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## National Disability Employment Strategy

### Response from the *Australian Sporting Alliance for People with a Disability (ASAPD)*

#### Introduction

The Australian Sporting Alliance for People with a Disability (ASAPD) represents lead organisations whose participant numbers, members and volunteers involve millions of people across Australia, and include: Blind Sports Australia, Deaf Sports Australia, Disability Sports Australia, Disabled Wintersport Australia, Paralympics Australia, Riding for the Disabled Association Australia, Special Olympics Australia, Sport Inclusion Australia & Transplant Australia.

The ASAPD is keen to work in partnership with the government and other key partners in the development and roll out of the National Disability Employment Strategy. We have contributed the recent *National Disability Strategy 2030* and *draft National Preventive Health Strategy* public consultations with a focus to ensuring there is recognition of the role and power of sport plays for all Australians, in particular, people with a disability.

Our broader role as National Sporting Organisations for People with a Disability (NSOD) is to work to promote the value of inclusion in sport and encourage people with disability to get active and involved in sport. We believe participation in sport provides positive social and physical benefits to people with disabilities and plays an important role in changing community perceptions of people with disabilities, including around employment.

Our NSOD's that are part of the Alliance have people with a disability among their Boards, staff and volunteers. A significant component of our work is to build links with sporting, disability and employer groups across the country and internationally to help support sporting pathways and opportunities for people with a disability. In the process, we hope we can break down some barriers, biases and stereotypes that limit opportunity.

Leadership is required by all governments. The ASAPD will work in partnership with the government and other key partners in this strategy. We believe we can also play a significant support role in breaking down some barriers, biases and stereotypes that limit opportunity in rebuilding communities through sport post COVID-19, including increasing employment opportunities for those with a disability.

## ***Understanding Disability in Australia***

In Australia in 2020, to be born with or acquire a disability means – for many people – to enter a world of reduced opportunities and expectations. Despite recent progress, this is also true of sport.

- Almost 20% of people in Australia live with a disability, but only one in four of these participate in sport.
- 75% of Australians with disability want to take part in sport but feel there are limited opportunities.
- 12.5% of people with severe/profound impairments participated at least once in sport in the previous 12 months. In the same period, 65-70% of the general population did.
- 10% of Australians with a disability experience discrimination or unfair treatment. Sport breaks down barriers, biases and stereotypes that limit opportunity.

Successful inclusion is about translating good attitudes and values into action. Inevitably this means challenging and changing the status quo. This may mean rethinking how you can do something different or better, how you can change entrenched attitudes and habits, or what new programs, games, products, education or employment opportunities can be implemented.

We believe participation in sport provides positive social and physical benefits to people with a disability and plays an important role in challenging community perceptions and changing attitudes on the sporting field, in the workplace and in the community.

Australia is a partner to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability. The convention emphasises that “sport can help reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with disability because it can transform community attitudes about persons with disabilities by highlighting their skills and reducing the tendency to see the disability instead of the person.”

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/issues/disability-and-sports.html>

## **Disability and employment in Australia**

People with disability face challenges routinely and actively participating in everyday life areas (such as employment) and are more likely to experience poor health, discrimination and violence than those without disability. (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/employment>)

- Over 4.4 million people in Australia have some form of disability.
- 17.8% of females and 17.6% of males in Australia have disability.
- The likelihood of living with disability increases with age. 2 in 5 people with disability are 65 years or older.

- People aged between 15 and 64 years with disability have both lower labour force participation (53.4%) and higher unemployment rates (10.3%) than people without disability (84.1% and 4.6% respectively).
- There are 2.1 million Australians of working age with disability. Of these, just under half were employed (47.8%), compared with 80.3% of people without disability. (Data above from (ABS) 2019, 4430.0 - [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia 2018](#))
- Australia's employment rate for people with disability (46.6% in 2015) is on par with developed countries. In developing countries, 80% to 90% of people with disability of working age are unemployed, whereas in industrialised countries the figure is between 50% and 70%. ('Employment of persons with disabilities' 2007, United Nations Department of Public Information).
- 34% of people with disability are managers & professionals. (ABS) 2019, 4430.0 - [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia 2018](#).
- Graduates with disability take 61.5% longer to gain fulltime employment than other graduates. ('Grad Stats', 2017, Graduate Careers Australia).
- Almost one in five (18.9%) people with disability aged 15-24 years experienced discrimination. In almost half of those instances, the source of discrimination is an employer.
- Global research has found that when employee health and wellness is managed well the percentage of engaged employees increases from 7% to 55%. ([Benefits to business: The evidence for investing in health and wellbeing](#)' 2011, ComCare).
- 73 percent of employees who say they work at a "purpose-driven" company are engaged, compared to just 23 percent of those who don't. (Inc Magazine 2014, [How a Sense of Purpose Boosts Engagement](#)),).
- A higher proportion of people with a profound or severe disability were working full time in 2018, 11.4% compared with 7.9% in 2015. This is driven by an increase in women with a profound or severe disability working full time (9.2% in 2018, up from 5.5% in 2015).

