



**MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED until 9.30am  
THURSDAY 23 MARCH**

**Historic corporate partnership and Vice Regal Patronage mark 500 day countdown to the 2018 IWRF Wheelchair Rugby World Championship**

Disability Sports Australia (DSA) today marked the 500 day countdown to the International Wheelchair Rugby Federation (IWRF) GIO 2018 IWRF Wheelchair Rugby World Championship to be held in Sydney, August 2018 with the announcement of a historic corporate partnership and appointment of the Championship Patron at Government House, Sydney.

“The GIO 2018 IWRF Wheelchair Rugby World Championship will be the largest disability sporting event to be held in Australia since the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games and DSA, the national body representing athletes with a physical disability, is proud to announce the official Championship naming rights sponsor GIO, and Patron His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret’d) Governor of New South Wales,” says Ms Jenni Cole, CEO, DSA.

In announcing the partnership Ms Cole said, “This partnership is of international significance. It is the first time in the history of the Championship that a naming rights sponsor has been secured. We commend GIO for their foresight and commitment to changing lives through sport”.

“GIO has a long and proud history with disability sport in Australia. Sport is an important part in the wellbeing of all of our lives, and for people with a disability it is no different. We are very proud of our ongoing partnership with DSA, and fully support their vision to enrich the lives of people with a disability through participation in sport. As naming rights sponsor of the GIO 2018 IWRF Wheelchair Rugby World Championship we are committed to showcasing the worlds most elite Wheelchair Rugby competition to the Australian public,” says Matthew Kayrooz, Head of Accident & Trauma, Personal Injury Portfolio and Products, Insurance Australia

Next year will be 18 years since Wheelchair Rugby debuted, as a full medal sport at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games.

Ms Cole said partnerships with the Australian Rugby Union and the long time support of the Department of Defence had assisted in DSA’s successful bid to bring the GIO 2018 IWRF Wheelchair Rugby World Championship to Sydney and the announcement today of Governor Hurley’s patronage further exemplified the significance of the event.

His Excellency commented: ‘I am honoured to be appointed Patron of the International Wheelchair Rugby Federation’s Wheelchair Rugby World Championship. Seeing the joy that this very physical sport offers to our veterans whose injuries through service to their nation resulted in them requiring the use of a wheelchair is inspiring. As Patron, I am looking forward to fast and furious games of strength, skill and speed, as the 11 international teams battle it out against our champion Australian Steelers. I welcome the world to play in our city of Sydney, whose Paralympics brought wheelchair rugby to the world.’

**Where:** Government House Sydney, Macquarie Street

**Date:** Thursday, 23 March 2017

**Time:** 9.00am

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**Media opportunities**

His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret’d) Governor of New South Wales and Mrs Hurley, Matthew Kayrooz, (Head of Accident & Trauma, Personal Injury Portfolio and Products, Insurance Australia) representing GIO, Ryley Batt, Australian Steelers team member and GIO staff member, and Jenni Cole, CEO, Disability Sports Australia

### **About the 2018 IWRF Wheelchair Rugby World Championship**

The Championship will be held from 5-10 August 2018 at the Sydney Olympic Park Complex and Netball Central with the world's top 12 teams including the Australian Steelers competing. The Championship is the most significant event on the international wheelchair rugby calendar, larger than the Wheelchair Rugby competition at a Paralympic Games where only eight teams compete.

The Australian Steelers will defend their world championship title on home soil in 2018 after successfully defending their Paralympic title in Rio in 2016.

### **About Wheelchair Rugby**

Since its inception in 1976, the sport of Wheelchair Rugby, previously known as "murder ball" has showcased the fierce and competitive nature of sport for athletes with a disability and captivated viewers worldwide.

Wheelchair Rugby is an intense team sport for male and female athletes with an impairment in both upper and lower limbs. The sport can be very physical as athletes attempt to carry the ball over the opponent's goal line.

The four players on the court cannot exceed a combined total of eight points. A round ball is used and it can be carried, dribbled, or passed in any way except by kicking. The ball must be bounced at least once every 10 seconds and the game is divided into four eight-minute quarters played over 60-90 minutes.

The players are classified according to their level of functional ability and are assigned a point value from 0.5 to 3.5 points – the higher the points, the more functional ability the athletes have.

### **About Disability Sports Australia**

Disability Sports Australia Ltd. (DSA) is the national governing body for Wheelchair Rugby in Australia, and also has a broader role as the peak body for sport for people with a physical impairment in Australia.

<http://www.sports.org.au>

<http://www.2018wrwc.com/>