



AUSTRALIA WATER POLO INC

JUNIOR SPORTS POLICY

23 February 2007



Australian Government

Australian Sports Commission

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Australia Water Polo's Junior Sport Policy is to assist in the provision of quality water polo experiences for young people. It will encourage the provision of safe, enjoyable and accountable environments for everyone involved in junior water polo. The policy covers players from 9 year to 18 years of age.

For some time there has been a move from within Australia Water polo 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 Australia Water Polo.

Over the last two years there have been progressive changes in the governance and structure of Australia Water Polo and the development of a Junior Sport Policy fits in ideally with the current progressive nature of the sport.

Sports Development is one of four sections of the Australia Water Polo Strategic Plan, which was launched in September 2005. Integral in this is the development of important Strategic Initiatives to assist in the grassroots development of the sport.

With the adoption and implementation of a Junior Sport Policy, Australia Water Polo 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.

Primarily this policy is an internal document to be used by Australia Water Polo and its affiliated bodies as a guideline in the development and implementation of national junior programs. However, the content of this policy is applicable to the delivery of Water Polo to all junior participants, regardless of whether they are participating in national programs. It should be recognised that this policy presents recommended standards for junior participation.

In addition, an action plan will be compiled to implement the strategies within this document. It is envisaged that these strategies will form the part of future AWPI strategic an operational plans.

Scott Schweickle
National Development Manager
Australia Water Polo Inc
P.O. Box 877
Belconnen ACT 2616

PH: 02 6162 1417
MOB 0417 355 149
EMAIL: scott.s@australianwaterpolo.com.au

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Key Stakeholder Groups	4
Long-Term Involvement	5
Getting Young People Involved	7
Physical Growth & Maturation	9
Water Polo Development Pathways	10
Forming Links	12
Quality Coaching & Officiating for Junior Water Polo Players	14
Making Water Polo Safe	15

KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Australian Sports Commission (Junior Sport Unit)
Active Australia Schools Network
ACHPER
School Sport Australia
Australian Referees Commission
National Youth Coach (Men)
National Youth Coach (Women)
High Performance Manager
Operations Manager
Secretary General
National Development Manager
Australia Water Polo Inc (Board)
NSW Water Polo Inc
Water Polo Qld Inc
ACT Water Polo Inc
Victoria Water Polo Inc
South Australia Water Polo Inc
Western Australia Water Polo Inc
Tasmania Water polo Inc
Northern Territory Water polo Inc
NWPL Clubs
Secondary Schools
Flippa Ball Schools/Clubs
Junior Water Polo Clubs
Parents of Water Polo Players
AWPI Junior Sport Framework Committee
Deaf Sport Australia

LONG TERM INVOLVEMENT

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

Quality experiences in junior water polo provide the entry to a lifelong involvement in water polo for

- enjoyment and recreation with pleasurable social involvement
- fulfilling individual potential in water polo.

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.

Policy/position statement

It is the aim of Australia Water Polo Inc to cater for all levels of junior water polo players by providing flexible rules and training in a fun filled enjoyable environment.

1. Strategies for Long term Involvement 9-12 Years; 13-18 Years.

One of the primary focuses of the Flippa Ball program is the provision of a fun, enjoyable environment in which participants can experience the sport in the modified format of mini-water polo.

- Provision of qualified program coaches capable of maintaining a safe participation environment.
- Program coaches are instructed to support participants and provide encouragement for personal and team achievement.
- No uniform requirements are to be imposed.
- Participation costs payable by schools or Out of School Hours Care Services (OSHCS) are to cover program costs and administration.
- Information is to be made available to parents/carers, schools and officials regarding further participation opportunities and pathways to encourage continued participation beyond the end of a particular program.

13-18 Years

- One of the primary focuses of the Water Polo program is the provision of a fun, enjoyable environment in which participants can experience the sport of Water Polo.
- Grading of teams on ability levels within programs is to occur to assist in the opportunity for participants to experience personal and team success. This allows for the formation of mixed-gender teams within programs.
- Provision of qualified program supervisors capable of maintaining a safe participation environment.
- Program personnel instructed to support participants and provide encouragement to achieve personal and team success.

- The program is not to be based on purely results-based competitive structures. Each program will operate a competition system that awards points to teams not only on the basis of game results, but also on the extent to which teams comply with the Codes of Behaviour.
- High school students are to be encouraged to take on roles as program administrators, coaches and referees.
- Delivery of the Secondary School Water Polo Program will predominantly be on weekdays or in the after-school period at venues identified as convenient for participants and their parents/carers.
- Membership packs to be provided to participants as a reflection of the value of participants to water polo.
- Training of program personnel will include instruction on the need to present a positive attitude, appropriate methods of interacting with participants and how to be an effective role model and motivate participants.
- Information is to be made available to parents/carers, schools and officials regarding further participation opportunities and pathways to encourage continued participation beyond the end of a particular program.



GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED

Water polo 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 water polo transfer to non-athletic careers and water polo 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 water polo to meet the challenge of all young people having the fundamental right to be involved in water polo. Meeting legal obligations related to equity of opportunity must also be considered.

Position Statement

All providers of water polo are to offer opportunities and experiences to all young people regardless of who they are, where they come from or their ability, in accordance to the progression table.

2. *Strategies for Getting Young People Involved 9- 12 Years; 13-18 Years*

2.1 *Ability, Geographical Location, Indigenous Australians, Equity of Opportunity*

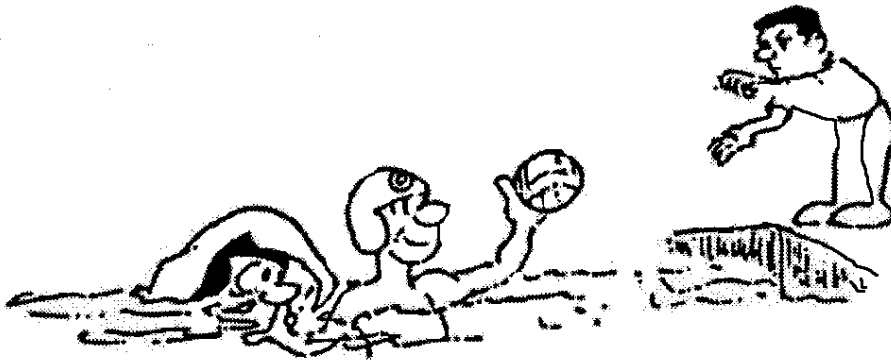
- The Flippa Ball Water Polo program is primarily focused on participation.
- Where appropriate the program is to be modified to include individuals with disabilities, as well as encouraging participation by individuals with disabilities in main-stream opportunities.
- Where appropriate the Flippa Ball Water Polo program is to be modified to accommodate cultural and religious beliefs were necessary.
- Where appropriate the program is to be modified to include individuals with disabilities, as well as encouraging participation by individuals with disabilities in main-stream opportunities.

13-18 Years

- The Water Polo Program is to be primarily focused on participation as opposed to competition/ability.
- Where appropriate the program is to be modified to include individuals with disabilities, as well as encouraging participation by individuals with disabilities in main-stream opportunities.
- Promotion of programs to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including the modification of rules and regulations to accommodate cultural and religious beliefs were

necessary.

- A continued focus on being a gender-equitable sport.
- A continued practice of allowing mixed-gender teams.
- The utilisation of weekend programs and camps to support participation by individuals from regional and remote geographical locations.
- A commitment to the provision of equipment and coaching resources to Indigenous communities in accordance with roll-out strategies.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & MATURATION

Physical activity is essential for the normal growth and development of the child. However, there are potentially harmful effects for young athletes 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 sports leaders.

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.

Position Statement

Water Polo providers are expected to provide training programs for young people which are appropriate to their individual growth and maturation patterns.

3. Strategies for Physical Activity & Maturation 9- 12 Years; 13-18 Years

- The development of a national introductory coaching program for coaches of children within Water Polo Program programs.
- Programs, competitions/tournaments are to be postponed if the temperature at or within the venue is 34 degrees or above.
- The Flippa Ball Water Polo program is to provide a range of modified activities using modified equipment to cater for the physical growth and maturation of participants.

13-18 Years

- The NCAS Level 1 Coach Training Program is to include a section relating to coaching children and the relevance of physical growth and maturation to the development of training and competition programs.
- Programs are to be postponed if the temperature at or within the venue is 34 degrees or above.
- Divisions within programs are to be based primarily on skill level.
- Use of modified rules to promote the holistic development/multi-skilling of participants.

WATER POLO DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

Years 9 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 sports skills in young people requires consideration of:

- identifiable stages of development
- different levels of ability
- different rates in gaining sports skills
- different interests of young people in sport.

It is the responsibility of water polo 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 water polo players 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 water polo 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.

Position Statement

Water Polo providers are expected to offer training sessions, competitions and an approach to conditioning that meet the recommendations outlined in the progression for junior Water Polo.

4. *Strategies for Water Polo Development & Pathways:*

- Develop a clear model of progressive stages to take young people from beginner to experienced participant.
- Create clear pathways for young people to continue their participation in volunteer roles by training to be a coach, official or administrator.
- Provide consistent pathways across organisations by working together (especially clubs with schools).
- Develop guidelines and education addressing eating disorders, growth, maturation, single gender competitions etc.
- The Water Polo Program is to undergo annual review, including input from participants into recommended changes.
- Encouragement for high school students to take on roles as program administrators, coaches and referees.

