National Aquatic Industry Workforce Report 2025

Data collected and collated from the
National Aquatic Industry Workforce Survey.

ROYAL LIFE SAVING
AUSTRALIA

AND THE
NATIONAL AQUATIC
INDUSTRY COMMITTEE

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Aquatic facilities are at the centre of Australian community life, fostering connection, physical activity, and lifelong water safety skills for people of all ages. These vital spaces underpin Royal Life Saving's vision to bring people together to eliminate drowning and empower communities to be safe around water.

Context and Challenges

Despite these essential roles, the aquatic workforce faces mounting pressures in 2025. With 357 drowning deaths recorded in the latest National Drowning Report, the highest since records began, Australia confronts an urgent need for action. Ageing and inadequate pool infrastructure is leaving too many communities without safe, accessible places to swim, learn, and participate.

Compounding these issues is the increased exposure to occupational violence and aggression experienced by aquatic industry professionals. This undermines both their wellbeing and sector retention, especially amidst new work health and safety legislation requiring a proactive focus on psychosocial risks and psychological safety at work.

Broader shifts, including technological innovation and evolving workforce expectations, are also reshaping our sector. The rise of artificial intelligence and digital systems offers opportunities to improve safety and service efficiency but introduces new skills and regulatory challenges for managers and teams.

Positive Shifts and Sector Leadership

Against this complex backdrop, there has been progress. Gender representation in senior roles is rising, multi-skilling across positions is common, and more staff now work significant hours each week. These trends reflect the dynamic, skilled, and diverse nature of Australia's aquatic workforce and emphasise the need for ongoing investments in leadership, people development, and inclusive participation for all Australians.

Priorities in Action

Strengthening the aquatic workforce requires collective and coordinated action across three domains:

> **Stopping Occupational Violence and Aggression (OVA):** With one in four workers affected and nearly half reporting workplace safety concerns, industry leaders, employers, and governments must invest in training, security, and community awareness to safeguard all frontline aquatic professionals.

> **Building Leadership and Development:** While a majority rate industry leadership as high, gaps in structured supervisory support and accreditation remain. Supporting frontline leaders, expanding mentoring, and pathways for career progression are essential to strengthen workforce capability and retention.

> **Fostering Diversity and Inclusion:** As one in 25 workers identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and nearly 10% are from multicultural backgrounds, targeted measures to create a workforce that reflects Australia's communities are essential. This demands inclusive recruitment, supportive workplaces, and strong policy and advocacy settings.

The Path Forward

A robust evidence base has never been more vital. This report, building on earlier surveys and now aligned with the National Aquatic Workforce Framework, offers timely insights to guide action by industry, government, and communities. It highlights what matters most to attract, retain, develop, and support people across the aquatic sector, and charts a path to strengthen leadership, safety, and diversity.

Royal Life Saving Australia, together with the National Aquatic Industry Committee and our State and Territory Member Organisations, thank the thousands of aquatic professionals whose voices shape this report. Their experiences and insights are central to our shared mission: eliminating drowning, empowering communities, and ensuring Australia's aquatic spaces remain safe, welcoming, and sustainable for generations to come.

Dr Justin Scarr
Chief Executive Officer
Royal Life Saving Australia

› SIZE OF THE AQUATIC INDUSTRY WORKFORCE & METHODS

The table below presents an estimate of the total number of workers in the Australian aquatic industry by role, alongside each role's proportional representation within the total workforce. The methodology integrates operational workforce data from multiple validated sources, with adjustments to reflect real-world employment conditions.

Methods

This report draws on data collected through the National Aquatic Industry Workforce Survey 2025, 2022, and 2019 administered via SurveyMonkey. The 2025 survey was open to workers nationally over March – April 2025. The report analyses more than 6,000 survey responses representing the full breadth of aquatic roles including swim teachers, pool lifeguards, customer service staff, aquatic managers, and technical operators.

Survey data were cleaned and analysed using descriptive statistical methods. Where appropriate, comparisons are made to findings from the 2019 and 2022 workforce surveys to highlight changes over time. The survey captured demographic information, employment conditions, workplace experiences, and career intentions, providing both role-specific insights and whole-of-workforce trends.

In addition to survey data, workforce size and role distribution estimates were modelled through triangulation of multiple sources, including the CERM PI dataset, the RLSSA National Aquatic Infrastructure Database, AUSTSWIM and RLSSA accreditation volumes, and AUSactive workforce data.

This approach ensures the most accurate possible estimate of total workforce size, while acknowledging the challenges of measuring a fluid, casualised, and seasonal workforce.

State and territory distributions were derived by weighting workforce estimates against facility type counts (outdoor pools, aquatic centres, and swim schools/other). For smaller jurisdictions, adjustments were made to reflect the unique operating models of remote and ultra-regional pools, where staff frequently perform multiple roles.

Targeted adjustments to headcounts were made to reflect jurisdictions where managers are commonly multi-hat roles. Workforce composition within each state was distributed according to the national role mix, with targeted corrections applied to align key roles with jurisdictional evidence. These steps ensure that both national role totals and jurisdictional workforce estimates are consistent with the best available data, while remaining sensitive to local operational contexts.

Limitations

As with all survey research, findings rely on self-reported data and voluntary participation, which may introduce response bias. The casualised and seasonal nature of aquatic work means workforce size is subject to fluctuation, and overlapping roles complicate role-specific estimates. While cross-validation with independent datasets strengthens reliability, differences in role definitions and reporting periods may affect comparability.

National Aquatic Workforce Role Distribution Estimate

Role	National Total	National %	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT
Swimming and Water Safety Teacher	29,149	34.3%	7,178	8,876	5,871	3,807	1,651	1,032	573	161
Pool Lifeguard	17,755	20.9%	5,946	4,338	3,978	1,196	1,163	604	142	388
Customer Service Officer/Coord/Mgr	13,285	15.7%	3,917	3,582	2,735	1,421	802	474	171	183
Fitness Staff	8,532	10%	2,515	2,300	1,757	913	515	304	110	118
Aquatic Programs TL/Coord/Spvsr/Mgr	5,422	6.4%	1,599	1,462	1,116	580	327	193	70	75
Duty Manager (Aquatics)	2,712	3.2%	800	731	558	290	164	97	35	37
Swim Coach	2,034	2.4%	600	547	419	218	123	73	26	28
Aquatic Operations TL/Coord/Spvsr/Mgr	2,034	2.4%	600	547	419	218	123	73	26	28
Facility Manager	2,100	2.5%	629	576	440	203	129	76	27	20
Aquatic Technical Operator	678	0.8%	200	183	140	73	41	24	9	8
Aqua Exercise Instructor	678	0.8%	200	183	140	73	41	24	9	8
Other	483	0.6%	142	130	100	52	29	17	6	7
Total	**84,862**	**100%**	**24,326**	**23,455**	**17,673**	**9,044**	**5,108**	**2,991**	**1,204**	**1,061**

› EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 National Aquatic Industry Workforce Report presents the latest national evidence on the people who make Australia's aquatic industry possible. Drawing on data collected through the National Aquatic Industry Workforce Survey 2025, 2022, and 2019, the findings provide the most comprehensive picture to date of workforce demographics, employment conditions, diversity and inclusion, leadership, and safety.

The aquatic workforce is large, diverse, and complex

The 2025 survey and supporting datasets estimate there are around 85,000 paid workers across the Australian aquatic industry. The largest roles are swimming and water safety teachers (34% of the workforce), lifeguards (21%), and reception and customer service staff (15%). Smaller but critical cohorts include fitness staff (10%), facility managers (2.5%), aquatic program coordinators/managers (6%), duty managers (3%), and aquatic technical operators (1%). The fluid, casualised and seasonal nature of work — with many individuals performing multiple roles — makes precise counts challenging, but this refined estimate represents the most accurate national profile to date.

Encouraging developments are evident.

› **Leadership gender balance:**
Women now hold 54% of senior leadership roles across the industry — a 10% increase since 2019. Representation remains particularly strong in aquatic program coordination (85%) and swim teaching (87%).

› **Leadership quality:**
57% of workers describe the quality of leadership in the industry as very high or high. However, 15% still rate leadership as low or very low, indicating persistent gaps.

› **Career opportunities:**
53% of workers agree the aquatic industry offers good career opportunities.

At the same time, the survey highlights urgent challenges that demand attention:

› **Workplace safety and OVA:**
Nearly nine in ten workers (90%) report experiencing occupational violence and aggression (OVA) in some form, with one in four (25%) experiencing it frequently.

62% per cent report feeling unsafe at a concerning level, and 18% describe this as alarming. The psychological toll is also high, with 61% reporting unreasonable stress from OVA at a concerning level and 23% at an alarming level. Impacts are particularly acute among frontline leaders: 94% of duty managers report feeling unsafe at concerning levels, with 35% describing this as alarming. Among aquatic operations team leaders, coordinators and managers - 82% report feeling unsafe at concerning levels, with 23% at alarming levels.

› **Employment conditions:**
While share of workers employed for more than 32 hours per week has more than tripled since 2019 (11% to 18% in 2022 and 36% in 2025), this is likely reflecting the reality that many workers require greater hours to meet financial needs. Nearly half the workforce (45%) is employed casually, and more than one-third (34%) work fewer than 15 hours per week, raising concerns about job security, financial stability, and workforce retention. 39% rated improving their work-life balance as a top career goal.

› **Diversity:**
While the share of workers that identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander remains higher at 4% than the population average, 10% of workers identified as having a multicultural backgrounds, and only 8% live with disability – both lower than the population averages at 27% and 21% respectively. These figures highlight the need for stronger alignment with community diversity through dedicated recruitment and retention strategies for these population groups.

Despite these challenges, aquatic workers consistently describe their roles as purposeful and rewarding.

More than half (51%) have career goals within the industry and half expect to remain for at least six years.

Additionally, the workforce consistently highlights purpose as its greatest source of satisfaction.

The majority of workers report that the most rewarding aspects of their role are *making a positive impact on people's live*s (identified by over 80% of respondents), *helping others to be safe around water* (55%), and *building community connections through teamwork and patron interaction* (reported by more than half). These intrinsic motivations rank above pay, conditions, or career advancement, underscoring the community-centred ethos of the aquatic workforce.

This evidence base is critical for guiding industry leadership and shaping future workforce development strategies. By addressing safety, leadership, and diversity, the sector can build a workforce that is skilled, resilient, and sustainable; ensuring aquatic facilities remain safe and welcoming places at the heart of community life.

A note on volunteers

It is important to highlight the significant contribution that the volunteer workforce makes to the aquatic industry. Without their dedication, aquatic sport and recreation, and many of the organisations, clubs and communities that rely on their time and efforts, would not be able to function. As the aquatic industry continues to adapt to evolving community needs and workforce challenges, the knowledge, skills, positivity and resilience of the paid and unpaid workforce will be more important than ever.

Royal Life Saving Australia, on behalf of the National Aquatic Industry Committee, developed and launched the inaugural National Aquatic Workforce Framework in late 2024.

The Framework expands the concept of workforce capability beyond traditional technical competencies, typically the focus of vocational education and training (VET) sector qualifications. Instead, it integrates technical skills with essential soft skills and business performance capabilities, ensuring these elements work together to maximise the positive impact on community safety and wellbeing.
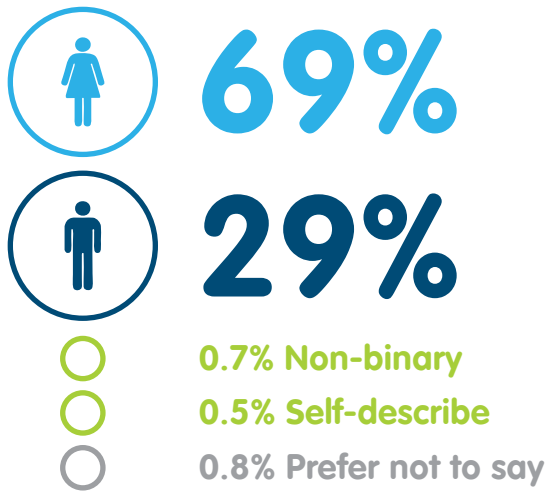
In addition, the Framework supports developmental and career pathways, emphasising the importance of skills progression and continuous learning to maintain a sustainable and effective aquatic workforce.
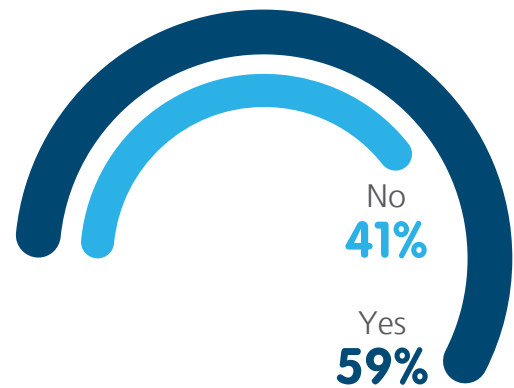
READ THE FRAMEWORK
royallifesaving.com.au/
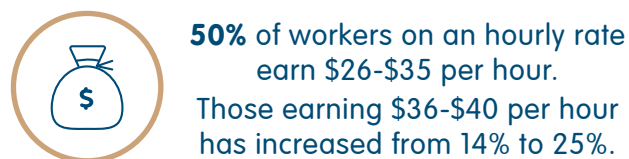workforceframework

The industry is mostly female

69%

29%

○ **0.7% Non-binary**
○ **0.5% Self-describe**
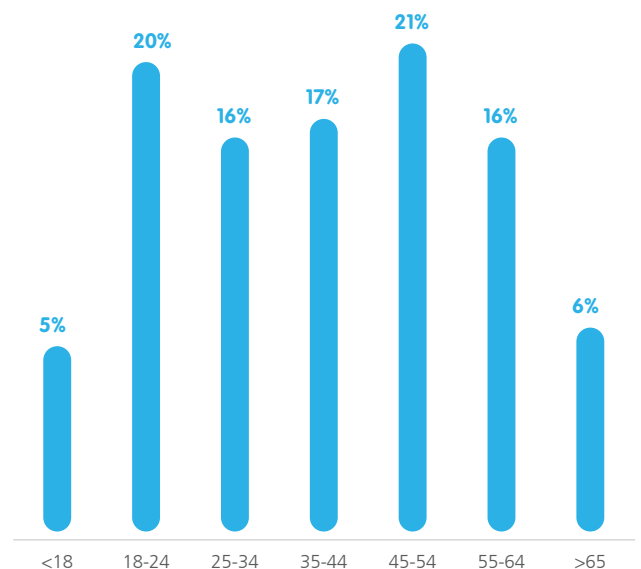○ **0.8% Prefer not to say**

Approximately one in every 25 workers identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

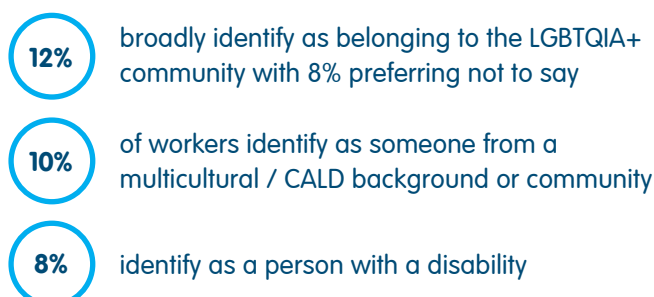3.2% of the population identify as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander[1]

4%
are
Indigenous

50% of workers on an hourly rate earn $26-$35 per hour.
Those earning $36-$40 per hour has increased from 14% to 25%.

