



# JUNIOR SPORT POLICY

“The purpose of this junior sport policy for Swimming Australia is to assist in the provision of quality sport experiences for young people. It will encourage the provision of safe, enjoyable and accountable environments for everyone involved in junior swimming.”

Updated: September 2008



Australian Government  
Australian Sports Commission

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## BACKGROUND

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The Junior Sport Policy (JSP) was introduced by Swimming Australia in October 2004. At the time there was a move from within Swimming Australia to address the rules and procedures for the junior end of the sport. There was previously limited implementation of any official policies, practices or procedures in activities run by or sanctioned by Swimming Australia.

Continued changes in the governance and structure of Swimming Australia have allowed a successful Junior Sport Policy to be introduced and adapted into the progressive nature of the sport.

Sport and People Development remain as two of the four sections of the Swimming Australia Strategic Plan, Swimming for Life, which was reviewed and relaunched in June 2007. A consistent, integral inclusion in this is the development of important Strategic Initiatives to assist in the grassroots development of the sport .

Swimming is in a unique position for grassroots development of the sport with a very strong national culture for children to learn to swim (whether through State Education Systems or private operators) and the traditional school swimming carnivals which still are an important part in most school curricula.

With the continued adoption and facilitation of this Junior Sport Policy, Swimming Australia and all of its affiliates will continue to 'rethink' how it deals with its young members, resulting in a change of culture for the benefit of the sport and its participants.

The perception of the sport of Swimming being elitist at all levels will continue to be changed with the grassroots development of the sport concentrating on fun and development, providing a broad base of activities.

The Sport will recognise participation and provide a higher level of support to junior swimmers through the Australia Junior Excellence Program and other GO CLUB branded programs.

The policy will continue to aim at addressing the issue of member retention. With an estimated 15% dropout every year and an annual new membership of over 10,000 in the 12 and under age group, there is a definite opportunity to provide programs that not only attract young people to the sport but also retain them for many years

# **THE KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPINGS IN SWIMMING'S JUNIOR SPORT POLICY AND THEIR ROLES**

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## **THE BOARD OF SWIMMING AUSTRALIA**

endorsement of the Junior Sport Policy

## **STATE/TERRITORY SWIMMING ORGANISATIONS**

assist in the review of the junior sport policy; implement the Junior Sport policy at the State/Territory level.

## **SWIMMING COACHES**

integral in the continued acceptance of modifying the rules and procedures and changing the culture of the sport

## **SWIMMING OFFICIALS**

the continued development of and ability to implement modified rules, known as rule tolerances, for the sport for appropriate levels of competition determined by the state.

## **SWIMMERS**

the participants who will benefit from the implementation of the policy

## **PARENTS OF SWIMMERS**

the critical supporters of the swimmers who need to be informed and involved in the policy and its development

## **SWIMMING ADMINISTRATORS**

the Club, Regional and State administrators who are the direct link for all information pertaining to the policy

## **SCHOOL SPORT AUSTRALIA**

provision of linkages to School swimming events and programs.

## **LEARN TO SWIM OPERATORS**

provision of linkages between learn to swim programs and swimming clubs

## **AUSTRALIAN SWIMMING TEACHERS AND COACHES ASSOCIATION (ASCTA) AND OTHER RELEVANT TEACHERS OF SWIMMING**

Professional bodies involved with the accreditation of swimming teachers and coaches

## **THE REVIEW PANEL**

Adam Pine (Swimming Australia Sport Development Manager), Grant Hughes (SAL Sport Development Coordinator), Paul Bruce (Coach and Athlete Development Coordinator), Kevin Hasemann (Swimming Queensland) representing the State Swimming ED's, Ralph Richards (ASCTA), Gayle Rogers – National Coordinator, Mel Turner – ASC Junior Sport Unit – will oversee the review of the policy and ensure effective consultation and implementation with all stakeholders

# **JUNIOR SPORT POLICY FOR AUSTRALIAN SWIMMING**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Swimming Australia believes that Junior Swimming provides the foundation for a unique life skill and sporting experience in water, from the Learn to Swim Program through to a variety of programs and experiences within the comprehensive swimming club structure.

