

An Audience with Peter Richards - Chair of State Selection Committee-20250302_183709-Meeting Recording

March 2, 2025, 8:37AM

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Questions and Answers only



QLD Chair

Q1. Queensland chair has been saying that team QLD announcement is early March 2025. Why haven't we seen it?



Peter Richards

We are still waiting on information back from Special Olympics Australia essentially. We, as a selection committee, they have been working on athlete quotas and volunteer quotas for 2022, so we could get the process rolling.

We've covered off on all sports to date, but we can't publish anything or make it known to athletes.

The only individuals that have had access to it are the selection committee. In terms of how we're working through the process.

I've heard this week that Special Olympics Australia, through the National Selection Committee or board, is it Kimberly?



QLD Chair

National Selection Committee.



Peter Richards

National Selection Committee are looking to provide quotas by the end of March, but SOA are looking to make a national media release to garner both media and sponsor support. The upshot is we should have quota numbers for 2026 by the end of March.

But there will be a lag until we can finalise athlete and volunteer numbers so early April, hopefully. Out of our hands, unfortunately.



QLD Chair

Nathan Walker did send an e-mail to out to all the state chairs last week saying they wanted an Australian national approach to the announcement and that's why you would have seen on the SOQ calendar that the team camp has been cancelled for May.

'Cause we'd worked on the quota was going to come out in February and that didn't happen.

Great work to the State Selection Committee under Peter's chair that they're just ready for the numbers, so that's absolutely fantastic.

So we do have to follow Special Olympics Australia's directive on this one that we have to put out our team state team with everyone else.

I'm in touch with Currimundi now to try and book that in, because normally you're right, the head of delegation and the assistant head of delegation would organise team camp, but we don't have those people yet.

So that falls on to the Queensland Chair and the Queensland Sport, with guidance from the SOQ SSC, especially with Queensland State Selection Committee Chair, which is Peter to organise a team camp. So it's a bit of a group effort.

Does anyone have anything further to add on that announcement part before we move to the next question and I'm happy for someone to shout out?



Peter Richards

I also wanted to make note, Kimberly and Kathleen have sent me through a number of questions. And when I say a number, there's two pages full.

So what we're going to do is if I don't think we're going to get through all of the questions, but we'll hit the big ones.

And do a frequently asked questions document that'll be posted through socials to give people a wider understanding outside of those on the call.



QLD Chair

So we've just had a comment just drop in there, please.

So, Kathleen, do you want to take that comment about equestrian athletes?



QLD Sport

First and foremost, I actually haven't had the chance to return my e-mail to Irina, but I would actually like to introduce Irina as our equestrian state sport specific and going to be the Lady of knowledge.

QLD Chair



This is not a platform to talk about equestrian, because equestrian will not be at nationals at this point, and so we'll just leave that because we're waiting on the national framework from Special Olympics Australia, and all we're doing is taking an approach that we're encouraging athlete riders to keep training.

So Kathleen will reach out to Irina to have that conversation one-on-one.

But this platform is about the State selection committee and the chair answering questions.

Q2. Can my support worker or family member come with me to Nationals if I am selected?



Peter Richards

I suppose the short answer is yes and no.

Officially, the teams will be made-up of athletes, obviously, who've met all the criteria. They've completed the events, selection events. We've got expressions of interest from volunteers, which includes the head of delegations, assistant head of delegations, medical and team support.

So the team is going to be made-up of those volunteers in particular.

I forgot head coaches and assistant coaches, so from that perspective.

Athletes will be supported by a group of qualified individuals plus team support individuals.

Carers family members are quite welcome to come along, but they're not going to be part of the official team QLD.



QLD Chair

They can't stay within Team QLD.



PR Peter Richards

Yeah, they'd be in separate accommodations.



QLD Chair

Q3. Will someone ring me to let me know if I'm in Team Queensland and I've been selected?



PR Peter Richards

The initial offer will go out as a letter and email to the individual and they'll be given a time to respond to that letter, so it won't be a telephone call.

(Qld Membership note! Please make sure all your contact details are up to date)



QLD Chair

I'm certain that there will be national directives from the National Selection Committee on how they want stuff communicated to make sure it's accurate.

Q4. If I say no to the first team Queensland offer, can I change my mind later?



PR Peter Richards

No. As simple as that.