The median national hourly wage across all industries is $40 per hour, and $33.90 in community and personal service workers[2]

The workforce is becoming increasingly diverse

12% broadly identify as belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community with 8% preferring not to say

10% of workers identify as someone from a multicultural / CALD background or community

8% identify as a person with a disability

More than half perform more than one role

No
41%

Yes
59%

The workforce has a broad and evenly spread age spectrum
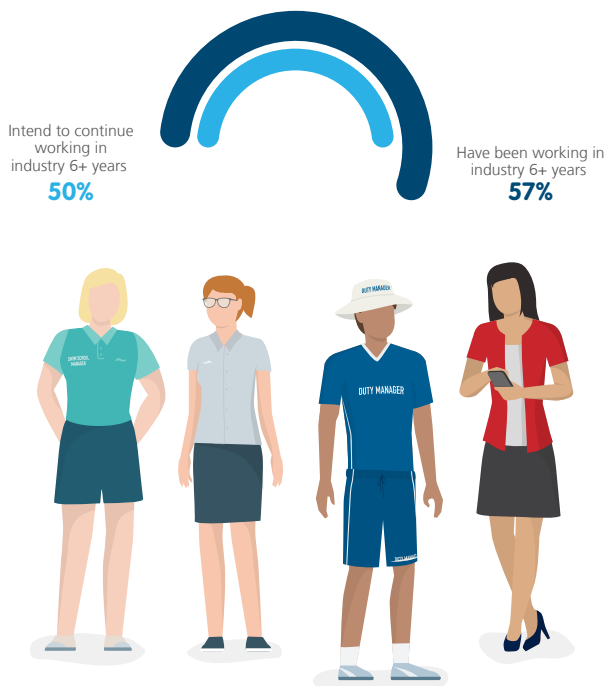
5% — <18
20% — 18-24
16% — 25-34
17% — 35-44
21% — 45-54
16% — 55-64
6% — >65

There is a significant casual workforce
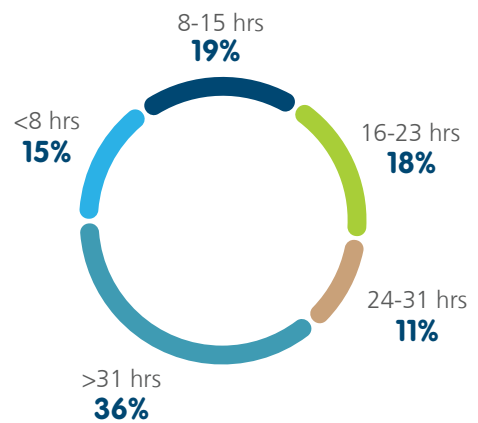*20% of the Australian workforce considers their job to be casual[3]

10%	14%	31%	45%
Other	**Part time** (permanent)	**Full time** (permanent)	**Casual**

A healthy number of workers are committed to the aquatic industry

Intend to continue working in industry 6+ years
50%

Have been working in industry 6+ years
57%

Most workers work at a public swimming pool managed by Government or a private operator

Public swimming pool managed by private operator
24%

Public swimming pool managed by Council or State Govt
41%

Other
22%

Family business
13%
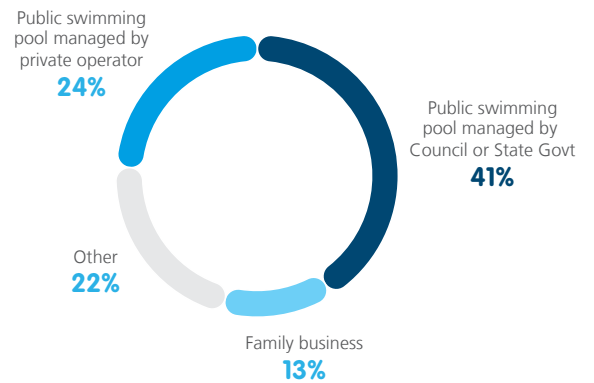
Just over half work less than 24 hours per week

8-15 hrs **19%**

16-23 hrs **18%**

24-31 hrs **11%**

>31 hrs **36%**

<8 hrs **15%**

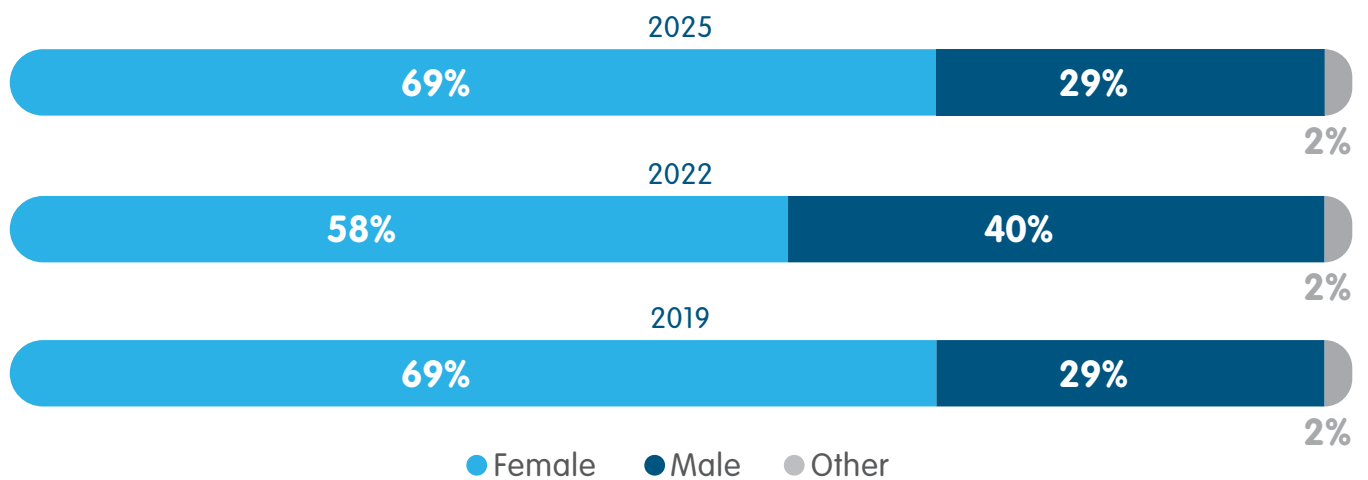## Workers ranked the following as their main career goals

#1 Gaining more experience in current role

#2 Improving work-life balance

#3 Earning higher qualifications

#4 Advancing to a coordinator / manager / senior manager position

#5 Specialising in a specific area, e.g. teaching infants, aquatic technical operations

#6 Moving into a training / education role
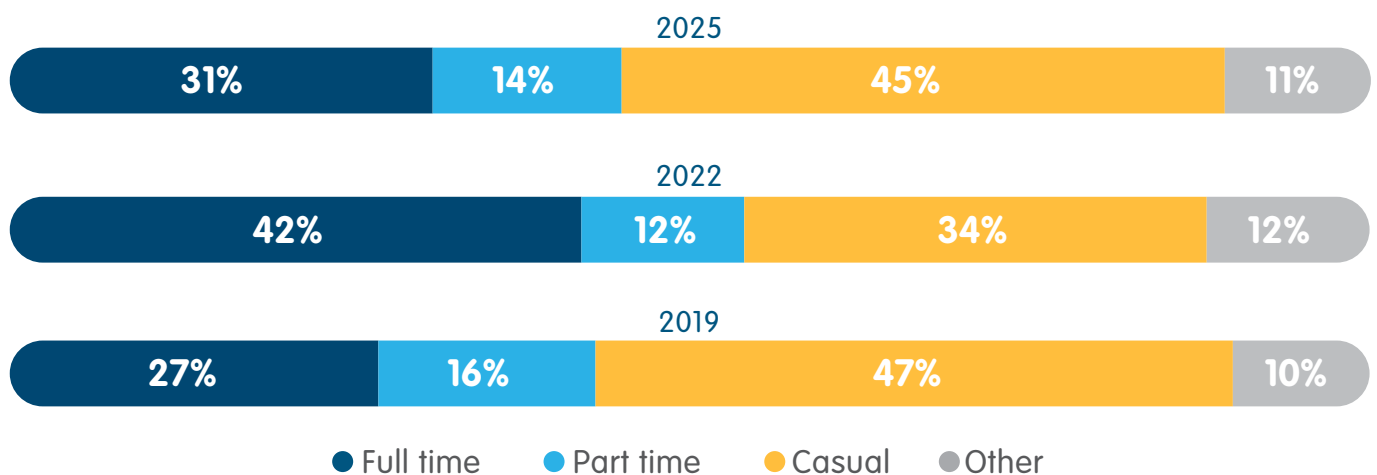
Workers gain enjoyment and satisfaction from

#1 Making a positive impact on people's lives

#2 Helping make people safe around water

#3 Interacting with patrons / colleagues

#4 Being part of a team

Gender

2025

69%	29%	2%

2022

58%	40%	2%

2019

69%	29%	2%

● Female ● Male ● Other

Employment status

2025

31%	14%	45%	11%

2022

42%	12%	34%	12%

2019

27%	16%	47%	10%

● Full time ● Part time ● Casual ● Other

Age

	<18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	>64
2025	5%	20%	16%	17%	21%	16%	6%
2022	4%	17%	19%	18%	20%	14%	6%
2019	3%	19%	15%	19%	23%	17%	4%

● 2025 ● 2022 ● 2019

Role

	Aquatic Technical Operator	Duty Manager	Back Office	Facility Manager	Swim School Manager	Pool Lifeguard	Other	Swim Teacher
2025	1%	6%	7%	8%	11%	15%	25%	27%
2022	4%	8%	10%	11%	4%	15%	31%	17%
2019	2%	5%	6%	9%	11%	11%	17%	39%

● 2025 ● 2022 ● 2019

Seasonal vs year-round employment
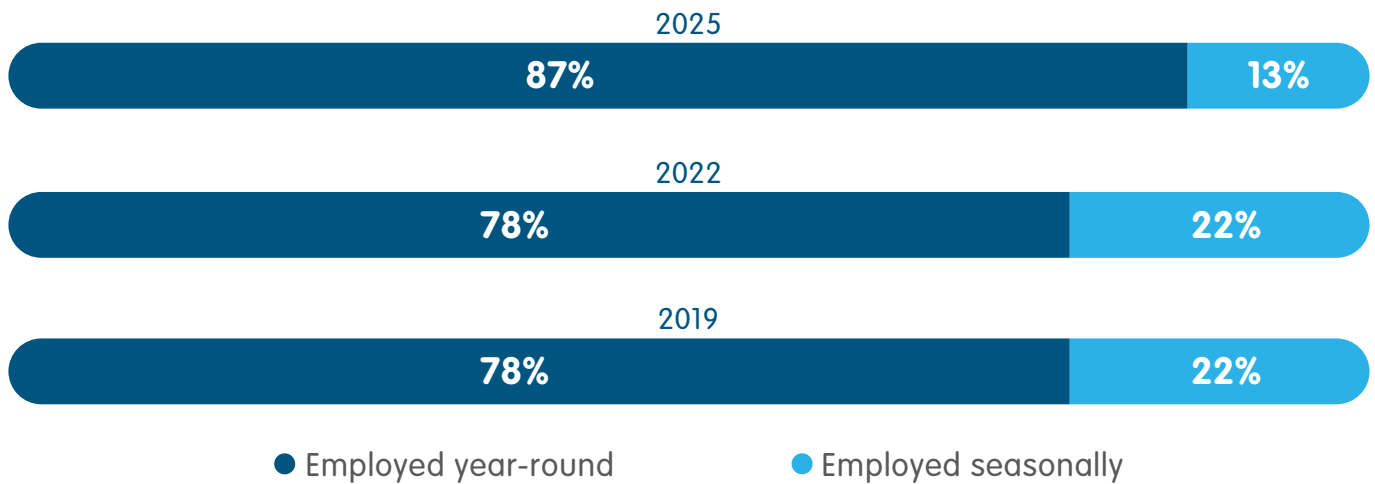
2025
| 87% | 13% |

2022
| 78% | 22% |

2019
| 78% | 22% |

● Employed year-round ● Employed seasonally

Hours worked per week

	<8 hrs	8-15 hrs	16-23 hrs	24-31 hrs	32-39 hrs	>39 hrs
2025	15%	19%	18%	11%	20%	16%
2022	18%	25%	20%	19%	10%	8%
2019	25%	30%	20%	14%	6%	5%

● 2025 ● 2022 ● 2019

Years working in industry

	<1 yr	1-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-20 yrs	>20 yrs
2025	7%	36%	16%	20%	21%
2022	8%	26%	19%	23%	23%
2019	11%	28%	21%	22%	19%

● 2025 ● 2022 ● 2019

PD sessions per year

	2025	2022	2019
1	17%	22%	21%
2	18%	26%	25%
3	17%	21%	22%
4	13%	8%	12%
5+	19%	21%	18%

● 2025 ● 2022 ● 2019

Background

10%
identify as
from a CALD
background

Yes
10%

Prefer not
to say
3%

No
87%
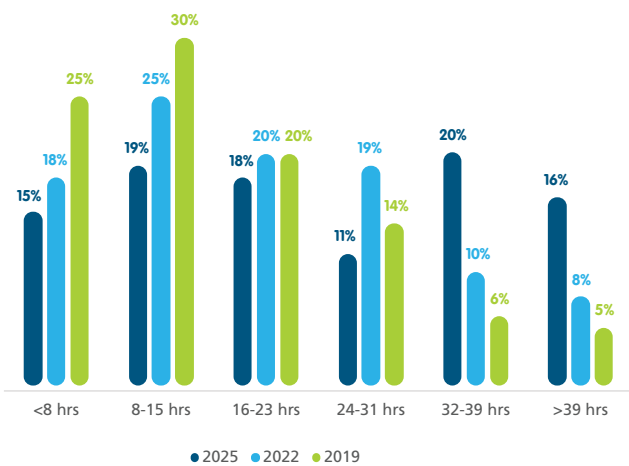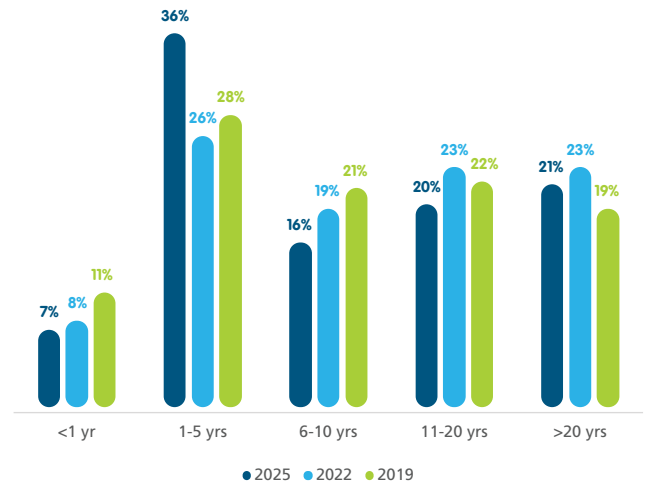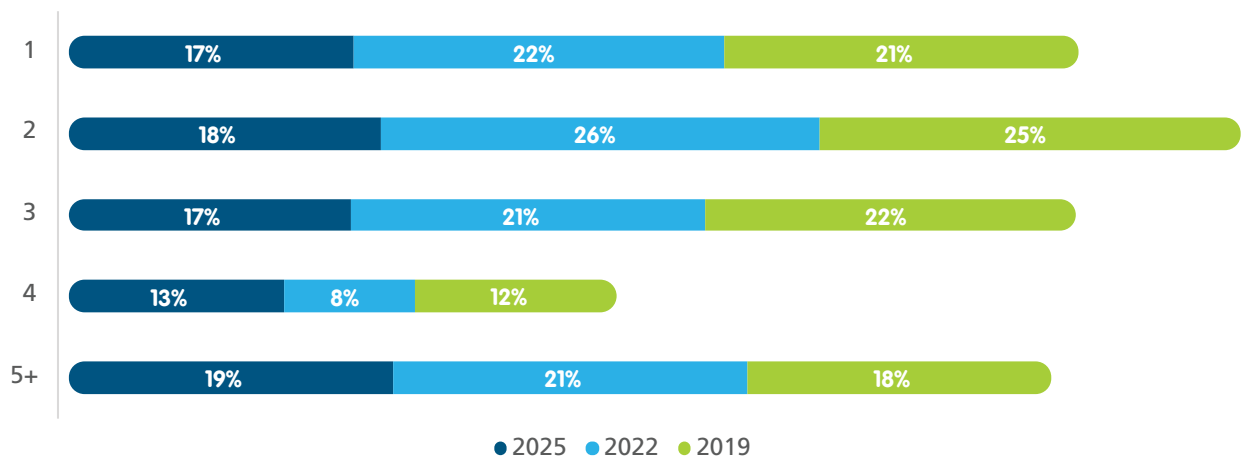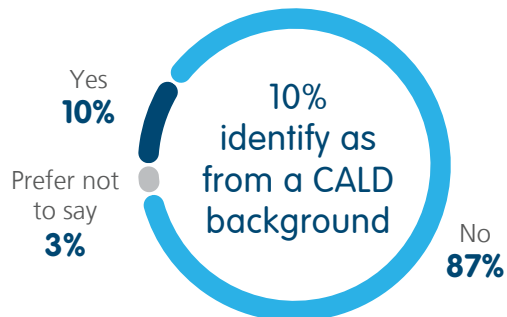
Ethnicity (from CALD background)

