



AUSTRALIAN
PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE

Policy Paper 2013 Federal Election

1 Overview

This document forms the 2013 federal sport policy submission of the Australian Paralympic Committee.

It summarises the additional federal sport investment that is required to establish equity of support for people with a disability to participate in sport, compared with the support provided to those Australians who are able-bodied.

It contains the following elements:

1.	Overview	Page 1
2.	Policy fundamentals	Page 2
3.	The case for equity – current position	Page 3
4.	Equity for high performance sport	Page 5
5.	Equity for community participation	Page 13

2 Policy fundamentals

The APC believes that it is time to address a fundamental issue in the Australian Government's support for sport for people with a disability.

Simply, it is a reality that funding for Para-sport remains well below the relative level of funding of sport for the able-bodied. For example, the figures clearly show that for each Olympic gold medal won in London, the Australian Government has currently allocated 39 times more ongoing funding than has been allocated for each Paralympic gold medal.

This submission asks Australia's major political parties to adopt the following principles as part of their overall sport policies:

- **High performance funding for able-bodied and Paralympic programs will be allocated at the same rate based on the level of performance success by all of that sport's high performance athletes.**
- **Sports development funding will be allocated proportional to the numbers, needs and costs of people with a disability so that they can have access to the same pathway opportunities as the able-bodied.**
- **Funding will be allocated to specific programs to address the inequalities in access to sport between the able-bodied and those with a disability.**

The APC believes that any funding allocation to reduce the inequity in sport for people with a disability should be additional funding, not a re-allocation of existing resources.

In addition, this submission also contains specific proposals for Australian Government support to address identified needs within the Para-sport pathway which limit the opportunities for people with a disability to follow the same sport pathways that are open to their able-bodied peers.

3 The case for equity – the current position

In Australia in 2013, to be born with or acquire a disability means – for most people – to enter a world of reduced opportunities and expectations.

Despite recent progress, this is also true of sport, contradicting its role in Australia as a great social equaliser.

Paralympic sport has been shown to influence attitudes to disability and to provide opportunities for people with a disability to excel in sport. The acknowledged success of the Australian Paralympic Team and the London 2012 Paralympic Games has influenced Australian attitudes.

However, people with a disability and the wider community receive another message if they expect the same level of sporting support enjoyed by able-bodied participants.

This inequity sends a message to the National Federations, to the athletes and to the community that the performances of Paralympic athletes do not have the same value as those of their able-bodied counterparts. It is a powerful message about the worth of a person with a disability compared to one who is able-bodied.

The following data tells the story:

- ABS statistics show that people with a disability comprise approximately 20 percent of the Australian population.
- The participation rate in sport and physical activity among able-bodied Australians is 68.5%. Among Australians with a disability it is 53.2%, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006).
- The proportion of total funding to able-bodied and disability sport has not changed since 2007/08 - 87.5% goes to able-bodied sport and just 12.5% of all Australian government funding is specifically allocated to sport for people with a disability, even though the actual costs per person of delivering sport for people with a disability are often much higher.
- Australia's Winning Edge (AWE) investment allocation for sport in 2013/14 identifies total funding for participation activities of \$17,176,600. Of this, just \$300,000 – 1.7% - is specifically allocated for participation activities for people with a disability.
- The Australian Paralympic Team was demonstrably more successful than the Australian Olympic Team in London in 2012. The Australian Paralympic Team won 6.16% of Paralympic gold medals on offer in London. The Australian Olympic Team won 1.99% of Olympic gold medals on offer. The Australian Paralympic Team won 5.52% of total Paralympic medals on offer in London. The Australian Olympic Team won 3.01% of all Olympic medals on offer.
- Australian Paralympic athletes won 70.1% of all Olympic and Paralympic medals won by Australia in London in 2012. Yet Australian Paralympic sports receive just 10.7% of the 2013/14 AWE overall high performance budget directed to Rio 2016.

