

**Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025**

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**Submitted by:** Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN)  
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14 March 2025

Dear Parliamentary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025.

**Background:**

QDN is an organisation of, for, and with people with disability. QDN operates a state-wide network of 3,000+ members and supporters who provide information, feedback and views based on their lived experience, which inform the organisation's systemic advocacy activities. QDN members are people with diverse disability including physical, intellectual, sensory, cognitive, neurological, psychosocial and neurodiverse and live in communities across our state. QDN is the Executive Peak Body for people with disability in Queensland, providing overarching leadership and coordination across the 17 funded Disability Peak Body and Representative Program organisations around the state. QDN's work is underpinned by a commitment to inclusion, co-design, collaboration, and innovation and is guided by the pillars of inform, connect, lead and influence.

QDN undertakes a range of project and programs across different portfolio areas including health, housing, transport, disaster preparedness and response, digital inclusion, sport, the arts, justice, domestic and family violence. QDN is leading the sector response to Queensland Disability Stakeholder Engagement and Co-Design Strategy as part of the Queensland Government's response to disability reforms including the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review and the implementation of the Queensland Disability Reform Framework.

QDN's members see Brisbane 2032 as a critical driver of change in accessibility and inclusion especially in community level participation in sport, the pathways to elite para sport and the opportunity to compete internationally in elite para sports.

QDN is partnering with the Jamieson Trauma Institute (JTI) from Metro North Health on the Empower Project, a Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games 2032 Legacy project. The Empower Project will explore and address barriers to sports and recreation participation for Queenslanders with disability to foster a more inclusive and accessible sports and recreation environment. In this program we will also work collaboratively with the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Griffith University, Sporting Wheelies, the University of Queensland (UQ) and other key representatives across the sporting and disability sector. The project will be completed by November 2026. The Empower Legacy Project is proudly supported by framework to improve the understanding of sports and recreation participation data, specifically for Queenslanders with disability. It will also enhance understanding of the experiences and barriers to sports and recreation participation for people with disability and increase community awareness of accessibility and inclusivity of sports and recreation programs and facilities for individuals with disability. As one of the first funded legacy projects it will provide a legacy contribution fostering an inclusive sports and recreation culture that lasts beyond the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games.

### **QDN feedback to Draft Bill**

QDN acknowledges the Bill and its functions to move Queensland Academy of Sport to a statutory body, inline with many other Australian jurisdictions and the rationale and intention of this to deliver better outcomes for Queensland athletes and para athletes.

QDN sees that it is critical that there are measures put in place within this Bill that ensure disability inclusion is embedded within the governance and operational structures and frameworks to ensure that people with disability are given equal focus, support, investment, resources and opportunities as non-disabled athletes.

#### **1. Governance**

The Bill will establish the board and Division 2 Composition Clause 15 sets out that the board must consist of at least 5, but not more than, 8 persons, all of whom who are to be appointed by the Governor in Council on recommendation of the Minister. Subsection (3) provides that the Minister must be satisfied a person has qualifications, skills or experience in at least one of the below areas prior to recommending for appointment: business or financial management; corporate governance; high-performance sport; law; Olympic or Paralympic sport another area the Minister considers relevant or necessary to support the board's functions.

Core to the success this and broader disability inclusion reforms is ensuring that the voice and leadership of people with disability can input into decision making across the organisation. A key part of this is good engagement and co-design. By involving people with disability and diverse backgrounds from the beginning in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of projects and initiatives, we will ensure that people's lived experience is front and centre to deliver more user-friendly, inclusive, accessible and fit-for-purpose products, services and policy.

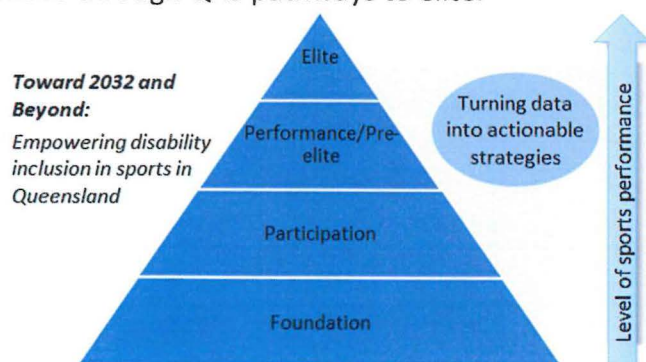
QDN recommends:

- That the Bill is drafted with content that identifies one of these positions is specifically dedicated to para sport expertise and disability inclusion to ensure that clear representation of disability is there at the decision making table.
- Establishment of an advisory committee mechanism to the Board that has representation of disability sport/para sport including the key functions of the QAS across development programs, high performance coaching, inclusive and accessible infrastructure and procurement, and research and disability focused sports science, sports medicine and sports technology research.
- Embed co-design and consultation requirements with people with disability before, during and after procurement and partnerships and that this is structured around obligations of disability legislation and functional requirements of disability.

## 2. Community level participation pathways to elite para sport

More than 900,000 Queenslanders have a disability, and it is important part of inclusion and individual health and well-being that there is a clear connection and pathways from community level participation through to elite para sport. It is also important to look at how Queensland can create a lasting legacy to increase participation of people with disability of all ages in sport and recreation, provide pathways for aspiring athletes with disability in achieving their goals to be part of 2032 Games and the subsequent links of sport and recreation participation to long term benefits to health and well-being. As we approach the year 2032 and beyond, an opportunity arises to catalyse positive change and reshape the landscape of disability access and inclusion in sports, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

As part of submitting and hosting the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Government has committed to ‘... **engaging another 500 000 people with a disability in sport by 2032**’.<sup>1</sup> By increasing participation in sport and recreation this will enable a greater pipeline of athletes with disability to move through QAS pathways to elite.



<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Documents/International-Olympic-Committee/Commissions/Future-host-commission/The-Games-of-The-Olympiad/Brisbane-2032-FHC-Questionnaire-Response.pdf>. (p45).

Increasing community level and grass roots participation in sport and recreation by people with diverse disability needs to be considered in the broader landscape of pathways to elite sports.

QDN recommends:

- Integration of community level grassroots sports programs for people with disability as part of the QAS structured pathways including mechanisms for early identification of athletes and development programs.

### **3. Partnerships and collaborate with national and state sporting organisations**

It is important that partnerships and collaborations include disability sport organisations who play a key role in the development of athletes with disability and form an important part of the pipeline for para athletes. These partnerships are also critical to developing emerging coaches, researchers, sports medicine professionals etc in developing sector expertise in inclusive sport practices.

QDN recommends:

- Bill includes specific requirements for formalised partnerships between disability sport organisations, and national and state para sport organisations.

### **4. Partnerships to maximise the opportunity for the Academy to engage commercial and philanthropic partners**

It is acknowledged that there are certain segments of Australia's sporting codes that attract greater commercial and philanthropic partners and therefore greater investment and money that flows to these. To ensure that para sport is able to grow and accelerate and benefit from the shift from government department to statutory body functions that this Bill enables, QDN sees it is critical to have safeguards in place to ensure a focus is given to partnerships and activities that focus on people with disability.

QDN recommends:

- Bill includes specific requirements for disability focused activities to deliver commercial and philanthropic partners and/or mechanisms for distribution of investments to safeguard disability and para sport and subsequent development and opportunities for athletes with disability.

Yours sincerely



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**Chief Executive Officer**



Queenslanders with Disability Network

