



ATHLETICS AUSTRALIA – NATIONAL ATHLETE SUPPORT STRUCTURE (NASS) POLICY

AUGUST 2022

Athletics Australia's (**AA**) National Athlete Support Structure (**NASS**) is a system that supports Australian Athletes who have the greatest potential to achieve AA's HP Program Goals and targets at Olympic Games, Paralympic Games, World Championships and Commonwealth Games.

The NASS selection process identifies athletes and uses the Australian Institute of Sport (**AIS**) categorisation to place each selected athlete within a nationally tiered support model. This categorisation model is then applied through AA's delivery partners – the relevant member of the National Institute Network (**NIN**). Under the AIS athlete categorisation model, to be prioritised for support an athlete must demonstrate potential for future success; past results are not the sole consideration, especially at the initial levels of NASS.

The Structure is built into three Streams – the Medal Stream, Pathway Stream and the Representative Stream. These Streams enable AA to identify the medal capable athletes within the current 4-year cycle, our medal capable athletes for future cycles and our prospective senior team athletes for the coming Championships, and then prioritise the resources available to support our elite athletes.

AA will review NASS selections every six months, through a NASS Selection Meeting, usually after the Australian domestic season, and after the international season/benchmark event (**BME**).



1. Aims of the AA High Performance program and NASS

High Performance success is measured against our international peers and is based on selecting the best athletes and closing the gap between their performances and the podium.

The goals of AA's High Performance program (**Goals**) are:

- **To achieve 1-3 medals, supported by an additional 6-10 top eight places, at the Olympic Games and World Athletics (WA) World Championships in Olympic events.**
- **To achieve 4-8 gold medals, supported by an additional 16-20 silver and bronze medals, at the Paralympic Games and World Para Athletics (WPA) World Championships, in Paralympic events.**
- **To finish the top nation on the Commonwealth Games athletics medal table and win WA and WPA World Championships Gold medals in non-Olympic/non-Paralympic Events.**

The NASS program will assist in achieving these Goals by providing support to selected athletes and their coaches. AA's NASS program aims to enhance coaching and performance support systems in each selected athlete's Daily Training Environment (**DTE**) and provide domestic and/or international competition opportunities.

The NASS Pathway stream is the initial step on this road to Podium success and is specifically aimed to provide the best support and DTE for a coach/athlete to assist their performance enhancement, planning and programming to achieve these aims.



2. Benefits of NASS

Athletes selected to NASS will receive access to a range of resources. The hierarchy of the NASS categorisation is based on the progression outlined by the Performance Criteria provided in the Appendix. The NASS categorisation will assist in the prioritisation of AA and National Institute Network (system) (**NIN**) high performance resources.

The utilisation of these high performance resources is focused on each coach/athlete's 'Gap to Podium' plan – what and how the system will support the achievement of these targeted areas. The 'Gap to Podium' plan will be established by the coach/athlete and their State Performance Advisor and Performance Service Staff.

The 'Gap to Podium' plan will then be the basis of the coach/athlete partnership with AA and NIN and the high performance resources available through this partnership. The AA and NIN high performance resources may include:

- Facility access
- Performance support (e.g. Medicine, Physiotherapy, Strength and Conditioning, Biomechanics, Physiology, Performance Psychology, Sports Nutrition etc.)
- Competition support
- Specific testing
- Coach mentoring
- Heat acclimatisation camps
- Altitude camps
- Coach development plan support
- Engagement with Australian HP system
- Equipment support
- Research
- Financial support
- Event camp access
- Innovation availability
- Any other resources agreed from time to time between AA, the athlete and relevant partners.

These high performance resources are limited and are solely to assist the athlete and coach to achieve future performance levels through the NASS partnership. Again, for the avoidance of doubt, the resources available to each athlete will be tailored to their 'Gap to Podium' plan.



Further, it is expected that athletes selected to NASS will engage with the system and proactively communicate with their State Performance Advisor, AA and NIN member. An athlete and coach can choose not to engage with the system and/or benefit from the high performance resources of AA and/or NIN, however, should they choose not to engage, the athlete may not be selected for, or may be exited from, the NASS program.

