

The Australian Paralympic History Project



Rome 1960



Setting the scene

For the first 30 years of the Paralympic movement in Australia, there was no umbrella organisation responsible for the Australian Paralympic Team or the Australian Paralympic movement.

In the lead-up to the 2000 Paralympics in Sydney, the APC created a new approach to Paralympic sport by following the able-bodied model of elite sport development. This was rewarded when Australia topped the medal tally in Sydney. Paralympic sport in Australia was dynamic, young, and forward looking.

But there was no way to pass on the torch - our teams and our athletes were not connected to the history of the movement and there were no mechanisms to celebrate the achievements of the past in the context of the present.

So in 2010 the APC established the Australian Paralympic history project.

What is the Australian Paralympic History Project?

A project to capture, manage and preserve the history of the Paralympic movement in Australia in a way that is relevant and accessible and places the Paralympic movement within its broader social context.



1960 Team pre-departure

We lack resources, so we:

INNOVATE

Find new ways to tell our story.

PARTNER WITH EXPERTS

We don't have the necessary knowledge and skills, but others do.

ENGAGE OUR COMMUNITY

Our alumni have a key role because this is their story.

ENGAGE THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The broader community is touched by Paralympic sport and wants to contribute.



Wikipedia workshop, Melbourne 2014

Elements of the Paralympic history project

The Australian Paralympic history project has many elements and one central core which is common to them all. The elements all incorporate one or more of the basic principles of the project.





1960 Paralympian Bruno Moretti

Oral histories

The history project commenced in 2010 with an approach to the National Library of Australia (NLA) to record the oral history of 1960 Paralympian Kevin Coombs.

By June 2014, 42 interviews had been recorded under a formal agreement between the APC and the NLA through its national oral history and folklore program.

The oral histories tell the stories of people who have played a significant role in the development of Paralympic sport in Australia from the 1950s to the present, including all eight 1960 Paralympians who were still alive in 2010. They form invaluable source material for the overall history project.

These interviews are part of the NLA's national collection:
<http://www.nla.gov.au/oral-history/australian-centre-for-paralympic-studies-oral-history-project>



2000 gold medallist Julie Higgins
from Wikimedia Commons

Photos

The APC has a collection of more than 40,000 photos, most from 1992 to the present. Its collection of images from 1960 to 1992 is also growing as we connect with earlier athletes and team staff.

The APC aims to ensure that all images are stored digitally with appropriate metadata. Most images since 2000 are in digital format. Earlier photos, negatives and transparencies are being progressively scanned.

Photos with no monetary commercial value to the APC are released for universal use through Wikimedia Commons. Every time they are used they promote the APC, Paralympic sport and Australia's Paralympians:
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Images_from_the_Australian_Paralympic_Committee.

By June 2014, 1,762 images had been shared through Wikimedia Commons.



NSIC video collection

Audio-visual collection

The audio-visual collection comprises Games footage, interviews with athletes, sponsor advertisements and footage of events.

Through a partnership with the National Sports Information Centre (NSIC), the collection has been digitised from a full range of diverse media formats onto DVDs and hard drive, catalogued and stored at the NSIC.

The catalogue is fully discoverable [online](#) and the NSIC manages all requests for access under an agreement with the APC.

There are 530 items in the collection.

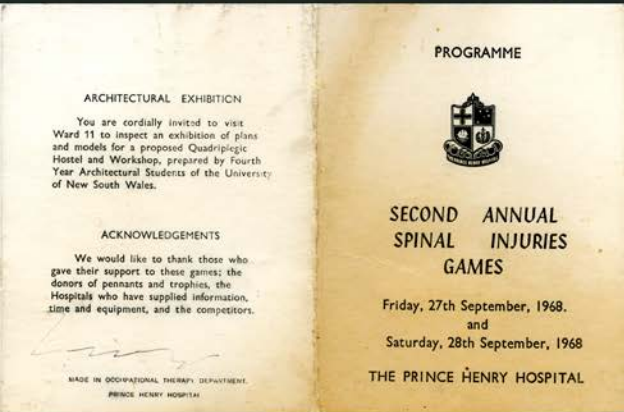


Scrapbook scans

Much history is revealed through the personal stories and details of the participants. Scrapbooks and photo collections of Paralympians provide context and interest to their stories.

When these are loaned to the APC, they are scanned and filed for use in the history project and future reproduction when required.