We, from a selection perspective, we do look at an athlete's first choice.

Unfortunately, some of the athletes have made their first choice events that they haven't actually competed in, but then we'll go to second choice.



QLD Chair

Q5. How many offers to be part of teams Queensland will go out to athletes?



Peter Richards

There'll be one major offer in terms of.

The entirety that the selection committee have put forward, if there are any individuals who don't accept the offer that they've received and there's likely to be those individuals as well, then we'll roll down through any existing athlete. So there will be subsequent offers, but they won't be made to another athlete. Sorry, the same athlete.

So if you don't accept it, that's it for Nationals for 2026.

QLD Chair



So we've had lots of interest from people that have never been a volunteer.

Q6. So how much will it be to be part of Team Queensland as a volunteer?



Peter Richards

Zero



QLD Membership

Well, it's actually it's a time commitment, Peter. As opposed to 0 cost, nothing but time commitment. You've got your team camp, you've got extra training that the sports are potentially like to run.

And potentially you should be supporting the athletes in the club that you're from with their fundraising. So money, no, time commitment, yes, it's just not the week of the games.

There's quite a few activities in the week and in the year leading up to the games.



QLD Chair

There's the team camp time commitment.

Then there's probably some meetings. I think the head coaches and that correct me if I'm wrong, the team's support have to put in a lot of work behind the scenes.



QLD Membership

Yeah, it's. It's usually a requirement.

Of the team support that they will be allocated athletes by their head coach. They are then required to make at least weekly contact with those athletes, get to know them, find out what they like, don't like in whatever way they can, depending on where the athlete is and where they are. And that's why it is encouraged. If there's a say, for example, you're a swimming support person, and you're not normally there because your son or daughter doesn't do swimming, but you're still in encouraged to go to the swimming competition to get a chance to meet face to face. The athletes and the families and get to know them because the best way to support athletes is getting to know them and they get to know you. And there's a number of different ways this is done. And I won't go into it because all the head coaches will have ideas on how you can connect with your family.

And a lot of will depend on how the family likes the connection. Some are happy with a phone call, some like to make face to face. No, I don't mean go out for coffee every weekend. I mean at training or competition.

Head coaches have got more commitment and team management obviously have got higher requirements from connecting with the team.



QLD Chair

And that makes the volunteers even more priceless.

Q7. How much will it cost for an athlete to be part of Team Queensland? How much will the Special Olympics National Games athlete levy be?



Peter Richards

Yeah. And that's gonna be difficult. I knew this one was coming up. So I did not go into great detail on the 1st question.

One of the reasons why Special Olympics Australia haven't been able to set quotas at the moment for athlete numbers is that they haven't been able to lock down some venues.

Not knowing the cost of venues, location of venues, which includes the need for transport to some venues, all impact on the cost. So in terms of a levy, it's a little bit of a question mark still.

But there's going to be obviously the cost of their flights, the cost of accommodation, etc that that will be rolled into the levy. There will be the camp cost as well. So they do add up, but unfortunately at this stage until SOA have provided the costing around for each state and territory and the quotas, just can't give you a definitive cost.

Oh, I just going to, yeah, finish off with a \$500 non refundable deposit with the offer letter to accept the offer.



QLD Athlete Leadership

And also which comes in the cost of that and for athletes haven't done Team Queensland before is uniforms as well. That's another cost as well what comes in that.

QLD Chair



Thanks, Corey. Thank you.

Q8. When is team camp?



Peter Richards

Well, when is team camp, it was going to be in May, but as I've mentioned in my preamble to the first question and Kathleen's comment, sorry Kimberly's comment. The National Selection committee are looking at doing an all of Australia. Media release, including for sponsors.

So as a consequence, it was going to get too close to send out letters to athletes, confirmations to volunteers about team selection, and then have a camp in May so that camp in May has been postponed until a later date, which will be decided at a later date and communicated.



QLD Chair

Thank you, Peter.

Q9. When is the 2026 Special Olympics National Games being held in Melbourne?

PR Peter Richards

Well, we all know now that it is going to be held in Melbourne and we're talking October 2026. I'm not sure the exact dates.

 **QLD Chair**

But that hasn't been publicly announced. I'm just looking at Special Olympics Australia website and still it's got the host announcement up there. So there's not the timing announcement, but they were talking about either early 26 or late 26 and I think they're going to go with the late 26, but we have nothing definitive at that point.

