

### Frequently Asked Questions from Athletes, Parents & Coaches

The CombatAUS National Performance Centre (NPC) will deliver “***A supportive environment that develops world class athletes capable of winning medals at world leading competitions***”.

We recognise for many athletes the consideration of joining the NPC is a big decision in their personal and athletic career. Athletes are encouraged to digest the information in this Frequently Asked Questions document and to talk to their support networks, including the CombatAUS AW&E Manager, as a means to make informed decisions that are in their best interest.

#### What is the purpose of the CombatAUS National Performance Centre?

The NPC will deliver a supportive environment that develops world class athletes capable of winning medals at world leading competitions. It is an athlete-centred, coach-led program to maximise the performance potential of Australia’s best Taekwondo and Judo athletes.

The NPC’s priority is to support its full time athletes through targeted technical and performance support services in a highly competitive and performance-focussed environment.

For categorised athletes that are not engaged full-time with the NPC, there may be opportunities to access the NPC for camps or for short term training agreements negotiated with the NPC staff.

#### Is this a centralised program?

Yes. The intentions of the NPC are to get the best athletes together more often. However, it is recognised that a completely centralised approach is not practical and appropriate for all individuals, so being involved in the NPC will not, in any way, be forced onto athletes. It is a tool that attempts to enhance the quality of the daily training environment (DTE) for athletes whose circumstances and readiness align with the intentions of the NPC.

The need for the NPC to integrate with the Performance Pathway Programs delivered through Judo Australia and Australian Taekwondo is well recognised and will be explored as much as possible and practical.

## Do I need to train in the NPC to be selected for national teams?

Absolutely not. It is not mandatory for any athlete to be involved in the NPC. Selection policies for national teams will remain open and transparent and will enable anyone to be selected to these should they meet the performance requirements as set out in the respective selection policy.

## How does CombatAUS pay for the NPC?

Judo Australia, Australian Taekwondo and Boxing Australia are Members Sports of CombatAUS, with all AIS High Performance investment for these sports provided to and deployed by CombatAUS to develop, implement, and resource the respective High Performance Programs (HPP) of these sports. The NPC is a key initiative to be delivered by CombatAUS through this investment.

Investment into the NPC delivers a full-time daily training environment (the venue), high performance coaching and the provision of specific integrated services delivered through our servicing partner – the Victorian Institute of Sport, or through our internal, embedded staff:

- Strength and conditioning
- Sports medicine
- Physiotherapy
- Nutrition
- Athlete Wellbeing & Engagement
- Performance Psychology
- Other direct support for athletes and program activity (such as camps and international travel) is separate to the running of the NPC, is prioritised through categorisation and in relation to benchmark event campaigns.

## What are the details of the Full Time Training Agreement at the NPC program?

There are defined engagement expectations for full time NPC athletes, with the aim of developing athletes capable of winning medals at world leading competitions.

Minimum expectations have been established for full time athletes to maximise the benefit of the resources the NPC is able to provide and in consideration of the development time needed to establish technical proficiency and physical competencies.

For Taekwondo these minimum weekly expectations are:

- 5 group technical training sessions
- 1-2 individual or small group training sessions
- 3 strength & conditioning sessions at the Victorian Institute of Sport

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	7.30-9am S&C (VIS)	7.30-9am S&C (VIS)	7.30-9am S&C (VIS)	8-10am Group Technical (NPC)	10.15-11.45am S&C (VIS)	Rest
5-7pm Group Technical (NPC)	Alternating weekly 5-6.30pm Female Technical	5-7pm Group Technical (NPC)	5-7pm Group Technical (NPC)			
	6.30-8pm Male Technical (NPC)					

For Judo these minimum weekly expectations are:

- 3 technical training sessions
- 4 Randori sessions
- 3 strength & conditioning sessions at the Victorian Institute of Sport and a 4<sup>th</sup> conditioning session

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning  S&C (VIS)	Morning  S&C (VIS)	10am-1pm  Judo (NPC)  Individualised technical with drills in small groups	Morning  S&C (VIS)	9-10.30am  Judo (NPC)  Group technical plus drills	10am-12pm  Randori  Venue TBC	Rest
3.30-5pm  Judo (NPC) Technical/Drills	6-7.30pm  Randori  Venue TBC	Rest	7-9.30pm  Randori  Venue TBC	Time TBC  Randori (NPC)  With Victorian Performance Pathway Athletes	Time TBC  VIS or other  Conditioning	

Please note all times are under review as service agreements with the VIS are currently being finalised.

Performance planning conversations with NPC staff may vary the overall training load for individual athletes considering their individual needs and circumstances such as:

- the athlete training and chronological age
- injury status
- periodised training plan

Athletes are encouraged to maintain strong links with their home coach and club. When appropriate attendance at club training may be included on top of the respective minimum NPC expectations where agreed as part of their periodised training plan.

