



PNZ Board Athlete Representation **Discussion Paper**

June 2024

“Athletes bring a unique perspective and should be able to feel safe to express their concerns, needs and desires so everyone benefits.”

Chris Arthur (HPSNZ)

The Importance of the Athlete Voice

The importance of hearing from, and engaging with, athletes in the governance and management of sport is well recognised nationally and internationally. Within the Paralympic Movement, New Zealand has been fortunate to have Paralympians engaged at various levels of the international movement and domestically, Paralympics New Zealand (PNZ) has engaged Paralympians in various capacities to assist and advise on a range of topics. PNZ has also been fortunate to have Paralympians on the PNZ Board. However, all these engagements were recognised as valuable but unstructured and reliant upon external factors rather than a conscious structured framework to ensure the voice of Paralympians and Para athletes were always at the forefront of PNZ decision-making.

Athletes' Council Terms of Reference

Lead by Paralympian #174 Mary Fisher MNZM, the PNZ Athletes' Council was established in 2021 to represent New Zealand Paralympians and Para athletes, while empowering athlete participation and voice within New Zealand and the Paralympic Movement internationally.

The Athletes' Council is a consultative committee established by PNZ to act as the athletes' voice within PNZ, providing governance and management advice on matters impacting on Paralympians and Para athletes.

Board Skills Review

Annually, or when a vacancy occurs on the PNZ Board, the Board reviews the skills and expertise of those sitting around the Board table. To ensure PNZ will continue to achieve its mission and strategic goals, it is imperative that the right people are helping to guide PNZ at the Board level.

During the 2023 review, it was identified there was a need for more Board structured engagement with Paralympians and Para athletes. It was acknowledged that the PNZ Board does and has had Paralympians as Board members, but these appointments were through election or appointments and not directly representative of the current Paralympians and Para athletes.

PNZ Athletes' Council discussions

Discussions by the newly established Athletes' Council expressed their desire to have an Athletes' Council representative on the PNZ Board with full voting rights. The PNZ Board was very receptive to creating a position on the PNZ Board for an Athlete Representative but was conscious there are many different methods of this occurring. As such, a discussion paper was presented to the Athletes' Council in November 2023 proposing a range of options for an Athlete Representative to become a full voting member of the PNZ Board.

The Athletes' Council considered the options but have not settled on a preferred option. In conjunction with PNZ, the Athletes' Council is seeking the feedback from Paralympians and Para athletes on what they consider is the best option for representing their voice around the PNZ Board table.

The following options are now presented to Paralympians and Para athletes to consider. These are the same options presented to the Athletes' Council in November 2023.

The Consultation Process

The consultation process will commence in June 2024 and will allow Paralympians and Para athletes sufficient time to consider the options without impacting upon athletes' preparations for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. A summary of the process is outlined on the following page.

At the same time athletes are providing feedback, PNZ will also be seeking input and feedback from PNZ members (National Sports Organisations and Parafeds) together with other key stakeholders. PNZ will encourage members to seek input from their Paralympians and Para athletes in determining their preferred option.

At the completion of the consultation process with athletes and PNZ members, the PNZ Board Governance Committee will consider all the feedback and in consultation with the Athletes' Council, identify the preferred option for athlete representation on the PNZ Board. This will be presented to the full PNZ Board for consideration. Any change to the PNZ Board composition requires changes to the PNZ Constitution, which only the PNZ members can approve.

