



APC MEDIA RELEASE  
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## **Boccia headed to Australian shores**

The Australian Paralympic Committee (APC) has welcomed the announcement that Sydney will host the 2013 Asia Oceania Boccia Championships this October.

To be delivered in partnership with the newly created Boccia International Sports Federation and Boccia Australia, it will be the first international boccia event staged in Australia since the Sydney 2000 Paralympics.

The announcement is an exciting boost for boccia in Australia, which has experienced a greater focus on improving the development pathway for players and coaches since the APC Boccia program was revamped following the Beijing Paralympics in 2008.

In the four years since, an injection in funding by the APC has helped increase participation numbers by 1000% nationally, and assisted the growth of programs in each state and territory. Through this success in growing participation rates, the APC believes boccia is now poised to return to the Australian Paralympic Team.

There are now 18 senior and junior athletes in boccia's Paralympic Preparation Program (PPP), with many vying for national selection to compete at October's regional championships.

APC Chief Executive, Jason Hellwig said: "Boccia has a unique and important place in Paralympic sport because it is aimed at athletes with a high level of disability.

"The APC is committed to providing opportunities for people of all abilities to play sport. We know that sport improves an individual's health and that it also improves the social wellbeing of an individual with a disability, particularly those with a more significant level of disability.

"The work undertaken with the boccia program has showcased the breadth of the work the APC does from a development level right through to the high performance level.

"We hope that the profile of boccia in Australia will increase as a result of the championships and that new players are attracted to the sport. It's been too long since we've seen an Australian boccia athlete at the Paralympic Games."

The championships will see the top Asian nations come to Sydney, with 12 countries expected to compete in total.

APC Pathways Development Coordinator Paul van Oosten, who has helped drive the development of the sport in recent years, says Australia's athletes will get the best possible start to their Rio campaign.

For many, international competition is something very new. It is a massive coup to have the regional championships on home soil as our athletes have the advantage of limited travel, in a sport where extensive travel can be difficult to manage," van Oosten said.

"Our players will be exposed to the world's top players from Asia, which will serve as an excellent benchmark to measure themselves against. It's a great mark of the hard work the APC has put in to developing the sport."

Boccia was introduced to the Paralympic Games in 1992 and is designed to test muscle control and accuracy as players throw, kick or use a chute device to propel a leather ball as close as possible to a small white ball, which serves as a jack. It is open to athletes with a physical impairment that affects both their arms and legs such as cerebral palsy, acquired brain injury, spinal damage or muscular dystrophy.

The Asia Oceania Boccia Championships will take place at Sydney Olympic Park from 18-26 October, 2013.

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We help Australians with disabilities participate in sport and compete at the Paralympic Games through partnerships with governments, business, sporting bodies and the community.