NPC staff will support athletes to proactively adjust external influences that may impact training availability rather than compromising the NPC program. It is understood there may be on occasion (an exception) where, for example, an athlete has a university exam or is called into work in an emergency that may interrupt a set training session. It is expected that in such circumstances an early conversation is had with the relevant coach to plan an alternative session, ensuring training time is not lost.

### What is the minimum time commitment, and will this be in the form of a contract?

Yes, as a part of your broader athlete agreement there will be an additional annex that once selected confirms your engagement with the NPC. Notionally full time athletes are engaged by CombatAUS for 12 month periods, reviewed annually in December but may be reviewed as required. The athlete may at any time decide that the current arrangements should not continue.

Individual Performance Plans are undertaken with each athlete where areas for improvement and engagement can be discussed clearly and openly. This provides opportunity for the athlete, and for the NPC to support the athlete, to meet these expectations. If there is insufficient intent or progress to address these, a decision may be made to suspend or end the current training agreement.

### What does the NPC provide for Full Time athletes?

For athletes to be competitive internationally and win medals at world leading competitions an environment of high training volume with high quality training partners is required. In order to thrive under this high volume and high quality training environment athletes must also be supported by integrated performance support services.

#### Core Support Services

The Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) is engaged to deliver quality assured high performance service provision in:

- Strength & Conditioning
- Physiotherapy
- Sports Medicine
- Nutrition
- Athlete Wellbeing & Engagement
- Performance psychology

All of these VIS services are provided to the NPC athletes at no cost. However, this does not include costs associated with external medical provision should that be required (e.g. surgery).

## Additional Support Services

- Integrated, multidisciplinary approach to training programs with pro-active interactions between staff that support:
  - injury recovery
  - training load management
  - ongoing technical development
  - complex injury case management
- Athlete Wellbeing & Engagement:
  - Supporting and promoting a healthy life during and after an athletes High Performance sporting journey
  - Encourage and support athletes to invest in areas of life outside of sport (including career and education, personal and professional development, and the value of contributing to community).
  - Provide athletes with information relating to available referral networks and resources available to them to best support their wellbeing and engagement.
- Logistical support for full time athletes will at times be provided for:
  - domestic camps
  - overseas camps and competitions
  - other additional benefits provided when the NPC co-coordinate these activities may include:
    - the provision of coaching
    - ground transport
    - support services such as physiotherapy and strength & conditioning

## Performance Impact Athlete Award

CombatAUS will also provide an annual Athlete Award to each full-time NPC athlete. The application of this Award will be individually considered and periodically reviewed through each athlete's respective Individual Performance Plan process to ensure it is invested to have the most significant performance impact possible. Full-time NPC Athlete Award investment allocations are as follows:

- Podium, Podium Ready and Podium Potential categorised athletes - \$10,000
- Developing categorised athletes - \$7,500
- Emerging categorised athletes and other full-time NPC athletes - \$5,000

## Are NPC athletes Victorian Institute of Sport scholarship holders?

Athletes in the NPC are not scholarship holders of the VIS, they have access to the VIS through an MOU agreement with CombatAUS. There may be athletes, who are granted a scholarship from the VIS or their home state as a result of their performances reaching standards defined by each individual institute of sport. The NPC encourages athletes to retain their state institute scholarship when they become members of the NPC.

## What if my availability does not match the training times of the NPC, can I do fewer sessions and still be a full-time member of the NPC?

CombatAUS will support full time athletes of the NPC to proactively adjust external influences that may periodically impact training availability rather than compromising the NPC program. We understand there may be on occasion (an exception) where for example an athlete has a university exam or is called into work in an emergency that may interrupt a set training session. It is expected that in such circumstances an early conversation is had with the relevant coach to plan an alternative session ensuring training time is not lost.

With the clear aim of the NPC to develop world class athletes capable of winning medals at world leading competitions, it is expected that athletes will complete the number of training session detailed above in the Full Time Training Agreement question.

## Short/Part Time Training Agreement

For those that are not full-time NPC athletes, there may be opportunities to access the NPC for camps or for short term training agreements negotiated with the NPC staff. However, this is not the priority for, or the focus of the NPC, and may be considered on the basis that such exposure aligns with the training plans of the NPC.

In general, engagements as training partners are likely to be:

1. Short term - a minimum of a week of training and for as long as two training weeks
2. Part Time - a nominated number of weekly sessions for a defined number of weeks/months.

In considering athletes outside the NPC and their suitability as a training partner, insights gained through the engagement with CombatAUS Member Sport's Performance Pathway Program is a priority.

