

**REPORT: QUEENSLAND V  
NEW SOUTH WALES  
WEIGHTLIFTING  
INVITATIONAL AT  
AUSFITNESS EXPO SYDNEY**



## **1. Introduction**

The Queensland v New South Wales Weightlifting event at the AusFitness Expo was a pioneering event that aimed to showcase the potential of a team-based, state v state competition. This unique format provided athletes the opportunity to represent their state, many for the first time, in a competitive and supportive environment. The event sought to strengthen the sense of community within the weightlifting sport, promote athlete development, and build a foundation for future competitions that could eventually include other states. This report reflects on the success of the event, key lessons learned, and recommendations for the future.

## **2. Overall Team Performance**

Queensland athletes performed significantly better than expected across all sessions. Initially, the team was predicted to fall short by a substantial margin, but the athletes exceeded their nominated entry totals by 25-30kg in each session. In contrast, NSW's performance was below their nominated totals by the same margin.

Every session contributed to the overall success, with each athlete displaying determination and grit. Unlike some competitions where one standout session makes the difference, the Queensland team saw remarkable contributions from all athletes. This collective performance underscored their commitment and preparation in the lead-up to the event.

### **Notable Achievement:**

One of the standout performances came from Sam Cartwright, who achieved a 3kg PB in the snatch and an 11kg PB in the Clean and Jerk to set an impressive 14kg PB in the total. A significant achievement for Sam which served as a morale booster for the rest of the team.

### **Special Mentions:**

Luiza Sartori, Lok Yee Lam, and Levi Deans all went 3/3 in the snatch to set new PBs and had heroic attempts to set new PBs on their last Clean and Jerk attempt to finish with 5/6.

Incremental gains were also key to the team's success, with athletes pushing for every kilo and Sinclair point, knowing that each small improvement would help close the gap between Queensland and NSW, most athletes achieved a new personal best in some aspect.

### **3. Team Dynamics**

The camaraderie and team spirit were key strengths for the Queensland squad. The team was made up of athletes from various SEQ clubs, ranging in age from 18 to 39 years. This diverse group included competitors who had only recently qualified for state-level events, as well as those who had narrowly missed qualifying for national competitions due to new standards.

Despite these differences in experience and skill level, the team bonded exceptionally well. Athletes consistently supported one another, whether through practical acts like lending warm-up equipment or cheering each other on during the competition. The team's ability to come together in moments of stress was exemplified when they waited at the airport for a late-arriving teammate to avoid them bearing the cost of a solo taxi ride.

This culture of mutual respect extended beyond the competition. In their downtime, athletes organised healthy entertainment options, ensuring that everyone had a way to unwind and stay focused. They also adhered strictly to the itinerary, showing great discipline in preparing for their sessions and being on time for all events.

### **4. Venue and Logistics**

The NSW Weightlifting Association set up a well-equipped venue that catered effectively to the needs of athletes, support staff, and spectators. While small, the venue provided all the necessary facilities for the competition, with space for warm-ups, audience seating, and access for support staff.

One of the highlights of the event was its integration into a larger expo, which provided tremendous exposure to Olympic weightlifting. Thousands of spectators attended the event over the weekend, many of whom were introduced to weightlifting for the first time. The sport stood out at the expo, particularly in comparison to bodybuilding, strongman, and powerlifting events that were also taking place. Weightlifting's mix of technical skill, dynamic action, and strategic drama made it uniquely appealing to both athletes and casual spectators.

On the logistics front, transport between the hotel, venue, and airport went smoothly. The freedom to use toll roads and the weekend schedule helped ensure there were no delays, allowing athletes plenty of time to arrive at the venue and prepare adequately. This contributed to the athletes' ability to focus on their performances without added stress.

## **5. Event Outcomes**

### **Team Performance:**

The Queensland team delivered a strong performance across all four competition categories. Several factors contributed to this outcome:

- Travel arrangements were seamless, allowing athletes to focus on their preparations.
- The opportunity to represent their state was highly motivating for the athletes, many of whom had not previously imagined they would have this chance.
- Support from staff ensured athletes felt confident and prepared for each lift.
- Team bonding throughout the weekend created an atmosphere of mutual respect and support, helping each athlete push themselves to perform at their best.
- Financial and time investment by the athletes demonstrated a commitment to the event that was reflected in the performances.
- A more or less balanced NSW squad ensured that no single category was left lacking, with strong performances across the board.

