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## **VOLLEYROOS WIN 4 VNL MATCHES IN A ROW – BEATING GERMANY, CHINA, KOREA AND RIO OLYMPIC SILVER MEDALLISTS, ITALY**

### **VOLLEYROOS APPEAL TO VOLLEYBALLERS NATIONALLY TO SHOW UP AND ‘VOTE FOR VOLLEYBALL’ THIS WEEKEND FOR FIVB VOLLEYBALL NATIONS LEAGUE AT HISENSE ARENA**

Volleyball Australia has called on its sport’s fans, athletes, coaches, administrators, officials and supporters to turn up and be counted at Hisense Arena this weekend for the home round of the new FIVB Volleyball Nation’s League (VNL). This weekend is your chance to vote for Volleyball.

In the midst of the World Cup, what is often described as the “other roundball world game”, volleyball, will host Olympic Champions Brazil, World Champions Poland and Pan American Champions Argentina in the last round of the VNL at Hisense Arena in Melbourne.

Following Australia’s promotion to the 16 nation league after its bronze place in the World League Finals in 2017, your Volleyroos have been the surprise package in the all new Volleyball Nation’s League. Winning their last 4 matches and beating volleyball powerhouses Germany, China and Korea before despatching Olympic silver medallists Italy on Sunday night in Korea. Despite this extraordinary run of success for the world’s youngest national team in the League, Volleyball Australia still anticipates a funding cut under the Australian Sports Commission’s controversial medal strategy, previously called “Winning Edge”.

Volleyball Australia President, Craig Carracher, on behalf of our men and women teams competing on the world stage this weekend and our many junior and youth teams competing globally this month, has called on all volleyball fans to turn up and support their Volleyroos and to protest the very possible outcome that the Australian Sports Commission may cut further high performance funding for our indoor volleyball programs in 2019.

The sport, and that means each of us, needs to appreciate just how important this weekend is. As a sport community we all must be fully informed that the FIVB VNL at Hisense Arena represents the last opportunity for the sport to prove to the ASC, the Government and to funding partners nationally that the sport should not be cut from high performance funding. This is the only way the sport can stand up and protest and be counted. These are political decisions and it’s time the government and decision makers understood the power of team sport in Australia.

Clearly performances alone are not enough. Clearly being the most gender equal sport in the nation (*ASC, AusPlay, December 2016*) is not enough. Clearly hosting the most successful secondary school sporting event in Australia does not appear to sway decision makers. Clearly the correlation between beach volleyball success and the depth of opportunity in our volleyball programs appears not to influence decision makers either.

Australia sits in 11th place in the 16 team VNL at the end of Round 4. The men’s Volleyroos are ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the world, well ahead of the Socceroos competing in the World Cup, and interestingly soccer and volleyball success stories are very similar with teams like Brazil, Argentina, Germany, France the traditional powerhouses in both sports. In many respects the success of a nation’s soccer and volleyball teams follows one another at world level. They are truly global sports and excite the imagination of world audiences. Volleyball was the most watched sport at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. But there is a changing of the guard and perhaps that is reflected in this week’s results in soccer as it has in volleyball.

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The Australian Sports Commission is expected to announce its high performance funding decisions next month, together with the new National Sports Plan and indoor volleyball is in the firing line, while beach volleyball's recent success at the Commonwealth Games and strong performances on the world stage are expected to assure it of continued strong support.

Volleyball is a world sport with 221 national federation members of the International Volleyball Federation, the FIVB, and typically over 150 nations compete each quadrennial for the 12 Olympic berths on offer. Australia has outperformed on the world stage and like the Soccerroos, continues to qualify for the World Cup equivalent in volleyball, the World Championships which will be held in Italy and Bulgaria later this year. But despite winning on the world stage as we did in 2014 in the World League and again last year winning the Bronze in the second division of the World League, medalling at an Olympics is a dream for even the top 10 teams in the world sport given the depth and breadth of the team sport. If the sport wants to command tax payer support for its high performance program, we need to evidence to those decision makers that at the elite level there is support for our sport.

That means, in very blunt terms, that Hisense Arena must be filled, even though we are playing in the middle of the AFL season, Rugby League season and international Rugby Union as well as the World Cup of Soccer.

But that is no excuse for our sport. We either turn up and be counted or each fan, each volleyball player, each parent and sibling of a volleyball fanatic in this generation and at this time, will have to accept our collective responsibility in the outcomes of any decision that may go against our sport in the coming weeks and months by the ASC. It is our time to protest vote!

This is the sport's time to protest our exclusion, protest our poor facilities nationally, protest our lack of funding and to send a message that gender equal non contact team sports are deserving of support. Sports that can bring the world's best to Australia to compete are deserving of recognition. That athletes that truly compete on a world stage, not just a regional or local stage, should be supported and the ambitions of our young athletes, in the most gender equal sport in the nation, should be encouraged.

It is up to the sport, it is up to us all now to be literally counted at Hisense Arena. Empty seats this Saturday night, the marquee night of the event, will be daggers into the hearts of the athletes, coaches and our junior players nationally. Hisense Arena is almost 11000 seats and we have given away no tickets – we value our sport and we value our athletes and we ask each of our sport's fans to support our teams and turn up and pay the that value. This is a case of the sport valuing itself, turn up and make a difference on one night.

Volleyroos play at Hisense Arena Friday night at 9pm against the Olympic Champions Brazil, at 5.30pm on Saturday night against Argentina and at 3pm against Poland on Sunday. All details are at:

<http://www.volleyballaustralia.org.au/events/volleyball-nations-league>

Tickets available at Ticketek.

For and on behalf of your Volleyroos,

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