



**AUSTSWIM LIMITED**

The Australasian Council for the Teaching  
of Swimming and Water Safety  
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**RE: AUSTSWIM TAKES A STANCE ON FORCEFUL TEACHING TECHNIQUES  
Monday 30th July 2018**

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**Respect is the first step in Water Safety  
Force is not the way**

Supervised programs promoting safety, respect and enjoyment, not forceful conditioning techniques, are the best methods for teaching water safety to infants and pre-school aged children according to AUSTSWIM, Australia's leading provider of industry best practice swimming and water safety teaching guidelines.

AUSTSWIM guidelines for teaching focus on providing a planned positive experience for all participants ensuring a relaxed and happy environment, building trust and assisting infants to develop a skill for life that will enhance their health and development in and out of the water.

"A relaxed environment will ensure a child is most receptive to the water safety aquatic skills lessons and build self-confidence in water," AUSTSWIM Interim CEO Mr Colin Organ said.

AUSTSWIM is strongly opposed to forceful conditioning methods, such as forced back float and submersion techniques, which are stressful to a developing child and can lead to a fear of water. Such techniques are in direct contravention to the AUSTSWIM Code of Conduct and Best Practices Standards.

"This method is a forceful conditioning technique which puts children under duress. It is a stressful environment which is traumatic for the infant, as well as for the teacher and the parent/carer, and can lead to an ongoing fear of water. It is important the community is aware of the potential risks associated with this method and to avoid these programs," Mr Organ said.

AUSTSWIM's position on this controversial forceful technique, which follows a thorough review, is supported by the Aquatics Industry and is consistent with the position of the UK baby swimming industry. This position is based on the University of Cambridge's Dr Françoise Freedman's June 2017 report titled, 'Sink or Swim', which concludes it would be unethical to subject babies and toddlers to these methods.

"We advocate for safer communities through quality swimming and water safety education and strongly urge parents to avoid programs that use force, do not respect the rights of the child and do not conform with the best practice guidelines," Mr Organ said.

Due to the risk of harm to infants, there is no ethical research on these controversial techniques. Academic ethics committees will not support research projects and testing of some teaching techniques which may cause harm to infants.

AUSTSWIM educates teachers to the highest international standards, by teaching people to respect water and provide a positive, fun and memorable experience.



“There is no substitute for supervision of infants around water. Providing a positive experience for everyone involved, the child and parent/carer, is the first step. What we must ensure is the quality teaching of evidence driven learning methods to enable children to enjoy the health and recreation benefits of gaining a skill for life,” Mr Organ added

In maintaining the highest industry standards, AUSTSWIM has confirmed that teachers and recognised swim centres must abide by the AUSTSWIM code of conduct to maintain their accreditation and recognition.

“Those who choose to teach outside our code of conduct, including the forced back float and submersion method, will be required to cease using these methods and follow the AUSTSWIM guidelines or face the potential suspension of their AUSTSWIM accreditation,” Mr Organ confirmed.

AUSTSWIM accredited teachers and recognised swim centres are being advised of this position and will be encouraged to review their practices where appropriate and have the opportunity to ensure they commit to AUSTSWIM's best practice guidelines in line with community expectations.

A frequently asked questions paper is attached. The final position paper on these forceful conditioning techniques will be released in August and an education and communication program on the endorsed teaching methods will be conducted through until the end of January 2019.

**END**

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**Available for comment:**

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Further to the media release above, vision of an infant swimming lesson can be arranged or footage provided. If you wish to obtain vision please contact Jade Hanson at AUSTSWIM on 0404 507 121 or email [jhanson@austswim.com.au](mailto:jhanson@austswim.com.au)

Interviews with AUSTSWIM CEO and an AUSTSWIM teacher can also be arranged.

