



CASE STUDY

PARA ATHLETICS DEVELOPMENT

Promoting inclusive opportunities for para athletes -
ParaFed Auckland and Owairaka Athletics Club.



In 2015/16 there were only two Para athletes registered in Auckland. Knowing more people could benefit from the challenges, confidence and competencies athletics participation provides, Parafed Auckland and Owairaka Athletics Club wanted to offer Para athletes the opportunity to progress from the development pathway programmes and stride towards participating within the mainstream environment.

20 athletes registered, many of whom were new to our sport, Owairaka Athletics Club had a suitable venue, equipment and coaching expertise. As a result of the programme and the introduction to Para athletics, 10 of the participants joined the club and competed nationally within the year.

CHALLENGES



OPPORTUNITIES

The Get Set Go and Run Jump Throw programmes that Owairaka Athletics Club run promote inclusiveness through the Halberg STEP philosophy, after which Para athletes had limited opportunities to reach their potential.

CONFIDENCE

Give new and existing para athletes the support and confidence to perform and participate within a mainstream environment.

ACCESS

Gaining access to specialised equipment can be difficult and costly, but Parafed associations can often provide the athletes and clubs with the equipment needed.

INSTRUCTION

Finding the right coaches to provide the additional coaching and support needed for fostering and developing the skills and experience of new athletes in the sport.

SOLUTION



The programme centralised around a Para athletics training group that met every fortnight to train together with a number of coaches. Athletes of all abilities and experience were invited and catered for, including wheelchair athletes.

Parafed Auckland refurbished old equipment and where needed purchased new. They brought these to the sessions, enabling many of our athletes the access to equipment and experiences they may otherwise not have had.

Following on from the Get Set Go and Run Jump Throw programmes, Para athletes now have the opportunity to further their athletics career and to compete for regional and national titles. Owairaka Athletics organised crucial in-club competitions so all athletes were prepared and not overawed at their first events.

RESULTS



To date we have 14 National records, five athletes qualify for the Oceania Championships and one for the 2017 World Para Athletic Championships in London. Without this programme the athletes would have had a more challenging pathway to their recent success. They have gained new opportunities to excel in a sport they enjoy, which without this programme they might not have otherwise experienced.

◀ CONCLUSION ▶

Although Para athletes may require a little more support to thrive in a mainstream environment, the effort is definitely worth it as they often have the potential to progress very quickly. By contacting and working with your local Parafed, you will not only benefit the athletes, but help your coaches and club grow and develop, which will further attract more athletes.

Para athletes require coaches who can think on their feet to adapt activities and practices that may not otherwise work. Our programme has shown that New Zealand has the potential to improve its already strong Para athletics programme if more of us can take the steps to be adaptable and inclusive from our developmental programmes right through to squad groups.

“I’m so proud to be running for Owairaka, the first athlete from the club to compete at this level since Beatrice Faumuina.”
Keegan Pitcher - T36 200m and 400m World Para Athletics Championships representative.