Other
13%

South-East Asian
24%

Southern &
Eastern European
12%

Pacific Islander
6%

North-West
European
11%

Latin American
6%

North African &
Middle Eastern
6%

Southern &
Central Asian
9%

Disability

8%
have a
disability

Yes
8%

Prefer not
to say
3%

No
89%
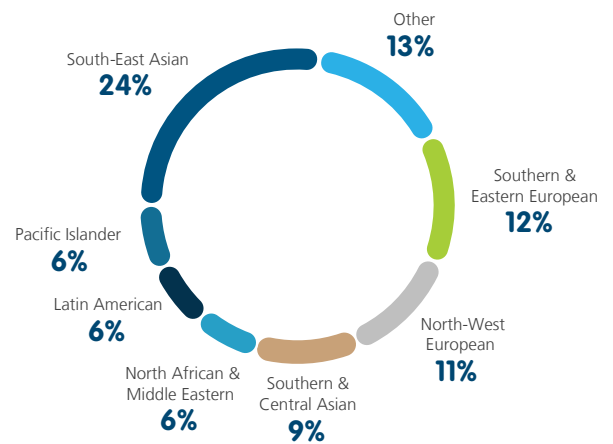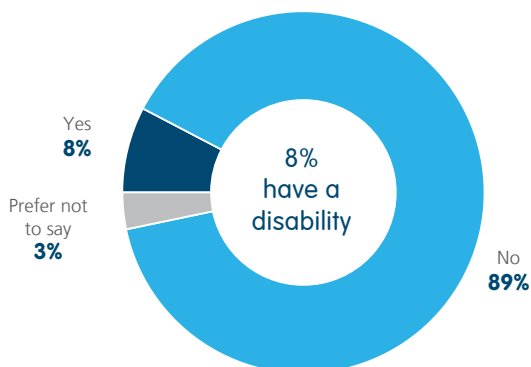
Disability Type (from 8% with disability)

Neurodiverse
36%

Chronic health
condition
19%

Physical
12%

Other
33%

Sexuality

81%

2% **1%** **3%**

2% 4% 8%
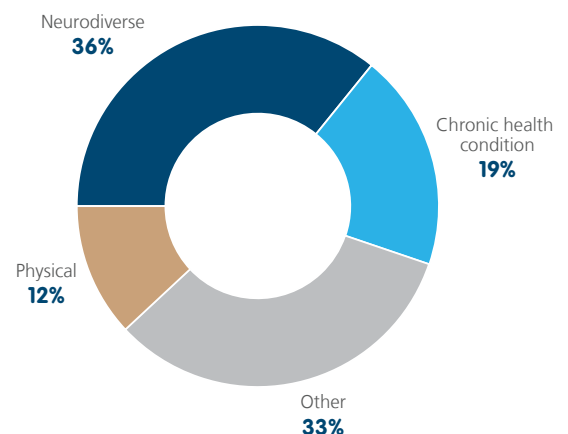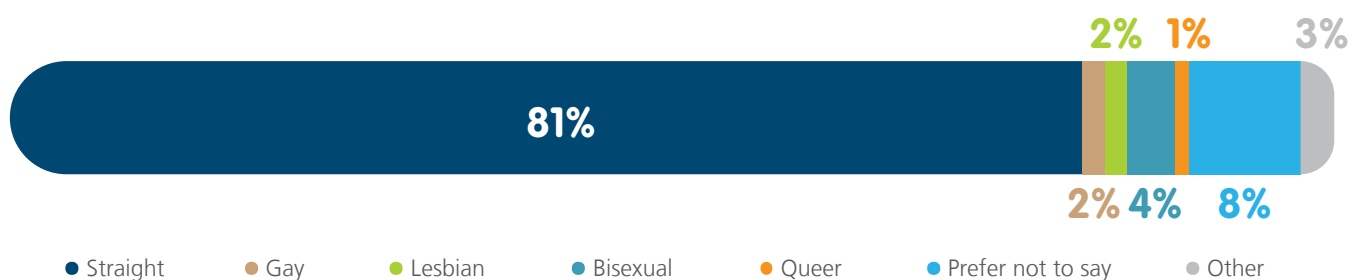
● Straight   ● Gay   ● Lesbian   ● Bisexual   ● Queer   ● Prefer not to say   ● Other

Perceived Quality of Leadership
There is a diverse range of experiences around quality of leadership

57%	28%	15%
Very high or high	**Neither high nor low**	**Very low or low**

The aquatic industry offers good career opportunities

Agree **39%**

Strongly agree **14%**

Strongly disagree **4%**

Disagree **14%**

Neither agree nor disagree **31%**

53% agree that the aquatic industry offers good career opportunities
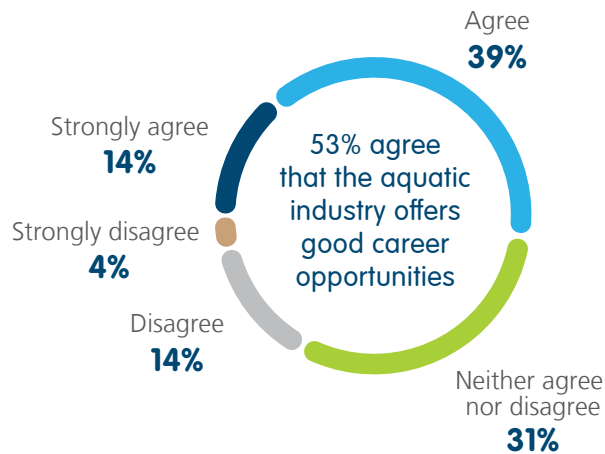
Over half have career goals in the aquatic industry

Have career goals within industry **51%**

Believe industry supports achieving external career goals **68%**
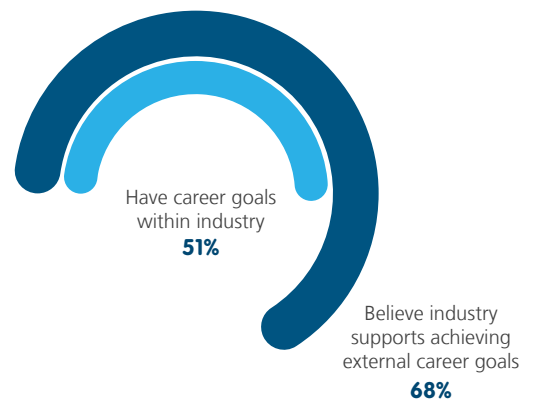
Top 6 ways to improve leadership

#1 More leadership development / training programs

#2 Better support for new leaders in their roles

#3 Stronger performance management and accountability for leaders

#4 Ensuring leaders are ready before promotion

#5 Attracting leaders through improved pay and conditions

#6 Developing and supporting clear leadership career pathways

Top 4 career goals

44% Gaining more experience in current role

39% Improving work-life balance in the industry

34% Earning higher qualifications

32% Advancing to coordinator & manager positions

Dealing with OVA related incidents is too common

Never	Very rarely	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Very frequently
10%	16%	19%	30%	17%	8%

Deal with OVA by role 1

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Pool Lifeguard	5%	35%	27%	33%
Duty Manager	0%	13%	24%	63%
Ops TL/Spvsr/Coord/Mgr	0%	22%	24%	53%
Facility Manager	6%	30%	27%	37%

● Pool Lifeguard ● Duty Manager ● Ops TL/Spvsr/Coord/Mgr ● Facility Manager

Deal with OVA by role 2

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Swim Teacher	20%	43%	26%	11%
Aq Programs TL/Spvsr/Coord/Mgr	5%	35%	42%	18%
Customer Service Officer/TL/Spvsr/Coord/Mgr	6%	25%	44%	25%

● Swim Teacher ● Aq Programs TL/Spvsr/Coord/Mgr ● Customer Service Officer/TL/Spvsr/Coord/Mgr

Deal with OVA by age

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
<25	7%	34%	26%	33%
25-34	6%	17%	27%	40%
35-44	9%	41%	30%	18%
>44	15%	47%	32%	16%

● <25   ● 25-34   ● 35-44   ● >44

Deal with OVA by location

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Metropolitan	9%	32%	31%	28%
Regional	12%	38%	29%	20%
Remote	14%	42%	28%	17%

● Metropolitan   ● Regional   ● Remote

Deal with OVA by gender

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Male	7%	31%	26%	35%
Female	12%	37%	31%	20%

● Male   ● Female
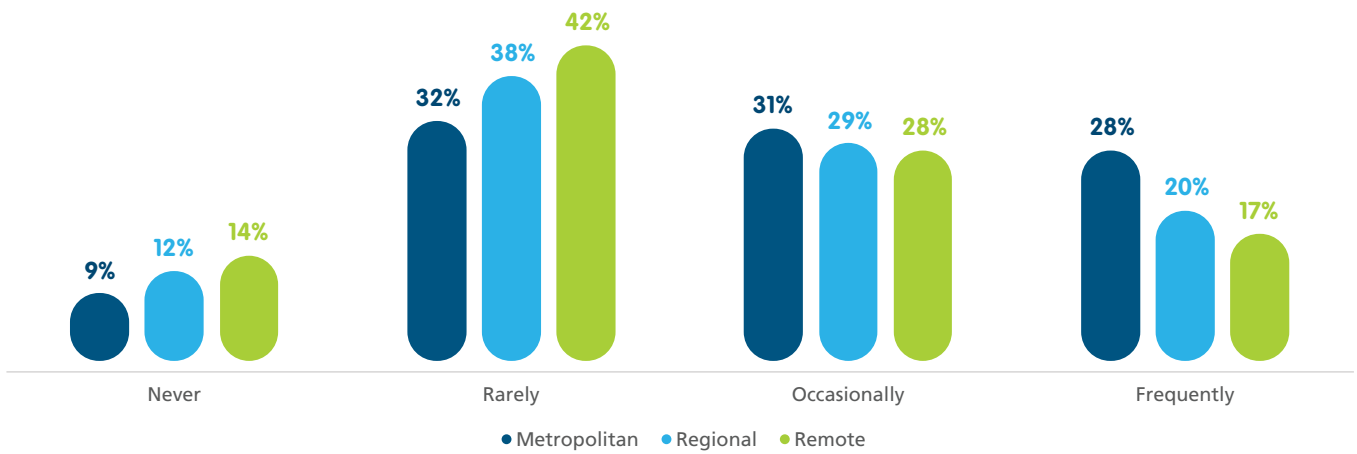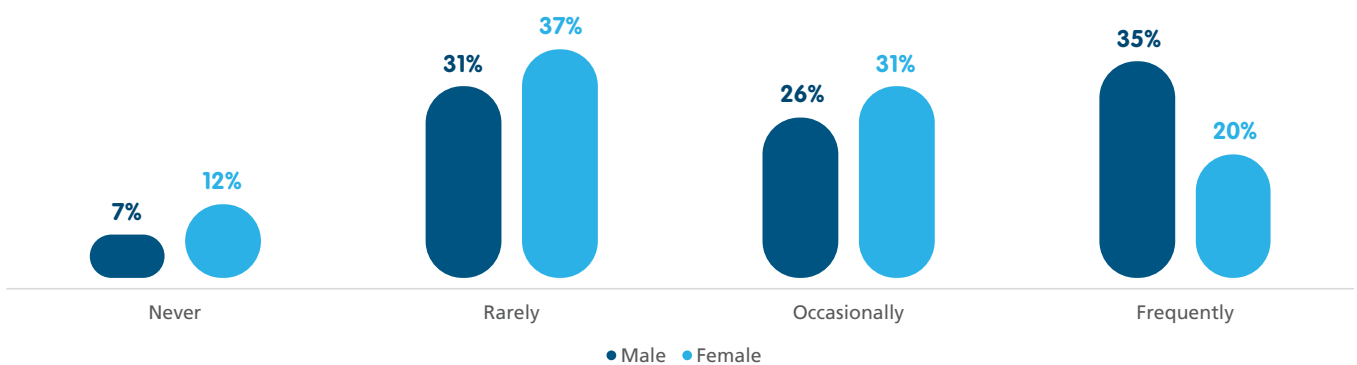
OVA - UNSAFE

Worker felt unsafe as a result of OVA type incidents
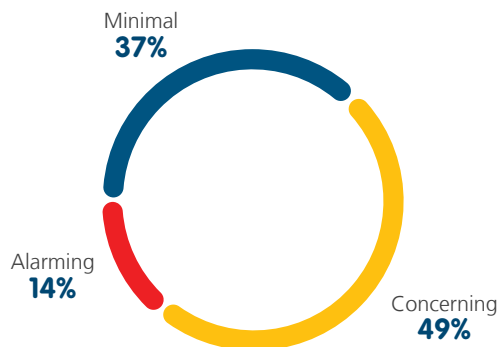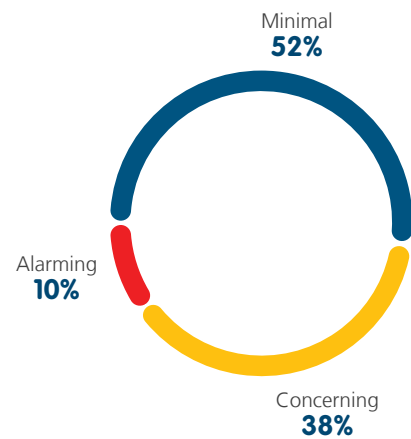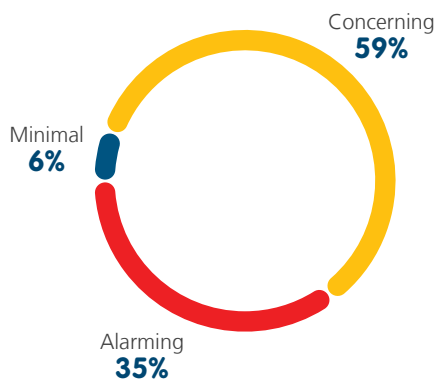
38%	44%	18%
Minimal	**Concerning**	**Alarming**