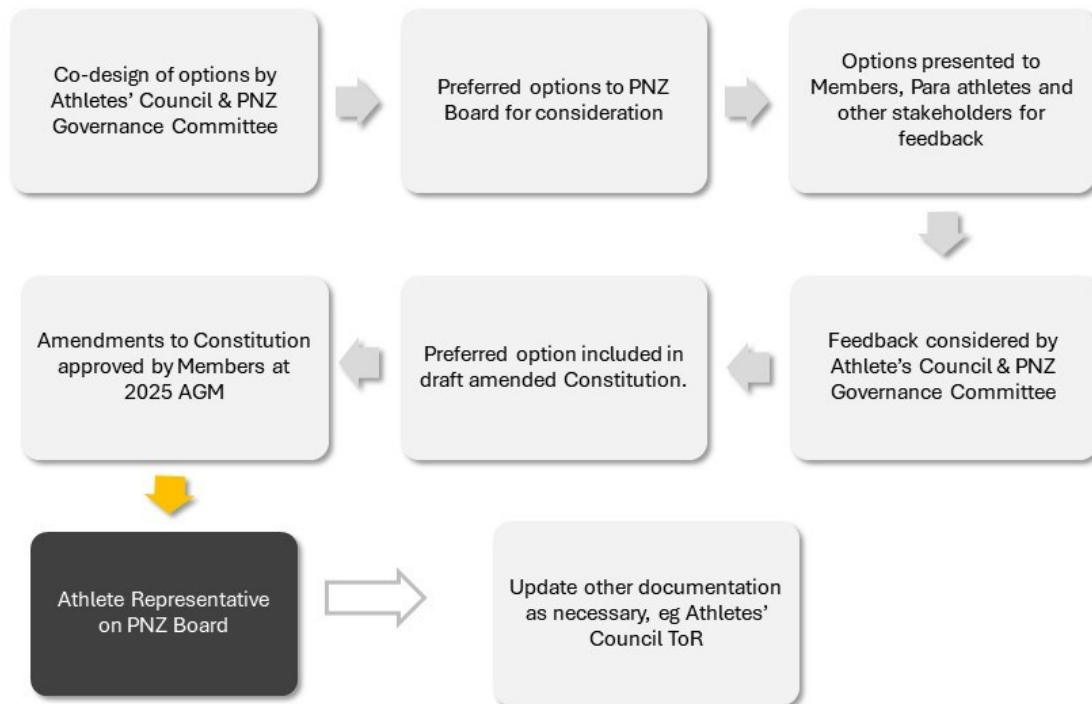
The acceptance of the preferred option will be presented at the 2025 PNZ AGM through a vote by PNZ members. Any change to the PNZ Constitution requires the members to vote on the change and pass the change with a simple majority.

Consultation and Feedback

PNZ is conscious of the timing of the consultation process and the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. This information is provided for your consideration. Feedback opportunities will include an online survey so Paralympians and Para athletes can select their

preferred option as well as an opportunity for individual feedback and comment via open text in the online survey and email contact details for the PNZ Governance Committee Chair and PNZ Athletes' Council Chair.

Proposed consultation and approval process



Models of Athlete Representation

This consultation process relates to **one** Athlete Representative on the PNZ Board.

Four examples of different methods for gaining an Athlete Representative were presented to the PNZ Athletes' Council as a discussion starting point. No further options were identified by the PNZ Athletes' Council for consideration and presentation to Paralympians and Para athletes. The PNZ Athletes' Council does have a preferred option, but PNZ and the PNZ Athletes' Council are seeking independent feedback directly from Paralympians and Para athletes as to their preference.

Athlete representative options

Athlete representative options include co-opted, appointed and elected. Each option is outlined in the following models, outlining the pros and cons of each option.

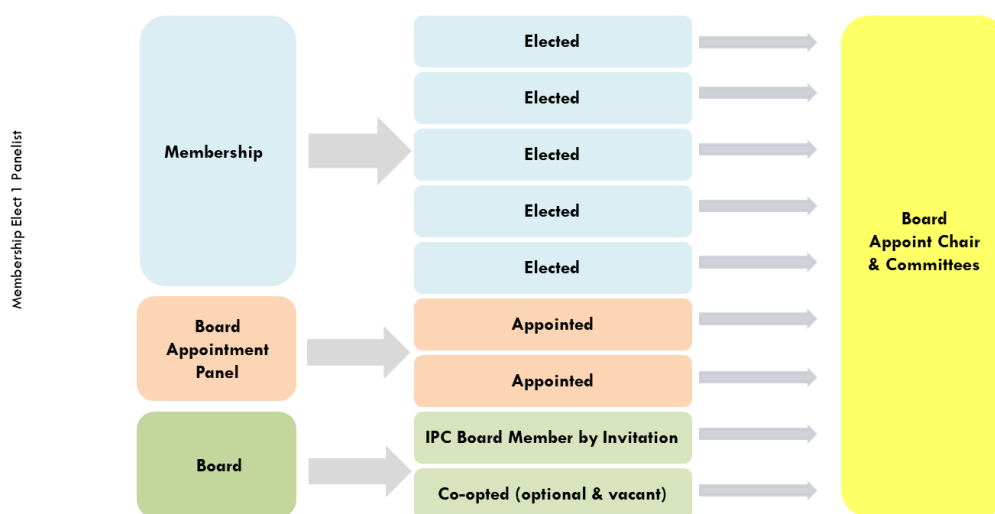
Mandate

One of the issues identified, but not fully resolved through the discussions with the PNZ Athletes' Council, is who should represent athletes on the PNZ Board?