NASS membership has no bearing on selection for an Australian representational team. Equally, selection onto an Australian representational team has no bearing on selection for NASS membership.

3. **Athlete Eligibility**

The eligibility requirements (**Athlete Eligibility**) for NASS include that the athlete, at all material times:

- satisfies all relevant eligibility and nationality rules of World Athletics (Formerly, International Association of Athletics Federation IAAF) (**WA**), International Olympic Committee (**IOC**), World Para Athletics (**WPA**) and Commonwealth Games Federation (**CGF**);
- hold Australian citizenship at the time of invitation to the NASS and throughout the NASS year and be eligible and committed to represent Australia (or on a committed path to Australian citizenship to be eligible to represent Australia);
- is a registered member of Athletics Australia through their Member Association;
- in the case of para athletes, hold an international WPA classification of “Review” or “Confirmed” status;
- in the case of guide-runners, must be co-located in the same Dily Training Environment as the athlete they guide, and play an active part in the support of the athlete’s training for 80% or more of the NASS period;
- complies with all relevant AA and AIS policies including (but not limited to) relevant Codes of Conduct, Team Agreements, Policies and Rules;
- complies with all applicable anti-doping requirements of Sport Integrity Australia (**SIA**), WA, WPA, Australian Olympic Committee (**AOC**), Paralympics Australia (**PA**), Commonwealth Games Australia (**CGA**), AA and the AIS including SIA level 1 and level 2 Anti-Doping courses and Match-fixing awareness course.



4. **Performance Criteria**

Performance Levels are not qualification standards whereby achieving the standard determines automatic selection on to NASS. The Performance Levels (refer to Appendix 1) are used as an initial indication for consideration and as a guide for the Selectors.

The capacity of an athlete to assist Athletics Australia to achieve the Goals will be the ultimate guide for Selectors.

The Selectors Criteria and Performance Levels (**Performance Criteria**) have been established for the Able Body program and are outlined within this document and in Appendix 1. The calculation method for these Performance Levels is articulated in Appendix 1.

Performance Levels have not been established for the Para program and selection on to NASS is purely on discretion of the Selectors based on the guidance in this Policy. However, as a guide, the AA Selection Standards for the upcoming BME will be used to benchmark Para athletes for consideration for NASS.

All athletes who have achieved the Performance Criteria and Athlete Eligibility criteria may be nominated for selection on to NASS. The Selectors may also consider athletes for selection who are yet to achieve the Performance Criteria or Performance Level if they believe they have the capability to meet the goals of NASS. This discretion will more commonly be used for Pathway stream athletes, but may, in exceptional circumstances, also be utilised for Medal stream athletes.

A single PB performance will be considered, however the average of an athlete's best performances of the season and/or a PB/SB performance at the BME will also be a factor for the Selectors, as this is a closer representation of an athlete's performance level and capacity to achieve the AA HP goals. Usually, the capacity to achieve the AA HP goals will require an athlete to continue to improve and achieve performances much in advance of the stated Performance Levels, and the capability to perform at a higher level will be a consideration of the Selectors.

For a performance to be considered it must meet all technical eligibility requirements of WA or WPA for entry into a benchmark event.



5. NASS Selectors, Selection Meetings and Selections

The NASS Selectors will be appointed by the CEO of Athletics Australia from time-to-time and will include AA High Performance staff and coaches. It is intended that three additional non-Selectors will also attend Selection Meetings: an AIS representative, a SIS/SAS representative and another person appointed by the CEO, usually with a sporting and legal background, to act as an “Independent Observer” of the process.

Unless otherwise required, there will be two Selection Meetings per year, one after the Australian domestic season (***Domestic Season Selection Meeting***) and the other after the conclusion of the international season (***International Season Selection Meeting***). The absence from a Selection Meeting of one or more of the NASS Selectors or any of the other people referred to above does not invalidate any selection meeting or selection decision. In making selection decisions, the NASS Selectors can inform themselves in any way they see fit and are acting as experts.

