

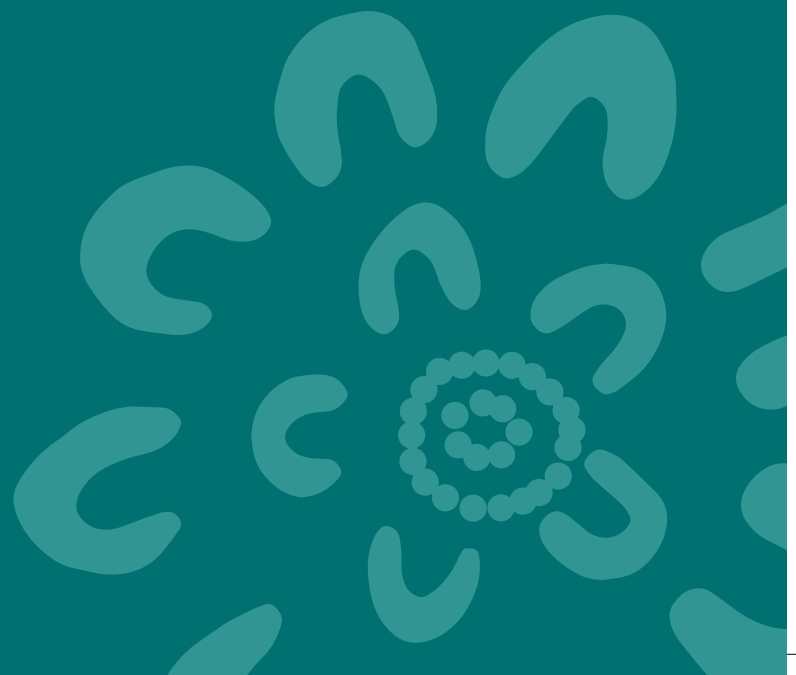


Paralympics  
Australia



# Paralympics Australia Pathways Guide

An Introduction to Understanding  
Para-sport and Classification Pathways



# Acknowledgement of Country

Paralympics Australia acknowledges and pays respect to Elders past and present of the lands and waters on which we live, work and engage in sports together. We are committed to caring for those lands and people across the nation. We acknowledge the diversity, unique histories, cultures, knowledge and current experiences of individuals and communities across Australia. We celebrate their contributions to the nation broadly, and specifically to community and sport.



Artwork by Uncle Paul Calcott - 'Our Story'

# Contents

Acknowledgement of Country .....	3
Paralympics Australia .....	4
Our Enduring Belief: ‘Sport has the power to change the world’ .....	5
Our Vision: .....	6
Our Ambitions: .....	6
What is Para-sport? .....	7
Summer Para-sports: .....	7
Winter Para-sports: .....	7
What is Classification? .....	8
Who can compete at the Paralympic Games? .....	10
How do I get classified? .....	12
Physical Impairment .....	12
Vision Impairment .....	13
Intellectual Impairment .....	13
Para-sport and Classification Pathway: .....	14
Engaging with Para-sport pathways: .....	15



# Paralympics Australia:

At Paralympics Australia, we help Australians with disabilities participate in sport and compete at the Paralympic Games through partnerships with governments, business, sporting bodies and the community.

We are responsible for preparing the Australian Paralympic Summer and Winter Teams for the Paralympic Games, which we have done successfully since 1990.

We work with our National Federation partners to help identify potential Paralympians and assist athletes to prepare for competition by providing funding for coaching, equipment and travel in the lead up to the Summer and Winter Paralympic Games. Our partnerships with governments, business, national sporting organisations and disability groups are critical to delivering a successful Paralympic Team to the Games.

We believe participation in sport provides positive social and physical benefits to people with disabilities and plays an important role in changing community perceptions of people with disabilities. At the heart of what we do is our athletes, who strive to compete at an elite level, upholding the ideals of the Paralympic movement.



The Australian Paralympic movement's unmatched potential to unite, inspire and drive social change will be fully mobilised under a comprehensive and bold strategy announced by Paralympics Australia in 2023.

