

## Background

On 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> June 2022 Royal Life Saving Society - Australia (RLSSA) convened the National Aquatic Industry Committee (NAIC) to review and discuss the strategic direction of the committee and the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations (GSPO) in light of the industry's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and a renewed focus on other key elements of aquatic facility ownership and operations. The committee met and discussed several issues and resolved to take action in the following areas on behalf of the national aquatic industry. The committee continued to support the ongoing need for the collaboration and coordination that the NAIC and RLSSA facilitation represents.

## Updates on RLSSA Research And Projects

RLSSA provided several briefs to the NAIC on a number of research and other projects that had been undertaken or were about to commence. These included:

- Adult Swimming Skills in Australia
- Child Supervision Programs across the Aquatic Industry
- The Law in Australia relating to Access and Equity for Aquatic Facilities
- Drowning Prevention Strategies for Migrant Communities in Australia
- A presentation on the Aquatic Industry Workforce Snapshot from 2022
- Psychology of Lifeguarding – Lessons from VR Research

The NAIC workshopped and discussed each presentation and provided feedback and input into each project. RLSSA thanks NAIC members for their advice and counsel as well as the contribution of member organisations to the data and research processes.

## Child Safety Across the Aquatic Industry

Following the Royal Commission into Child Abuse and Harm in Institutions in 2013, Child Safety Standards for organisations working with children have become legislated in some states and territories. In 2018, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (the National Principles). In November 2021, the NSW Government passed new legislation to require the adoption by organisations of the National Principles. The Victorian Government has also legislated to align their existing seven Child Safety Standards with the National Principles due to come into effect 1 July 2022. Victoria also includes cultural safety for Aboriginal Children and Young People, bring their new standards to 11 total. In addition, each state / territory takes a different approach to Working With Children Checks for aquatic facility staff. Finally, governments are starting to require industries and organisations to comply with the National Principles in order to be eligible for funding. It is inevitable that tender requirements will also require the adoption of the National Principles. Current gap is that the National Principles are not industry-specific and are ambiguous in some areas. The NAIC discussed and determined that developing aquatic industry guidance in the form of national guidelines would be beneficial to the industry in terms of aligning the industry's approach in a nationally-consistent way and serve to assist with the protection of the industry as a whole's reputation. This received broad support from the NAIC and it was resolved that draft guidelines will be developed by a small working group and then reviewed by the committee prior to wider industry consultation.

## State of Aquatic Industry Infrastructure in Australia

The NAIC was provided with an executive summary of research into the state of aquatic industry infrastructure in Australia. An exact number of pools built in the 1950s and 60s as well as a deep dive on 260 facilities' level of investment into maintenance and upkeep has been conducted. RLSSA will release a report shortly which advocates the issue further. The committee is broadly supportive of the research and advocacy and looks forward to being involved in further discussion upon publication of the report. It should be noted that the Australian Water Safety Summit (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> August) delivered by Royal Life Saving and Surf Life Saving will examine this issue further with conference participants. You can [register for the Summit here](#).

### **Learn to Swim Ecosystem in Australia**

The NAIC was provided with an executive summary of research into the state of the learn to swim ecosystem in Australia. A review on the social, health and economic contribution of learn to swim as well as barriers and enablers of learn to swim has been conducted in partnership with PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia (PwC). RLSSA and PwC will release a report shortly which advocates the issue further. The committee is broadly supportive of the research and advocacy and looks forward to being involved in further discussion upon publication of the report. It should be noted that the Australian Water Safety Summit (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> August) delivered by Royal Life Saving and Surf Life Saving will examine this issue further with conference participants. You can [register for the Summit here](#).

### **Changes to Industry Training Packages**

The NAIC were presented with information relating to changes to units of competency, skill sets and training packages that form part of the minimum qualifications for key roles in the aquatic industry. It was noted that SkillsIQ has been conducting consultation sessions and that ARI, ARV and LSV have also facilitated industry consultation forums on the new training packages. It was noted by the NAIC and RLSSA that more work needs to be done to facilitate consultation on updates to training packages in all states and territories. It was noted that RLSSA has a representative on the relevant Industry Reference Committee and that ARI does also. The committee members and their constituents were invited to provide further feedback on the proposed changes either directly to SkillsIQ or via RLSSA, ARI, ARV or LSV who are all facilitating consultation processes.

### **Single Guideline for Aquatic Industry Training and Qualifications**

Following a review of references to training and qualifications across six current GSPOs, it was put to the NAIC that all training and qualifications should be contained within a single guideline. It was proposed that a review process of a small technical group would commence in July with wider NAIC consultation in August/September, for wider industry consultation ahead of summer. This received unanimous support from the NAIC and the project will commence in July.

### **NSW Guidelines for Multicultural Inclusion in Aquatic Facilities**

A presentation was delivered by RLS NSW on a recent project to develop guidelines for aquatic facilities to increase the cultural diversity of participants, members and employees of the aquatic industry in New South Wales. The NAIC were broadly supportive of advice and guidance to assist industry in making aquatic facilities more inviting, but opposed the notion of state-based guidelines, preferencing instead 'A guide' or 'Recommendations' which were inherently less likely to impose compliance burdens. The preference of the committee remained to ensure industry guidelines are authorised by the committee.

### **Drownings in Hotel, Motel, Caravan Park and Other Tourism and Communal Pools**

The committee were provided with a briefing on recent Coronial Recommendations following a drowning in a Hotel Pool and noting the growing number of Hotel, Motel and Caravan Park drownings in recent times.

It was discussed whether the hotel / tourism industry required representation on the NAIC and it was noted that the group is already quite diverse and representing a wide variety of interests. Although the discussion was preliminary, it was generally discussed that if specific safety guidance was needed for the tourism industry for pool ownership and operations, that RLSSA would be well placed to facilitate this nationally as well as LSV in the case of a state code of practice in line with the recommendations. However, in the case of RLSSA, it was noted that no funding currently exists for this program which would require significant resources to deliver to the standard the Hotel / Tourism industry would expect and that regulators and coroners would require.

Prepared By:

RJ Houston

RLSSA National Manager – Aquatics

NAIC Photo – June 2022

