

AUSTRALIAN ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS PARA EVENTS MODIFICATIONS (OPENS COMPETITION)

In 2027, Australian Athletics (AA) will introduce changes to the conduct and qualification of Para events at the Australian Athletics Championships (AAC).

These changes are designed to maintain a high level of inclusion for Para-athletes, while also strengthening the standard and quality of Para competition at the AAC.

AA is recognised as a world leader in the inclusion of Para events within athletics meets around the world - something AA is very proud of and remains committed to. These changes have been carefully considered by AA after consultation.

The AAC have played an important role in providing opportunities for Para-athletes across a broad range of classifications and performance levels, supporting participation, development and the identification of future high-performance athletes.

The changes seek to strike an appropriate balance between showcasing Australia's leading Para-athletes and maintaining meaningful opportunities for Para-athletes achieving national standard performances.

An important consideration in these changes is recognising the different pathways that exist within Para athletics. Some classifications are recognised within the international Paralympic pathway, providing athletes with the opportunity to progress to the World Para Athletics Championships and Paralympic Games, while other classifications provide important participation and national competition opportunities, but do not currently have the same international pathway.

The changes are designed to better recognise these two distinct streams, while ensuring both continue to have a place at the Australian Athletics Championships.

The changes are expected to have minimal impact on most athletes and are designed to strengthen the role of Para events at the Australian Athletics Championships.

AA considers that the changes strike an appropriate balance between inclusion, high-performance competition and meaningful national competition opportunities, supporting the successful future of Para events at the AAC.

The changes are as follows:

1. Remove State Championships' podium-based qualification

For the AAC, the Para performance standard will become the sole entry pathway, removing podium place-based qualification through Member Association's State Championships.

This approach will:

- Provide a consistent, performance-based pathway across all Para classifications.
- Remove reliance on the multi-class points calculation as an entry mechanism.
- Reinforce the AAC as Australia's pinnacle domestic high-performance competition.
- Create greater consistency in the performance standard required to compete at the Championships.

This change is expected to have minimal impact on most Para-athletes, with the performance standard providing a clear national benchmark for qualification. Importantly, this is not intended to reduce opportunities for Para-athletes generally; rather, it provides a clear and consistent national-level performance standard for the AAC.

2. Separate Para events into Paralympic Pathway and National Para streams

Where entry numbers support it, Para events will be separated into two clearly defined streams - Paralympic Pathway and National Para Events- for example:

- 100m Men – Paralympic Pathway
- 100m Men – National Para events

This would be implemented where **five or more** confirmed athletes are entered in each group.

Based on 2026 entry numbers, events likely to meet this threshold include:

Men's and women's 100m and 200m. Men's and women's discus throw. Men's long jump and shot put.

This approach would allow the AAC to clearly recognise the two different Para streams, showcase Australia's Paralympic pathway athletes competing at the highest domestic level, and maintain meaningful national competition for athletes in non-Paralympic classifications who meet the national performance standard.

3. Combine seated and ambulant throws

To support viable and meaningful competition where entry numbers are low, the current separation between seated and ambulant throws will be removed, with athletes competing together as a combined event in each of the three throws.

Where applicable, club would remain combined with javelin for relevant classifications.

This change would:

- Improve the viability of throwing events for all athletes.
- Reduce the likelihood of events being cancelled because of insufficient entries.
- Create stronger, more sustainable competition opportunities.
- Align with the approach already used successfully in underage competitions

No equivalent merger is proposed for track events, where maintaining separate competition remains important.

AA will review the impact of these changes following the 2027 AAC.