The release of the Strategy for Australian Paralympic Sport to Brisbane and Beyond by the nation's preeminent sporting organisation for people with a disability signals the start of a new era in Paralympic sport, seizing the once-in-a-generation opportunity presented by the Brisbane 2032 Paralympic and Olympic Games. This also coincided with the release of Australia's High Performance 2032+ Sport Strategy, which Paralympics Australia collaborated on and committed to supporting.

## Our Enduring Belief:

### ‘Sport has the power to change the world’

Paralympic sport has the power and a platform to engage, inspire and challenge inequality. We aspire to amplify the influence sport has to create positive social change.

We believe that sport and society need to evolve to be more inclusive and collaborative; to live and reflect the Australian values of equality, mateship, and a fair go – for everyone. Remarkable Paralympic moments inspire trust, pride, and respect; they bring us together, catalysing conversations and telling powerful stories from diverse role models.

## Our Purpose:

We exist to lead Paralympic sport and create a more inclusive world.



## Our Vision:

To create the most successful era of Paralympic sport in Australia’s history.

## Our Ambitions:

**Ambition 1:** A world-leading and equitable sport system.

**Ambition 2:** Remarkable Paralympic performance.

**Ambition 3:** Our Team is a source of Aussie pride and a force towards creating a more inclusive society.

# Paralympics Australia Pathways Guide

Paralympics Australia would like to thank the Queensland Government for their support of the development of this resource, through the ActiveKIT Fund. This resource has been developed by the Paralympics Australia Pathways and Classification Team, with the intention of providing a clear overview of Para-sport performance pathways in Australia.

It is aimed at anyone who is new to exploring Para-sport, whether you are interested in pursuing Para-sport yourself or supporting somebody else to understand their potential opportunities. It is important to note that this is generalised information, and specific details will differ between sports, disciplines, and athletes, as every journey is unique. For more detailed information, please visit the Paralympics Australia Start Line website, and the digital version of this document which includes additional resources.



## What is Para-sport?

Para-sport is a term used for sports that have a pathway to the Paralympic Games. However, there are many opportunities for individuals to get started in Para-sport through recreation and social programs, local sporting clubs, and school sport, and for those more competitive to potentially compete at state, national, and international levels.

## Paralympic Sports

There are 28 Para-sports at the Summer and Winter Paralympic Games.

### Summer Para-sports:

- Para-athletics
- Para-archery
- Para-badminton
- Boccia
- Para-canoë
- Para-cycling
- Para-equestrian
- Football 5-a-side
- Goalball
- Para-judo
- Para-powerlifting
- Para-rowing
- Para-shooting
- Sitting Volleyball
- Para-swimming
- Para-table tennis
- Para-taekwondo
- Para-triathlon
- Wheelchair basketball
- Wheelchair fencing
- Wheelchair tennis
- Wheelchair rugby
- Para-climbing (LA 2028 Paralympics Games)

### Winter Para-sports:

- Para-alpine skiing
- Para-cross country skiing
- Para-snowboard
- Para-biathlon
- Para-ice hockey
- Wheelchair curling



## Eligible Impairment Types

To be eligible to compete in Para-sport, athletes must have a physical, vision, or intellectual impairment from one of the following eligible impairment groups.

- **Loss of Limbs:** Partial or complete absence of bones or joints due to amputation or deficiency from birth.
- **Muscle weakness/Impaired muscle power:** Muscle weakness or paralysis from conditions such as muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, nerve damage, spinal cord injury or damage
- **Co-ordination impairments Hypertonia, Ataxia or Athetosis:** Impairments from neurological conditions such as acquired brain injury, cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis that affect co-ordination and smoothness of movement and balance.
- **Restricted joint movement:** Restricted movement or tightness in a joint/s from conditions such as joint fusions and other restricting conditions
- **Short stature:** Reduced standing height and limb length from conditions such as achondroplasia or other conditions that affect growth
- **Leg length difference:** Significant difference in leg length from a deficiency at birth or trauma
- **Intellectual Impairment:** An IQ of 75, and impairments in adaptive behaviour (conceptual, social and practical skills) - that is observed before the athlete is aged 18
- **Vision Impairment:** Impairment of the eye structure, optic nerves or pathways, or vision area of the brain, resulting in a loss of vision in both eyes. Caused by conditions such as albinism, macular degeneration, macula or cone rod dystrophy and retinitis pigmentosa.

