



# Athlete Classification Policy

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# Preface

Athlete Classification is a defining feature of Para-sport, which forms the competitive structure of Para-Sport competition from entry level competition through to the Paralympic Games. The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Athlete Classification Code and IPC Classification Standards (collectively referred to as the “**IPC Code**”) is the fundamental document on which classification in the Paralympic movement is based.

In accordance with the IPC Code, classification in Para-sport:

1. defines who is eligible to compete in Para-sport; and
2. groups athletes into sport classes according to how much their impairment affects fundamental activities in each specific sport or discipline.

The classification processes of each Para-sport share common features, however, the classification process is sport-specific.

A list of definitions and abbreviations is provided at the end of this policy.

## 1. Policy Purpose

1.1 The purpose of the Paralympics Australia Athlete Classification Policy (Classification Policy) is to:

- Provide a clear statement on the purpose of Classification in Para-sport in Australia;
- Set out the position, role and responsibilities of Paralympics Australia (PA) with regards to classification, as the National Paralympic Committee (NPC) member of the IPC and in accordance with the IPC Code and the IPC Model of Best Practice for National Classification;
- Provide a framework for the policies and procedures for the management of classification for Para-sport in Australia;
- Set out the requirements of PA members and other organisations and individuals engaged by PA for classification purposes;
- Promote inclusive practices in Australian sport; and
- Promote and uphold the integrity of Paralympic sport.

- 1.2 This Classification Policy is supplemented by the PA Classification Standards which provide specific, operational guidance in key areas of Classification including:
  - Eligible impairments;
  - Athlete evaluation;
  - Protests and appeals;
  - Classification personnel and training;
  - Classification data protection; and
  - Intentional misrepresentation.
- 1.3 This policy is intended to be clear enough to achieve standardisation of practice where this is required but be general enough to permit flexibility regarding the implementation of its principles.
- 1.4 This document shall be read in conjunction with the IPC Code, IPC Code of Ethics, PA Classification Standards and any other relevant PA Policy.
- 1.5 In the event that this policy fails to provide for a matter covered by a provision in the IPC Code, the provision appearing in the IPC Code shall apply and be regarded as being part of this Classification Policy.

## 2. Who does this Policy apply to?

- 2.1 This policy applies to:
  - PA employees, contractors and volunteers
  - Selected Athletes and Appointed Officials of Paralympic Teams
  - PA Member organisations, the PA members state organisations, PA Member athletes and athlete support personnel and any other person or organisation who is engaged by the PA Member to support classification activities.
  - Any other organisations or individuals engaged by PA for Classification purposes.
- 2.2 PA will only recognise Australian classification activities that are conducted within the scope of this Classification Policy. This Classification Policy does not apply to events offered by PA members to athletes with impairments that sit outside of the IPC Code and the relevant International Federation (IF) rules.

## 3. Paralympic Classification Governance

- 3.1 The IPC is the global governing body of the Paralympic movement, responsible for the IPC Code, models of best practice and monitoring the IPC Code compliance of its members.
- 3.2 PA is the National Paralympic Committee (NPC) for Australia and the NPC member of the IPC. PA is required, as a condition of its membership to the IPC, to comply with the IPC Code.
- 3.3 International Sport Federations (**IFs**) and Regional Organisations (Oceania Paralympic Committee being the regional Organisation under which PA is the member) are also members of the IPC.
- 3.4 IFs are responsible for the development and implementation of classification systems in their sports including:
  - Selecting the IPC eligible impairments that are included in their sport;
  - Setting processes and procedures for assessing whether an Athlete has an Eligible Impairment;
  - Setting Minimum Impairment Criteria for each Eligible Impairment;
  - Determining Sport Classes based on the extent to which Athletes are able to execute the specific tasks and activities fundamental to the particular Para-sport or discipline;
  - Setting relevant procedures for Classification Personnel and Training;
  - Defining processes for the management of Protests and Appeals;
  - Outlining Data Protection procedures;
  - Managing international level investigations, misconduct and allegations of Intentional Misrepresentation.
- 3.5 PA members as a condition of their membership to PA are required to:
  - Abide by the PA Athlete Classification Policy and promote its adoption through their network to support classification governance and the mandated compliance with the IPC Code;
  - Take such actions and provide all reasonable support and assistance that PA requires in order to comply with its obligations under the IPC Code, and to support integrity in classification.
    - In addition, PA members should conform with IF Classification Rules as much as is practical, and in any event, ensure IPC Code Compliance.

