

## U14 COMPETITION RESTRUCTURE

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The Aquatic Sport Executive (ASE) appreciate that some members and a small number of clubs have raised concerns and requested a review of their feedback regarding the Under 14 competition restructure. The ASE reviewed all feedback and considered a range of options to address. As a result, the decision made at the Aquatic Sport Council will stand with some modifications for the 2018/19 season including a transition season for U14 athletes.

Key benefits of the restructure:

- To create a Youth competition which aligns to the Australian Titles format.
- To align to the SLSA double dipping rule, U14s (and U13s) will only be able to compete in individual events in their own age group, i.e. they will no longer be able to compete in U15 individual events.
- To better integrate Youth competition into Youth/Senior pathways; and
- To improve the impact on Junior carnival programming.

The following communication has been developed to further clarify concerns and provide next steps regarding the U14 competition restructure. The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) developed and circulated to members on 18 July, has also been updated and can be viewed on pages 4-6.

While we do acknowledge that change can be difficult, and that members are unsure how the change will be implemented, we have commenced targeted planning with key officials and personnel regarding the programming, structure and environment we aim to create in the U14 and U15 Youth Arena. We look forward to working with clubs in the upcoming season to implement this change and further work towards the best outcome for all.

### Background:

At the Aquatic Sport Council meeting held on Monday, 18 June 2018, Club Delegates and Members of the Aquatic Sports Council (ASC) voted in favour of the following proposal from the ASE;

The ASC endorsed the proposed restructure of U14 competition for the 2018/19 Season. At the ASE meeting on Monday, 30 July 2018, feedback received from parents, clubs and athletes regarding the U14 Competition Restructure was reviewed and discussed at length. The following motion was passed by the ASE;

- The endorsed restructure of U14 competition for the 2018/19 season in which U14s will compete in Youth/Senior Carnivals is upheld, with the following hybrid model to be implemented for the 2018/19 season, with a review prior to the 2019/20 season;
  - U14/15 competitors will not compete at beaches viewed as unsuitable, for example Fairhaven. Where practical, an alternative event will be programmed within the Surf Sports calendar,
  - U14/15 competitors will be moved to a more suitable Junior carnival location, should the need arise in venue planning.
  - U14 competition will be included at the at Cosy Corner carnival.
  - U14 team events shall now be run at selected carnivals; U14s will choose to compete in either an U14 or U15 team per event.

This means for the 2018/19 season, a transition model will be implemented. U14 competitors will have a shared calendar with Junior & Youth/Senior competition, to assist with the Youth/Senior transition. At the completion of the 2018/19 season, this model will be reviewed with the intention for U14 competitors to be fully integrated into Youth/Senior Competition in the 2019/20 season.

### Evolution of the proposal:

The outcome to restructure U14 competition has evolved over discussions that has been held with the ASC over the last 18 months regarding the potential restructure of competition age groups. Initially, this included the proposal to run three State Championships – Junior, Youth and Senior, which has been continuously re-visited with the understanding that our carnival system has many difficulties in its current format. Workshopping on the potential restructure has occurred at the ASC with alternative proposals suggested to the three State Championships. Following this, a paper was prepared by the ASE proposing the inclusion of U14s at Senior carnivals, competing in a Youth arena alongside the U15s.

