



**Submission to the Independent Sport Panel**

**by the**

**Australian Paralympic Committee**

**15 October 2008**

# APC submission to the Independent Sport Panel

October 2008

## Introduction

---

Australia enjoys a well-deserved reputation for its successful sporting environment.

However, in 2008 at least three key areas need to be addressed:

1. Australia lacks a shared national vision for sport to drive sport policy and delivery.
2. There is a massive disparity at all levels in the resources allocated to sport for the able-bodied compared with sport for people with a disability.
3. Government legislation and documentation reinforces inequities in the treatment of people with disabilities in sport.

While the Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games helped create a common focus for much of sport in Australia, the eight years since have seen a gradual fragmentation of focus and priorities, most particularly among federal and state government sport agencies.

It is time for a formal recognition of the value of sport and a commitment to its support which crosses all state and federal government lines, all political party lines and can be embraced and followed by Australia's sporting organisations.

A specific consequence of the lack of a shared national vision is the disparity between sport opportunities for people with a disability and able-bodied Australians.

Australian Paralympic success depends on a healthy sport environment where all Australians enjoy the same opportunities for fulfilment and achievement through sport.

This is not currently the case and changes are required to ensure that Australian sport offers the same opportunities and benefits – at all levels - to people with disabilities as it does for the able-bodied population.

Two simple examples demonstrate this:

- Although 40 percent of Australians over 18 report a long-term condition or disability, participation in sport and physical recreation by this large group is 14 percent lower than by the balance of the community, across all age groups<sup>1</sup>.
- At the elite end of sport, the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) conducts 32 sport programs, offering 700 athlete scholarships annually<sup>2</sup>. In 2008 just 26, or 3.7 percent, of these scholarships are for athletes with a disability and, of 89 coaches employed in AIS programs, just one is a full-time, hands-on coach of athletes with a disability.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sport and Physical Recreation Participation among persons with a disability (Report prepared for the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport)*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, July 2006.

<sup>2</sup> AIS website, 7 October, 2008

## **Background to the APC submission**

---

This submission to the Independent Sport Panel specifically addresses the Terms of Reference.

This submission builds upon the following documents:

- *Report of the Australian Paralympic Committee Paralympic Sport Task Force*, August 2006.
- *A National Plan for Paralympic Sport and sport for people with a disability*, Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Paralympic Committee, November 2006<sup>3</sup>.
- *2007 Policy Submission by the Australian Paralympic Committee* (subsequently adopted in full by the current Government), June 2007.
- *Review of the Australian Sports Commission Act 1989 - confidential submission by the Australian Paralympic Committee to DCITA*, June 2007

The above documents, and the actions that have resulted from them, have already had an impact in improving opportunities in sport at all levels for people with disabilities.

However, the rate of progress is too slow. It has been too slow for Australia to remain ahead of its international Paralympic competitors. And it is too slow for those people with disabilities all over Australia who can benefit, in many ways, from access to quality sport experiences.

While many of the same issues confront disability sport as confront able-bodied sport, athletes with a disability, overall, are in a worse position because as a group they receive proportionally less funding, less access to quality coaching, less access to facilities, less corporate support, fewer competition opportunities and less recognition.

The overall structure of sport for people with a disability in Australia needs greater coordination and integration of sporting services and opportunities.

As part of this, the role of "mainstream" national sporting organisations, the APC and its partners, in the provision of sporting opportunities for people with a disability, must be strengthened to enable them to actively develop their sports and to deliver them to all Australians.

There are a number of key themes in this submission which the APC believes can guide government and sporting organisations into the future.

A search of the website of the British Government's sport agency, UK Sport, returns more than 691 mentions of the word "Olympic" and more than 691 mentions of "Paralympic". The same search on the website of the Australian Sports Commission returns 3,363 mentions of "Olympic" but just 223 mentions of "Paralympic"<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> The APC was not the author of much of this document and as such is not able to endorse it fully.

<sup>4</sup> Site searches of [www.uksport.gov.uk](http://www.uksport.gov.uk) and [www.ausport.gov.au](http://www.ausport.gov.au) conducted 13 October 2008.

## **Key points of this submission**

---

The body of this submission contains 68 points to improve the delivery of sport to people with a disability in Australia. Here is a summary of those points.

### **1. Ensure Australia's continued elite sporting success.**

In 2008, Australia's Paralympic athletes do not receive from government, at federal or state levels, the same recognition, benefits and opportunities that their Olympic compatriots enjoy. In addition, Australia has been passed by other countries in the provision of opportunities and incentives which assist coaches and athletes to reach and continue to perform at the highest levels.

Yet research shows that Australians overwhelmingly support the investment in Paralympic sport by the Australian Government<sup>5</sup>, with 96 percent in favour.

A change of direction would:

- Create a national charter for sport which recognises the value of sport, defines the shared objectives of the Australian community for sport and commits governments and community organisations to fulfilling their roles in the delivery of sport;
- Establish a single, national sports institute network to replace the current disparate structure with one which has a national outlook in genuine partnership with national sporting organisations;
- Provide full AIS scholarships and coaching to Paralympic athletes across a significantly broader range of sports than is presently the case;
- Fund talent identification for Paralympic athletes at a rate equitable with talent identification of able-bodied athletes;
- Provide athlete support grants to all elite athletes at the same rate;
- Provide a pool of qualified high performance full-time coaches to work with Australia's best Paralympic athletes in those sports being contested by Australia at the summer and winter Paralympic Games;
- Reintroduce a national coaching body, along the lines of the former Australian Coaching Council with sufficient resources to revitalise sports coaching in Australia from the professional and elite levels through to community level coaching;
- Support international and domestic competition opportunities which promote Paralympic sport in Australia; and
- Invest in the future of Paralympic success by providing support for underpinning layers.

### **2. Better place sport and physical activity as a key component of the Government's preventative health approach.**

It has been shown that specific programs are effective in promoting participation by target groups in sport for people with disabilities. Increased participation and understanding can be assisted by:

---

<sup>5</sup> *OmniAccess report for the Australian Paralympic Committee*, Woolcott Research, September 2008

- Expanding the work done by the APC to ensure that classification is the portal for participation in Paralympic sport, including an extension of the role played by the APC in classification to assist Paralympic and non-Paralympic sports to more effectively assess participants so that they can make informed decisions about the best sports for them;
- An expansion of programs which use Paralympic athletes who have acquired their disabilities through motor vehicle or workplace accidents to deliver effective messages about safety and the role of sport in assisting rehabilitation and reintegration into society;
- The expansion of the Paralympic Education Program into every Australian primary school and its introduction into high schools;
- The introduction of specific programs to increase sport participation by people with a disability from Australia's diverse ethnic backgrounds, including indigenous Australians and people in more severe disability classes;
- Equity in the use of language and references to sport for people with disabilities and the able-bodied in all government legislation and documentation;
- The alignment of government and community programs;
- The use of ongoing targeted programs to address inequity until there is evidence that people with a disability enjoy the same consideration, at all levels of sport, as the able-bodied; and
- An audit of Australian sporting facilities which includes an evaluation of disability access.