- 3.6 The delivery of classification services for each sport in Australia is the responsibility of the Australian member organisation of the relevant IF, unless otherwise agreed by the IF member, PA and Sport Australia. For the purposes of this Classification Policy, the term NSO/NSOD is used to refer to the organisation approved by the IF member, PA and Sport Australia for the delivery of the Australian Para-sport program.
- 3.7 In the event the Australian IF member does not deliver classification services, the organisation must:
- Recognise the primacy of the IPC Code, IF rules and this Classification Policy;
  - Have in place a written agreement with the organisation delivering the classification services outlining their expectations of delivery in line with this Classification Policy; and
  - Actively promote and monitor the responsibilities that apply to NSO/NSODs within this Classification Policy.

## 4. Classification Integrity and Safeguards

- 4.1 PA adopts an inclusive approach for Australia's Para-sport system, with the expectation that Para-sport and classification programs are equally recognised and embedded within the structure, systems, people and pathways of an NSO/NSOD.
- 4.2 Participation in Para-sport should be safe and inclusive for all. PA is committed to ensuring that all people in Para-sport, and more specifically in classification, are treated with respect and dignity and are protected from bullying, discrimination, harassment, abuse or physical or psychological injury.
- 4.3 Classification is an athlete-centred process and is to be conducted by all involved parties in a manner that protects and supports each Athlete's physical and psychological wellbeing.
- 4.4 Classification works best when Athletes, Athlete Support Personnel and Classification Personnel work cooperatively towards a common outcome of determining the most accurate Sports Class for all athletes.
- 4.5 PA is committed to an Australian classification system that is safe, supportive and friendly for children and young people. State and territory child protection legislation (including mandatory reporting obligations) and National Principles for Child Safe Organisations are to be adopted in every PA member's

classification policies and procedures and be understood and practised at all levels of the sport.

- 4.6 Athletes have the right, and are encouraged, to choose one person to support and accompany them through any classification process (Athlete representative). If the Athlete is under 18 years or has a legally appointed guardian this is mandatory. If the Athlete requires an interpreter (eg language other than English or Auslan), the interpreter will be permitted to accompany the Athlete in addition to the Athlete representative.
- 4.7 As with the delivery of any sport operation, classification carries with it an inherent level of risk. PA is committed to a national classification system that proactively identifies, assesses and minimises risks that could negatively impact the PA classification strategy, reputation, compliance, finances and/or people.
- 4.8 Intentional Misrepresentation
- 4.8.1 Intentional Misrepresentation (IM) is a deliberate attempt by an Athlete or Athlete Support Personnel (either by deed or omission) to mislead a Para-sport organisation or anyone else regarding the existence or extent of their skills and/or the nature of their eligible impairment. Intentional Misrepresentation may occur during Athlete Evaluation and/or at any point after the allocation of Sport Class.
- 4.8.2 IM includes circumstances where an athlete or athlete support personnel:
- submits false and/or fraudulent medical diagnostic information as a part of the classification process, or withholds relevant medical documentation that may have an impact on the classification process;
  - attempts to deceive the classification panel during athlete evaluation by misrepresenting the athlete's skills and/or abilities and/or the degree or nature of impairment;
  - deliberately presents at athlete evaluation in a way that is inconsistent with their usual presentation in competition;
  - fails to make a medical notification as to a change in circumstances that may impact upon sport class allocation;
  - knowingly assists, covers up, is involved in any type of complicity involving IM or disrupts the athlete evaluation process with the intention of deceiving or misleading the classification panel.
- 4.8.3 Athletes and/or Athlete support personnel may be subject to disciplinary actions if found guilty of IM offenses under the IPC Code, IF classification

rules, PA Classification Policy and/or NSO/NSOD classification rules. Investigations and any subsequent disciplinary and reporting procedures are to follow the PA Classification Standard: Intentional Misrepresentation.

- 4.8.4 Any sanctions that are applied to Athletes or Athletes Support Personnel in relation to IM by the IPC or IF are to be recognised across all levels of Para-sport.