Usually, the **NASS Medal Stream and Representative Stream** will be identified and selected during the ***International Season Selection Meeting*** (when those athletes have had their main competition period) and the **NASS Pathway Stream** will be identified and selected during the ***Domestic Season Selection Meeting*** in non-World Athletics U20 Championships years, and after the ***International Season Selection Meeting*** in World Athletics U20 Championship years (when these athletes have had their main competition period).

There may be considerations of athletes for a particular stream outside of their identified Selection Meeting, but that will be considered unusual and therefore rarely applied.

Having regard to the guidance in this Policy and, in particular, the goals of Athletics Australia’s High Performance program and the aims of NASS, NASS Selectors will determine, at their discretion, which athletes to offer NASS places to and which level of NASS to offer to selected athletes during these Selection Meetings.



6. Appeals

Only athletes who have previously been selected as a member of NASS within the preceding period may request reconsideration of the decision regarding their exit from NASS or their change of NASS level (**Request**). This Request must be in writing to the General Manager - High Performance. In their Request, the athlete must address either or both of the following grounds for reconsideration, namely that the NASS Selectors,

- (a) made an error of fact, or
- (b) failed to consider a relevant performance standard.

The Request must be made within seven days of the notification to the affected athlete.

Upon receipt of a valid Request, the General Manager - High Performance will ask the Independent Observer to review the athlete's Request. Following this review, the Independent Observer may invite the NASS Selectors to reconsider their decision or may request the NASS Selectors provide further detail to the athlete addressing their concerns and/or the reasons for the NASS Selectors' decision. The Independent Observer should provide reasons for their decision to the affected athlete and NASS Selectors.

For the avoidance of doubt:

- (a) the Independent Observer is not entitled to make or substitute selection decisions, any changes would need to be made by the NASS Selectors;
- (b) athletes are not entitled to appeal against the selection to NASS of any other athlete;
- (c) there is no further avenue of appeal.



7. NASS Medal Stream

The aim of the Medal Stream is to support athletes who have the realistic capacity to achieve top 8 and Medal results at the senior BME within the next 2-4 years, usually through having achieved their performances and results at the most recent Senior BME medals. Usually, the Medal Stream selections will be made during the ***International Season Selection Meeting***.

The athletes and their coaches in these categories of NASS receive Performance Support through their State Performance Advisor and their NIN performance servicing staff.

7.1. Selection Considerations

MEDAL STREAM	AA Category	Criteria for the Selectors to consider
	Gold (AIS Category – Podium)	(i) Athletes with the realistic capacity to win a Gold medal at the next Olympic / Paralympic Games , and (ii) Have won a Gold medal at a Podium Benchmark Event within the previous 24 months .
	Medal (AIS Category – Podium)	(i) Athletes with the realistic capacity to win a Silver or Bronze medal at the next Olympic / Paralympic Games , and (ii) Have won a Silver or Bronze medal at a Podium Benchmark Event within the previous 24 months .
	Podium Ready	(i) Athletes with the realistic capacity to reach the Medal level at the next Olympic / Paralympic Games and (ii) Have finished Fourth to eighth place at a Podium Benchmark Event within the previous 24 months .
	Podium Potential	(i) Athletes with the realistic capacity to reach the Podium Ready level within approximately two years (based on event-specific development timeframes) and (ii) Have achieved the Podium Potential performance level .

7.2. Medal Stream Progression and Retention

An athlete should show year-on-year progression towards the Goals and the aims of NASS.

From Podium Potential level and above (Medal Stream), an athlete should achieve the expected progression through higher results at the BME moving them towards the next level on an approximately two-yearly basis; this is a clear indication an athlete is achieving the aims of NASS.

Progression will normally be shown through the improvement of their PB in line with their event's relevant performance projection. Progression may also be shown through



the achievement of PB at the BME, or successful utilisation of performance services and the HP resources of AA and NIN showing progression towards closing the identified Gaps to Podium.