There has to be a holistic developmental approach at all levels of the sport involving young people, coaches, Technical officials, administrators and anyone else connected to Junior swimming.

As duty of care issues become increasingly important, providers of junior swimming must be familiar with, and put into practice, procedures to ensure young people have a positive experience in our sport. The health and welfare of junior swimmers must be central to all objectives, which include providing:

- Fun experiences
- Safe and supportive environments
- Skill development, challenge and the joy of achieving
- Access for all to participate
- A clear pathway for improvement
- Equal opportunities for all young people.

This policy contains guiding principles to assist in achieving the objectives. They are provided in the following key areas:

1. Getting Young People Involved for the Long-term
2. Swimmer Development and Pathways
3. Forming Links
4. Quality Coaching of Junior Swimmers
5. Making Swimming Safe

**FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS DOCUMENT THE POLICY COVERS AGES 5 – 17 YEARS**

## 1. GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED FOR THE LONG-TERM

Getting young people active is important because it is an integral component of a healthy lifestyle. Swimming assists in preventing lifestyle diseases and promotes physical, psychological and social well-being.

Quality experiences in junior swimming provide the entry to a lifelong involvement in the sport for

- Enjoyment and recreation with pleasurable social involvement
- Fulfilling individual potential in sport.
- Recognition of participation in the sport of swimming in the long term

An understanding of what young people look for in sport helps us provide positive experiences that encourage young people to remain active participants throughout their lives.

Swimming provides an opportunity to develop physical, social and emotional abilities and therefore should be accessible to all young people. A wide variety of skills and abilities developed in swimming transfer to non-athletic careers and swimming influences social factors such as goal setting, community pride, identity, and leisure.

Swimming as a sport continues to be inclusive at all levels. Strong awareness of catering for disability, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, geographical location, Indigenous background, social class and socio-economic status sees swimming exceed it's legal responsibilities and the adoption of the behavioural guidelines ensures an outline of appropriate behaviour for those involved with our sport.

Recognising the difficulties from the perspective of young people, and the restrictions they have on being involved, allows swimming to meet the challenge of all the young people having the fundamental right to be involved in the sport. Meeting legal obligations related to equity of opportunity must also be considered.

***Swimming will cater for all levels of junior swimmers with flexible and appropriate rules and practices.***

### PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED FOR THE LONG-TERM TO INCLUDE:

#### ***Enable equity of access to all junior programs by coaches, officials and swimmers.***

This strategy will include:

- Recognising and addressing issues associated with Ethnicity, Disability, Gender, Sexuality, Socio economic status, Body Shape, Ability and Geographically location
- Flexible membership categories
- Affordable programs

#### ***Provide equal opportunity for young people regardless of their ability***

This strategy will include:

- Appropriate and varied training methods
- Re-defined competition (across all spectrums)
- Recognition of all levels of achievement through participation ribbons and other items
- More flexible and varied competition programs to cater for all
- Availability of rule tolerances in appropriate circumstances for junior swimming

### ***Establish an appropriate club environment***

This strategy will include:

- Family involvement and activities
- Developing a club 'culture'
- Promotion of healthy lifestyle
- Re defining the role of the club
- Utilisation of the GO CLUB PB, the national Club Operation measurement system
- Continued development of a "GO Swim" New Members Kit
- Encouraging young people to become involved as administrators, coaches etc. through Youth based programs and committees

## 2. SWIMMER DEVELOPMENT AND PATHWAYS

Years 5 to 17 are a time of tremendous development for young people on all levels - physically, psychologically, emotionally and socially. Planning for the progressive development of swimming skills in young people requires consideration of

- Identifiable stages of development
- Different levels of ability
- Different rates in gaining swimming skills
- Different interests of young people in the sport.

It is the responsibility of all swimming leaders to manage the experiences available to young people so that activities and challenges are offered in a planned and sequential manner.