- Athletes' Council representative?
- Only a retired Para athlete or any Para athlete including current Para athlete?
- Paralympian?
- Para athlete?
- Someone who is not an athlete (but is elected by the athletes)?

In the models outlined in the following pages, the "who" who represents athletes is slightly different and has different mandates and responsibilities back to athletes.

Current PNZ Board Structure



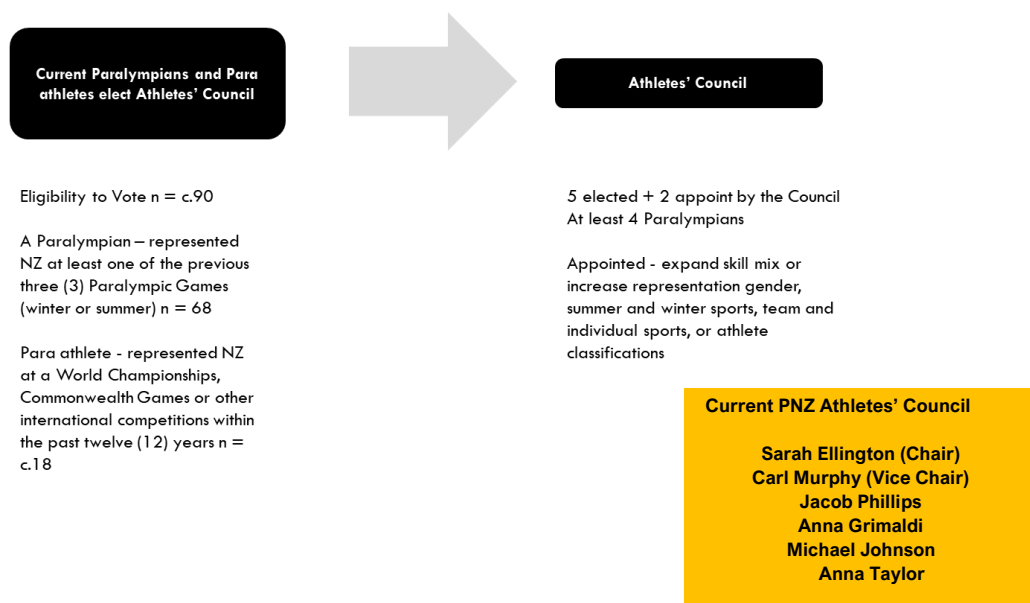
PNZ Board

The diagram above illustrates how the current PNZ Board is established. Five positions are elected by the PNZ members, two are appointed by the Board Appointment Panel which is made up of the PNZ Chair, a panelist appointed by the PNZ Board and a panelist elected by the PNZ members. Two further Board members can be appointed by the PNZ Board directly.