The retention or exit of an athlete on the Medal Stream who does not show improvement in line with these performance progressions will be at the absolute discretion of the Selectors. An athlete's State Performance Advisor will provide specific detail on an athlete for the Selectors consideration. An athlete may also be retained on the Medal Stream, but at a lower level, if the Selectors believe the athlete can still achieve the Goals and the aims of NASS, however this will be a very rarely exercised discretion.

Athletes may be considered for selection on to the Medal Stream regardless of whether they have previously been exited from NASS, or if it is the first time they are being considered. Their selection will be based on whether the NASS Selectors believe they can achieve the aims of the NASS program and consistent with the delivery of the Goals.

An athlete who has been exited from the Medal Stream may still be considered for selection on the Representative Stream.



8. NASS Pathway Stream

The aim of the Pathway Stream is to support athletes with the potential to win Senior BME medals within the next 4-8 years. Usually, the Pathway Stream selections will be made during the ***Domestic Season Selection Meeting***.

This stream includes the Developing and Emerging levels of NASS. These athletes and their coaches receive Performance Support through their State Performance Advisor and their NIN performance servicing staff.

The NASS Associate Membership is also included to recognise athletes who are based overseas, particularly those within the NCAA system. Associate Membership is not formal categorisation but provides a linkage to the athlete's home-based NIN. The request of the NIN is to provide facility access for these athletes if, and when, they come home for short periods (holidays, family visits etc).

8.1. Selection Considerations

	AA Category	Criteria for the Selectors to consider
PATHWAYS	Developing	Athletes with the realistic capacity to reach the Podium Potential level within approximately two – four years , as outlined in Section 7.
	Emerging	Athletes with the realistic capacity to reach the Podium Potential within approximately four years , as outlined in Section 7.
	Associate	NASS Associate Membership is for overseas based athletes who meet the requirements for selection onto the Pathway Stream if they were in Australia.

Athletes eligible for selection will be identified by the relevant National Event Group Coaches, in conjunction with the NASS Selection Panel. The panel and coaches will utilise a variety of information when making selections, including:

- Current performance level including performance at relevant competitions
- Age
- Event Group performance trends
- Consistency of performance at major competitions
- Year-on-year upward trends in performance
- Perceived capacity to improve.
- Impairment and Classification (Para specific)
- Quality of the Daily training Environment including coaching, S&C and performance support.



Athletics Australia understand that talent development is complex and non-linear, and that each event may have its own age at peak performance. As a result, there are no specific age bands for membership at the Pathway level, although it is expected that many athletes will be between 18-22 years of age at their initial selection within the Able Body program. When indicated, and in line with performance data and expert coach advice, athletes who fall outside of this age band may be selected onto the Pathway Stream.

Due to the relatively wide age bands of this level of NASS, there are no specific performance standards required for entry onto the Pathway Stream. As a rough guide, for able body athletes who are still within the Under-20 age group or are immediately transitioning from this age group into the Open category, the Athletics Australia World Under-20 Selection Standards would typically be representative of the minimum required performance level, with holders of multiple standards demonstrating upwards performance potential likely to be considered for selection. Older athletes (i.e. primarily those aged 21 or 22) would typically be expected to be performing close to or at the standards detailed under *retention* (below).

As a general rule Para Pathway athletes will need to show they are within or progressing towards the AA “B” standards of the next BME.

8.2. Pathway Stream Retention

Ordinarily, athletes will remain on the Pathway Stream for approximately two to four years, with an expectation that, in the final two years of membership, athletes will be moving towards, or competing at, the performance standards in Appendix 1.

Associate NASS membership should be considered for retention in the same way the other levels of the Pathway Stream of NASS and Associate NASS athletes are eligible for selection onto either the Representative or Medal Stream. Once an athlete returns to living in Australia they are no longer eligible for Associate NASS membership and will be considered for selection under the rest of the NASS policy.



9. **NASS Representative Stream**

The aim of the Representative Stream is to support athletes who are highly likely and fully committed to being selected on the next Senior BME team.