QLD Chair

So next question, Peter.

Q10. If I get a subsequent offer, so the first offers been sent out, but then I get an offer because someone said no or changed their mind. Or later, that is not one of the first offers and I missed the team camp. Will there be another team camp?

PR Peter Richards

Short answer is no, there won't be another team camp held.

Given that we are postponing the May team camp, it may not be an issue for any subsequent offers for athletes who missed the first offer.

QM QLD Membership

Usually you've got your team in place and you allow yourself plenty of time for Team camp because you know that potentially some people are going to refuse depending on what the timeline that you have set up in relation to athletes answering and then chasing them up and then how long it takes to go out to the second and third office, it can take up to two months to get the team finalised, but you wouldn't be holding your team camp.



QLD Chair

Q11. When can we start fundraising to support our chosen club athletes in Team QLD?



QLD Membership

Yesterday.



Peter Richards

Yes, I was gonna say if you haven't started, start.



QLD Membership

You're going to have some athletes from every club start fundraising. Sorry.



Peter Richards

And it's not, it's not only the athlete or the family members that need to think about it, it is the wider network within the Special Olympics, the clubs, Special Olympics Queensland. So yeah, you're quite right.

And if you haven't started, start, we all know it's been happening and going to happen.



QLD Chair

Q12. If I'm selected as a volunteer to travel with Team Queensland, do I need to be registered? Do the mandatory training and have a blue card?



Peter Richards

Yes, yes, definitely. Yep. No two ways about it. Yes, yes, yes.



QLD Membership

Yes.

PR Peter Richards

So that, as, as Annette mentioned before, there's a little bit of time involvement in doing the mandatory courses, but they are there for a purpose.

And there's quite a bit of time to do them.

QM QLD Membership

Oh, in actual fact, when I sent out to somebody the mandatory courses to do, I have found that I get instead of saying please complete these. I am now giving them two weeks because if I don't set a deadline or a timeline, they will do it later and later never happened. So from the time they register or from the time I get a request from the state selection committee or from somebody that's been told they've got to do their mandatory stuff. And I have to.

PR Peter Richards

You'll be pleased to know, and you'll be pleased to know, Annette, I think there's only about four or five that are currently registered.

QM QLD Membership

Do you want me to chase them, or do you want to wait and see till you get your quota?

PR Peter Richards

And we'll wait until we see it and get the quota.

QM QLD Membership

OK.



QLD Chair

Q13. If I have been selected for Team Queensland and hurt myself, will I be removed from Team QLD?



Peter Richards

Yeah, that's a that's a difficult one and it really depends on the injury and medical assessment will be required to if it's a substantial injury required to be provided.

I mean, we want athletes to perform well and if they're injured, they're not going to be able to perform well.

The short answer is it'll depend on the injury and subsequent rehabilitation.



QLD Membership

Yeah. And it's mandatory that they have a clearance from their medical professional that they will be fit to participate. It's around the insurance. We don't have that, they don't go.



QLD Chair

And it goes without saying that all the athletes will be in touch with their head coach anyway, so if anything happens, they will let the head coach know.

Q14. What if I really want to go to Nationals when I'm selected, but I don't have the money? Even to pay the deposit?



QLD Membership

Talk to your club.



Peter Richards

Yeah It's where you're going to have to get that money from is probably going to be then talk to your club.

Talk to other athletes where they're getting their funding from, but yes, club would be your first port of call.

QM QLD Membership

And also now unfortunately due to changes from the NDIS from October last year, whereas before there was an avenue to get some support from them, you know submitting a receipt of a payment.

That's avenue's gone.

And unless it's a very unusual NDIS plan, that somebody has, people can't rely on the NDIA and NDIS to support them anymore.

 **QLD Chair**

Q15. When I raise money to go to Nationals, can I keep whatever is leftover for a holiday?

PR Peter Richards

That would have to be a no. Share the joy around to other athletes.

QM QLD Membership

Yeah, they because the funds are raised under the Special Olympics banner, anybody that raises above their levy has to be shared with the rest of the Queensland team.

They can, however, indicate a specific athlete, so if they know there is somebody from their club who is struggling, they can say any of their excess funds can go to ? 'cause he can't pay. But no, they can't get to keep it.