- This funding proportion EXCLUDES funding available for the Australian Institute of Sport. In 2011/12 (the last year for which figures are available), the total funding allocated to sports for their AIS programs was \$19,896,220. Of this, just \$304,711 – or 1.5% - was allocated to Paralympic programs through the APC.
- By way of relevant international comparison, Paralympic athletes won 64.9% of all Olympic and Paralympic medals won by Great Britain in London in 2012, and British Paralympic sports will receive 20.1% of the overall high performance sport funding allocated over the four years for Rio 2016. This is DOUBLE the proportion of overall Rio funding that is being allocated to Paralympic sport in Australia, despite the British Paralympic team being comparatively slightly less successful than the Australian Paralympic team in London, when compared with their Olympic peers.
- The overall British high performance funding for Rio 2016 through UK sport equates to \$145.8m a year (based on the exchange rate on 15 June 2013). Of this, Paralympic sport receives the equivalent of \$29.3m a year. The overall UK high performance funding is 45.5% more than Australia's overall AWE high performance funding of \$100.2m. However, in the UK, Paralympic funding is 118.6% more than Australian high performance funding for Paralympic sport, indicating the relative status of Paralympic sport accorded by the Federal Government of each country.
- On a rate of funding for each Australian gold medal won in London, Australian Olympic summer sports have been allocated 39.1 times more direct AWE funding per gold medal than Australian Paralympic summer programs for 2013/14.
- On a rate of funding for each Australian medal won in London, Australian Olympic summer sports have been allocated 20.8 times more direct AWE funding per medal than Australian Paralympic summer programs for 2013/14.

To bring AWE performance direct sports funding for Paralympic sport to 20% of Australia's overall direct AWE sports funding for Paralympic and Olympic sports requires an additional annual investment of \$9.73m in AWE Paralympic sports funding.

4 Equity for high performance sport

The APC acknowledges the support of successive Federal Governments for Paralympic programs and Paralympic athletes. The APC believes that it is effective and efficient in its use of this support.

In 2013/14 the APC will receive \$9.101m in Australian Government high performance AWE program funding which goes to agreed sports programs, most under the APC's mainstreaming agreements.

The APC will receive an additional \$4.280m for a range of additional high performance programs and program support. \$1.055m of this funding is allocated by the APC to AIS programs to supplement the \$0.304 of the AIS budget allocated to Paralympic sport.

There continue to be gaps in the resourcing and delivery of high performance Paralympic sport programs for people with a disability in Australia. Addressing these gaps will enable the APC to assist more people with a disability to play sport, maintain Australia's level of Paralympic performance success and promote understanding and opportunities for all Australians.

This section contains a range of proposals for Australian Government support to maintain the success of Paralympic sport in Australia.

4.1 Equity of funding for Australia's summer Paralympic Preparation Programs

Aim

Maintain Australia's ranking within the top five Paralympic nations in 2014 and 2016 by resourcing the 17 summer PPP (Paralympic Preparation Program) sport programs currently receiving funding from the Australian Paralympic Committee to a level which enables them to be internationally competitive and achieve Games success.

Overview

Since the introduction of Federal government funding in 1994, the APC has guided the evolution of Paralympic high performance program management through the PPP, moving it from a disability sport model to a high performance sport model managed by the APC, then to a mainstreamed model managed by the APC's national federation partners. The APC is now actively engaged in the development of an integrated sport model in which Paralympic athletes receive the same support and opportunities as elite able-bodied athletes.

In the four summer Games prior to the introduction of Federal Government funding for Paralympic sport through the APC, Australia's average ranking was tenth by gold medals and seventh by total medals. In the five summer Games since the introduction of funding to the APC, Australia's average ranking by gold medals and by total medals at the Paralympic Games has been third.

With the total high performance funding allocated across more than 350 Paralympic Preparation Program athletes in 17 sports for preparation and competition, and associated support activities such as sports science and sports medicine, most Paralympic high performance programs (outside athletics, basketball, cycling and swimming) are delivered from a total level of funding between \$150,000 and \$450,000 a year – well below equivalent programs in able-bodied sport.

