



PA Classification Standard: Eligible Impairments

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1. Purpose

1.1 This document:

- Sets out the position, role and responsibilities of Paralympics Australia (PA) with regards to eligible impairments, as the national Paralympic member of the IPC and in accordance with the IPC Athlete Classification Code and Standards (IPC Code) and the IPC model of best practice for national classification;
- Provides a framework for the common technical and operational procedures of National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) and National Sporting Organisations for people with disability (NSODs) which deliver Australia Para-sport program and/or eligibility assessment.

1.2 This document shall be read in conjunction with the IPC Code, IPC Code of Ethics, relevant International Sport Federation (IF) classification rules, PA Athlete Classification Policy and other relevant PA policies and standards.

1.3 In the event that this Standard 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 Standard.

2. Who Does This Standard Apply To?

2.1 This standard applies to:

- PA employees, contractors and volunteers
- Selected athletes and appointed officials of Paralympic Teams
- PA member organisations, their member organisations, athletes and athlete support personnel and any other persons (paid or unpaid) 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 Standard and other PA policies. This Standard does not apply to sport opportunities provided by PA members to athletes with impairments that sit outside of the IPC Code (eg hearing impairment, transplant recipient).

- 2.3 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 Standard, 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. International Sport Federation (IF) Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 IF Classification Rules must be in compliance with the IPC Code. The IF is required, by way of their classification rules, to specify which of the eligible impairments an athlete must have in order to compete in that sport and the relevant processes of assessment for that impairment.

4. PA Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 Develop and support the implementation of a national classification framework in accordance with this Standard.
- 4.2 Provide support, education and resources to enable its members to comply with this Standard.
- 4.3 Monitor compliance and address non-compliance of its members to this Standard.
- 4.4 Provide general education to build classification awareness within the Australia sports community, Para-athletes and other relevant stakeholders (including media & spectators) in relation to this Standard.

5. NSO/NSOD Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 NSO/NSODs are expected to:
- 5.2.1 Adopt the eligible impairments defined by their IF in their national classification system;

- 5.2.2 Establish and publish an eligibility assessment process (see Article 9 and 10);
- 5.2.3 Ensure eligibility assessment processes have appropriate safeguards in place to protect physical and psychological health and wellbeing of parties involved in eligibility assessment;
- 5.2.4 Ensure adequate screening of high performance athletes is undertaken to minimise risk and support wellbeing for athletes and team members undertaking international level classification;
- 5.2.5 Ensure eligibility processes are consistent with PA Classification Standard: Classification Data Protection (including but not limited to medical documentation, electronic pictures, videos or other notes);
- 5.2.6 Ensure processes are in place to manage classification intelligence, investigations and subsequent disciplinary proceedings in relation to this Standard and in accordance with PA Athlete Classification Policy;
- 5.2.7 Clearly outline the codes of conduct and expectations of their members, athletes, athlete support personnel, classification personnel and any other persons or organisations engaged by them within their classification system in relation to this standard;
- 5.2.8 Develop and deliver classification education and awareness programs for athletes, athlete Support Personnel, member organisations and any other relevant stakeholders (media, spectators) in relation to and consistent with this standard;
- 5.2.9 Integrate changes made by their IF to Classification Rules in respect to eligible impairments and eligibility assessment, within six months after the IF change is made and align any changes as closely to the IF system as is practical; and
- 5.2.10 Collaborate with PA in the continuous improvement of national classification activities in relation to this Standard.

6. Eligible Impairments

- 6.1. Para-sport in Australia exists for athletes with at least one of the following ten eligible impairment types recognised by the IPC:
 - 6.1.1 **Impaired Muscle Power:** Athletes with impaired muscle power have a health condition that either reduces or eliminates their ability to voluntarily contract their muscles in order to move or to generate force. Examples of health conditions that may lead to impaired muscle power include spinal cord injury (complete or incomplete, tetra- or paraplegia or paraparesis), muscular dystrophy, post-polio syndrome and spina bifida.