It is also important to note that there are minimum impairment criteria applicable to each of these impairment groups.





## What is Classification?

Classification exists to create a fair and equal playing field for Para-sport and helps to determine who is eligible and not eligible to compete in a Paralympic pathway. It's necessary to understand what classification is and how you can engage with the classification process. Our aim is to minimise perceptions that classification can be scary and overwhelming, and rather highlight its critical role in understanding a person's potential pathway and the opportunities they might have. Classification is based around the impact of a person's impairment on their sport performance, and there are minimum impairment criteria applicable to all impairment groups.

There are specific classifications that compete in each sport on the Paralympic program, and not every classification is eligible for all Para-sports. The table below is a guide to show which broad impairment groups are potentially eligible to compete in the different Para-sports.



# Who can compete at the Paralympic Games?

Athletes must have one of the eligible impairments listed below in their chosen sport to compete at the Paralympic Games:

Impairment	Loss of limbs	Muscle Weakness/ Impaired Muscle Power	Coordination impairments, -Hypertonia, Ataxia or Athetosis	Restricted Joint Movement	Short Stature	Leg Length Difference	Intellectual Impairment	Vision Impairment
<b>Para-sport</b>								
Para-Alpine Ski	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Para-Archery	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Para-Athletics	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Para-Badminton	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Para-Biathlon	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Boccia	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Para-Canoe	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Para-Cross Country Ski	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Para-Cycling	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Para-Equestrian	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Football 5-a-side								✓
Goalball								✓
Para-Ice Hockey	✓					✓		
Para-Judo								✓

<b>Impairment</b>	<b>Loss of limbs</b>	<b>Muscle Weakness/ Impaired Muscle Power</b>	<b>Coordination impairments, -Hypertonia, Ataxia or Athetosis</b>	<b>Restricted Joint Movement</b>	<b>Short Stature</b>	<b>Leg Length Difference</b>	<b>Intellectual Impairment</b>	<b>Vision Impairment</b>
<b>Para-sport</b>								
<b>Para- Powerlifting</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Para- Rowing</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
<b>Para- Snowboard</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
<b>Para- Swimming</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Para- Table Tennis</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Para- Taekwondo Kyorugi</b>	✓	✓		✓				
<b>Para- Triathlon</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
<b>Para- Shooting</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
<b>Sitting Volleyball</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
<b>Wheelchair Basketball</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
<b>Wheelchair Curling</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓				
<b>Wheelchair Fencing</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
<b>Wheelchair Rugby</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓				
<b>Wheelchair Tennis</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		

**For more information**  
 Contact your NSO or Paralympics Australia at  
[www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au)

## How to get classified

There are three different levels of classification available to Australian athletes, and the type of event or competition that they are competing in will determine the level of classification required. Classification is only required when entering a competitive pathway and athletes will be guided by their relevant National Sporting Organisation as to when classification is required. The following information is a general overview of the classification process for each impairment category, but this will differ for each athlete, depending on the advice provided by the sports.

## Physical Impairment

### Provisional Classification:

The Australian Provisional Classification process is an entry level, preliminary assessment of specific tests that can provide an indication of eligibility and class. Most Para-sports allow opportunities to compete up to State level using a provisional classification. This type of classification is only available to athletes with a physical impairment and is useful in assisting with commitment of Para-sports.

**Apply for Provisional Classification:** please contact the relevant National Sporting Organisation

- For example: if seeking a provisional classification to compete in Para swimming, search for 'classification' on the Swimming Australia website and follow the instructions. Or, if seeking a provisional classification to compete in Para athletics, search the Athletics Australia website.
- Once in contact with the relevant National Sporting Organisation, provisional classification paperwork will be provided and will need to be completed by a doctor or physio. This is then submitted to the relevant National Sporting Organisation and reviewed by their classifiers, who will provide an outcome

This system is still a new process and therefore, not all Para-sports have access to Provisional Classification. The following Para-sports do have Provisional Classification:

- Para-alpine-skiing
- Para-archery
- Para-athletics
- Para-badminton
- Boccia
- Para-canoë
- Para-cycling
- Para-powerlifting
- Para-rowing
- Para-shooting
- Para-snowboard
- Para-swimming
- Para-table tennis
- Para-taekwondo
- Wheelchair basketball
- Wheelchair tennis

