

AUSTSWIM WETS Aqua

Innovation in Aqua Activity

Introduction

Throughout Australasia a critical shortage of trained professional aqua activity leaders has been identified limiting opportunities for community participation in aqua activity. As is the case in every community, the aquatic environment is sometimes the only safe and effective setting in which to remain physically active to increase an element of wellbeing. The results of people remaining physically active have long term effects on the health and wellbeing of the community.

Background

This project will be instrumental in addressing the skill shortage of aqua leaders as documented in the Australian Government Department of Industry and Innovation Science Research and Tertiary Education Document (prepared by Service Skills Australia (SSA) – Environmental Scan 2013) 'there is a shortage of skilled specialists such as aqua trainers and yoga and zumba instructors'

A recent study published by Honda and Kamioka in 'Open Access of Sport Medicine' (AWSS 2012-15 Priority 1 Goal 3) demonstrated health benefits and curative effects on people who regularly participated in aquatic activity.

Linkages to the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2012-2015 include goals in three priority areas:

- Reduce Drowning Deaths in Young People Aged 15-24 and 55+
- Reduce Drowning Deaths by Strengthening the Aquatic Industry
- Reduce Drowning Deaths in High Risk Populations

Purpose

- I. To strengthen drowning prevention and healthy activity through AUSTSWIM WETS training.
- II. To implement strategies that address the skills gap in the aqua sector.

AUSTSWIM's 'into the future' strategy addresses and provides a quality training framework, inclusive of current competencies within AQF Statements of Attainment; adding a layer of relevant and appropriate skill sets above and beyond the minimum standards currently demanded.

The AUSTSWIM Aqua outcome of this development opens opportunity for:

- Greater career pathway options for aquatic personnel
- Expansion of industry programming options
- Increased participation choice for the Australasian population.

Method

From a national database, sixty eight male and female community aqua participants (mean age 42 years) with class experience ranging from 3 months to 12 years, were asked to rank a series of questions relating to engagement and interaction, exercise physiological knowledge, pool deck demonstration skills, class formatting, musicality, activity variation and water safety assurance.

Eighty aqua leaders with a mean age of 36 years and a minimum 12 months experience were provided a series of questions relating to the study elements of the current aqua qualification.

Thirty six facilities nationwide answered questions relating to quality employment attributes for an aqua leader .



Results

- Participants indicated a sense of safety and security in water as of utmost importance along with exercise variation interaction and engagement
- Aqua Leaders identified water safety as a knowledge and skill gap. Additional ranking of high importance included pool deck demonstration and aqua activity planning
- Facility managers identified the sourcing of qualified aqua leaders, safety and risk management as major areas of focus; while also including commitment, interaction and engagement as important attributes.
- Aqua leaders and facility managers identified a clear 'disconnect' in demand and supply as the shortage of new and emerging aqua leaders stifles program development and expansion that also impacts on growth in participation numbers.
- Further analysis identified current qualification pathways as a barrier for the development of new aqua leaders.

Conclusion

Evidence suggests water safety is an integral component of aqua activity classes, training and program management. However, current practice does not necessarily include it as an essential element.

AUSTSWIM:

- Commits to design and deliver effective and efficient aqua leader training
- Resolves to measure and evaluate key areas of water safety, pool deck communication and aquatic class planning
- Supports career pathway development enhancing knowledge, skill and understanding of trained professionals for the industry.

Australian communities must be provided with clear and detailed options to enhance participation for aqua physical activity.

To effectively address, impact and reduce Aqua Leader shortage, industry agency support for skill set training is crucial.



AUSTSWIM the Australasian Council for the Teaching of Swimming & Water Safety.
AUSTSWIM has developed quality education courses for those wishing to train as Aqua Activity Leaders.
www.austswim.com.au