## 5. PA Roles and Responsibilities

PA will:

- 5.1 Lead Australia with integrity and represent national classification interests to the IPC, IFs and Oceania Paralympic Committee;
- 5.2 Collaborate with other NPCs in the best interests of the development of global classification strategy;
- 5.3 Develop and support the implementation of an inclusive national classification system in accordance with the IPC Code. PA reserves the right to modify the specifications in the IPC Code where these are not practical in an Australian sporting environment;
- 5.4 Develop policy for and provide support to its members to comply with the IPC Code;
  - 5.4.1 PA prioritises support to PA members whose Para-sports are on the Summer and Winter Paralympic Games program. Support may be funded or non-funded. Principles for determining levels of support are outlined in funding or other agreements with PA members.
- 5.5 Monitor compliance and address non-compliance of its members with this Classification Policy;
- 5.6 Develop policies and procedures with respect to classification for Selected Athletes and Appointed Officials of Paralympic Teams;
- 5.7 Develop generic classification resources and education to support its members in the delivery of any classification systems;
- 5.8 Cooperate with any classification investigations initiated by the IPC or any IF; and

- 5.9 Initiate classification investigations based on sound evidence and will support its Members with the management of such processes.

## 6. NSO/NSOD Roles and Responsibilities

Classification is integral to the delivery of Para-sport competition. NSO/NSODs must adopt an inclusive approach and embed Para-sport classification within their sport by way of:

### 6.1 Governance

- 6.1.1 Recognise PA in its role of leading the strategic objectives and national governance of Classification for Para-sports in Australia.
- 6.1.2 Developing and implementing NSO/NSOD specific Classification Rules, an athlete classification pathway, other classification policies and procedures relevant to their Para-sport that align with this Classification Policy.
- 6.1.3 Clearly outlining the expectations of their members, athletes, athlete support personnel, classification personnel and any other persons or organisations engaged by them within their classification system.
- 6.1.4 Report on NSO/NSOD classification program activities and acquit any funding provided by PA on request
- 6.1.5 Consider risks associated with Classification within the NSO/NSOD risk management framework.

### 6.2 Classification System

- 6.2.1 Implementing, as closely as possible, the classification system that is defined by their respective IF, including the adoption of:
  - The eligible impairments permitted to compete in the sport;
  - The processes and procedures for assessing whether the Athlete has an eligible impairment (Eligibility Assessment);
  - The Minimum Impairment Criteria and assessment methods;
  - The Sport Classes and Sport Class Status; and
  - The Athlete Evaluation processes and assessment methods.

### 6.3 Delivery of Classification Opportunities

- 6.3.1 Establishing a classification pathway that is appropriate to the standard of competition at which an Athlete competes and deliver classification opportunities accordingly.

### 6.4 Classification Personnel and Training

- 6.4.1 Appoint a number of key Classification Personnel, including but not limited to classification administrators and classifiers. Classification Personnel have a key role in the organisation, administration and delivery of Classification for the NSO/NSOD and their members, in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Classification Personnel and Training.
  - 6.4.2 NSO/NSODs are to establish and deliver a transparent system for the recruitment, education, training, certification and re-certification of Classifiers for their sport.
  - 6.4.3 NSO/NSODs are to include Classifiers as part of their NSO/NSOD officials program ensuring that provisions, insurances, training opportunities and terms of engagement exist for classifiers as they do for other NSO/NSOD officials.
  - 6.4.4 NSO/NSODs must have within their Classification Rules (and/or other relevant rules) a clear set of professional conduct standards that all Classification Personnel must comply with. These standards should comply with the IPC Code of Ethics and be in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Classification Personnel and Training.
  - 6.4.5 NSO/NSODs must have within their Classification Rules (and/or other relevant rules) procedures for reporting, investigating and subsequent disciplinary action as a result of violation with the standards outlined in Article 6.44.
- 6.5 Safeguards and Integrity
- 6.5.1 NSO/NSODs are to ensure that safeguards specific to child safety practices and legislation requirements are adopted in NSO/NSOD classification policies and procedures and are understood and practised at all levels of the sport. Any NSO/NSOD classifier or classification personnel who interact with children under 18 years must hold a valid working with children check.
  - 6.5.2 NSO/NSODs are to take informed and appropriate measures to ensure that all classification activities are practiced in a manner that protects the physical and psychological health of athletes and all of the parties to Classification activities.
  - 6.5.3 NSO/NSODs are to comply with local public health advice and review any health risks associated with the delivery of classification activities. Classification should be implemented in accordance with standard infection control procedures and relevant state and national work health and safety legislation.
  - 6.5.4 NSO/NSODs are to have systems and safeguards in place to protect all people involved in classification services, and to establish and promote appropriate member protection and dispute resolution processes.

#### 6.5.5 Protests and Appeals

- (a) NSO/NSODs must include a protest process in its Classification rules in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Protests and Appeals. A protest is the procedure by which a reasoned objection to an Athletes Sport Class is submitted and subsequently resolved.
- (b) NSO/NSODs must include an Appeal process in their Classification rules, in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Protests and Appeals. An Appeal is the process to resolve Classification procedural disputes.

