

Submission  
to

# THE SPORT PANEL

November 2008

## AUSRAPID

Australian Sport and Recreation Association for Persons with Integration Difficulties Incorporated

### ***Mission***

*Facilitate the provision of sport and recreation opportunities for persons with integration difficulties (people with intellectual and other disabilities) at local, state, national and international level.*

### ***Philosophy***

*AUSRAPID views integration to be the inclusion of persons with integration difficulties into activities of mainstream sporting and recreational organisations at a level denoted by the ability and choice of each individual – i.e. participating in grades/divisions/activities, which are age and ability appropriate.*

## Background

AUSRAPID was established in 1986 through the collaboration of seven (7) State/Territory Member organisations, each of which identified the need to be represented nationally and to further the philosophy of inclusion at National and International level.

One of the common objectives of the organisations involved was to improve the lives of people with an intellectual disability by using sport and recreation as the medium to enable their inclusion into the community – focusing on their ability, lessening the previous historical evidence of individuals being ostracized and forgotten, enhancing their skills and educating the Community of their immense value and worth.

To achieve these goals, AUSRAPID expounded these concepts to Australia in the mid eighties, encouraging the main generic sport and recreation providers to expand their charter to include all Australians, not just the elite.

For this inclusion process to be effective, it required strong collaboration between AUSRAPID and National Sport and Recreation organisations, AUSRAPID State/Territory Member organisations with the equivalent State Sport and Recreation organisations. AUSRAPID and its State/Territory Member organisations took on the role of facilitation.

This innovative practice has not only seen Australia do exceptionally well on the international scene (which has further cemented the concept) but many sport and recreation organisations have taken the responsibility to include all, thanks also to strong Government Disability policies which promote inclusion.

When AUSRAPID commenced, there were a handful of people with an intellectual disability participating in meaningful sporting and recreational community activities. In 2001 when a major audit of AUSRAPID's eight State/Territory was completed, there were 2060 people included in mainstream sporting and recreational pursuits at local level, in 2005 there were 8,400 participating, which is an increase of in excess of 400% over a four year period. Further statistics just completed demonstrate a further 150% increase with in excess of 13,000 people now involved in regular/seasonal mainstream activities in the Community. Please refer to Attachment 1 for audit details.

AUSRAPID has also been providing critical support and ongoing assistance necessary to maintain the spirits of many Australian athletes with an intellectual disability, plus their families and supporters, who have been deprived of Paralympic Competition for the past eight (8) years – since the ban imposed on all athletes with an intellectual disability by the International Paralympic Committee.

### ***Background continued...***

AUSRAPID, together with ASC, NSO's and the APC have endeavoured to ensure that opportunities for elite competition have been provided despite this unjust ban.

We will continue to provide this crucial support until such time as the discriminatory situation is resolved – hopefully in time to participate in London 2012 Paralympics.

## **Implementation**

To implement it's philosophy, AUSRAPID works in partnership with National Peak organisations to facilitate participation of athletes with an intellectual disability. Some of these strong links include

- Australian Sports Commission;
- Australian Paralympic Committee;
- Swimming Australia;
- Athletics Australia;
- Tennis Australia;
- Basketball Australia;
- Cricket Australia;
- Netball Australia;
- Indoor Cricket Australia;
- School Sport Australia;
- Table Tennis Australia;
- Ten Pin Bowling Australia;
- Football Federation Australia.

The key to AUSRAPID's success is that we provide the infrastructure necessary to form essential partnerships with the relevant national sport and recreation bodies and to sustain the initial development, establishment and maintenance of positive working relationships. As the provider of the special activity, the national sport and recreation body eventually takes ownership and responsibility for the ongoing program provision. AUSRAPID remains in the crucial role of facilitator, providing guidance and expertise on the ethos of inclusion.

As the owner of the program, the national sport and recreation body, often is recognised and funded without acknowledgement of the crucial partnership provided by AUSRAPID. We need to be included in the 'credits' assigned to each key role player in the particular activity.

We need to continue to expand this exceptionally successful program. AUSRAPID contends that our Nation's strong sporting heritage provides the perfect medium to enable inclusion of people with an intellectual disability and assist with their transition into the Community.

### ***Implementation continued...***

Some of the examples which highlight the benefits to a person with an intellectual disability who has found success by participating in a community sport and recreation setting:

- Increased general health status and fitness levels
- They gain acceptance, respect and enhanced self esteem
- Sense of belonging and therefore increased self worth
- Improved communication skills, which have all contributed greatly to many finding full time employment and social acceptance
- Less risk of breaking the law (which is an inherent risk to vulnerable persons with an intellectual disability throughout the world)