PLG - Unsafe

Minimal
37%

Concerning
49%

Alarming
14%

SWST - Unsafe

Minimal
52%

Concerning
38%

Alarming
10%

DM - Unsafe

Concerning
59%

Minimal
6%

Alarming
35%

Customer Service Officer/Coord/Mgr - Unsafe

Minimal
29%

Concerning
43%

Alarming
29%

Further roles - Unsafe
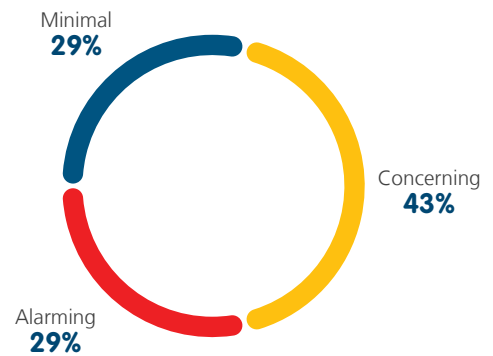
	Minimal	Concerning	Alarming
Aquatic Operations TL/Coord/Spvsr/Mgr	18%	59%	23%
Aquatic Programs TL/Coord/Spvsr/Mgr	38%	37%	25%
Facility Manager	36%	41%	24%

● Minimal ● Concerning ● Alarming

Worker felt unreasonable stress as a result of OVA type incidents

39%	38%	23%
Minimal	**Concerning**	**Alarming**

PLG - Unreasonable stress

Minimal
48%

Concerning
34%

Alarming
18%

SWST - Unreasonable stress

Minimal
44%

Concerning
36%

Alarming
20%

DM - Unreasonable stress
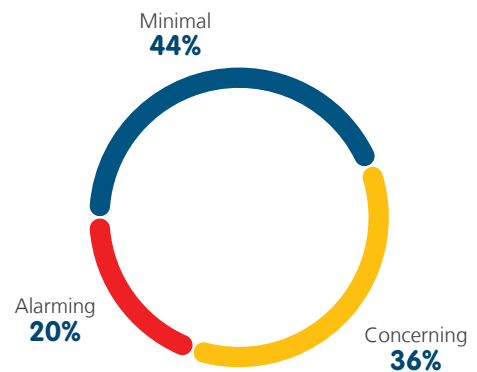
Concerning
46%

Minimal
15%
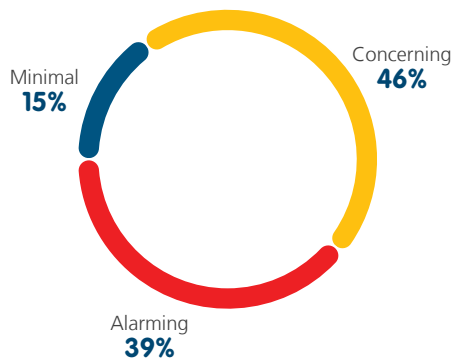
Alarming
39%

Customer Service Officer/Coord/Mgr - Unreasonable stress

Minimal
27%

Concerning
47%
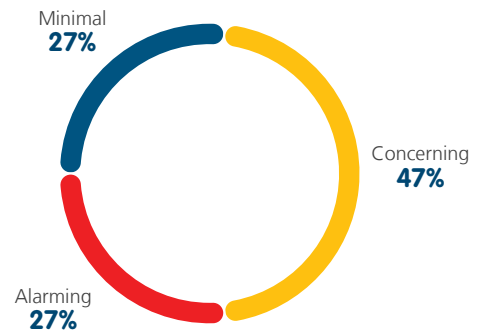
Alarming
27%

Further roles - Unreasonable stress

Role	Minimal	Concerning	Alarming
Aquatic Operations TL/Coord/Spvsr/Mgr	29%	36%	36%
Aquatic Programs TL/Coord/Spvsr/Mgr	32%	49%	20%
Facility Manager	30%	37%	33%

● Minimal ● Concerning ● Alarming

17

Occupational Violence and Aggression (OVA)

One of the most pressing findings of the 2025 survey is the prevalence of occupational violence and aggression in aquatic facilities. A quarter of workers report dealing with OVA incidents frequently, while 30% do so occasionally. Almost half (44%) say they feel unsafe at times in their role, and nearly one in five (18%) report feeling very unsafe. In addition, many workers (63%) describe experiencing unreasonable levels of stress linked to managing conflict with patrons. Taken together, these results underline the scale of the challenge: aquatic facilities are intended as safe spaces for recreation and community, yet many frontline staff are regularly exposed to hostility and aggression that undermines their wellbeing and job satisfaction.

The industry has already begun to respond. Over the 2024–25 summer, Royal Life Saving led the **Keep Your Cool at the Pool** campaign, which was supported by councils, facility operators, and peak bodies across the country. The campaign raised awareness of appropriate behaviour in aquatic settings and reinforced that abuse and aggression toward staff is unacceptable. This is an important step, but the findings of this report highlight that continued, coordinated action is required. Training in de-escalation, stronger reporting and support systems, and facility design and security enhancements will be critical to halting the impacts of OVA and retaining a safe, sustainable workforce.

"Employee safety and training — I haven't experienced violence myself, but I know many lifeguards who have. More training is needed, stronger support from duty managers, and consequences for patrons who behave aggressively."

Leadership and Capability Development

Leadership emerged as another defining theme of the 2025 findings. While a majority (57%) of workers rate the quality of leadership in their workplace as high or very high, a significant minority (15%) describe it as very low or low. This divide suggests pockets of excellent leadership across the sector, but also a lack of consistency in how supervisors and managers are trained, credentialed, and supported. Survey responses highlight what workers want to see improved: better support for new managers, greater access to professional development, and structured pathways into leadership roles. Many noted that frontline leaders are often promoted from swim teaching or lifeguarding without sufficient preparation, and that mentoring and resourcing are critical to success.

"Provide greater support for new managers who may have been promoted from being a swim teacher without any experience… Increased mentoring programs with senior staff are needed, as a weekend course and a few shadow hours are not enough to build skills or confidence."

Workers are also seeking clearer progression and leadership opportunities, particularly for lifeguards and younger staff.

"Increase personal development opportunities, more events and opportunities for upcoming staff, more leadership opportunities for lifeguards."

These findings confirm that investment in leadership capability is not only an organisational priority but an industry-wide need. Establishing consistent standards for leadership development and embedding mentoring programs could lift capability across all facilities, improving workforce culture, safety, and retention.

Analytical thinking remains the most soughtafter core skill among employers, with seven out of 10 companies considering it as essential in 2025. This is followed by resilience, flexibility and agility, along with leadership and social influence.[4]

Actions employers can take to reduce exposure to OVA incidents

Action	%
Enforce stronger policies and consequences for aggression and abuse	56%
Better training on de-escalation and conflict management	49%
Better education for patrons on acceptable behaviour	49%
Stronger leadership support in handling conflicts	37%
Improve security measures, e.g. cameras, alarms, security staff	35%

Diversity and Inclusion

The 2025 workforce survey highlights both progress and persistent gaps in diversity across the aquatic industry. Women represent 69% of the workforce and now hold more than half of facility manager positions, up from 44% in 2022. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers comprise 4% of the workforce, slightly above national representation. Yet, workers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds make up just 10% of the workforce, well below the national benchmark of 27.6%.

Representation of workers with disability also remains low at 8%, compared with 21.4% across the Australian population. Among those who identify with disability, 36% described themselves as neurodiverse, 19% with a chronic health condition, 12% with a physical disability, and 33% selected "other". These findings show the importance of moving beyond surface-level access initiatives toward meaningful inclusion strategies that recognise and support the breadth of lived experience.

Recent sector research, such as the Exploring Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion across the Aquatic and Leisure Ecosystem in Victoria report (Swinburne University, VicHealth & RLSSA, 2025), reinforces these patterns. It found that while enthusiasm for DEI is high, initiatives are often ad hoc, compliance-driven, and unevenly applied across different groups. Aligning workforce strategies with the DEI Roadmap outlined in that report — including stronger leadership commitment, clearer policies, and ongoing training — could help bridge the gap between good intentions and consistent practice.

Taken together, the findings on occupational violence and aggression, leadership, and diversity and inclusion show the interdependence of these themes. Workers who feel safe, supported by capable leaders, and valued for their diversity are more likely to stay in the industry and build long-term careers. Conversely, when safety concerns go unaddressed, leadership capability is inconsistent, or inclusion is superficial, the workforce is weakened, and the industry's broader community impact is likely diminished. Addressing these areas in a coordinated way offers the strongest pathway to building a resilient, professional, and future-ready aquatic workforce.

"Provide better staff training and resources to support people from diverse backgrounds — cultural, disability, gender, education, and ages. Greater collaboration with community groups is needed."

Technology, AI and the Changing Nature of Work

According to the World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report 2025, 'On average, workers can expect that two-fifths (39%) of their existing skill sets will be transformed or become outdated over the 2025-2030 period.'[5] Even in frontline aquatic industry roles such as lifeguard and swim teaching, digital tools are increasingly reshaping core components of the role. From AI-enabled drowning detection systems, to using data and video from wearable health devices and video systems, to building-wide sensors and customer apps, technology is moving from back-of-house support to an integrated toolbox shaping daily work and leisure. This shift delivers genuine safety, efficiency, and service gains, but it also changes the mix of tasks, the skills required, and the pressure profile for staff.

Across the workforce, digital and data fluency are becoming core capabilities. All roles — and increasingly leadership, management, and customer-facing positions — operate at the centre of an information hub: managing patron and student data, monitoring dashboards, responding to drowning detection alerts, accessing CCTV footage, overseeing rosters and programs, reviewing incident logs, and responding to maintenance or equipment alerts. The ability to access, interpret, analyse, decide, and communicate effectively through digital tools is now fundamental. Equally important are the capabilities to keep learning, problem solve, adapt, and "see the whole picture" alongside role-specific technical knowledge.

These shifts are unfolding within a broader social context. Cost-of-living pressures, time scarcity, information echo-chambers, and the rise of "me" culture are shaping patron attitudes and behaviours, often heightening frustration and lowering tolerance for rules or perceived lack of service (delays, cancellations, broken equipment). The record-everything environment and threat of social media escalation add reputational risk and stress for staff and organisations.

Survey responses reinforce this picture. Workers consistently emphasised the need for ongoing training, stronger safety standards, and a culture that adapts to new challenges rather than assuming things will remain unchanged.

"Ongoing training is needed to ensure employees stay current with safety standards and industry developments."

"Staff need ongoing training and education in specific areas (such as de-escalation)."

As technology and social trends converge, aquatic roles are becoming more complex and adaptive. The interpersonal and safety-driven skills at the heart of the industry remain vital, but the context in which they are applied is shifting. Workers now require not only vigilance and technical competence, but also resilience, adaptability, and confidence in using technology to maintain safe, welcoming, and trusted aquatic environments.

› RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Halt the Impacts of Occupational Violence and Aggression (OVA)

› Embed consistent, industry-wide training in de-escalation, conflict management, and stress management for frontline staff.

› Strengthen facility security arrangements through clear escalation protocols, robust incident reporting systems, and visible deterrents.

› Extend and repeat public campaigns such as Keep Your Cool at the Pool to reinforce expectations of respectful behaviour and support for workers.

› Monitor and evaluate OVA incidence data nationally to track progress and guide future interventions.

› Strengthen sector-wide policy and practice frameworks, such as the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations to incorporate the new facets of safety management at aquatic facilities.

2. Strengthen Leadership Capability and Development

› Establish a nationally consistent approach to aquatic leadership training and credentialling, with a continuing education focus, particularly for duty managers, team leaders, supervisors and facility managers.

› Expand access to mentoring and professional development, particularly for younger staff and those transitioning into leadership roles.

› Integrate inclusive leadership and people-management skills into all supervisory training to foster safe, supportive, and accountable workplace cultures.

› Encourage employers to dedicate time and resources for ongoing leadership development rather than relying on ad hoc or one-off training.

3. Build Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

› Actively recruit and support underrepresented groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, CALD communities, LGBTIQA+ workers, and people with disability.

› Provide targeted training in inclusive practices, with particular focus on cultural competence, and supporting the needs of neurodiverse patrons, gender diverse patrons and those with physical disability.

› Promote gender equity in leadership through structured development programs and visibility of women in senior roles.

› Strengthen sector-wide policy and practice frameworks.

4. Embrace Technology and the Changing Nature of Work

› Support leaders and managers to make informed decisions on technology adoption and provide guidance on safe, best-practice implementation.

› Provide staff with training and support to confidently work with digital systems.

› Ensure policies and training address privacy, consent, and communication with patrons about the use of technology in aquatic settings.

5. Strengthen Workforce Attraction, Retention, and Sustainability

› Promote the health benefits, lifestyle, flexibility, and community impact of aquatic work to attract new entrants, while addressing factors that make workers feel unsafe, overworked or unreasonably stressed.

› Develop targeted retention strategies that emphasise supportive workplace cultures, flexible rosters, and competitive pay and conditions.

› Create clearer career pathways linking frontline roles with supervisory, management, and technical opportunities to improve continuity and reduce attrition. Refer to the National Aquatic Workforce Framework.

› Streamline professional development and reaccreditation requirements, reducing duplication and complexity, and ensuring national consistency.

is 24 or younger

earns between $26 - $40 per hour

works between 8 - 23 hours per week

joined the industry between 15 and 24 years

has been in the industry for less than six years

intends to continue working in industry 1 - 5 years

took up the job because it suited their lifestyle and they had a background in swimming
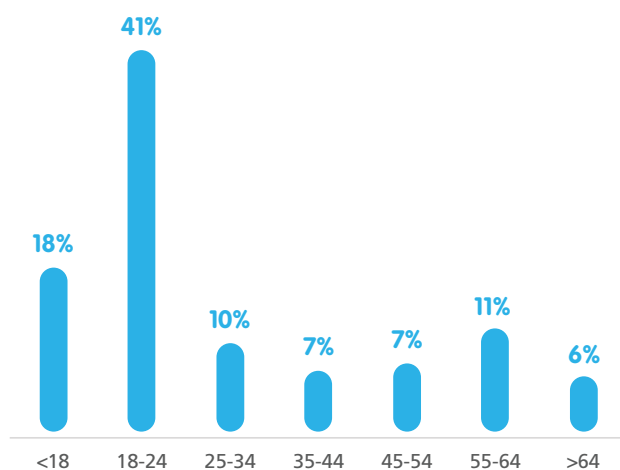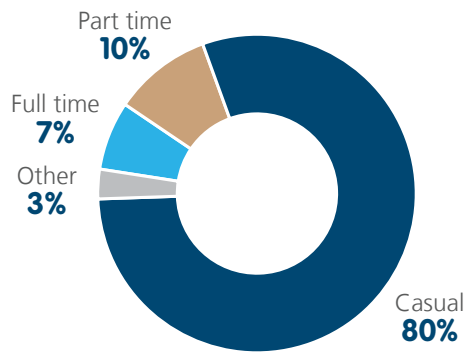
Gender
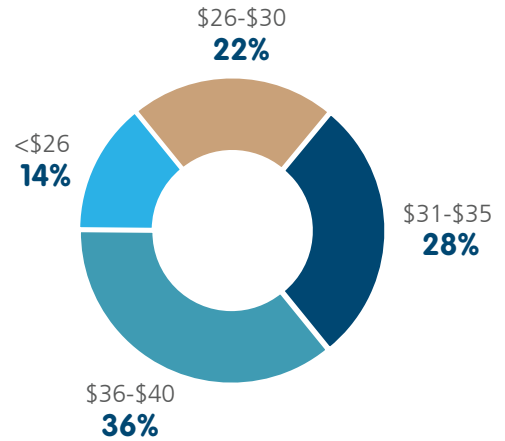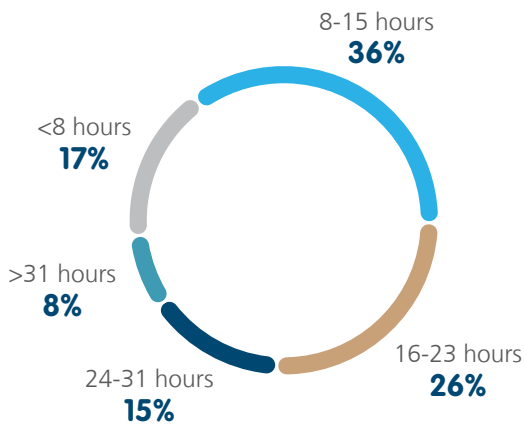
51%

