



# **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 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 Wheelchair Rugby Australia (WRA) Athlete Classification Policy (Classification Policy) is to:
  - Provide a clear statement on the purpose of Classification in wheelchair rugby;
  - Set out the position, role and responsibilities of Wheelchair Rugby Australia with regards to classification, as the member of World Wheelchair Rugby (WWR) and in accordance with the IPC Code, the IPC Model of Best Practice for National Classification and Paralympics Australia Athlete Classification Policy;
  - Set out the requirements of Wheelchair Rugby Australia members and other organisations and individuals engaged by Wheelchair Rugby Australia for classification purposes;
  - Promote and uphold the integrity of Paralympic sport.
- 1.2. This document shall be read in conjunction with the IPC Code, IPC Code of Ethics, PA Classification Policy and Classification Standards and any other relevant Wheelchair Rugby Australia policy.
- 1.3. 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:
  - WRA employees, contractors and volunteers

- Selected Athletics and Appointed Officials of WRA Teams
  - WRA Member and state organisations, the PA members state organisations, WRA athletes and athlete support personnel
  - Any other organisations or individuals engaged by WRA for Classification purposes.
- 2.2. WRA will only recognise classification activities that are conducted within the scope of this Classification Policy. This Classification Policy does not apply to events offered by WRA athletes with impairments that sit outside of the IPC Code and the WWR 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. Paralympics Australia (**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 of the IPC, to comply with the IPC Code and to ensure that national classification rules conform with the IPC Code.
- 3.3. WWR as a member of the IPC is required to comply with the IPC Code and to recommend that its national bodies comply with the applicable provisions of the Code.
- 3.4. WWR is responsible for the development and implementation of classification systems in wheelchair rugby including:
- Selecting the IPC eligible impairments that are included in wheelchair rugby;
  - 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 wheelchair rugby;
  - Setting relevant procedures for International Level Classification Personnel and Training;
  - Defining processes for the management of International Level Protests and Appeals;
  - Outlining WWR related Data Protection procedures;
  - Managing international level investigations of alleged misconduct and allegations of Intentional Misrepresentation.
- 3.5. WRA as a condition of its membership of PA is required to:
- Abide by the PA Athlete Classification Policy and promote its adoption through its network to support classification governance and compliance with the IPC Code;

- Take such actions and provide all reasonable support and assistance as PA requires in order to comply with its obligations under the IPC Code, and to support integrity in classification.
- 3.6. The delivery of classification services for wheelchair rugby in Australia is the responsibility of WRA unless otherwise agreed by WWR, PA and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC).

## 4. CLASSIFICATION INTEGRITY AND SAFEGUARDS

- 4.1. WRA adopts an inclusive approach and equally recognises wheelchair rugby within its structure, systems, people and pathways.
- 4.2. Participation in wheelchair rugby should be safe and inclusive for all. WRA is committed to ensuring that all people in wheelchair rugby, 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 Sport Class for all athletes.
- 4.5. WRA is committed to an Australian classification system that is safe, supportive and friendly for children and young people. WRA adopts state and territory child protection legislation (including mandatory reporting obligations) and National Principles for Child Safe Organisations in its classification policies and procedures and must be understood at all levels of WRA.
- 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 (e.g. 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. WRA is committed to a national classification system that proactively identifies, assesses and minimises risks that could negatively impact the WRA classification strategy, reputation, compliance, finances and/or people.
- 4.8. Intentional Misrepresentation (**IM**)
- 4.8.1. The following constitutes IM
- An Athlete or Athlete Support Personnel, at any time, whether by act or omission, intentionally misleads or attempts to mislead an IF or

NSO/NSOD or any of its representatives (such as Classification Personnel) in relation to any aspect of Classification; or

- An Athlete or Athlete Support Personnel, at any time, whether by act or omission, engages in any type of intentional complicity in respect of any violation or attempted violation of Article 4.8.1.