Table 1 Progression for Junior Water Polo - a general guide

	Broad Experiences	Progression	Specialisation	Recreational Participation
Ability	Beginner – Flippa Ball/Primary Schools	Intermediate – Junior Club/Secondary Schools	Advanced – National 16 & Under	Any level
Age Span	9-11	12-15	16-17	
Focus	Fun, learning, general athletic development	Fun, improving wide range of skills	Enjoyment and improving performance	Enjoyment, social and personal satisfaction
Considerations	Modifications to equipment, venue and game structure for safety and success	Athletic and behavioural skills for life-long participation	Fitness, technical and tactical training, goal setting, managing aspirations	Social aspects and events Encourage involvement in other roles (e.g. coach, official)
Session Duration	Up to 40 mins	Up to 90mins	Up to 120mins	Up to 90mins
Session Frequency	1-2 times/wk	Up to 3 -5 times/wk	Up to 7-10 times/wk in total	Up to 3 times/wk per sport
Session Contents	Play, simple games, opportunities to participate focusing on gross motor skills	Skill development through understanding, training and games	Training and competition with the aims of skill development, game sense and performance	Training and competition with options at various levels
Approach to Conditioning	Minor aspect, not a focus	Careful introduction and progression to suit individual development	Evaluate individual to determine focus and gradually progress	Train to avoid negative outcomes (e.g. injuries)
Competition	Modified activities with the objective of individual improvement No representative teams	Competition with emphasis on all-round development and rotation around all positions Emphasise fair play Representative teams and regional competitions in later years Scoring tallies	Introduction of interstate competitions Emphasis on individual and all-round development Experience competition also through officiating and coaching younger groups	Focus on social competitions Level of competitive intensity appropriate to individual motivation
Recognition	Recognise effort and participation	Recognise effort, improvement, application and participation	Recognise effort, improvement and performance	Recognise effort, participation and contribution to the sport

FORMING LINKS

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

A number of agencies have responsibilities for organising and conducting water polo including sporting organisations, schools, non-profit providers, government (local, state and federal), and non-government agencies.

All of these are partners in junior water polo and their cooperation and goodwill is vital to the successful delivery of junior water polo. 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 sport with regard to age groupings, competition rules etc
- sharing sports resources.

Policy statement

That water polo providers identify stakeholders that can assist water polo providers provide effective and efficient opportunities and experiences for junior water polo participants.

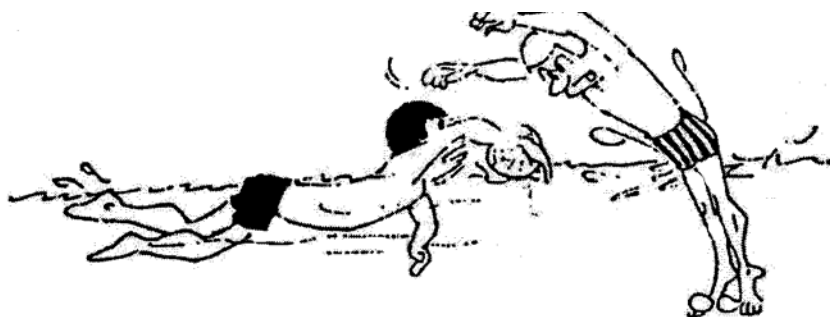
5. Strategies for Forming Links 9-12 Years; 13-18 Years

- Participants in the Flippa Ball Water Polo program are to be encouraged to progress into a Water Polo Program.
- All resources, equipment and promotional materials developed for the Flippa Ball Water Polo program are to be made available to all program coaches to aid in a consistent national delivery.
- Australian Water Polo Inc's national insurance policy is to cover all Flippa Ball Water Polo program coaches against public liability and indemnity.
- Develop links with Flippa Ball coordinators and liaise and consult with these coordinators to access opportunities to deliver the Flippa Ball Water Polo program.
- SSOs to help coordinate scheduling of school and community events and competitions at all levels.

13-18 Years

- SSOs to help coordinate scheduling of school and community events and competitions at all levels.
- The Water Polo Program is to provide participation opportunities for secondary school children and is to be the only nationally-branded program for this category of young people.
- Participants in the Water Polo programs are to be encouraged to progress into a club program.
- Every Water Polo Program delivered is to have the same nationally developed structure and processes.

