MEMORANDUM

TO ALL NSW AQUATIC FACILITIES

Attention: Swimming Pool Managers / Operators
Date: 14th December 2007

NOTE:
From 2008 all NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Schools will seek to obtain from Aquatic Facilities a recommendation on whether dive entries are permissible for planned swimming carnival events.

Royal Life Saving in consultation with the NSW Department of Education and Training, AUSTSWIM, and the Aquatic and Recreation Institute have developed an implementation guide to assist aquatic facilities to complete the necessary documentation. The implementation guide titled; Aquatic Guidelines “Safe Water Entry for Competitions–Competitive Dive Starts” provides guidance notes and templates suitable to meet the new requirements.

BACKGROUND:
There is a significant body of evidence to suggest that shallow water diving can lead to a range of injuries that include head injuries (broken teeth, scalp injuries and facial fractures) to the more significant spinal cord injury. Spinal cord injury is sudden and unexpected. It can be devastating and costly in human and social terms. Each year in Australia, about 300 – 400 new incident cases occur. Water related events accounted for 10% (n=25) of persisting spinal cord injury cases reported during 2003-04. Ninety six percent (n=23) of water related spinal cord injury reported had injury to the cervical spinal segments, with 25% sustaining complete injury to the cord after diving into bodies of water without being aware of the depth.

Aquatic Guidelines – Safe Water Entry for Competitions–Competitive Dive Starts has been developed in response to the Royal Life Saving Society Australia – Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation SU22 – Safe Water Entry for Competitions. Royal Life Saving Society Australia produced these
Guidelines in 2006 as a result of a number of head and spinal injuries that had occurred during scheduled activities such as swimming carnivals and recreational swimming.

A competitive dive start is defined as entry into water from the side of the pool (flush or raised) or from a starting block for the purpose of starting a swimming based competition or training for a swimming based competition.

Diving is a common entry method for swimming carnival events. Diving into shallow water is a complex skill and is generally taught through structured education and training programs. Many competitors participating in swimming carnivals across NSW have not had the opportunity to undertake a progressive education program on diving.

**WHAT DO HOST AQUATIC FACILITIES NEED TO DO?**

Facilities hosting School (NSW DET) Swimming Carnivals will need to complete a:

“Shallow Water Diving Information and Risk Assessment” form.

Part 1 of this form enables the Aquatic Facility to document the depth (entry points) for the pool in which carnival events have been scheduled. The depth measurement will take into consideration not only water depth but concourse and / or starting block heights. This information needs to be applied to a depth matrix (provided with the Aquatic Guidelines) and one of two options identified:

1. **An in-water start recommendation** (based on the depth of the competition pool and concourse height the recommendation is to commence events in the water – no diving permissible).
2. **Competitive dive starts permitted** (based on the depth of the competition pool and concourse height a competitive dive start is permissible).

Principals and Carnival Coordinators will then utilise this information and conduct an internal Diving Induction program with their students and staff.

Part 2 of this form involves completing details pertaining to: **Risk Identification, Assessment and Control Procedures** as compiled by the host Aquatic Facility. This section outlines the hazard description, current controls, likelihood details and consequence details together with a level of risk for the purpose of shallow water diving. This level of risk will be determined by utilising a Risk Management Matrix (provided with the Aquatic Guidelines).

This information (Part 1 and 2) is then to be made available to NSW DET Schools. Aquatic Facilities should maintain this information and have it available to Schools whenever requested. The information
within the Shallow Water Diving Information and Risk Assessment form only needs to be completed once unless a change or review of risk identification, assessment and control procedures is undertaken.

WHERE CAN I GET A COPY OF THE RELEVANT GUIDELINES?
The “Aquatic Guidelines– Safe Water Entry for Competitions–Competitive Dive Starts" is available direct from the Royal Life Saving website as a PDF document. The Aquatic Guidelines contain all necessary information and templates to complete relevant requirements.
Website:  www.royalnsw.com.au

FURTHER INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE
For further details please contact your nearest Royal Life Saving Office.

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