The APC holds scans of the scrapbooks and ephemera collections of Australia's first male and female gold medallists and other athletes, team medical staff and administrators.





Ross Sutton
Australia's first gold medallist

Memorabilia

From Australia's first Paralympic gold medal and the bow and arrows used to win it, through to the uniforms of the 2014 winter Games team, the APC is assembling a collection of items of significance to the Paralympic movement in Australia.

The APC works with the National Sports Museum to conserve and manage this collection, some of which is on display in the Museum in Melbourne, pending the establishment of an Australian Paralympic museum.

Most of the collection is currently housed in the APC's archive in Canberra.





Library

The APC library is a unique collection of 1,312 catalogued items (June 2014) on shelves in the APC office.

It includes books about Paralympic sport and Paralympians, results from international competition, including the Paralympic Games, magazines, reports, submissions and proposals relating to the APC and Paralympic sport.

The library is catalogued through the NSIC and the Clearinghouse for Sport, which means that all items in the APC library are fully discoverable online, with subsequent access controlled by the APC.



Jeff Simmonds, 1968

Alumni

Ongoing contact with the members of Australia's Paralympic teams is a measure of the maturity of the Paralympic movement in Australia.

Almost a quarter of Australia's Paralympic alumni are members of the alumni Facebook group.

Alumni birthdays are recognised through Facebook and Twitter and face-to-face activities are planned to strengthen the relationship between the APC and the alumni.

Alumni are involved in the history project as contributors, especially through Wikipedia.

The APC supports a role for the alumni as ongoing ambassadors for, and contributors to, the Paralympic movement in Australia.



Paralympic Hall of Fame

The [Australian Paralympic Hall of Fame](#) was established in 2011 by the Australian Paralympic Committee to recognise individuals who have, over time, made a significant contribution to Australia's Paralympic success; enhance the profile and understanding of Paralympic sport and Paralympic athletes within the Australian community; and promote the role of the Paralympic movement within the development of Australian sport and society.

The inaugural inductions in 2011 recognised:

- [Louise Sauvage](#) (inaugural female athlete),
- [Frank Ponta](#) (inaugural male athlete) and
- [George Bedbrook](#) (inaugural associate)

Louise Sauvage and Quentin Bryce

Team reunions

Team reunions are important in helping the APC connect with its alumni. The APC has held reunions of the 1960 (in 2010) and 1964 (in 2011) teams.

Each team competed, and most of their members retired, decades before the APC came into existence. The reunions also provide an opportunity to connect current Paralympic athletes with Paralympic pioneers.

Following the reunions held so far, the APC has also benefitted from donations of objects, loans of scrapbooks and photos, and contributions to the oral history project.



1960 Team 50 year reunion 2010



Sport history posters

The University of Canberra and the APC have combined to create posters which tell the Australian history of each sport currently supported by the APC.

In London 2012 and Sochi 2014, these posters formed part of the decoration of the Australian allotment in the Paralympic Games Athletes Village, helping the athletes and other team members to learn the history of their sports in an environment where it was relevant and poignant.

The 2014 alpine skiing posters were also available for download from the APC's education website at high resolution in a variety of sizes, so that schools, clubs and individuals could have them cheaply printed and put them on display.

The posters are currently being updated.