- 6.1.2 **Impaired passive range of movement:** Athletes with impaired passive range of movement have a restriction or a lack of passive movement in one or more joints. Examples of health conditions that may lead to impaired passive range of movement include arthrogryposis and contracture resulting from chronic joint immobilisation or trauma affecting a joint.
- 6.1.3 **Limb deficiency:** Athletes with limb deficiency have total or partial absence of bones or joints as a consequence of trauma (for example traumatic amputation), illness (for example amputation due to bone cancer) or congenital limb deficiency (for example dysmelia)
- 6.1.4 **Leg length difference:** Athletes with leg length difference have a difference in the length of the legs as a result of a disturbance of limb growth, or as a result of trauma.
- 6.1.5 **Short stature:** Athletes with short stature have a reduced length in the bones of the upper limbs, lower limbs and/or trunk. Examples of health conditions that may lead to short stature include achondroplasia, growth hormone dysfunction, and osteogenesis imperfecta.
- 6.1.6 **Hypertonia:** Athletes with hypertonia have an increase in muscle tension and a reduced ability of a muscle to stretch caused by damage to the central nervous system. Examples of health conditions that may lead to hypertonia include cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and stroke.
- 6.1.7 **Ataxia:** Athletes with ataxia have uncoordinated movements caused by damage to the central nervous system. Examples of health conditions that may lead to ataxia include cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury stroke and multiple sclerosis.
- 6.1.8 **Athetosis:** Athletes with athetosis have continual slow involuntary movements. Examples of health conditions that may lead to athetosis include cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, and stroke.
- 6.1.9 **Vision Impairment:** Athletes with vision impairment have reduced or no vision caused by damage to the eye structure, optical nerves or optical pathways, or visual cortex of the brain. Examples of health conditions that lead to vision impairment include retinitis pigmentosa, rod cone dystrophy, and diabetic retinopathy.
- 6.1.10 **Intellectual Impairment:** Athletes with an intellectual impairment have a restriction in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour which effects conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills required for everyday life. This impairment must be present before the age of 18.

6.2. The eligible impairment must be permanent and as a result of a health

condition.

- 6.3. An athlete may have more than one eligible impairment. Refer to PA Classification Standard: Athlete Evaluation for relevant guidelines.

7. Non-Eligible Impairments

- 7.1 Any impairment that is not listed in this Standard as an eligible impairment is referred to as a non-eligible impairment for Para-sport.
- 7.2 Any athlete who has a non-eligible impairment and an eligible impairment may be evaluated by a classification panel in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Athlete Evaluation on the basis of the eligible impairment, provided that the non-eligible impairment does not affect the classification panel's ability to allocate a sport class.
- 7.3 Examples of non-eligible impairments include but are not limited to the following:
- Pain;
 - Hearing impairment;
 - Low muscle tone
 - Hypermobility of joints;
 - Joint instability e.g. unstable shoulder joint, recurrent joint dislocation;
 - Impaired muscle endurance;
 - Impaired motor reflex functions;
 - Impaired cardiovascular functions;
 - Impaired respiratory functions;
 - Impaired metabolic functions; and
 - Tic and mannerisms, stereotypes and motor perseveration.
- 7.4 An athlete who has one or more of these non-eligible impairments, without the presence of an eligible impairment, is not eligible to compete in the Para-sport classes offered by the NSO/NSOD. Any decision taken by the NSO/NSOD to allow these athletes to compete in non Para-sport classes or events (such as via an open class), is considered outside of the scope of this standard and at the sole responsibility of the NSO/NSOD.

8. Health Conditions that lead to an Eligible Impairment

- 8.1. Many health conditions do not lead to an eligible impairment. If an athlete has multiple health conditions, they will be assessed to determine if one or more of these Health conditions leads to an eligible impairment.
- 8.1. Any athlete who has a health condition, but does not have an eligible impairment, will not be eligible to compete in Para-sport.
- 8.2. The IPC Code considers the following health conditions do not lead to an eligible impairment. Health conditions that:
 - Primarily cause pain e.g., fibromyalgia, complex regional pain syndrome;
 - Primarily cause fatigue e.g., chronic fatigue.
 - Primarily cause joint hypermobility or hypotonia; or
 - Are primarily psychological or psychosomatic in nature e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder or conversion disorders
- 8.4 Any decision taken by the NSO/NSOD to allow these athletes to compete in non Para-sport classes or events (such as via an open class), is considered outside of the scope of this standard and at the sole responsibility of the NSO/NSOD.

9. Eligibility Assessment

- 9.1. Any athlete who wishes to compete in NSO/NSOD recognised competition must satisfy, by way of eligibility assessment, the relevant NSO/NSOD that they have an eligible impairment before they can participate in athlete evaluation with a classification panel.
- 9.2. It is recommended that NSO/NSODs require all athletes to provide diagnostic information in order to conduct the eligibility assessment and verify:
 - 9.2.1 The eligible impairment
 - 9.2.2 That the eligible impairment is permanent; and/or
 - 9.2.3 The health condition.
 - 9.2.4 It is recommended any medical reports/statements have been provided within the last five years.
- 9.3 The eligibility assessment ideally occurs in advance of the athlete presenting to athlete evaluation but may be deferred to a classification panel if they have the required expertise to do so.

