

LOCAL IMPACT, GLOBAL REACH

Special Olympics Australia brings the joy of sport and friendship to people with intellectual disability/autism.

This group are often isolated or ignored, but sport can open the door to personal achievement, pride and inclusion.

We are part of a global sporting community that supports over 3 million athletes in 201 countries and jurisdictions.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

We are often confused with the Paralympics, but we are different.

The Paralympics is a major sporting event for elite athletes, mainly with a physical disability.

Special Olympics is a year-round sports program for people with intellectual disability/autism – of all abilities – who have access to competition, including a World Games every four years.



WHAT IS INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY/AUTISM?

People with intellectual disability/autism can find it hard to do things many of us take for granted, like reading, handling money or catching public transport. It doesn't mean they can't learn, they just might need more time and support to succeed.

It's not always obvious when a person has intellectual disability/autism. But what is obvious is that playing sport can help them discover their talents and lead a fulfilling life.

Athlete, Brittney Neill sums up what having autism means to her:



"I concentrate on what I can do and not what people think I can't. Really, I can do everything anyone else can do. It just takes me longer to learn. I know I just have to keep trying, so that's what I do to achieve my dreams. When I'm running, I think a tiger is after me and in my head I say: Go, go, go, go!"

THE STATISTICS



850,000 Australians have an intellectual disability/autism and another child is diagnosed every two hours.



People with an intellectual disability are less likely to get a job or higher education, leaving them without important networks of support.



People with an intellectual disability are three times more likely to be victims of physical violence due to lack of understanding and tolerance.

WE OFFER SPORT...AND MORE!

Our suite of programs reflects our vision of an inclusive Australia where people with intellectual disability/autism can live a healthy, active and fulfilling existence at all life stages.

playing for all

Playing for All is a games-based program for youth (8-17) and adults (18+) with and without disability. It helps them get active, make friends and have fun while learning important life skills.



The Inclusive Sport Academy provides the basic principles, techniques and tools to effectively coach, teach and guide people with intellectual disability/autism.



Young Athletes focuses on play-based activities to support social and physical growth for children with and without disability aged 2-8. It is fun, active and inclusive.



Through Unified Sports, people with and without intellectual disability/autism come together to train and compete. The program promotes social inclusion and is inspired by a simple belief – playing together is a quick path to acceptance and friendship.



INCLUSIVE SPORT IN SCHOOLS

Our Inclusive Sport in Schools program improves the health and wellbeing of students with and without disability through the delivery of sport and physical activity at school.



WEEKLY SPORTS TRAINING

Weekly sports training gives people with intellectual disability/autism a chance to pursue their chosen sport. The program includes: skills-development, goal setting, support and competition.



ATHLETE LEADERSHIP

Through Athlete Leadership we empower athletes to find their voices and make choices. We help them develop self-advocacy and leadership skills with the support of trained mentors, dedicated workshops and community engagement roles.



COMPETITION PATHWAY

Special Olympics athletes can progress from local to international competition – and they don't have to be elite competitors! All athletes can climb the competition ladder. Our competitions are structured by divisioning where athletes compete against others of similar ability.



VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers play a role at all levels of the organisation. They are our coaches, officials, event organisers, fundraisers, administrators and community leaders. Some give their time at a local club on a weekly basis, others participate at events and many help out wherever needed.



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

People with an intellectual disability/autism are more likely to have untreated health issues and die younger than the general population. That's why we offer health screenings and well-being advice.



AFFILIATES

Our Affiliate Program is how we collaborate with groups who want to offer an inclusive environment for athletes with intellectual disability/autism.

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