Alpine skiing and sailing posters

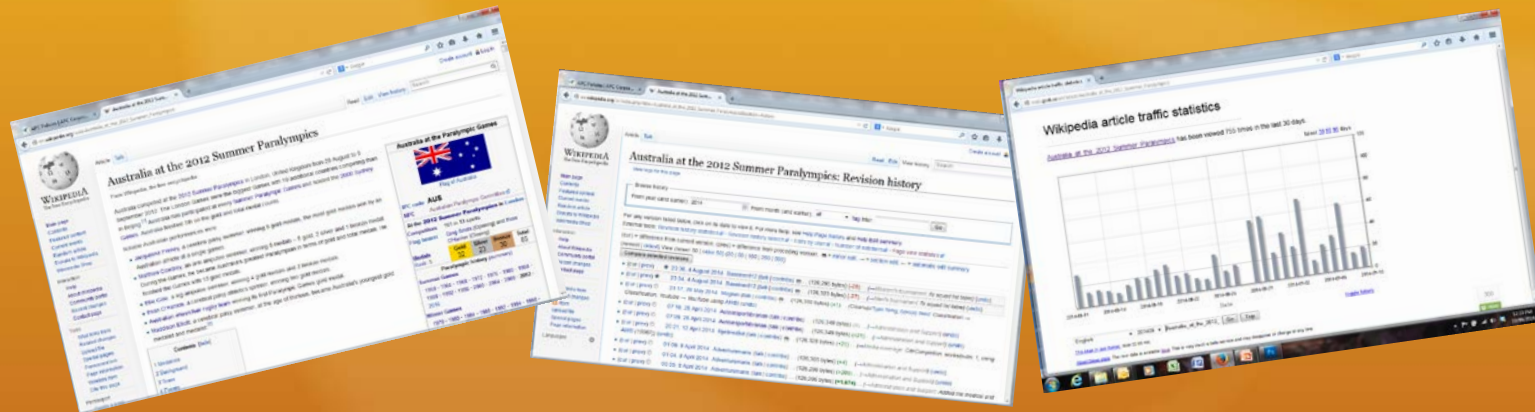
Wikipedia

Since 2010 the APC has enjoyed a relationship with Wikimedia Australia, the parent body for Wikipedia in Australia. The English language version of Wikipedia receives 186 million pageviews every day.

In 2010, there were few articles on Paralympic sport in Wikipedia compared to Olympic sport, and very, few articles on the Paralympic movement in Australia. Now, more than 47 volunteer Wikipedia editors (in Australia and overseas) create and update Paralympic content. The APC coordinates exchanges of information to ensure that needs are addressed. The APC, with UQ and Wikimedia Australia, runs 1-3 workshops annually for new and existing editors.

The Wikipedia project has created almost 900 new articles, including articles about every Australian Paralympic medallist, all members of the 2012 and 2014 Teams and all articles about Paralympic classification in the English language Wikipedia. During the London Games, articles created through the project were viewed more than 1.9 million times.

The Wikipedia articles form an essential repository of knowledge about Paralympic sport





The Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games was one of the biggest highlights of my life and for me I was in the prime of my sporting career. It is any athletes dream to compete at a home games. It was made even more special to have so many of my friends and family come to share and experience the Paralympics in Australia. Something I will never forget.

Louise Sauvage

Cowbird

[Cowbird](#) is a vehicle to tell stories using photos, audio and text. Cowbird can be used to create a story collection to tell the stories of a particular group, as in the collaboration between Cowbird and National Geographic to [tell the stories](#) of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation community in South Dakota through a mosaic of images and stories.

The APC is working with Cowbird to present the stories of the Paralympic Oral History project interviewees in the same way, using extracts from the interviews and then linking to the full oral history interviews. The interviewees are asked to select a photo of significance to them and to provide accompanying text. An appropriate section of the interview is then selected.

This will be a unique way of drawing attention to the oral histories and bringing the stories of Australia's Paralympic community to audiences.

Based on the success of this project, the APC plans to offer the opportunity to every Australian Paralympian to tell their story through a Cowbird collaboration.



15 year old Michael Milton
1988 Winter Games

Centre for Paralympic Studies

The APC has established the Australian Centre for Paralympic Studies (ACPS) to:

- Capture and manage information about Paralympic sport, including collecting and managing historical and ongoing Paralympic records and data.
- Control and coordinate Paralympic research in Australia to benefit the APC.
- Encourage, promote and give prominence to Paralympic research.

The APC seeks to accredit universities which it can work with to promote research into, and teaching about, Paralympic sport.

Ampsports



THE AMPUTEE SPORTING ASSOC. OF AUSTRALIA

Written history

The narrative contained within the written history of the Paralympic movement in Australia will wind through the history project, connecting its elements in a multidimensional tapestry.

The primary vehicle for the presentation of the written history will be online.

The online narrative will link to Wikipedia articles about athletes and other key participants; it will link to photos; it will link to the oral histories, to videos; and it will reference the APC's physical collections such as memorabilia and the library.

The written history will utilise [recent successful online storytelling](#) techniques to tell the story of the Paralympic movement in Australia in a compelling way that can be accessed linearly or non-linearly. A "print on demand" book version is also planned.

The APC has commissioned the University of Queensland to create the written history. UQ has received additional funding through a National Research Council grant of \$240,000 for the project, which is seen as an innovative way of telling history.

Original documents are preserved

