



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION PRETORIA

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia scores a winning goal for people with disabilities

The Australian High Commissioner to South Africa, HE Mr Graeme Wilson, marked the 21st International Day of People with Disability by cheering the Australian wheelchair rugby team to victory at the recent International Wheelchair Rugby Federation Asia Oceania Champions final. Mr Wilson had the honour of presenting the Australian team with their gold medals following the 55-48 win in the final against Japan at the LC De Villiers Sports Complex, University of Pretoria.

“Australia’s inspiring performance during the international wheelchair rugby final highlighted the importance of creating inclusive societies in which everyone is given the opportunity to reach their full potential”, said Mr Wilson.

“While international efforts to promote disability inclusion are encouraging, people with disabilities are still too often left behind. People with disabilities are the world's largest and most disadvantaged minority, accounting for around 15 per cent of the global population or 1 billion people. Collectively, people with disability have poorer health outcomes, lower education achievements, less economic participation and higher rates of poverty than people without disability.”

“Australia is committed to tackling the stigma that still surrounds disability by promoting disability-inclusive development through our aid program. In 2012, Australia provided assistive devices, such as prostheses, to more than 150,000 people with disability. Our Australia Awards scholarship program has been a leader in supporting disability inclusion. Since 2011, over 50 students with a disability from 22 African countries have received an Australia Awards scholarship. Australia Awards scholars with disabilities receive extra financial support to link them with support organisations and to cover expenses such as wheel chairs and hearing aids”, said Mr Wilson.

The Australian High Commission in Pretoria administers a small grants scheme that is used to support civil society projects across southern Africa. A number of these projects focus on promoting the rights of people living with disabilities, including:

- (a) a partnership with the Smile Foundation to treat South African children from disadvantaged backgrounds who suffer from facial abnormalities such as Cleft Lip and Palate;
- (b) supporting rehabilitative services in Botswana for individuals and families who have physical disabilities; and
- (c) a partnership with the Rachel Swart Foundation to provide motorised wheelchairs for South Africans from disadvantaged backgrounds who suffer from various forms of paralysis.

For more information, see www.southafrica.embassy.gov.au

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