9.1. **Representative Stream Selection**

Usually, the Representative Stream selections will be made during the ***International Season Selection Meeting***. The NASS Selection Panel will consider athletes for selection through utilising the WA World Rankings system and Top Lists (for able body athletes) and a combination of the WPA Rankings list and AA BME Selection Standards (for para athletes) along with input from the relevant National Event Group Coaches.

NASS Representative Stream selection will be focused on consideration of the Olympic and Paralympic event list. Only athletes who are considered medal capable in a non-Olympic or Gold medal capable in a non-Paralympic event will be considered for the Representative Stream in those events.

Selection or non-selection for the Representative Stream has no bearing on the ultimate selection or non-selection of an athlete for future Australian Teams. Those decisions are a matter for the AA Selection Panel.

9.2. **Representative NASS Retention**

Athletes will be assessed by the NASS Selection Panel at the International Season Selection Meeting to ensure that the Athlete remains in contention for selection at the next BME.



10. Relays

AA is committed to supporting relay teams who AA believe could assist achieving the goals and the aims of NASS. The NASS Selectors will determine at the selection meeting if a specific relay event can be targeted to achieve the aims of NASS and if so, which stream of NASS is selected for that relay event.

Athletes selected on to NASS for a Relay program will need to fully commit to that program, including program training camps and competition periods.

Athletes selected on to NASS for individual events may also be included into Relay programs, but their individual selection on to NASS will be solely based on their capacity to achieve the Goals and the aims of NASS in that individual event.

For the avoidance of doubt, selection for a benchmark event relay team will not be limited to those on the NASS Relay program, and normal team selection considerations will be applied.

The athletes who are part of a relay program and achieve top 8 or medal at a BME will be eligible to receive that level of NASS, the same as individual athletes, with the selectors applying the same considerations. The selectors may select any athletes to be part of that program and are not limited to those who ran at the BME.



11. Medical and Medical – Pregnancy

An athlete who is on either the Medal or Pathway Stream may be placed within the Medical or Medical – Pregnancy categories, if the Selectors believe that the athlete can return to a performance level congruent with their original NASS Selection, meet the goals and aims of the program in the future. If an athlete is placed on the Medical or Medical – Pregnancy levels they may return onto NASS at any time, normally at the level of NASS they were at prior to being placed on Medical or Medical – Pregnancy level.

As the Representative Stream of NASS relates to the next upcoming Benchmark Event athletes will not usually be moved from the Representative Stream of NASS to the Medical or Medical – Pregnancy categories, but this may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

11.1. Medical Category

The Medical Category is available for an athlete who incurs a long-term medical issue which means they will be unable to compete to a high level within the next 6-12 months but is likely to be able to return to that level once they have recovered from their medical issue.

11.2. Medical – Pregnancy Category

Athletics Australia recognises that athletes may take some time away from intense training and competition when they become pregnant or have recently given birth. AA recognises that pregnant athletes may still be on track to contribute to national performance targets at the next pinnacle event.

- NASS funded athletes will still be identified within the Athlete Categorisation matrix, and therefore eligible for funding, if they meet the following minimum criteria:
 - Prior to becoming pregnant, the athlete was categorised AND was receiving funding in the past 12 months;
 - Has an individual athlete performance plan focusing on maintaining physical and mental wellbeing as it aligns to the sports needs and informed by specific medical advice from the NSO/ NIN medical doctor as it relates to pregnancy;
 - Has an agreed return to sport and competition plan including timeframes and regular pre-determined meetings scheduled with their Sport Performance Advisor and
 - Maintains contact with AW&E staff on a regular basis to ensure athletes are focussed on maintaining their overall wellbeing.

We highly encourage pregnant NASS funded athletes to attend regular medical reviews with their NIN/ NSO medical doctor. Please refer to Athletics Australia's Pregnancy Policy.



12. Review of NASS Structure

AA will review the structure of the NASS program on an annual basis with input from the NIN and any other relevant system partners.

