moment, it has the Governor in Council appointing the CEO, and I think that is madness. In fact, there is no point in having a statutory body unless the CEO does report to the board. The minute it is reporting back to the minister, you lose the whole power and authority of what goes on.

I think there should be a couple of things—and I have picked up on these in my statement—around how the CEO functions and about how the strategy and the budget have to be approved by the board and it has to be accountable. The CEO certainly cannot delegate any powers or authority without the board's approval. I think there are some things in there that, if we do not fix them now, are going to get us into a lot of trouble down the track.

I am gravely concerned that you are expecting a high-performance organisation that has its own act of parliament where the CEO is employed outside of the Public Service Act, and in my experience to have the rest of the staff employed under the Public Service Act is a grave mistake. You can ask me any question you like about why I think that, but there are a couple of things at a high level where it is a mistake. The Public Service Commissioner actually has the powers to direct the CEO, and I have seen it happen. You have the board and the CEO, and it is like the poor old CEO has two masters; he has two watches and he does not know which one is telling the right time.

You need the approval of the commissioner to actually appoint a senior management team, which just takes away the whole point of high-performance. High-performance is about taking fear outside of organisations. It is about taking some measured risks; it is about pushing the boundaries; it is about supporting people. Bureaucracies set rules and standards to guard against the lowest common denominator; high-performance has to set rules and standards for the highest performance. They are two very different cultures, and that is why you need to look at this bill differently to other bills that have happened.

It is also of great concern that for the staff to be employed under this act it also makes them available to lack of accountability. They have other people they can go to as opposed to the CEO and the organisational structure, and they fall into certain other industrial instruments. All of a sudden we are looking for a high-performance organisation that can actually be unionised. With all of those sorts of things, you need to have a lot of clarity.

I think what should happen is that the board should have an employment contract with the CEO and all of the staff of the QAS should have employment contracts with the statutory authority. Then, sure, they can go back to the Public Service. We are expecting to hold coaches and athletes to account—to the highest account, the highest standard and the highest level of performance; otherwise we should not be doing any of this—but this does not. We are saying to our staff of the QAS, 'You're going to be put to a different set of rules and standards.' It is a great concern that this bill says that the CEO is employed by the board but everybody else is employed under the Public Sector Act. That is not high-performance.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Mark. That is a point well made. Jonty, do you have a question?

**Ms BUSH:** Mark, you also said in your submission that the board should be able to consider the policies of Sport Integrity Australia but not have to adopt them. Could you talk about that?

**Mr Stockwell:** In my experience, I have seen decisions made by Sport Integrity Australia to be the wrong ones. They are just humans. It is an organisation and they do not always make the right decisions. I think this board should be able to consider what other laws, other acts or other bodies have to say, but I do not think they should be fettered by having to act under someone else's jurisdiction. That is why I say it, because I have seen it, in my opinion, get it wrong.

**Mr KEMPTON:** Mark, you are obviously advocating greater autonomy for the board, which I think is a good thing, but what is the mechanism to hold them accountable for non-high-performance, in your view?

**Mr Stockwell:** I think ultimately the board will be appointed by the Governor in Council. Effectively, the minister appoints the board and gets it ticked off by the Governor in Council. I think the engagement between the chairman, the minister and the board is a vital piece of this whole thing. I think it is as simple as the board being held to account by the minister.

**Mr KEMPTON:** I guess that relationship is important, isn't it, with cooperation? How does the minister deal with a CEO if the board does not remove him for failure—

**Mr Stockwell:** Under the bill, the minister can give a direction which the chairman would have to act on. In all my time, it has never had to get to that point. To answer your question, the minister could give a direction to sack the CEO. However, it would have to be a ministerial direction.

**Mr KEMPTON:** That is the secret: to give the autonomy to let them get on with the job but to have some safeguards.

**Mr Stockwell:** Yes. Wilma did say some great things, and Wilma is the grandmother of high-performance sport in this state. In terms of women in sport in Queensland, it gives me goosebumps to watch the tsunami of women athletes in women's sport coming down the track at the moment. It is all because of women like Renita, but it is actually because of Wilma Shakespear, and to have her here today is unbelievable. She has been a great mentor to so many women.

To get back to your question, it is so important that the CEO wakes up every day and knows who their boss is and who they are accountable to. I think that is the best process I have seen. It can work; it is in other legislation to work like that. David, you do not always get great sports ministers. We have had great sports ministers—and I am not going to name who they are—and we have had some absolute shockers. When you get a minister who does not know what they are doing, he or she—and we have only had bad bloke sports ministers—will then revert to their director-general and all of a sudden you have lost control of it, and that is why we are setting this up.

**CHAIR:** Fortunately, we have a great sports minister at the moment.

**Mr Stockwell:** We have an excellent sports minister, yes.

**CHAIR:** I would like to expand on a couple of things but, firstly, Mark, did you see the response from the department with regard to your submission?