49%

1% Non-binary

2% Prefer not to say

Age

<18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	>64
18%	41%	10%	7%	7%	11%	6%

Employment status

- Casual **80%**
- Part time **10%**
- Full time **7%**
- Other **3%**

Hourly rate

- $26-$30 **22%**
- $31-$35 **28%**
- $36-$40 **36%**
- <$26 **14%**

Hours worked per week

- 8-15 hours **36%**
- <8 hours **17%**
- >31 hours **8%**
- 24-31 hours **15%**
- 16-23 hours **26%**

Weeks worked per year

- 13-24 weeks **21%**
- 25-36 weeks **18%**
- 1-12 weeks **7%**
- 37-52 weeks **53%**

Perform more than one role

- Yes **44%**
- No **56%**

Other role:
38% SWST
39% DM

Age first commenced

- 15-17 **49%**
- 18-24 **24%**
- 25-34 **6%**
- 35-44 **7%**
- 45-54 **8%**
- 55-64 **7%**

Years actively working in industry

<1 year	1 - 5 years	6-10 years	>10 years
16%	**59%**	**13%**	**12%**

Why take up employment

Enjoy working with people **45%**

Background in swimming **54%**

Suited my lifestyle **60%**

Other work or study

Work **45%**

Study **65%**

Quality of leadership

Very high quality	17%
High quality	42%
Neither high nor low quality	25%
Low quality	11%
Very low quality	6%

Future plans

	<1 yr	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	6-9 yrs	>9 yrs
Future in current role	12%	40%	34%	4%	10%
Future in industry	7%	30%	39%	9%	15%

● Future in current role   ● Future in industry

Career goals in industry

26% have career goals in the aquatic intdustry

Yes **26%**

No **46%**

Unsure **28%**

Value of current role for achieving career goals

Somewhat helpful **31%**

Not helpful **15%**

Helpful **54%**

Professional development sessions per year

40%	17%	10%	11%	9%	13%
None	1	2	3	4	5+

Most enjoyable parts of role

Impacting community / people positively	**56%**
Being physically active	**55%**
Interacting with people	**53%**
Helping people be safe around water	**50%**
Working with my colleagues; part of a team	**48%**

Reasons for leaving role

Commenced work in chosen career	**45%**
Not enough work hours / seasonal nature of work	**43%**
Poor quality management / leadership	**40%**
Poor work culture / environment	**39%**
Poor remuneration / poor pay	**38%**

Skills for success (soft / people oriented)

#1 Communication (verbal or written)

#2 Teamwork & collaboration

#3 Conflict resolution

#4 Customer service

#5 Problem solving

Skills for success (technical)

#1 First aid

#2 Aquatic supervision & rescue

#3 Emergency planning & incident response / management

#4 Risk management

#5 Aquatic operations & maintenance

A typical Swimming & Water Safety Teacher...
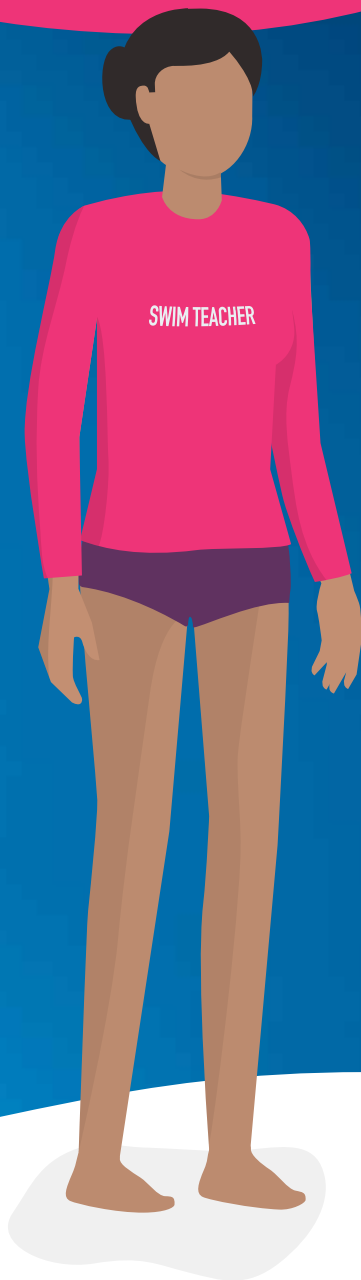
- is female
- is under 24 years of age or over 45 years of age
- earns between $26 - $35 per hour
- Works between 37 - 52 weeks per year
- joins the industry across all ages
- intends to stay in their role three years or more
- most enjoys making a positive impact on people's lives and the community and helping make people safe around water

SWIM TEACHER

Gender

87%

9%

2% Non-binary

2% Prefer not to say

Age

6%	23%	10%	15%	23%	18%	6%
<18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	>64

Employment status

- Part time **17%**
- Full time **5%**
- Other **11%**
- Casual **67%**

Hourly rate

- $26-$30 **17%**
- <$25 **9%**
- $31-$35 **46%**
- >$35 **27%**

Hours worked per week

- <8 hours **28%**
- 8-15 hours **31%**
- >31 hours **7%**
- 24-31 hours **11%**
- 16-23 hours **23%**

Weeks worked per year

- 25-36 weeks **17%**
- 13-24 weeks **6%**
- 1-12 weeks **10%**
- 37-52 weeks **66%**

Perform more than one role

- Yes **46%**
- No **54%**

28% also work as a customer service officer

Age first commenced

15 - 17	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64
24%	25%	14%	17%	12%	7%

Years actively working in industry

< 1 year	1 - 5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	>20 years
14%	**46%**	**15%**	**10%**	**16%**

Why take up employment

Prevent drowning
42%

Background in swimming
53%

Suited my lifestyle
53%

Other work or study

Study
50%

Work
55%

Quality of leadership

Very high quality	**15%**
High quality	**44%**
Neither high nor low quality	**27%**
Low quality	**9%**
Very low quality	**5%**

Future plans

	<1 yr	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	6-9 yrs	>9 yrs
	10%	**26%**	**34%**	**12%**	**17%**
	7%	**15%**	**29%**	**18%**	**30%**

Career goals in industry

Yes **50%**

50% have career goals in the aquatic intdustry

Unsure **22%**

No **28%**

Value of current role for achieving career goals

Somewhat helpful **34%**

Not helpful **9%**

Helpful **56%**

Professional development sessions per year

None	1	2	3	4	5+
17%	**18%**	**21%**	**14%**	**15%**	**16%**

Most enjoyable parts of role

- Impacting community / people positively — **70%**
- Helping people be safe around water — **66%**
- Working with children — **60%**
- Learning new knowledge and skills — **35%**
- Being physically active — **33%**

Reasons for leaving role

- Poor remuneration / poor pay — **53%**
- Not enough work hours / seasonal nature of work — **52%**
- Commenced work in chosen career — **39%**
- Poor quality management / leadership — **38%**
- Lack of career opportunity — **29%**

Skills for success (soft / people oriented)

- **#1** Communication (verbal or written)
- **#2** Teamwork & collaboration
- **#3** Planning, coordinating & organising
- **#4** Problem solving
- **#5** Mentoring, coaching, staff development

Skills for success (technical)

- **#1** Teaching, coaching, facilitating techniques
- **#2** First aid
- **#3** Aquatic supervision & rescue
- **#4** Risk management
- **#5** WHS compliance
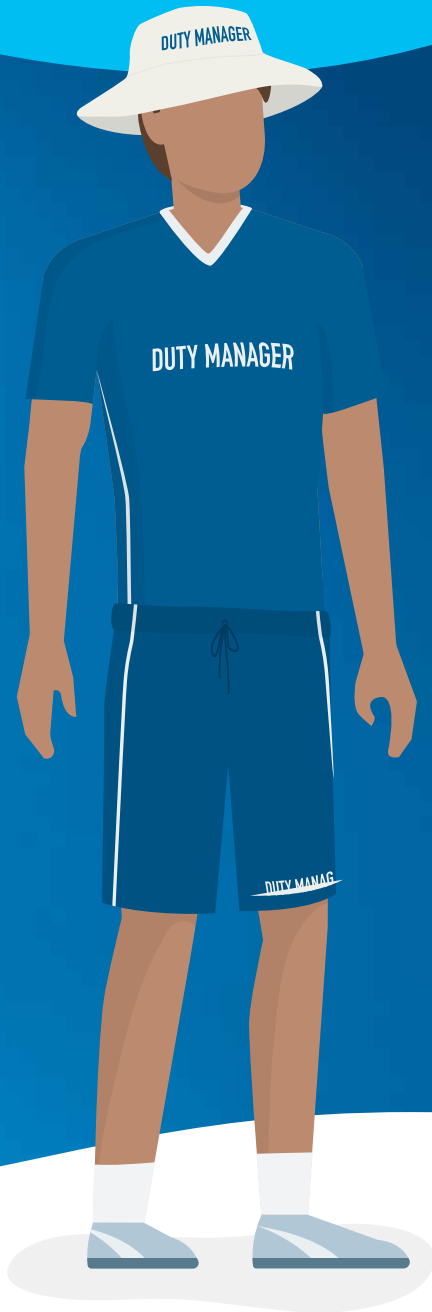
- is male
- earns between $36 - $45 per hour
- works between 37 - 52 weeks per year
- also works as a pool lifeguard
- is studying while working
- intends to stay in industry five years or less
- relies on conflict management, communication and customer service skills for success in the role

Gender

41%

57%

2% Prefer not to say

Age

42% — 18-24
17% — 25-34
13% — 35-44
11% — 45-54
15% — 55-64
2% — >64

Employment status

- Full time **26%**
- Part time **25%**
- Casual **47%**
- Other **2%**

Hourly rate

- $31-$35 **20%**
- $26-$30 **7%**
- >$45 **19%**
- $41-$45 **10%**
- $36-$40 **44%**

Hours worked per week

- 16-23 hours **23%**
- 1-15 hours **12%**
- 24-31 hours **23%**
- >31 hours **43%**

Weeks worked per year

- 25-36 weeks **4%**
- 1-24 weeks **6%**
- 37-52 weeks **90%**

Perform more than one role

93% also work as a Pool Lifeguard

- Yes **87%**
- No **13%**

Work for more than one organisation

34% work for more than 1 organisation

- Yes **34%**
- No **66%**

Years working in industry

< 1 year	1 - 5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	>20 years
2%	42%	19%	25%	13%

Why take up employment

Friends / family suggested **36%**

Suited my lifestyle **40%**

Background in swimming **50%**

Other work or study

Work **44%**

Study **58%**

Quality of leadership

Very high quality	4%
High quality	40%
Neither high nor low quality	21%
Low quality	21%
Very low quality	15%

Future plans

	<1 yr	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	6-9 yrs	>9 yrs
Future in current role	26%	23%	30%	9%	11%
Future in industry	15%	19%	30%	8%	28%

● Future in current role ● Future in industry

Career goals in industry

35% have career goals in the aquatic intdustry

Yes **35%**

No **39%**

Unsure **26%**

Value of current role for achieving career goals

Somewhat helpful **38%**

Not helpful **13%**

Helpful **50%**

Professional development sessions per year

None	1	2	3	4	5+
23%	21%	17%	11%	11%	17%

Most enjoyable parts of role

Category	%
Interacting with patrons / colleagues	50%
Learning new knowledge & skills	46%
Working with colleagues; part of a team	46%
Dealing with various tasks & situations	42%
Being physically active	40%

Reasons for leaving role (ranked average)

Category	%
Poor quality management / leadership	55%
Not enough work hours / seasonal nature of work	43%
Poor work culture / environment	38%
Commenced work in chosen career	34%
Lack of career opportunity	32%
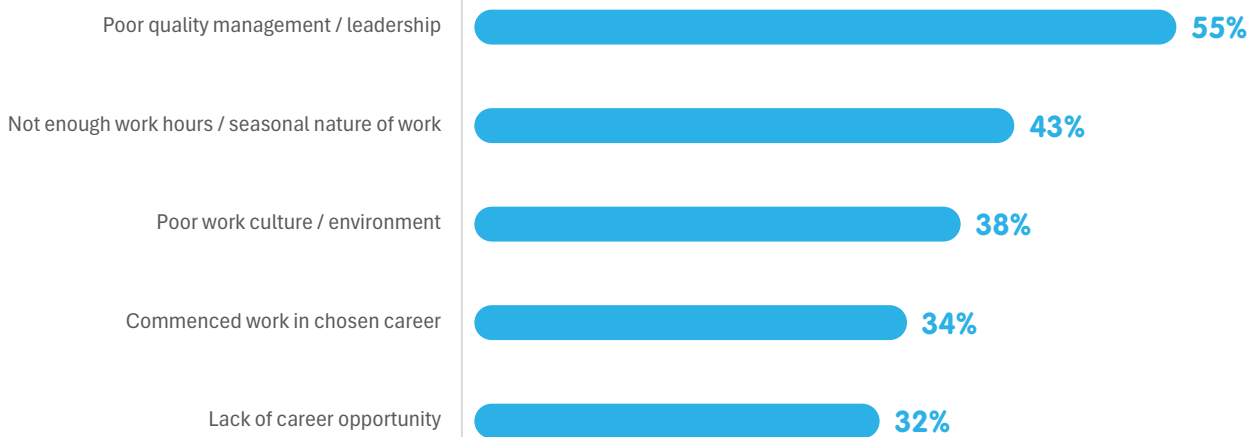
Skills for success (soft / people oriented)

#1 Conflict resolution

#2 Communication (verbal or written)

#3 Customer service

#4 Leadership

#5 Mentoring / staff development & Teamwork

Skills for success (technical)

#1 Aquatic supervision & rescue

#2 Aquatic operations & maintenance

#3 First aid

#4 Risk management

#5 WHS compliance equal with Emergency response
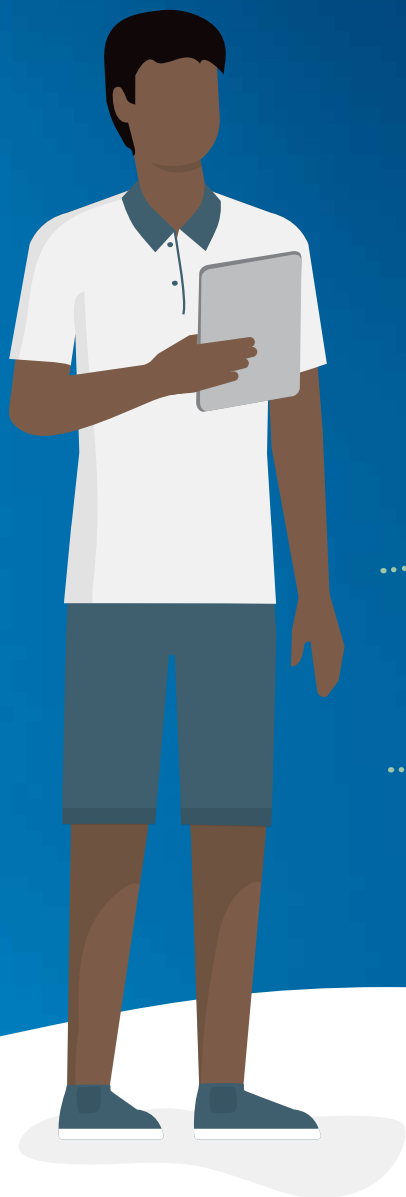
- is 25-44 years old
- works full time
- works between 37 - 52 weeks per year
- performs more than one role
- has been in the industry for 11 years or more
- intends to stay in the industry six years or more
- believes current role is valuable in achieving their career goals

