

TO: All Special Olympics Australia

FROM: Pierre Comis, Chief Executive Officer

RE: 2021 End of Year Report

DATE: Wednesday 15 December 2021

Dear athletes, families, carers, and volunteers

At the end of another challenging year, I am pleased to report that progress has been made on a range of projects that will strengthen our movement in 2022 and beyond.

Return to Sport

COVID presented the biggest ever challenge to modern community sport. Our latest return to sport has been warmly welcomed after a false start earlier in the year.

I was proud to see a range of initiatives around the country encouraging continued physical activity and social connection. It's been a stressful time without sport and training and even when we couldn't connect personally, we developed our resilience and were able to find ways to support each other. We now appear well placed to return to sports training safely at the start of next year in preparation for the 2022 National Games in Launceston.

We've been able to make progress with programs despite COVID. Delivery of the Inclusive Sport in Schools program continued, utilising teacher deliverers rather than external coaches while restrictions prevented this; Young Athletes received grant funding to expand into new states; and our affiliate program has attracted 100 new sporting organisations.

We continue to work with clubs and sport partners to implement a safe return to training and competition activities following State and Territory advice.

COVID vaccination policy

After consultation with athletes, volunteers, health departments, and national sporting organisations, and review by the national board, a COVID vaccination policy was formalised for Special Olympics Australia.

We unequivocally support the public health orders in place to protect vulnerable communities against COVID-19. People with intellectual disabilities are a high-risk group for COVID-19 illness, complications, and death and we urge everyone to get vaccinated.

From 1 February 2022, double COVID-19 vaccination will be a minimum condition of participation, attendance, entry, volunteering, and employment with Special Olympics Australia.

In addition, our activities and events will all continue to be conducted with a strict adherence to relevant public health orders.

We will continue to monitor information and advice and adjust our COVID Safety Plans as required, to keep the Special Olympics community safe.

National Sport Partnerships

Our partnerships have expanded to include three new National Sporting Organisations: AFL, NRL, and Tennis Australia. These exciting new partnerships help increase access to sporting opportunities for our community. The 2022 agreements focus on co-delivery of sports programs in schools and provision of specialised training and development for coaches and development officers. Special Olympics Australia and Tennis Australia will also collaborate on competition pathways.

We've also engaged 10 National Sporting Organisation partners in our Inclusive Sport in Schools program. These partners help deliver in-school, sport-specific programs through the Australian Government's Sporting Schools program enabling a program pathway for participants to further develop their skills.

Online Learning Portal

We've continued to develop the suite of online training resources we offer to increase the skills of endorsed coaches within National Sporting Organisations and Special Olympics coaches to provide a variety of fun, highly engaging sport programs. In addition, two new courses are being developed: *Physical Literacy for People with Intellectual Disabilities* and *Volunteer Induction*.

Our online learning platform is a key component of the 'Inclusive Leadership' pillar within our 2022-2026 strategic plan. It will undergo rebranding and commercialisation early next year and continue to help us build inclusive sport capability within the community sport sector.

NDIS

The NDIS is a pivotal scheme that can support the growth of our movement and is considered a board and organisation priority. We appointed a NDIS project manager and have researched the viability of covering costs associated with being a Special Olympics athlete. This encompassed engagement with grassroots sports and programs to develop information to enable athletes to choose to utilise their NDIS funds to pay for participation, including in the 2022 National Games.

Next year we will examine the potential for athletes to use NDIS funding to participate in restructured sport and competition options, and across a range of other organisation offerings.

Fundraising

We engaged a not-for-profit consultancy to conduct market research on fundraising, events, and broader strategic improvements required within our organisation. The resulting report has informed our 2022 strategy. Thanks to those who provided feedback, including club and state chairs, volunteers, and athletes via the Athlete Input Council.

The research has so far generated a new promotional video and idea for our 2022 digital fundraising campaign. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of the research demonstrated in our marketing, communications, and fundraising next year.

National Strategy and Organisational Structure

Next year will see a sharpened focus by the national board and executive team on the existing four strategic pillars:

- quality experience
- expand engagement
- inclusive leadership
- viable business.

In the next twelve months, a longer term, five-year strategic plan will be developed.

A reorganisation of existing roles and staff members is underway. Early in 2022, professional staff will be regrouped into four departments with more defined functional areas and clearer roles. This structure will give us capacity to grow and deploy more paid staff in the states, and ensure we remain focused on delivering athlete services and ensuring a better athlete experience.

2022 Budgeting

Budget planning for next year has been completed with all departments and the proposed budget has been approved by the national board. You can view the 2022 budget by clicking [here](#). Financially, 2022 will be a year of consolidation. Operationally, we are planning to return to weekly training, drive program growth, increase competition opportunities, and activate a suite of fundraising activity safely.

World Games

In early 2021, the Special Olympics Australia board ratified submission of a bid for Perth to host the Special Olympics World Games in 2027. This was supported by the appointment of a World Games 2027 Director to oversee the bid feasibility work.

The bid development process is supported by Ernst and Young, Deloitte, PwC, Clayton Utz, United Nations Association (WA division), Telethon Kids Institute, University of WA, Chamber of Minerals and Energy, Rotary, PCYC, Cricket WA (WACA), and state and federal government ministers. Work will continue next year, with the submission, evaluation, and selection all due in late 2022. You can read more about the exciting bid by clicking [here](#).

National Office

Our commercial lease agreement with the Goodman Foundation ended in November. We are grateful for the foundation's support in helping us maintain a national office space. To reduce business expenses and prioritise investment in serving athletes, we will not be relocating to a new office in the immediate future. All staff previously based in the national office will work from home or Sports House at Sydney Olympic Park in 2022. National office address details are:

Meeting space

Special Olympics Australia
Quad 1, Level 2, 8 Parkview Drive
Sydney Olympic Park NSW 2127

Postal address

Special Olympics Australia
PO Box 110
Concord West NSW 2138

I wish you a safe, happy, and healthy festive season and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Kind regards



Pierre Comis

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