## **Future Direction – People with a disability**

### ***Management and Accountability***

- At National level, sport for people with a disability should be funded by the ASC, through all relevant NSO's, NSOD's and the APC, therefore financial control and accountability is the responsibility of the ASC.
- At State/Territory level, funds should be allocated by the respective State/Territory government department to the relevant body reflecting membership of the NSO's, NSOD's and the APC. Thus, at State/Territory level ensuring funds to enable local sport and recreation groups to become more inclusive, which in turn enables participation of people of all abilities to be involved in invaluable community leisure opportunities.
- It is not feasible to have one umbrella organisation capable of meeting the needs of all groups. In each State/Territory where an umbrella group (One stop Shop) exists, inclusion of people with an intellectual disability into the sporting and recreational community is non-existent or very limited.
- The umbrella organisation's sole focus becomes promotion of its own brand, which is "Disability", and they conduct a few heavily branded multi-disability athletic and swimming events a year. Whether this is to procure further funding or justify their existence, the outcome definitely opposes the integration philosophy of working with mainstream organisations to enhance their ownership and responsibility in the development of opportunities for its constituents at all levels of participation.
- Where umbrella groups exist, inclusion is at its weakest. (Cogent examples can be cited)

### ***Future Direction – Management and Accountability continued...***

- The principle of Sport CONNECT is sound and if practiced well, NSO's should be identifying strategies and developing models to include people with a disability within their sport from local level up to National level. These models can then be replicated in other areas and sports.
- NSO's need to establish Commissions which include wide representation from within the sport and which addresses the specific needs of people with a disability within their sport. Representation needs to be broader than just the person responsible for development, to ensure full understanding and acceptance of inclusion at all levels of decision making. E.g. Board member, Development officers, Coaches, Participants and School representatives.

NB. There should also be effective partnerships established between the ASC, NSO's, NSOD's and the APC with respective Education Departments to ensure provision of competitive Sports events across all age levels, e.g. National School Sports events and Pacific School Games

### ***Changes necessary to effect real difference***

- Firstly, by emphasis on the SPORTS PERSON, STUDENT, or PARTICIPANT, rather than the current description which describes the disability first, e.g. The Commonwealth Game's EAD, elite athletes with a disability, description was excellent – competitors were introduced according to their sport. This can be applied to all disability specific sports e.g. Wheelchair sport, (Rugby, Basketball, Tennis, Goal Ball etc).
- To be consistent with the ethos of inclusion and funding which is allocated through that focus, disability sports providers who insist on competition and programs in isolation should not be funded through the ASC. Such initiatives should perhaps be viewed as recreational or rehabilitation.
- There needs to be acknowledgement of Disability Specific Sports organisations which are able to include people with a disability in regular community based programs and competitions.
- All funded bodies must (or be able to) create pathways to every level of participation, (from local to international), not just providing irregular opportunities for competition. Funding by ASC and State/Territory organisations must be consistent, only organisations providing pathways should be funded.
- There needs to be greater attention paid to the issue of classification/registration of elite athletes. AUSRAPID as a member of INAS-FID is involved in determination of eligibility which provides a bench mark, which the APC and all National members of IOSD's through the IPC are endeavouring to implement.

There are currently many anomalies in disability categories, which require clarification.

## ***Barriers/Difficulties***

The main difficulty impacting on the lives of people with an intellectual disability is the need for adequate **ADVOCACY** and **ACCESS**. AUSRAPID maintains a 'watchdog' role in this area, which guarantees that an absolute fair go is provided to all Australian athletes, of all ages and ability, who just happen to have an intellectual disability-

- AUSRAPID advocates in all negotiations of the needs and abilities of the athletes we represent;
- We enable access for all participants not only in physical (equipment and coaching/training) and financial (resources) terms, but social terms as well.

## ***Best Forum***

- A National campaign which encompasses every inclusion possibility into sport.
- Opportunity for people with a disability which highlights the positive outcomes of sport's participation and enables people with a disability of all ages to be included in the sport of their choice by contacting the appropriate sport's providers and SSOD's.
- The absolute advantages of sport's participation for all e.g. health, general fitness, confidence, self esteem, community living, quality of life, enhance employment opportunities, lessening of offending – all of which have been well documented and demonstrated by effective organisations, which have pioneered and espoused the philosophy of inclusion since inception.

## ***Key Stakeholders***

- Key stakeholders are ASC, APC, NSOD's, NSO's, Departments of Sport and Recreation, Rehabilitation advisors, Centrelink, Departments of Education, School Sport Organisations, SSO's, SSOD's and people with a disability.
- All above bodies are the key determinants who will ensure elite outcomes in the future. They need to form positive working and ongoing partnerships.
- Partnership outcomes will be assured by the work of the SSOD's in cooperation with respective State/Territory Sport and Recreation Departments and Education Departments.
- Increased participation can be assured by the positive effects of the above bodies in conjunction with every possible local organisation e.g. pre schools, schools-primary and secondary, sports bodies, holiday programs and practical demonstration, which provide accessible opportunities for inclusion at the very basic levels for people with a disability.

## ***Practical Examples of Best Practice***

To provide full equitable sporting opportunities for people with a disability, Organisations and Personnel with proven track records of enabling positive access to ongoing valued community sporting opportunities e.g. AUSRAPID and Member Organisations - from local to National to Paralympic and World Championship levels.