4.8.2. Examples of IM include (without limitation):

- submitting forged medical documentation attesting to the existence of a Health Condition or Eligible Impairment that the Athlete does not have;
- deliberately underperforming during a Classification evaluation session;
- intentionally undergoing Classification without the adaptive equipment they intend to use in competition;
- otherwise misrepresenting their skills, abilities, and/or the existence, nature, and/or degree of their impairment before, during or after Classification;
- disrupting Classification, or refusing to cooperate with a Classification Panel during Classification, with the intention of misleading the Classification Panel;
- not providing accurate information as to their identity or having another person attend Classification in their place; and/or
- deliberately failing to notify WWR or WRA or other approved Classification organisation of any relevant Classification related information, including that they have previously undergone Classification (for example in the context of another para sport) and/or that there has been any change in the nature of degree of their impairment that may necessitate a Medical Review.

4.8.3. WRA considers IM to be a very serious offence that undermines the integrity of Classification and Para-Sport and does not condone any attempts to commit or conceal such offences.

4.8.4. Athletes and/or Athlete support personnel may be subject to disciplinary actions if found guilty of IM offenses under the IPC Code, WWR classification rules, PA Classification Policy and/or WRA classification rules and/or the WRA Competition Manipulation & Sports Gambling Policy. Investigations and any subsequent disciplinary and reporting procedures follow the PA Classification Standard: Intentional Misrepresentation.

4.8.5. Any sanctions that are applied to Athletes and Athlete Support Personnel in relation to IM by the IPC, WWR, PA or another NSO/NSOD are recognised by WRA across all levels of wheelchair rugby.

## **5. PA ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

PA is expected to:

- 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 is expected 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 WRA to comply with the IPC Code;
- 5.5. Monitor compliance, and address non-compliance, of its members with the PA Athlete 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. Uphold its obligations under the IPC Code and the National Integrity Framework (NIF) to report, investigate and/or respond to any IM allegations, as is jurisdictionally appropriate.

## **6. WRA ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Classification is integral to the delivery of wheelchair rugby competition. WRA will conform with WWR Classification Rules as much as is practical. WRA adopts an inclusive approach and adheres to its roles and responsibilities in wheelchair rugby classification by way of:

- 6.1. Governance
  - 6.1.1. Recognising 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 WRA specific Classification Rules, an athlete classification pathway, other classification policies and procedures relevant to wheelchair rugby that align with PA Athlete Classification Policy;
  - 6.1.3. Clearly outlining the expectations of WRA members, athletes, athlete support personnel, classification personnel and any other persons or organisations engaged by WRA;
  - 6.1.4. Report on WRA classification program activities and acquit any funding provided by PA on request; and
  - 6.1.5. Consider risks associated with Classification within the WRA risk management framework.
- 6.2. Classification System

- 6.2.1. Implementing, as closely as possible, the classification system that is defined by WWR, including the adoption of:
- The eligible impairment permitted to compete in wheelchair rugby;
  - The processes and procedures for assessing whether an 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. Appointing a number of key Classification Personnel, including but not limited to classification administrators and classifiers, in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Classification Personnel and Training. Classification Personnel have a key role in the organisation, administration and delivery of Classification for WRA and their members.
- 6.4.2. Establishing and delivering a transparent system for the recruitment, education, training, certification and re-certification of wheelchair rugby Classifiers.
- 6.4.3. Classifiers are recognised as part of the WRA officials program ensuring that provisions, insurances, training opportunities and terms of engagement exist for classifiers as they do for other WRA officials.
- 6.4.4. Professional conduct standards that all Classification Personnel must comply with are outlined in the WRA Classification Rules. These standards comply with the IPC Code of Ethics and are in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Classification Personnel and Training.
- 6.4.5. WRA has within its 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 6.4.4.
- 6.5. Safeguards and Integrity
- 6.5.1. Safeguards specific to child safety practices and legislation requirements are adopted in WRA classification policies and procedures and are expected to be understood and practiced at all levels of the sport. Any wheelchair rugby classifier or classification personnel who interact with children under 18 years must hold a valid Working with Children Check.
- 6.5.2. Informed and appropriate measures are taken 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 WRA Classification activities.



