

GREAT SOUTHERN ACADEMY OF SPORT — SCHOLARSHIP ATHLETES

Statement by Member for Albany

MS R.S. STEPHENS (Albany) [12.53 pm]: I rise to draw the attention of the house to the incredible young people of the great southern region who are scholarship athletes at the Great Southern Academy of Sport. In May 2023, the Great Southern Academy of Sport transitioned into a full academy model. A new board of management has been established, with Olympian and former member for Albany, Hon Peter Watson, assuming the role of chair, accompanied by several highly skilled board members.

The Great Southern Academy of Sport is designed and built from the ground up to deliver an exceptional sports support and training environment for our region's most elite young athletes. The academy fosters the development of young athletes through elite pathways as they represent our state and country and eventually make their way to shine on the world stage.

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Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes an academy to raise an athlete. As they strive to reach the pinnacle of their sport, these talented young men and women learn the value of effort, discipline and teamwork.

As a parent of two children who are both starting to excel and represent the state in their respective sports, I appreciate the significance of this academy and the ongoing disadvantage that regional athletes face. Despite the fact that Albany Highway, between Albany and Perth, is not going to get any shorter, families will continue to make countless journeys to enable their young athletes to participate in trials and competitions at the state and national levels.

It has been an exceptional year in sport and I acknowledge the young athletes from the Great Southern Academy of Sport who continue to excel in their chosen fields: Mabel Markey, Australian Football League; Mason Watson, athletics; Keely Berry, basketball; Benjamin Blechynden, hockey; Evan Delbene, basketball; Buddy Robinson, cricket; Evie Famlonga, hockey; Teague Valli, cricket; Ruby Welsh, gymnastics; Zoe Mills, hockey; Henry Edmondson, snowboarding; Jack Mills, hockey; Abbey O'Donnell, mountain biking; Isabella Campbell, surfing; and Jethro Wright, hockey. There are a few more.