This level of funding is well below that required to deliver optimal training and competition programs, or programs comparable to the equivalent Olympic programs in those sports. (In 2012, no Olympic sport with funding below \$2.0m achieved medal success.)

Additional funding will be used by sports to:

- Increase international competition opportunities;
- Extend coaching networks;
- Increase the number of athletes in high performance programs to extend the depth of programs and potential for performance success.

Proposed program

Expand the pool of funding to be allocated to the existing high performance sports programs through the APC to a level which is in line with the level required to maintain international performance results.

Funding to be allocated by the APC across its existing sports programs based on need and demonstrated high performance success.

Total annual cost

\$9.73m

4.2 Equity for Australia's winter Paralympic Preparation Program

Aim

Bring the winter Paralympic Preparation Program into line with its able-bodied equivalent by providing sufficient funding and support for its integration into the Olympic Winter Institute of Australia at the same level as Olympic programs and in line with its ongoing record of high performance success.

Overview

Australia has participated in every Paralympic Winter Games since the first Games in 1976, winning 11 gold medals and 28 medals in total in the ten Paralympic Winter Games that have been conducted. Australia has twice finished within the top ten nations overall and is consistently within the top 10 nations in the discipline of alpine skiing since its first medals in 1992.

The APC supports programs in alpine skiing and snowboard. The winter sport program is the only high performance program with a direct able-bodied equivalent organisation that is currently managed by the APC.

The requirement for extensive – and expensive - on-snow time in Australia and overseas, and the highly technical skills and requirements of Paralympic winter sport mean that it has been difficult to establish the conditions to mainstream this program and bring it into line with the integration that has occurred in other sports.

Proposed program

Increase funding available to the winter sport program to facilitate its integration into the Olympic Winter Institute of Australia under a mainstreaming agreement, in line with summer Paralympic sports.

Total annual cost

\$0.22m

4.3 Talent identification

Aims

- Increase the sport entry options for people with higher needs.
- Assist more athletes to pursue opportunities in their identified sport.
- Strengthen the engagement between the APC and other sport providers at all levels.

Overview

More than 2,000 people have participated in the APC's Talent Search activities since 2005. Many of those people will not go on to perform at higher levels in their sport, and the APC is concerned that it has had limited capacity to assist those participants into sport programs because of limited resources, which have restricted the program's focus on identification of potential elite athletes. Many of those participants have higher needs and are not easily accommodated within sporting programs.

The APC proposes extending the successful APC Talent Search program to enable more people with severe disabilities to engage in sport and provide more support to match athletes with coaches and sport programs.

Proposed programs

Employ additional part-time staff in each state and territory to:

- promote the APC's "come and try" activities to young people with higher needs and support their engagement in the program;
- liaise with sporting groups which provide training and competition opportunities to assist them to expand their programs and capacity;
- match identified talented athletes with coaches and programs to accelerate their engagement with sport.

Total annual cost

\$0.2m (matching funding to be obtained within each state).

4.4 Events

Aims

Through a regular program of Paralympic sport events:

- increase participation rates among people with a disability;
- support Australia's Paralympic sporting programs;
- increase awareness of the achievements of people with disability with consequent social inclusion and equality benefits.

Overview

The Sydney Paralympic Games demonstrated the vital role of Paralympic events within Australia in developing awareness, understanding and appreciation of Paralympic sport, and its capacity to inspire all Australians and break down barriers for people with a disability.

Outside of the Paralympic Games every two years, Australians have little opportunity to witness Paralympic sport, and even less to attend Paralympic sport events.

Federal funding support has been instrumental in the development of the Oceania Paralympic Championships, as part of the Arafura Games, into a major regional event. As an outcome, Paralympic sport is beginning to flourish in the Oceania area and young Australian athletes have the opportunity to experience international competition at an appropriate level. However, its wider community impact was very limited to within the Darwin region.

Wherever possible, the APC has taken advantage of opportunities to apply other funding to international events and has leveraged the benefits of these events by associating them with its education program, providing opportunities for classifier training, and using a variety of means to broadcast Paralympic sport.