### Australian National and International Classification:

Athletes will be informed of when and how to access these levels of classification through their relevant sporting organisations, coaches, and officials, as they progress through the Para-sport pathway

### General overview of process:

- Athlete provides medical evidence to confirm their diagnosis and impairment
- Physical Assessment – medical tests such as vision tests, psychological tests or measures of strength and coordination
- Technical Assessment – performs key tests, drills and skills related to their sport e.g. demonstrates long jump technique; ball handling and wheelchair skills in wheelchair rugby
- Observed in competition.
- This type of classification is essential for Nationals, records, and team selections, depending on the sport



## Vision Impairment

### Apply for Vision Impairment Classification:

Submit a classification request form using the VI Classification Request Form, which can be found in the Classification section of the Paralympics Australia website.

- Once in contact with Paralympics Australia, required paperwork will be provided and will need to be completed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist. This is then submitted to Paralympics Australia and assessed by classifiers, who will provide an outcome.

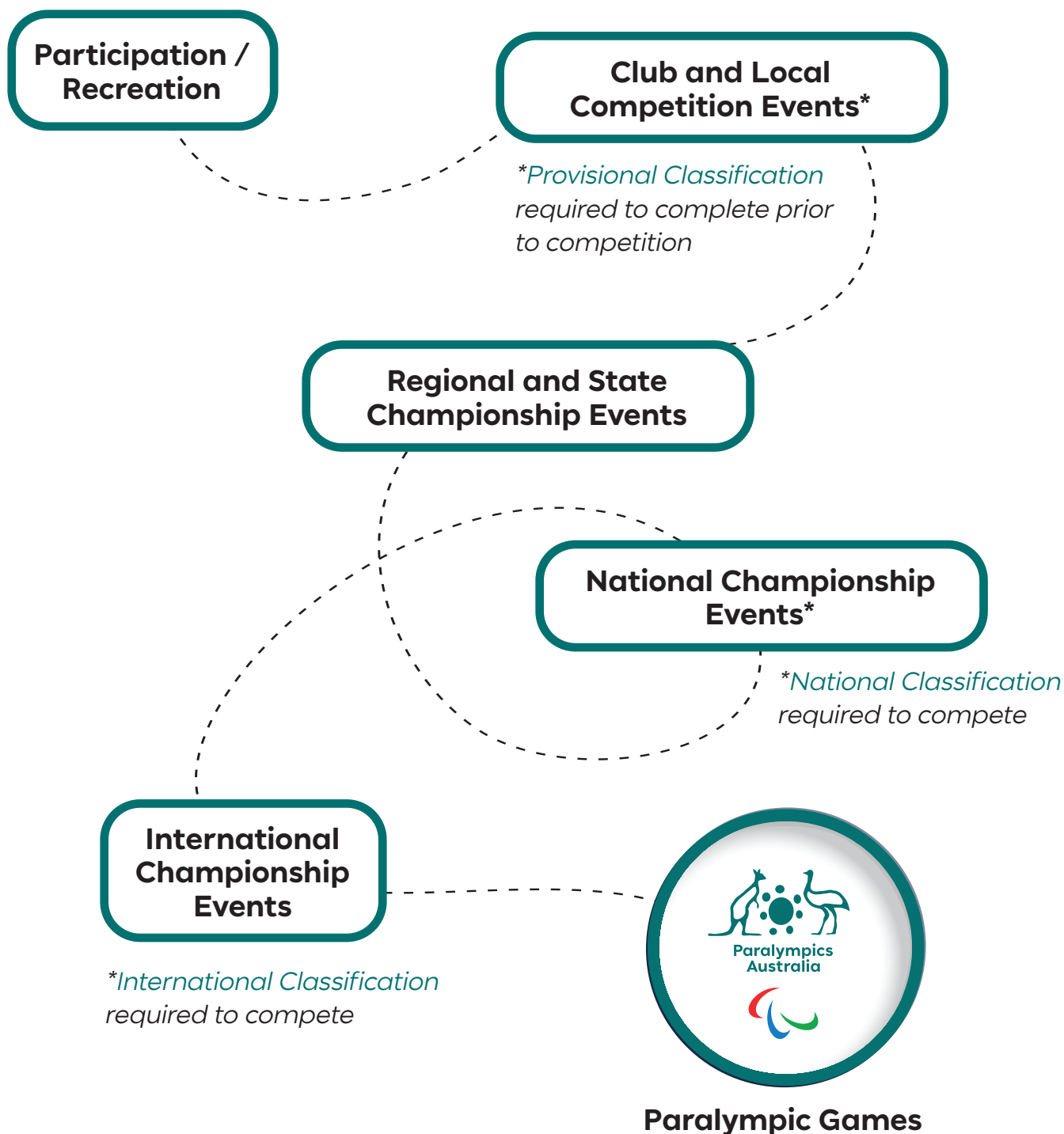
## Intellectual Impairment

### Apply for Intellectual Impairment Classification:

Follow Sport Inclusion Australia instructions to download and complete National Eligibility Application form.

## Para-sport and Classification Pathway:

Each person's Para-sport pathway will be unique, and is likely to differ slightly between sports and disciplines and talent and aspirations, but the below flow chart shows a general overview of how the Para-sport and Classification Pathways progress:



Sports deliver their own pathways and therefore there will be differences in the type of programs and levels of competition available across each sport. There are also differences in which organisations within a sport will deliver each element of the pathway, and what support is available for athletes as they progress. For the most up to date sport specific information, it is best to search the relevant sport organisation online.

## How to engage with Para-sport Pathways:

### Expressing interest in Para sport

Engage in a conversation about Para-sport to determine if an individual is interested in learning more. This conversation could be started by the individual themselves, or a support person, educator, allied health professional, or anyone in their support network

### Exploring Para sport and Classification Pathways

The best way to learn more, is to explore the Paralympics Australia 'Start Line', on the Paralympics Australia website. The 'Start Line' is an online, central hub of information, where you can find useful tools and resources to help begin your Para-sport journey

