



MEDIA RELEASE

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2022 Australian Deaf Games Co-Patron Announcement

From the 16th – 22nd April 2022, the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie region will welcome over 1000 athletes from across the country to compete in 16 medal and 4 demonstration sports at the Australian Deaf Games. The aim of the Games is to provide a four yearly event that brings together Deaf and hard of hearing Australians in a multi-sport environment that enables all participants the opportunity to compete to whatever level they aspire.

The Deaf Sports Australia Board of Directors and the Games Organising Committee are excited and proud to announce we have two Co-Patrons for the Games. Cindy-Lu Bailey-Fitzpatrick OAM and Katie Kelly OAM.

This is a great outcome that demonstrates the diversity of our community, showcases our leadership and sporting achievements and increases our network reach in the deaf, disability and wider communities.

Cindy-Lu, who is deaf, is a former swimmer who has represented Australia in both Commonwealth Games and in the Deaflympics. She represented her country at two Commonwealth Games (1982, 1986), two Pan Pacific Games and competed at 6 Deaflympics Games over a 20 year period (1977-1997). She was ranked in the top 16 on the 1982 Speedo World Rankings list.

At national level, Cindy-Lu held the Australian title in the 100/200 m breaststroke double in 1981, 1982 and 1986. In 1983 she held the 200m title at the Australian titles. At the Deaflympics she dominated winning the 100/200 m breaststroke double at 5 successive games from 1981 till her retirement from international swimming in 1997 and won 19 gold, 4 silver and 5 bronze medals. During this time she broke 18 Deaflympics records.

Her record haul of 29 medals is also the third most by a Deaflympic athlete (among men and women). Her medal tally of 29, is also the highest medal count for Australia in Deaflympics history.

She was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1985 for her services towards sport and DSA life membership in 1997. In 2002, she became the only woman to be inducted into the New South Wales (NSW) Hall of Champions.

At the 2005 Summer Deaflympics held in Melbourne, Cindy-Lu was given the honour of lighting cauldron and was announced as one of the 'Legends of the Games.' She was also a torchbearer during the 2000 Summer Olympics.

In 2013, she voted as one of Australia's Top 100 sportswomen of all time.

Cindy-Lu remains involved with swimming as an assistant Technical Director of swimming for the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf. She was instrumental in helping establish the NSW Deaf Sport organisation and was on the 2018 Australian Deaf Games Organising Committee. She continues her strong



advocacy in encouraging and motivating young deaf and hard of hearing children to get active in sport opportunities.

Katie was born with profound hearing loss (diagnosed at the age of 5 years) and then at 22 years of age it was confirmed she had the condition Usher Syndrome resulting in hearing and eye sight loss that progressively worsens. Katie Kelly is an Australian Paralympic Gold Medallist and had the honour of winning Australia's first medal at the Rio Paralympics where Paratriathlon (vision impaired class) made its debut. She was awarded her Order of Australia Medal for her success at these Paralympics. She is also the Founder and Director of Sport Access Foundation, providing grants for Australian children living with a disability. Katie has worked in consumer sports marketing for over 15 years with organisations including Australian Paralympic Committee, NRL, ANZ Stadium and Tabcorp.

Katie is passionate about promoting inclusiveness for Australians living with a disability. She has worked with a number of community organisations including Blind Cricket Australia, the Australian Deaflympic Team, as well as initiating professional fun runs in regional NSW. She was also involved in setting up the Darwin Parkrun. Katie is an Ambassador for the Royal Deaf Blind Institute for Children now known Next Sense and Usher Kids Australia.

Katie invokes real life examples – she has experienced disappointing employer attitudes and at times a lack of sensitivity about her condition. Early on in her life Katie tried to hide her disability, but over a long period of time she realised it wasn't she who needed to change but rather the workplace, sporting environments and other areas where her life took her.

Katie has a strong sense of social justice and has a determination in her own small way to improve the opportunities for women in sport, and more recently for young children who are living with a disability to access sport.

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