**Mr Stockwell:** No.

**CHAIR:** It was only published this morning. Essentially, with regard to the issue of staff, they talked about doing significant research and consultation with other agencies and sports institutes around that. When you get a chance to look at that, we would be interested in your feedback.

**Mr Stockwell:** Do you want me to give feedback to the committee?

**CHAIR:** We might make that a question on notice so that you can respond to the government responses.

**Mr Stockwell:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Because your submission had a lot of content, they had to actually do 11 pieces of work—from budget through to staff structures—on your submission, so thank you for the content of that. In your opening address you talked about an organisation that you are associated with that had raised \$17 million but you had grown that to be \$100 million. I asked a similar question to Glynis Nunn earlier about the independent Queensland Academy of Sport and the opportunity for it to be able to seek philanthropic funds as opposed to the bureaucratic agency. Could you talk to us about your experiences in that regard?

**Mr Stockwell:** There is only one way to get a tax deduction for donating to sport in this country, and that is through a donation through the Australian Sports Foundation. It is the only way you can do it. The Australian Sports Foundation, which I chaired, has a large team to help sports and sporting organisations to raise money, so the best thing to do is to get in touch with the Australian Sports Foundation. They do not raise the money for you, but they teach you how to raise money. You cannot just turn up and think you are going to run sport off a donation from Gina once every five years; you actually have to bring it into the grassroots and the people who are in sport. A lot of those relationships where people want to give to sport or to organisations take years and years to develop. I would say to Glynis to get on to the CEO of the Australian Sports Foundation and set up a meeting and they will help.

**Ms Garard:** If I can make a comment on that in relation to that agility in a commercial sense to secure other revenue, I think the structure needs to allow that, and sometimes it is not just cash support. There was a live example that I experienced in my time at the QAS which would be very public. The QAS has a program called Dream Twice, and this is about getting athletes jobs, so it goes back to Kieren's point at the start about athletes needing financial support. The QAS team had worked extraordinarily hard, but there was an inordinate delay in launching that. While that does not sound like much, it coincided with the period when the kids could have come back from the Paris Olympics and got jobs and been working in their down time to progress their careers and save some money so they can travel, so that real dynamic. There is an opportunity to put all the governance around it but go for it if it fits into the model. That will open up so many opportunities, and not all of them are cash generating. Some of them will just be finding opportunities for these kids to survive so they can thrive.

**CHAIR:** Yes, it is a complicated web, isn't it, of having that grassroots support and development? Mark, with regard to your point before about having a high-performing board and the high-performing achievement of athletes and the other contributing to a lower standard—

**Mr Stockwell:** Yes, to the bureaucratic cultures, yes.

**CHAIR:** Yes. Would you like to expand on that for us?

**Mr Stockwell:** As an athlete, you cannot stand on the blocks if you are scared. As an athlete, you cannot stand on the blocks and compete unless you have had discipline, unless you have turned up to training—the whole thing about being the best that you can be. Then something like the QAS needs to be there and support in pushing those boundaries. That may be, 'We want to get a new bike wheel for a cyclist,' or 'We want to develop aerodynamics,' or 'We want to work on a new training block,' or 'We want to work on a new swimsuit.' I think these are many opportunities that will actually happen in the lead-up to 2032 and beyond.

Hopefully today our Premier is going to announce the National Aquatic Centre at the Centenary Pool. It will be the best facility of its kind in the world, and organisations like the QAS will be leveraging off that and around a whole bunch of things—not just around sport science and sport psychology and diet but also technology, innovation and really being able to push those boundaries. If you want to do something—and this is why this bill is so good—and you are six months out from the Olympics and all of a sudden you see something that is happening in Europe and you need to buy one of those to get it here but you have to wait for three months for the director-general to come back from holidays and walk around the 31st floor of 1 William Street, it is too late—it has gone—and so that is why you need this bill.

I think high-performance behaviour is very much a mindset. It is very much about pushing yourself. It is very much about coming to work and training every day and being better. It is very much about coaches and the systems holding you to account and saying, 'Hey, you can do better,' or 'Hey, that's not good enough.' These are all things that breed very resilient people, and I think these are

aspirations that we need to keep alive and well in our society today. Resilience is something that is lacking everywhere, and I think these athletes and the QAS can be such a guiding, powerful role model in our community in the face of everyone else trying to dumb things down.

**Mr JAMES:** Thanks, Mark, for your direct comments.

**Mr Stockwell:** Yes. We do not have enough time to be indirect.

**Mr JAMES:** No, you are right; it is very refreshing. From sitting here today and listening to everyone speak it seems everyone wants to be on the board and it has the potential to try to be all things to all people, so I am with you: I think the board can get too big. Can you comment on the fact that the board has the potential to be top-heavy—

**Mr Stockwell:** Yes, and I think Renita said it very well, but in my experience a board of somewhere between five and eight is perfect. We cannot be all things to all people. All of these passionate people we have heard from today have a very important voice, and there are many avenues for those voices to be heard and there are many other acts of parliament, both federal and state, that are working on those things. I would counsel this committee away from trying to be all things to all people. As a case in point, the BOCOG board is up at, I think, about 25 or 26 people now and I have watched that do exactly what has been suggested today.

