

# School swimming, water safety programs and aquatic activities – procedures

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This document should be read with the School swimming, water safety programs and aquatic activities policy.

## 1. Introduction

These procedures have been produced to promote safe aquatic participation while minimising risks associated with school swimming and water safety programs. This is supported by providing schools with teacher qualifications, student ratios, and duty of care requirements for school swimming programs, including, swimming carnivals, diving, recreational aquatic activities and student resuscitation education.

## 2. Procedures

### 2.1. Duty of care

The teacher in charge has overall responsibility for ensuring that the department meets its duty to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the group of students in its care at a swimming and water safety program or activity.

The swimming teacher is responsible to the teacher in charge of the swimming and water safety program or activity.

### 2.2. Qualifications

The swimming and water safety program and activity must be conducted by a suitably qualified teacher in accordance with the Qualifications and ratios table.

For swimming and water safety programs or activities conducted in purpose built pools, for example pools in preschool settings, teachers of swimming and water safety are required to have a current minimum qualification of Royal Life Saving Australia (RLSA) Swim teacher rescue award and a completed Emergency action plan and Risk management plan.

### 2.3. First aid

It is the responsibility of the teacher in charge of the swimming and water safety program or activity to ensure that a first aid kit is available for use at the aquatic location, and that an adult with a current first aid certificate is present during all swimming and water safety programs and activities.

If preschool children are participating in a swimming program or aquatic activity, ensuring that at least one school staff member who holds a current approved first aid, anaphylaxis and asthma management qualification, is located at, or immediately available, at all times that children are in attendance.

In the case of drowning or severe accident an ambulance must be called. All accidents should be reported to the principal, and the Work health and safety incident report form must be completed on the same day as the accident. The Incident report form is available to staff and schools electronically on the Education intranet.

If a serious injury or incident occurs or a dangerous hazard is identified, NT WorkSafe must be notified immediately by telephone 1800 019 115 and, if required, in writing within 48 hours by submitting the NT WorkSafe Incident notification form. If in doubt about reporting requirements, contact NT WorkSafe for advice.

## 2.4. Risk assessment, Emergency action plan and Risk management plan

A risk assessment must be conducted for the aquatic environment being used, and the Emergency action plan and Risk management plan must be designed for that environment by the teacher in charge of the program or activity in consultation with the certified swimming teacher.

All participants and staff should be aware of, and practice, the emergency procedures identified in the Emergency action plan at the start of the swimming and water safety program or activity. Safety equipment must be available at all times during programs and activities. An essential item is a rescue tube, other items could include a flotation device such as a kickboard, broom handle, length of rope a minimum six metre length, or personal floatation device.

## 2.5. Natural waterways including sheltered waters and open water

When using a natural waterway, the teacher in charge of the swimming and water safety program or activity must contact the managing body prior to and on the day of the event to confirm the designated area is crocodile free and is safe for swimming, this may include Parks Australia, NT Parks and Wildlife, stations and resort management.

Swimming and water safety programs or activities conducted in a natural waterway must have the area for instruction clearly defined, and a designated independent observer who has clear vision of all participants at all times during the program. From time to time, authorised swimming areas may be subject to closure for health and safety reasons. Hence information and warning signs should always be observed.

Open water such as the ocean or a large bay must not be used for the teaching of swimming. Teacher qualifications and ratios vary for different types of swimming environments.

## 2.6. Jellyfish safety precautions

As Chironex fleckeri, the major box jellyfish, are prevalent in Northern Territory (NT) ocean waters during the wet season, particularly between 1 October and 31 May, school swimming and water safety programs or activities are not permitted in the sea during this time.

If swimming programs are implemented in the sea during the dry season, typically June to September, students should enter the water with caution as Chironex fleckeri are known to frequent NT waters all year, based on the historical data of stings.

