



Speech By  
**Hon. Tim Mander**


**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 February 2025

**QUEENSLAND ACADEMY OF SPORT BILL**

**Message from Governor**

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Sport and Racing and Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games) (12.49 pm): I present a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The message from Her Excellency recommends the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MESSAGE

QUEENSLAND ACADEMY OF SPORT BILL 2025

*Constitution of Queensland 2001*, section 68

I, DR JEANNETTE ROSITA YOUNG AC PSM, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intitled—


A Bill for an Act to establish the Queensland Academy of Sport, and to amend this Act and the Public Sector Act 2022 for particular purposes

GOVERNOR

Date: 18 February 2025

*Tabled paper:* Message, dated 18 February 2025, from Her Excellency the Governor, recommending the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025 [83](#).

**Introduction**

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Sport and Racing and Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games) (12.49 pm): I present a bill for an act to establish the Queensland Academy of Sport, and to amend this act and the Public Sector Act 2022 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025 [84](#).

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025, explanatory notes [85](#).

*Tabled paper:* Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025, statement of compatibility with human rights [86](#).

It is with a sense of purpose and anticipation that I rise today to introduce into parliament a landmark piece of legislation, the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025. The bill will establish the Queensland Academy of Sport, otherwise known as the academy, as an independent statutory body, with a proposed commencement date of 1 July 2025. The academy is Queensland's high-performance sports agency.

As I impressed upon the House last year, it is up to each of us to restore Queensland's enthusiasm for the games. This is something I raised when I was interviewed as part of the 100-day review of games infrastructure and planning. Our collective goal is to ensure better games outcomes for all Queenslanders—in particular, sports participants, clubs and codes, especially in our regions. We must ensure we make the most of the opportunities ahead of us. We owe it to the next generation of Queenslanders who dream of growing up to be an athlete, work on the games or draw inspiration from the Olympic spirit to help achieve personal goals. Any decisions we make now must be with a long-term benefit in mind. This transition is a key step in the right direction.

The Queensland Academy of Sport plays a vital role in the cultivation, development and pursuit of excellence among our elite athletes. By nurturing talent that goes on to represent Queensland and Australia on the world stage, the academy is instrumental not only in shaping the champions of today but also in paving the way for future generations of athletes. Since its establishment in 1991, the academy has operated as a business unit within a Queensland government department and it currently forms part of the Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is now time to give the academy the autonomy and agility it needs to take its operations to the next level. We are moving to cut red tape, keep administration out of the way of achievement and keep paperwork away from performance. The academy is at the juncture of commencing activities and entering arrangements that will extend to the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Following public advocacy by numerous high-profile athletes and sports administrators such as Wayne Bennett, Cate Campbell, Shayna Jack and Alex Newton, the former government announced in July last year that the academy would be transitioned to a statutory body within two years. That is way too long. We took action within our first 100 days of government. Let me start by quoting Shayna Jack, two-time Olympian from Paris, on the transitioning of the QAS. She said—

Becoming an independent group allows the QAS to have a bit more of an athlete focus—we will actually get the support we need going through to the games in LA, but even more excitingly in Brisbane.

Five-time Olympian Nat Cook said—

Having the Queensland Academy of Sport become a statutory body allows them to make dynamic, nimble decisions to get our athletes at the right events at the right time with the right preparation. The staff here are amazing but they've spent too much time cutting through red tape.

**Ms McMillan:** Rubbish!

**Mr MANDER:** I will take that interjection. I am quoting Nat Cook, five-time Olympian. I think I would take notice of her opinion over that of the member for Mansfield with regard to the efficacy of the Queensland Academy of Sport and why this transition is so important. She continued—

So, let's remove that—thanks to Tim Mander and the Crisafulli Government.

Swimming legend Duncan Armstrong said—

How do we improve the QAS ... it is about what we hold in sport dear ... it is about agility, being able to make decisions, being able to adapt and make the changes we need to make to stay on top all the way to 2032 and well beyond.

