

Defining what is a physical or vision impaired disability category:

Bowls WA hosts an annual All Abilities State Championships consisting of Singles and Pairs played over a two-day weekend. This event is open to four categories: (1) Deaf, (2) Intellectual, (3) Physical, and (4) Vision Impaired. By participating in these games, you are opening the opportunity for a state title as well as the possibility of bowling at the following tournaments:

1. The Australian Open (all categories)
2. Bowls Australia (BA) National Multibowl Championships (physical disability)
3. Commonwealth Games (physical and vision categories)
4. International Bowlers with Disability (IBD) tournaments (physical and vision categories)

Bowls Australia (BA) is the National Sporting Organization (NSO) in addition to performing the role of a National Coordinating Body for physical disability athletes. This provides a single point of contact between the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and the Australian Paralympic Commission (APC). Vision Impaired Athletes governing body is Australian Blind Bowlers Association (ABBA) who interact with the state authority Vision Impaired and Blind Bowlers Association WA (VIBBWA). Deaf Lawn Bowlers WA (DLBWA) interact with their national Authority Deaf Sports Australia (DSA).

It can be hard defining what a disability is and BA and ABBA follow the International Paralympic Commissions (IPC) definition of Athletes with a Disability using a Classification system. The eight levels for physical and visual impairment are listed below, followed by further definitions of Intellectual Disability and Deaf Impairment.

Each player is classified based on their disability. Athletes with a hearing impairment undergo a hearing test; Athletes with an Intellectual Disability undergo an IQ test; Athletes with a vision impairment undergo a vision test; and Athletes with a physical impairment undergo a bench and functional skills test – a bowler must have lost at least 10 points in testing to be eligible for classification.

AUSTRALIAN IPC LAWN BOWL CLASSIFICATIONS:

- B1:** No light perception in either eye up to light perception but no recognition of hand movements at any distance or any direction.
- B2:** From the ability to recognise hand movements up to a visual acuity of 2/60 (Snellen).
- B3:** From a visual acuity of better than 2/60 (Snellen) up to a visual acuity of 6/60.
- B4:** A visual acuity of better than 6/60 (Snellen) up to a visual acuity of worse than 6.24 (Snellen) and/or a visual field of less than 20 degrees.
- B5:** Wheelchair bowlers who can only use a very small bowl (size 00) due to limitation of upper limb function. Ambulant and wheelchair bowlers with restricted grip and upper body limb function, poor balance and co-ordination, unable to bowl a full length end or needing a splinting device to do so (Not including the bowling arm as used in Australia).
- B6:** Ambulant and wheelchair bowlers with reduced balance function (loss of 5 points or more) but able to bowl a full length end.
- B7:** Ambulant and wheelchair bowlers with minor balance problems (loss of less than 5 points).
- B8:** Ambulant bowlers, who have a permanent and irreversible disability, have lost 10 points on the bench test, but have no noticeable impairment of function.

Athletes who participate in Paralympic sport are grouped into ten major categories, based on their type of disability:

(1-4) Visual Impairment - Athletes with [visual impairment](#) ranging from partial vision, sufficient to be judged [legally blind](#), to total [blindness](#). This includes impairment of one or more component of the visual system (eye structure, receptors, optic nerve pathway, and visual cortex).

(5-8) Physical Impairment - There are eight different types of physical impairment:

- **Impaired muscle power** - With impairments in this category, the force generated by muscles, such as the muscles of one limb, one side of the body or the lower half of the body is reduced, (e.g. due to spinal-cord injury such as [spina-bifida](#) or [polio](#)).
- **Impaired passive range of movement** - Range of movement in one or more joints is reduced in a systematic way. Acute conditions such as [arthritis](#) are not included.
- **Loss of limb or limb deficiency** - A total or partial absence of bones or joints from [partial or total loss](#) due to illness, trauma, or congenital limb deficiency (e.g. [dysmelia](#)).
- **Leg-length difference** - Significant bone shortening occurs in one leg due to congenital deficiency or trauma.
- **Short stature** - Standing height is reduced due to shortened legs, arms and trunk, which are due to a musculoskeletal deficit of bone or cartilage structures.
- **Hypertonia** - Hypertonia is marked by an abnormal increase in muscle tension and reduced ability of a muscle to stretch. Hypertonia may result from injury, disease, or conditions which involve damage to the central nervous system (e.g. cerebral palsy).
- **Ataxia** - Ataxia is an impairment that consists of a lack of coordination of muscle movements (e.g. [cerebral palsy](#), [Friedreich's ataxia](#)).
- **Athetosis** - Athetosis is generally characterized by unbalanced, involuntary movements and a difficulty maintaining a symmetrical posture (e.g. [cerebral palsy](#), [choreoathetosis](#)).

(09) Intellectual Disability - Athletes with a significant [impairment in intellectual functioning](#) and associated limitations in adaptive Behaviour. The IPC primarily serves athletes with physical disabilities, but the disability group Intellectual Disability has been added to some Paralympic Games.

(10) Deaf Impairment – People who are born deaf or became deaf at an early age (before language acquisition). Deaf people identify themselves as part of a Deaf Culture and Community and are likely to use Auslan (Australian Sign Language) as a first or preferred language.

If you have further questions contact Denise McMillan, Bowls WA Inclusion Officer at denise@bowlswa.com.au or 0449 619 841.