It is essential that protective clothing such as a stinger suit be worn by students if undertaking swimming and water safety programs or activities in the sea during the dry season. The minimum requirement must be coverage of the torso, arms and upper legs. Vinegar should be taken to the venue as an added safety precaution. Dousing the jellyfish stung area with vinegar and calling 000 is an immediate first aid measure.

For more information, visit the NT Government information page about jellyfish stings.

## 2.7. Sun protection

Teachers and students participating in a swimming or water safety program should refer to their school based sun safety procedures, which should include considerations such as:

- applying a broad spectrum SPF 30+ water resistant sunscreen at least twenty minutes before going outdoors
- reapplying sunscreen every two hours when outdoors and available shade should be used whenever possible to reduce exposure to the sun

- strongly encouraging staff and students to wear sun protective clothing and lip balm storing sunscreen at below 30 degrees Celsius and expiry dates should be checked to ensure sunscreen remains effective.

## 2.8. Consent forms

It is the responsibility of the teacher in charge of the swimming and water safety program or activity to ensure that a parental consent form is returned for each student involved in swimming and water safety programs, swimming carnivals and recreational aquatic activities. The form asks parents to identify the swimming ability of individual students and assists teachers to assess the swimming ability of students. The form must be checked with records of each student's swimming proficiency stored in Student Administration Management System (SAMS) or with RLSA.

Information obtained from consent forms, SAMS and RLSA, must be taken to all swimming and water safety programs, swimming carnivals and recreational activities.

The teacher in charge is not to permit students to participate in swimming or water safety programs and activities without a completed consent form that includes parental assessment of the child's swimming ability.

## 2.9. School swimming and water safety programs

Schools are strongly encouraged to provide opportunities for all early childhood, primary and middle years students to participate in a swimming and water safety program.

At the beginning of a school swimming and water safety program, a swimming ability assessment of each student is required to confirm the level of swimming ability of individual students in accordance with the RLSA swim and survive program and bronze star rescue awards. This assessment enables the swimming instructor to group students according to their swimming ability.

At the conclusion of a school swimming and water safety program, another swimming ability assessment is required to confirm the level of swimming ability of individual students in accordance with the RLSA Swim and survive and bronze star rescue awards. The outcome of this assessment must be recorded in SAMS and reported to Royal Life Saving Northern Territory (RLSNT).

The department has adopted the RLSA Swim and survive and bronze star rescue awards scheme as the performance criteria for swimming and water safety programs aligning with the Health and Physical Education requirements of the Australian Curriculum.

To teach preschool aquatics aligned to the RLSA swim and survive, little wonders to level 03, teachers must hold a current AUSTSWIM teacher of infant and preschool aquatics licence, updated every three years, and a current resuscitation award, updated each year.

To teach RLSA swim and survive, levels 1 to 9, teachers must hold a current AUSTSWIM teacher of swimming and water safety licence, updated every three years, and a current resuscitation award, updated each year.

To teach RLSA bronze star, teachers must hold a current AUSTSWIM teacher of swimming and water safety licence, updated every three years, and a resuscitation trainers' certificate, updated annually at the trainers' workshop.

## 2.10. Minimum standard of water safety and swimming competencies

The Australian Water Safety Council recommends that:

- by the completion of primary school education, each student should be able to satisfactorily perform all competencies equivalent to level 4 of the RLSA swim and survive program or surf safe level 2 of the Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) surf and survive program.
- By the completion of year 10, each student should be able to satisfactorily perform all competencies equivalent to RLSA bronze star including resuscitation or SLSA surf survival including resuscitation.

## 2.11. School swimming carnivals

The safe and effective conduct of a school swimming carnival relies on good planning and effective communication with school staff, pool management, students and parents. The teacher in charge of the carnival must have experience with organising events in water environments and student safety is the paramount consideration in any planning process.

The teacher in charge of the swimming carnival must undertake all safety and duty of care requirements and complete an Emergency action plan and Risk management plan.

