

# Aquatic Physical Activity - a collaborative career pathway approach

## Introduction

Physical activity is universally recommended for the maintenance of good health and well-being. For people with a medical condition and / or disability, including injuries, options for conventional activity on land maybe limited. The aquatic environment in this case offers a viable solution.

This AUSTSWIM Project aims to:

- Service the gap in aquatic access and inclusion
- Promote community awareness and knowledge to enhance physical activity for all
- Create a valued aquatic career pathway for AUSTSWIM Teachers

## Background

All AUSTSWIM training includes best practice strategies for drowning prevention, enhanced participation and improved swimming and water safety knowledge. The Teacher of Access and Inclusion (TAI) and Making Aquatics a Terrific Experience (MATE) seminar are no exception.

- Growing evidence suggests various forms of movement, whether motor skill, balance or aquatic training has potential to influence neural networks in response to the stimulus (Doidge 2008)
- Aquatic intervention appears to have a positive effect on perceived social acceptance and social function as reported by caregivers (Getz 2007)
- Early childhood swimming programs promote eye-hand coordination and provision of vestibular stimulation (Sigmundson and B Hopkins 2010)

## Purpose

- Promote the benefits of aquatic activity as an early intervention option especially for people with mobility and sensory conditions
- Foster participation in activity that is often inaccessible among land based programs.
- Enhance learning and participation through education with an AUSTSWIM teacher and recreational activity with an AUSTSWIM MATE.
- Convey the MATE focus to community members; parents, friends, siblings, other relations, care and support professionals
- Promote TAI to enhance and expand knowledge, skill and understanding for teachers of swimming and water safety

## Method

- Collaborate with aquatic industry professionals, physical education specialists, carers, people with a disability and facility management to develop a sustainable community seminar
- Deliver an informative interactive lecture with video clips, case studies, group tasks and problem solving scenarios based around people in the aquatic environment
- Discuss safe entry and exit, physiological, psychological and social benefits of activity in the aquatic environment
- Gather, review and evaluate industry feedback about the AUSTSWIM people with a disability course
- Develop, design and deliver AUSTSWIM TAI, adopting an educational approach and directive for AUSTSWIM teachers to provide aquatic access and inclusion for all.
- Create cohesion and complementary outcomes between AUSTSWIM TAI and AUSTSWIM MATE

## Results

- The MATE community seminar demonstrated sustainability within the first 12 months of development with over 70 AUSTSWIM Presenters trained to deliver in their own communities. Nationally over 800 participants completed the MATE Seminar.
- MATE attendees included support personnel, parents, siblings, children, AUSTSWIM teachers, school teachers and teacher aides.
- MATE attendees completed evaluation forms on conclusion of the seminar ranking content, presentation style and resources; a 98% satisfaction rate was achieved
- Quality TAI resources and training developed with over 1,800 TAI teachers now licenced and fostering accessible water safety education for older adults, the CALD community and people with disabilities.

## Conclusion

The success and interest of MATE has achieved set outcomes including:

- Documented recognition and appreciation from community members, aquatic personnel and the disability sector
- An increase in access and inclusion participation in nationwide pilot venues
- A defined pathway for people to participate in an innovative AUSTSWIM MATE community seminar gaining skills and knowledge to support people with a disability in aquatic recreational activity

The success and interest of MATE has initiated further course development by AUSTSWIM to introduce the Teacher of Aquatics — Access and Inclusion learning module for teachers of swimming and water safety.

Teacher of Access and Inclusion learning outcomes encourage teachers to observe, analyse, modify and if necessary adjust aquatic lessons for safe, effective, enjoyable and appropriate participation.



**AUSTSWIM  
MATE Seminar**

- ✓ Community awareness
- ✓ Parent and Carer knowledge



**AUSTSWIM  
Access & Inclusion Course**

- ✓ AUSTSWIM Teachers
- ✓ Industry Accreditation

**Career Pathway Development**

**Recreate with a MATE - Educate with an AUSTSWIM TAI Teacher**



AUSTSWIM the Australasian Council for the Teaching of Swimming & Water Safety.

AUSTSWIM has developed quality education courses for those wishing to train as aquatic teachers.

AUSTSWIM accreditation is the national industry standard for swimming and water safety teachers and is delivered and recognised in each Australian state and territory and many countries throughout the world

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