

Submission to the New International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy

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ASAPD - Background

The Australian Sporting Alliance for People with a Disability (ASAPD) is a unified force, driving positive change and amplifying opportunities in sport through empowering, linking, organising, and streamlining efforts.

ASAPD represents eight member organisations comprising: Disability Sport Australia, Special Olympics Australia, Social Inclusion Australia, Deaf Sports Australia, Blind Sports Australia, Disabled Wintersport Australia, Riding for the Disabled and Transplant Australia.

As an alliance of passionate advocates and organisations, we collaborate to break down barriers, and ensure equal access for people of all abilities.

The following responses are composed by ASAPD and are reflective of a disability sport perspective.

Question 1: What are the most important things we should work on for disability equity and rights?

1. Advocacy and Awareness

Promote the rights of athletes living with disability in sport across all tiers and enhance awareness regarding the significance of inclusiveness in sport, emphasising the advantages of active participation.

2. Inclusive Policies

Develop inclusive policies that cater to the requirements of athletes living with disability, incorporating guidelines that cover equitable competition rules and eligibility criteria.

3. Collaboration

Encourage cooperation among organisations dedicated to disability and sport, government entities, and other stakeholders to collaboratively advance the cause of disability equity and rights in sport.

4. Representation and Visibility

Enhance the visibility of athletes living with disability in the media by highlighting their accomplishments and capabilities to challenge stereotypes and foster positive perceptions.

5. Equal Opportunities for Participation

Ensure adequate opportunities exist for athletes living with disability to participate in grassroots, community-level sport and high performance levels.

6. Training and Education

Offer specialised training for coaches, officials and sport administrators, including various types of disability, coaching methodologies and the creation of inclusive training environments.

Question 2: What are the best ways we can do this?

1. Raise Awareness

Promote positive portrayals and challenge stereotypes by organising campaigns within the sports community, shedding light on the rights, capabilities, and challenges experienced by athletes living with disability.

2. Co-design and Sport Leadership

Utilise sport people with lived experience and who have skills and knowledge to help achieve desired outcomes.

3. Advocate for Legislation and Policy Change

Collaborate with sports advocacy groups to lobby for the establishment, improvement, and effective enforcement of laws and policies that safeguard the rights of athletes living with disability.

4. Encourage Inclusive Education Practices

Collaborate with educational institutions to champion inclusive policies, providing training in inclusive coaching methods for their effective implementation.

5. Facilitate Community Engagement

Establish forums within the sport community that empower athletes living with disability to actively participate in decision-making processes, fostering partnerships between disability sport organisations and community groups.

6. Develop Training Programs

Offer training initiatives tailored for sports professionals, coaches, teams, and the general public to enhance their understanding and proficiency in interacting with athletes who are living with disability.

7. Encourage Research and Data Collection

Support research initiatives that explore the experiences, requirements, and capabilities of athletes living with disability

8. Establish Supportive Networks

Create support networks and mentorship programs within the sport community to facilitate connections, sharing of experiences, and resource access for athletes living with disability.

Question 3 Part 1: How can we support people with disabilities to do this work?

1. Ensure Accessibility

Provide accessible sports venues and accommodation for meetings, events, and activities, ensuring physical accessibility, sign language interpreters, captioning, electronic communication access tools and materials in various formats (eg. Braille, large print, electronic).

2. Promote Inclusive Communication

Use inclusive and accessible language in all communications and ensure that information is available in multiple formats to accommodate diverse communication needs.

3. Foster Inclusive Leadership

Actively involve athletes living with disability in leadership roles within sports advocacy organisations and initiatives while creating opportunities for athletes living with disability to participate in co-design and decision-making processes.

4. Address Discrimination and Bias

Raise awareness about the discrimination and biases faced by athletes living with disability in sports advocacy spaces. Advocate for and enforce anti-discrimination policies within sports advocacy organisations to create a more inclusive sports environment.

5. Promote Self-Advocacy

Support athletes living with disability in developing their self-advocacy skills and provide sport-specific resources and guidance on navigating systems, accessing services, and effectively communicating their needs.

6. Collaborate with Disability Organisations

Partner with disability sports advocacy organisations to ensure that their expertise and perspectives are integrated into broader sports advocacy efforts while seeking guidance on creating inclusive and accessible sport initiatives.

Part 2: How can we support organisations working with people with disabilities to do this work?

1. Capacity Building

Offer sport-specific training and capacity-building programs to enhance the skills of organisational leaders, staff, and volunteers while providing resources and workshops on topics including inclusive sports leadership, diversity and effective communication.

2. Inclusive Policies and Practices

Advocate for and support the development of inclusive policies within sport organisations to ensure equal opportunities and accessibility.

3. Sports Networking and Collaboration

Facilitate networking opportunities for sport organisations to collaborate, share best practices, and learn from each other.

4. Mentorship Programs

Facilitate mentorship programs within the sport community where experienced leaders can provide guidance and support to emerging leaders.

5. Advocacy Support

Collaborate with sport organisations to advocate for disability rights and inclusivity in sports policies and legislation.

6. Public Awareness Campaigns

Collaborate on public awareness campaigns within the sport community to promote a better understanding of disability issues and challenge stereotypes.

7. Professional Development Opportunities

Support professional development of organisational leaders and staff through workshops, conferences, and networking events.

7. Foster Inclusive Leadership

Utilise broader disability community leaders/experts to assist in a 'Train the Trainers' program where there are gaps in leadership within the sport industry.

8. Research and Data Collection

Support sport research initiatives that contribute to a better understanding of the needs and challenges faced by athletes living with disability.

Question 4 Part 1: What could stop us improving disability equity and rights?

1. Lack of Awareness and Understanding

Insufficient awareness about the rights, capabilities, and specific needs of athletes living with disability can contribute to discriminatory practices, perpetuate stereotypes, and lead to exclusion.

2. Attitudinal Barriers

Negative attitudes, biases, and misconceptions about disability within the sport community can contribute to social exclusion and discrimination against athletes living with disability.

3. Resistance to Change

Resistance to inclusive sport practices and a reluctance to challenge traditional norms and structures may impede progress in promoting disability equity within the sport community.

4. Inadequate Legal Frameworks and Enforcement

Weak or poorly enforced disability rights legislation within the context of sport may fail to protect athletes living with disability from discrimination.

5. Negative Stereotypes and Stigma

Prevalent stereotypes and stigmas surrounding disability in sport can perpetuate discrimination, creating barriers to the social inclusion of athletes living with disability in sport communities.

6. Inaccessible Infrastructure

Physical barriers in sport arenas, transportation to sport venues, and sport facilities can limit the mobility and independence of athletes living with disability.

7. Insufficient Support Services

Limited availability of sport-specific support services, including adaptive sport technologies, personal assistance, and sport rehabilitation services, can impede the full participation of athletes living with disability.

8. Lack of Collaboration

Ineffective collaboration and coordination among sport organisations, governments, and communities may hinder collective efforts to promote disability equity and rights within the sport sector.

9. Inadequate Inclusion policy/Poor Implementation of Inclusion Practices

Not using sport inclusion experts or skilled/knowledgeable sports people with lived experience in disability to ensure human rights, equity and access requirements are included in strategies.

Question 4 Part 2: What could help us to improve disability equity and rights?

1. Raise Awareness and Promote Education

Conduct awareness campaigns within the sport community to educate about disability rights, inclusion, and the diversity of athletic abilities.

2. Promote Inclusive Sports Education

Implement policies within sports education that support inclusivity, ensuring athletes living with disability have equal access to quality sports education in mainstream institutions.

3. Ensure Accessible Sports Infrastructure

Implement and enforce accessibility standards for sport venues, transportation, and sport facilities.

4. Foster Inclusive Policies

Develop and enforce policies within sport organisations and institutions that promote inclusivity, diversity, and accommodation for athletes living with disability.

5. Foster Community Engagement

Involve athletes living with disability in co-design, leadership and decision-making processes that affect them.

6. Provide Training and Resources

Offer sport-specific training programs for various stakeholders, including healthcare professionals, educators, employers, and the general public.

7. Encourage Research and Data Collection

Support research on sport disability issues to better understand the needs, challenges, and strengths of athletes living with disability.

Summary

The information presented outlines strategies aimed at advancing equity and rights for athletes living with disability in the sport sector. The central focus involves advocating and raising awareness to promote disability rights across all levels of sport, including people with lived experience in co-design, leadership and implementation, access requirements are addressed, underscoring the benefits of inclusivity in the sporting sector. Additionally, inclusive policies strive to address the needs of athletes living with disability by establishing fair competition rules and eligibility criteria.

Collaboration is highlighted, encouraging cooperation among disability sport organisations, government entities and stakeholders to collectively promote equity and rights for athletes living with disability. Representation and visibility efforts aim to challenge stereotypes by showcasing accomplishments in the media.

To implement these strategies effectively, creating awareness is crucial, involving campaigns within the sport community to illuminate the rights, capabilities and challenges faced by athletes living with disability. Advocacy for legislative and policy change involves collaborating with sport advocacy groups to establish and enforce laws safeguarding the rights of athletes living with disability.

Inclusive educational approaches focus on policies that guarantee equal access to high-quality sports education. Community engagement aims to empower athletes living with disability by involving them in decision-making processes. Ultimately, supporting athletes living with disability involves ensuring accessibility, fostering inclusive communication and leadership, addressing discrimination and bias, promoting self-advocacy, and collaborating with disability organisations.

Overcoming challenges such as lack of awareness, attitudinal barriers, and resistance to change requires proactive measures to advance disability equity and rights within sport.