### **Competition Results:**

The Queensland women's team won their category, while the men's team experienced a narrow loss. The overall result was a loss by just 90 points, which was an impressive outcome given the pre-competition prediction that Queensland would lose by 660 Sinclair points. This result was a testament to the determination and effort of every athlete, as well as the strategic preparation and support provided by the coaching staff.

## **6. Goals Met**

### **1. Proof of Concept for a Team-Based, State v State Competition**

As the first event of its kind, this competition successfully demonstrated the potential for a team-based, state v state format. Interest is likely to grow as more athletes and states recognise the value of participating in such events, creating excitement for future editions.

### **2. Encourage Other States to Join**

The event's success reduces barriers to entry for other nearby states, particularly on the East Coast. Queensland athletes will return to their clubs with positive experiences to share, likely encouraging more lifters to see the value in this competition and driving participation in future events.

### **3. Build Community**

This event acted as a vital pathway to prevent factionalism within the Queensland QWA. By bringing athletes and coaches together from across the state, it exposed participants to new people, opinions, and training methods. The athletes that attended - and those in the same position - will go on to be Queensland's future coaches, referees, officials, club executives, and governing positions.

### **4. Create a Unified Brand**

This event clearly differentiated Olympic weightlifting from other strength sports, many of which were also represented at the expo. While athletes in other sports often come from homogenous backgrounds in terms of age, body type, and gender, Olympic weightlifting appeared more inclusive and accessible. This diversity made it stand out and helped create a brand image of weightlifting as a sport for all.

### **5. Keep Intermediate Lifters Engaged in the Sport**

The athletes who competed in this event are the 'glue' that holds their clubs and respective state organisations together. By engaging these intermediate lifters—those working towards national standards or just below it—the event gave them a meaningful goal to pursue, helping to maintain their interest and involvement in the sport.

### **6. Coach Development**

Typically, coaches from different clubs rarely get prolonged or meaningful opportunities to collaborate and exchange ideas. These events provide a unique platform for coaches to engage with each other, generating a shared, athlete-centred coaching philosophy across clubs. It also reduces any sense of familiarity bias by offering new perspectives and methods that coaches can bring back to their own clubs. Also, the event allowed staff/coaching roles to be tested by those who hadn't done them before.

### **7. Victory**

While Queensland narrowly lost by 90 points, nobody on the team was disappointed in the outcome. In the first session, after an NSW athlete failed to register a total in the snatch portion, Queensland could have taken a safer route to an easy win. However, the team chose to push forward with determination, and their collective efforts throughout all four sessions displayed true commitment and excellence. Everyone would agree that losing in this manner was more rewarding than a cautious victory.

## **7. Lessons Learned**

### **1. Coaching Roles and Backroom Strategy**

Having a coach in the backroom who wasn't directly responsible for nominating weights and timing athletes proved to be valuable. This allowed for close monitoring of the clock, weight changes, opposition performance, and athlete demeanour

without the distraction of immediate decision-making. The NSW coaching team demonstrated exceptional cohesion in their tactics, working seamlessly as a unit rather than acting as individual coaches who just happened to represent the same state. For example, they would coordinate to change a weight between them when Qld coaches were distracted from the marshal's table.

## **2. Impact of the Sinclair System**

The bias in the Sinclair system against female athletes is well established, with the lowest male Sinclair score still higher than the best female score. In addition, the team-based Sinclair system placed a greater stake on individual performance—when one athlete failed to register a total, it had a much larger impact on the outcome of the whole event than the collective effort of the entire team. Despite these challenges, there is currently no alternative system that offers a more balanced evaluation across genders.

## **3. Effect of Time Zone Differences and Sleep**

While Saturday's midday sessions did not pose any issues, the early Sunday morning start highlighted how even a one-hour time difference could disrupt athletes' routines. Athletes may have found it difficult to get enough rest, possibly impacting their performance. Combined with the fact we had to checkout of the hotel as well, the midday sessions on Saturday allowed for better rest and preparation.

