



Speech By  
**Hon. Tim Mander**


**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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**QUEENSLAND ACADEMY OF SPORT BILL**

**Second Reading**

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Sport and Racing and Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games) (5.37 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to speak again on the Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025. The bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly on 18 February this year and referred to the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee for detailed consideration. Officers from the Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games provided a briefing paper as well as a public briefing to the committee about the bill on 3 March, providing further information when requested by the committee. The committee received 10 submissions to its inquiry on the bill and tabled its report on 11 April. The committee's report made two recommendations and I table a copy of the government's response to the committee's report.

*Tabled paper:* State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee: Report No. 6, 58th Parliament—Queensland Academy of Sport Bill 2025, government response [431](#).

I would like to thank the chair, the member for Lockyer, and all of the members of the committee for their prompt consideration of the bill. I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the committee secretariat and the organisations and individuals who made submissions in relation to the bill.

The first recommendation made by the committee was that the bill be passed, and I thank the committee for its support. The committee's second recommendation was that the bill be amended to require that board members collectively have qualifications, skills or competencies in both Olympic and Paralympic sport. The Queensland government supports this recommendation in principle. The bill enables the minister to recommend a person for appointment as a board member if they have qualifications, skills or experience in the areas of Olympic or Paralympic sport, or another area relevant or necessary to the board's functions. Given the main purpose of the act and some functions of the academy are specifically to support Queensland athletes to achieve success at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, it is crucial to ensure there is Olympic and Paralympic Games expertise on the board. Therefore, an amendment will be moved during consideration in detail to include a requirement for the board to collectively have qualifications, skills or experience in both Olympic and Paralympic sport.

A further two matters for inclusion in the bill, which will require amendments to be moved during consideration in detail, were identified following introduction. The first relates to the application of the State Government Entities Certified Agreement 2023 to new employees. A key feature of the bill is the strong employment protections it provides for academy staff as it transitions from a government department to a statutory body. Every staff member will move across with their current employment

conditions and entitlements fully maintained. A number of current employees of the Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games, who are to transition to be staff members of the academy, are employed pursuant to the Queensland Public Service Officers and Other Employees Award—State 2015 and the State Government Entities Certified Agreement 2023. Following further consultation, it was determined that the bill does not explicitly provide that employees employed after the commencement of the academy as a statutory body on 1 July 2025 will be covered by the agreement. This is because the academy, once transitioned from the Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games to a statutory body, is not a party to the agreement.

The agreement has a nominal expiry date of 30 June 2026 and the Office of Industrial Relations has advised there will be more than a 12-month period between the proposed commencement date of the proposed Queensland Academy of Sport Act 2025 and the operative date of a replacement agreement following extensive consultation and ballot of all employees covered by the agreement. Therefore, an amendment will be moved during consideration in detail to ensure new employees of the academy, employed post establishment of the academy as a statutory body in accordance with sections 150, 151 or 152 of the Public Sector Act 2022, are covered by the agreement until such time as the academy is a party to a replacement agreement or academy-specific industrial instruments are created.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Krause): Minister, could you pause for a moment? There is too much talk in the chamber. Please keep your conversations low or take them outside.

**Mr MANDER:** I cannot understand why people are not absolutely glued to every word I say during this particular speech. I would ask that they do pay attention.

I continue. This is to ensure consistent employment terms and conditions are provided to all employees of the academy.

The second matter requiring inclusion in the bill relates to the academy's contracts and agreements. The bill currently provides for existing contracts for a person providing services for the Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games in relation to the academy to continue as though a reference to the state is a reference to the academy. The contracts apply with any necessary modifications. The bill does not provide for the transfer of other kinds of contracts and agreements that the academy is a party to. An amendment will be moved during consideration in detail to provide for the transfer of existing agreements which relate to the ongoing operation of the academy as a statutory body. This includes contracts for the provision of goods and/or services to the academy, software licence agreements, funding agreements, sponsorship agreements, research agreements including university collaborative research agreements, student placement and other work experience agreements. This amendment will allow these contracts to continue as though a reference to the state is a reference to the academy.

I return now to the committee's inquiry into the bill. I am pleased to advise that there was overwhelming support for the bill from stakeholders who made submissions, with strong support for the change to a statutory body for the academy. The public submissions brought forward during the committee's examination of the bill included a number of matters that will be critically important for the academy to consider as it moves forward in its new form. I thank all those who submitted for assisting the Crisafulli government in reaching our goal of providing our athletes with the best support possible.