The QAS has done an incredible job since its inception, years and years of great performance all the way through to what we saw in Paris, where if Queensland was a nation it would have been in the top 10 for medals in both the Paralympic Games and Olympic Games. We want this strong tradition of performance to continue, and we believe going to a statutory body will give the agility, adaption and also the executive to be at that elite level.

The academy has made remarkable strides, but its ability to fully achieve its objectives is often hindered by the structural and administrative requirements that come with being embedded within a government department. As we know, this kind of burdensome government control is what those opposite thrive on. The academy has outgrown the confines of government bureaucracy—

**Ms McMillan** interjected.

**Mr MANDER:** I will take the interjection from the member for Mansfield. This was a decision that the previous government made. They made the decision to transition the academy from a state government entity to a statutory body. Now the member is bagging the decision. I never heard her bagging the decision last year. It was a decision made by the previous government which we are carrying through. The major difference is that they were going to take two years to do it. The comments of the member for Mansfield show that their heart was never in it. They were dragged kicking and screaming because of pressure from people in the high-performance sector—people like Wayne Bennett. What did they do? They kicked the can down the road. They said it would take two years. When we came into government we showed that we are a government of agility, we are a government that is nimble and we are a government that can move quickly. I accelerated the process to make sure this comes into effect from 1 July this year.

The academy has outgrown the confines of government bureaucracy, and this transition serves the needs of the academy as an elite high-performance sports institute. We know from our research of institutes across Australia and the world that independence and autonomy is key to ongoing excellence. Processes that are not fit for purpose can directly impact the overall agility and responsiveness of the academy. The academy operates in a highly specialised field, requiring unique operational structures. Shared resources and rigid administrative systems can limit its operational efficiency.

Establishing the academy as a statutory body provides the most effective solution to these issues. As an autonomous legal entity, the academy will gain greater operational and financial independence while remaining accountable to government standards and public sector regulations. A statutory body model will allow the academy to control its own funds, optimise its resources and create a governance framework tailored to its unique needs. Establishment as a statutory body provides the most effective mechanism through which to address issues compared to other organisational form options such as remaining in its host department, instating an advisory committee or transitioning to a statutory authority. I am very excited that we have accelerated the transition to have the academy commence in its new form from 1 July 2025. As I mentioned, that is 12 months sooner than the previous government had promised.



**Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Sport and Racing and Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games) (2.59 pm), continuing: I will continue my introductory speech about the Queensland Academy of Sport transition. It is necessary to transition the academy with a proposed commencement date of 1 July 2025 to avoid protracted uncertainty for the staff of the academy and to ensure any potential disruptions for sports and athletes are minimised prior to Los Angeles 2028. Queensland's green and gold runway extends beyond 2028, with sights set firmly on delivering our best ever performance during the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Establishment of the academy in its statutory body form on 1 July 2025 will ensure the focus remains on supporting athletes and hosting a successful Brisbane 2032.

The Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be a defining moment for our state—a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to showcase our state to the world, boost our economy, create jobs and leave a lasting legacy for generations to come—but under the former Labor government its preparation was nothing short of a shambles and that opportunity was being squandered. Instead of delivering a clear, coordinated vision for Brisbane 2032, the former Labor government gave us delays, budget blowouts and political infighting. In a clear act of contempt, the former government scrapped the dedicated Olympic and Paralympic portfolio altogether, walking away from the responsibility of delivering a games that will benefit all Queenslanders.

Of course we all remember that in 2021 the former Labor government announced that the Gabba would be rebuilt at a cost of \$1 billion. The Auditor-General was asked about that later in terms of how he thought that that \$1 billion figure had been come to and he said, 'I think it was in a press statement.' Two years later the figure had ballooned to \$2.7 billion. When Graham Quirk did his 60-day sport review, that figure went to over \$3 billion. Whilst talking about the review that former lord mayor Graham Quirk delivered, in his final report he recommended that the QSAC stadium should not be used as an Olympic and Paralympic Games venue to host the track and field events. Instead of listening to the experts, the former Labor government announced on 18 March 2024 that it would upgrade QSAC at a cost of approximately \$1.6 billion and that the Gabba redevelopment was scratched. As has been said today in the parliament by the Deputy Premier and previously by the Premier, the only person who thinks it is a good idea to upgrade QSAC with temporary stadiums at \$1.6 billion is the current opposition leader. In introducing this bill now, we have listened to the experts in the field and we will do right by our athletes, and we will continue to do right by all Queenslanders.