## **4. Positive Response to Goal Communication**

Athletes responded much more positively when they had input into their goals, as opposed to having goals predetermined for them. Before the event, athletes were asked to complete a document that coaches could use to inform decision making for the event. Feeling involved in the decision-making process helped increase their engagement and motivation.

## **5. Environmental factors**

Although I received no complaints, the busy and stimulating environment could be overwhelming for athletes sensitive to overstimulation. The loud music, bright lights, and high energy of the expo created an environment that may not suit everyone. However, all athletes performed at or above expectations. It is likely then that the expo with its music, noise, and people moving on the periphery more closely reflected what their training environments are normally like allowing them to perform at their best.

## **8. Recommendations for the Future**

While it is not my role to comment on strategic decisions for the QWA or AWF, I would like to offer some perspectives based on the recent event.

## **1. Location and Event Format**

To further build athlete engagement, exposure, and brand recognition, future competitions might benefit from being held alongside sports or strength-adjacent events, rather than being hosted at a weightlifting-specific club. This would broaden the audience and community engagement, creating more visibility for Olympic weightlifting while maintaining its connection to other strength sports.

## **2. Understanding Barriers for Regional Clubs**

All athletes in this event came from the South East corner of Queensland, highlighting the need to better understand the barriers preventing participation from more regional or northern clubs. Gathering data on what may be limiting involvement—whether financial, logistical, or related to training resources—could inform decisions on how to make future events more inclusive for clubs across the state.

## **3. Public Involvement**

Many vendors, stalls, and other sports at the expo offered ways for the public to engage with and participate in the event. Consumables offered free samples, sports had equipment that the public could interact with, one stall had a force plate, another a vertical jump test, and boxing had a machine that measured punch force. Future weightlifting competitions could benefit from introducing similar elements—gimmicky or simple—like having a foam barbell where attendees can pose and take photos. This would not require significant resources but would allow the public to engage with the sport in a fun and memorable way.

## **4. Media and Marketing**

The event would have benefited from having an official photographer or media presence to capture the experience. Many athletes were willing to pay for photos, with an unofficial photographer charging \$150 for a set. Having a designated photographer whose cost is spread across entry fees would increase the perceived value for athletes and also provide valuable content for QWA's marketing efforts, helping promote the brand and engage with the wider community.

## **5. Weigh-In Timing**

For travelling teams, avoiding early morning weigh-ins would allow athletes more time to rest and prepare adequately on competition day. The early weigh-in on Sunday was disruptive for athletes' sleep and preparation, which could be improved by scheduling weigh-ins later in the day. Although this is somewhat out of our control when we are invited, it should be raised in planning stages.

## **6. Additional Team Training Sessions**

A second or supplementary training day prior to competition would help build team cohesion and familiarity. Although Queensland had strong camaraderie, not all athletes were able to attend the sole training session at Burleigh. Meanwhile, despite hosting the event, the NSW team did not demonstrate the same level of unity and camaraderie that Queensland displayed. Holding multiple training sessions, perhaps one in Brisbane and one on the Gold Coast, would help reinforce team spirit and ensure all athletes have the chance to bond before the competition.

## **9. Conclusion**

The inaugural Queensland v New South Wales competition was a resounding success. It not only provided athletes with the opportunity to represent their state for the first time but also demonstrated the potential for this format to become a staple in Australian weightlifting calendar. The event highlighted the strength, resilience, and camaraderie of the Queensland team, with every member contributing to a performance that exceeded expectations.

As a proof of concept, the event met several important objectives: it kept intermediate lifters engaged in the sport, promoted a unified brand, and built a sense of community among the participants. The positive athlete feedback and the cohesion of the Queensland team serve as evidence of this format's potential.

This first step has laid a strong foundation for future events, and it is an exciting time as the sport grows through innovative formats like this. With continued success, this team-based competition could bring more states into the fold and foster a vibrant, connected weightlifting community across Australia.

**David Bock**

**Team Leader**