In his submission, the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Sports Commission and celebrated former Queensland Olympian Kieren Perkins OAM recognised that the academy is a critical part of Australia's high-performance sport system. He acknowledged that the relationship between the academy and the Australian Sports Commission and across the National Institute Network of institutes and academies of sport has never been stronger than now. Along with all other state institutes and academies of sport, the games partners—that is the Australian Olympic Committee, Paralympics Australia and Commonwealth Games Australia—and the Australian Sports Commission, the academy has signed on to the Win Well strategy, Australia's High Performance 2032+ Sport Strategy, which focuses on optimising outcomes and sustainable success for Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games sports. Mr Perkins expressed that as a statutory body, the academy will have a responsibility to continue to engage in the national system.

I am pleased to advise that the bill has been drafted to recognise the importance of continued engagement by the academy in the Australian high-performance system and ensure the continuation of its well-established relationships with institutes of sport including the Australian Sports Commission and national and Queensland sporting organisations. Indeed, one of the main purposes of the bill in establishing the academy as an independent body is to enhance collaboration 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. This approach aligns with the Crisafulli government's

focus of keeping red tape away from the success of our athletes and organisations—a stark contrast to what this parliament saw under the previous government. I thank Mr Perkins and the Australian Sports Commission for their very considered submission on the bill.

I would also like to recognise the contributions from Mr Dane Cross and Ms Jacqueline Kelly of the Sporting Wheelies and Ms Michelle Moss of the Queenslanders with Disability Network. I am sure that all members will be pleased to support the amendment to the bill that I will move during consideration in detail to ensure that Paralympic—as well as Olympic—expertise is required to be represented on the board of the academy. The bill has a strong focus on the academy's continued support of para-athletes and identifying emerging talent in the para-sport sphere.

The academy has also done an enormous amount of work to date in championing para-athletes, which is an area the Crisafulli government feel strongly about. That is evidenced by the Paralympic element of my portfolio, which I am extremely proud of and would not discard under any circumstances, unlike those opposite who failed to recognise the Paralympic title for months and months on end. We want Australia to be a world leader in para-sport and this transition will help us on that journey.

I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge that the academy has made remarkable strides in advocating for and supporting women in sport. Fifty-eight per cent of all athletes supported by the academy are female, as well as 54 per cent of the academy workforce. The academy has also introduced several initiatives aimed at fostering greater involvement of women in coaching. The Gen2032 coach scholarship program has seen 12 exceptional women coaches, accounting for 52 per cent of all participants, engage in a two-year, full-time program. I think this clearly shows the academy's commitment to championing women in sport and I have no doubt that this will continue in its independent form.

My thanks also go to Ms Alison Quigley, Dr Aurélie Pankowiak and Dr Victoria Roberts for their submission in relation to ensuring the academy creates child safe environments. The protection of children is a matter of utmost importance to the Queensland government and members of the community. As a Public Service entity under the Public Sector Act 2022, the academy will continue to be subject to the requirements of Queensland child safe legislation, which includes: the new Child Safe Organisations Act 2024, both the Child Safe Standards and the reportable conduct scheme; the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020, otherwise known as the blue card system; and the Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020.

Additionally, clause 13 of the bill provides that a function of the board is to ensure the academy provides a safe, fair and healthy sporting environment that aligns with national sporting integrity standards. This means that the academy will be required to align with Sport Integrity Australia's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, which is designed to protect children and young people in sport. Over the past two years the academy has placed a significant focus on strengthening its safeguarding practices, including the implementation of many policies, practices and systems. This work done to date, along with the forward requirements to continue to protect athletes and children, places the academy in a strong position to continue to foster a healthy and safe environment into the future.

In terms of the development of and access issues for regional athletes as raised by Ms Wendy Henning of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association Queensland and respected former Olympic athlete and hall of famer sporting identity Ms Glynis Nunn OAM, the bill seeks to provide for the effective operation of the academy and gives it the independence it needs to best serve athletes across the state, including from regional areas. The Crisafulli government knows that this state is built on the back of Queenslanders from well beyond the south-east corner. This will allow for additional focus to be placed on programs such as YouFor2032. The government is breaking down barriers and making sure that no young athlete is missed, no matter where they live across our vast decentralised state. Already the academy has tested young athletes in 40 locations, including 26 regional centres from Warwick to Emerald and the Gold Coast to Yarrabah. Some 5,700 potential athletes have been tested and over 2,000 of those have entered the three-month trial phase, 422 have progressed to a 12-month development program and 40 have already been selected for state or national high-performance programs.