Access to group technical training is provided whilst a training partner at the NPC. Individual technical sessions are not generally provided. Access to our service provider, the Victorian Institute of Sport, their S&C facilities, S&C program prescription, medical, physiotherapy and other services are NOT provided. For short term, one to two weeks in length, there is likely to be access to the strength & conditioning facilities now housed inside the NPC in order to maintain fitness, but not access to the

VIS unless the athlete is a scholarship holder at an institute/academy of sport as reciprocal access is usually provided across the National Institute Network. If there are injuries or treatment needs whilst at the NPC, staff are able to support this by referral to appropriate external providers, with the cost of treatment borne by the athlete.

### **If I am a full-time member of the NPC, are my domestic and international travel costs paid for?**

The NPC is not able to cover all costs associated with being an elite athlete. Athletes will still be required to contribute to some service needs, travel costs and living expenses.

CombatAUS investment into travel costs is provided through the respective High Performance Program and is prioritised to athletes under the remit of CombatAUS; those categorised Developing and above and those engaged in CombatAUS managed DTEs, such as the NPC.

This investment will be committed on a trip by trip basis, and the level of support may be dependent on an athlete's categorisation level, with the intention to limit the financial impost on athletes wherever possible, in particular for athletes categorised Developing and above.

Emerging and non-categorised athletes, whether full-time NPC athletes or not, may benefit from support provided through their respective Member Sport Performance Pathways Program.

### **Does the NPC provide health insurance and for costs associated with major injuries?**

It is highly likely that **elite athletes** will sustain injuries during their career, some of which may require surgical intervention. Therefore, athletes are required to maintain an appropriate level of health insurance that;

- Facilitates having a timely assessment, access to your choice of high quality specialist medical services and rapid access to appropriate medical treatment to assist a fast injury resolution and return to training
- Guards against some of the very high costs of hospital and surgical treatment, which can be prohibitive to high performance outcomes.

### **Does the NPC provide cost reimbursement for assessment and treatment of injury?**

In combat sports, injury is an inherent risk. At present, if **any NPC athlete** sustains a new injury they can utilise the VIS service agreement for the initial diagnosis (doctor's appointment) and the NPC will reimburse for the out of pocket expenses if an initial relevant diagnostic scan is required. Other costs such as; follow up scans, late notice external physio treatments and surgery costs are not covered by the NPC. The services provided by the NPC support athletes in their rehabilitation through physiotherapy, S&C and medical review. Athletes are expected to maintain private health insurance, with any contribution towards any medical costs by CombatAUS made after claiming benefits available through Medicare, private health insurance and the member sports insurance.

## Can I access the NPC from time to time or in a part time capacity?

The primary intention of the NPC is to provide a holistic DTE for full time athletes. There are circumstances where a short/part-term involvement in the NPC is available as detailed in the [NPC Selection Guidelines](#).

Examples of a circumstances that may be considered would be;

- in final preparation for major competitions, such as the World Championships where there may be athletes selected who are not members of the NPC
- where an athlete is unable to commit to a full time engagement but where a defined and agreed part time engagement suits both the NPC and the athlete

Due to investment levels the performance support services available to the full time NPC athletes are not available to athletes completing shorter/part-time training stints in the NPC.

## What happens when an athlete in the NPC decides to leave, or it is decided by the program that the NPC is not suitable for them at that time?

At some point in time, an athletes' time at the NPC will come to an end. During this stage, they will receive recommendations and transition support from a range of people:

- 'Athlete Wellbeing & Engagement': Supporting athletes' throughout their sporting and life progression; identifying a career outside of sport, identifying opportunities to engage in community engagement, provide access to mental health professionals, and provide support and learning opportunities to encourage and develop self-awareness to manage stress as well as they can.
- VIS physiotherapy, medical review & treatment recommendations and external referral for any current injuries
- VIS S&C program to assist in the transition period, in support of any rehabilitation or ongoing performance development.

## If I am not a full time NPC athlete, are my domestic and international travel costs paid for?

Each Member Sport of CombatAUS has responsibility for the Performance Pathway Program invested in by the AIS for supporting athletes beyond the remit of CombatAUS. This AIS investment does include elements of support for structured PPP activity that could involve travel both domestically and internationally, each member sport has management of these programs, but it is unlikely to cover all of these costs.

CombatAUS' primary role is in support of athletes in its full time DTE programs (NPC) and also those who are categorised Developing and above. This investment will be committed on a trip by trip basis, and the level of support may be dependent on an athlete's categorisation level, with the intention to limit the financial impost on athletes within its remit wherever possible.

## Are parents, partners, family members and club coaches able to engage in the NPC training environment?

On request technical training sessions may be open to parents and partners. Club coaches of NPC athletes are able to attend training with their athletes during the technical sessions by prior discussion and arrangement with the NPC Head Coach. Covid restrictions may restrict this access, but we will discuss this directly with athletes as is required.