PNZ Athletes' Council

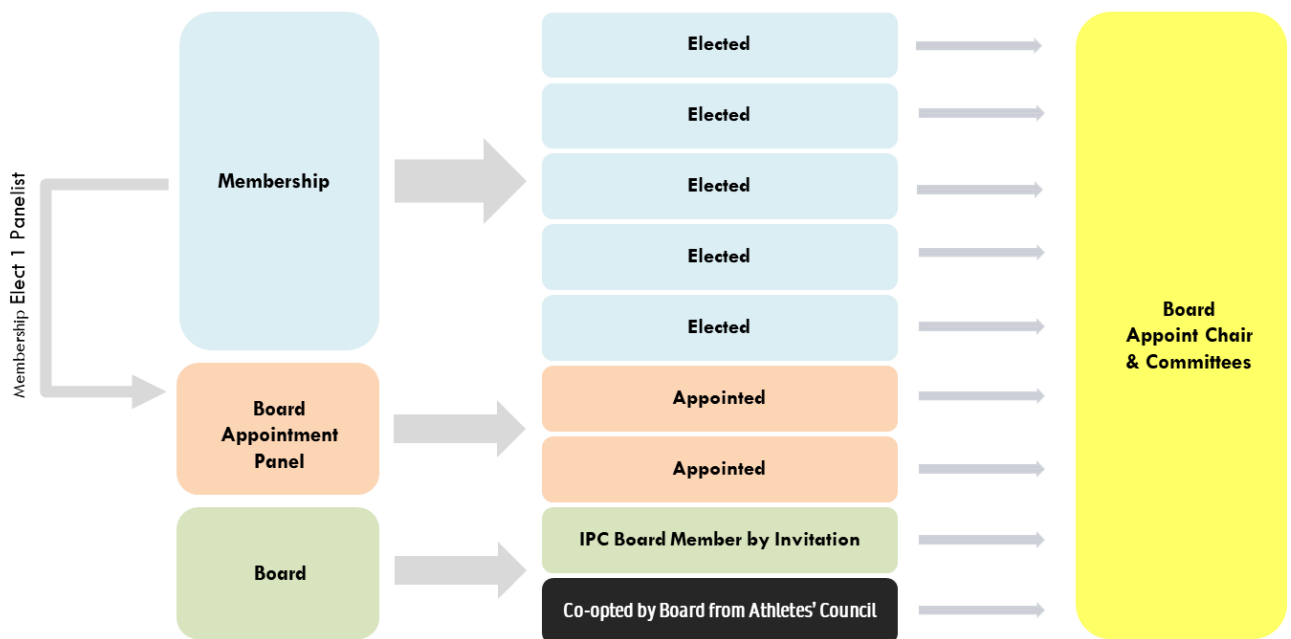
The PNZ Athletes' Council is a body elected by current Paralympians and Para athletes. Five elected members and up to two appointed members constitute the membership of the PNZ Athletes' Council.

Athletes' Council Election Process



Model 1

Athlete's' Council Representative fills vacant **Co-opted** role



Pros

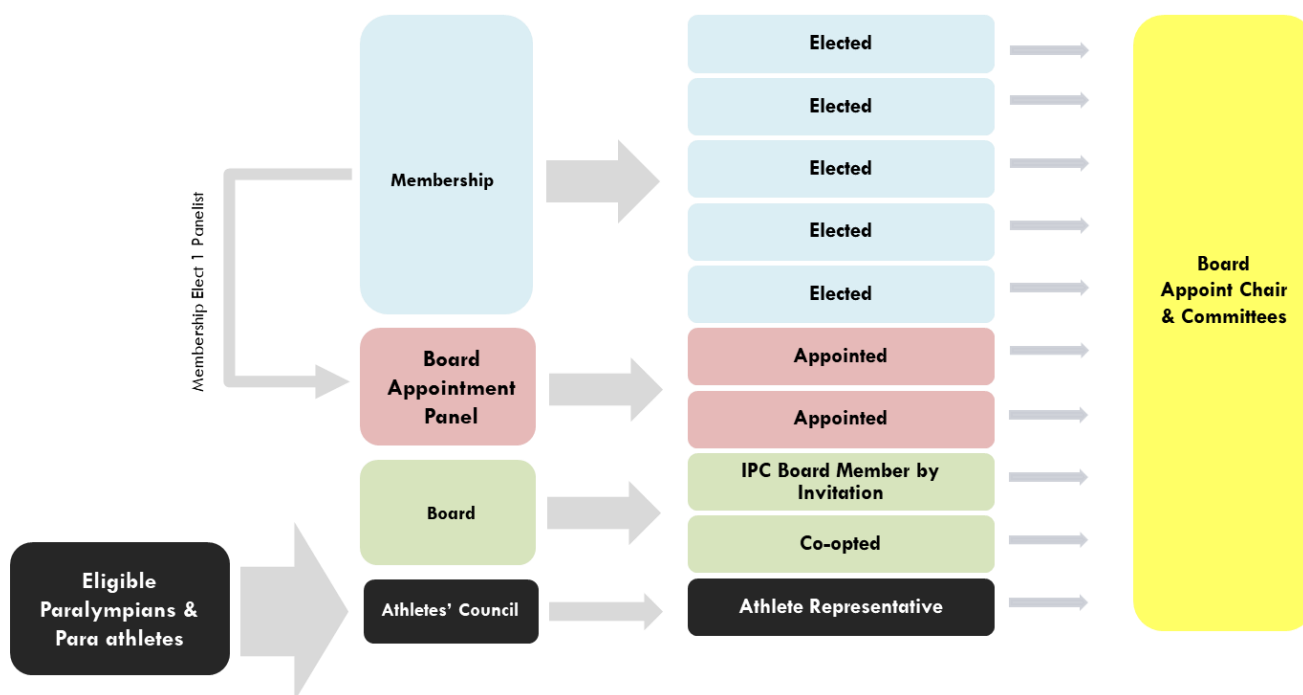
- No change in PNZ Board size.
- Allows PNZ Board and PNZ Athletes' Council to determine representation as a flexible approach.