The Australian Human Rights Commission's National Inquiry into Employment and Disability found that fewer people with disabilities participate in the workforce than those without disabilities. More people with disabilities are unemployed than those without disabilities. The severity of the disability that a person has, affects both the level of labour force participation and the unemployment rate. Women with disabilities are less likely to be in the workforce than men with disabilities. In addition, the unemployment rate of women with disabilities has increased in the last five years while that for women without disabilities has decreased significantly. When employed, people with disabilities earn lower wages, on average, than workers without disabilities.

The overall levels of income earned by people with disabilities are also lower than those without disabilities. <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/national-inquiry-employment-and-disability-issues-paper-1>

## Sport and employment

The Australian Sports Industry contributes \$83 billion annually to the national economy through economic, health and social benefits and supports over 10,800 businesses. 14 million people participate in sport annually, supported by close to 2 million volunteers and 220,000 employees (pre-Covid). The return to Australian communities is at least \$7 for every \$1 invested (Sports Industry Economic Analysis, Exploring the size and growth potential of the Sport Industry in Australia, Office for Sport – Commonwealth Department of Health, March 2020).

The Sport sector is made up of a variety of entities that are all largely driven by the widespread popularity of sport in Australia. Most entities that make up the Sport sector are small scale enterprises that are member owned and rely on the contributions of community members and volunteers. The employment level in the Sports and Physical Recreation Activities industry has risen substantially over the period between 2000 and 2019, however in 2020 employment levels dropped by almost half, to 61,200. Projections predict a rise in employment levels, to 133,900 by 2024.

(<https://nationalindustryinsights.aisc.net.au/industries/sport-fitness-and-recreation/sport> )

Sports Coaches, Instructors and Officials make up 16% of the Sport and Recreation Activities industry workforce (excluding Horse and Dog Racing Activities) with Sportsperson's accounting for close to 7%. Employment levels for both occupations are projected to increase between 2019 and 2024, by approximately 16% and 13% respectively. Vocational education and training (VET) is required for a range of Sport related occupations such as: Sports Coaches, Instructors and Officials and Sports and Fitness Workers. There were close to 47,340 enrolments in Sport-related qualifications during 2019, the highest figure recorded since 2015 and following on from a slight decline in enrolments between 2017 and 2018. (<https://nationalindustryinsights.aisc.net.au/industries/sport-fitness-and-recreation/sport> )

## Sport participation driving employment

Delivering and supporting a healthy population is imperative to driving long term growth and higher employment. The reality is there is a gap in participation rates of people with disability when compared to the general population. The Australian Sport Commission's [AusPlay](#) survey results in 2016 showed that people with disability are 10%

less likely to participate in sport or active recreation at least once per week when compared to the general population. This is not because of lack of demand. In addition to this, research by the Australian Sport Commission in 2010 suggested that 75% of people with disability who play sport want to play more, and that 83% of people who are inactive want to get active.

Increasing participation and physical activity can significantly increase productivity both through improved health and education outcomes and economic growth through expenditure on related activities. A fitter, more active nation improves productivity by increasing employee engagement and reducing the number of absences.

The most common occupations of people with disability are:

- 1 in 5 (22%) Professionals
- 1 in 8 (14%) Clerical & administrative workers
- 1 in 8 (13%) Labourers
- 1 in 8 (13%) Technicians & trades workers

(<https://www.afdo.org.au/about-australians-with-disability/employment/> )

Sport offers people with a disability, opportunities for employment and volunteer work to learn new skills in these areas.

