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**Five-time Female Olympian appointed Technical Director of Judo Federation of Australia**

The Judo Federation of Australia (JFA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Maria Pekli into a full time Technical Director role.

This newly created Technical Director position will have broad responsibility for leading, developing, and implementing the JFA's high performance strategies and programs.

The five-time Olympian, who won Bronze at the Sydney 2000 Olympics, was acknowledged for her world-class performances when she was inducted into the International Judo Federation's Hall of Fame in 2015.

Maria was recognised as one of the very elite judokas on the international judo scene; and the very first inductee for our region. Since her competitive retirement, Maria has played a key role in progressing JFA high performance programs at both state and national levels.

"I am very excited to take on this role and endeavour to enhance our high performance program. We have many talented athletes in Australia and I truly believe that with a carefully planned and implemented strategy we can become truly competitive on the World Judo circuit," Pekli said.

This is a vital stage for the JFA, as the organisation is implementing a significant change agenda and aiming to further enhance and professionalise its high performance programs leading in to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and beyond.

The Technical Director role will be responsible for setting the strategic and operational direction of the JFA High Performance Program and assume the National Head Coach role for major benchmark events.

JFA Chief Executive Officer Alex Vallentine is excited by this appointment and believes the experience Maria brings to the role will see her very well placed to successfully lead the JFA's high performance activities through the new Olympic cycle.

"The JFA is extremely fortunate to have recruited Maria to the Technical Director position. To be able to appoint an excellent candidate from within our own organisation, who has the credibility, skills and experience is truly fantastic. I know that our community will welcome this appointment," he said.

Maria will be based in Melbourne and officially commence in the role on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April.