Physical activity is essential for the normal growth and development of the child. However, there are potentially harmful effects for young swimmers through the impact of intense training. This can adversely affect the dynamics and timing of growth and physical maturation. Determining when children are ready for more intense training and competition is a duty of care required of swimming coaches.

Growth is a complicated process because parts of the body mature at different rates, and periods of growth vary considerably between individuals. This differential growth of various body parts has a major influence on the performance of motor skills.

Maturation is the genetically programmed series of changes leading to maturity. Tissues and systems mature at different rates and although every child passes through all the stages of maturation in the same order, there is great variation in developmental rates and the length of time taken to pass from an initial stage to a final stage. Chronological age is of limited value in determining levels of maturity for children.

***Junior swimming practices will reflect the junior swimming development model***

### PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR SWIMMER DEVELOPMENT & PATHWAYS TO INCLUDE:

#### ***A clear development model for junior swimmers***

This strategy will include:

- Developing a non-competitive/recreational model to include young people as administrators, officials and coaches through Youth based programs and committees.

#### ***Pathways from learn to swim to Swimming clubs***

This strategy will include:

- Fostering relationships with learn to swim programs and providers.
- Participation ribbons available for all non medallists at specified events.
- Recruitment of new members through provision of resources to clubs for promotion.
- National certification scheme for junior swimmers through the Australian Junior Excellence Program.
- Define the progression of junior swimmers using Athlete Development Pathway (See Appendix A).

**Create a clear development model for young people as volunteers**

This strategy will include:

- Diverse roles and responsibilities.
- Create junior volunteer model/pathways.
- Youth Leadership opportunities for development.

**Recognise and cater for Physical and Psychological maturation**

This strategy will include:

- Education and policies addressing psychological burnout, eating disorders, growth, maturation and body image.

TABLE 1 - PROGRESSION FOR JUNIOR SWIMMING (SEE APPENDIX A, SWIMMER DEVELOPMENT MODEL)				
	Broad Experiences	Progression	Specialisation	Recreational Participation
Ability				
Age Span				
Focus				
Considerations				
Individual Session Duration				
Session Frequency				
Session Contents				
Approach to Conditioning				
Competition				
Recognition				

### 3. FORMING LINKS

Consultation and co-operation are essential for effective and efficient junior swimming participation.

A number of agencies are responsible for organising and conducting sport including schools, commercial and non-profit providers, sporting organisations, government (local, state and federal), and non-government agencies.

All of these are partners in junior swimming and their cooperation and goodwill is vital to the successful delivery of junior swimming. Consultation and cooperation provide many benefits including

- Identifying gaps and overlaps in delivery and resolving cooperative approaches to them
- Consistency in the provision of junior swimming with regard to age groupings, competition rules etc
- Sharing resources.

Participants in junior swimming potentially come into contact with, and are influenced by, a diverse range of people including: Other swimmers, Parents and carers, Teachers, Coaches, Technical officials, Administrators and Volunteers.

These people are an important resource in junior swimming because they provide the necessary infrastructure for its delivery. They also determine the social atmosphere of the sport.

The importance of their contribution cannot be underestimated because of the close relationship between the quality of leadership found in swimming and the quality of the swimming experience for young people

***Swimming will have strong links and partnerships with stakeholders, kindred organisations, schools and others.***

#### PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR FORMING LINKS TO INCLUDE:

##### ***Establish links with Kindred Organisations***

This strategy will include establishing links with:

- Education/Schools (School's Network, ACHPER)
- Facility owners (private)
- Other related sports
- Government providers and state bodies
- Learn to swim organisations
- Providers of Swimming teacher training
- Other Peak bodies
- Other sports and the opportunities they can provide

##### ***Provide ongoing support for the people who supply the infrastructure to enable junior swimming to happen.***

This strategy will include:

- Promoting the SAL Behavioral Guidelines
- Regular communication to Young people, Parents and carers, Teachers, Coaches, Technical officials, Administrators and Volunteers involved with Junior Swimming.
- Encouragement of communication mediums specifically for those involved with junior swimming

## 4. QUALITY COACHING OF JUNIOR SWIMMERS

Understanding the learning process and the developmental stages in this process are necessary for quality junior swimming experiences. Young people have preferences for how they like to learn, and their preferences might change depending on the type of task and their prior experiences.