- 6.5.3. WRA will comply with local public health advice and review any health risks associated with the delivery of classification activities. Classification will be implemented in accordance with standard infection control procedures and relevant state and national work health and safety legislation.
- 6.5.4. Systems and safeguards are in place to protect all people involved in classification services. Any classification related disputes or member protection issues are managed through the WRA Member Protection Office.
- 6.5.5. Protests and Appeals
- (a) Protest processes are outlined in the WRA Classification rules in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Protests and Appeals. A protest is the procedure by which a reasoned objection to an Athlete's Sport Class is submitted and subsequently resolved.
  - (b) Appeal processes are outlined in the WRA Classification rules, in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Protests and Appeals. An Appeal is the process to resolve Classification procedural disputes.
  - (c) National Level Classification Appeals will be referred to the National Sports Tribunal in accordance with National Sports Tribunal legislation.
- 6.5.6. Intentional Misrepresentation
- (a) Procedures on the management of Intentional Misrepresentation are outlined in the WRA Classification rules in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Intentional Misrepresentation.
  - (b) In accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Intentional Misrepresentation:
    - (i) Procedures relating to Athletes and Athlete Support Personnel under the jurisdiction of WWR are governed by the processes outlined by WWR.
    - (ii) WRA refers all IM complaints relating to Athletes or Athlete Support Personnel who are exclusively recognised under WRA jurisdiction, that is, are not under WWR jurisdiction to PA<sup>1</sup>.
    - (iii) Intentional Misrepresentation is deemed to be Competition Manipulation under the WRA Competition Manipulation and Sports Gambling Policy.
  - (c) WRA will cooperate and encourage the cooperation of WRA members with any classification investigative process.
  - (d) WRA recognises, respects and enforces any sanction imposed on an Athlete or Athlete support person for IM as notified by the IPC, an IF,

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<sup>1</sup> For the avoidance of doubt, IM complaints relating to Athletes or Athlete Support Personnel who are recognised under the jurisdiction of both WWR and WRA, those complaints shall follow WWR Classification Rules.

PA, or any other authorised body in accordance with the WRA Classification Rules.

#### 6.5.7. Classification Intelligence Gathering and Investigations

- (a) Procedures regarding the management of Classification Intelligence, are outlined in the PA Classification Standards: Intentional Misrepresentation and Classification Data Protection. All sources of classification intelligence are protected.

#### 6.6. WRA High Performance program

WRA:

- 6.6.1. Expects all High-Performance Athletes and Personnel will abide by WWR classification rules and the requirements for the participation of Athletes in international level competition;
- 6.6.2. Will conduct screening and proactively plan for international classification opportunities for Athletes once they are nominated to high performance programs and as required for the qualification for Paralympic Games and other benchmark events;
- 6.6.3. Will 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. Provide proactive support structures and processes to minimise risk and support the maintenance of wellbeing for Athletes and staff undertaking International level classification.

#### 6.7. Data Storage and Protection

WRA ensures that lawful processes are in place for collection, processing, storage, use and retention of personal and classification data. These processes and procedures are in accordance with the PA Classification Standard: Classification Data Protection.

#### 6.8. Classification Masterlist

The Classification Masterlist of all Australian athletes who have been classified for wheelchair rugby at a provisional, national and international level, including the athlete's name, sex, year of birth, state, sport class and sport class status is published on the Wheelchair Rugby Australia website.

#### 6.9. Classification Education and Awareness

6.9.1. WRA will provide Classification resources and education activities for Athletes, Athlete Support Personnel, WRA member organisations and any other relevant stakeholders (media, spectators) for all levels of the wheelchair rugby pathway including:

- Classification pathway and processes for wheelchair rugby;
- Eligible impairment types of their Para-sport;

- The IPC Code, PA Classification Policy and Standards and relevant IF and/or WRA Classification rules;
- Athlete, athlete support personnel and classification personnel rights and responsibilities; and
- Classification integrity and intentional misrepresentation information.

6.9.2. WRA is committed to the involvement of Athletes in the development and delivery of such education and awareness programs.

#### 6.10. Classification Research and Innovation

6.10.1. WRA will support WWR, and promote active contribution from WRA members, in the development of the WWR classification system.

6.10.2. Any research conducted or participated in by WRA must comply with nationally recognised ethical standards and research practices.

6.10.3. WRA will work collaboratively with PA for the continuous improvement of classification activities in wheelchair rugby.

#### 6.11. Changes to the Classification System

6.11.1. WRA will integrate changes made to WWR classification systems as soon as possible after the change is made and will align any changes as closely to the IF system as is practical.