However, compared with able-bodied sport, there is an absolute paucity of Paralympic events in Australia.

The conduct of regular international events in Australia, every year in a range of Paralympic sports, will have a significant impact on the “normalisation” of Paralympic sport through broadcasts, media coverage and spectator participation. It will impact on the performances of Australian athletes and teams, through limiting the need for external travel and creating more opportunities for competition. Events also provide an opportunity to classify athletes and train new classifiers.

At a domestic level, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby are the “flagship” Paralympic sports, with popular appeal to spectators and the media. They each also have a proven role in attracting young people to Paralympic sport. The national league competitions in wheelchair rugby, women’s wheelchair basketball and men’s wheelchair basketball are of international standard but run at considerable losses and drain the resources of the organisations which support the teams from each state. Support for these leagues will have a significant impact on the activities of the organisations at state level and the influence of the leagues.

Proposed program

The APC proposes a comprehensive program of support for domestic and international events in Australia:

- tours and tournaments for “showcase” sports;
- Paralympic components of existing events in mainstream sports;
- effective national competitions in the flagship sports of wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby;
- standalone development events; and
- continuation of the successful Oceania Paralympic Championships within the Arafura Games.

Total annual cost

\$1.2m

4.5 AIS and partner institutes and academies of sport

Aims

- Enhance Australia’s Paralympic medal success by increasing the scope and integration of Paralympic programs in Australia’s high performance sport network.
- Provide greater equity for Paralympic athletes compared with able-bodied sports within Australia’s elite sports network.
- Enhance the aspirational value of sport pathways for people with disabilities.
- Increase the critical knowledge available to Australian athletes and coaches.

Overview

In July 2012, the AIS became the first Centre for Paralympic Excellence accredited by the APC under the Paralympic Sports Centres program.

The targeted investment of federal government funding by the APC through the AIS and Australia's high performance network of state institutes and academies of sport is a key element of Australia's Paralympic Preparation Program.

Since 1988, AIS athletes have won 37 percent of Australia's summer Paralympic Games medals and 71 percent of Paralympic winter medals.

The value of the AIS Paralympic programs was emphatically demonstrated in Beijing. AIS athletes comprised just 14.1 percent of the Australian Paralympic Team, but they won 45.6 percent of its medals, including more than 70 percent of gold medals. AIS athletics coach Iryna Dvoskina was named the APC's coach of the year.

In 2012, 19 of the 20 AIS Paralympic program scholarship holders competed at the Paralympic Games in London. Comprising 11.8 percent of the Team, they won 16.5 percent of Australia's total medals and 21.9 percent of its gold medals.

The AIS Paralympic programs have been particularly effective in working with AIS sports scientists and sports medicine practitioners to develop equipment and performance advantages for Australian athletes, through the sport programs and high performance research projects which specifically address the particular characteristics of Paralympic athletes. The results of this research have been dramatic and will enhance Australian performances beyond the London Games.

In addition, nine AIS SSSM staff were SSSM staff members of the 2012 Australian Paralympic Team and a further three participated in the Australian Paralympic Team's pre-Games staging camp.

However, in 2011 AIS Paralympic programs comprised approximately 3.6 percent of the total AIS programs by cost and 6.8 percent of athletes. Since the establishment of the AIS in 1981, there have been approximately 7,000 able-bodied scholarship holders and less than 100 Paralympic scholarship holders – about 1.4 percent of the total number.

In 2012 there were AIS scholarship programs in 5 sports - alpine skiing, athletics, swimming, rowing and sailing, compared with 26 able-bodied programs. Three of the Paralympic programs were integrated within the able-bodied AIS programs for that sport.

Apart from \$304,000 in allocated AIS funding, these programs and associated services were purchased from the AIS by the APC from its overall government funding.

Within the state institutes and academies of sport, Paralympic athletes often receive individual scholarships, which provide more equal status with able-bodied athletes. However, opportunities to take full advantage of the facilities and expertise available are limited by the resources that the APC can allocate to them. Additional resources will enable the APC to achieve greater integration of many existing programs to include both Paralympic and Olympic athletes.