PR Peter Richards

No.

QLD Chair



Q16. Can I travel with my family or support worker to Nationals if I am selected?

QM

QLD Membership

No, you don't. You travel from point of departure. You're the athletes are handed over to the team, they take them. We're totally responsible for them.

Until they either leave the games and they have to seek permission to leave at the closure of the games after the closure of games to go on a holiday or whatever with their family, or they come back to the point of departure and that's SOA really.

PR

Peter Richards

Thanks for that.



QLD Chair

Q17. If selected as a volunteer, can I stay separately to the athletes for privacy and alone time?

PR

Peter Richards

Effectively know the reason you're a team support person is to support the team.



QLD Chair

And that goes for head coaches and assistant coaches too. You just stay altogether.

QM

QLD Membership

In relation to what sort of accommodation you're likely to have. In most cases it's twin share situation.

Yeah. Look, you're really only sleeping there at night time. Head coaches will be required to do team management. People are quite good at that is, if you need some down time because it's your first time away, you're finding it hard going it hard going. You just let your coaches know.

And somebody can cover your athletes while you go off and have a coffee or go off and have a sleep for two or three hours and come back if you're not sleeping well but that is managed by quite often by the medical staff. They will step in and take athletes so that somebody can get support assistance because team management is usually busy running around trying to make sure everybody gets where they should be and they don't have time to do athletes or the coaches handle it within the sport themselves.



QLD Chair

Thanks for that. Anyone that doesn't know, Annette's been everywhere and she's been a HOD nationally internationally. Annette's got decades of experience with that. So thank you, Annette for your assistance.



QLD Membership

The in actual fact what I have found, and this has been on every team I've been on the chill out room where coaches, team support have to come for time out, debrief, whatever you want to call it is the nurses room or the medical room. Usually there's a knock on the door and it's a "can I talk?" The nurse takes one look at them and it says is this a open door conversation or a closed door conversation?

And we deal with appropriately to give them the support. So the medical staff aren't just there to support the athletes, although the first team I went on, that's what I was told. But I in actual fact found that the team's support needs as much support too, and they just sometimes need to get away for 5 minutes just to be brief.

They have that chill out time that gives them then the strength to go back, to continue. So there's ways around it.



QLD Chair

Q18. If selected as a volunteer, will I need to assist athletes with personal care or if they go to the toilet and need assistance?

PR

Peter Richards

Annette.

QM

QLD Membership

That really depends on what people are referring to as personal care. Athletes are meant to meet the 1:4 support requirement in relation to the team, so you may need to do some minimal care.

Like to make sure that their pants are pulled up, or occasionally the athlete, especially the athletes that have limited movement with their hands, they can't tie their own shoelaces.

They may need assistance getting their socks on, although other athletes will help them, they'll need assistance with shaving, so there's little things like that. But no, we don't cut up their food. We don't feed them off the fork. If they can't do that, they really shouldn't be on the team or they should be using something else that some other utensil that allows them to feed themselves. So it gets back to that. Really good assessment of the athletes and hopefully this is where Team camp is really important because we've got a coach that's had an athlete for an hour a week or a club that's had an athlete for an hour a week, knows a little bit about them, but doesn't really know what they need on a daily basis simply because mum or dad are always there at training and helping them or the support worker is, then we get to team camp and we find out that the athlete can't shower themselves, can't shave themselves, washing hair. You may have to wash hair because some people just can't get their arms up if there's restricted upper limb.

But that whole toileting thing, if there's accidents, yeah, you'll potentially have to clean stuff up.

But not all day, every day. Just that sort of answer the question, or has anybody else got anything they want to say around that?

The medical staff along with this is where it's really important that the team's support and the head coaches really get to know their athletes and get to know their athletes' abilities and their levels of support they need.

There is for those people that aren't familiar, we will be sending out the OPEROO requests again. There's two sections to Operoo, medical background around medication allergy, allergies, dietary.

The thing you have to remember that with that is you're relying on families to answer it truthfully.

And the second form on there is a supports need assessment form and they are asked questions about you know do they need assistance with personal care, what is the level of assistance and that sort of thing. We then work with the families to encourage the athletes to become a little bit more independent.

And just watch their personal growth for that week that they're away.