Children who play sport show improved cognitive development, are more attentive at school, achieve superior academic results and stay in school longer. Given the important life skills gained through sport, there is a high correlation between playing sport regularly as a child and higher lifetime earnings and economic productivity.

### **Current employment programs from Alliance partners and elsewhere**

Some of the Alliance members have more capacity and resources than other members to be able to offer employment support / assistance initiatives. We are really 'scratching the surface' in terms of the potential of these employment programs for people with a disability in our sport organisations. For example, the *Paralympic Workplace Diversity Program* has been running for over 10 years and has placed many athletes with a disability into meaningful long-term employment. All of the programs are readily scalable if they are provided with long-term commitment and support.

With greater government support and resources, more Alliance members would be in a position to contribute to employment programs for their cohort of members.

#### [Paralympic Workplace Diversity Program](#)

The Paralympic Workplace Diversity Program (PWDP) is an initiative of Paralympics Australia designed to help place past and present Para-athletes into employment.

Paralympic Employment Providers offer flexible work environments and meaningful career opportunities specific to the skills, experience and career goals of each participant. 360 HR Consulting, a boutique recruitment and consulting organisation based in Sydney, has been appointed by Paralympics Australia to manage the PWDP.

### [Paralympic Speakers Program.](#)

Paralympic athletes have powerful stories about how resilience, teamwork, and commitment can overcome adversity. This program allows Paralympic athletes to share their story and inspire others with businesses and at events.

### [SPORTSWORK](#)

A basketball and employment program for people with disability aligned with Basketball Victoria

### [Australian Institute of Sport Athlete Wellbeing and Engagement program](#)

## Recommendations to the Strategy

The ASAPD recommends the following:

1. We fully support the vision and priority areas, however we request acknowledgement and inclusion of disability employment in the sport industry as a part of the strategy;
2. We encourage the employment sector and in particular the sport industry, to increase their capacity to employ people with a disability in their organisations. The flow on effect will be improvement in inclusion policies and practices, better engagement and pathway opportunities for people with a disability in the workplace and improving service delivery;
3. That the sport industry including the disability sport sector be included in the roll-out and implementation of the strategy.

## About the ASAPD

As part of the 2018 National Sport Plan (Sport 2030, 2018, p.22) Australian Government committed to sport and physical activity becoming more accessible to people with a disability. Following the release of this report, Sport Australia brought together leaders from the sporting disability sector to identify key challenges and opportunities.



Leaders from each NSOD organisation unanimously endorsed recommendations to collaborate and create a collective vision to represent the needs of individuals with a disability throughout Australia.

The nine National Disability Sporting Organisations (NSODs), have formed as a key peak agency for sport and physical activity for people with a disability (Australian Sporting Alliance for People with a Disability). Our vision is that all Australians have an opportunity to engage in sport and physical activity in a welcoming and inclusive environment. To achieve this, we have agreed to work together to collaborate, advocate, and facilitate inclusive sport and physical activity for people with a disability, impairment or limitation.

The NSOD's involved represent lead organisations whose participant numbers, members and volunteers involve millions of people across Australia, and include: Blind Sports Australia, Deaf Sports Australia, Disability Sports Australia, Disabled Wintersport Australia, Paralympics Australia, Riding for the Disabled Association Australia, Special Olympics Australia, Sport Inclusion Australia & Transplant Australia.

This is a ground-breaking initiative which will enhance our ability to communicate with one-voice on many issues and the Government's capacity to effectively and efficiently engage with the broader disability sporting sector. This new collective signals an unparalleled alignment with each other and governments which will benefit the broader sporting sector and the people the collective represents.

The benefits of this new unified and collaborative approach will result in:

- More cohesion in the disability sporting sector;
- Greater efficiency in sport delivery;
- Improved working relationships with NSOs and inclusion as an integral part of the wider sporting industry;
- Enhanced programs and pathways from grassroots to high performance;
- Increased capacity to engage more inactive people in sport and physical activity;
- Unified approach to building stronger physical and health outcomes;
- Improved efficiencies in sharing of resources between agencies;
- Greater communication and awareness about the power of sport & physical activity to deliver social inclusion;
- Increased research and innovation projects in inclusive sport.

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