

## 3.4 Financial Hardship

Reference: SOA\_3.4PP – Financial Hardship Policy and Procedure

### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Special Olympics Australia is committed to the principle as set by Special Olympics Inc. that ‘every person with an intellectual disability who meets the eligibility requirements...should have the opportunity to participate and benefit from the sports training and athletic competition programs offered by Special Olympics.’

Special Olympics Australia will support to the extent possible those who face genuine financial barriers to participation with access to support and/or financial assistance.

### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to support the objectives of:

- supporting athletes and their families/carers experiencing financial hardship to access support.
- ensuring that Special Olympics Australia volunteers and staff are sensitive and responsive to financial hardship cases.
- providing a consistent and fair way for financial hardship cases to be addressed.

### 3. SCOPE

The policy is applicable to all athletes, families/carers, guardians, volunteers, committee members and staff of Special Olympics Australia.

### 4. DEFINITIONS

#### Financial Hardship

Financial hardship is defined as a situation where an athlete or family/carer wants to pay but is not in a position to do so. Financial hardship cases are not all alike and should be addressed on a case by case basis in a fair, equitable and consistent manner.

#### International Competition

International competition is defined as any competition where athletes are officially representing Special Olympics Australia and have gone through a national selection process. It does not include overseas Invitational Games or multi-country competitions where athletes are representing an Australian state/territory or local Special Olympics Australia club.

### 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

#### **General Manager, Sport Development**

The General Manager, Sport Development is responsible for ensuring the organisation understands and is supported effectively to comply with the policy and procedure.

#### **Sports Development, State Committee and Club Leadership Teams**

Staff and members of the state committee and club leadership teams are responsible for ensuring that they identify and support athletes who have financial hardship constraints in a manner consistent with this policy.

### 6. PROCEDURE

#### **6.1 Annual Registration Fees**

A club who has identified an athlete facing a financial barrier to participation may agree to contribute towards the

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athlete registration fee. All financial assistance requests should be made in writing to the club. The club can at its discretion agree to a payment plan subject to the terms and conditions that are determined by the club. The club will need to ensure that there is a consistent set of terms and conditions in processing financial assistance within their club and that accurate records are reflected in the club minutes.

The club will pay to central office the appropriate upfront amount in full at the time the athlete's registration papers are submitted.

The club will then be responsible for managing the payment plan directly with the athlete or family/carer.

The payment plan options available for clubs include:

- an agreed percentage of the athlete registration fee paid for by the club and the balance by the athlete/family. A club should not approve payment of the full registration fee in financial hardship cases.
- agree on a regular payment plan arrangement to allow the athlete/family to pay off the full athlete registration fee over a 12 month period with the club.

In cases where an athlete is unable to commit to a payment plan due to extreme financial circumstances the following can apply:

The club documents the extreme financial circumstance of the athlete and consults with the Sport Development Manager.

Subject to approval by the Sports Development Manager the following fee split will be agreed to:

- Athlete pays \$15
- Club pays 30% to the central office the full registration fee
- The central office to cover the balance remaining

## **6.2 Local Training and Competition**

Financial assistance should not extend towards transport, uniforms, venue fees, sporting equipment, accommodation, care or assisted technologies. An athlete should be supported where they are unable to meet regular training or venue fees or with competition entry fees with a payment plan or other suitable financial arrangement. All financial assistance requests should be made in writing to the athlete's club for consideration.

## **6.3 State Competition**

This is restricted to financial assistance towards competition entry fees. It does not include assistance with transport, uniforms, venue fees, sporting equipment, accommodation, care or assisted technologies. To receive assistance to compete at this level a signed commitment to fundraise is required from the athlete or parent/guardian/carer.

## **6.4 National Competition**

For national competition (where representation is for a state/territory at an officially approved national competition) athletes can apply for financial assistance towards the individual athlete levy set for the Games. To receive assistance to compete at this level a signed commitment to meet a fundraising target is required from the athlete or parent/guardian/carer.

## **6.5 International Competition**

For international competition athletes can apply for financial assistance towards the individual athlete levy set for the Games. To receive assistance to compete at this level a signed commitment to meet a fundraising target is required from the athlete or parent/guardian/carer.

## **6.6 Invitational or Multi Country Competitions**

Financial assistance does not extend to invitational and multi country competitions. Athletes attend these competitions at their own discretion and are expected to cover the cost of attendance.

## **6.7 Eligibility for Financial Assistance at State, National and International Competition**

To be eligible to apply for financial assistance an athlete must be:

- a registered Special Olympics Australia athlete in the year of the competition
- selected by the appropriate selection committee for the designated competition
- genuinely experiencing financial difficulties
- willing to fundraise and meet agreed fundraising target
- willing to establish a payment plan.
- an athlete who has previously received financial assistance should have met all the previously agreed conditions such as fundraising and/or payment plan targets, before being considered for further assistance.

#### **6.8 Application Process**

Applications must be provided in writing using our Financial Assistance for Competition Form and the form must be endorsed by the athlete's local committee.

The closing date for applications will differ for each Game, but will normally be after the date set for the deposit payment and signed acceptance to join the team, and prior to the due date of the first levy payment.

#### **6.9 Assessment and Notification**

Applications for financial assistance to attend competition will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the General Manager, Sport Development or their approved delegate. Assessment will take between 2-4 weeks from the date that the application is received and notification will be made via mail and email.

#### **6.10 Possible Outcomes**

Based on a review of each application, the General Manager, Sport Development or their delegate will decide whether a request for financial assistance to attend competition is valid.

If deemed valid, Special Olympics Australia may initiate one or more of the following actions:

- request assistance from the athlete's local club
- provide guidance and support for grant applications or sponsorship
- offer the applicant a payment plan option (this may go beyond the finish date of the competition, but is expected to be fulfilled).

If deemed invalid, the athlete will need to withdraw from the team.

#### **6.11 Outcome Review**

The outcome can be reviewed through the Special Olympics Australia Complaints Policy.

#### **6.12 Privacy and Confidentiality**

All information provided to Special Olympics Australia staff or volunteers will remain confidential. Breaches of confidentiality will be taken seriously and appropriate disciplinary actions may be taken.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Club Leadership Handbook  
SOA\_5.6PP - Registration  
SOA\_6.3PP - Code of Conduct  
SOA\_6.6PP - Complaints Handling  
Financial Assistance for Competition Form

## **DOCUMENT CONTROL**

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Owner: General Manager, Sport Development

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