### **3. Strengthen pathways from junior sport to grassroots community sport right through to elite and professional sport.**

Programs conducted by the APC and evidence from other disability sport agencies shows that participation in sport by people with disabilities is limited by structural inefficiencies and lack of access to information, equipment and convenient opportunities to participate. Some of these are longer-term problems which must be addressed by systemic changes and others can be readily addressed by improvements in the current "system", through:

- A more effective structure for the management and delivery of sports programs for people with a disability, with a broader coordination and facilitation role to be played by the APC, as requested by a broad range of stakeholders, including the ASC;
- Support for underpinning programs as the basis for elite sport success;
- Support for the APC to identify and accredit as Paralympic Training Centres a network of clubs and other organisations around the country which provide practical opportunities for people with disabilities to receive coaching and to participate in sport at all levels;
- A central, online, information portal, managed by the APC, for people with a disability to find out about opportunities to participate in sport at any level, anywhere in Australia; and
- A national sports equipment program to assist people with disabilities to participate in sport.

#### **4. Maintain Australia's cutting edge approach to sports science, research and technology.**

Australia's leadership role in sports science and medicine has not been extended to Paralympic sport in any coordinated manner. A range of simple measures, utilising the pool of sports science expertise within Australia's institutes and academies of sport as the catalyst, has the potential to boost sport performance at all levels:

- Support the APC to establish a Centre for Paralympic Studies which will coordinate research in sport for people with disabilities;
- Build the capacity for Australia's sports science centres, such as the AIS, to the extent they are able to support Paralympic sports science initiatives to a level that is on a par with able-body" sport;
- Build on the links created for the care of the 2008 Australian Paralympic Team to create a network of "disability aware" sports science and medicine practitioners in the sports institute network around Australia and conduct regular programs to update and share knowledge within this group and to involve more practitioners in the provision of expert medical, nutrition, psychology and recovery services; and
- Bring Australia's anti-doping agency, ASADA, into line with the majority of nations by adopting the use of the ADAMS online system to report and monitor athlete whereabouts.

#### **5. Identify opportunities to increase and diversify the funding base for sport through corporate sponsorship, media and any recommended reforms, such as enhancing the effectiveness of the Australian Sports Foundation.**

Paralympic sport in Australia receives funding from a range of sources and the APC has worked very hard to diversify its funding base. There are a number of ways in which Government can assist in this diversification, including:

- Ensuring that Government agencies and instrumentalities give equal recognition to the achievements and needs of disability sport in all documents and legislation, especially key sport documents such as the Australian Sports Commission Act; and
- Retaining legislation which maintains the status of the Australian Paralympic Committee as a registered charitable institution.
- Extending the Federal Government support for the broadcasting of the Paralympic Games, provided in 2008, through to 2010 winter and 2012 summer Paralympic Games. Based on the success of this initiative in 2008 and the value of such affirmative action in highlighting the achievements of people with disabilities, particularly women, through sport.

## Submission details

---

### ***Terms of Reference 1 - Ensure Australia's continued elite sporting success.***

- *Identify any areas of duplication within Australia's sporting system and recommend ways to build a more efficient system.*
- *Examine the relationship between the Australian Sports Commission, Australian Institute of Sport, State and Territory Institutes, academies of sport and regional institutes and how this relationship could deliver better athlete pathways.*
- *Recommend opportunities to ensure maximum returns from talent identification programs.*

### **The Australian sport system will not be equitable until Paralympic athletes can aspire to the same opportunities, in the same facilities, with the same coaching and support, as Olympic athletes.**

In 2000 Australia led the way in many facets of Paralympic sport, most particularly in program structure and performance expectations. However, other countries have caught up in those areas and, as the Beijing Games have shown, have passed Australia in other areas, such as overall spending and provision of equipment (Great Britain), coaching support (Ukraine) and training environment (China).

Recent funding increases will help maintain Australia's Paralympic performance. The following initiatives will improve it.

#### **1.1 National charter for sport**

The APC's members comprise a wide range of Australia's generic national sporting organisations (NSOs) as well as national sporting organisations for the disabled (NSODs). The APC's relationships and ongoing communications with its members and other sports bodies give it a unique overview of Australian sport.

At all levels, it is apparent that Australia lacks a shared vision and a common direction for sport. Further, there is no common government recognition of the role of sport within the Australian community - despite occasional attempts to define its value.

- 1.1.1 The APC believes that it is time for a formal agreement across all levels of Australian government which recognises the value of sport and sets out the place of government and community organisations in the delivery of sport.

Such a "charter for sport" would define the role of sport, the shared objectives of the Australian community for sport and contain a commitment for all signatories to work together to achieve its objectives.

- 1.1.2 An outcome of such an agreement would be a realignment of the relationship between the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and other government agencies and the sporting organisations which deliver sport to Australians - towards a genuine collaborative partnership.

In the context of elite sport, another outcome should be the creation of a coordinated sports institute network, working towards common goals and not driven by regional interests (often at the expense of national goals) as is currently the case. (See 1.2)

## **1.2 Coordinated sports institute network**

Within Australia's relatively small sport community, the lack of coordination of the activities of the national and State level institutes and academies of sport with the programs and performance goals of bodies such as the APC and the national sporting organisations (NSOs) is inexcusable. This lack of coordination is resulting in inefficient use of resources and a duplication of activities.

While there have been attempts to coordinate the activities of the AIS and the state institutes and academies of sport (SIS/SAS), such as the creation of the National Elite Sports Council (NESC), the practical outcome has not been a significant improvement in coordination, but, rather, a perception that there is a "us-them" dichotomy between the elite sports agencies of government and the sporting organisations which provide sport for Australians.

The 2004 High Performance Review Forum which took place after the Athens Games, resulted in neither a national plan nor any collegiate approach.

1.2.1 The APC proposes a single national sports institute system which recognises the different capacity of each state to contribute and where all programs are created and managed collaboratively, from a national perspective. It is essential that Australia's sporting organisations be at the centre of such a system.

## **1.3 Institute programs for Paralympic athletes**

For Paralympic athletes, the benefits of access to full-time AIS scholarships was clearly demonstrated in Beijing. The six athletes on AIS athletics scholarships formed 12.5 percent of the Australian athletics team, yet they won 42 percent of Australia's medals in athletics.

The AIS athletics model has worked very well, with the full integration of scholarships and athletes within the AIS athletics program, trained by specialist coaches. Access to the full range of AIS services has been a key element.

Following the 2008 Federal Budget, there will be additional AIS program opportunities for Paralympic athletes from 2009 - a further four residential scholarships for athletics, six new residential swimming scholarships, camps-based programs in basketball and powerlifting and greater access for the existing alpine skiing program. There will also be new full-time positions for coaches in athletics, swimming and powerlifting/weight training.

However, these increases will not begin to bridge the gap between the opportunities which exist for Paralympic athletes compared with able-bodied athletes. The AIS currently conducts 32 sport programs, offering 700 athlete scholarships annually<sup>6</sup>. In 2008 just 26, or 3.7 percent, of these scholarships are for athletes with a disability and, of 89 coaches employed in AIS programs, just one is a full-time, hands-on coach of athletes with a disability.

In 2008, Australia's key rivals are well ahead – China, for example, has two Paralympic institutes of sport in Beijing and a further 14 throughout the country. Great Britain offers Paralympic athletes scholarships on the same basis as able-bodied athletes. These countries finished first and second on the medal table in Beijing.