A key deliverable in my portfolio is ensuring further development of pathways for Queenslanders to grow from grassroots participation to the elite athletic level. Ensuring the academy performs at its best is a key component of improving this pathway, and the YouFor2032 program and Para Sport Unit are testament to this. By establishing the academy as a statutory body along an accelerated timeline, this government is moving to ensure Queensland's sporting superstars shine on the world stage and amongst their peers. The engagement of the academy's peers has been critical to drive us towards the introduction of this bill today.

Extensive consultation has occurred with a number of interstate high-performance sport institutes and Queensland statutory bodies and has informed the drafting of the legislation, including the NSW Institute of Sport, the Victorian Institute of Sport, Economic Development Queensland, Health and Wellbeing Queensland and Stadiums Queensland. I am confident that the bill meets all of the necessary

requirements to provide the academy with a solid basis for its establishment. The bill has been prepared drawing upon the New South Wales Institute of Sport Act 1995, which establishes the NSW Institute of Sport as a statutory body. However, the bill is specific to the state of Queensland and the needs of our academy.

The bill provides that the academy will be a statutory body for the purposes of the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982 and the Financial Accountability Act 2009 and will be a unit of public administration under the Crime and Corruption Act 2001. Other Queensland integrity legislation such as the Right to Information Act 2009, the Information Privacy Act 2009 and the Human Rights Act 2019 will continue to apply to the academy. The primary objectives of the bill are twofold: first, we seek to establish the Queensland Academy of Sport as a statutory body, representing a progressive framework that allows the academy to act with agility, efficiency and flexibility; and, second, we aim to establish a board of directors for the academy—a body comprised of individuals with diverse expertise, dedication and insight. The board will be the guiding force, ensuring the academy performs its functions in a manner that is proper, effective and efficient. It will steer the academy towards achieving its goals with integrity and focus.

The benefits to the academy of transitioning to a statutory body include improved governance, improved flexibility to recruit specialised staff to support sports, and improved operational efficiency for the academy. A more efficient academy will maximise time and energy invested to ensure the performance and wellbeing of athletes is at the forefront of our efforts and to create better partnerships with national and state sporting organisations. The purpose of the academy does not change as part of the transition to its independent form, with its key purposes being to assist emerging and elite Queensland athletes to achieve success at the Olympic and Paralympic Games; partner with national and Queensland sporting organisations to identify and develop talented Queenslanders into future elite athletes; and collaborate with institutes of sport and national and Queensland sporting organisations to maximise the success of Australian athletes at the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The bill establishes the academy as a body corporate that represents the state and which has the privileges and immunities of the state. The academy's functions centre around providing programs for the development of emerging and elite Queensland athletes who have the potential to excel at future Olympic or Paralympic Games; providing specialist multidisciplinary performance support to athletes, for example coaching, strength and conditioning training, sports science and sports medicine; supporting athlete wellbeing, including through personal, career and educational development during their time at the academy and upon retirement; conducting programs in partnership with national and Queensland sporting organisations to identify and develop talented future elite athletes; providing scholarships to support Queensland athletes who have the potential to excel at future Olympic or Paralympic Games; providing development for promising high-performance coaches; providing access to high-performance training facilities; developing partnerships and collaborating with institutes of sport alongside national and Queensland sporting organisations; and undertaking research or collaborating with other entities undertaking research on sports science, medicine and technology.