If the school swimming carnival includes unstructured free time, students will be required to complete the water survival challenge proficiency to determine the aquatic proficiency of students. Following completion of the water survival challenge proficiency all students are required to be issued with an appropriate coloured band. Schools should document the students' proficiency in case a band is lost or damaged during an activity.

Bands should be issued as follows:

- green: proficient swimmer who is safe to participate in deep water
- yellow: nonproficient swimmer who can participate in shallow water, at a depth no higher than a student's waist
- red: non-swimmer who is not permitted to participate in any aquatic activity.

It is imperative that bands cannot be removed, swapped or changed by students.

Where applicable the program for the carnival should include scope for modified activities that match the swimming capabilities of the students. The location of the swimming carnival needs to provide shade for students and spectators, safety equipment and provision for supervision of students at the venue.

Supervisory staff ratios need to align with the Qualifications and ratio table. RLSA bronze medallion or higher qualified staff need to be rescue ready, dressed appropriately and with rescue equipment within easy access. An active adult supervisor should be assigned to each side of the pool for all races.

## 2.12. Diving

All students should perform an in water start to any swimming activity unless they have been taught dive skills through the RLSA swim and survive program and achieved level 7 instruction in shallow water diving.

Before diving, including competitive dive starts, can take place at a swimming venue, the teacher in charge of the aquatic activity or event must check the water depth, compare to the diving depth matrix and complete an Emergency action plan and Risk management plan.

An official announcement about whether diving is permitted or not, must be communicated to all students, staff and volunteers at the beginning of any swimming activity.

## 2.13. Recreational or unstructured aquatic activities

The teacher in charge of the recreational aquatic activity should undertake all safety and duty of care requirements and complete an Emergency action plan and a Risk management plan.

At the beginning of any recreational aquatic activities, where there are no active swimming ability records students will be required to complete the water survival challenge proficiency to determine their aquatic proficiency. Following completion of the water survival challenge proficiency all students are required to be issued with an appropriate coloured band. Schools should document the students' proficiency in case a band is lost or damaged during an activity.

Proficient students will be issued with a green wrist band and will be deemed safe to participate in events of 25 meters and over. Nonproficient students will be issued with a yellow wrist band and can participate in shallow water activities, at a depth no higher than a student's waist. Students who are non-swimmers will be issued with a red wrist band and must be assigned to a supervised area away from the water's edge. Students with a red wrist band must not participate in any aquatic activity.

Appropriate activities should be organised for those students deemed nonproficient in an appropriately defined shallow water area with specific supervision applied. The location of the recreational swimming needs to provide shade for students and spectators, safety equipment and provision for supervision of students at the venue.

The number of active adult supervisors required at the activity will depend on the number of students, students with special needs, medical conditions, age and maturity, the type of activity and the conditions at the venue. As a minimum, supervision ratio must align with the Qualifications and ratios table.

An adult with a current first aid certificate must be present during all recreational aquatic activities.

## 2.14. The water survival challenge proficiency

At the beginning of any unstructured or free time aquatic activities, where there are no records of a student's swimming proficiency, students will be required to complete the water survival challenge proficiency to determine their aquatic proficiency. Students whose parents have not provided consent for them to enter the water and students who do not pass the water survival challenge proficiency will not be allowed to enter the water.

The water survival challenge proficiency consists of 5 elements:

1. Entry
2. Survival swimming
3. Survival sequence
4. Exit
5. Rescue sequence.

To be regarded as proficient, each student is required to demonstrate proficiency against the water survival challenge proficiency criteria.

## 2.15. Classifying students – coloured wrist bands

Following completion of the water survival challenge proficiency all students are required to be issued with an appropriate coloured wrist band. Schools should document the students' proficiency in case a band is lost or damaged during an activity.



Proficient students will be issued with a green wrist band and will be deemed safe to participate in deep water.

Nonproficient students will be issued with a yellow wrist band and can participate in shallow water, at a depth no higher than a student's waist.

