

# SYDNEY 2000 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES: THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE STRATEGY

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This is the first in a series describing the public health preparations for the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Games will begin on September 15, 2000 and will conclude with the closing ceremony of the Paralympic Games on October 29, 2000. From September 2, 2000, the Olympic Village will begin to fill with athletes. At the height of the Olympic Games competition up to half a million people will pass through Sydney Olympic Park in a day, with a peak of 300,000 there at one time.

During this time Sydney will swell with visitors, who will make up the spectator force that will follow the expected 14,200 athletes, over 27 days of competition, at about 35 venues throughout the city. There will be a 17-day interval between the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games when the Olympic Village is renamed the Paralympic Village.

Sydney has never before hosted an event the size of the Olympic Games. The event has been estimated by the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) to equal 40 world championships, 34 National Football League Super Bowls or 17 Formula One Grand Prix. It is with this in mind that the Olympic Public Health Service Strategy has been designed.

Through a series of memoranda of understanding, SOCOG is responsible for providing the health and medical services to support the Games, either directly through its planned workforce of about 4,500 medical program volunteers, or through other agencies such as the NSW Department of Health, the Ambulance Service of NSW and other organisations.

The NSW Department of Health will coordinate the planning for hospital care, disaster response, health care interpreters and public health services. The provision of public health services represents a significant commitment by the Department, particularly in the area of food safety

and environmental health. An important consideration is to ensure minimal disruption of normal services and to leave a legacy of enhanced systems, procedures and services.

The Olympic Public Health Service Strategy represents the third stage of planning for the Games. A public health services subcommittee, chaired by the Director of the Centre for Disease Prevention and Health Promotion and with representation from SOCOG, departmental policy areas and Public Health Units, has developed a strategy with the following objectives:

- maintenance of the current public health system;
- provision of a supplementary Games service to monitor, rapidly detect and respond to public health threats; and
- a concentrated effort to prevent illness and injuries through encouraging the promotion of healthy behaviours.

The planning, development and implementation of the Public Health Service Strategy for the Olympics incorporates seven focus areas within a surveillance system that will cover all Games venues and allow for the continued monitoring of the remainder of NSW. The focus areas are:

- infectious disease and surveillance
- food safety and nutrition
- environmental health
- injury prevention
- heat, sun exposure and physical activity
- smoking
- cruise ships

The planning and coordination of public health services to support the Games is a significant challenge. There will be opportunities to improve existing systems, such as infectious disease surveillance, and also to highlight the NSW public health system's strengths.

The hosting of the Games provides an unparalleled opportunity to plan and implement programs that have the potential for a positive effect on the community.

## PUBLIC HEALTH EDITORIAL STAFF

The editor of the *NSW Public Health Bulletin* is Dr Michael Frommer, Director, Centre for Research and Development, NSW Health Department. Dr Lynne Madden is production manager.

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