13. Benchmark Events

The **Benchmark Events (BME)** are:

1. **Olympic Games,**
2. **Paralympic Games,**
3. **World Athletics World Championships, and**
4. **World Para Athletics World Championships.**

Other international and world level competitions may be considered as part of the NASS selection process, but the focus of NASS remains these identified BMEs.



APPENDIX 1

Individual Performance Levels

Performance Levels have been established for the Able Body program only.

Performance Levels have also not been explicitly set for entry onto the Pathway Stream – consideration for entry is outlined above.

Performance levels are not qualification standards whereby achieving the standard determines selection. Performance Levels are used to;

- Identify athletes on the consideration list for entry to the **Medal Stream** and the higher level of the **Pathway Stream** of the program. Being on the consideration list does NOT guarantee being invited onto the program.
- Guide the selection panel with respect to the retention of existing NASS members at the **Pathway and Medal Streams** of the program.
- For events where the standards are being refined the selection of NASS members will be at the discretion of the selectors. The selectors may request relevant information from senior national coaches of the event group.

Explanation of Performance Levels

Pathway Stream performance levels are based around a podium finish at the last four World University Games and are the anticipated performance level in the last two years of the Pathway Stream. Some discretion has been applied to these standards in line with the development of different events. Walks standards are being refined.

MEN

100m	200m	400m	800m	1500m	5000m	10000m	
10.23	20.63	45.97	1:45.90	3:38.38	13:57.17	29:08.43	
110mH	400mH	3000mSC	10000mW	20kmW			
13.57	50.20	8:35.88	41:50	1:23:05			
HJ	LJ	TJ	PV	DEC			
2.24	8.00	16.74	5.56	7690			
SP	DT	JT	HT				
19.83	62.23	79.00	75.28				



WOMEN

100m	200m	400m	800m	1500m	5000m	10000m
11.41	23.24	52.01	2:00.75	4:09.35	15:54.83	33:20.25
100mH	400mH	3000mSC	10000mW	20kmW		
13.04	55.83	9:44.62	46:55	1:33:20		
HJ	LJ	TJ	PV	HEP		
1.90	6.50	13.94	4.39	5916		
SP	DT	JT	HT			
17.55	59.00	58.92	70.29			

Medal Stream performance levels have been derived from the athletes who medaled at benchmark events (2008-2022), and their season's best performance 4 years prior to their medal result. Season's best performances have been averaged and weighted towards more recent benchmark events. Out of stadium standards are being refined.

MEN

100m	200m	400m	800m	1500m	5000m	10000m
10.02	20.17	45.51	1:44.20	3:34.30	13:09.93	27:31.77
110mH	400mH	3000mSC	Mar	20kmW	35kmW	
13.24	49.50	8:07.32	TBC	1:22.30	See Note	
HJ	LJ	TJ	PV	DEC		
2.28	8.10	17.11	5.68	8352		
SP	DT	JT	HT			
20.49	65.76	81.40	78.32			



WOMEN

100m	200m	400m	800m	1500m	5000m	10000m
11.10	22.67	51.19	1:59.95	4:06.38	14:42.16	30:40.43
100mH	400mH	3000mSC	Mar	20kmW	35kmW	
12.81	54.81	9:34.72	TBC	1:30.15	See Note	
HJ	LJ	TJ	PV	HEP		
1.95	6.64	14.47	4.54	6237		
SP	DT	JT	HT			
19.41	64.05	63.36	72.09			

Note: 35km Race Walk

This is a new event and is not an individual event but a Mixed Relay event at the Olympic Games.

As such, and given there is minimal historical data to call upon, athletes will be eligible for consideration for NASS categorisation in the medal stream in this event, if they meet **either** of the following criteria:

- Has achieved a top-8 finish at a BME in 2021 or 2022 in the 20km, 35km, or 50km Race Walk
- Has achieved the current World Athletics Championships Qualifying Standard in the 35km Race Walk (set at 2:29:40 for men and 2:51:30 for women in 2022) **AND** the World Athletics Championships Qualifying Standard at 20km.