



## Case Study

Since 2014, Golf Programs Australia Inc (GPAI) is an affiliate of Special Olympics Australia based on the Sunshine Coast. Founder and PGA Professional Darrell Dalton set up a dedicated organisation to provide a low impact activity for members of the community who experience isolation and challenges. Driving inclusion and breaking isolation is the slogan and mission of GPAI.



### Program

The GPAI Program is a weekly golf session facilitated by Darrell and supported by some volunteers. Each session involves an athlete led warm up, followed by a game where the group plays 4 -5 holes. Sessions end with a presentation. There is an assigned safety officer as well as volunteer assistant coaches who award two golf balls each week to athletes who demonstrate excellence, personal bests, leadership and / or outstanding attitude.



### Coaches

Darrell Dalton is the driving force behind the success of the program. Darrell provides the facilitation, leadership and operational support each week – including guidance to the volunteer assistant coaches and coaching to the athletes. Further to this, Darrell also provides individual coaching and small group clinics.



### Athlete Involvement

There are approximately 50 athletes involved in the program with 20 – 30 attending each session. The athletes have a range of golfing ability, from beginner level to those who have represented Australia internationally.

Many GPAI athletes are also members of Special Olympics Australia and all participants of the GPAI golf program are encouraged to join. Athletes who are only GPAI members are invited to compete at local Special Olympics events with the support of GPAI coaches.

## **Volunteers**

A key component to the success of the weekly session are the volunteers. There are 10 volunteers who contribute each week to provide support to the athletes and create a positive and encouraging environment. Volunteer roles include assisting with registration of athletes, assisting with coaching and providing snacks and drinks post game.

GPAI coaches are required to complete the Special Olympics Australia online coaching courses and a first aid & CPR certificate. All GPAI volunteers carry a Blue Card and coaches must also complete a national police check.

## **Location**

The program is run at a private golf course on the Sunshine Coast at Didilbah. There are many benefits of playing at a private course including greater flexibility to meet the needs of the program, no conflicting priorities, and often having the run of the course for the athletes.

## **Golf Classic**

A highlight of the GPAI calendar is the annual GPAI Golf Classic. The December event in 2020 was the 7th edition, with a record 33 athletes taking part. The event is a two player ambrose format, with competitors coming from all over South East Queensland to take part in the event.

## **GPAI Shop and Athlete Traineeships**

In 2016, GPAI expanded by opening it's retail store. The retail outlet comprises of a number of micro businesses that support the charity. Importantly, it also provides the opportunity for athletes to become trainees. Funding for in-store or social enterprise training with GPAI is provided via a trainee's individual NDIS Funding. GPAI is self-funded and does not rely on government grants or funding to deliver its programs or training initiatives. (It has only received one Federal Grant of \$15,000 – which GPAI were required to match dollar for dollar).

## **Outcomes**

The key outcomes of the GPAI program include:

-  Driving inclusion and breaking isolation for athletes.
-  Golfing Program led by a PGA Professional.
-  Holistic development of athletes including connection, confidence and character.
-  GPAI Golf Classic.
-  GPAI Retail store and athlete traineeships.
-  Creation of the GPAI 'family'.