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Paralympics Australia applaud decision to postpone Tokyo Games

Paralympics Australia has joined the International Paralympic Committee in applauding the decision overnight to postpone the Tokyo Games.

The International Olympic Committee, the Japanese Government and the Tokyo Games Organising Committee confirmed overnight that the Games will move to the northern hemisphere summer of 2021.

The decision gives much-needed certainty to Australia's Paralympic community, who can now focus fully on maintaining their health and well-being during the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, without the growing pressure to prepare for the Paralympic Games which were scheduled to open on August 25 this year.

International Paralympic Committee (IPC) President Andrew Parsons gave the following reaction:

“Postponing the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games as a result of the global COVID-19 outbreak is absolutely the right thing to do. The health and well-being of human life must always be our number one priority and staging a sport event of any kind during this pandemic is simply not possible.

Paralympics Australia President Jock O’Callaghan said: “The decision provides clarity for the Paralympic movement in a time of uncertainty, and the IOC, the Japanese Government, TOCOG and the IPC should be commended for recognising the need to prioritise the health of humanity. To have made a decision of such a monumental scale amidst many uncertainties demonstrates tremendous leadership.

“We acknowledge this is a decision that will come with mixed emotions for our Paralympic athletes and support staff preparing for the Paralympic Games, but I’m sure everyone understands that this is the right decision in these tumultuous times.

“Resilience is in the DNA of the Paralympic movement. But this is a fight so much bigger than sport and we can’t fight it alone.”

Paralympics Australia Chief Executive Lynne Anderson said: “Paralympics Australia is ready to react to this decision and continue to ensure we leave no stone unturned to provide an optimal performance environment for our athletes and sports for a Tokyo Games.

“We see a huge opportunity to be innovative now and find competitive advantages in this changing landscape. Earlier today we met with CEOs of National Sporting Organisations and the AIS to discuss next steps and we are proud to be supported by such outstanding partners who are willing to work together and help each other through this.”

Chef de Mission of the Australian Paralympic Team, Kate McLoughlin, said: "Our campaign mindset 'Ready Set Tokyo' has shifted slightly today, 'Ready Reset Tokyo'.

“While today’s postponement of the Games does present a diverse range of challenges for athletes, coaches, support staff and PA staff, the Australian Paralympic Team will be given every opportunity to succeed in Tokyo. The goal hasn’t changed, just the timing.

“We will be working closely with all our sports and sporting partners in light of the new decision, with a focus on open communication and support over the coming weeks and months. Our main message is to stay safe, keep well and look after each other and we will be doing our best to support you during this hugely difficult period that we’re all in together.”

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