Cons

- PNZ Board co-opts not the PNZ Athletes' Council? Not a certainty.
- Should PNZ Athletes' Council Chair be the Ex Officio representative or any member of the PNZ Athletes' Council?
- No change in PNZ Board size means no further opportunity to co-opt additional members/skills/expertise.
- Inconsistency in PNZ Board co-opted member term up to 2 years, all other PNZ Board members' up to 4 years.
- Adds additional work and time commitment to PNZ Athletes' Council representative.

Model 2

Athlete Representative - **Appointed by Athletes' Council**



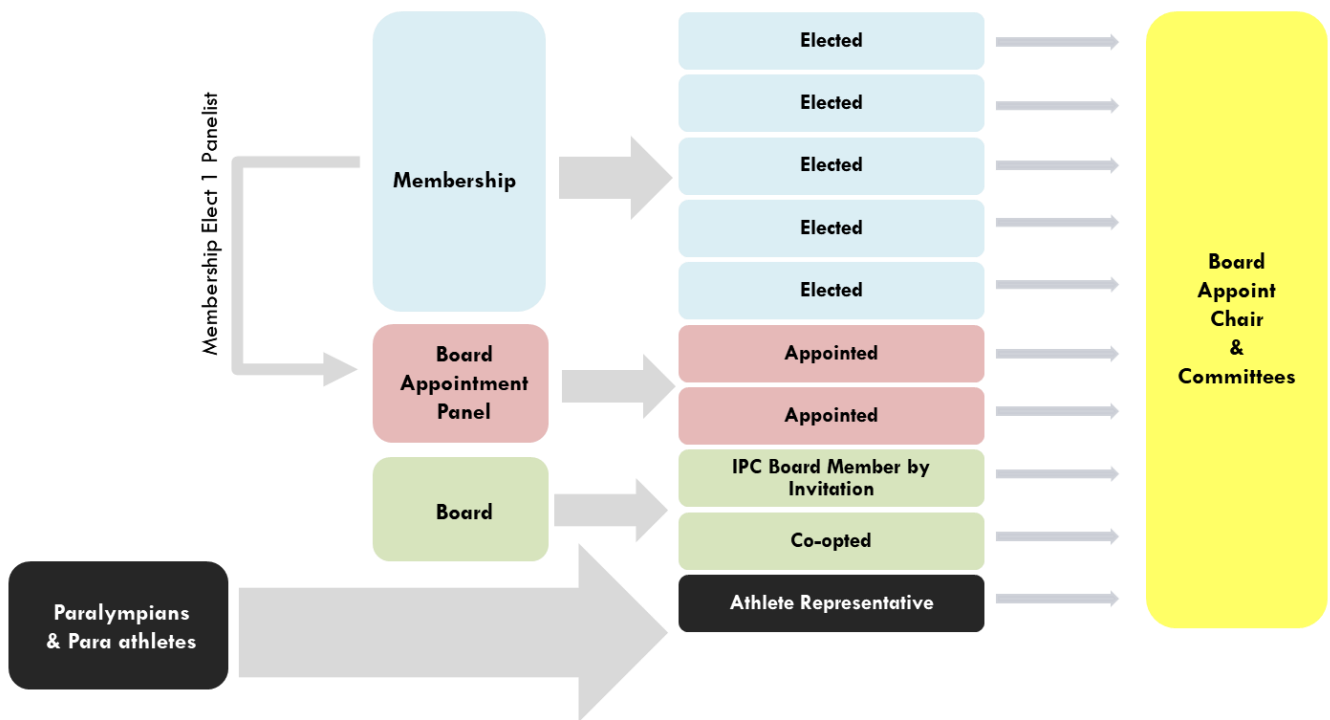
Pros

- Appointed by PNZ Athletes' Council.
- No voting by Paralympians/Para athletes needed.
- Allows for PNZ Board to still co-opt additional members/skills/expertise.

Cons

- PNZ Board size increases by 1 member.
- Paralympians/Para athletes have no direct involvement in appointment process.
- Representative role only while the appointee is on PNZ Athletes' Council.
- Adds additional work and time commitment to PNZ Athletes' Council representative.