Students who are non-swimmers will be issued with a red wrist band and must be assigned to a supervised area away from the water's edge. Students with a red wrist band must not participate in any aquatic activity.

The bands should remain on the students until they exit the venue at which point they can be appropriately discarded.

Bands can be sourced from local suppliers or the internet and, when selecting bands, please ensure the following:

- band is designed for single use, is waterproof, tear resistant and non-stretch
- enough bands are available to cater for the entire group
- additional bands are available in case of breakage or loss during an activity
- bands must be cut off to make them a single use item
- bands are tight enough to avoid student removal or swapping of band
- schools consistently utilise the colours green for proficient, yellow for non-proficient and red for non-swimmers to avoid confusion at aquatic venues.

## 3. Types of swimming environments

### 3.1. Closed pool

#### 3.1.1. Description

- a fence encloses the pool
- qualified lifeguard is on duty
- the pool can be hired outside public hours
- first aid facilities may be on site.

#### 3.1.2. Examples

- council, shire and community pools in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Jabiru, Tennant Creek, Pirlangimpi, Ngukurr, Yuendumu and Alice Springs.

### 3.2. Shallow pool

#### 3.2.1. Description

- depth of water is at or below waist level of students.

#### 3.2.2. Example

- preschool pools.

### 3.3. Deep pool

#### 3.3.1. Description

- depth of water is above waist level of students when standing on both feet.

#### 3.3.2. Examples

- most closed pools could be considered deep pools, depending on height of students.

### 3.4. Supervised water recreational facility

#### 3.4.1. Description

- the depth of the water may vary
- a qualified lifeguard is on duty
- water clarity may depend on the time of year
- first aid facilities would be present.

#### 3.4.2. Examples

- Leanyer Recreation Park
- Palmerston Water Park
- Darwin Waterfront Recreation and Wave Lagoons.

### 3.5. Natural waterway including sheltered waters

#### 3.5.1. Description

- the depth of water may vary
- there is no qualified lifeguard on duty
- the body of water may be still or flowing
- water clarity may depend on the time of year
- vegetation may surround part or all of the body of water
- there may be submerged rocks and or tree branches
- water level may change rapidly due to heavy rainfall
- crocodile activity may change due to seasonal changes.

Not all natural waterways are safe for swimming, and this will need to be identified in the risk assessment.

There is usually an absence of windy, choppy or moving water.

#### 3.5.2. Examples

- Lake Alexander
- Darwin Waterfront Recreation Lagoon
- Edith Falls, Katherine

- Ellery Big Hole
- Glenn Helen
- Ormiston Gorge
- Berry Springs
- Wangi Falls
- Lake Bennett
- Mataranka and Bitter Springs.

## 3.6. Open water

### 3.6.1. Description

- coastal location not enclosed by land, includes ocean, gulf and any large expanse of water. Open water is not recommended for the teaching of swimming.

### 3.6.2. Examples

- Mindil Beach
- Casuarina Beach
- Yirrkala.

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

### 4.1. Principals

Principles are responsible for ensuring:

- the school provides opportunities for all early childhood, primary and middle years students to participate in swimming and water safety programs which include resuscitation education
- teaching staff including outside providers, are holders of a Working with children clearance notice
- teachers of swimming and water safety have current qualifications as outlined in the Qualifications and ratios table
- school staff are made aware of the policy and familiarise themselves with this document
- the risk assessment, including a Risk management plan and Emergency action plan, is conducted as outlined in this document and authorised by the principal
- the Managing water hazards in preschool policy and procedures is followed when preschool children are participating in a swimming program or aquatic activities
- records of student swimming ability are updated, maintained in SAMS at the conclusion of each swim program or activity and reported to RLSNT.

