



# Media Release

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**KATE ELLIS MP**

**Minister for Sport and Youth**

**BILL SHORTEN MP**

**Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services**

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Monday, 1 September 2008

## **Our 2008 Australian Paralympic Team departs for Beijing**

The largest Australian Paralympic Team to compete abroad today left for Beijing to take on the world's best in the 13<sup>th</sup> Paralympic Games.

Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, Bill Shorten joined Ms Therese Rein in sending our elite athletes off at a launch ceremony at Sydney International Airport, ahead of the Games' kick off on 6 September.

Mr Shorten said the Games were an opportunity for the Australian Paralympic Team to continue our nation's recent record of success.

"The Paralympic Games is a world stage for our elite athletes to shine upon," Mr Shorten said.

"Our team of inspirational athletes are very well prepared for the tough competition they have ahead of them in Beijing, especially from China, Great Britain and the USA.

"I urge all Australians to get behind our team, follow their achievements closely – and cheer loudly."

Minister for Sport and Youth, Kate Ellis also wished the Australian Paralympic Team the best of luck.

"This is the largest ever Australian Paralympic Team to compete overseas and I am greatly looking forward to celebrating their success in Beijing," Ms Ellis said

"Every Australian state and territory will be represented at the Paralympics.

"The Team is made up of 170 elite athletes, including 11 guide runners and pilots for the sight impaired, and will be supported by 121 officials.

"The Australian Government has provided more than \$26 million to the Australian Paralympic Committee to support Australia's Paralympic athletes in Beijing," Ms Ellis said.

The Team travels to Beijing today with a total of 908 medals from Paralympic competition over the past 48 years.

There will be a total of 472 medals on offer at the Beijing Paralympic Games.

Both Ms Ellis and Mr Shorten will attend the Games to support our champion athletes.

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