PR Peter Richards

Thank you for that additional bit.

And it was a deliberation point in for this selection committee around an athletes age, there's a 16 years age cut off from a SOA SOI perspective.

But everybody, regardless of whether you're over 16 or not, doesn't mean you cope well-being away from your family and may need support.

QM QLD Membership

For all International Travel, Australia does only take the 16 above, even if it's classified as an open games. The last two Queensland games, I'm pretty sure it's the last two, so as made the ruling that it is predominantly 16 and above. However, for some sports they did suggest we could go down as low as 14 the sports.

We were looking at was sports like gymnastics, where the majority of the athletes at that time were in that sort of 14 to 16 age group, and if they if Queensland hadn't taken 14 and 15 year olds, Queensland wouldn't have had a gymnastics team. But it all depends on what SOA classify the games out, whether they classify it as open or whether they classify it as a senior game 16 and above.

Have they notified you about that yet?

QLD Chair

No, there's been none.

Lot of stuff comes through from Nathan Walker Manager Competition Pathways, from the National Selection committee and it's just more information coming through. When it is available, it will be circulated.

QLD Sport

QS Sports advisory panel are meeting next Thursday's, and that is a question that I'll actually raise because to my awareness, that was a topic of discussion prior to the Christmas break where it was quite said that it the athlete must be 16 as the day of competition. So I will go back and question them again.

QM QLD Membership

And also Kathleen, you need to be aware that if they throw it open, it will as an open games, it will affect your teams because there's a SOI ruling as to when you come to sharing. There cannot be too big a age gap between the two people sharing the same room and I have a sneaking suspicion that's four years, but don't quote me anything bigger than that so.

QS QLD Sport

Absolutely. Queensland I will speak at the advisory panel to clarify the actual ruling upon that. But as I said prior to Christmas, the ruling was that the athlete must be 16 at the at the start of competition.

QLD Chair

Alright, Junior Nationals comment just popped up is a whole different ball game. So we'll leave that.

Q19. If selected as a volunteer, can I choose a different sport to be involved in rather than the one I received my offer for?

PR Peter Richards

Short answer is no. The quotas are based on athletes and their ability to work on a basis of 1:4, so we can't chop and change.

Numbers of team support are based on the athletes, so you can't rock up to National's as support for swimming and then decide you want to pop over and do team support for basketball. So no.

QLD Chair



However, if there's 25 people that wanna be selected as a volunteer for say swimming, I'm sure Peter and his State Selection Committee will find a spot for them somewhere else.

Peter Richards

PR

Yeah, and thankfully most people that put in an expression of interest didn't put one sport down or one role. They put multiple sports down, so we have been able to flick across.

QM

QLD Membership

The thing that may be behind that, but thanks for clarifying it. Beverly is in this instance, there are a lot of parents or a number of parents on there and they may end up or may even select to be allocated to a sport that their son or daughter is not in.

To get the opportunity to go out and see them, maybe compete for one day is negotiated with the head of delegation at the time and the head coaches, so you need to take a support person from swimming to go to botch.

And so the person from bocce can go and watch their daughter swim. But that's only done once we get to the games. If you're allocated to swimming, you've got swimming.



QLD Chair

So the next question.

Q20. I have life threatening food allergies. Can I still accept an offer for Team Queensland? And know I can eat with safety.

PR

Peter Richards

All right, I'm able to answer this as well. I mean anywhere you go life threatening allergies are serious. We do have medical staff that are qualified medical staff but the emphasis is on athletes and even volunteers if they've got food allergies, the venues will be catering to that. The food supplied will be catering to allergies.

QLD Membership

QM And it'll be the responsibility of the support person with allergies. Now obviously this information will be shared by the medical staff because the medical staff will get this. They'll be responsible for it. They do manage it overall, but the volunteer has to ask the questions the volunteer and I'll quote an example here.

We were in Adelaide, athlete that had anaphylaxis to nuts. They had an allergy table set up with Muesli there with nuts in it, so you've got to be very aware. Keep your eyes open and if you yourself are the person that has the allergy, you have your Epipens. We make sure you've got your Epipens.

So there's pretty strict protocol around, but I would have to say from the medical perspective, my biggest challenge has always been making sure.

That every bit of food that's served up is safe. You've just got to ask questions.



QLD Chair

OK. Thank you. We have 5 minutes left.

Q21. So the next question is can I manage my own medication? I don't like to give it to anyone else.

And so this is an athlete.



QLD Membership

Oh, no. It's a safety perspective. It has to be kept under lock and key because we do not know the understanding of the other athletes on the team. We do not physically give the athletes their medication, they just come to our room, we hand them their Webster pack, they take it. But unless it's Epipens, Ventolin and emergency stuff. I've had an athlete that got severe, got severe migraines and had to take medication immediately, she started getting it. They carry them individually, but the rest of the medication, from the safety perspective, are kept under lock and key so that their meds are there when they need them.



QLD Chair

Thanks, Annette.

Q22. As a volunteer with Team Queensland, can I take some personal time and do sightseeing by myself or take some athletes out of Nationals camp there, have some local fun?

PR Peter Richards

Effectively, no. The requirements are that from an insurance perspective, they're at the National Games.

I think, as Annette mentioned at one stage, you know, we're talking about volunteers, but it's also parents and carers need to get official okay to leave the games.

After they've finished their event or just leave the games for holidaying so it'd be the same for volunteers. They've got a role to play at the wider games, not just having a bit of a holiday.

QM QLD Membership

Usually once the competition for a sport is finished, the head coaches are all experienced. They usually have something sorted out.

And you know that they'll be taking their athletes down to Luna Park, or they'll go for a walk to the beach or just trying to think where else they took athletes in Melbourne.

 **QLD Chair**

Well organised. It won't be a random thing.

 **QLD Chair**

Right. So Peter, you've probably answered some of this, but we'll end with this question.

Q23. If you could possibly tell us the quota of athletes that Queensland will send and how the individual sports numbers are calculated?

PR Peter Richards

Individual sports numbers. I did make a reference to this previously, but it's based on the venues that are confirmed.

As I mentioned, I think there's three sports that are still have venues to be confirmed and the venue obviously sizing wise will provide.

The overall athletes in the competition and then it's cut down through to states.

QM QLD Membership

And there is the option there that once the quotas come out, a state selects or rejects unable to fill the quota. So just to quote for example, they might decide they want 50 swimmers there. I mean, I know they'll have many more, but from three states, but one of the states can't fill their quota.

They will come back to another state and say we've got an extra four places. Can you fill them? And so there is room for a bit of negotiation to increase.

Some of the sports, but it all depends on the responses from the other states as to whether or not they accept the quota they are issued, how do they work out the quota. The quota is usually worked out on 50% of the registration for that sport in the age bracket that is being selected.

PR Peter Richards

Thanks for that.

QM QLD Membership

Roughly.

 **QLD Chair**

OK. Well, thank you, everyone. Right on 7.30. Peter, would you like to make any comments before we close it?

PR Peter Richards

Queensland yay!

 **QLD Chair**

And I'd like to remind everyone that we're all volunteers.

Peter Richards

PR

And we from State Selection Committee, we're trying to be as transparent as we can and as fair as we can, we've got a basis of processes that we're working through. And as soon as we can provide athletes' letters, we will.



QLD Chair

Yeah, Nathan Walker is sending out a lot of information. And as that happens Peter and Secretariat Kathleen will get that straight from me.

We are trying to be as transparent as possible. The national selection committee has altered the terms of reference for the state selection committee to have the State Manager attending during the selection committee selection process.

And a representative from the National selection committee may be attending as well. It's all up to the National Selection Committee, but I know Peter's been very transparent and we have all the information. And so, Peter, could you just remind everyone what's the criteria that the athlete has to meet?

PR

Peter Richards

Firstly you have to compete in the qualifying events. You have to be registered. You have paid your registration fee. The other basis for the selection, from State Selection Committee perspective is that firstly the athlete is ready for the next level of competition; going from state to national. They meet the four to one ratio for athletes support. And they'll flourish in the team environment. They're the crux of the other criteria.



QLD Chair

I'm sure there'll be lots more questions.

And we might even have another one of these down the track. But thank you, Peter. I really appreciate your time. I know it's a lot of hard work for the State Selection Committee and there's always more information coming through from the National Selection Committee as well. Queensland is very versatile, flexible and we get the job done.

Thank you, everyone. Good night.

● **QLD Chair** stopped transcription