At state level, Paralympic athletes are included in SIS/SAS programs. While Paralympic athletes are proportionally better represented in SIS/SAS programs than those of the AIS, there remains a significant disparity in the number of opportunities available. At its most extreme, one state institute has no wheelchair access to half of

---

<sup>6</sup> AIS website, 7 October, 2008

its offices and its purpose-built weight training facility, at the bottom of a flight of stairs, cannot be accessed by athletes in wheelchairs at all.

The APC proposes:

- 1.3.1 Equity in the provision of programs, scholarships and services across all levels of the national sports institute network. This includes the support of all Paralympic sports to the same extent as their equivalent Olympic or able-bodied program.
- 1.3.2 Targetted athlete sport institute scholarships for talented athletes who have the potential to medal (and qualify) for the upcoming Paralympic Games in Paralympic sports that are not supported by a full Paralympic program (such as Judo or Fencing).
- 1.3.3 Support for Paralympic outcomes in a coordinated fashion across the national sports institute network with consistent goals and program delivery determined in conjunction with NSOs and the APC. The opportunity for NSOs to work with a single coordinating organisation would significantly improve the efficiency of the system.
- 1.3.4 Increasing coaching scholarships for coaches of Paralympic athletes in the national sports institute network which can form part of the coaching pathway for their respective sport.

#### **1.4 Talent identification**

The APC's talent identification program – Talent Search – commenced in March 2005 and placed 27 athletes in the Beijing Paralympic Team, with 15 of them winning medals. The program has achieved these spectacular results on a modest budget of less than \$350,000 a year<sup>7</sup>.

While the Paralympic Talent Search program was established to uncover potential Paralympic Talent, another benefit has been that it is often the initial introduction to sport for participants who have not been able to participate actively within an able-bodied sports system, mainly due to lack of access, available competitions or self-confidence.

A key element of the Paralympic Talent Search program is the involvement of experienced coaches at each activity to assess each participant. In addition, identified athletes are placed, where possible, in ongoing programs with coaches.

However, resource limitations mean that the program is yet to reach its potential. The Paralympic Talent Search program is poised to go to the next stage. This requires:

- 1.4.1 Expanded coach involvement in Talent Search days across further sports to ensure raw talent is properly identified in as many sports as possible.
- 1.4.2 Integration with disability-specific organisations (such as blind schools), rehabilitation centres and children's hospitals, with the APC facilitating this involvement.
- 1.4.3 Support for talented athletes to explore new sports – "talent transfer" - for those who may not make it to the very top of their current sport, yet may be

---

<sup>7</sup> This compares with the budget of the ASC Olympic Talent Identification Program (NTID), which was increased to \$20 million over 4 years in 2006. Five NTID athletes represented Australia at the Beijing Olympics, without winning any medals.

more suited physically and geographically to succeed in other Paralympic sports.

- 1.4.4 The availability of relevant information for selected sports pertinent to the athlete's disability.
- 1.4.5 Basic self-screening through the Internet with information relevant to the athlete's disability can increase participation without athletes having to participate in sports that are not suitable for their disability.
- 1.4.6 Availability of a web-based database of associated contacts and relevant events specific to the participant's disability.

## **1.5 Talent development**

The APC's talent identification program for Paralympic sport has been very successful, with, proportionally, a very high performance success rate. However, the APC's figures show that 60 percent of athletes identified through the program as having elite potential have not been able to engage in their sport<sup>8</sup>, with the biggest reasons being lack of available coaching and program opportunities.

Talent development is the essential second step in the talent identification process. Within Australia, the following elements currently limit the success of this step:

- 1.5.1 Access to coaching expertise within athletes' chosen sports and events.
- 1.5.2 Regular structured competition opportunities.
- 1.5.3 The availability of essential specialised equipment at reasonable cost.

## **1.6 Athlete grant programs**

In the modern environment for Paralympic and Olympic sport, athletes must take a professional approach if they are to be successful and this includes a commitment to full-time or extensive part-time training and competition.

While the achievements of elite athletes are seen to be of significant national value<sup>9</sup>, the reality is that most athletes are not able to generate sufficient income, through prize-money or sponsorship, to live independently and still make the necessary training and competition commitment.

In the lead-up to Beijing, Australian Paralympic athletes received direct support funding through the Australian Government Sports Training Grant Program (AGSTG) and the APC Direct Athlete Support (DAS) program.

In the year leading up to Beijing, Paralympic athletes received up to \$13,000<sup>10</sup> each in direct support, compared with \$18,000 for Olympic athletes.

In Beijing, Australia's athletes competed against athletes from a number of other countries, such as Great Britain, who receive government funding to train and

---

<sup>8</sup> Attachment A

<sup>9</sup> "Sport is integral to Australia's way of life, our view of ourselves and how we are viewed by the rest of the world. It helps build the social cohesion that binds families, communities, regions and the nation. No other facet of our culture has the capacity to bring together so many different streams of Australian life in mutual joy and celebration." *Australian Sport: emerging challenges, new directions*. Australian Government, May 2008

<sup>10</sup> 78 Paralympic athletes received up to \$6,500 each through AGSTG. All members of the Australian Paralympic Team received a one-off DAS payment of \$6,500 - a total of more than \$1.1 million among 170 athletes, guides and pilots. (The APC consolidated DAS funds over the four years leading up to the Beijing Games into a single grant to have the greatest impact on athlete preparations for the Games.) This compared with AGSTG funding for Olympic athletes of \$18,000 for each athlete during that time.

compete full-time. A range of countries, from Sweden to Singapore, offered athletes significant medal incentive payments.

The APC does not believe that the Australian sports culture requires “living wage” funding for all Paralympic athletes. However, under the current system, athletes are retiring well before they reach their performance potential due to the need to earn a living. This system can be improved to ensure that:

1.6.1 Australia’s Paralympic and Olympic athletes who have a record of significant achievement receive priority support which enables them to maximise their competitive careers; and

1.6.2 Paralympic and Olympic athletes are funded at the same rate.

The APC is also aware that many of the difficulties which apply to athletes also apply to coaches. This is one factor in the shortage of qualified international level coaches in Paralympic sport.

The APC believes that a new support program should be extended to coaches so that honorary coaches can afford to spend the necessary time with athletes on tour, training and also in self-education.

The APC proposes:

1.6.3 A program which pays Australia’s best athletes a support allowance appropriate to the value of their performances.

1.6.4 Payment of a support allowance to all shadow squad members (approximately 300-350 Paralympic athletes), giving more athletes the opportunity to reach their potential and using the money for greatest impact. This must be at least \$10,000 per athlete, paid at least 6-12 months ahead of the Games.

1.6.5 Providing larger sums of athlete support has a greater impact than smaller amounts more frequently.

1.6.6 Payment on an individual basis, where NSOs have the capacity to configure individual allocations based on most need and greatest impact, will be most effective.

1.6.7 That coaches be included in any future scheme.

## **1.7 High performance coaching**

The Beijing Paralympic Games demonstrated clearly the role of professional coaches in achieving performance results. For example, the five athletes coached by Iryna Dvoskina, one of only two full-time hands-on coaches in the Australian Team, were involved in winning eight gold, one silver and two bronze medals – all but three of the gold medals won by the Australian athletics team. The Ukraine team, which won 43 swimming medals to Australia’s 29, contained six coaches who work full-time with its swimmers. Consistently, teams and athletes with full-time coaches dominated the results.

Yet the number of coaches working with Paralympic athletes in Australia is so low that athletes identified as having elite potential are unable to find coaching support, across a range of sports.