### 4.2. Teachers in charge

Teachers in charge are responsible for ensuring:

- a risk assessment is conducted for the aquatic environment and an appropriate completed Emergency action plan and Risk management plan is authorised and implemented

- participants and staff are aware of, and practice the emergency procedures, identified in the Emergency action plan at the start of the swimming and water safety program, activity or event
- when using a natural waterway, the managing body is contacted to confirm the designated area is crocodile free and is safe for swimming, this may include Parks Australia, NT Parks and Wildlife, and station and resort management
- parents identify the swimming ability of students in the Permission for student to attend excursion parent consent form (consent form), and this is completed and returned for all swimming and water safety programs and activities
- no student is permitted to enter the water without a completed consent form that includes parental assessment of the child's swimming ability
- information obtained from the consent form, SAMS and RLSA is taken to all swimming and water safety programs, swimming carnivals and recreational activities
- a swimming ability assessment is conducted for each student at the beginning of a school swimming and water safety program, and recorded in accordance with these procedures
- at the beginning of any school unstructured aquatic activities, where there are no records of a student's swimming proficiency, students are required to complete the water survival challenge proficiency and that:
  - all students are issued with a coloured band, proficient students are issued with a green band, nonproficient students are issued with a yellow band and non-swimmers are issued with a red band. Assessment information is located in the supporting documents for this policy.
- records of student swimming ability are updated in SAMS at the conclusion of each swim program and activity, and reported to RLSNT
- sun smart procedures and practices are followed by students and staff
- they take overall responsibility for the department's duty to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the students in its care at a swimming or water safety program or activity
- a first aid kit is available for use at the aquatic location
- an adult with a current first aid certificate is present during all swimming and water safety programs and activities
- adherence to the adult and teacher to student ratios set out in the Qualifications and ratios table.

## 5. Definitions

Term	Definition
Active adult supervisor	An adult who is continually monitoring students in and out of the water.
Emergency action plan	A set of documented and well rehearsed procedures which are initiated by the teacher in charge of the swimming or water safety program or activity on the occurrence of a major incident. An Emergency action plan should be developed after completing a full risk assessment of a swimming venue.
Independent observer	An adult who has been notified of his or her role and responsibilities by the person in charge of the swimming or water safety activity. This person needs to be suitably positioned to have clear vision of all participants within the defined area.

Parent	A child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for that child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander customary law or tradition. The definition of a parent does not include a person standing in place of the parent on a temporary basis.
Parental responsibility	A person who has: a) daily care and control of the child, or b) is entitled to exercise all the powers and rights, and has all the responsibilities, in relation to the long-term care and development of the child, or c) has daily care and control of the child and the entitlement and responsibilities at (b), and includes a person who has been given the above responsibilities under another state or territory law.
Purpose built pool	All pools in special education and preschool settings that are used for water familiarisation and play.
Ratio	The required number of qualified teachers and supervisors in relation to the swimming ability and number of students participating in the designated activity or program.
Recreational aquatic activities and unstructured activities	Participation in informal aquatic activities other than the school swimming and water safety program. Such as celebration or reward days either for individual classes or the whole school, free swim time as part of an excursion, free swim time incorporated in a school swimming carnival, free swim time or pool play at a school camp or free swimming in a weekly swimming program
Risk assessment	A procedure undertaken by the teacher in charge of the swimming or water safety program or activity to identify any potential hazards that could cause harm to students involved in the program or activity. The risk assessment should include the location of the swimming or water safety program, the date and time when the assessment was undertaken and a completed Risk management plan.
School swimming and water safety program	Formal learn to swim and aquatic survival education within structured school swimming and water safety programs based on skill development and assessment of student ability.
School swimming carnival	Amateur swimming competitions consisting of structured swimming events.
Swimming ability assessment	An assessment conducted at the beginning of a school swimming and water safety program. The assessment of each student is required to confirm the level of swimming ability of individual students in accordance with the Royal Life Saving Australia swim and survive program and bronze star rescue awards. This assessment enables the swimming instructor to group students according to their swimming ability.
Swimming teacher	A suitably qualified teacher in accordance with the Royal Life Saving Australia Qualifications and ratios table. Preschools must maintain the minimum ratio and qualifications requirements required under the Education and Care Services National Regulations at all times. The swimming teacher is responsible to the teacher in charge of the swimming and water safety activity or program and holds a Working with children clearance notice.
Teacher in charge	A Department of Education teacher who has overall responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of the group of students in their care, at a swimming and water safety program or activity. This teacher is in charge of organising the activity or program and has ultimate responsibility and therefore authority while the activity or program is in progress.