- All resources, equipment and promotional materials developed for the Water Polo Program are to be made available to all program personnel and delivery agents to aid in a consistent national delivery.
- Promote consistent national standards on equipment, pool size.
- The Australian Water Polo Inc's national insurance policy is to cover all Water Polo programs, including its program personnel and delivery agents and its participants.
- Develop links with the organisations identified in the long-term plan and liaise and consult with them to achieve roll-out.
- Continue to identify links with high schools and the providers of high school participation opportunities as hosts of Water Polo programs.
- Continue to meet on a regular basis with representatives of affiliated Member States to coordinate the delivery of the Water Polo Program.
- Establish links with other organisations such as:
 - Local Councils
 - Secondary/Primary Schools
 - Aquatic Facilities
 - Government Providers/State Bodies
 - Other Sports; SLSA, Swimming etc and the opportunities they can provide
 - Volunteers
- Recognise groups that have established strong community links that can benefit junior water polo.



QUALITY COACHING & OFFICIATING OF JUNIOR PLAYERS

Understanding the learning process and the developmental stages in this process are necessary for quality junior water polo 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 optimize learning, safety and enjoyment.

Position statement

All water polo coaches and officials are to be accredited in accordance with AWPI/ASC course and national standards.

6. Strategies for Quality & Officiating of Junior Water Polo Players 9-12 Years; 13-18 Years.

- Training of program personnel will comply with ASC requirements, including the Community Coach Training Program, and will include instruction on the need to present a positive attitude, appropriate methods of interacting with participants and how to be an effective role model and motivate participants.
- Coaches are to receive resources that provide information on planning sessions and season programs, including example plans, a range of fun activities and guidelines for the provision of instruction and feedback.
- Coaches are to be provided with opportunities to attend training programs that offer the opportunity to gain knowledge of appropriate activities for inclusion in sessions.
- Provide quality coaching for all levels including a range of mentoring opportunities for new coaches.
- Develop officiating pathways for volunteers/parents and players with education skewed towards first time introduction to water polo.

13-18 Years

- Provide quality officiating for all levels including a range of mentoring opportunities for new officials. Develop a Talent Identification Program for coaches and officials.

MAKING WATER POLO SAFE

Water Polo organisers have a legal duty of care to not expose young people to risk in any aspect of providing the water polo 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
- dealing with emergencies

To protect the welfare of young players in water polo organisations, coaches, officials, parents and members must be aware of the relevant legislation regarding young people in each state. It is also important that these organisations are aware of the current AWPI safeguards regarding young people.

The legislation relevant to the safety and welfare of participants in junior water polo covers: Privacy, Child Protection, Discrimination, Harassment and Drugs.

Position statement

That all water polo providers implement and enforce AWPI policies and provide the appropriate training and education for stakeholders.

7. *Strategies for Making Water Polo Safe 9-12 Years; 13-18 Years*

- Ensure that the Membership Protection Policy and its objectives are actively promoted throughout the water polo community.
- Promote the AWPI Codes of Behaviour
- Develop other safe & healthy guidelines such as nutrition, parent education hydration, sun protection etc.
- Facilities and equipment risk management checklist included in program manuals for use by coaches prior to commencing delivery of an Flippa Ball Water Polo program at a new venue.
- Develop and implement specific rules for venues that have limited free space, including restrictions on bags and other player equipment being left in the free space.
- Guidelines for canceling sessions included in program manuals for use by program coaches.
- The importance of hydration and sun sense to be included in coach training programs.
- Requests to be submitted to schools and OCHCS that participants bring suitably named drink bottles if there are not readily accessible drinking fountains.
- Schools and OCHCS to be notified that program coaches will enforce a policy of “No hat – No play” and ask that this be communicated to students and their parents/caregivers.
- Guidelines on safe training practices and the monitoring of athletes to be included in coach

training programs.

- Guidelines on dealing with blood spills to be included in program manuals for the benefit of program coaches.
- Schools and OCHCS are required to complete pre-participation questionnaires on participants, identifying any special needs.
- Program coaches to have current first aid qualifications.
- First aid kits to be available at all program venues.
- Guidelines for dealing with emergencies, including the reporting of the incident to the school or OCHCS and Australian Water Polo Inc following the emergency, to be included in the Flippa Ball Water Polo program manual.
- Ensure program personnel have access to a telephone.
- Program venue managers and in-school clinic coaches to have current first aid qualifications.
- First aid kits to be available at all program venues.

The Law and Water Polo

- Incidents of discrimination and child abuse to be reported to the school or OCHCS and the Australian Water Polo Inc.
- Compulsory prohibited person check for all program coaches to be completed prior to commencement of engagement in the program.
- Program coaches to be made aware of OHS duties within their training and in program manuals.
- Personal information collected to be managed in accordance with the by the Australian Water Polo Inc' Privacy Policy.
- A summary of the Australian Water Polo Inc's Member Protection Policy to be included in the Flippa Ball Water Polo program manual.
- Participants in the Flippa Ball Water Polo program are to be encouraged to progress into a Water Polo program.