Gender

45%

51%

2% Self describe

2% Prefer not to say

Age

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	>65
16%	40%	18%	15%	7%	4%

Employment status

- Full time **80%**
- Part time **9%**
- Casual **5%**
- Other **5%**

Hourly rate

- $31-$35 **23%**
- $36-$40 **19%**
- $41-$45 **19%**
- >$45 **31%**
- <$31 **8%**

Hours worked per week

- 32-39 hours **65%**
- >39 hours **22%**
- >22 hours **7%**
- 24-31 hours **5%**

Weeks worked per year

- 37-52 weeks **87%**
- 25-36 weeks **9%**
- 13-24 weeks **4%**

Perform more than one role

65% work as a Pool Lifeguard

- Yes **47%**
- No **53%**

Work for more than one organisation

- Yes **18%**
- No **82%**

Years working in industry

<5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	>20 years
27%	20%	33%	20%

Why take up employment

- Career opportunity **42%**
- Background in swimming **40%**
- Enjoy working with people **40%**

Other work or study

- Work **31%**
- Study **30%**

Quality of leadership

- Very high quality **10%**
- High quality **50%**
- Neither high nor low quality **30%**
- Low quality **8%**
- Very low quality **2%**

Future plans

	<1 yr	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	6-9 yrs	>9 yrs
Future in current role	11%	33%	25%	9%	22%
Future in industry	4%	5%	29%	11%	51%

Career goals in industry

- Yes **67%**
- No **13%**
- Unsure **20%**

Value of current role for achieving career goals

- Somewhat helpful **16%**
- Not helpful **6%**
- Helpful **77%**

Professional development sessions per year

None	1	2	3	4	5+
8%	21%	26%	15%	13%	17%

Most enjoyable parts of role

Impacting people / community positively	56%
Working with colleagues; part of a team	54%
Interacting with patrons / colleagues	52%
Helping people be safe around water	46%
Dealing with a variety of tasks and situations	42%

Reasons for leaving role

Poor remuneration / poor pay	46%
Commenced chosen career	44%
Lack of career opportunity	42%
Poor quality management / leadership	40%
Poor work culture / environment	38%

Skills for success (soft / people oriented)

#1 Communication (verbal or written)

#2 Planning, coordinating & organising

#3 Mentoring, coaching, staff development

#4 Teamwork & collaboration

#5 Problem solving

Skills for success (technical)

#1 Aquatic operations & maintenance

#2 Aquatic supervision & rescue

#3 WHS compliance

#4 Emergency planning & incident response

#5 Risk management

> **A typical Aquatic Programs Team Leader/ Supervisor/Coordinator/Manager**

> **earns more than $31 per hour**

> **works more than 32 hours per week**

> **is 25-44 years old**

> **has been in the industry more than 11 years**

> **performs more than one role**

> **believes working in industry is helpful in achieving their career goals**

> **most enjoys having a positive impact on people and the community**

> **relies on strong communication, planning, and organising skills for success in the role**

SWIM SCHOOL MANAGER

Gender

85%

14%

○ **0% Self describe**

○ **1% Prefer not to say**

Age

40%

16%

18%

15%

7%

4%

18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 >65

Employment status

- Full time **44%**
- Part time **20%**
- Casual **26%**
- Other **10%**

Hourly rate

- <$31 **17%**
- $31-$35 **47%**
- $36-$40 **20%**
- $41-$45 **6%**
- >$45 **9%**

Hours worked per week

- <24 hours **30%**
- 24-31 hours **16%**
- 32-39 hours **34%**
- >39 hours **20%**

Weeks worked per year

- 25-36 weeks **8%**
- <25 weeks **5%**
- 37-52 weeks **87%**

Perform more than one role

77% work as a Swim Teacher

- Yes **80%**
- No **20%**

Work for more than one organisation

- Yes **25%**
- No **75%**

Years working in industry

<6 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	>20 years
30%	13%	31%	26%

Why take up employment

Background in swimming
46%

Career opportunity
44%

Suited my lifestyle
39%

Other work or study

Study
35%

Work
37%

Quality of leadership

Very high quality	13%
High quality	35%
Neither high nor low quality	35%
Low quality	16%
Very low quality	1%

Future plans

	<1 yr	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	6-9 yrs	>9 yrs
Future in current role	13%	21%	27%	13%	26%
Future in industry	5%	13%	21%	16%	46%

● Future in current role ● Future in industry

Career goals in industry

Yes **49%**

No **21%**

Unsure **30%**

Value of current role for achieving career goals

Somewhat helpful **28%**

Helpful **72%**

Professional development sessions per year

None	1	2	3	4	5+
3%	13%	22%	19%	19%	25%

Most enjoyable parts of role

Impacting people / community positively	**79%**
Helping people be safe around water	**64%**
Working with children	**42%**
Working with colleagues; part of a team	**36%**
Interacting with patrons / colleagues	**34%**

Reasons for leaving role

Poor remuneration / poor pay	**53%**
Seasonal nature of work	**50%**
Commenced chosen career	**41%**
Poor quality management / leadership	**37%**
Lack of career opportunity	**31%**

Skills for success (soft / people oriented)

#1 Communication (verbal or written)

#2 Planning, coordinating & organising

#3 Mentoring, coaching, staff development

#4 Teamwork & collaboration

#5 Problem solving
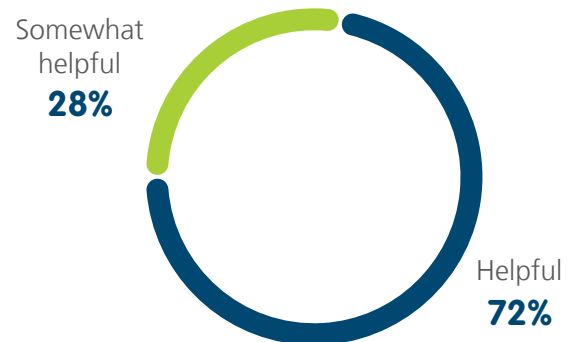
Skills for success (technical)

#1 Teaching, coaching, facilitating techniques

#2 Program & event management

#3 Aquatic supervision & rescue

#4 IT

#5 Aquatic operations & maintenance

- is female
- works between 37 - 52 weeks per year
- works full time
- has been in the industry for 11 years or more
- performs more than one role
- intends to stay in the industry six years or more
- undertakes three or more PD sessions per year

Gender

54%

44%

○ 2% Prefer to self-describe

Age

6% 18-24
26% 25-34
20% 35-44
29% 45-54
10% 55-64
10% >65

Employment status

- Full time **79%**
- Part time **7%**
- Casual **6%**
- Other **7%**

Hourly rate

- Salary **63%**
- Hourly wage **29%**
- Other **8%**

Hours worked per week

- >32 hours **96%**
- <32 hours **4%**

Weeks worked per year

- 37-52 weeks **86%**
- 25-36 weeks **13%**
- 13-24 weeks **1%**

Perform more than one role

60% work as a Pool Lifeguard

- Yes **83%**
- No **17%**

Work for more than one organisation

- Yes **19%**
- No **81%**

Years working in industry

1 - 5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	>20 years
9%	23%	37%	31%

Why take up employment

- Career opportunity **47%**
- Background in swimming **44%**
- Enjoy working with people **34%**

Other work or study

- Study **36%**
- Work **26%**

Quality of leadership

- Very high quality **14%**
- High quality **48%**
- Neither high nor low quality **29%**
- Low quality **6%**
- Very low quality **3%**

Future plans

	<1 yr	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	6-9 yrs	>9 yrs
Dark	10%	17%	34%	13%	26%
Light	4%	7%	23%	9%	57%

Career goals in industry

- Yes **75%**
- No **14%**
- Unsure **11%**

Value of current role for achieving career goals

- Extremely helpful **46%**
- Very helpful **38%**
- Somewhat helpful **17%**

Professional development sessions per year

1	2	3	4	5+
23%	14%	22%	9%	31%

Most enjoyable parts of role

Impacting people / community positively	**81%**
Helping people be safe around water	**49%**
Dealing with a variety of tasks and situations	**38%**
Working with colleagues; part of a team	**38%**
Interacting with patrons / colleagues	**36%**

Reasons for leaving role

Poor remuneration / poor pay	**55%**
Seasonal nature of work	**55%**
Commenced chosen career	**39%**
Poor work culture / environment	**38%**
Lack of career opportunity	**29%**

Skills for success (soft / people oriented)

#1 Communication (verbal or written)

#2 Mentoring, coaching, staff development

#3 Teamwork & collaboration

#4 Planning, coordinating & organising

#5 Problem solving

Skills for success (technical)

#1 Aquatic operations & maintenance

#2 WHS compliance

#3 Risk management

#4 Financial (budgeting, financial reporting, cost management)

#5 Emergency planning & incident response / management

earns between
$36 - $50 per hour

works between
37 - 52 weeks per year

is 18 - 34 years old

has been in the industry
for less than six years

performs more than one
role and works for more
than one organisation

intends to stay in
current role less than
five years

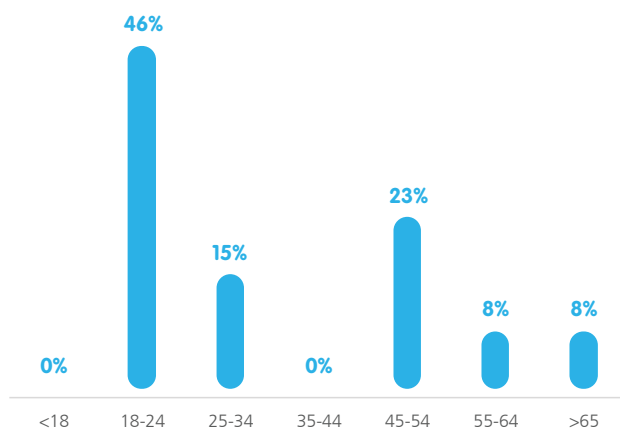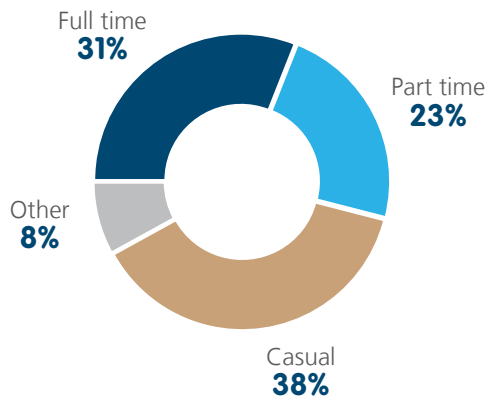undertakes three
or more PD sessions
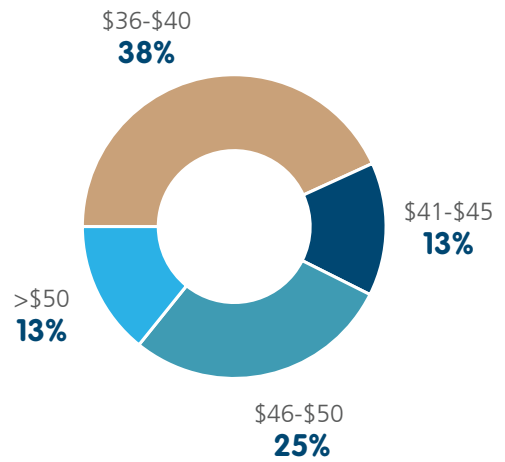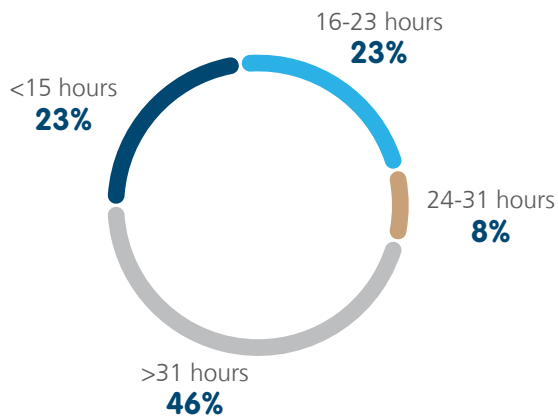per year

Gender

41%

57%

2% Prefer not to say

Age

46%

15%

23%

8%

8%

0%

0%

<18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	>65

Employment status

- Full time **31%**
- Part time **23%**
- Casual **38%**
- Other **8%**

Hourly rate

- $36-$40 **38%**
- $41-$45 **13%**
- $46-$50 **25%**
- >$50 **13%**

Hours worked per week

- 16-23 hours **23%**
- <15 hours **23%**
- 24-31 hours **8%**
- >31 hours **46%**

Weeks worked per year

- 25-36 weeks **15%**
- 13-24 weeks **8%**
- 37-52 weeks **77%**

Perform more than one role

90% work as a Pool Lifeguard

- Yes **77%**
- No **23%**

Work for more than one organisation

62% work for more than 1 organisation

- Yes **62%**
- No **38%**

Years working in industry

- **54%** 1 - 5 years
- **15%** 6-10 years
- **8%** 11-20 years
- **23%** >20 years

Why take up employment

Background in swimming **42%**

Career opportunity **50%**

Suited my lifestyle **58%**

Other work or study

Study **67%**

Work **83%**

Quality of leadership

Very high quality	**25%**
High quality	**25%**
Neither high nor low quality	**25%**
Low quality	**8%**
Very low quality	**17%**

Future plans

	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	6-9 yrs	>9 yrs
Future in current role	38%	46%	8%	8%
Future in industry	8%	46%	15%	31%

● Future in current role   ● Future in industry

Career goals in industry

Yes **67%**

Unsure **25%**

No **8%**

Value of current role for achieving career goals

Not helpful **25%**

Somewhat helpful **25%**

Helpful **50%**

Professional development sessions per year

1	2	3	4	5+
25%	**8%**	**42%**	**17%**	**8%**

Most enjoyable parts of role

Helping people be safe around water	**67%**
Being physically active	**58%**
Impacting people / community positively	**50%**
Working with colleagues; part of a team	**50%**
Dealing with a variety of tasks and situations	**42%**

Reasons for leaving role

Poor quality management / leadership	**67%**
Poor work culture / environment	**58%**
Commenced work in chosen career	**33%**
Poor remuneration / poor pay	**33%**
Exposure to psychosocial hazards	**25%**

Skills for success (soft / people oriented)

#1 Problem solving

#2 Customer service

#3 Conflict resolution

#4 Communication (verbal or written)

#5 Teamwork & collaboration

Skills for success (technical)