In general, Paralympic sport in Australia continues to rely on unpaid coaches.

Successful Australian coaches are being poached by other countries and there is evidence that coaching, as an activity, does not currently receive the recognition and support it deserves in Australia.

The APC believes that the Australian sport system needs to develop a more attractive coaching structure for coaches of Paralympic athletes – one which provides a pathway through to an elite group of full-time coaches and contains incentives and rewards along the way.

The AIS/SIS/SAS system can provide the ideal environment for the development of coach pathways.

The APC proposes:

- 1.7.1 The immediate full-time employment of an additional 20 of Australia's elite Paralympic coaches in hands-on coaching roles with Paralympic athletes in athletics (2), boccia (1), cycling (2), CP Football (1), equestrian (1), goalball (1), powerlifting (1), rowing (1), sailing (1), shooting (1), swimming (2), table tennis (1), wheelchair tennis (1), wheelchair basketball (2) wheelchair rugby (1) and Paralympic winter sport (alpine: 1) and a plan to increase this pool by a further ten coaches across key Paralympic sports by 2010.
- 1.7.2 The introduction of a coach allowance program for identified elite volunteer coaches of leading Paralympic athletes to enable them to spend the required time coaching their athletes and improving their knowledge. (See 1.6)
- 1.7.3 Coaching scholarships for coaches of Paralympic athletes at the AIS and SIS/SAS which can form part of the coaching pathways for their respective sport in conjunction with appropriate athlete programs and working with elite full-time coaches. (See 1.3)
- 1.7.4 Support for national sporting organisations delivering Paralympic programs to develop pathways for coaches coaching Paralympic athletes, including coaches entering sports at the grassroots level, those already in the able-bodied system, those coaching at an underpinning or development level and those coaching at a senior or elite level.
- 1.7.5 The development of specific coaching accreditation for all Paralympic sports where Australia has an active program.
- 1.7.6 The reintroduction of an agency with responsibility for the promotion, accreditation and development of policies and resources relating to coaching at all levels of Australian sport, such as was undertaken in the past by the Australian Coaching Council.

## **1.8 Competition opportunities**

Compared with able-bodied sport, there are fewer competition opportunities for athletes with a disability at all levels, which makes those opportunities even more valuable and worthy of nurture.

An important benefit of conducting events for athletes with a disability is that they also provide opportunities for athletes to be accurately classified and for training of classifiers, both of which are essential for disability sport.

The 1998 Wheelchair Basketball Gold Cup, the 2000 Paralympic Games and the 2007 Oceania Wheelchair Rugby Zonal Championships all demonstrated the attractiveness of Paralympic events in Australia.

At the underpinning level, the successful integration of the Oceania Paralympic Championships into the existing Arafura Games in Darwin in 2007 has demonstrated the role of such events in developing Paralympic sport in the region and to “blood” potential Australian Paralympians in international competition. The success of the inaugural event in 2007 led directly to the qualification of athletes in several sports for the Beijing Paralympic Games.

With integration in 2007 achieved through Federal funding support, the APC has committed to support the event in 2009 and 2011. The level of this commitment and any future commitments and potential expansion to this event will be dependent on ongoing and improved Federal support.

The APC is currently negotiating with key stakeholders to establish the Australian Paralympic Youth Games. This event is for the underpinning level of Paralympic sport, providing a high level competition opportunity for junior athletes.

The establishment of the Paralympic Youth Games and consolidation of the Oceania Paralympic Championships provides a level of competition for developing athletes which will be critical to the success of future Paralympic Teams.

For developing athletes, there is evidence that multi-sport events for athletes with a disability have an important role to play, alongside the integration of athletes within able-bodied events.

The expansion of competitions through the schools sporting system is another APC goal.

To support and encourage further competition opportunities for Australia’s Paralympic athletes, the APC proposes to establish an events business unit to identify, secure and facilitate competitions in Australia and to protect and promote the Paralympic brand through those events.

Under its events business unit, the APC will look to invest in events that provide an opportunity to expand the opportunities for Australian Paralympic athletes to compete in their own backyard.

The APC proposes:

- 1.8.1 To establish an events business unit within its structure to identify, secure and facilitate competitions in Australia and to protect and promote the Paralympic brand through those events.
- 1.8.2 That the Federal Government provides targetted financial and other support to Paralympic sport events which will assist it to achieve its sport goals.
- 1.8.3 Organisations responsible for the delivery of school sport be supported to work with the APC to properly and fully include competition opportunities for people with a disability within current events or, as may be required, with discreet events in their own right.

***Terms of Reference 2 - Better place sport and physical activity as a key component of the Government's preventative health approach.***

- *Examine Government frameworks to ensure an on-going focus on grassroots and community sport and physical activity.*
- *Examine Government programs to increase participation rates in sport and physical activity, including analysis of existing programs.*
- *Identify and recommend opportunities to break down barriers to participation at junior, adult and senior ages with a view to making it simpler and easier for Australians to participate in the sport or physical activity of their choice, including for women, the disabled and Indigenous people.*
- *Recommend strategies to increase the effectiveness of the promotion of sport by the Federal Government to better communicate positive health and activity messages to the broader community.*

## **2.1 Classification**

Classification is the key step that facilitates the participation of people with a disability in sport from a grassroots, community level to the Paralympic Games. Accurate athlete classification enables fair and equitable competition opportunities and enjoyment for participants across all Paralympic and non-Paralympic sports and at all stages of the sporting pathway.

Classification is a portal for the participation of people with a disability in sport. Conversely, the lack of an accurate classification is a barrier to participation in sport for people with a disability.

Classification also simplifies and facilitates the choice of sport for people with disabilities.

Under the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Classification Code, the APC has a central policy, coordination and supervisory role in classification for Paralympic sport in Australia.

The APC has established a national classification program which has accredited 39 new national and 14 new international classifiers since 2006, accredited classifiers in cycling, rowing, alpine skiing and blind sports (which previously had none in Australia), developed a directory of classifiers, produced resources for all sports, and created a national classification "passport" for every Paralympic sport.

National Sporting Organisations for the Disabled (NSODs) and NSOs currently have a poorly coordinated approach to athlete classification across sports and state networks. The APC is placed in a unique position to be able to facilitate and coordinate classification as a service to sports at national and state levels across the spectrum of disability groups.

An expansion of the role of the APC in this area will reduce duplication and gaps in current athlete classification processes.

The APC proposes:

- 2.1.1 To be the principal agency responsible for facilitating athlete classification across non-Paralympic sports and disability groups, in addition to Paralympic sports.
- 2.1.2 Utilising the APC website and other resources to provide accurate, up-to-date and easily accessible classification information to all stakeholders.
- 2.1.3 An ongoing focus on classification as a foundation for participation in Paralympic and other disability sport.

## **2.2 Community health programs**

The APC, in partnership with government and corporate sponsors, has experience in conducting very effective programs which target specific groups in the community. These programs assist people in rehabilitation and others with a disability to participate more actively in all aspects of community life and provide health messages which resonate with the entire community.

The current APC programs are:

- The Paralympic Accident Awareness and Rehabilitation Program (PAARP) is funded by the Motor Accidents Authority of NSW (MAA). It is targeted at people in rehabilitation following a motor vehicle accident to promote the benefits of participating in sport, through competing, coaching or volunteering. These benefits include health and socialisation.