The academy as an entity is provided all the powers of an individual and may do anything necessary or convenient to be done in the performance of its functions. The bill also provides powers to the academy which provide flexibility and autonomy in its current and future operations and ability to raise and generate revenue such as being able to provide access to the academy's resources, services or facilities; enter into commercial arrangements, including sponsorship and marketing; accept gifts, devises or bequests; charge fees for providing goods and services; and conduct sporting competitions. For transparency, details of any gifts, devises or bequests accepted by the academy must be included in the academy's annual report for each financial year.

I will turn now to the board. As previously mentioned, the bill establishes the academy as a legal entity with control over its own funds, overseen by an independent and appropriately skilled board. Board members will have a range of qualifications, skills or experience in business or financial management, corporate governance, law, Olympic or Paralympic sport or other high-performance sport. The board's functions include deciding which sports are supported by the academy and how these sports will be supported, ensuring the academy performs its functions in a proper, efficient and effective way and the academy operates having regard to Sport Integrity Australia's integrity standards, which include anti doping, participant welfare including athlete safeguarding, competition manipulation and improper use of drugs and medicine.

The powers of the board include all of the powers necessary or convenient to support the performance of its functions. The board will consist of a minimum of five and a maximum of eight members including a chairperson and deputy chairperson. Board members will be appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the responsible minister, and remuneration and

allowances will also be decided by the Governor in Council. Members must disclose conflicts of interest in matters being considered by the board and must not be present in the board's deliberations and decision-making on those matters.

A chief executive officer will be appointed once the board is established to ensure the effective and efficient day-to-day administration and operation of the academy. The CEO is appointed by the Governor in Council on recommendation of the responsible minister, following the minister's consultation with the board. The chief executive officer is appointed under this act and not the Public Sector Act 2022. The Governor in Council will decide the conditions of appointment of the chief executive officer including remuneration and allowances. The chief executive officer will be accountable to the board. This is the same governance arrangement for other statutory bodies across my portfolio such as Stadiums Queensland and Racing Queensland.

I will be moving as fast as possible to fill these very important roles, and there are transitional provisions in the bill to ensure the academy will be able to hit the ground running, with a board and chief executive in place from day one. This includes provisions for the appointment of acting board members and an acting chief executive officer if required. Any recommended applicants for appointment to these roles must meet the strict standards and requirements, as will the appointment of any ongoing board members and chief executive officer. There is a strong public interest in ensuring there is appropriate oversight and accountability imposed on people who seek appointment or are appointed to the academy. Therefore, appropriate integrity safeguards have been built into this bill to ensure both the chief executive officer and members of the board act in the interest of the academy.

I turn now to the hardworking staff of the academy. There are currently 107 staff at the Queensland Academy of Sport. While the majority are based at the academy's headquarters at QSAC in Nathan, others work from the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast and the Sleeman Centre. There are sport scientists, data analysts, strength and conditioning coaches, nutritionists, physiotherapists and other high-performance experts, but there are also accountants, communications officers, a partnerships team, travel officers and other administrators who quietly enable the great work that allows our athletes to perform at their best. Unlike the neglect shown by those opposite, this government is committed to making sure this transition occurs well and in a timely manner. The transition will set the academy on course for success into the future and allow them to keep doing the extraordinary work they do supporting world-class athletes and coaches to do what they do best.

Importantly, the bill provides security of employment and protections for staff of the academy in transitioning from a government department to a statutory body. All staff employed at the academy will transition to the statutory body with no change in their employment conditions and entitlements. No staff member will be disadvantaged as part of the transition. Consideration of staff has been core to the transition work undertaken by the department in establishing the academy as a statutory body. The Premier has made a clear, consistent commitment to the Queensland Public Service, and this transition will not come at a cost to employment, entitlements or conditions. The bill, as I have presented today, ensures a continuation of employment entitlements for staff, ensuring flexibility where required and stability where it can be provided. In order to bolster this approach, the bill presents a clause providing reversionary rights for transferred staff which provides that academy staff who wish to return to the Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games may do so by 30 September 2025. This approach has ensured no staff member is worse off through the transition of the academy.