The APC invests a considerable amount of its current funding into its partnerships with the AIS and its partner institutes and academies of sport to enable athletes to access facilities and services. However, the demand is greater than the capacity of current funding.

Proposed program

Expand the investment in Paralympic sport, through the APC, to provide equitable access to the national institute and academy of sport network for Paralympic athletes

Invest appropriately to enable each sport to develop a national scholarship model for Paralympic athletes and provide a level of support equal to that provided to able-bodied athletes.

An increase in the proportion of national athlete scholarship system for Paralympic athletes to 20% of all funding for high performance athletes will bring the Paralympic programs into line with a more equitable representation compared with able-bodied sports and effectively drive performance in those sports.

This funding increase should not be at the expense of existing programs. Additional funding is required to deliver equitable outcomes.

Total annual cost

As far as the APC is aware, this will be covered through full equity of funding through 4.1 (Equity of funding for Australia's summer PPP).

4.6 Innovation – sports science and sports medicine

Aims

- Extend the application of sports science and sports medicine (SSSM) to every Paralympic athlete's training and competition environments to enhance performance and create better knowledge and services to athletes.
- Shared outcomes from the SSSM program benefit the wider community, including better travel management, recovering from and coping with heat and climate stress, screening and body alignment practices and benefits, wheelchair design and prosthetic development.

Overview

The APC has implemented a SSSM program which focuses on the achievement of performance outcomes through the development and application of knowledge specific to Paralympic athletes and sports.

Performance focused sports science and sports medicine support represents a potential ongoing major competitive advantage for Australia's Paralympic athletes and teams. In this area in able-bodied sport, Australia has been at the forefront internationally for more than 20 years.

The application of sports science and sports medicine in every Paralympic athlete's training and competition environments will enhance performance and create better knowledge and services to athletes in the areas of prosthetics, orthotics and equipment.

New research will expand the focus on better travel management, recovering from and coping with heat and climate stress, screening and body alignment practices and benefits, wheelchair design and prosthetic development. Travel still creates challenges for people with disabilities and the best strategies for relief on flights and recovery from travel, especially for athletes with spinal cord injuries, are yet to be fully determined.

However, the current level of funding means that the APC does not have the personnel to identify and create partnerships and other relationships to research and address the full range of specific issues impacting on Paralympic athletes. In addition, the APC is limited in its capacity to apply existing knowledge across all its sports.

As well as producing performance outcomes in almost all sports, there are significant commercial opportunities for Paralympic knowledge and technology to be applied to the 20 percent of Australians who have a disability.

Proposed program

- Create and fund a position of Coordinator of SSSM Research and Development to drive this area and take advantage of opportunities which exist to partner with tertiary institutions to undertake specific research and apply the results. This requires a person with the understanding of the tertiary research environment and the contacts and skills to take advantage of those opportunities. (\$180,000 pa)
- Create and support specific industry partnerships in three key areas and coordinate those areas of research:
 - The impact of travel and environmental factors (in particular heat stress) on people with a range of disabilities, and strategies to minimise the impact. (\$40,000 pa)
 - The use of technology for smart athlete monitoring and the development and customisation of equipment to maximise performance under sport rules – wheelchairs, prosthetics, orthoses, customising boats to the athletes. (\$40,000 pa)
 - Training specificity, including recovery for different disability types. (\$40,000 pa)

Total annual cost

\$0.3m

4.7 Free to air broadcast coverage

Aims

- Promote awareness the achievements of people – and in particular women - with disabilities across the broader Australian community by ensuring comprehensive coverage of the Paralympic Games on free to air television.

Overview

Following the recommendation of the Senate Standing Committees on Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts in September 2006, in its report on its Inquiry into women in sport – ***About time! Women in sport and recreation in Australia*** - the federal government provided funding of \$1 million to the APC to support free to air television coverage of the 2008 summer and 2010 winter Paralympic Games.