- 9.4 The eligibility assessment process should be conducted in accordance with the following:
- 9.4.1 The NSO/NSOD determine what diagnostic information must be provided on behalf of the athlete and for what purposes.
 - 9.4.2 The NSO/NSOD will set timelines for the production of diagnostic information. It is recommended that diagnostic information be gained at least two weeks prior to the athlete evaluation opportunity.
 - 9.4.3 The NSO/NSOD requests the diagnostic information from the athlete.
 - 9.4.4 The NSO/NSOD appoints the person/s to conduct the eligibility assessment. The appointed person/s must have appropriate medical/allied health qualifications and may be a classifier in that sport or a registered medical/allied health person with other appropriate expertise. All persons conducting eligibility assessment must comply with PA Classification Standard: Classification Data Protection. Consent to process diagnostic information must be provided by the athlete in advance of its processing.
 - 9.4.5 Each eligibility assessment will involve the review of diagnostic information to decide whether it establishes the existence of an eligible impairment. In the case where the eligibility assessment has been deferred to the classification panel, the panel may also consider the physical presentation of the athlete in its decision.
 - 9.4.6 If the eligibility assessment determines that the athlete has an eligible impairment the Athlete will be permitted to complete athlete evaluation with a classification panel.
 - 9.4.7 If the eligibility assessment does not determine that the athlete has an eligible impairment the NSO/NSOD will provide a decision to this effect in writing to the athlete. The athlete will be given an opportunity to comment on the decision and provide further diagnostic information to the NSO/NSOD for review. If the decision is subsequently revised, the NSO/NSOD will inform the athlete. If the decision is not changed, the NSO/NSOD will issue a final decision in writing to the athlete with no right of protest to this decision.
 - 9.4.8 A decision of Sport Class Not Eligible based on the outcomes of Eligibility Assessment, does not preclude the Athlete the right to initiate an Appeal.
- 9.5 An NSO/NSOD may, if required, seek expertise from PA regarding eligibility assessment decisions. In this case the NSO/NSOD must ensure that appropriate data protection provisions are in place to share the diagnostic information with PA. PA and any persons engaged by PA in such eligibility assessment must comply with the PA Athlete Classification Policy and Standards.

9.6 NSO/NSODs who establish a provisional classification process, as outlined in PA Classification Standard: Athlete Evaluation are recommended to establish an eligibility assessment process consistent with the provisions of this standard.

10. Sport Class Not Eligible

- 10.1 If an NSO/NSOD determines that an athlete does not have an eligible impairment based on the eligibility assessment it must allocate Sport Class Not Eligible (NE) and designate the athlete with Sport Class Status Confirmed, meaning the athlete is unable to compete in Para-sport events. The NSO/NSOD must include this outcome within their classification masterlist. Any decision taken by the NSO/NSOD to allow these athletes to compete in non Para-sport classes or events, is considered outside of the scope of this standard and at the sole responsibility of the NSO/NSOD.
- 10.2 The provisions of Article 10.1 also apply for provisional level classifications in circumstances where the athlete has undergone eligibility assessment that complies with the conditions of Article 9.
- 10.3 An athlete who is allocated Sport Class Not Eligible because the athlete does not have an eligible impairment will follow the process outlined at Article 9.4.7.
- 10.4 Wellbeing supports should be available to athletes who are allocated Sport Class Not Eligible and their athlete support personnel.
- 10.5 An NSO/NSOD may choose to recognise the allocation of Sport Class Not Eligible with Confirmed Status, if another NSO/NSOD has determined that an athlete does not have an eligible impairment based on the eligibility assessment, without the need for that athlete to undergo a new eligibility assessment.

11. Definitions

- 11.1 This Standard uses the defined terms from the IPC Code and PA Athlete Classification Policy. Further defined terms specific to this Standard are:

Athlete

For purposes of Classification, a person who participates in sport at the international level (as defined by each International Federation) or national or lower level (as defined by each NSO/NSOD). Any reference to an Athlete includes a reference to the Athlete's legal guardian where the context so

permits.

Diagnostic Information:

Medical records and/or any other diagnostic documentation that enables the NSO/NSOD to assess the existence or otherwise of an Eligible Impairment and/or Health condition.

Eligibility Assessment:

A process to assess the existence or otherwise of an Eligible Impairment. In athletes with an intellectual impairment, this process is known as Primary Eligibility.

Health condition:

Any pathology, acute or chronic disease, disorder, injury or trauma. The IPC Code uses the term Underlying Health condition more specifically to define any Health condition that may cause one or more of the Eligible Impairments.

Para-sport:

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

12. 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 - 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](#)