#1 Aquatic operations & maintenance

#2 Aquatic supervision & rescue

#3 WHS compliance

#4 First aid

#5 Risk management

A typical Customer Service Officer/Coordinator/Manager

- **is female**
- **works between 37 - 52 weeks per year**
- **is 25 - 44 years old**
- **performs more than one role**
- **intends to stay in current role less than five years**
- **believes quality of leadership in the industry is high or very high**
- **believes current role is valuable in achieving their career goals**
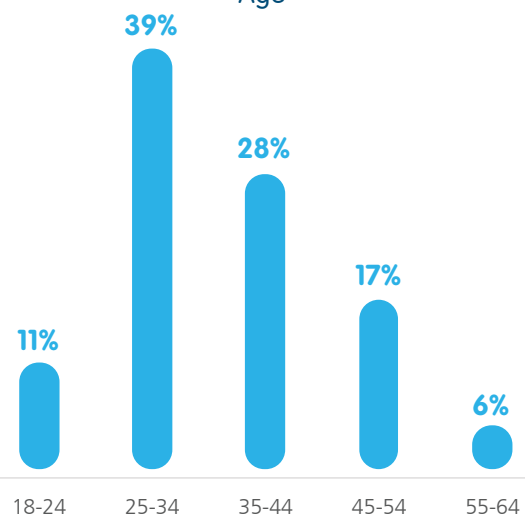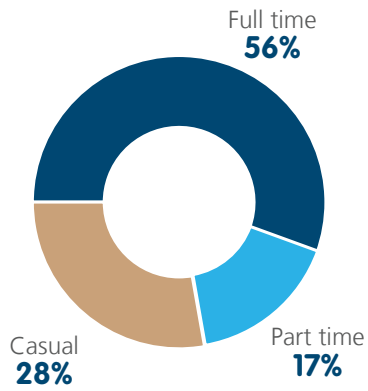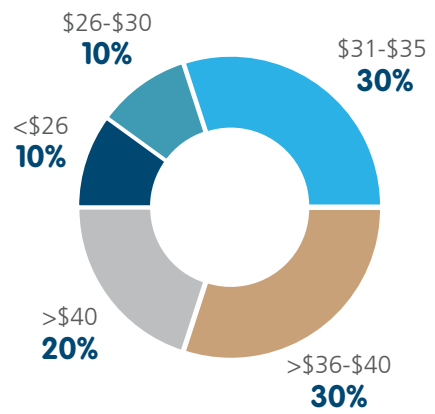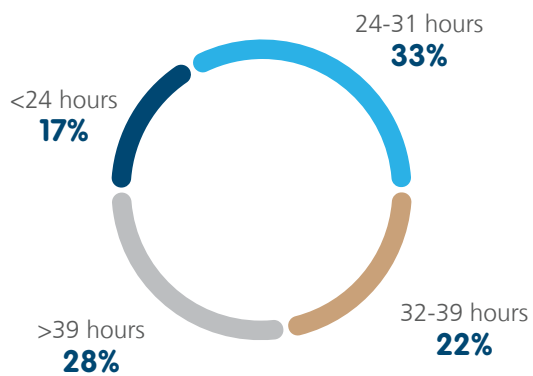
Gender

67%

28%

6% Prefer not to say

Age

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
11%	39%	28%	17%	6%

Employment status

- Full time **56%**
- Part time **17%**
- Casual **28%**

Annual salary

- $26-$30 **10%**
- $31-$35 **30%**
- <$26 **10%**
- >$40 **20%**
- >$36-$40 **30%**

Hours worked per week

- 24-31 hours **33%**
- <24 hours **17%**
- >39 hours **28%**
- 32-39 hours **22%**

Weeks worked per year

- 25-36 weeks **6%**
- 13-24 weeks **11%**
- 37-52 weeks **83%**

Perform more than one role

- Yes **61%**
- No **39%**

55% work as a Pool Lifeguard
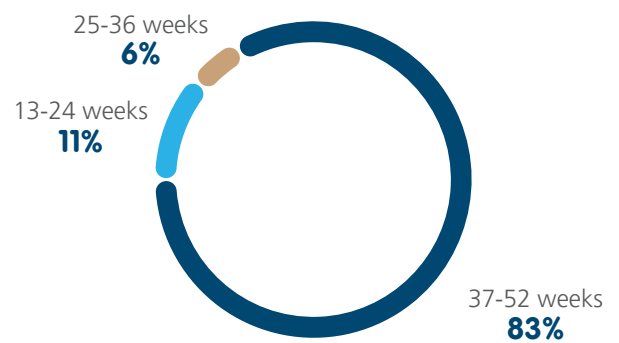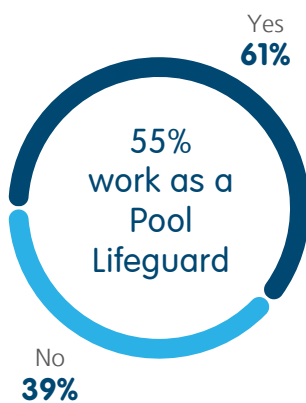
Age first commenced working in industry

- 15-17 **17%**
- 18-24 **28%**
- 25-34 **22%**
- 35-44 **33%**

Years working in industry

- 1 - 5 years **50%**
- 6-10 years **11%**
- 11-20 years **33%**
- >20 years **6%**

Why take up employment

- Involved in local community **56%**
- Suited my lifestyle **50%**
- Career opportunity **50%**

Other work or study

- Work **28%**
- Study **39%**

Quality of leadership

Very high quality	18%
High quality	59%
Neither high nor low quality	18%
Low quality	0%
Very low quality	6%

Future plans

	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	6-9 yrs	>9 yrs
Future in current role	39%	44%	6%	11%
Future in industry	17%	44%	22%	17%

- Future in current role
- Future in industry

Career goals in industry

- Yes **44%**
- No **6%**
- Unsure **50%**

Value of current role for achieving career goals

- Somewhat helpful **14%**
- Helpful **86%**

Professional development sessions per year

None	1	2	3	4	5+
24%	6%	38%	19%	6%	6%

Most enjoyable parts of role

Impacting people / community positively	88%
Interacting with patrons / colleagues	59%
Working with colleagues; part of a team	47%
Dealing with a variety of tasks and situations	47%
Learning new knowledge & skills	35%

Reasons for leaving role

|	
Seasonal nature of work	59%
Lack of acknowledgement	53%
Poor quality management / leadership	41%
Poor remuneration / poor pay	41%
Commenced chosen career	29%

Skills for success (soft / people oriented)

#1 Customer service

#2 Communication (verbal or written)

#3 Problem solving

#4 Mentoring, coaching, staff development

#5 Leadership

Skills for success (technical)

#1 IT

#2 Financial

#3 First aid

#4 Aquatic supervision & rescue

#5 Program & event management

> A typical Swim Coach
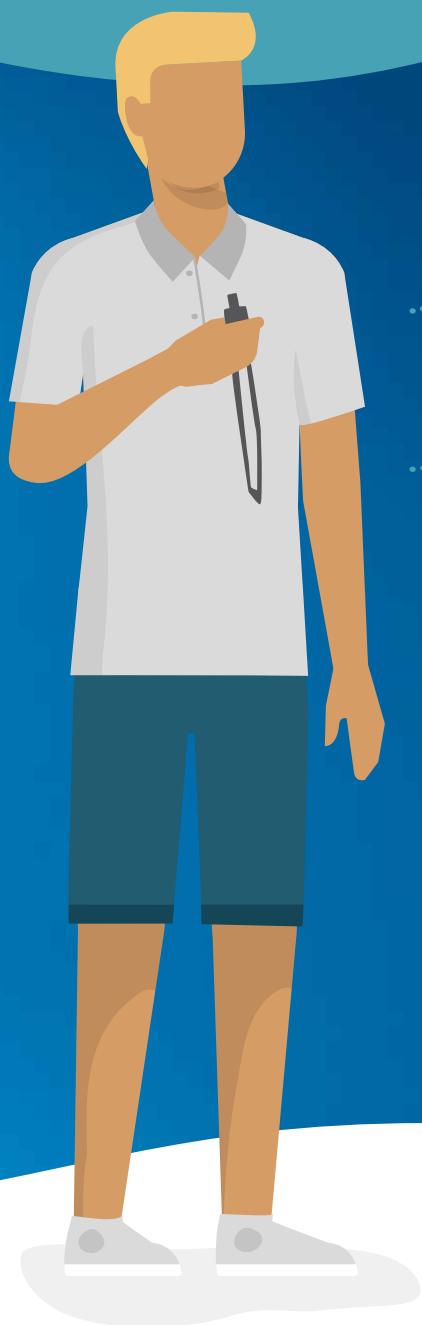
- **is male**
- **is 35 years or older**
- **earns between $31 - $40 per hour**
- **works between 37 - 52 weeks per year**
- **works between 8 - 23 hours per week**
- **has another job and is studying**
- **finds working in industry valuable in achieving career goals**
- **most enjoys making a positive impact on people's lives and the community**
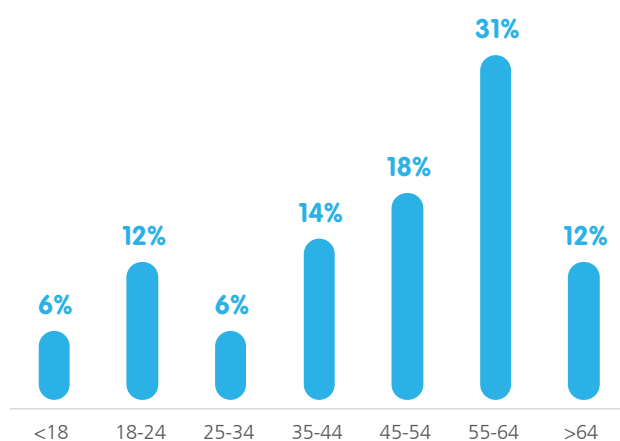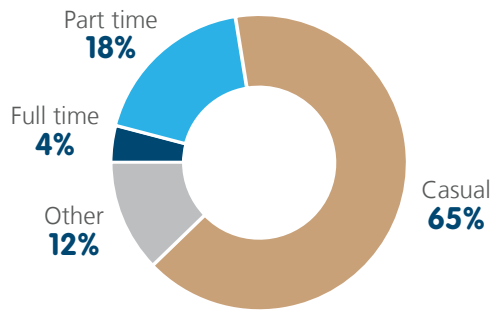
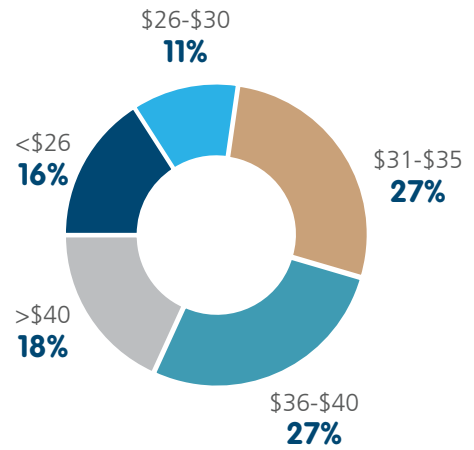### Gender

24%

76%

0% Prefer not to say

Age

<18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	>64
6%	12%	6%	14%	18%	31%	12%

Employment status

- Part time **18%**
- Full time **4%**
- Other **12%**
- Casual **65%**

Hourly rate

- $26-$30 **11%**
- <$26 **16%**
- $31-$35 **27%**
- >$40 **18%**
- $36-$40 **27%**

Hours worked per week

- 1-7 hours **27%**
- 8-15 hours **24%**
- >23 hours **18%**
- 16-23 hours **31%**

Weeks worked per year

- 13-24 weeks **8%**
- 25-36 weeks **12%**
- 7-12 weeks **8%**
- 1-6 weeks **4%**
- 37-52 weeks **67%**

Perform more than one role

68% work as a Swim Teacher

- Yes **63%**
- No **37%**

Work for more than one organisation

- Yes **33%**
- No **67%**

Years working in industry

<1 year	1 - 5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	>20 years
2%	33%	12%	14%	39%

Why take up employment

Suited my lifestyle **41%**

Increase water safety **43%**

Background in swimming **65%**

Other work or study

Study **59%**

Work **71%**

Quality of leadership

Very high quality	**13%**
High quality	**33%**
Neither high nor low quality	**36%**
Low quality	**18%**

Future plans

	<1 yr	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	6-9 yrs	>9 yrs
Future in current role	10%	29%	31%	14%	16%
Future in industry	2%	8%	39%	16%	35%

● Future in current role ● Future in industry

Career goals in industry

Yes **48%**

No **27%**

Unsure **25%**

Value of current role for achieving career goals

Somewhat helpful **43%**

Not helpful **5%**

Helpful **52%**

Professional development sessions per year

None	1	2	3	4	5+
13%	**18%**	**21%**	**21%**	**11%**	**16%**

Most enjoyable parts of role

Impacting people / community positively	82%
Helping people be safe around water	71%
Working with children	49%
Being physically active	33%
Working with colleagues; part of a team	33%

Reasons for leaving role

|	
Seasonal nature of work	56%
Poor remuneration / poor pay	47%
Poor quality management / leadership	42%
Lack of career opportunity	36%
Poor work culture / environment	33%

Skills for success (soft / people oriented)

#1 Mentoring, coaching, staff development

#2 Communication (verbal or written)

#3 Teamwork & collaboration

#4 Planning, coordinating & organising

#5 Problem solving

Skills for success (technical)

#1 Teaching, coaching, facilitating techniques

#2 First aid

#3 Aquatic supervision & rescue

#4 WHS compliance

#5 Program & event management
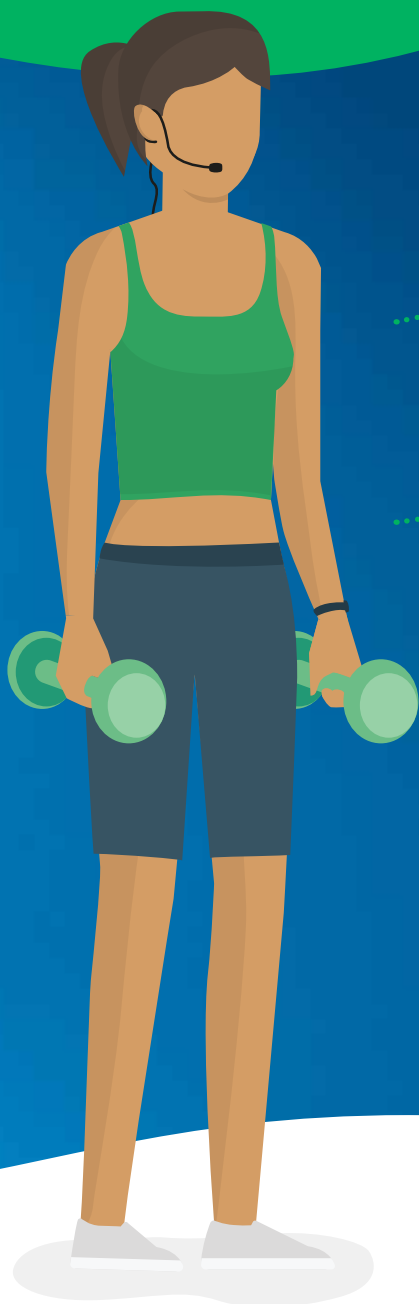
is female

earns between $36 - $50 per hour

works between 37 - 52 weeks per year

works up to 15 hours per week

has been in the industry 11 years or more

has career goals in the industry and finds working in industry valuable in achieving career goals