I want to thank all submitters to the committee's inquiry for their time in providing feedback on the bill and I thank them all for their support of the transition of the academy to a statutory body. Importantly, I want to emphasise that the bill provides the board with broad powers to do anything necessary or convenient in the performance of its functions. This provides the board with the independence, discretion and flexibility to consider and respond to matters relevant to the academy

such as those raised by submitters. The board may consider, for example, investment, collaboration, consultation and partnerships as it sees appropriate in furthering the aims of the academy in supporting Queensland and Australian athletes to achieve success at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The bill establishes the academy as a legal entity with control over its own funds, and that comes with strong, independent oversight.

The academy will be governed by a board made up of between five and eight members, with a chair and deputy chair. These members will bring a diverse mix of skills and experience—from business and financial management to corporate governance, law and, of course, Olympic, Paralympic and other high-performance sport experience. This blend of expertise will ensure the academy is guided by people who understand both the sporting landscape and the demands of running a high-performing organisation. The academy's day-to-day operations will be overseen by a chief executive officer who is accountable to the board. The role of the CEO will see a significant uplift in responsibility under the new model. Responsibilities that have traditionally sat within the department, including corporate services, legislative compliance and operational delivery, will now sit directly with the organisation. As a result, the CEO will require a broad skill set—a robust understanding of, engagement with and experience in an Olympic and Paralympic context—and will need to be supported by skills stretching across these new responsibilities for the academy in order to effectively lead this organisation in this new structure.

The establishment of the CEO role reflects what we see in comparable statutory bodies and it is both expected and necessary to ensure strong, capable leadership in the next chapter of the academy's journey. I intend to move swiftly to appoint these critical leadership roles. This bill includes transitional provisions to ensure the academy is ready to hit the ground running, with a functioning board and a CEO in place from day one. Importantly, all recommended candidates, whether for acting or ongoing appointments, must meet the same high standards and eligibility requirements. This will ensure strong, capable leadership from the outset, setting the academy up for long-term success.

I now turn to the main purpose of this legislation which is to establish the Queensland Academy of Sport as an independent statutory body with a board. To provide certainty for staff and stability for our sporting community, the transition to the new academy structure is set to commence on 1 July 2025. Unlike those opposite, we know how important this transition is for our athletes and this timing ensures minimal disruption for athletes and sports in the crucial lead-up to LA 2028 and Brisbane 2032. Unlike those opposite, who wanted to take another year to deliver this transition, we are committed to doing what is best for our athletes. The QAS looks after the best of the best Queensland has to offer. To make those staff and athletes live with constant uncertainty for two years shows a lack of care and understanding for the high-performance environment by the former government. Athletes have enough variables to deal with without having two years of Labor government-imposed front office uncertainty thrust upon them.

The academy's vision is 'inspiring extraordinary sporting success' and this bill, if passed, will help the academy achieve this focus. The academy has achieved a great deal, but its ability to fully realise its potential is constrained. Being embedded within a government department brings with it a range of structural and administrative requirements. While necessary in many settings, these processes can limit the flexibility and responsiveness the academy needs to best support high-performance sport. To truly thrive and deliver on its objectives, the academy needs the autonomy and agility that a dedicated statutory body can provide. Consultation with leading institutes across Australia shows that independence and autonomy are critical to sustained sporting excellence. When processes are not fit for purpose, they can slow us down, limiting the academy's responsiveness and operational efficiency.

Shared resources and rigid administrative systems may work in broader government settings, but they can hold back the unique, focused work the academy is here to do. That is why establishing the academy as a statutory body is the most effective way forward. As an autonomous legal entity, the academy will have the operational and financial independence it needs while still upholding public sector standards and accountability. It will be able to manage its own funds, tailor its governance structures and optimise its resources, all with a clear focus on delivering for Queensland's elite athletes.

The move from departmental business unit to statutory body is one that was publicly supported by many high-profile sports administrators and athletes including Mr Wayne Bennett, Mr Alex Newton, Ms Cate Campbell and Ms Shayna Jack. I pay particular homage to Renita Garard, Peter Conde, Wilma Shakespear and Alex Baumann—all people who are used to working in the high-performance sector who lobbied and lobbied and lobbied the previous government until the previous government had no choice but to listen to common sense. I thank those people for that fight that they fought and tonight I am proud to deliver their vision. The athlete journey is at the heart of everything the academy does and, as it transitions into a new form, that focus will not change. Supporting athletes to reach their full potential and achieve world-class success will remain the academy's driving purpose, both for now and into the future.

I want to express my sincere thanks to my department and the QAS for their support in delivering this important piece of legislation. They have pulled out all the stops under enormous pressure and constrained deadlines to make this happen, and I thank them for their hard work. This bill is testimony to that hard work. I once again thank those people in my department. I also once again thank the committee for its prompt consideration of the bill and all of the organisations and individuals who made submissions on the bill. Consistent with the committee's first recommendation, I commend the bill to the House.