The program is delivered by Paralympians who have themselves been through rehabilitation following a motor vehicle accident.

- The WorkCover NSW program targets employees and the families of employees. It promotes the importance of workplace safety and the key messages of returning to life and work after a life-altering accident.

Corporate involvement in these programs enables WorkCover and MAA to promote key messages and gives income to Paralympians. Both organisations have increased their level of commitment to the programs significantly in 2008 due to their success.

- 2.2.1 The expansion of these programs nationally would expand the health and community benefits, promote the benefits of sport as a rehabilitation tool to a key target group within the community and provide opportunities for Paralympic athletes to develop new skills and income.

## **2.3 Paralympic education**

The Telstra Paralympic Education Program (TPEP) is a program of the Australian Paralympic Committee which uses Australian Paralympians as role models for Australian primary school children, enhancing their knowledge and understanding of all people with disabilities through Paralympic sport.

Through eight lesson and associated resources, the program:

- provides a practical guide for teachers and students to openly raise disability and associated issues with students;
- creates awareness of the importance of inclusion and opportunities for children with a disability; and
- inspires all students to be the best they can be.

Since its launch in 2007, TPEP has reached 1,816 primary schools within Australia. Those schools report that they are delivering the program to 282,435 students<sup>11</sup> (see Attachment B).

A unique component of TPEP is the Athlete Correspondence Program (ACP), which links Paralympic athletes with schools. This allows the school to correspond directly with athletes and facilitates opportunities for Paralympic athletes to visit chosen schools.

During the visits to schools, athletes discuss issues associated with disability, building on what has been learned through the lesson plans and helping to demystify disability. The use of Paralympic athletes as positive role models through the ACP promotes positive images and emotions of people with a disability to students and helps students to understand the contributions people with a disability make to society.

The use of positive role models who have a disability can have a substantial impact on young students who have had little exposure to people with a disability within their community and begin to break down barriers and stereotypes of people with a disability. Increasing students' exposure to positive people with a disability creates comfort around disability, ensuring it is less confronting and more openly discussed.

Despite increased funding in the 2008 Federal budget, TPEP is currently limited by resources to support and expand the program to meet the demand.

This program has the potential to positively influence the role and understanding of people with a disability by every Australian schoolchild.

The APC proposes support for the expansion of the Paralympic Education Program to enable:

- 2.3.1 Comprehensive face-to-face exposure in every Australian state and territory through the expansion of the Athlete Correspondence Program and travelling "roadshows" which enable students to experience firsthand the issues which affect people with disabilities and the opportunities for achievement through Paralympic sports.
- 2.3.2 Annual updates of the lesson plans and the regular addition of new plans.
- 2.3.3 The extension of the program to high schools.
- 2.3.4 Ongoing development of the TPEP website to maintain it as a valuable resource for teachers, students, parents and athletes.
- 2.3.5 The development of more effective resources and teaching aids.
- 2.3.6 Integration with the Sports Ability program of the ASC, which introduces schoolchildren to modified sports for people with disabilities.

## **2.4 Participation by under-represented population groups**

An analysis of the membership of the 2008 Australian Paralympic Team indicates that it is not representative of the ethnic diversity of Australia's population, including indigenous Australians. While female athletes had the highest ever representation on the Australian Paralympic Team, their relatively weak performances in Beijing indicates that some further work may be required to achieve gender equity.

---

<sup>11</sup> Figures at 10 October 2008

In Beijing, Australia was also under-represented in sports classes for the more severely disabled, especially in the key sports of athletics, swimming and cycling.

Before drawing any conclusions from these observations, there is a need for research to determine the proportions of people with various disabilities within Australia's ethnic populations, as well as women, and the reasons for any under-representation in Paralympic sport.

The APC proposes:

2.4.1 An action plan which can be implemented by government and sporting organisations, including the APC, to:

- Target participation by people in the more severe disability classes.
- Target participation by people from Australia's diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Australia's indigenous population; and.

## **2.5 Government programs for disability sport**

The Australian Sports Commission delivers the government's policy agenda. To do so effectively, the ASC must work in partnership with Australia's national sporting organisations.

The relative numbers of athletes with a disability and able-bodied athletes within the AIS program are covered in section 1.3 of this submission and the funding available for AGSTG for Beijing in section 1.6. In each case, there are significant disparities between opportunities for able-bodied athletes and athletes with a disability. Even a very basic measure such as the number of references to "Olympic" versus "Paralympic" on the ASC website, indicates a considerable difference.

The examples cited here are indicative of a disconnect between the stated policy objectives of the government and its sport agency and any implementation of those policy objectives.

Where the actions of the government sport agency do not reflect equality of treatment, it is difficult for an overall environment of equity to exist in Australian sport.

The ASC also conducts disability sport programs – Sport CONNECT and Sports Ability. Both programs operate independently of any APC input or, indeed, significant input from the key community stakeholders in this area.

The APC believes that changes are required to ensure that recognition and support for sport for people with a disability flows from all levels of government and is integral to the relationships between government agencies and sporting organisations.

The APC proposes:

2.5.1 All government documentation relating to sport, including legislation, should use inclusive language and provide equal reference to people with a disability where it is appropriate to do so. (See 5.2)

2.5.2 A review of the role of the ASC in disability sport, as recommended in the report of the Paralympic Task Force, 2006.

2.5.3 Government programs in the disability sport area should line up with community programs conducted by key stakeholders such as the APC and be conducted, as far as possible, in partnership with those stakeholders.

2.5.4 In a fully mainstreamed environment, where disability sport is integrated at all levels of the sport structure, disability development positions within the national bodies of key sporting organisations should not be necessary. However, there is strong evidence that the existence of these positions within NSOs has a very positive impact on the equity of opportunities for athletes with a disability within NSOs and that they will make a significant difference at Australia's present level of development.

## **2.6 Facilities**

Australia has a current shortage of facilities at all levels of sport. This is exacerbated by limitations on outdoor facilities caused by the extended drought over most of the country.

Athletes with a disability often require special consideration when using facilities. For example, more severely disabled swimmers may require their own lane within a squad because they swim so much more slowly than able-bodied swimmers or even than other swimmers with a disability. This can add significantly to costs as well as create availability issues. In athletics, throwers with a disability who throw from a seated position require additions to throwing facilities so that they can stabilise the frames on which they sit to throw.

In addition, people with a disability may be involved in smaller, minor sports (such as boccia, goalball) which can be marginalised by the facility demands of larger sports.

Thus, when facility usage is high and availability is limited, people with a disability may miss out on sport opportunities.

The APC believes that:

- 2.6.1 Every Australian sporting facility should be accessible to all Australians.
- 2.6.2 It is time for an audit of Australian sporting facilities which would include an evaluation of disability access and availability.
- 2.6.3 The results of this audit should be used to determine a unified approach across all levels of government and the sports industry to identify and prioritise facility planning. The APC can provide accessibility advice.

***Terms of Reference 3 - Strengthen pathways from junior sport to grassroots community sport right through to elite and professional sport.***

- *Examine the capacity of the system to ensure optimal and efficient delivery of the athlete and coach pathway for any given sport.*
- *Recommend the most effective support and recognition for the coaches, officials, umpires, administrators and volunteers who keep our community clubs alive.*
- *Examine how relationships between the Commonwealth Government and National Sporting Organisations, State Sporting Organisations and Australia's peak representative bodies at key multi-sports competitions may be strengthened to deliver better performance outcomes.*

### **3.1 A more effective structure**

The Australian sporting structure follows, in general, the federalist structure adopted in many other areas, including the Australian political structure, with similar strengths and weaknesses.