Some might like to watch, listen and experiment, and others may like to try an activity first and refine their learning through feedback.

Young people typically learn more than one thing at a time. In the process of learning physical skills, young people also learn what behaviour is expected, how to work with others, and what they are good at.

Recognising that learning is multi-dimensional is important. It highlights the complexity of acquiring skills and how broader social aspects of life impact on young people as they learn physical skills.

People in leadership roles should plan for each session and the season ahead. Planning should address not only what is presented but also how it will be presented to optimise learning, safety and enjoyment.

***Swimming will have a system that will recognise and support the developmental coaches of junior swimmers.***

### PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR QUALITY COACHING OF JUNIOR SWIMMERS TO INCLUDE:

#### ***Develop clear pathways for coaches of junior swimmers (Professional development and recognition)***

This strategy will include:

- Promotion of the ASCTA Junior Squad and Assistant Coach Qualification for coaching junior swimmers.
- Promote and encourage coaches working within the club environment to complete the Bronze Licence Accreditation course
- Further developing a junior coaching course content that emphasises the specific needs of Junior Swimmers
- Targeted coach education through specialised lectures and program visits by mentor coaches

#### ***Provide professional development of club coaches***

This strategy will include:

- Linkages with the Go Club Coach education program
- Development of state based presentations and activities for coaches

#### ***Provide quality coaching for all levels***

This strategy will include:

- Develop a range of mentoring opportunities

#### ***Talent ID and 'Assistant coach' role***

This strategy will include:

- Development of a talent development program
- Involvement of parents/more experienced swimmers in assistant coaching roles.

## 5. MAKING SWIMMING SAFE

Swimming organisers have a legal duty of care to not expose young people to risk in any aspect of providing the swimming experience. Areas of concern for which advice, training and procedures (written where possible) should be in place include facilities and equipment, the environment, training and competition, infectious diseases, medical conditions, drugs, weight control and dealing with emergencies

To protect the welfare of young people in swimming, organisations must be aware of the relevant legal issues and put safeguards in place. By doing this you will be protecting both your junior members and the organisation.

The legislation relevant to the safety and welfare of participants in junior swimming covers: Discrimination, Child protection, Drugs, Health and safety and Privacy.

All of this legislation emphasises the serious obligations undertaken by any person or organisation taking responsibility for the care and/or coaching of children.

The community and the courts have a high expectation that officers of organisations and members of management committees are aware of their legal obligations and taking steps to ensure compliance.

***Swimming will have standards/policies/guidelines for safe junior swimming.***

### PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR MAKING SWIMMING SAFE TO INCLUDE:

***Ensure the key objectives of the Member Welfare Policy, the Child Welfare Policy and the Behavioural Guidelines are actively promoted throughout the swimming community***

This strategy will include:

- Promote a safe and harassment free environment
- Promotion of Member and Child Welfare Policy through a brochure
- Continued promotion of the Member Welfare Policy through free online training etc

***Ensure the swimming membership positively embraces the Behavioural Guidelines***

This strategy will include:

- Promotion of the Behavioural Guidelines
- Promotion of the free online training for Member Welfare Policy

***Develop national guidelines for facilities and equipment***

This strategy will include:

- Encouragement of adherence to national guidelines for safe pool operations (i.e. RLSSA)

***Develop national guidelines for safe practices in training and competition***

This strategy will include:

- Promotion of the Risk Assessment Checklist for running events
- Development of Risk Assessment checklists for running club training
- Promotion of the online risk assessment training for swimming clubs

***Develop other Safe Health policies and guidelines.***

This strategy will include:

- Psychological/physical, Overload, Nutrition, Parent Education, Medical History, Drugs, Hydration, Weather and Sun Protection.

# APPENDIX A - ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY



## Swimming Australia | ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