For individuals interested in Paralympic pathways, and eligible for classification within their chosen sport, they could:

- Contact a local club to find out more about their Para-sport opportunities and how to get involved
- Contact a Disability Sports Organisation, such as Disability Sport Australia, to explore their programs
- Visit the 'Start Line' to complete a Get Involved form, or use the Events Calendar to find Para-sport events happening in your local area

If the individual is not eligible for classification in Paralympic pathways, there may be other opportunities through Non-paralympic pathways - please refer to the guide on page 18

### Entering Pathways

Individual engages in Para-sport pathway through participating in local program and accessing classification as required. This process can look different for each athlete, and vary between sports and programs.

### Follow-up

Individuals can connect to relevant sports organisations or Paralympics Australia if they require further assistance or would like to explore other Para-sport programs

# PARA-SPORT – AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE PARALYMPIC SPORT PATHWAY INFORMATION



Disability Type	Governing Body	Sports available	Is there an eligibility requirement?
<p><b>Physical</b> (Eligible Impairments include Limb Deficiency, Leg Length Difference, Impaired Muscle Power, Impaired Passive Range of Motion, Short Stature, Hypertonia, Ataxia, Athetosis)</p>	<p>National Sporting Organisation (NSO)</p>	<p>Alpine Skiing, Athletics, Badminton, Biathlon, Boccia, Canoe, Cycling, Equestrian, Rowing, Snowboard, Swimming, Shooting, Sitting Volleyball, Taekwondo, Triathlon, Wheelchair Basketball, Wheelchair Curling, Wheelchair Fencing, Wheelchair Rugby, Wheelchair Tennis</p>	<p>Yes – refer to the NSO website for requirements.</p>
	<p>School Sport Australia</p>	<p>Athletics/Track and Field, Cross Country, Swimming</p>	<p>Yes – refer to the NSO website for requirements.</p>
<p><b>Vision</b> (Impairment of the eye structure, optic nerves or pathways, or vision area of the brain, resulting in a loss of vision in <b>both</b> eyes)</p>	<p>State School Sport Office</p>	<p>Track and Field (Athletics), Cross Country (Athletics), Swimming Additional sporting options vary.</p>	<p>Yes, for Track and Field, Cross Country, and Swimming – refer to the NSO website for each sport for requirements.</p>
<p><b>Intellectual</b> (An IQ score of 75 or less and significant limitations in adaptive behaviour)</p>	<p>National Sporting Organisation (NSO)</p>	<p>Alpine Skiing, Athletics, Biathlon, Blind Football, Cycling, Equestrian, Goalball, Judo, Rowing, Swimming, Triathlon.</p>	<p>Yes – refer to the NSO website or the Sport Inclusion Australia page for requirements.</p>



# NON-PARALYMPIC SPORTING OPPORTUNITIES INFORMATION

Disability Type	Governing Body	Sports available <i>(Including but not limited to)</i>	Is there an eligibility requirement?
<b>Physical</b>	Australian Football League (AFL)	Wheelchair AFL	Yes – refer to the AFL website for requirements
<b>Vision</b>	National Sporting Organisation (NSO), Blind Sports Australia	Archery, Blind AFL, Blind Cricket, Blind Golf, Blind Table Tennis, Blind and Low Vision (BLV) Tennis, Blind and Low Vision (BLV) Ten Pin Bowling, Sailing, Shooting	Yes – refer to the NSO or Blind Sport Australia websites.
<b>Transplant</b>	National Sporting Organisation (NSO), Transplant Australia	Athletics, Badminton, Chess, Cycling, Darts, Golf, Lawn Bowls, Pétanque, Swimming, Table Tennis, Ten Pin Bowling, Tennis, Volleyball	Yes – refer to the NSO or Transplant Australia for requirements.
<b>Hearing</b>	National Sporting Organisation (NSO), Deaf Sports Australia	Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Cycling, Football, Golf, Judo, Karate, Orienteering, Shooting, Swimming, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Ten Pin Bowling, Tennis, Volleyball, Wrestling	Yes – refer to the NSO or the Deaf Sports Australia websites.
<b>Intellectual</b> <i>(An IQ score of 75 or less and significant limitations in adaptive behaviour)</i>	National Sporting Organisation (NSO), Sport Inclusion Australia	Basketball, Cricket, Equestrian, Football, Futsal, Golf, Hockey, Judo, Karate, Rowing, Sailing, Skiing, Taekwondo, Tennis	Yes – refer to the NSO website or the Sport Inclusion Australia page for requirements.
<b>Intellectual</b> <i>(Significant impairment)</i>	National Sporting Organisation (NSO), Sport Inclusion Australia, Special Olympics Australia	Athletics, Swimming, Table Tennis, Tennis	Yes – refer to the NSO website or the Sport Inclusion Australia page for requirements.
<b>Autism</b>	National Sporting Organisation (NSO), Sport Inclusion Australia	Athletics, Swimming, Table Tennis, Tennis	Yes – refer to the NSO website or the Sport Inclusion Australia page for requirements.

# THE START LINE



**For further information about the topics covered in this Pathways Guide, visit the Paralympics Australia ‘Start Line’ website, and explore the following:**

## **Pathways:**

- Complete a Paralympics Australia Get Involved form to connect with the Paralympics Australia Pathways Team, and find out more about the Para-sport you are interested in
- Visit the Paralympics Australia Event Calendar to discover what local Para-sport programs and events are happening near you

## **Classification:**

- Explore the classification resources available to learn more about what classification is, and what the process involves
- Use the Impairment Mapping Tool to explore which Para-sports an individual might be eligible for classification in
- Try the free Classification Fundamentals Course to test your understanding and learnings around classification. This is available through the Sport Integrity Australia website

## **Stay Connected:**

- Keep up to date with all things Paralympics Australia and the Australian Paralympic Team, by visiting the Paralympics Australia website and joining AUS Squad
- Learn more about the work Paralympics Australia does and how you can support through fundraising, by visiting the Paralympics Australia website
- Visit the Start Line ‘Para Play Makers’ section if you are an allied health professional, teacher, support worker, coach, or anyone else interested in learning more about Para-sport and how to connect individuals to Para-sport opportunities.





# Paralympics Australia



**For more information:**

Please visit [www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au)  
or contact our team at:  
[pathways@paralympic.org.au](mailto:pathways@paralympic.org.au)

**health +  
wellbeing**  
Queensland



**Queensland  
Government**