

Competition Framework

Introduction

The Australian Dolphins Swimming Team is one of the Nation's most reliable international performers and we have consistently delivered on the international stage over numerous Olympic and Paralympic cycles.

Within Swimming, there is always a desire to improve, and in fact a necessity to do so if we are to remain at the forefront of the sport.

Swimming Australia (SAL) has embarked on a four-year strategy to Tokyo 2020. A key aspect of this strategy was to review the current competition structures with the aim of improving the competition pathway from entry into national level competition to the elite stage in the sport.

Key drivers for the review included:

- our conversion rate from our selection competitions to the major benchmark competition each season
- perceived gaps in our competition structure for athlete development
- the impact maturation has on our competition structure
- keeping pace with changes that have already been implemented across the world from our competing nations

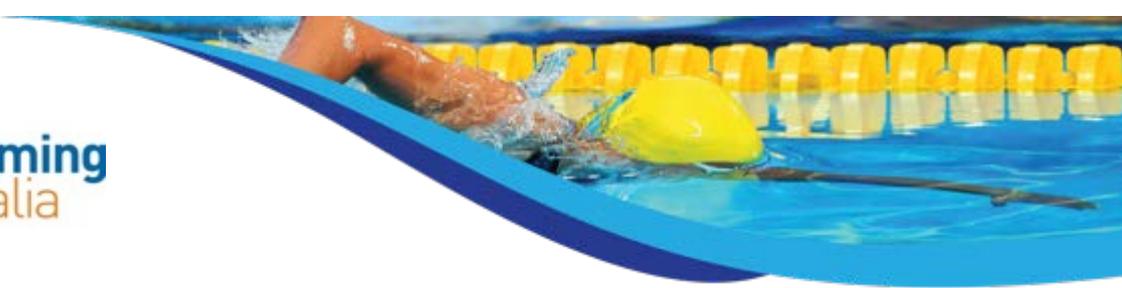
With intended outcomes to achieve:

- developing a framework that will serve our sport for at least the next cycle
- a framework that focuses on optimal performances at key periods in a season
- a philosophy on youth development for Senior performance
- fostering alignment for competition structures across the States and Regions

Background

In tandem with our competition review, SAL has also implemented an [Australian Swimming Framework \(ASF\)](#). The ASF is our guidebook for swimming which maps out the athlete and coach pathway within our sport. It aims to align the efforts, resources and talents of all contributors in the national system. The ASF is an important tool that helped us shape the competition review, particularly in relation to the impact our competition structures have on the stages of maturation and development swimmers go through.

The competition structure review was overseen by the SAL High Performance Unit with input from Dr Stephen Cobley from the University of Sydney. Specific guidance was provided by technical swimming, maturation, development and sport science experts, notably the SAL and Swimming QLD high performance and participation units. Input was also sought from individuals and organisations that have expertise in this area, including **ASCTA, University of Sydney, Victoria University** and the **Australian Institute of Sport**).



Competition Review Findings – Olympic Pathway

The **main challenges** that were identified were:

1. Competition structure that is too long & repetitive
2. There is a requirement to grow engagement and inclusion to create lifelong participation
3. There is a disconnect from age group swimming to open swimming
4. Alignment of the competition structure (calendar) both domestically and internationally
5. Our competition structure, including the timing of our key selection competitions hasn't been reviewed for change, which was impacting on our conversion rates
6. Coach education and recognition is restricting our domestic Age competition structure moving forward.

Competition Review Findings – Paralympic Pathway

The **main challenges** that were identified were:

1. Competition structure isn't standardised to the Paralympic program and there aren't Heats and Finals for Paralympic events
2. Internationally the S14 class accounts for just 5% of events but this class dominates entries at national events creating a bias in our competitions/programs
3. Non-Paralympic Games event classes have an advantage because the Multi-class point score (MCPS) is of a lower standard
4. there is limited opportunity to scout and review performances to confirm selections on HPU Pathway programs
5. Coach education and recognition is reducing opportunities to improve and develop our domestic Age competition structure.

Overview of Key Competition Changes

Following extensive consultation with our sports key stakeholders (State Swimming Associations and ASCTA) the SAL High Performance Committee and SAL Board, Swimming Australia developed a Competition Framework 2018 – 2020 that proposed an improvement plan covering the following competition changes.