The success of the coverage of those Games by the ABC led to the provision of the same level of funding to the APC for coverage of the 2012 and 2014 Paralympic Games by the current government.

The effectiveness of this strategy in 2012 has been indicated in research conducted for the APC in September 2012 by Woolcott Research.

Woolcott Research found that Australians were significantly more engaged with the 2012 Paralympic Games than the 2008 Games (31 percent followed them closely, compared to 23 percent in 2008), with 41 percent of respondents reporting that their level of interest had increased compared to 2008.

Fifty-eight percent of those who were aware the Games were on reported that they had watched the TV coverage or highlights. This represented 56 percent of the overall population. Virtually 100 percent of this viewing occurred on free to air television.

Woolcott found that television was the leading medium Australians used to follow the London Paralympic Games.

The ABC broadcast more than 100 hours of coverage of the 2012 Paralympic Games, a large proportion live, and has indicated to the APC that its Paralympic coverage was responsible for ABC2 achieving record ratings during the Games period and for lifting the

overall ratings of the ABC across its free to air channels above Network Ten's ratings across its free to air channels. (Final figures to be provided.)

Two of the three individual athletes nominated by respondents as "highlights" of the Games were female – swimmers Jacqui Freney and Maddison Elliott.

With 44 percent of the Australian Team in London, female athletes won 48 percent of Australia's medal tally.

Proposed program

Provide funding to the APC to support free to air television coverage of the 2016 and 2018 Paralympic Games under the same conditions as the successful funding to support coverage of the 2008/10 and 2012/14 Games.

Total cost

\$1.0m (continuation of existing funding)

5 Equity for community participation

People with higher needs are one of the most marginalised, disadvantaged and disengaged groups in the community, particularly in relation to sport.

In general, people with a high level of disability assume there are no sporting opportunities available for them and/or they face difficulty in allocating very limited carer and financial resources to enable them to participate in sport.

For people with higher needs, the barriers to participation in sport can be overwhelming, despite extensive evidence that sport is very beneficial for people with a disability, from its effective use in rehabilitation programs through to its ongoing social, fitness and psychological health benefits and community understanding.

Distinguishing features of this group are the need for sport assistants - usually one-to-one - to facilitate the participation of the athlete, smaller groups, the provision of one-on-one care, mobility and equipment aids or specialised equipment, and the need to minimise travel. Participants with higher needs are not easily accommodated within mainstream sporting programs or even activities for participants with milder levels of disability.

This is an extremely challenging area and the existing structure of disability sport in Australia has largely failed to meet the needs of this group for meaningful sporting opportunities and for access to development pathways.

The APC has facilitated and supported effective sport programs and pathways for people with higher needs, particularly through its successful development programs in Boccia and Goalball.

Although Boccia has been established for more than 20 years in Australia, the sport had struggled and was in decline, with less than fifty active participants nationally. Since the APC appointed a coordinator in December 2010 to work directly with groups interested in promoting Boccia, there has been a 1,000 percent increase in the participation rate in the sport, the establishment of regional, state and national school and junior competitions, and the creation of viable organisational structures to manage Boccia.

Goalball, played by people with vision impairment, has followed a similar path, supported by the APC's network of state development coordinators.

The APC has successfully facilitated the introduction of sporting opportunities for people with higher needs, where these had struggled or failed in the past. However, further development is hampered by issues of access and the cost of the carers who are essential to participation.

The development of models to support access to sporting opportunities by people with higher needs on an equitable basis with the rest of the community has the capacity to significantly benefit the individuals involved and the wider community.

Sport participants should not be required to pay additional costs simply because their disability requires more support so that they can play sport.

The DisabilityCare Australia scheme, supported overwhelmingly by the Australian community and by all of Australia's major political parties, shows that Australians are interested in addressing the broader inequities faced by people with a disability.

The Australian Paralympic Committee has written to the Minister for Disability Reform with a proposal for a partnership with DisabilityCare Australia to provide access to sport and active recreation programs.

The remainder of this section outlines the elements of a program to improve the delivery of sport opportunities to people with higher needs in the Australian community.