#### 6.5.6 Intentional Misrepresentation

- (a) Each NSO/NSOD must have in place procedures on how to identify and manage allegations and subsequent disciplinary proceedings for Intentional Misrepresentation in the NSO/NSOD Classification rules in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Intentional Misrepresentation.
- (b) NSO/NSODs are to recognise, respect and enforce any sanction imposed on an Athlete or athlete support personnel for IM as notified by the IPC, an IF, PA or other NSO/NSOD.

#### 6.5.7 Classification Intelligence Gathering and Investigations

- (a) Each NSO/NSOD must have policies and procedures in place for the receipt and subsequent assessment of Classification intelligence, in accordance with PA Classification Standard: Intentional Misrepresentation. The NSO/NSODs must ensure that sources of classification intelligence are protected.
- (b) NSO/NSODs are to cooperate and encourage the cooperation of their members with any classification investigative process.
- (c) All intelligence data must be processed in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Classification Data Protection.

### 6.6 NSO/NSOD High Performance programs

NSO/NSODs are to:

- 6.6.1 Abide by their respective IF classification rules and requirements for the participation of Athletes in international level competition;
- 6.6.2 Proactively plan for international classification opportunities for Athletes once nominated to high performance programs and as required for the qualification for Paralympic Games and other benchmark events;
- 6.6.3 Provide education for all team members on their classification roles and responsibilities including, but not limited to, any applicable Codes of Conduct; and

6.6.4 Have proactive support structures and processes in place that minimise risk and support the maintenance of wellbeing for Athletes and staff undertaking International level classification.

## 6.7 Data Storage and protection

Each NSO/NSOD must ensure that lawful processes are in place for collection, processing, storage, use and retention of personal and classification data. These processes and procedures must be in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Classification Data Protection.

## 6.8 Classification Masterlist

NSO/NSODs must maintain and publish a Classification masterlist of all Australian athletes who have been classified at a provisional (or other entry level), national and international level, including at least the athletes name, sex, year of birth, state, sport class and sport class status.

## 6.9 Classification Education and Awareness

6.9.1 NSO/NSODs must develop and deliver Classification resources and education activities for Athletes, Athlete Support Personnel, member organisations and any other relevant stakeholders (media, spectators) for all levels of their sport pathway. Such program must include:

- Classification pathway and processes for their sport;
- Eligible impairment types for their Para-sport;
- The IPC Code, PA Classification Policy and Standards and relevant IF and/or NSO/NSOD classification rules;
- Athlete, athlete support personnel and classification personnel rights and responsibilities; and
- Classification integrity and intentional misrepresentation.

6.9.2 NSO/NSODs are encouraged to involve Athletes in the development and delivery of such education and awareness programs.

## 6.10 Classification Research and Innovation

6.10.1 NSO/NSODs are encouraged to support their respective IFs, and promote active contribution from their members, in the development of the IF classification system.

6.10.2 Any research conducted or participated in by the NSO/NSOD must comply with nationally recognised ethical standards and research practices.

6.10.3 NSO/NSODs are expected to work collaboratively with PA for the continuous improvement of classification activities in their sport.

## 6.11 Changes to Classification Systems

- 6.11.1 NSO/NSODs are to integrate changes made to their classification systems by their IF as soon as possible after the change is made and align any changes as closely to the IF system as is practical.
- 6.11.2 NSO/NSODs must provide appropriate notice to Athletes and other stakeholders of anticipated changes to their classification systems and any other change(s) that might impact on Sport Class allocation. Notice should include a rationale for change, the proposed timelines for implementation, any transition rules and processes for feedback as applicable.
- 6.11.3 NSO/NSODs must notify PA of classification system changes and any other change(s) that might impact on Sport Class allocation with the details of the changes proposed, the proposed timelines for implementation and transition rules. PA must be provided an opportunity to submit feedback, prior to implementation of any changes.
- 6.11.4 Education and wellbeing supports should be available to Athletes and athlete support personnel who are affected by changes in Classification rules.

## 7 Responsibilities of Athletes and Officials of Paralympic Teams

The roles and responsibilities of Paralympic Team members include:

- 7.1 Conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the PA Classification Policy, PA Code of Conduct, IPC Code and IPC Code of Ethics;
- 7.2 Adhere to their responsibilities outlined in their IF and NSO/NSOD Classification Rules; and
- 7.3 Participate in Paralympic Team member training or education as required by PA.

