

To: Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk MP
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From: Monique Murphy
Yuggera Country



To The Honourable Ms Palaszczuk MP

My name is Monique Murphy and I have lived in Queensland on the Land of the Bundjalung and Yuggera People since 2017.

I am writing to you in your role as Minister for the Olympics and Paralympics. Yes, that's right, Premier – you are Minister for both. Let me tell you why it's very important that that is said in full – Olympics and Paralympics – and not just hidden away.

My own sporting dreams were ignited by the heroes that were presented to me through school, sport, and media. None of these included para-athletes.

However, at the age of 19, after a fall from a suspected spiked drink, I became an amputee. This accident is what started me on the road back to swimming, but not to the swimming I had known.

People with Disabilities were not common in my past because, as I now realised, the world didn't easily accommodate them.

Through hydrotherapy I fell back in love with the water and one year to the day, I was racing at the National Open Swimming Championships and selected for the International Paralympic Committee World Championships.

Two years after my accident, on my 21st birthday I was selected for the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.

900 days after I fell from that 5th floor balcony, I stepped forward to receive a silver medal at those Games.

When I was selected for my first Senior team, there was a fear that being 'para' meant less. For one, the para swimmers raced during the ad breaks while the OLY program athletes were broadcasted prime time. I had grown up with the names of Ian Thorpe and Susie O'Neil and was now teammates with para-athletes with the same accomplishments that I had never heard of. When I arrived at the World Championships in 2015, the fear that we were 'less' or 'had it easier' was eradicated. Watching my teammates on the podium ignited the same passion I had as a child. The Paralympics' is not a consolation prize for those with different bodies, it's not a handout because we are different. The Paralympic Games is a movement that calls for its athletes to push their bodies as far as they can regardless of their differences. It's a movement that offers an equal playing field for its athletes to live their dream and to be who and what we are. World class athletes.

I watched the announcement of the Brisbane 2032 Games from home as the prospect of bracing the crowds and spending a long night on my prosthetic caused me pain and exhaustion. The announcement of another home Olympic and Paralympic Games excites me as I remember the impact of the Sydney Games hand on me as a 6 year old girl discovering her love for sport. In my childhood the Paralympic Games were never shared with me. They were not celebrated like their Olympic counterparts, they were not cheered on or hailed by the media in the same way. Their athletes were not idolised by young Australian kids because they were not presented as the heroes of sport they were. Something as simple as your title, continues to hide our movement away.

When you exclude 'and Paralympics' from your Ministerial title, Premier, you are excluding the whole community of people with a disability, 1 in 5 Australians in fact, and you contribute to their invisibility. 'Olympic' is not an umbrella term that acknowledges us too. We have our own movement, our own history, our own symbol, and a Games that runs 'parallel'. Our movement has worked tirelessly for over 70 years and our legacy deserves to be recognised. I know you don't intend this because I've heard you speak about the importance of inclusion.

Please make sure you instruct your press office and your Department to rename your role as 'Minister for Olympics and Paralympics' for the rest of the lead-up to this fantastic event which I, as a proud adopted Queensland and amputee, am so looking forward to.

Monique Murphy