## If I have left the NPC, or was not successful in an application, can I re-apply?

Yes. We acknowledge that committing to the expectations of the NPC is not easy. If an athlete leaves but at a later date decides to reapply, their application will be reviewed equally alongside any other application. Similarly, if you have previously lodged an application but were unsuccessful and feel at a later date you are better prepared, we encourage you to re-apply.

An assessment based on things such as athlete readiness and NPC capacity will be made by the NPC Selection Panel for each individual applicant and each application. Please note that categorised athletes are likely to be prioritised in terms of access to the NPC.

## Who will provide me with primary Coaching advice around my training and competition plans?

The NPC Head Coach will lead overall program design, technical & tactical development and day-to-day support for all full time NPC athletes. The need for athletes to remain engaged with their club and club coach is recognised. As such there will be clear expectations of engagement established between the NPC coach and the athlete's club coach around the individual performance plan for each athlete and subsequent communication about their progress against that plan.

We acknowledge that this change in coach relationship when you commit to the NPC may feel different at the beginning and does take concerted effort from the athlete, the NPC and Club coach to develop this new relationship. But the need is clear for the coach who is present in your DTE to be the primary person you work with to set your training, competition, IPP and overall program direction.

Your club coach's role will therefore evolve in various ways if you become an NPC athlete. They will be a critical friend/mentor/support, as well as a coach (but may not be the primary coach) that you choose to utilise at selection events or international competitions when not part of a national of NPC team activity.

## Is there a maximum number of candidates for the program?

Yes, currently there are two aspects that contribute to the places available in the NPC.

1. The current service agreement with the VIS provides service delivery for up to 24 athletes across Judo and Taekwondo
2. The coaching capacity is also a factor in the total number of full time athlete places

## At what athlete age group(s) is the NPC aimed at?

Age is not a primary factor in the selection of athletes to engage in the NPC. The NPC has been established to maximise full-time exposure of Australia's highest categorised athletes with the primary goal of delivering **"A supportive environment that develops world class athletes capable of winning medals at world leading competitions"**.

As such, a factor that may be more relevant is the Categorisation of athletes and their involvement in their Member Sport's Performance Pathway Program as this best reflects their potential to contribute to and/or produce medal winning performances in the near future.

## What assistance will be provided in terms of relocation (accommodation, school/uni, work etc)?

### Will that assistance vary depending on performance level?

CombatAUS has an Athlete Wellbeing and Engagement (AW&E) Manager and the NPC Performance Program Manager who will work with each athlete on their specific and individual needs when relocating.

All categorised athletes currently have access to AW&E support; during your relocation, it is recommended you work with the AW&E manager to ensure you transition into Melbourne and the NPC as well as possible. Identifying key support networks, transferring study and employment, are all key aspects of a successful transition, as well as making sure you know (and if required use) the additional layers of support that are available to you.

We have established a relationship with an accommodation provider (at a cost) linked to a university that can be used as an interim place to stay until an athlete finds suitable long term accommodation and for any NPC "trial" periods needed in the selection process. If needed we can engage with real estate agents to brief them on some of the challenges athletes face in applying for rental properties and allaying any concerns they may have, but the costs associated with accommodation and finding what is suitable are the responsibility of the athlete.

There is a small one-off grant available for athletes to apply for in support of some of the relocation costs in moving to the NPC. This is available to all relocating athletes not only those outside Victoria and is not dependant on performance or categorisation but considered on an individual case by case basis.

## Will I need to change clubs if I am a full time athlete in the NPC, either when moving from interstate or if I am already in Melbourne?

The NPC is an independent training environment from any club. Athletes will remain members of their home club and continue to represent their club and home state.

## Will there be a trial period?

As detailed in the NPC Selection Guidelines there is a stage where an invitation for a “trial” training period at the NPC may be offered to gain greater understanding of things such as an athlete’s:

- technical capabilities & deficiencies
- commitment & attitude
- potential to successfully engage with the NPC multidisciplinary service environment
- relevant medical (or other relevant discipline) review.

If an athlete feels that they would like to request a “trial” training period to establish if the NPC is something they wish to pursue we are open to discussing how this could be accommodated and to understand what aspects an athlete is looking to experience.

## Will other National activities (training camps etc) be held at the NPC?

The NPC facility may be used for other national activities but ensuring that it does not detract from the running of the full-time NPC programs. We envisage that there will be some national camps or other activities run out of the NPC, with a key focus of integration with Member Sport Performance Pathways Programs where possible and practical.

## How do I apply to become a member of the NPC?

CombatAUS has a formal published **Athlete Selection Guidelines** document that describes this in detail, please refer to that specific document via the CombatAUS [National Performance Centre](#) web site.

This document may be updated from time to time - Version Date: 3 December 2021