Another aspect of the bill is the ability of the responsible minister to issue a written direction about the performance of the academy's functions or exercise of its powers if the minister is satisfied that it is in the public interest to do so. Good governance and good strategy are natural partners for any high-performing organisation. As minister, I must consult with the board prior to issuing the direction. The academy must comply with the direction. The responsible minister may also give the academy a statement of expectations to ensure it operates within the broader context of government priorities, and the academy must have regard to the statement in performing its functions. As the minister, I have ensured that any written directions or statement of expectations issued must be detailed in the academy's annual report as well as a statement of how the academy complied with or had regard to the written directions or statement of expectations. The academy will be required to prepare an annual report for each financial year in accordance with the Financial Accountability Act 2009.

Delegations have been appropriately drafted, providing for the academy to delegate its functions and powers under the act, in line with other Queensland statutory bodies across the statute book. A function or power can only be delegated to a board member, the chief executive officer, an appropriately qualified staff member or an appropriately qualified contractor of the academy. The bill also provides for the academy, as a statutory body, to be included in the Public Sector Act 2022 as a Public Service entity.

Now that the legislation has been introduced to parliament, staff consultation will begin in earnest around the statutory body's structure. The move to an independent entity will position the academy for even more success now and into the future and provide Queensland athletes with a winning advantage leading into Los Angeles 2028 and Brisbane 2032. By transitioning to this new model we are ensuring Queensland athletes receive the best possible support and our coaches and specialists have the flexibility to excel. This is not just an administrative change; it is a strategic investment in our sporting future and a commitment to excellence.

The athlete journey is at the heart of everything the academy does and will continue to be the key focus as it transitions to prepare and support athletes to achieve world-class success. Some of the most beloved and famous names in Queensland sport rank among the academy's alumni: Kieren Perkins; Nat Cook; Anna Meares; Mark Knowles; Steven Bradbury; Katie Kelly; Ben Newton; and the greatest ever Australian Olympian, Emma McKeon. No, it is not the member for Mermaid Beach, Ray Stevens!

The current athlete list includes legends such as Cortnee Vine, Logan Martin, Arisa Trew, Kaylee McKeown, Curtis McGrath and Matt Denny, to name a few. They all became household names after the Paris Olympics. I want to share the names of some of our most exciting emerging athletes so you can remember you heard it here first. We have an incredible new generation of stars on the rise including 17-year-old surfing world junior champion, Sierra Kerr; YouFor2032 para-archer Seth Macdonald; and BMX racing junior under-19 and under-23 world champion, Teya Rufus. In fact, the Queensland Academy of Sport's vision is inspiring extraordinary sporting success.

Beyond its impact on sport, the academy's success also delivers significant economic benefits to our region, strengthens social cohesion, promotes health and fitness, and fosters immense community pride. Moreover, its contributions enhance Queensland's international reputation, showcasing our state as a leader in sporting excellence. It is essential that we continue to support and invest in this invaluable institution to ensure its ongoing success and the continued prosperity of our athletes and our community. I recently met with a delegation from India who said that the QAS's reputation is world renowned. They said they came to the QAS because they want to establish an academy of sport in India and the QAS is the best model of success that they have come across.

Over more than 30 years, the academy has established itself as the country's leading sports institute, with world-class high-performance experts guiding athletes to perform at the top of their game. The academy currently supports more than 500 athletes across 20 sports: swimming, football, track, cycling, BMX racing, rowing, diving, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, Rugby Sevens, hockey, water polo, BMX freestyle, skateboarding, athletics, beach volleyball, sailing, paddle, surfing and triathlon. Athletes are truly at the heart of all the academy's work and, while performance is the focus, it is also essential to note that there is a strong emphasis on wellbeing. In partnership with Sport Integrity Australia, the academy was the first state institute of sport to appoint a dedicated integrity manager. That role works to enhance staff, athlete and coach understanding of integrity principles and also provides athletes with a point of contact for any integrity concerns.

