

# Sports academy will reach into SW region

THE creation of a South West Academy of Sport became official last month with the presentation of \$100,000 funding from the State Government by South West Minister Mark McGowan.

The money was on top of \$45,000 previously committed by the Government to establish the academy, which will boost sporting development through the region by providing high level support and training locally.

Academy board chairman Don Punch said the academy would not

be Bunbury-centric, but travel throughout the region.

The academy would also help reduce the stress on families of up-and-coming champions presently forced to travel to the metropolitan area to improve themselves.

But Mr Punch said there was still a long way to go to turn the initiative into reality with sponsorship from businesses needed to help fund the academy.

"State Government funding commitments will cover administration costs but the development

of sports programs for young athletes depends on support from the community and business sectors," he said.

Mr Punch said it was estimated up to \$400,000 would be needed in sponsorship. He believed business, riding high on the economic boom of the region, would be keen to support young athletes through sponsorship of the academy.

The new academy would work with an initial three sports and create scholarship programs to support athletes of sports not initially taken on.

"The academy will have an administration base in Bunbury but sports programs will be conducted around the region where there are appropriate facilities," he said.

Selection of sports taken on by the academy will be through an open expression of interest process expected to begin shortly.

Mr Punch said a broad base of services would be provided, including skills and strength development, life skills, scholarships and career education.