6.11.2. WRA will provide appropriate notice to Athletes and other stakeholders of anticipated changes to the classification system and any other change(s) that might impact on Sport Class allocation. Notice will include a rationale for change, the proposed timelines for implementation, any transition rules and processes for feedback as applicable.

6.11.3. WRA will 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 will be provided an opportunity to submit feedback, prior to implementation of any changes.

6.11.4. Education and wellbeing supports are available to Athletes and athlete support personnel who are affected by changes in Classification rules.

## **7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ATHLETES AND OFFICIALS OF WRA TEAMS**

The roles and responsibilities of WRA Team members include:

- 7.1. Conducting themselves in a manner that is consistent with the PA Classification Policy, WRA Code of Conduct, IPC Code and IPC Code of Ethics;
- 7.2. Adhering to their responsibilities outlined in WWR and WRA Classification Rules; and
- 7.3. Participating in Team member training and education as required by WRA.

## 8. CONDITIONS

- 8.1. WRA 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 WRA, WRA members must report on compliance with this Classification Policy. Explanations for any non-compliance must be included.
- 8.3. Subject to the approval of the WRA Board, the following sanctions may be applied to WRA members who are non-compliant with this Classification Policy:
  - 8.3.1. Withholding some or all funding or support;
  - 8.3.2. Suspension of WRA membership;
  - 8.3.3. Exclusion from WRA events; and/or
  - 8.3.4. Reporting the WRA member to ASC (where the organisation is recognised by the ASC)
- 8.4. Disciplinary action may be taken against an individual who breaches the terms of this Policy.

## 9. PROVISION

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

## 10. DEFINITIONS

**Appeal** means the means by which a complaint that a sports federation has made an unfair decision during the Classification process is resolved.

**Athlete** means a person who participates in Para-sport at the international, national or local level.

**Athlete Evaluation** means 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.

**Athlete Support Personnel** means 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.

**Classification** means grouping athletes into sport classes according to the extent to which their impairment affects the fundamental activities in each specific sport or discipline.

**Classification Personnel** means any individuals who act with the authority of WRA for any component of the classification program for wheelchair rugby.

**Classifier** means a person authorised as an official by WWR or WRA to evaluate Athletes as part of the classification panel.

**Eligible Impairment** means a physical, intellectual or vision impairment, designed as being a pre-requisite for competing in Para-sport, as designed by the IPC Code.

**International Sports Federation (IF)** means 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.

**IPC Athlete Classification Code and International Standards (IPC Code)** means the IPC Code 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 Integrity Framework** means the suite of integrity related policies adopted by WRA which include the National Integrity Framework, the Competition Manipulation and Sports Gambling Policy, the Complaints, Disputes and Discipline Policy.

**National Sporting Organisation (NSO) / National Sporting Organisation for people with Disability (NSOD)** means the national sporting organisation recognised by PA and the Australian Sports Commission for the delivery of Para-sport within Australia.

**National Sports Tribunal** means the National Sports Tribunal established by the *National Sports Tribunal Act 2019 (Cth)*.

**National Sports Tribunal legislation** means the *National Sports Tribunal Act 2019 (Cth)*, the *National Sports Tribunal Rule 2020 (Cth)* and the *National Sports Tribunal (Practice and Procedure) Determination 2021 (Cth)*.

**PA Classification Standards** means the PA Classification Standard published by PA from time to time.

**PA Member** means 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** means all sports for athletes with a physical, intellectual or vision impairment, on a Paralympic Games program, or recognised by the IPC.

**Protest** means the procedure by which a reasoned objection to an Athlete's sport class is submitted and subsequently resolved.

**Sport Integrity Australia (SIA)** means the non-corporate Commonwealth entity of that name established by the *Sport Integrity Australia Act 2020 (Cth)*.

## 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
- Wheelchair Rugby Australia Codes of Conduct
- WRA Complaints, Manipulation and Sports Gambling Policy
- WRA Competition, Disputes and Discipline Policy
- Other WRA policies (including but not limited to the WRA Privacy Policy)

To view all Wheelchair Rugby Australia policies, including those relating to Classification, please visit: [www.wheelchairrugby.com.au/governance](http://www.wheelchairrugby.com.au/governance).

To view all PA Classification policies, please visit the Paralympics Australia website: [www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au)