Last year, the academy also launched the Dream Twice program, which connects QAS supported athletes with employers. The program gives athletes the opportunity to build a career and have flexible paid work with a supportive employer who then gets to leverage the individual drive, expertise and enthusiasm of a professional elite athlete in their team. So far, opportunities have been made possible for athletes to take on flexible employment with PeopleIN, the Bdn group, the RACQ, Studio Pilates, LSKD and Queensland government agencies and bodies such as Stadiums Queensland, the Department of Education and, of course, the Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games. Helping athletes on their post-professional sports journey is a key focus of Dream Twice.

Another recent big win for the academy was my announcement of the establishment of AusCycling's national Action and Acceleration Centre of Excellence at the Anna Meares Velodrome and Brisbane SX International BMX Centre at Chandler, Brisbane. It is our aim to have as many Australian sporting organisations as possible see Brisbane as their headquarters as we lead into the 2032 games. The centre of excellence is being supported by the academy's high-performance teams. We are excited to see what promises to be a world-leading facility and performance program. The academy currently supports more than 500 of Queensland's elite athletes at various stages of their journey towards Olympic, Paralympic and world championship success.

Paris witnessed an extraordinary performance by Queensland and academy supported athletes who delivered the lion's share of medals in a record-breaking games for Australia. Queensland-supported athletes competed in 29 different sports and won medals in 10 different sports. Forty of our athletes won medals, including 17 athletes who were participating in their first games. In all,

Queensland-supported athletes won 28 medals: nine gold, 12 silver and seven bronze. It was an enormous effort after years of hard work by the athletes, their coaches and support teams. A record 40 academy staff were selected to support the Australian team in Paris or at staging camps, which is a testament to the world-class skill and knowledge of our team. The Australian team won a total of 63 Paralympic medals, including 18 gold, 17 silver and 28 bronze, achieving ninth place in the medals tally. Queensland-supported athletes contributed seven gold, five silver and 16 bronze medals.

The Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games represented the most successful games for Queensland athletes. During the Paris games, Queensland athletes gave us many moments to be proud of and they inspired a nation. Many Australians will forever remember skateboarder Arisa Trew becoming Australia's youngest Olympic gold medallist by winning the women's park final in Paris and Kaylee McKeown taking gold in both the 100-metre and 200-metre backstroke, becoming the first woman in history to win both titles in two consecutive Olympic Games. The impact of their extraordinary success goes far beyond the closing ceremony. Their stories are inspiring the next generation of sporting stars who we will see coming through the ranks in the lead-up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

We honoured our Queensland champions by bringing back the prestigious Queensland Academy of Sport Athlete Awards, where we saw athletes such as Arisa Trew, Alexa Leary, Curtis McGrath, Korey Boddington, Mollie O'Callaghan, Kaylee McKeown and Emma McKeon recognised for their achievements at a gala ceremony. Last week, 400 people joined the academy's staff at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre to reflect upon and learn from the Paris cycle at the IGNITE conference. I was honoured to present the welcome speech at the event, which brought together some of the best athletes such as Cam McEvoy and Korey Boddington, the best coaches including the Lions' Chris Fagan and paddle guru Myriam Fox, with an elite list of other specialists to really dissect the science of preparation and winning on the biggest sports stages of the world.

Going forward, the academy is seeking our next generation of talented athletes with the YouFor2032 talent search. The YouFor2032 talent search is designed to match aspiring athletes and para-athletes with the Olympic and Paralympic sports where they have the greatest potential for success. This unique program connects future athletes with coaching and support to help them succeed. We want to make sure every Queensland kid gets the chance to try for their Olympic and Paralympic dream. Staff from the academy have travelled more than 30,000 kilometres to more than 40 locations across 25 regional centres from the Torres Strait to Coolangatta, Cunnamulla and beyond, testing Queenslanders.

Recently I was in Townsville for the opening of what is commonly known as the Red Track, a new world-class running track at the city's sports precinct. I can assure the House that there is a lot of talent and ambition in the north and across our entire state. Across Queensland, more than 5,700 aspiring athletes have been tested through the YouFor2032 program, with every athlete tested receiving a personalised performance report against national and international benchmarks—2,044 athletes have been identified and progressed into the next phases of YouFor2032, including 422 athletes who have been invited to targeted development programs and 23 athletes who have been selected to attend further state or national programs. By the end of 2024, the program had covered over 4,000 kilometres and tested 450 young athletes aged 13 to 23 years over a four-week period.

