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## **TRIATHLON AUSTRALIA NAMES FORMIDABLE TEAM FOR GOLD COAST**

Australia will boast its largest ever team when the Gold Coast hosts the 2009 ITU Triathlon World Championships in September, with more than 1,000 athletes to compete on home soil.

Triathlon Australia this week approved an age group contingent of 991 triathletes, made up of 573 competing in the Olympic Distance Triathlon and 418 in the Sprint Distance Triathlon. Combined with what is certain to be a strong team of open elite competitors, Under 23s and ITU juniors that number will swell to well over 1,000 when competition gets underway from September 9 to 13.

Age group athletes will compete in categories split into male and female five-year increments, having gained selection via a rigorous series of qualification races – the new national Challenge Series for Olympic Distance competitors, and various State titles for Sprint Distance athletes.

Triathlon Australia President Ken Bonham said the size and talent of the team was a credit to the entire Australian triathlon community.

“This is a formidable team that is sure to do us proud on home soil,” he said. “Just gaining selection for the team is an achievement in itself, given the times that were posted in the more competitive age groups during the qualification races.

“Triathlon Australia’s new Challenge Series provided a wonderful pathway into the World Championships, with some scenic and testing courses throughout the capital cities producing consistently high quality racing. Adelaide, Hobart, Canberra and Perth attracted record competitor numbers and we now have an established platform to encourage participation in the sport at junior, novice, experienced and elite level.”

“With our largest and strongest ever age group team assembled, along with a stellar cast of elite and emerging talent ready to take on the world in their own backyard, it really is an exciting and progressive time for triathlon in Australia.”

The youngest competitor in the Australian age group team is Liam Rapley, from Sydney’s Engadine Tri Club, who will turn 16 a fortnight after the event. The oldest Australian team member is 82-year-old ACT triathlon legend Rad Leovic. The team also includes a number of families and Bill Chaffey, a northern NSW athlete who will compete in the hand-cycle category for AWAD (athlete’s with a disability) entrants.

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**Australian Sports Commission:**

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