

Senate Inquiry: Adaptive sport programs for Australia Defence Force veterans
Questions on Notice – supplementary information
Invictus Australia
6 April, 2023

The following advice is provided in response to the Questions on Notice, from the public hearing attended by Invictus Australia (1400, 3 April 2023).

1. PURPOSE OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS FUNDING TO INVICTUS AUSTRALIA

Attached (Attachment 1) is a copy of the funding agreement between the Department of Veteran Affairs and Invictus Australia.

The total funding received by Invictus Australia is \$8,087,000, split over three years.

As per the Agreement, the funds are to be used for the following expenses:

- *travel costs associated with Warrior Games and Invictus Games including flights, accommodation and in-country transportation for veterans, their families, corporate and support staff;*
- *uniforms, promotional material and marketing directly related to the grant activities;*
- *Adaptive Sport Program events of at least 12-15 events per year;*
- *salaries for seven to eight Veteran Engagement Specialists (VES) with at least one VES to be engaged per state and territory;*
- *a research project with a PhD scholar who will undertake a detailed evaluation of the Invictus Games initiatives;*
- *administration expenses directly related to the Invictus Australia's program.*

Supporting the Agreement is an *Activity Work Plan* which outlines the specific areas of spend each year. This is included as *Attachment 2* to this submission.

The first tranche of funding was received by Invictus Australia in late September 2022, and work is underway on implementation. As of February 2023, there is an Invictus Australia presence in QLD, SA, NSW, VIC, ACT and will commence shortly in WA.

The current funding arrangements with the Department of Veteran Affairs do not provide for Invictus Australia to be a funding agency for other programs.

2. POTENTIAL FOR INVICTUS AUSTRALIA TO PERFORM A CENTRAL ROLE IN COORDINATION OF FUNDING FOR VETERAN SPORT PROGRAMS

Invictus Australia supports the position that better co-ordination and secure funding is required to support programs which provide avenues for veterans and their families to engage in sport and recreation. This aligns with our strategy and vision and it is clear that many existing programs would benefit, as would the veterans and families they support.

Invictus Australia is in a position to take on additional responsibility to provide this co-ordination role.

The advantages Invictus Australia has with this model, should it be adopted, is as follows:

- We maintain considerable expertise and connections with the sport industry and can utilise these relationships in addition to investment;
- We can manage Government investment in a cost-efficient way, and are able to augment investment as our private revenue streams grow;
- The profile and attractiveness of our brand is helpful when engaging with the broadest community possible and can be utilised to assist smaller or developing programs reach their potential;
- We are not aligned or affiliated with any one group and we are not a membership-based organisation which means we are not in conflict or competition.

The model suggested in this supplementary submission has a parallel in Paralympics Australia, which is engaged to co-ordinate and support sport programs for people with a disability. Paralympics Australia is a non-Government charitable entity, much like Invictus Australia.

As with Paralympic sport, the challenges confronting sport for veterans are both financial and operational. A coordinating agency such as Invictus Australia would provide a central resource for support in a cost efficient and effective way.

3. ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATIONS

- A. **ADF Relationship:** The Memorandum of Understanding between Invictus Australia and the Australian Defence Force is attached (Attachment 3). This outlines the relationship and the respective roles and responsibilities.

The ADF assumes the overall management of the ADF Adaptive Sport Program (and associated Invictus and Warrior Games teams). The invitation for Australia to participate in Invictus and Warrior Games is extended through the Chief of the Defence Force. To date, Invictus Australia has only been authorised by the ADF to provide a supporting role and to comment where we believe improvements can be made. To that end, our considerable sporting team experience is underutilised.

- B. **Not just the Games:** Invictus Australia is not limited to the Invictus Games. It is equally focused on general sport participation by veterans (former and current serving) and their families at a local community level. This approach covers sport and general recreation, through roles such as participation, volunteering, sports administration and officiating.

Therefore, Invictus Australia has a dual purpose – supporting our Invictus and Warrior Games teams, as well as providing a deeper and significant role at all levels within the Australia sport system for veterans and their families. No other organisation is operating within the Australian sport system in this way. This is one of the reasons that the Invictus Australia services and programs are so valued by our participants and partners.

- C. **Staff investment:** Invictus Australia's staff drive community participation and our relationships with national and local sporting organisations across Australia. It delivers a sustainable and large-scale outcome for veterans and their families.

The Invictus Australia model engages with the extensive Australia sport network to provide tailored opportunities to cater for individual needs and preferences. This approach is enabled by using established national sporting organisations which, in turn, have a reach of more than 70,000 sporting clubs. This makes the Invictus Australia model more sustainable than a standalone program or programs that rely on a small number of volunteers.

In addition, according to feedback we receive from participants, veteran centric programs are not always helpful for those dealing with physical and mental health concerns where it could be triggering. Therefore, in these situations integration into civilian communities and programs can be more beneficial. This approach, however, does not mean that we don't support and encourage stand alone programs where they are proving successful.

- D. **Being an enabler:** While Invictus Australia is not currently in a financial position to invest in other organisations, we have been an enabler for many programs and initiatives. This has been a feature of our work to date and where our staff in the community make a significant difference. Enabling means for us improving the environment to enable veterans and their families to engage and have a great experience, which we aim to translate to an ongoing involvement in sport.

Invictus Australia deploys its expertise to help sport better cater for veterans and their families. At the same time, Invictus Australia uses its established relationships with sport to assist other ESOs better use sport for the benefit of their members. Further, we help individual volunteer led programs expand their reach.

- E. **Alternatives for Invictus Games applicants:** There was mention during the hearing about individuals who apply and miss out on selection for an Invictus Games, or individuals who finish with the program, and what opportunities are made available to them. This is something Invictus Australia is acutely aware of and is developing a program to address. An example is the trialing of a Veteran Team to the Surf Lifesaving Championships last year. This was highly successful in supporting a group of veterans outside the Invictus program.

Invictus Australia is considering an expansion to include other events, such as the Masters Games in Australia, to be able to re-direct unsuccessful applicants. The objective is to find a pathway or opportunity for everyone, and not to have an application to the ADF Adaptive Sport Program end in disappointment. Invictus Australia will seek to find an alternative avenue through which an individual may achieve the same health and wellbeing outcomes.

- F. **Role in transition:** Invictus Australia has not been approached by the Joint Transition Authority. We believe more could be done to create a connection to sporting communities through transition that would have clear and beneficial health outcomes.