5.1 Boccia

Boccia is played by participants with the highest needs. Boccia has the potential to be a major participant sport among people with higher needs, with the opportunity to create viable lifelong sporting opportunities for a market otherwise not well catered for.

Since the APC appointed a Boccia development coordinator in December 2010 to work with community organisations to develop the sport, there has been an increase in participants of more than 1,000 percent nationally in just over two years. The APC's involvement has led to structured programs and competitions in SA, WA and Victoria, the expansion of structures in Queensland and NSW, and the introduction of the first ever schools and junior competitions in Australia.

Concept:

The APC is limited in what it can achieve through lack of resources.

Additional resources to expand this program will significantly increase outcomes and engage with people with higher needs to participate in the sport pathway.

- Employ nationally coordinated full-time state based development officers (SA, WA, Vic, Qld, NSW).
- Support community associations in all states to develop ongoing programs and support relevant to the needs of the target population.

Estimated annual cost - \$0.5m

5.2 Goalball

Goalball is played by blind participants and others with a vision impairment. It is a sport which can be integrated with sighted participants and is therefore one of a small number of sports that is ideal for building communities and social networks between the sighted and those with a vision impairment.

Since the APC took over the management of the Australian high performance Goalball programs in 2008, there has been a significant increase in numbers of participants and the profile and performance success of the sport. Similar to Boccia, the APC's involvement has led to structured programs and competitions around Australia and the reinvigoration of structures.

Concept:

The APC is limited in what it can achieve through lack of resources.

Additional resources to expand this program will significantly increase outcomes and engage with people with higher needs to participate in the sport pathway.

- Employ nationally coordinated full-time state based development officers (SA, WA, Vic, Qld, NSW).
- Support community associations in all states to develop ongoing programs and support relevant to the needs of the target population.

Estimated annual cost - \$0.5m

5.3 Indigenous Australians

Research shows that the level of disability among Indigenous Australians is approximately twice that of the overall Australian population. This is true for Indigenous Australians who live in cities and those in regional communities. Yet Indigenous Australians who have a disability do not participate in sport at the same levels as other groups in the community and are under-represented in all areas of disability sport.

Little is known about the relationship of disability to sports participation within Australia's Indigenous population. Anecdotal evidence suggests that cultural issues associated with disabilities within Indigenous cultures limit the participation of people with a disability.

Sport offers considerable benefits to Indigenous Australians who have a disability, in the same way it offers benefits to able-bodied Indigenous Australians.

While opportunities exist to link with Indigenous talent identification (TID) programs of the ASC and organisations such as the AFL, this is currently beyond the resources of the APC and will not succeed without appropriate resources and follow-up.

Further research and the linking with existing successful able-bodied programs currently conducted by the ASC and AFL will require a significant commitment.

Significant investment in equipment is also necessary to ensure ongoing engagement and a meaningful increase in the transfer of Indigenous athletes into the Paralympic sport system and teams.

The aim is to raise the participation in sport by Indigenous Australians with a disability towards the same levels as other Australians with disabilities.

Concept:

Appoint a development coordinator to help coordinate and collate research and work to extend existing programs such as the ASC's Indigenous Sport Program, the Aboriginal Disability Network and programs at state level through sport and recreation and other agencies, manage the program, develop partnerships with existing and potential program providers, and create learning and competition opportunities for participants. Allocate resources to extending existing programs to include Indigenous Australians with a disability.

Estimated annual cost - \$0.5m

5.4 Higher needs coordination

There is a need to develop and share information and strategies around Australia for the provision of meaningful sport opportunities for people with higher needs and to educate all Australians about the value and place of sport for people with higher needs.

At present, there is little effective coordination and communication which spans government and non-government organisations to assist service deliverers and participants to share and approve strategies and ideas across the sport pathway.

The APC is uniquely positioned to work with state and territory governments to identify system efficiencies, and to facilitate arrangements with relevant bodies, including State Sporting Organisations for the Disabled (SSODs) and generic national sports federations, to deliver elements of the disability sport pathway.

Concept:

Expand the role of the APC with its sport partners and government agencies, coordinated nationally and serviced through its state development coordinators and national program managers to identify, work with and support effective programs for people with higher needs, provide direct assistance, knowledge and referrals.

Estimated annual cost - \$0.3m

5.5 Classification

Classification is at the heart of any fair, organised competition in disability sport, at all levels apart from the most basic social activities.

The APC has a role as the coordinating body for classification in Paralympic sports and a number of non-Paralympic sports. The expansion of this role will assist increasing numbers of people with disabilities to meaningfully participate in sport.

Concept:

Expand the impact of the APC's successful classification program by developing effective online basic courses for classifiers and increasing the availability of face-to-face courses, with a focus on higher needs participants and sports relevant to them.

Partner with an Australian university to develop and deliver online courses and expand the APC's "self-classification" checklist.

Deliver these courses through an open online platform which is accessible to people anywhere in Australia and the world, and pair this with a basic certification process.

Estimated annual cost - \$0.25m

5.6 Coaching

In any sport, committed, enthusiastic and knowledgeable coaches are the drivers of successful programs to increase participation and retain participants.

While the incorporation of disability elements in generic coach accreditation courses has done much to improve the skills and confidence of sport coaches to work with athletes with a disability, the pool of coaches which acts as the driver for participation growth is too small and has not been nurtured and supported.

Further, there are very few coaches with the skills and expertise to successfully coach athletes with higher needs. Increasing these numbers is one of the keys to successfully increasing participation in the long term.

Concept:

Establish a Para-sports development coaching support program to address the lack of access to coaching for people with higher needs.

This program will work through sport and government partners at national, state and regional levels.

It will also be delivered through tertiary institutions and schools. The APC currently has relationships with 33 Australian universities for the delivery of information and courses about Paralympic sport and more than 130 high schools and 357 combined primary/high schools are part of its Paralympic Education Program.

The program will incorporate mentoring and professional development opportunities.

Estimated annual cost - \$0.4m

5.7 National calendar and “where to play” directory

Difficulty in finding information has been identified as a major barrier to participation among people with a disability.

The Nican service, established in the 1980s, provides a limited range of information. Other websites at state level have varying degrees of usefulness. However, there is no single point of access for people seeking information about opportunities in disability sport, including where-to-play information and assistance with a full range of services, including classification.

Concept:

Create a one-stop online portal with information about sports opportunities around Australia for people with disabilities.

The website will be linked to a comprehensive database.

The website will include information about all sports for people with disabilities, a calendar of events by state, region and city, local organisation contacts, classification information and links to sporting organisations and other service providers.

Estimated annual cost - \$0.2m to establish and manage.

5.8 Research

The value of sport, service delivery practices, the role of coach and support services and a wide range of other factors within the sport system are well researched and understood for able-bodied sport. However, there is a paucity of knowledge about the same factors in the delivery of disability sport.

The APC has established the Australian Centre for Paralympic Studies (ACPS) to facilitate, promote, support and control Para-sport research in Australia and is working with a range of institutions around Australia.

Opportunities exist to extend the concepts that have been developed by the APC to improve the understanding and delivery of sport to people with higher needs.

This includes research into disability and its relationship to sports participation within Australia's Indigenous population and within Australia's communities of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Concept:

The potential of relationships with the APC has proven to be very attractive to Australian tertiary institutions.

Establish and implement cost-effective mechanisms to collect, analyse and use data across Australia to improve the provision of sport for people with higher needs.

Through the use of technology and volunteer networks, act as a model for other sporting organisations and community groups.

Expand the APC's program of social and participation research, in conjunction with appropriate partners, to make a significant contribution to the understanding of issues affecting the participation of people with a disability and how they can be addressed.

Appoint a development coordinator to collate existing research and facilitate new research to understand participation in various higher needs populations, including Indigenous populations, and how these can be addressed.

Establish processes to share information with all Australian stakeholders.

Estimated annual cost - \$0.30m