- National Team Selection Trials to be held approximately '5 weeks out' from the International Benchmark competition (BME's) each season;
- Competition is ideally 5 or 6 days in duration;
 - **Purpose** – to select the best athletes for the Australian Dolphins Swim Team
 - **Emphasis** – aim for peak performance at selection trials and international BME
 - **Outcome** – confirmation of the Australian Dolphins Swim Team

Olympic Pathway

- High Performance qualifying standards derived from World Senior Championships;
- Likely removal of semi-finals, relays and non-Olympic/Paralympic events in competition schedule;
- The timeline for the changes above will commence at the Commonwealth Games Trials in **February 2018** and the subsequent national selection trials afterwards.

Paralympic Pathway

- Modify the MCPS to apply a measured weighting to the non-Paralympic events to bring them in line with the events that are raced frequently internationally and reduce the influence that non-Paralympic events have on overall results;
- Modify the number of competitors required for 'B' finals to allow for National Team Selection and opportunity to swim two races in each event;
- Remove the limitation of three per class per final
- The timeline for the changes above will commence with Para Pan Pac Trials in 2018 and the subsequent national selection trials afterwards.



- To be held at the end of the summer national championship season
- Competition schedule is ideally 4 to 5 days in duration
 - **Purpose** – to recognise the National Champions and to grow engagement/inclusion to create lifelong participation for our adult (post maturation) athletes
 - **Emphasis** – practice performing under national level pressure
 - **Outcome** – confirming the national champions in each event/age band, whilst developing competition performance insights
- The timeline for the changes above will commence with the Australian Championships in **April 2019**

Olympic Pathway

- National Championship with two post maturation age bands:
 - Female age groups - 17yrs – 18yrs & 19yrs – 20yrs
 - Male age group - 18yrs – 19yrs & 20yrs – 21yrs
 - 3 Finals per Event (Open plus the two age bands)
- Qualifying standards derived from world standards but appropriate for emphasis and purpose of the competition
- Inclusion of Relays or non-Olympic/Paralympic events in competition schedule
- Competition schedule is ideally 4 to 5 days in duration

Paralympic Pathway

- National Championship for Open age band
- Continue to use the revised MCPS
- Inclusion of non-Paralympic Games events in competition schedule



- To be held in the traditional end of the summer national championship season
- Competition schedule is to be 6-8 days in duration.
 - **Purpose** – introduction to competitive swimming at a national level;
 - **Emphasis** – learning to develop competitive swimming skills (heats & finals, technique on all strokes, starts/turns/finishes/relay takeovers, underwater kicking and pacing)
 - **Outcome** –confirming the national champions in each event/age band, whilst learning to enjoy racing at a national level; selection of the Australian Junior Swim Team

Olympic Pathway

- Age Championship bands Olympic:
 - Girls age groups: 13yrs – 16yrs
 - Boys age groups: 14yrs – 17yrs
- Qualifying standards derived from world junior standards but appropriate for emphasis and purpose of the competition
- Inclusion of 4x50m Relays for all age bands in competition schedule
- Key Point – The Club Point score at Australian Age will be removed from 2018 onwards. This has been done to lessen the impact of early specialisation on maturing swimmers
- The timeline for the changes above will be phased on over two years as follows:
 - **April 2018 – Year 1**
 - Remove the girls and boys 12yrs age band
 - Keep the existing 17yrs & 18yrs age band
 - Boys age groups: 13yrs, 14yrs, 15yrs, 16yrs, 17yrs & 18yrs;
 - Girls age groups: 13yrs, 14yrs, 15yrs, 16yrs, 17yrs & 18yrs;
 - Add the 4x50m freestyle relays for all age bands

- Point Score moved to Australian Championships
- Qualifying standards derived from World Junior Championships
- **April 2019 onwards – Year 2**
 - Remove the boys 13yrs age band
 - Boys age groups: 14yrs, 15yrs, 16yrs, 17yrs
 - Girls age groups: 13yrs, 14yrs, 15yrs, 16yrs

Paralympic Pathway

- Maintain the current Age bands and qualification time standards;
- For April 2018, a 19+ years age band is included to allow for an additional national competition for all classes (rather than just those at Commonwealth Games Trials).
- Implement a 'Bonus Event' for entries to allow swimmers to target the 400m FS and IM events
- Implement the new MCPS into Age Nationals
- Continue to conduct events as part of the Australian Age Program, ensuring our commitment to inclusive sport. Multi-class Age events will be conducted over 3 days as part of the Australian Age Championships;
- The timeline for the changes above will commence in **April 2019**