Model 3 Athlete Representative - Elected by Paralympians



Pros

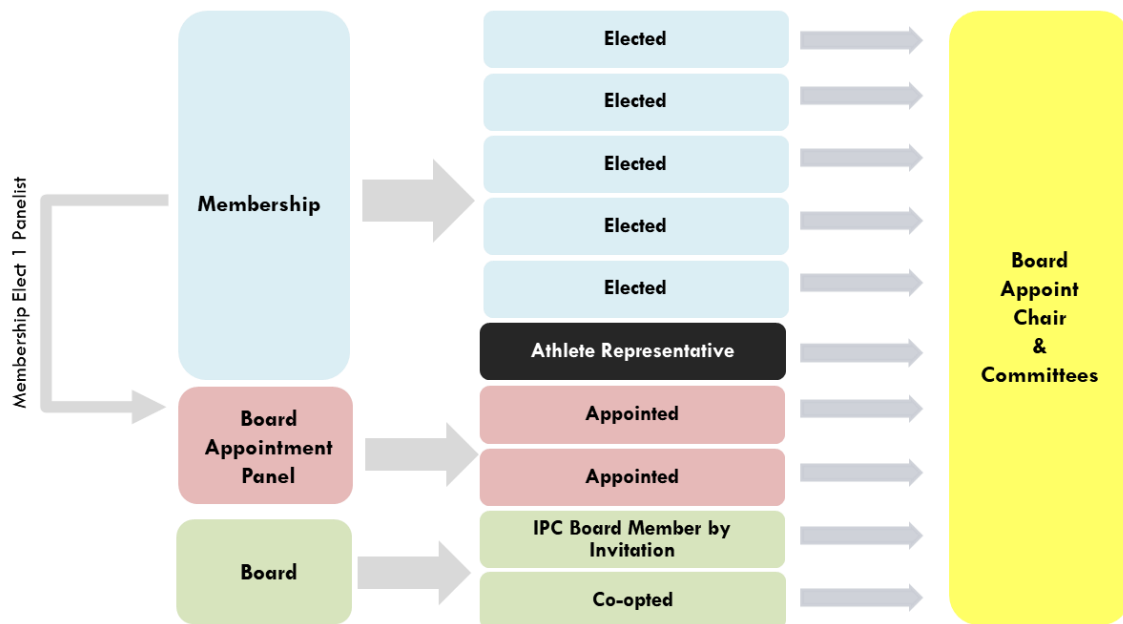
- All eligible athletes can vote for their representative on the PNZ Board.

Cons

- PNZ Board size increases by 1.
- Only Paralympians not Para athletes?
- Alignment to PNZ Athletes' Council eligibility and elections?
- Voting practically very difficult.
- How would validity of candidates and voters be monitored?
- How would the election process be run separate to the PNZ Board member process?
- Would require a new membership group – “Para Athlete” in PNZ Constitution. This may have other implications on membership rights and voting on other issues?

Model 4

Athlete Representative - **Elected by PNZ Members**



Pros

- No change to current voting process.

Cons

- PNZ Board size increases by 1.
- Voting by PNZ members only (NSOs and Parafeds). Does not directly represent Paralympians/Para athletes and the athletes' voice.
- Paralympians/Para athletes have no direct involvement in election process or control on who is elected to represent them.