



# Australian Swimming

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft Junior Sport Policy

**\*Deadline for Final Comment - 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2004\***

*"The purpose of this junior sport policy for Australian Swimming 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."*

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## *Background*

- Although for some time there has been a move from within Australian Swimming to address the rules and procedures for the junior end of the sport, there still remains a total absence of any official Junior Sport policies, practices or procedures in activities run by or sanctioned by Australian Swimming.
- Over the last two years there have been progressive changes in the governance and structure of Australian Swimming and the development of a Junior Sport Policy fits in ideally with the current progressive nature of the sport
- Sport and People Development are two of the four sections of the Australian Strategic Plan, which is to be launched in 2004. Integral 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 adoption and implementation of a Junior Sport Policy, Australian Swimming and all of its affiliates will have 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 be changed with the grassroots development of the sport concentrating on fun and development, providing a broad base of activities.
- The policy will also address the issue of member retention. With an estimated 30% dropout every year and an annual new membership of over 10,000 in the 10 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

- The Board of Australian Swimming - *approval of the Junior Sport Policy*
- State/Territory Swimming Organisations - *assist in the development of the draft policy; organise State/Territory consultations; implement the Junior Sport policy at the State/Territory level.*
- Swimming Coaches - *integral in the acceptance of the modifying of rules and procedures and changing the culture of the sport*
- Swimming Officials - *the development of and able to implement, modified rules for the sport*
- 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 AUST SWIM - *Professional bodies involved with the accreditation of swimming teachers and coaches*
- *The Steering Committee* - Brendan Lynch - ASI Manager Corporate Service, Len Yeats - ASI Sport Development Manager, Kevin Hasemann (QASA) representing the State Swimming ED's, Michael Piper - Member Development Officer QASA, Jeff Emmel - Executive Director, ACHPER, Di McNeill - ASC Junior Sport Unit - *will oversee the development of the policy and ensure effective consultation with all stakeholders*

## The Process

### Phase 1 - Policy development

1. Convene Steering Committee by 12<sup>th</sup> March 04 - **COMPLETED**
2. Development of Draft Policy by Key Stakeholders - State ED's, ACHPER, SSA, & Technical officials by 18-19<sup>th</sup> March 04- **COMPLETED**
3. Review of First Draft and development of Operational strategies for the Draft Policy - State Development Officers - 5<sup>th</sup> April 04-**COMPLETED**
4. National Consultation on First Draft. - Road Show to State Meetings of stakeholders for feedback on Draft Policy - May - July 04. [FEEDBACK TO LEN YEATS : [Len.yeats@swimming.org.au](mailto:Len.yeats@swimming.org.au) by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2004] - **COMPLETED**
5. Preparation of Second Draft - July - August 04
6. Second Draft sent to all Stakeholders and put on ASI website ([www.swimming.org.au](http://www.swimming.org.au) ) for comment - August - September 04 [DEADLINE FOR FINAL COMMENT - 10<sup>th</sup> September 2004]
7. Final Draft prepared - September 04
8. Presentation of Final Draft to ASI Annual Forum 18-19<sup>th</sup> September 04
9. Policy document submitted to ASC Industry Review Group for comment - October 04
10. Final Policy submitted to ASI Board for Approval November 04

### Phase 2 - Implementation

1. Modification of Rules and Practices - June 04 - February 05 Ist Draft completed 21 July 04 - **UNDERWAY**
2. Development of Swimming Development Model and Pathways - June 04 - February 05
3. Compilation of examples of Best Practices - June 04 - February 05
4. Production and distribution of Junior Sport Policy Brochure February 05
5. Development of Junior Swimming Action Plan booklet - March/April 2005
6. Official Launch of Policy and Junior Sport Action Plan - April 05
7. Implementation of Policy by stakeholders - from April 2005

# *Junior Sport Policy for Australian Swimming*

## *(2<sup>nd</sup> Draft - August 2004)*

### *Introduction*

Australian Swimming 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.

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 community pride, identity, and leisure.

Marginalisation still occurs on the basis of disability, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, geographical location, Indigenous background, social class and socio-economic status. A less obvious factor that shapes participation, but one of growing importance, is the way young people perceive their body image.

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
- More flexible and varied competition programs to cater for all

- 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 National Club Standard measurement system
- Development of a New Members Kit

## 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
- Pathways from learn to swim to Swimming clubs  
 This strategy will include:
  - Fostering relationships with learn to swim programs and providers
  - National badging/certification scheme for junior swimmers
  - Recruitment of new members
  - Define the progression of junior swimmers using Table 1
- Create a clear development model for young people as volunteers  
 This strategy will include:
  - Diverse roles and responsibilities
  - Create junior volunteer model/pathways
- 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**

	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 have responsibilities for organising and conducting sport including sporting organisations, schools, commercial and non-profit providers, 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: Young people, 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 (Active Australia School's Network)
- Facility owners (private)
- Other related sports
- Government providers and state bodies
- AUSTSWIM
- 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 Codes of Behaviour
- Regular communication to Young people, Parents and carers, Teachers, Coaches, Technical officials, Administrators and Volunteers 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.

Recognizing 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:

- Development of a specific coach accreditation scheme for Coaches of junior swimmers.
- Developing a junior coaching course content that emphasises the specific needs of Junior Swimmers

- Provide professional development of club coaches

This strategy will include:

- Linkages with the Go Club education program

- 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 ID program
- Involvement of parents/youth 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 MPP and its key objectives are actively promoted throughout the swimming community

This strategy will include:

- Promote a safe and harassment free environment
- Continued promotion of the MPP

- Ensure the swimming membership positively embraces the codes of behaviour

This strategy will include:

- Development of a Codes of Behaviour Brochure
- Promotion of the Codes of Behaviour

- Develop national guidelines for facilities and equipment

- Develop national guidelines for safe practices in training and competition

This strategy will include:

- Development of Risk Assessment checklists for running events
- Development of Risk Assessment checklists for running club training

- Develop "National Safe Healthy" policy and guidelines.

This strategy will include:

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