I know that the government is looking at—and I have made a submission to the government about this—reducing the size of the board, because you just cannot act and cannot get the best outcomes. A professional CEO, a professional board and the right board members tapped into sport and all of the things that we have talked about will pick up on everything, and it is happening today. Para-sport in this country has never had so much visibility, and I remember that at the Commonwealth Games in 2018 we actually put para-sport and able-body sport together at the same event, which was the first time. There is an evolution that is happening, and it is a very good one. I did smile when I heard that the Australian Sports Commission is set up exactly like what we are proposing with this organisation with this bill. They have a board and they have separate powers, so I think there are plenty of examples, but I would counsel away from trying to be too prescriptive about who gets a seat around the table.

**Mr JAMES:** Having said that, we welcome your submission that Jim was talking about to include the make-up of the board. That would be excellent.

**Mr Stockwell:** Yes, I think there are a couple of obvious ones that I have talked about—coaching, innovation. Some of those are cutting-edge stuff. I think AI probably has innovation as part of that so, yes, there are a few things in there. The system is robust enough now that we do not have to segment it. Board members with those broad skills will understand how important child safety is. Just totally off point, I want to see parents actively involved in these sporting pathways and parents have a bigger participation in what we are doing rather than less. I think if parents were around more—and we have to work on a way to do that—that would be a good thing. That is a little side point.

**CHAIR:** It is a good point, though. It is fundamental to our society.

**Mr KEMPTON:** Mark, you heard the submission around child safety. Competitive sport at any level has a lot of stress; otherwise, you do not become a high performer. You are probably aware of that yourself. Do you think there are sufficient safeguards at the moment without setting up a committee to advise the board in respect of that issue, which seems to be just another level of—

**Mr Stockwell:** Yes, I do. I watched Tracy go through the royal commission with swimming and the recommendations that were made out of that. We talked about gymnastics. Without putting someone on the board, one of the standing orders of the board should be to sit there and say to all of the sports that they are dealing with, 'What's your child safety program?' This board cannot do it all and if it tries to it will fail, but it can hold the sports that it interacts with to account. The QAS does employ coaches, but those coaches come out of the system, come out of the sports. We are very much at the pointy end, and the national sporting organisations have a huge role to play in what we are doing here today.

**Mr KEMPTON:** Yes, because I guess it is a very subjective test as to when it becomes a child safety issue and if you try to build it in then there is a risk of—

**Mr Stockwell:** Yes, I do not think we should build it in.

**Mr KEMPTON:** Yes, I agree.

**Ms Garard:** I just want to add that I chaired the safety committee at the QAS, so we recently—in the last 12 months—have built world-class child protection policies. The other thing to be aware of is that the environment is very complex because the training environments, as Mark said, are often

the sports training environments and they are not the QAS's training environments, so the complexity in designing those systems and processes and having people who understand sport on the board is critical because they have an awareness of why it is needed and what the rules are but they can understand the situation these kids are in.

**CHAIR:** Thanks very much. We have run out of time, but we will give you the opportunity, Mark, to address those government responses to your submission, and thank you very much for that. Was there anything else that you needed to succinctly add?

**Mr Stockwell:** I would love to tap into more Indigenous talent in North Queensland. It is everywhere. It is a huge opportunity.

**CHAIR:** Renita, did you have anything else to add?

**Ms Garard:** The only thing was in relation to not being overly prescriptive. Also, the sporting landscape is changing really fast. In terms of some of the things about how many people you have on a board, you might have six this year and eight next year and five, because the world is moving so fast with regard to what you need, so prescribing a lot of things makes it quite difficult. Getting the right people making those decisions is my focus.

**CHAIR:** Yes, it is a good point—

**Mr Stockwell:** You do not want to scare everyone off.

**CHAIR:**—because there are different stages to every development, aren't there? Wilma, I have to give the grandmother of elite sport of Queensland the last opportunity.

**Ms Shakespear:** The one thing I am really keen to see change is that all QAS staff are employed by the QAS. I think it is really taking a step backwards if we allow them to be employed under a bureaucratic system. I am quite heartened by the fact that it is moving and we are going to get it and get it well.

**Mr Stockwell:** And we have bipartisan support, which is great and a credit to everyone.

**CHAIR:** It is an exciting time for Queensland and particularly our great sporting culture right across the state. It is something that we do here very well. It is time for this session to end, so thank you very much for your presentation today and for your submissions. Thank you for answering the questions. There is one question on notice that I have given Mark in terms of the opportunity to address the responses of the department to his submission, so if you could get that to us by 31 March that would be really great—and I dare say, as per your submission, it will be fairly succinct.

**Mr Stockwell:** It will be.

**CHAIR:** That concludes the hearing today. Thank you to everyone who has participated. Thank you to our Hansard reporters and broadcast staff for their assistance. A transcript of today's hearing will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. I declare this public hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 12.43 pm.**