The academy was also instrumental in working with the City of Gold Coast and Skate Australia to build a temporary indoor training facility for skateboarders, offering similar conditions to the Olympic venue ahead of the Paris games. It meant that many of our street athletes were able to train and focus on their Olympic preparations close to home, with their extensive performance support team around them. The bonus was that having athletes of that calibre training there at the Gold Coast Recreation Precinct could serve as an inspiration for other locals to chase their dream of representing Australia on the biggest stage of all at the Brisbane 2032 games.

I had the great pleasure earlier this month of announcing \$2 million in funding for the academy to launch a new Para Sport Unit, which will more than double the pipeline of future Paralympians on the road 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 parasport coaches.

There are more than 160 systemic barriers to entry and progression for para-athletes, including limited access to classification and high-performance pathways, a lack of experienced coaches and challenges with travelling to national and international competitions. The Para Sport Unit will aim 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. This will ensure Queensland cements its position as a global leader in Paralympic sport, and the Paralympic community is incredibly excited about this initiative.

The academy currently supports 85 para-athletes, and this investment will aim to more than double this number by 2029. Key initiatives of the Para Sport Unit include: the Para Talent Program, a pre-elite pathway providing tailored support for 40 aspiring para-athletes modelled on the successful Talent Support Plan program; the Gen2032 Para Coaching Program, developing specialised coaching pathways to strengthen parasport expertise across Queensland; an Affiliate Program and Talent ID Network, establishing partnerships with allied health professionals and networks to expand talent identification efforts; and the revamped YouFor2032 talent search, redesigned as a four-stage program to identify and develop emerging paratalent.

The unit is backed by more than \$4 million investment from the state and federal government and \$270,000 from Paralympics Australia over two years. Through the Para Sport Unit we want to ignite the dreams of the next generation and inspire them to follow in the footsteps of our Paralympic icons like Korey Boddington, Alexa Leary and Curtis McGrath. The Para Sport Unit is set to open next month, and I cannot wait to see the athletes it will support succeed in their journey.

Of course, the academy is not just about supporting our athletes directly; it is also identifying and developing frontline coaches to bring out the best performances. The Gen2032 program is guiding emerging coaches who will help pave a golden runway for Queensland athletes towards Brisbane 2032. The first cohort alone had 10 coaching prodigies including eight women and a number of elite athletes who have finished their sporting careers and are transitioning to coaching. These include former world surfing champion Chelsea Hodges, Olympic gold medallist Rugby player Shannon Parry and dual Olympic swimmer Tom Fraser-Holmes. The program is designed to create lifelong learners who use innovative coaching practices and become skilled communicators. Supported by the Australian Institute of Sport, the program incorporates high-calibre mentors along with expert guidance from local and international coaching professionals and is breaking new ground in coach development here in Australia.

Behind every sport, every athlete and every win is a team who makes excellence possible. Some of my favourite moments in my career have been in and around elite sport, but we do not have time to talk about all of those today.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr MANDER:** I am just trying to work out who is still awake! These moments have been celebrated with teammates, families, friends and colleagues. This role as Queensland's Minister for Sport and Racing and Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games is my dream job. I know the importance of the role in supporting our athletes from the grassroots right through to the elite levels. I take this responsibility seriously and am genuinely motivated to bring back the enthusiasm when we talk about the games.

The games is the most exciting once-in-a-generation—literally—opportunity that this state has, and it is important that we go out and sell that vision not just to the people of South-East Queensland but also to all of Queensland so that they can be proud of their games. I am also passionate about living and encouraging a healthy lifestyle. To me, these passions are best exemplified by the work of the academy to inspire others to dream big, to get moving and to achieve extraordinary sporting success.

### **First Reading**

**Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Sport and Racing and Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games) (3.35 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

### **Referral to State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr McDonald): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee.