

# Academy lifeline from State funds

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THE South West Academy of Sport has avoided closure to its more than 50 Busselton athletes after being granted \$800,000 of State Government funding last week.

SWAS CEO Bernice Butlion told the *Times* \$796,000 of the State Government's Royalties for Regions funding, which will be supplied over the next three years, has more than replaced funding lost when the organisation's major sponsor, Devereaux Holdings Pty

Ltd's pulled out its funding when its company Griffin Coal went into administration earlier this year.

The South West Development Commission announced on June 25 that \$220,000 would be granted to the organisation over the next three years and \$136,000 has already been supplied.

The not-for-profit organisation, which provides high performance coaching to South West athletes including football and basketball players, had funding to operate for

the next year but its future past 2011 was uncertain.

In State Parliament, and in response to questions from the *Times* recently, Collie MP Mick Murray said he was concerned a lack of State Government support could result in the organisation's closure after just three years of operation.

However, Ms Butlion said the funding commitment had "changed the status quo completely" and the organisation was now planning advertising extensions to its oper-

ations to include tennis and other partner sports.

"Now there are no talks of any problems," she said. "We're pleased that the South West Development Commission has recognised us as a valuable contribution."

Ms Butlion said there had been concern from several of the academy's associated companies after the news of its funding issues and believed the loss of its major sponsor had a bearing on the State Government's decision to award funding. However, she did not be-

lieve SWAS was given preferential treatment and pointed out staff had to go through an extensive application process like others who had also applied for Royalties for Regions Funding.

The academy's accolades and achievements over its two years of operation, the CEO said, were also taken into account.

Despite securing its future for several years she said the academy would continue to source funding with the aim of expanding its operations further.