- To be held approximately 8 weeks prior to April national championship competitions in the pool
- Competition schedule to be 3 days in duration
 - **Purpose** – to select the best athletes for the Australian Dolphins and Junior Swim Teams; to recognise the National Champion; and to grow engagement/inclusion to create lifelong participation
 - **Emphasis** – practice peak performance under national level pressure
 - **Outcome** – confirmation of Australian Dolphins Swim Team and Junior teams, confirming the national champions in each event/age band, whilst developing competition performance insights to drive improvement
- The timeline for the changes above begin at Australian Open Water Championships in **January 2018**

Olympic Pathway

- In addition to the Open events, three further age bands are offered:
 - Girls – 14/15yrs (5km/Relay), 16/17yrs (7.5km/5km/Relay), 18/19yrs (10km/5km/Relay)
 - Boys - 14/15yrs (5km/Relay), 16/17yrs (7.5km/5km/Relay), 18/19yrs (10km/5km/Relay)
 - Age bands as the 31 December each year
- Introduction of the 5km Time Trial for Open Championship race
- Inclusion of Open Water Relays as per FINA events

Paralympic Pathway

- National Championship for male and female 5km race



Hancock Prospecting Australian Short Course Championships (October)

- To be held in October each year
- Competition schedule is ideally 3 days
 - **Purpose** – to select the best athletes for the Australian Dolphins Swim Team (if applicable); to recognise the National Champions
 - **Emphasis** – practice peak performance under national level pressure; Introduction to open level racing for maturing swimmers
 - **Outcome** – confirmation of Australian Dolphins Swim Team (if applicable) and confirming the National Champions in each event
- The changes above began at Australian Short Course Championships in **November 2015**

Olympic Pathway

- National Championship with no age bands (Open racing)
- Qualifying standards derived from World Short Course Championships

Paralympic Pathway

- National Championship with no age bands (Open racing)



The final part of the Swimming Australia Competition Framework is to highlight how the review recommendations can be translated into training and periodisation throughout the season. The paragraphs below and diagram will highlight:

- Recommended training and competition emphasis
- The focus for each phase of the season
- When athletes can take a break (particularly at end of each phase) and return to training
- The emphasis of competing to gain valuable experience
 - When to expect international peak performance
 - Potentially when to fully taper and shave down
 - When specific teams are selected
- The national competitions structure
- The state competitions structure

Our swimming season philosophy is advocating a stronger alignment with the international competitive calendar. In the early part of the season (Sept-Dec) the focus is on an early aerobic conditioning and skills emphasis with a Short Course competition exposure. As the season progresses the training and competition emphasis and intensity should increase with the expectation of peak performance from June through till August each year. We have worked with each of the State Swimming Associations to ensure there are a series of meaningful competitions leading into the Peak Performance period of the season.

We'd recommend that a full taper and shaving down should occur between 2-3 times per season and driven by the individual athlete's requirements factoring in their stage of development (Senior/Youth).

It is also important that appropriate recovery and regeneration is considered in the overall training program. These periods are again relevant to the athlete's individuality and stage of development, and we'd recommend 6-10 weeks of annual recovery for Senior athletes and between 10-16 weeks for younger athletes.



Competition Framework Overview and Training Emphasis

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug
Recommended Training/Competition Emphasis Senior Athletes	Sept – Apr <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building capacity phase, improving and applying skills & technique progressively in the whole phase (8 months). No (race) specific preparation for competition. Added rest for in between goals (e.g. Short Course, AUS Champs, International meets) can occur as part of the building phase periodisation and improved race experience. 								May – June <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining capacity, increasing specificity, applying skills & technique. 	June – Aug <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taper into Trials for qualification. Build, maintain and taper into BME for Peak Performance. Aug – Sept: Break		
Recommended Training/Competition Emphasis Youth Athletes	Sept – Dec <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building capacity phase, improving and applying skills & technique progressively in the whole phase (5 months). No (race) specific preparation for competition. Added rest for in between goals (e.g. Short Course, State Titles, international meets) can occur as part of the building phase periodisation and improved race experience. 				Jan – March <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining capacity, increasing specificity, applying skills & technique 			April <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taper into Age Nationals and/or AUS Championships for qualification 	May – June <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-building capacity phase, improving and applying skills & technique progressively in the whole phase (2 months) 		July – Aug <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining capacity, increasing specificity, applying skills & technique Taper into BME (or targeted meet) for Peak Performance Sept: Break	
SAL Competition Calendar	Break		National SC		National Open Water			National Age & Championships	Final Prep Comp	SAL Selection Trials (5 weeks)	Senior BME Junior BME	
State Competition Calendar	Break State SC		National SC	QLD	WA/SA	VIC	NSW		Final Prep Comp		State SC	