The key shortcomings of this structure can be a lack of coordination across the levels of sport and a tendency for government agencies to dictate to sport rather than to form partnerships for planning and the allocation of funding.

The combination of different organisations working in the areas of disability sport has created a fragmented and uncoordinated approach to the provision of sporting opportunities for athletes with a disability.

At state level, umbrella groups have emerged in some states (such as Queensland Wheelchair Sports and Disabled) to deliver practical services at the grassroots level for a wide range of sports. This important development has proven to be more effective than the proliferation of small sport organisations in other states.

Nationally, some sports such as wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby conduct semi-regular introductory programs, and the conduct of regular competitions creates a reasonable pathway.

The influx of athletes from the APC Talent Search Program has revealed the fragility of the current system, which has not been able to service those interested in their particular sport.

The APC has been invited to consider playing a wider role in disability sport, including an umbrella role for disability sport organisations. The APC has agreed to consider any formal request put to it to assist in the rationalisation of disability sport and is holding discussions with member organisations regarding resources and programs under its umbrella.

The pooling of resources through the APC may provide opportunities that disability sport groups and sporting organisations don't have individually to encourage participation in sport and to introduce sports in regional areas.

These range from "big picture" issues such as industry sector representation to practical hands-on solutions such as the establishment of a national "contacts" database, a register of active disability sport coaches and a calendar of events.

The APC proposes:

- 3.1.1 Its central role in the management and coordination of Australia's Paralympic performance outcomes be maintained.
- 3.1.2 The APC create a new member and athlete services division to work with its members and other relevant organisations to expand its role and support the broad needs of the disability sport sector for a coordinating industry agency.

### **3.2 Development programs**

For Australia to remain successful at Paralympic level, all underpinning programs must have systems in place to identify, nurture and develop talented athletes.

Fostering relationships with organisations and industries unique to disability sport is critical to the success of disability sport in Australia. Building strong relationships within rehabilitation and health networks (eg occupational therapists within hospitals) will assist in ensuring potential athletes with a disability are made aware of sporting opportunities available to them.

The following programs are critical to the development of Paralympic sport in Australia and are covered separately in this submission:

- Classification;
- Talent identification;
- Talent development including junior, emerging athletes;
- Coaching;
- Competition at all levels of development.

Development programs, other than those specifically mentioned in this submission, are the responsibility of the relevant sport and disability sporting organisations.

The APC proposes:

- 3.2.1 National and state bodies, including the APC, be involved in the development of Paralympic and aspiring Paralympic athletes and coaches, be adequately resourced to undertake their task.
- 3.2.2 A thorough analysis of Paralympic results and associated data to enable organisations such as the APC to reverse engineer programs to identify and nurture talent specific to particular needs.

### **3.3 Competition opportunities for developing athletes**

Section 1.5 of this submission covers the range of opportunities in this area, including competition opportunities for underpinning levels, which are essential to a healthy disability sport system.

### **3.4 Paralympic training centres**

Many athletes identified through APC programs are unable to find coaches and venues for training and this has created a barrier to development.

The following actions will assist in addressing this:

- 3.4.1 The APC will examine opportunities to work with the umbrella disability sport organisations and sports which deliver services at state and territory level to accredit clubs and organisations as official "Paralympic centres of excellence" if

they meet certain standards in the delivery of coaching or competition opportunities for people with a disability.

- 3.4.2 The establishment of, and support for centres of excellence for chosen sports within specific regions should seriously be considered. Many coaches of Paralympic athletes also coach other athletes with a disability with little or no financial support from the NSO, SSO or APC and work predominately on in a voluntary capacity. A financial reward/incentive for coaches to seek out and coach talented athletes with a disability will increase retention and uptake of talent search and developing athletes markedly.
- 3.4.3 The state institutes and academies of sport can play a significant role in identifying, acknowledging and assisting centres of excellence for Paralympic athletes.

### **3.5 Information structures**

There are many barriers to participation in sport by people with a disability.

One of these is the difficulty of finding information. Basic sport information and pathway documents are not often freely available and can be difficult to locate for a new athlete with a disability wishing to participate in a particular sport.

More cohesion and sharing of information is required within the sport structure to retain athletes within sport as they move through the sporting pathway and deal with different organisations.

The APC is positioned as a key agency to coordinate the assembly and posting of information about disability sport through the creation of an information portal which would include basic sport information, classification information, places to play, sporting organisation and coach contacts, calendar of events, etc.

The APC website delivered more than 1.1 million pageviews during the Beijing Games and the APC has a background in creating and effectively delivering information about sport.

The APC proposes:

- 3.5.1 The creation of an information portal hosted and managed by the APC to include basic sport information, classification information, places to play, sporting organisation and coach contacts, calendar of events, and a national equipment register.

### **3.6 Equipment**

Specialised equipment is required to compete in many Paralympic sports.

An able-bodied athlete interested in playing basketball requires minimal equipment to participate. An athlete with a disability wishing to participate in wheelchair basketball must purchase or borrow a specialised chair and associated equipment. This situation occurs in many Paralympic Sports and limits the opportunities for potential athletes to participate.

Whilst some athletes with a disability have received compensation as a result of an accident or are funded to purchase required equipment, more commonly athletes with a disability are from a low socio-economic background and funding purchases of specialised equipment is often laborious and simply too difficult.

Individuals (including some Paralympians) and organisations conduct small-scale equipment grants and supply programs in various regions of Australia. However, there is an opportunity to establish a national scheme, funded by government in partnership with corporate Australia.

The APC proposes:

- 3.6.1 Comprehensive research into equipment needs and availability around Australia, including an equipment audit.
- 3.6.2 The creation of a national equipment program, in conjunction with government, disability agencies and the corporate sector which would include an equipment lending scheme and an information portal so that people with disabilities can find out what is available and how to obtain it.

***Terms of Reference 4 - Maintain Australia's cutting edge approach to sports science, research and technology.***

- *Examine the capacity of the system to ensure provision of cutting edge technology, innovation, sport science, sports medicine, applied research to underpin sport performance and development, including ways to maintain Australia's position as leaders in anti-doping.*
- *Examine the current partnerships in place within these fields and recommend any potential partnerships.*

#### **4.1 Applied sports science and sports medicine program**

The appointment of AIS and SIS/SAS sport science, psychology and medicine staff to the 2008 Australian Paralympic Team had significant benefits. Australia was the only nation to provide coordinated recovery services to its Team during the Paralympic Games. The appointment of AIS staff also facilitated coordination of the service delivery between the Australian Olympic and Paralympic Teams.

The APC proposes:

- 4.1.1 The Australian Paralympic and Olympic Teams should continue to build on the strong partnership they developed over the period between Athens and Beijing in sports science and sports medicine.
- 4.1.2 National sports institute policies should reflect this partnership and facilitate the involvement of key staff as members of Olympic and/or Paralympic Teams.

#### **4.2 Sports science and sports medicine research program**

There is a lack of quality research relating to the performance of sport by people with disabilities, despite Australia's reputation as a leading nation in the field of sports science, research and technology.

The investment in Paralympic scholar sport science positions within the national sports institute network across a range of sport science disciplines can significantly improve this base of knowledge and enhance elite athletic performance.

