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For immediate release

Media release

Special Olympics athletes gather for Trans Tasman competition

Hundreds of athletes with intellectual disabilities from throughout New Zealand and Australia are preparing to gather in Hamilton for next week's (25-27 November) Special Olympics Trans Tasman Tournament.

The tournament, which includes the sports of athletics and swimming will see nearly 300 New Zealand and 120 Australian athletes of all ages and abilities competing against their peers. For many of the athletes it will be their first opportunity to compete in an international competition.

"The purpose of the Trans Tasman Tournament is to give our athletes more opportunity to compete, particularly for those who may not otherwise have the opportunity to compete internationally, says Kathy Gibson, Chief Executive for Special Olympics New Zealand.

"This event is designed with the skills and abilities of all athletes top of mind, and is much shorter in duration than the Special Olympics World Games."

The 2016 competition is the third Trans Tasman Tournament held between Special Olympics New Zealand and Australia. The inaugural Trans Tasman Tournament was held in Wellington in 2011 and included football and basketball. A subsequent event was held in Cairns in 2012 and featured athletics, basketball, ten pin bowling and football.

Special Olympics Australia CEO, Corene Strauss, who will be in New Zealand for the Tournament, said "We have a great relationship with Special Olympics New Zealand so it makes sense for us to join forces to strengthen sport for people with an intellectual disability in the Asia-Pacific region. The Aussie athletes are really excited to be heading across the Tasman where they will play fair, while doing all they can to win a medal. We have plenty of family members heading across the Tasman too so we'll be an enthusiastic delegation. Good luck to all competitors!"

The Trans Tasman Tournament is also being supported by nearly 150 volunteer coaches and management staff, over 500 family members and a strong contingent of local volunteers.

All athletics events will take place at Porritt Stadium, Crosby Road, Chedworth Park while the swimming events will be held at Waterworld, Garnett Avenue, Forest Lake.

To find out more about the Trans Tasman tournament and view the full list of competing athletes visit www.specialolympics.org.nz/transtasman

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Notes to the editor:

In addition to the sporting programme there will be two Opening Ceremonies for the event: one at Waterworld at 9.00am on Friday 25 November and a second at Porritt Stadium at 10.30am. The Closing Ceremony will be held at Waterworld at 3.15 pm on Sunday 27 November.

We welcome your photographers at the Trans Tasman Tournament. There will be many opportunities for photography during the Tournament, particularly action photography. Special Olympics New Zealand will also be photographing the event and is happy to supply images to media as requested.

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About Special Olympics New Zealand

Special Olympics New Zealand is a year-round programme of sports training and competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. More than 7000 athletes throughout the country train and compete in 13 different Olympic-type summer and winter sports.

Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provides athletes continuing opportunities to develop fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy as they participate in the sharing of gifts and friendship with other athletes, their families and the community.

[Words Matter—Special Olympics Language Guidelines for media](#)

Special Olympics New Zealand: www.specialolympics.org.nz