



Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2025

QUEENSLAND ACADEMY OF SPORT BILL

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (5.59 pm): I rise to contribute to the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025. The Queensland Academy of Sport Bill arises from sector feedback that the previous Labor government heard and took on board about the need for a more agile and responsive structure to supercharge Queensland's high-performance sport landscape. Following a review, the Miles Labor government committed to the structural reform now formalised in the bill we see today which will establish the Queensland Academy of Sport as an independent statutory body, determine its purpose and establish its board and procedures. At the outset, I can confirm that the opposition supports the objectives of this bill, especially as Queensland prepares for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The opposition has listened to the Queensland Academy of Sport and the high-performance sport sector and we support reforms that will help the academy maximise the success of our Queensland athletes as we embark on a new golden age.

However, as drafted, the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill misses key opportunities to make the academy the very best that it can be. In so doing, the bill misses the opportunity to grow Queensland athletes to be the very best that they can be. It misses the opportunity to support Queensland athletes with disability and ensure their voices are heard. It misses the opportunity to support our amazing female athletes. Disappointingly, it fails to even mention regional athletes. Disgracefully, it misses opportunities to protect athletes, especially child athletes, from harm and abuse. As such, the opposition intends to move amendments to strengthen the bill. For the benefit of the House I table a copy of those amendments.

Tabled paper: Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025, amendments to be moved by Hon. Glenn Butcher MP [432](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025, explanatory notes to Hon. Glenn Butcher's amendments [433](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Hon. Glenn Butcher's amendments [434](#).

Despite surging popularity, only 10 per cent of sports funding nationally goes to women's sport. Transparency matters, and Queensland women and girls deserve to know how much of the QAS budget goes to developing women's sport and the sporting heroes who they look up to. That is why the opposition's amendments require the Queensland Academy of Sport to publish in its annual report each year the proportion of funding dedicated to women's sport along with activities it has undertaken and the objectives for women's sport for the year ahead.

One in four people with disability currently participate in sport, but three times that number say that they would like to. While one in four Queenslanders live with a disability, only a tiny proportion of sports funding goes to para-sport. The Queensland government committed that a legacy for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games would be an extra 500,000 people with disability participating in sport. As Mr Dane Cross, CEO of Sporting Wheelies, said to the committee—

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 people with disability.

The opposition has listened. That is why our amendments will require that at least one member of the QAS board must, in addition to the other qualifying skills and experience, be a person with lived experience of disability. The Crisafulli LNP government can claim to care about hearing from people with disability, but they refuse to include even one person with a disability on the QAS board permanently. The government amendments do not guarantee this position on the board. It is important that we hear from them. Only by ensuring the QAS hears those voices can we create a pipeline of champions between now and 2032 that will make our Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games the most golden in history. Our amendment achieves just that. Only by baking in transparency about QAS funding and activities can para-athletes be confident that they are going to get the support they merit.

It simply is not good enough to leave the success of Queensland's women athletes and para-athletes to chance. The opposition's amendments will require the academy to publish in its annual report the proportion of its spending on women's sport and para-sport, the activities that it undertakes to foster women's sport and para-sport and the objectives of the previous year and the year ahead for women's sport and para-sport.

The Queensland Academy of Sport Bill is deeply relevant to children. Some future 2032 Olympians may be as young as 10 years old now and if they show promise as emerging athletes they could spend most of their childhood years under the supervision of the Queensland Academy of Sport. Sadly, we know that abuse can be common in high-performance sport settings and the risk is heightened for child athletes. As drafted, the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill does not require the QAS board to take concrete steps to protect those young athletes, and especially child athletes, from harm and abuse. This is a slap in the face of Queenslanders who have experienced abuse in a high-performance sport context and those who advocate for them—advocates like Dr Aurelie Pankowiak and Dr Victoria Roberts who spoke during the committee process about the severe impact of abuse on young athletes. The Crisafulli LNP government loves to talk a big game about how they listen to victims, but in the case of this bill they simply have not done the work. There is simply no excuse for not taking steps to protect children from harm and abuse, particularly in sporting applications.

In the absence of leadership from the Crisafulli LNP government to address the gaps in this bill that leave child athletes vulnerable, the opposition's amendments require the QAS board to establish a harm prevention and safety committee to advise the board and specifically task that committee with developing a charter of athletes' rights and a child-friendly complaints process. When it comes to protecting athletes and children from harm, the opposition will put in the work if the Crisafulli LNP government will not.

As a regional member myself, it is deeply disappointing that on legislation as important as the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill, the bill as drafted by the LNP government does not make a single mention of regional Queensland. Based on this bill as introduced by the Crisafulli LNP government, it is like regional athletes do not exist. That is why the opposition amendments require the Queensland Academy of Sport board to address in each annual report how they have supported regional Queensland events and backed the participation of athletes from our regions.

The Crisafulli LNP government like to build themselves up as hardworking but the bill before the House is, frankly, inadequate and lazy. The government did not do its homework on some of the most important aspects of running a high-performance sport academy in Queensland. They shamefully dropped the ball on children's safety. They failed to ensure women athletes are supported. They left people with disability without a seat at our most important table for para-athletes. They failed to consider the needs of regional athletes. The lazy Crisafulli LNP government did not listen and did not respond to what key stakeholders told them about this bill. It has taken the Labor opposition to step up and ensure the Queensland Academy of Sport is 'race ready' for 2032 and beyond.

Finally, as we debate this bill with its important role in identifying and developing the pipeline of young athletes who will deliver gold for Queensland in 2032, I call on the Crisafulli LNP government to make sure that all Queensland kids can participate in sport during the current cost-of-living crisis. Clause 3 outlining the purposes of this bill speaks to the importance of the academy's role in identifying and developing emerging young talent and athletes. Where do these emerging athletes get their start? They get their start from community sport.

When it comes to getting kids involved in sport, Labor's FairPlay vouchers have been a huge success. Hundreds and thousands of children have been able to participate in sport because Labor's FairPlay vouchers helped their family cover the costs. That is why today I call on the Crisafulli LNP government to save Labor's FairPlay vouchers. In a cost-of-living crisis, Queensland kids and their families rely on Labor's FairPlay vouchers. Many Olympians and Paralympians who stand on the podium in 2032 will get their start from FairPlay vouchers in Queensland provided that the LNP do not cut them. Labor knows that Queensland is the greatest country in the world and our future elite athletes

deserve support to be the very best that they can be. It is time for the LNP to stop hiding and come clean. During historic cost-of-living pressure on families and with the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games on the horizon, will they cut these FairPlay vouchers? I also thank the committee and the many stakeholders—

Mr Watts interjected.

Mr BUTCHER: I am not taking your interjections. Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot concentrate with the noise from over there.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Member for Gladstone, you have been skirting very close on the issue of relevance. If you come back to the bill full square, you will be right.

Mr BUTCHER: I also thank the committee and the many stakeholders who gave up their valuable time to inform the House of the wideranging implications of this very important bill. I particularly acknowledge the deputy chair, the member for Cooper, who championed the need for these critical amendments. I encourage members to support our amendments to this bill.