The APC proposes:

- 4.2.1 The establishment of direct links with coaches to share this knowledge will enhance the standard of coaching for athletes with a disability from a grassroots level and throughout the sporting pathways. The APC should be involved in the appointment of Paralympic scholars and should guide the research undertaken.
- 4.2.2 Researchers and practitioners within the national sports institute system are ideally positioned to lead the development of knowledge that underpins sport performance. This knowledge should be released only when this would not compromise any Australian competitive advantage.
- 4.2.3 There is considerable scope for the sport science and sport medicine programs of mainstreamed NSOs to develop a focus on the inclusion of athletes with a disability and for NSO Chief Medical Officers to have equal responsibility for the provision of care for able-bodied athletes and athletes with a disability.

### **4.3 Centre for Paralympic Studies.**

Compared with able-bodied and Olympic sport, very little research has been undertaken into Paralympic sport and much of that research has been ad hoc and not necessarily directed towards understanding relevant issues.

- 4.3.1 To address this, the APC will establish a Centre for Paralympic Studies, as the driving agency for research involving sport for people with disability and a central repository for Paralympic history and data.

The Centre will be responsible for assisting researcher to access funding, grants and a population of athletes for investigation. It will be the sole body responsible for liaison with affiliated institutions.

Research conducted on high end, elite athletes will be retained by the centre and used for the interest of our Paralympic athletes prior to wider release. Research relating to the participation of people with a disability at grass roots and introductory levels, including that relating to the participation of people with disabilities from diverse communities will be applied at a community level to increase the participation of all people with disabilities in Sport.

### **4.4 Anti-doping**

To maintain Australia's position as leaders in anti-doping, its anti-doping agency, ASDA, needs to align its systems with international standards. ASDA is one of the few anti-doping agencies which does not use the "ADAMS" results management and whereabouts system. This causes significant duplication for athletes and administrators in sport at an international level, because Australian information cannot be accessed by national and international bodies. In the lead-up to the Paralympic Games in Beijing, Paralympic athletes had to provide two sets of whereabouts data, one to ASDA one to the IPC. If Australian athletes had access to ADAMS, this would not have occurred.

The APC proposes:

- 4.4.1 ASDA aligns its athlete whereabouts notification practices with international standards to assist athletes and sporting organisations.

***Terms of Reference 5 - Identify opportunities to increase and diversify the funding base for sport through corporate sponsorship, media and any recommended reforms, such as enhancing the effectiveness of the Australian Sports Foundation.***

## **5.1 Fund-raising status**

There remains a disparity in funding support from all sources between sport for people with a disability and able-bodied sport.

Because of this, the diverse circumstances of the participants and the range of stakeholders, disability sport depends on a diversified funding base, especially community support.

While community fundraising activities can be an unreliable source of funding, which fluctuate according to the proximity of key events, they also allow organisations such as the APC to position themselves and their programs and services within the community.

Access to charity status assists organisations such as the APC to benefit from community support and reduce its reliance on government.

The APC's charity status is integral to the communication and promotion of the APC.

With the APC's expanding role in the delivery of disability sport programs, the APC needs to retain the level of funding it receives from Government and the corporate sector to ensure ongoing and improved delivery of programs and provision of services for athletes with a disability such as:

- Equipment – provision and maintenance
- Facilities – access (high end disability athletes eg swimming; upgrade to ensure w/c accessible; maintenance
- Elite – scholarships – national institute framework; athlete grants
- Coaching – development of coaches; ensuring athletes have access to coaches
- Events – staging national and international competitions
- Classification – including training of classifiers
- Development – following on from TS
- Delivery of programs – TS, TPEP
- Information portal for disability sport
- Sports science, research, technology

The APC proposes that:

- 5.1.1 Government retains legislation which maintains the status of the Australian Paralympic Committee as a registered charitable institution.

## **5.2 The Australian Sports Commission Act**

The APC believes that equity in language and referencing play an important role in ensuring the equal treatment of all Australians, especially in key government documents.

In 2007 the APC made a submission to the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA), which conducted a review of the Australian Sports Commission Act, focussing on its effectiveness in enabling the ASC to deliver results that give effect to the Government's sport policy.

In its submission, the APC noted that the ASC has obligations under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act which aims to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the grounds of disability in a range of areas, including sport.

The APC proposed that the ASC Act should also incorporate an explicit statement within its Objects that the ASC will promote equality of access to its programs and services.

According to the APC, placing such a statement in the Objects section of the Act illustrates a commitment to providing sporting opportunities for all Australians – more so than the existing statement in the Act under the Functions section (Part II, Section 7) “to develop and implement programs that promote equality of access to, and participation in, sport by all Australians.”

5.2.1 The APC proposes that the ASC Act be amended to incorporate an explicit statement within its Objects that the ASC will promote equality of access to its programs and services and that references to the Australian Olympic Committee or the word “Olympic” should be accompanied by references to the Australian Paralympic Committee or the word “Paralympic”, where appropriate.

### **5.3 Broadcast of the Paralympic Games**

In 2008 the Australian Government accepted the recommendation of the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, titled *About time! Women in sport and recreation in Australia* that “the government consider allocating up to \$1 million to the Australian Paralympic Committee to assist with production and associated costs of televised coverage of the forthcoming Paralympics, and that the arrangement stipulate that a condition of accessing this funding be that there be balanced coverage of male and female athletes.”

This funding was instrumental in securing extensive coverage of the 2008 Paralympic Games through the ABC, which broadcast more than 130 hours in total, including more than 80 hours of live coverage on ABC2.

Initial reports from the ABC and independent monitoring indicate that each day one in ten viewers in Australia’s five major metropolitan markets visited ABC TV to watch coverage of the Paralympic Games, with a peak across ABC networks of 1.5 million on the most watched day. The coverage of the Games boosted the audience reach of the ABC’s new digital network, ABC2, by 60 percent during the Games.

While figures have not been finalised, there is clear evidence that total media coverage of the Games increased significantly from Athens. Traffic on the APC’s own website increased by 500 percent over the same period in 2004.

There is no doubt that the Federal Government’s support for the television coverage of the Games had a significant impact on overall awareness of the Games and made a significant difference in the support and coverage of the achievements of Australia’s Paralympic athletes, including assisting in providing strong role models for Australian women with a disability.

The APC proposes:

5.3.1 Extending the Federal Government support for the broadcasting of the Paralympic Games provided in 2008 through to the 2010 winter and 2012 summer Paralympic Games. Based on the success of this initiative and the

value of such affirmative action in highlighting the achievements of people with disabilities, particularly women, through sport.

### Talent Search and underpinning programs for juniors, youth and talent transfer athletes.

The Toyota Paralympic Talent Search is a successful APC program which identifies potential Paralympic athletes through talent identification days in metropolitan and regional centres throughout Australia.

While the Talent Search program was established to uncover potential Paralympic Talent, it is often the initial introduction to sport for participants who have not been able to participate actively within an able bodied sports system mainly due to a lack of access and available competitions or self-confidence.

The program operates on a modest annual budget of \$358,000 (2008/09).

Following a range of sporting tests and general measurements, participants are advised which Paralympic Sports are most suitable for them to pursue. Participants are given realistic expectations of their capabilities. Following the battery of tests all participants are tiered according to their Paralympic potential:

- Tier 1 (elite potential within 2 years);
- Tier 2 (development level, potential elite within 4 years); or
- Tier 3 (no elite potential recognised at present).

