



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **AOC plans for Athlete and officials' safety in COVID-19 World**

The Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) will continue its planning and preparations for the Tokyo Olympic Games with athlete and official health and safety the major priority.

The global disruption caused by the COVID-19 virus and resultant critical public health measures have significantly disrupted the qualification processes for sports as well as the preparation of athletes.

AOC Chief Executive Officer Matt Carroll says the AOC will do everything possible to fulfil the dreams of Australian athletes in incredibly difficult circumstances.

“We recognise there is a global health crisis. We recognise that people are suffering – people are sick, people are losing jobs, businesses are struggling amid enormous community uncertainty. Things are changing everyday and we all must adapt.

“Equally, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), advised by the World Health Organisation, has assured us that the Olympic Games in Tokyo are proceeding in four months. We owe it to our Australian athletes to do everything we can to ensure they will participate with the best opportunity in those Games.

“We gain confidence from the IOC’s overriding principles regarding staging the Games. Namely, to protect the health of everyone involved and support the containment of the virus. And secondly to safeguard the interests of the athletes and of Olympic sport,” Mr Carroll said.

AOC Chef de Mission Ian Chesterman says urgent adaptations to the qualification processes for each sport should be clearer by early April when International Federations (IF) for each sport submit their revised systems to the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

“Last night we spoke with IOC President Thomas Bach who reminded us of the IOC’s determination to give the athletes their moment, with an Olympic Games in Tokyo, beginning with the Opening Ceremony on July 24<sup>th</sup>.”

“There are a number of challenges all athletes are facing between now and then, but two stand out.

“First is gaining qualification for the Games with so much disruption to world sport and travel, and second is ensuring they are able to attend the Games free of coronavirus.

“The situation regarding qualification is complex to say the least, with global travel restrictions among many measures that prevent qualifying events anywhere in the world from going ahead right now.”

“International Federations will seek to create a clear path to the Games for each sport. The AOC will certainly assist all our National Federations here in Australia as they respond to the specific decisions in their individual sports.

“Our focus is moving to the planning of our pre-Games preparation to ensure we get our athletes to the Games healthy, prepared and virus free. Clearly that is a major challenge for all National Olympic Committees.

“We are starting conversations with our sports about what that looks like. But initiatives on the table include extended pre-Games camps in Australia or in Japan. The option of taking the Team direct from the pre-Camps into Tokyo via charter supports that period of pre-Games isolation. We will look at potentially minimising the time they spend in the Olympic Village.

We will work with sports to curate bespoke solutions to deliver our athletes to the Games fit and healthy and ready to go.

The AOC has also undertaken a range of measures to comply with government public health considerations.

Matt Carroll says the AOC has an obligation as a leading sports organisation to ensure community health and the safety of the sporting community and its own staff.

“We will continue to monitor and make ongoing decisions to ensure we meet our responsibilities,” Mr Carroll said.

Measures undertaken in the past week include:

- Postponing of Team Appeal dinners
- Cancelling March sport planning trip to Tokyo
- AOC Annual General Meeting to be conducted in an on-line environment
- AOC staff working from home
- Risk mitigation protocols for team selection announcements and events
- Suspension of the Olympics Live planning around live sites and other events

ENDS:

For further information



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