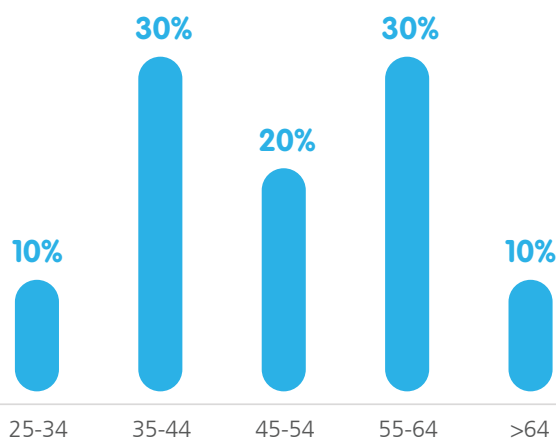**most enjoys making a positive impact on people's lives and being physically active**
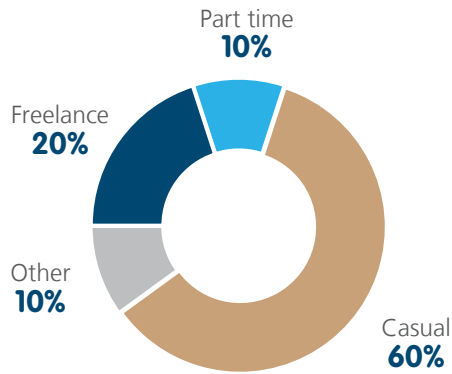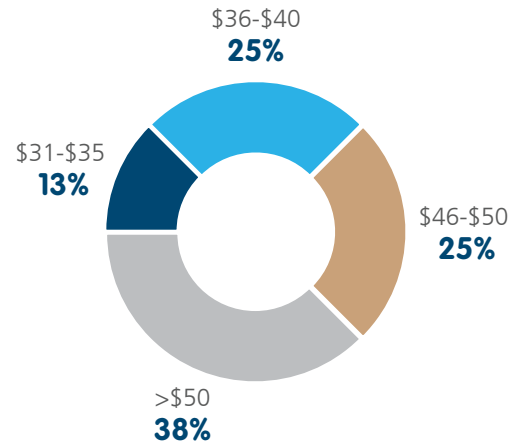
Gender

90%

10%

0% Prefer not to say

Age

25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	>64
10%	30%	20%	30%	10%

Employment status

- Part time **10%**
- Freelance **20%**
- Other **10%**
- Casual **60%**

Hourly rate

- $36-$40 **25%**
- $31-$35 **13%**
- $46-$50 **25%**
- >$50 **38%**

Hours worked per week

- 1-7 hours **40%**
- 24-31 hours **10%**
- 16-23 hours **10%**
- 8-15 hours **40%**

Weeks worked per year

- 25-36 weeks **10%**
- 13-24 weeks **20%**
- 37-52 weeks **70%**

Perform more than one role

- Yes **50%**
- No **50%**

60% work as a Swim Teacher

Work for more than one organisation

- Yes **50%**
- No **50%**

Years working in industry

10%	30%	40%	20%
1 - 5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	>20 years

Why take up employment

- Suited my lifestyle **80%**
- Enjoy working with people **40%**
- Involved in local community **40%**

Other work or study

- Study **30%**
- Work **50%**

Quality of leadership

Very high quality	**30%**
High quality	**20%**
Neither high nor low quality	**40%**
Low quality	**10%**
Very low quality	**0%**

Future plans

- <1 yr **10%**
- 1-2 yrs **20%**
- 3-5 yrs **20%**
- 6-9 yrs **10%**
- >9 yrs **40%**

● Future in current role

Career goals in industry

- Yes **67%**
- No **33%**

Value of current role for achieving career goals

- Somewhat helpful **17%**
- Not helpful **17%**
- Helpful **67%**

Professional development sessions per year

None	2	3	4	5+
20%	**40%**	**10%**	**10%**	**20%**

Most enjoyable parts of role

Impacting people / community positively	80%
Being physically active	70%
Interacting with patrons / colleagues	70%
Working with children	40%
Helping people be safe around water	20%

Reasons for leaving role

Poor remuneration / poor pay	70%
Poor quality management / leadership	60%
Lack of acknowledgement	50%
Poor work culture / environment	50%
Exposure to physical hazards	20%

Skills for success (soft / people oriented)

#1 Planning, coordinating & organising

#2 Communication (verbal or written)

#3 Problem solving

#4 Customer service

#5 Mentoring, coaching, staff development

Skills for success (technical)

#1 Teaching, coaching, facilitating techniques

#2 First aid

#3 WHS compliance

#4 Aquatic supervision & rescue

#5 Risk management

Certifications gained to enter industry

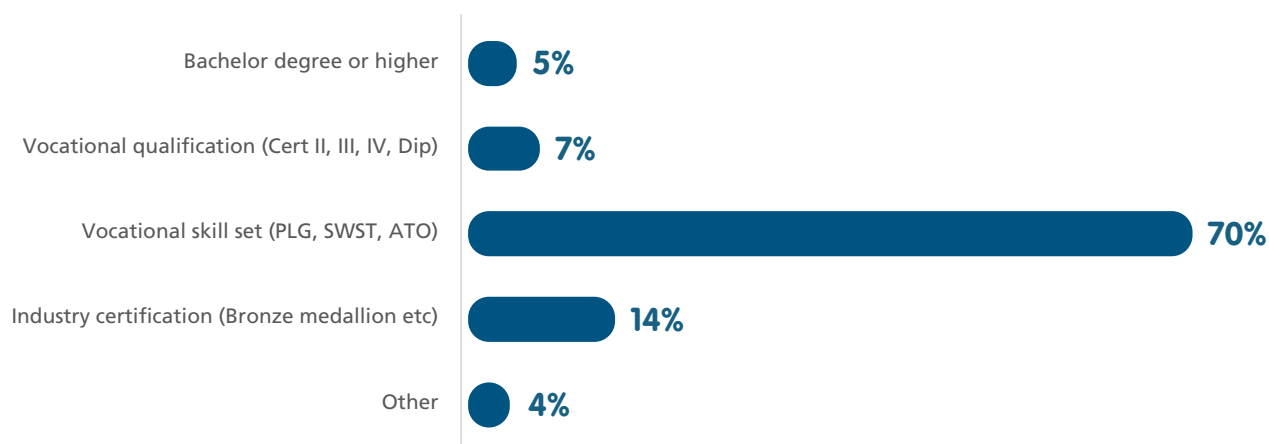| Certification	Percentage
Bachelor degree or higher	5%
Vocational qualification (Cert II, III, IV, Dip)	7%
Vocational skill set (PLG, SWST, ATO)	70%
Industry certification (Bronze medallion etc)	14%
Other	4%

Priority skills to develop

Skills for success (soft / people oriented)

#1 Communication (verbal or written)

#2 Teamwork & collaboration

#3 Mentoring, coaching, staff development

#4 Problem solving

#5 Conflict resolution

Skills for success (technical)

#1 Teaching, coaching, facilitating techniques

#2 Aquatic supervision & rescue

#3 First aid

#4 Aquatic operations & maintenance

#5 Risk management

Questions 55 – 57 were free text questions which asked respondents the following:

- What are some things that organisations/employers in the aquatic industry do well?
- What are some things that organisations/employers in the aquatic industry could improve?
- What areas of opportunity do you see for the aquatic industry?

The below direct respondent answers are reflective of the themes raised across the breadth of responses.

RESPONDENT QUOTES

Organisations/employers do well

Top themes: communication; teamwork, support and workplace culture; leadership and management; training and development; safety.

Communication

- "Connection and communication. Although sometimes they (different organisations) don't get along we're all working together, were all have similar if not the same goals. and inevitably we work as a team and were connected."
- "Build connection with community. Encourage staff to participate in activities such as PLG challenges."
- "They build a sense of community."
- "Hear out your concerns and are willing to make changes to suit you better."

Teamwork, Support, Workplace Culture

- "Supportive management and flexibility in work hours to ensure work-life balance."
- "The support I have personally experienced is very helpful and makes me feel as if want to be there."
- "Fostering a team environment. Making sure communication is at the top of the list for staff."
- "Provide great opportunities and environments for people's first job."
- "Provide us with places to go for support when needed."
- "My current employer is invested in making sure all staff members are happy and well."
- "Very big on support and knowledge sharing. Understanding that we are one team with one goal of safety for our patrons."

Leadership and Management

- "Promote a positive culture within the organisation, the team work well in the fast paced environment and there is a strong sense of enthusiasm from management."
- "Creating a fun and enjoyable workplace although in my experience this is dependent on the centre leadership and not a reflection of the organisation."
- "Post pandemic, the aquatic industry has made swim teachers feel valued. Swim school leaders treat teachers with respect, and partner with us to find ways to support us."
- "Provide freedom within boundaries of the role to express yourself."
- "It provides great flexible employment opportunities for a casual workforce, while challenging them with diverse situations and growth opportunities."
- "Offer a range of tasks to complete, allowing almost every day to be different."

Training and Development

- "My employer upper management are supportive of my own goals and I've worked with them for over 10 years in the same position because of that support."
- "Support development and retention in the industry via partial funding for essential accredited courses"
- "Promote leadership opportunities for younger people compared to other industries. Flexibility and hours of work available."
- "The opportunities to upskill and the availability of these opportunities."

Safety

- "They prioritise safety by implementing comprehensive risk management practices and adhering to guidelines."
- "Provide safe environments for patrons."
- "Adherence to safety rules and regulations."
- "Promoting the importance of keeping safe around aquatic environments."
- "They provide structured training, ensure safety protocols, and create an engaging environment for both staff and learners."
- "Many aquatic organisations prioritise safety by ensuring staff are well-trained in CPR, first aid, and rescue techniques."

RESPONDENT QUOTES

Organisations/employers could improve

Top themes: Leadership, management and communication; community and inclusion; training, development and support; job design; sustainability; safety.

Leadership, management, communication

- "Better communication between managers and employees."
- "Not bandaging or plugging holes... More planning, consultation and communication. Appreciating the loyal staff."
- "Treat casual staff as you would permanent staff ie communication and discussion of ongoing roles."
- "Improve communication networks between executive and operational teams - particularly in regional areas."
- "Leadership from above. Clear expectations, not allowing staff to do other roles without the pay because they seem capable of doing so."
- "Better communication with staff in regards to achievement and how well they are going in their field of work and how they can improve."

Community and Inclusion

- "Increasing community involvement and outreach efforts to build stronger relationships and support local initiatives."
- "Greater collaboration and consultation with community groups and/or members through advisory groups or partnerships."

Training, Development, Support

- "Provide greater support for new managers who may have been promoted from being a swim teacher without any experience with staff management, program management, budgets etc. Increased mentoring programs with senior staff as completion of a weekend course & some shadow hours do not provide sufficient skills & confidence for a new graduate to meet expectations & safety for teaching swimming."
- "Provide better staff training and resources to support people from diverse backgrounds - cultural, disability, gender, education, and ages.
- "More PD opportunities to improve the skills of staff, and encouraging all staff to be involved so that everyone is adequately trained and on the same page on how to handle situations."
- "Knowledge of working with individuals with disabilities in the aquatic industry is often assumed, placing staff under pressure to "learn on the go". For example, understanding multiple sclerosis (MS) in theory is vastly different from knowing how to safely assist a person with MS in transferring to and from a wheelchair in the water. Practical training is essential to ensure safe and effective support for individuals with disabilities in aquatic environments."

- "Professional development opportunities, upskilling opportunities, pay, more traineeship opportunities or supporting training and further education course costs."

Job design

- "Willingness to better work with employees to provide employment opportunities across roles and offer full time and secure work in doing so. I have found employers only want to consider employment in one role eg. Swim teacher or lifeguard or reception. They also usually offer casual employment only. I have wanted to combine roles within the recreation industry, both for variety in my role so I don't get bored and use or develop different skills, and to have full time employment and move regional where housing is cheaper."
- "Better remuneration, eg. proper penalty rates on weekends and public holidays as these are generally the busiest days. More opportunities for leaders - leaders get stuck in positions for a long time and their performance decreases. More detailed processes for complaint handling (complaints regarding customers and other staff). Setting young people up for success in communicating with the public (conflict resolution, communication etc)."

Sustainability

- "Implementing more eco-friendly practices, such as reducing water and energy consumption, minimising chemical use, and promoting recycling and waste reduction, can help protect the environment."

Safety

- "I have lots of friends and family that are lifeguards that tell me stories of patrons physically and verbally abusing them. 1. them not knowing how to deal with it or not having someone more trained available to help them. 2. no repercussions for the patrons, they will come back the next day. More training is needed for staff, more supportive duty manager, mangers there for our young lifeguards to lean on when they need help and proper reparations for people doing the wrong thing."
- "More training in how to deal with aggressive patrons."

RESPONDENT QUOTES

Opportunities for industry

Top themes: Diverse groups and programs; industry positioning and scope, advocacy and funding, technology.

"Workforce needs will continue to change in profound ways. Structural forces including population ageing, rising demand for care and support services, technological and digital transformation, and climate change and the net zero transformation will shape labour force needs over the next 40 years."[6]

Diverse Groups & Programs

- "Aging population increases the popularity and utility of low-impact exercise."
- "Teaching increasingly large CALD population water safety."
- "Adult swim lessons. Aquatic exercise programs for all level and would love to see more physio."
- "Subsidised and ongoing LGBTIQA+ swim opportunities, similar to the women's only program. With women's only engaging trans and gender diverse inclusive spaces. However organisational LGBTIQA+ cultural safety is imperative to avoid token gestures, or once off events."
- "Adult/teen LTS to Ocean Swim programs. I teach mainly new immigrants and their eyes just light up when I speak to them about swimming amidst fish and waves but there is no linear way to introduce them to ocean swimming swimming. And they are too intimidated to join a Lifesaving Club as an adult onset swimmer. It would be great to have some ocean awareness programs being run for immigrants and adult/teen onset swimmers."
- "I would also like to know where all the boomer generational men are - definitely not in aqua fit. A program more tailored to the older gentleman would be of great benefit to the community. As would adult squads allowing for a combination of speeds."
- "Fitness and rehabilitation are big areas for the industry using EPs and other allied health professionals in the water to assist with health and wellness."

Industry / Facility Positioning and Scope

- "Integrating more community-based services into the same building/facility."
- "Growth and moving to a more sport and recreation industry. How to make a strong connection with aquatics and gyms for those in a multi complex building/leisure centre. Hard being an operations coordinator of leisure facility when all networking events only focus on aquatics."
- "Attaching itself to the [early childhood] education industry to incorporate compulsory introductory lessons for children. Every child needs to have the skills to at least float in water, to help survival in case of accidents, and the obvious entry point is in early childhood education."

- "Embracing changing community needs & diversifying to cater to those in the community that really need us."
- "Continue to interact and liaise with community via interactive programs and marketing particularly in the mental health sector and the benefits being in and around the water have."
- "More community base programs or associations with community partners."
- "The Aquatic Industry represents in most communities a safe, fun and connected place to work, recreate and socialize. More opportunity for this to be recognized as a high importance/need to society. Not just an add on service to the community in a local government environment that has a high cost to provide."
- "That we are seen as the ultimately community centre where everyone can mingle and be social and be looked after."

Advocacy / Funding

- "Need to have a consistent voice of advocacy at the State and Federal levels of government."
- "A partnership with the Federal Government towards providing better financial opportunity for schools to participate in swimming programs."
- "Water safety and swimming as part of the school curriculum."
- "I would love to see aquatic industry come together to fight for people living with physical and mental disabilities. Water safety lessons being removed from NDIS plans is a massive loss for all of these participants. We need to come together to fight for their right to be safe in and around water."

Technology

- "Expanding adaptive and inclusive swimming programs to ensure people of all abilities have access to water safety education. Incorporating more technology, such as video analysis and apps, to enhance skill development and coaching. Strengthening environmental sustainability initiatives, such as better water management practices and reducing chemical use in pools."
- "Use of technology to improve staff and customer experience. Opportunities to do more around aquatic education for diverse communities. Opportunities to work more collaboratively across industry/facilities - share strategies on occupational violence , customer service training etc."

Acknowledgements

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