Since its inception in March 2005, the program has tested more than 1000 people with a disability through 72 Talent Search days in every State and Territory.

TALENT SEARCH STATISTICS (March 2005 – October 2008)

STATE	TOTAL DAYS	PARTICIPANTS	TIER 1	TIER 2
ACT	5	66	16	42
NSW	20	257	32	128
NT	2	19	0	6
QLD	11	222	26	78
SA	11	101	9	35
TAS	2	22	4	5
VIC	17	209	29	61
WA	4	112	11	40
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>1008</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>395</b>

Of the 522 participants recognised as having elite potential, 53 were part of the Paralympic Preparation Program (PPP) preceding the Beijing Paralympic Games, across 10 Paralympic Sports. This figure represents 20 percent of all PPP athletes in that time.

Twenty seven Talent Search athletes were selected for the Beijing Paralympic Games, forming 17 percent of the Australian Team, with fifteen athletes going on to win medals.

Two Athletes won gold medals (9 percent of the Australian team total), eight athletes won silver medals (28 percent) and a further eight athletes won bronze medals (30 percent) underlying the value and success of the program.

The Paralympic Talent Search Program has seen significant success compared with that of the able-bodied National Talent Identification and Development Program (NTID) with five athletes on the Olympic Team and no medals in Beijing.

It is acknowledged that whilst commitment levels of Paralympic Athletes is often similar or even greater than their Olympic counterparts, the level of expertise required to reach the Olympic level in many sports and events is still greater than that of Paralympic level.

However, the APC Talent Search program has one unique feature which contributes to its success.

Paralympic coaches who have an “eye” for talent are always part of the testing process, so talented athletes are able to be spotted more regularly irrespective of the results of the testing. Without coach involvement, many talented athletes who do not test well due to a lack of fitness or exposure to sports may slip through the system.

### **The way forward**

Coach involvement in the testing process needs to expand across further sports to ensure raw talent is properly identified in as many sports as possible.

Some components of the NTID Program and other similar programs overseas can be implemented to assist to fast track talented athletes. A version of E-TID incorporating information relevant to the athlete’s disability can improve how talented athletes are identified and increase participation at grassroots level without athletes having to participate in sports that are not suitable for their disability.

Locating information via the internet relevant to chosen sports for participants with a disability is extremely time-consuming, often with little results. A database of associated contacts and relevant events specific to the participant’s disability should be available following a Talent Search day or the completion on an electronic TID form

Talented athletes often have characteristics relevant to other sports. In an attempt to retain talented athletes within the Paralympic system all avenues should be explored to transfer athletes to other sports who have expressed a desire for a change and also for those who simply may not make it to the top of their current sport yet maybe more suited physically and geographically to succeed in other Paralympic sports.

While a substantial number of Talent Search athletes have already competed at international level, a survey of participants (July 2008, see Table 2) found that the majority of participants are yet to commit to a chosen sport due to a range of factors, including:

- Barriers for new athletes committing to a sport include a lack of coaching expertise within their chosen field.
- Regular structured competition opportunities and the availability and cost of specialised equipment also contributes to the low uptake of sport by identified athletes.
- The availability of relevant information for that sport pertinent to the athlete’s disability also restricts athlete’s participation.

**TABLE 2**  
**Ongoing participation by identified Talent Search athletes**

Sport	Tier 1 & 2 athletes identified	Tier 1 & Tier 2 participating in identified sport	Yet to commit to identified sport
Archery	21	8	13
Athletics	208	53	155
Boccia	13	6	7
CP Football	23	12	11
Cycling	92	22	70
Equestrian	9	4	5
Judo	5	2	3
Powerlifting	9	3	6
Rowing	38	14	24
Sailing	4	2	2
Shooting	9	4	5
Swimming	126	31	95
Table Tennis	41	21	20
Wheelchair Basketball	36	13	23
Wheelchair Rugby	5	3	2
Wheelchair Tennis	20	5	15
Winter	9	4	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>315</b>

### Telstra Paralympic Education Program (TPEP) A tool for understanding and breaking down barriers associated with disability.

The Telstra Paralympic Education Program (TPEP) is a program of the Australian Paralympic Committee which uses Australian Paralympians as role models for Australian primary school children, enhancing their knowledge and understanding of all people with disabilities through Paralympic sport.

Through eight lesson and associated resources, the program:

- provides a practical guide for teachers and students to openly raise disability and associated issues with students;
- creates awareness of the importance of inclusion and opportunities for children with a disability; and
- inspires all students to be the best they can be.

Since its launch in 2007, TPEP has reached 1,816 primary schools within Australia. Those schools report that they are delivering the program to 282,435 students (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1**  
**TPEP reach around Australia**

State	Schools registered	Participating students	Total primary schools in state	% of schools registered
ACT	60	9,691	96	63%
NSW	602	97,286	2,415	25%
NT	8	1,822	176	5%
QLD	412	56,944	1,447	28%
SA	192	25,294	577	33%
TAS	46	7,149	204	23%
VIC	417	64,225	1,894	22%
WA	79	20,024	910	9%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,816</b>	<b>282,435</b>	<b>7,719</b>	<b>24%</b>

A unique component of TPEP is the associated Athlete Correspondence Program (ACP), which links Paralympic athletes with schools. This allows the school to correspond directly with athletes and facilitates opportunities for Paralympic athletes to visit chosen schools.

During the visits to schools, athletes are able to further discuss issues associated with disability, building on what has been learned through the lesson plans and helping to demystify disability. The use of Paralympic athletes as positive role models through the ACP promotes positive images and emotions of people with a disability to students and helps students to understand the contributions people with a disability make to society.

Because of the factors associated with disability, people with disabilities often experience isolation, low self-esteem and may face overwhelming barriers to participate in social (sport, etc.) and economic (employment) life in society.

The use of positive role models with a disability can have a substantial impact on young students who have had little exposure to people with a disability within their community and begin to break down some of the barriers and stereotypes of people with a disability. Increasing students' exposure to positive people with a disability creates comfort around disability, ensuring it is less confronting and more openly discussed.

### **The way forward**

For many people with a disability, being active in society is a series of obstacles due to both physical and attitudinal barriers. As a consequence, whilst we have seen many positive changes in recent years, much remains to be done to promote the social participation and opportunities for people with disabilities within society. The expansion of TPEP can play a role in removing obstacles.

A "roadshow" which incorporates activities for students and meeting athletes has been successfully trialled in 2008. Future activities could include an introduction to Paralympic sports and the modification of sports and games for people with disabilities.

Developed for upper primary school students nationally, and launched in 2007, the TPEP Teaching Resource embraces diversity and inclusion as its key themes.

Lesson plans included in the resource are:

- Diversity
- Inclusion
- People enjoy being together; people enjoy sport
- Paralympic sport
- Paralympic theme songs
- Introduction to elite athletes with a disability
- Paralympic cities; past, present and future
- Playing Paralympic sports

Lesson plans need to be updated annually and replaced over time.

Other future steps include:

The extension of the program to high schools.

Ongoing development of the TPEP website to maintain it as a valuable resource for teachers, students, parents and athletes.

The development of more effective resources and teaching aids.

Integration with the Sports Ability program of the ASC, which introduces schoolchildren to modified sports for people with disabilities.