

Background

On the 8th March & 21st June 2023 Royal Life Saving Society - Australia (RLSSA) convened the National Aquatic Industry Committee (NAIC) to work through key industry advocacy initiatives and updates to the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations (GSPO). 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 continues to support the ongoing need for the collaboration and coordination of the National Aquatic Industry, particularly in regards to ensuring consistency of national standards and approaches. The committee also discussed many of the challenges facing the sector as it normalises post-COVID-19.

NAIC Identified - Industry Challenges

The NAIC discussed several challenges facing the sector. These included:

- Workforce – staffing shortages, consistency and quality of staff, young workers at entry level, loss of quality / expertise at management levels, increasing diversity
- Rising costs of business – increased utility costs, aging infrastructure
- Contemporary safety challenges: psychosocial safety, child safety, safety culture, occupational violence & aggression

It was noted that the upcoming Workforce Report and National Aquatics Symposium would target advocacy at some of these issues and that further work was needed to align priorities and actions on safety challenges.

National Aquatics Symposium

On the 9th and 10th March 2023, RLSSA with the support of the NAIC hosted a forum for Industry, Government, education, private sector and academia to collaborate, discuss and investigate the issues and solutions surrounding:

- **Swimming skills** – ensuring that all children have access to swimming and water safety programs and achieve National Benchmarks
- **Workforce** – raising the profile of the industry as a career opportunity and ensuring the workforce is sustainable, supported and capable
- **Infrastructure** – ensuring the availability and sustainability of fit-for-purpose aquatic facilities.

A National Aquatics Symposium Report was released, capturing the contributions of 150 delegates across two days of intense discussion. The symposium reinforced the importance of swimming and water safety education, increased access to and sustainability of aquatic facilities, and further professionalisation of the aquatic workforce in Australia.

The report contained a series of action statements workshopped and agreed to by the delegates to guide the future activities of the sector, governments and industry bodies. The report containing the statements can be found here: [National Aquatics Symposium Report](#).

Child Safety Guidelines

A draft set of guidelines were provided to the committee in September 2022. Following this legal and child safety expert reviews were conducted. At the March meeting, the NAIC workshopped and discussed the second draft of the Child Safety Guidelines. Following the NAIC feedback, the third draft of the guidelines were then opened up for industry consultation for 3 months. There were 1,000 visits to the Child Safety Guideline feedback page, however, no major feedback was received. A motion was passed by the NAIC in June to publish the guidelines with an effective as of 1 July 2024 date. The motion passed unopposed. The RLSSA thanks NAIC members for their advice and counsel as well as the contribution of member organisations to the guidance. It is planned that these will be launched to industry ahead of Summer 23-24.

Managing Psychosocial Risk

Committee members were provided with a draft guideline for Managing Mental Health and Wellbeing for the Aquatic Facility's Workforce in March. A briefing was provided to the committee at the March meeting. However, due to time, a discussion was not held and the agenda item was pushed back to June. In June, the committee held a discussion having reviewed the draft guidelines. There was not consensus on whether or not guidelines are the best support that the committee can provide to industry to assist in managing psychosocial risk. Discussion was that further review and research was needed. An expert psychologist working with Aquatics and Recreation Victoria (ARV) was engaged for peer review in July. Further consultation with industry groups maintains the need for guidance to be developed to assist aquatic facilities with understanding how to manage their work health and safety responsibilities with regards to psychosocial risk management. Some committee members support a GSPO in this space, but there is no consensus on the topic currently. The committee will explore further in 23-24 what resources or projects it can support industry with in regards to psychosocial risk management.

Single Guideline for Aquatic Industry Training and Qualifications

Following the updates to training packages and the resolution in June 22 to develop a single set of training and qualifications guidelines, three drafts were provided to the NAIC in 22-23 for rounds of feedback. The final draft has been provided to the NAIC for adoption ahead of Summer 23-24. The guideline will come into effect 1 July 2024.

Minor Updates to GSPOs

Several requests for minor updates to the GSPO were tabled. A series of working groups were established to review and update guidance for: diving, teaching platform design, pool lighting specifications & lifeguard use of wearables. These recommendations will be tabled in 23-24.

National Workforce Report 2023

Royal Life Saving, on behalf of the NAIC completed the National Aquatic Industry Workforce Report 2023.

Royal Life Saving hosted a webinar on Wednesday 19th July 2023 to launch the report and present its key findings. You can now watch this webinar recording from the GSPO Subscriber area of the website [here](#). The report is available on the Royal Life Saving website: [National Aquatic Industry Workforce Report 2023](#).

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Symposium Photo – March 2023