

Media Release

Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Environment

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events

Minister for Outdoor Recreation



Thursday, 4 September 2025

OLYMPIAN KICKS OFF ROLE AT THE VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT

Olympic gold medallist Dr Lauren Burns OAM has been appointed as Chair of the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) – bringing years of sport and academia experience to the role.

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Steve Dimopoulos welcomed Dr Burns into the position – the fourth person to take on the role in the Institute’s 35-year history.

Dr Burns created sporting history by winning the first Olympic gold medal for Taekwondo when the sport made its debut at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and shortly after in 2001 was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM).

A 12-time national champion between 1993 – 2000, Dr Burns also achieved bronze medals at the 1996 World Cup and the 1997 World Championships. In 2015 she was inducted into the International Taekwondo Hall of Fame, and in 2017 was inducted into Sport Australia Hall of Fame.

Following her retirement from competitive taekwondo, Dr Burns embarked on a successful career in both naturopathy and academia. She holds a PhD in Athlete Lifestyle and Mindset, and her doctoral work has been published in high-impact peer-reviewed journals.

Dr Burns works closely with the Australian Institute of Sport with its Gold Medal Ready program and research institute and sits on the Scholarship Selection Committee for the Sport Australia Hall of Fame.

The Chair of the VIS plays a key leadership role, guiding the organisation's strategic direction and ensuring it best supports Victorian athletes and coaches.

Dr Burns succeeds Nataly Matijevic who stepped down this year after leading the VIS for five years.

At the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games, the VIS sent 122 Victorian athletes from across the state. These Victorian heroes returned to Australia with a total of 23 medals – five gold, four silver and 14 bronze.

For more information about the Victorian Institute of Sport, go to vis.org.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Steve Dimopoulos

“Lauren’s incredible sporting career and academic research places her in a great position to provide first-hand experience on how young athletes thrive – these insights will help support the next generation of VIS athletes.”

“I would like to thank Nataly Matijevic on her service at the Victorian Institute of Sport and forward to working with Lauren and the VIS team to continue the organisation’s proud legacy of supporting Victoria’s elite athletes.”

Quotes attributable to Victorian Institute of Sport Chair Lauren Burns

“I am excited about the future of the VIS as we head toward Brisbane 2032.”

“The VIS is a centre of excellence which empowers athletes to thrive in both sport and life, while equipping our expert staff to lead, evolve, and deliver world-class performance support.”

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