### ***Two Ideal models***

#### **State Sporting Organisation**

An exceptional model to view is Netball Victoria. They have fully integrated all services for people with a disability within their strategic planning. Services are provided and grants made available to their member associations to incorporate programs which include participants with a disability. They rightly boast 1000 netballers with a disability who are registered members of a club or association.

They have had a Commission consisting of a wide range of representatives which has advised them on policy for approximately five years. This Commission will only now be called on if the need arises.

They have infrastructure for developing new programs and promoting netball for ALL to the wider community. They work with Special schools in providing expertise in the way of coaching and officiating to further promote at this level and as a talent identification process. They have developed pathways from local to state level and have put forward a submission to Netball Australia for a National pathway to be re-introduced.

They have played promotional games before key National League games and the website is totally inclusive.

#### **National level**

Basketball Australia became involved with including basketballers with a disability in the early nineties. They have demonstrated ongoing commitment to develop infrastructure for basketballers with a disability. They promote the national representative teams as their own and include information on their letterhead.

When they became a Sport CONNECT sport they worked hard to support State initiatives which were innovative and worked to increase the numbers of young people with a disability playing basketball. As a result, Basketball Victoria is a clear leader in the development of basketball for young people with a disability at school level.

They have developed a Commission which deals with all matters pertaining to Basketball for people with a disability.

### *Two ideal models – National level...*

They include a National event alongside their U/20 competition for players with an intellectual disability.

Basketball Australia needs to be further supported to enhance their excellent work and more resources need to be made available to address the identification of players at local level and linking them with clubs.

One initiative could be to promote positive inclusive models i.e. Netball Victoria and Basketball Victoria to other State Sporting Associations.

## Summary

AUSRAPID and its State/Territory Member Associations have led the way in Australia (and had significant impact on other Countries) by espousing and practising integration at its most basic and elite levels of participation.

The essential ingredient of AUSRAPID's successful operation over 20 years is the focus on the ability of the participant, not in anyway promoting disability and the ease with which mainstream sporting services can be extended to include ALL Australians. We contend that going back to a disability focused organization is untenable and a backward step.

There is an ongoing argument that people with a disability want to compete against each other and not be involved in mainstream sporting and recreational pursuits, but AUSRAPID strongly maintain that we must continue to liaise with Sport to develop regular inclusive sporting options in the community based and provide people with the choice.

We exist as an organisation to promote and enable thousands of athletes, who contest a wide variety of sports provided by local, State, National and International Sports Organisations.

We are the facilitators and advocates of Australian sports people, who just happen to have a disability.

They are included in and have access to community life through their meaningful inclusion into sport.

Mrs Marie T Little OAM  
President

Ms Robyn J Smith  
Chief Executive Officer

## Acronyms

APC	Australian Paralympic Committee
ASC	Australian Sports Commission
AUSRAPID	Australian Sport and Recreation Association for Persons with Integration Difficulties
EAD	Elite Athletes with a Disability
INAS-FID	International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability
IPC	International Paralympic Committee
IOSD	International Organisation of Sport for the Disabled
NSO	National Sport Organisation
NSOD	National Sport Organisation for the Disabled National Sport Organisation for People with a Disability
SSO	State Sport Organisation
SSOD	State Sport Organisation for the Disabled State Sporting Organisation for People with a Disability

# Audit

(Participants included in Sport and Recreation activities in Community)

## AUSRAPID Member Organisations

Victoria: VICSRAPID  
 New South Wales: NSWRAPID  
 Queensland: Life Stream Foundation  
 Tasmania: New Horizons Club  
 Northern Territory: Total Recreation  
 South Australia: SASRAPID  
 Australian Capital Territory: ACTSPORT  
 Western Australia: Recreation & Sport Network

**2001:2005:2008**

<b>SPORT</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>
Art		41	55
Athletics	108	303	340
Australian Rules Football	232	696	747
Basketball	340	848	1473
Bocce		95	265
Bushwalking	12	24	18
Canoeing	20	30	13
Cricket		124	180
Cycling		5	51
Dance	16	119	100
Darts		1	10
Drama Groups		3	13
Duke of Edinburgh		250	255
Figure Skating			9
Fishing		12	40
Fitness Groups		15	30
Futsal	117	267	65
Golf	10	66	140
Gymnastics	15	75	171
Holidays			40
Indoor Bias Bowls	25	129	110
Indoor Cricket	357	441	567
Judo			20
Lawn Bowls	57	138	186
Martial Arts			15
Netball	165	1164	1315
RAPID Swim		15	380
Riding	12	934	1026
Rowing	32	55	16
Rugby League	105	300	40
Sailing			27
School Sports			963
Sledge Hockey	25	25	8
Soccer/Football	45	433	397
Social Club	36		310
Sports Ability Kit			150
Swimming	115	561	514
Table Cricket			12
Table Tennis	25	65	161
Teenage Recreation		38	50
Tennis	127	334	396
Tenpin Bowling	86	809	1136
Touch Football		8	80
Water Polo		15	24
Work Place sports			1123
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2082</b>	<b>8438</b>	<b>13041</b>