




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2025

QUEENSLAND ACADEMY OF SPORT BILL

 **Mr JAMES** (Mulgrave—LNP) (7.46 pm): I rise in support of the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025. The primary objectives of the bill are to: establish the Queensland Academy of Sport as a statutory body, allowing the academy to act with agility, efficiency and flexibility; and establish a board for the academy to ensure it performs its functions in a proper, effective and efficient way.

Originally established in 1991, the academy has to date formed part of a Queensland government department. The role of the academy is to act as the government's high-performance sport agency with responsibility for preparing Queensland elite athletes, teams and coaches for world-class success on the world stage.

To this end, it is critical to the success of Queensland athletes and events more broadly that the academy can function in an agile and responsive way. Given the structural and administrative requirements of a government department, the academy's delivery of its objectives can be hindered by system complexities and processes that are not fit for purpose for elite sports, directly impacting athlete competitiveness, medal chances and the overall agility and responsiveness of the academy.

A statutory body is a separate legal entity that operates autonomously to enable the academy to function with greater operational efficiency, flexibility and financial independence. On 12 July 2024 the previous Labor government announced that the academy would transition to become a statutory body. This followed a review of the organisation and consultation with key stakeholders. However, the previous Labor government then delayed the transition out to two years. The Crisafulli government accelerated the transition to be completed in six months. This move will cut red tape and provide the academy with the independence and agility it needs to be at the top of its game in elite sport.

The proposed commencement date of 1 July 2025 will provide certainty for the academy and ensure any potential disruptions for sports and athletes will be reduced as much as possible prior to the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The legislation will not change the role of the academy. The main purpose is: to assist emerging and elite Queensland athletes to achieve success at the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games; to identify and foster the development of Queenslanders who demonstrate the talent to develop into future elite athletes; and to collaborate with institutes of sport and national and Queensland sporting organisations to maximise the success of Australian athletes at the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games.

The transition of the academy to a statutory body and the development of enabling legislation has been informed through consultation undertaken with several statutory bodies in Queensland as well as interstate high-performance sporting institutes, including Economic Development Queensland, Health and Wellbeing Queensland, the Residential Tenancies Authority, Stadiums Queensland, the Victorian Institute of Sport and the New South Wales Institute of Sport. The academy will be required to comply with all relevant Queensland legislative frameworks. The 2032 high-performance strategy

serves as the blueprint that will supercharge Queensland's efforts to identify the journeys of talented athletes and coaches towards unmatched success at the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The establishment of an independent academy will allow for additional focus to be placed on programs such as YouFor2032. The foreseen benefits of transitioning the academy to a statutory body include improved governance through an independent board with high-performance sports experience and improved operational efficiency for the academy. While winning medals is certainly at the heart of what the academy does, this enhanced support would not be limited to supporting performance at an Olympic or Paralympic Games. A more efficient academy will also maximise time and energy for ensuring the wellbeing of athletes, creating better partnerships with national and state sporting organisations and creating more commercial and/or philanthropic partnerships to benefit athletes.

In addition to this, several high-profile sports administrators have spoken publicly in favour of the transition which can build further confidence in the academy's ability to positively impact Queensland athletes. A cohort of former sports administrators and Olympic athletes provided a submission to the committee's inquiry on the bill, expressing their strong support. This cohort included: Wilma Shakespear, the founding director of the academy; Peter Conde, the former CEO of the Australian Institute of Sport; Alex Baumann, double Olympic gold medallist and former CEO of Swimming Australia; Tracy Stockwell, Olympic gold medallist and former academy board member and chair; Andrew Trim, dual Olympic medallist and president of Paddle Australia; Bruce Hatcher, former deputy chairman of the academy board and former chairman of Queensland Rugby League; and Renita Garard, dual Olympic gold medallist and former chair of the academy board.

The Crisafulli government is committed to addressing diversity and inclusion on Queensland government boards, committees and other government bodies, including gender equality. This commitment will apply to the board of the academy. These provisions enable board members to be appointed based on Paralympic sport and disability inclusion skills and expertise.

Support of Paralympic sport and Paralympic athletes is a key tenet of the academy. The academy recently announced a \$2 million investment to establish a new Para Sport Unit which will more than double the talent pipeline leading up to Brisbane 2032. The unit, delivered in partnership with the Australian Institute of Sport and Paralympics Australia, will reduce barriers for participation and talent identification, enhance performance pathways and develop world-class para-sport coaches. The Para Sport Unit aims to remove these barriers and create inclusive, visible pathways for people with disabilities to engage in sport by providing access to tailored programs and skilled coaches who can nurture their talent.

In summing up, the bill will achieve the objective of an agile and responsive academy by legislating powers and functions of the academy and its board that enable streamlined structures, delegations and processes that are specific to the needs of high-performance sports. The academy has all the powers of an individual and may do anything necessary or convenient to be done in the performance of its functions. The establishment of the academy as an independent statutory body and the establishment of the board to oversee the operations of the academy will achieve this. I commend the bill to the House.