Water survival challenge proficiency	An assessment of students' swimming proficiency conducted at the beginning of any school aquatic activity that includes unstructured or free time. Students must complete the water survival challenge proficiency where there are no active records of a student's swimming proficiency.
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## 6. Related legislation, policy and procedures, resources and documents

### 6.1. Legislation

- *Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011* - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-AND-CARE-SERVICES-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011>
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Vic)* - <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/education-and-care-services-national-law-act-2010/012>
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (NSW)* - <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2011-0653>
- *Swimming Pool Safety Act 2004* - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/SWIMMING-POOL-SAFETY-ACT-2004>

### 6.2. Policies and procedures

- Excursions policy - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/school-operations#excursions>
- Managing water hazards in preschool policy and procedures - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/early-childhood-education-and-care/preschool-specific-policy>
- School swimming, water safety programs and aquatic activities policy and procedures - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/swimming-and-water-safety>
- Sun safety in schools policy - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/sun-safety>

### 6.3. Resources

- AUSTSWIM teacher of infant and preschool aquatics licence - <https://austswim.com.au/training>
- Bronze medallion courses - <https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/training-development/training-courses/bronze-medallion-courses>
- Bronze star rescue awards - <https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/educate-participate/lifesaving/lifesaving-awards/lifesaving-resources>
- NT Government information about jellyfish stings - <https://nt.gov.au/wellbeing/emergencies-injuries-and-accidents/bites-and-stings/box-jellyfish>
- RLSA Swim and survive - <https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/nt/educate-participate/swimming/swim-and-survive>
- Working with children clearance notice - <https://education.nt.gov.au/careers-in-education/working-with-children-clearance>

## 6.4. Documents

- NT WorkSafe Incident notification form - <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/forms-and-resources/forms/incident-notification-form>
- Permission for student to attend excursion parent consent form - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/managing-school-operations/excursions/excursions-all-categories>

The following documents are available on the Policy and advisory library on eLearn – internal access required - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/3538>

- Swimming and water safety information for schools
- Responsibilities summary checklist form
- Diving depth matrix information
- DRSABCD action plan
- RSLA competencies information
- Qualifications and ratios table information
- RLSA physical education plan for aquatic education information
- Emergency action plan and template
- Risk management plan and template
- Water survival challenge proficiency criteria information and template
- SAMS user notes for entering student swimming level
- Examples of information letter to parents

Acronyms	Full form
NT	Northern Territory
RLSA	Royal Life Saving Australia
RLSNT	Royal Life Saving Northern Territory
SAMS	Student Administration Management System
SLSA	Surf Life Saving Australia
SPF	Sun Protection Factor

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Contact details	Teaching and Learning Services, <a href="mailto:otls.doe@education.nt.gov.au">otls.doe@education.nt.gov.au</a>
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Version	Date	Author	Changes made
1-4.2	September 2013	School Support Services	First version
4.3	October 2015	School Support Services	Major review
4.4	July 2022	Operational Policy	Minor update TRM 50:D22:68979
5	November 2022	Quality Standards and Regulation – Operational Policy	Administrative amendments to align roles and responsibilities to the structural alignment in effect from 1 July 2022, including NTG template and minor formatting
6	April 2023	Early Years and Primary Policy	Updates to reflect changes to the Swim and Survive program levels, treatment of preschool children and included references to other departmental policies and procedures.