## 8 Conditions

- 8.1 PA will support and monitor the compliance of its members to meet the conditions of the PA Classification Policy and Standards.
- 8.2 On request by PA, PA members must report on compliance to this Classification Policy. Explanations for any non-compliance must be included.
- 8.3 Subject to the approval of the PA Board, the following sanctions may be applied to PA members who are non-compliant with this Classification Policy:

- 8.3.1 Withholding some or all funding or support;
  - 8.3.2 Suspension of PA membership;
  - 8.3.3 Exclusion from PA events; and/or
  - 8.3.4 Reporting the PA member to the IPC, relevant IF and/or Sport Australia (where the organisation is recognised by Sport Australia).
- 8.4 Disciplinary action may be taken against individuals who breach the terms of this Policy and associated Classification Standards.

## 9 Provision

9.1 PA will appoint a person who will be responsible for monitoring progress, implementing this Policy and for providing advice to the CEO, PA Board and PA's Members on its implementation.

## 10 Definitions

<b>Appeal:</b>	The means by which a complaint that a sports federation has made an unfair decision during the Classification process is resolved.
<b>Athlete:</b>	A person who participates in Para-sport at the international, national or local level.
<b>Athlete Evaluation:</b>	The process by which an athlete is assessed in accordance with the classification rules, so that they may be allocated a sport class and sport class status.
<b>Athlete Support Personnel:</b>	Any individual who supports an athlete, including but not limited to coaches, team staff, medical or para-medical specialists, interpreters, administrators, carers and parents/ legal guardians.
<b>Classification:</b>	Grouping athletes into sport classes according to the extent to which their impairment affects the fundamental activities in each specific sport or discipline.
<b>Classification Personnel:</b>	Any individuals who act with the authority of an NSO/NSOD for any component of the classification program in their sport.
<b>Classifier:</b>	A person authorised as an official by an IF or NSO/NSOD to evaluate Athletes as part of a classification panel.
<b>Eligible Impairment:</b>	A physical, intellectual or vision impairment, designated as being a prerequisite for competing in Para-sport, as designated by the IPC Code.
<b>International Sport Federation (IF):</b>	The International Sport Federation (IF) recognised by the IPC as the sole world-wide representative of a sport for athletes with an impairment that has been granted the status of a Para-sport by the IPC. The IPC and some IOSDs act as an IF for certain sports. International Triathlon Union (ITU) and World Para Swimming (WPS) are examples of IFs.

**International Organisations of Sport for the Disabled (IOSDs)**

IOSDs are independent organisations recognised by the IPC as the sole representatives of a specific impairment group. Virtus, IBSA, IWAS and CPISRA are the recognised IOSDs.

**IPC Athlete Classification Code and International Standards (IPC Code):**

The IPC Code is the document which details the purpose of classification, policies and procedures that should be common to all sport's classification systems and sets principles to be applied by all sports within the Paralympic Movement. The IPC Code is supplemented by the International Standards.

**National Sport Organisation (NSO)/National Sport Organisations for people with Disability (NSOD):**

The national sporting organisation recognised by PA and Sport Australia for the delivery of the Para-sport within Australia. Athletics Australia and Rowing Australia are NSO examples. Blind Sports Australia, Sport Inclusion Australia and Disability Sport Australia are the recognised NSODs.

**PA Classification Standards:**

Complement this Classification policy and provide the technical and operational requirements for key classification areas.

**PA Member:**

Member organisations of PA (who pay an annual membership fee and have a right to vote at the PA Annual General Meeting) under the Company's constitution.

**Para-sports:**

All sports for athletes with a physical, intellectual or vision impairment, on a Paralympic Games program, or recognised by the IPC.

**Protest:**

The procedure by which a reasoned objection to an athlete's sport class is submitted and subsequently resolved.

## 11 Relevant policies, codes and standards

- [IPC Athlete Classification Code and International Standards](#)
- [IPC Classification Code Model of Best Practice - National Classification](#)
- [IPC Code of Ethics](#)
- [PA Classification Standard - Eligible Impairments](#)
- [PA Classification Standard - Athlete Evaluation](#)
- [PA Classification Standard - Protests and Appeals](#)
- [PA Classification Standard - Classification Personnel and Training](#)
- [PA Classification Standard – Classification Data Protection](#)
- [PA Classification Standard – Intentional Misrepresentation](#)
- [PA Code of Conduct](#)
- [Other PA policies](#) (including but not limited to People Protection Policy and Privacy Policy)

To view all Paralympics Australia policies, including those relating to Classification, please visit the [Policies and Resources section of our website](#).