### Clarification of concerns:

Concern Raised	Comment
That the venues will be unsuitable for U14s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth/Senior states to be held at Warrnambool (this age group has competed there for 5 years).</li> <li>The carnival calendar and venues are nearly finalised, and the ASE do not believe there will be issues with U14s being able to compete at the beaches that are currently proposed.</li> <li>Venue selection is heavily influenced by the Clubs that nominate to host carnivals.</li> <li>The ASE made the decision at their meeting on 30 July, that Youth competition will not be included at any venues that may be unsuitable for those age groups and will instead be moved to a suitable Junior Carnival.</li> <li>It is important to note that currently all Life Saving Clubs conduct nipper programs on their home beaches and risk is assessed prior to each session. Carnivals are assessed in a similar way and any beach may or may not be suitable in certain conditions. Not all conditions will be suitable to all competitors and this will depend largely on what they have been exposed to in training.</li> </ul>
That children will be competing with adults in an unsafe environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>No</b>, at the Youth/Senior carnivals, children and young people and adults will be at the same carnival location but will <b>not</b> be competing against adults.</li> <li>U14 and U15 competitors will be competing in their own Youth Arena.</li> <li>It is important to note that Senior pool competition is currently inclusive of U12 to Open.</li> <li>LSV is committed to the Safeguarding of Children and Young People (SCYP). Further information regarding our commitment can be found <a href="#">HERE</a>.</li> </ul>
That clubs will be affected as less U14s will strive to obtain their patrolling award.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The requirements for U14s to compete will remain as is, i.e. they require their U14 Competition Swim Evaluation for all normal carnivals and will require their SRC to compete at the Youth/Senior State Championships. This will be no different to previous years.</li> <li>There is no requirement for an U14 competitor to complete patrol hours to compete (as they cannot compete as an U15 in individual events).</li> <li>There is the concern that athletes are unable to compete in a Youth/Senior carnival until they obtain their SRC. This is incorrect - Additional water safety will be implemented for those who are competing on a U14 Competition Swim Evaluation.</li> <li>There is no reason or indication that clubs should be affected by a change in competition days for U14s. Club programs and activities within the club can be run for the best needs of each club.</li> </ul>
That LSV has not followed proper governance in this decision-making process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LSV ASC has followed the required process and engaged in an extended level of engagement (over 18 months) to ensure clubs had the chance to consult members and vote according to the interests of Life Saving.</li> <li>The vote is reflective of participation of most motions presented to ASC member clubs. If members feel clubs did not consult sufficiently with individual club members during the past 18 months, it is important the members address that issue directly with their clubs for better communication and engagement in the future.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We reiterate to clubs that it is important for their delegates to attend meetings and be a conduit for decisions.</li> </ul>
That competitors will have less opportunity to compete in water, beach and age specific team events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ASE have decided that for the 2018/19 season, U14 team events will be conducted. U14 athletes will be able to choose to compete in an U14 or U15 team event, for each event, i.e. they can't do the same event in both age groups.</li> <li>It is intended that all U14 events will run, and events programmed so that U14s do not have to choose between water and beach events. Belt and Reel will be run for U14s.</li> <li>U14s are able to take part in the March Past at the Junior State Championships if they choose.</li> <li>LSV are working with the R&amp;R Panel regarding programming of events for the season.</li> <li>Athletes will now have their own opportunity to structure their carnival program around events specific to themselves.</li> </ul>
That competitors will be disadvantaged not having a year on Mals (boards) in Junior Competition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>U14s compete on Mals, and coaches have a responsibility to ensure that their athletes are competent on the equipment they are using, regardless of age group.</li> <li>U14s will have the same level of access in the Youth/Senior carnivals as Junior carnivals to compete on Mals.</li> <li>For U14s to be SRC qualified, they are required to be proficient in the use of a rescue board.</li> </ul>
That the restructure creates barriers to participation for girls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LSV is an inclusive organisation that provides equal access for participation in Aquatic Sports.</li> </ul>
That competitors were left without their final leadership opportunities in Junior Competition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clubs can still provide leadership opportunities for U14s within club activities. This should not change anything a club currently does.</li> <li>There will be opportunity for U14s to be leaders through being able to attend Junior carnivals and assisting younger age groups with tips and tricks, marshalling, board handling etc.</li> <li>They also have the opportunity once they have completed their SRC to provide water safety at Junior carnivals.</li> </ul>
That families are unable to get a refund on accommodation booked for the Victorian Junior State Championships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is acknowledged that there are families who have booked accommodation in Lorne and surrounds for the Junior State Championships who now may not attend.</li> <li>LSV can provide a letter explaining the restructure of competition to support member's requests for refunds.</li> <li>It has been proposed that a Facebook forum (or similar) be created for members to arrange transfers of bookings, swaps etc.</li> <li>We are aware that a number of clubs/members have not yet booked accommodation for Lorne and will be looking for accommodation.</li> </ul>
That the ASE had an unwillingness to incorporate modifications or transitions into the decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ASE considered a wide range of options for the change. The decision relating to the shift of U14 was not just limited simply moving U14s, but broader considerations in an effort to address a range of risks and issues facing aquatic sport and in particular Junior carnivals.</li> <li>The ASE have agreed to make some modifications for the 2018/19 season, which will be reviewed post the season.</li> </ul>

For further information, please email [sport@lsv.com.au](mailto:sport@lsv.com.au).

Date: 6 August 2018

Prepared by: LSV Aquatic Sport Executive

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – U14 COMPETITION RESTRUCTURE

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### Background:

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) have been developed following one of the key decisions made at the Aquatic Sport Council meeting held on Monday, 18 June 2018. Delegates and Members of the Aquatic Sports Council (ASC) voted in favour of the following recommendation from the Aquatic Sport Executive (ASE);

- The ASC endorse the proposed re-structure of U14/15 competition for the 2018/19 Season. \*Please note this means for the 2018/19 season, U14 competitors will compete in Youth/Senior carnivals.

The briefing paper outlining the proposal can be viewed [HERE](#).

### FAQ:

#### 1. What decision has been made regarding U14 Competition?

The U14 competition age group has moved from Junior carnivals and will now compete at a mixture of Junior and Youth/Senior Carnivals during a transition period. The U14 Competition age group will compete in a 'Youth Arena' within their own age group for all individual events, alongside U15s competing in their individual age group. This aligns to the successful 'Youth Aussies' format and competition changes implemented by Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA).

#### 2. Why was this change recommended?

This decision has been made for several reasons;

- After successful implementation of the Youth Arena format at the Australian Championship for the past 5 years, LSV have decided to now conduct our carnivals in this same manner.
- We currently cater for U14s in both Junior & Senior Competition, this will now provide a streamlined competition in a Youth/Senior Carnival as well as selected Junior Carnivals.
- SLSA will implement a 'Double Dipping' rule, disallowing U14 competitors to compete 'up' an age group, and therefore remove any possibility of competing at Senior carnivals in the previous structure.
- A review of the 2017/18 season showed that on average, 42% of U14 Competitors also competed in Senior Carnivals, this means these athletes also made teams in the U15 age group
- Allows better event management in both Junior and Youth/Senior environments.

#### 3. How does this affect our Nippers Program?

This change will have no impact on your club's Nippers program and how you conduct activities at your club.

Nippers is a Surf Education Program which caters for children 5-14 years. This National program is designed to teach kids the basic lifesaving skills required to be safe around an aquatic environment.

The change only affects U14s in relation to the Surf Sports (competition) component of Surf Life Saving, which will see them compete in Youth/Senior Carnivals. The same opportunities to compete exist.

Your club is encouraged to conduct your Nipper program in the way it best works for you, the only difference will be that U14s will compete within the Youth/Senior carnivals, essentially on a different day.

#### 4. How will LSV assist with retention strategies and the transition of U14s into Youth/Senior Carnivals?

We acknowledge the concerns by members and are keen to work with clubs on managing transition and retention. The following strategies are proposed and additional ideas welcome and can be discussed with the Aquatic Sport team.

- LSV is focusing on improving culture on the beach. A key focus for the 2018/19 will be on creating an inclusive Youth Arena environment whereby all U14 and U15 competitors feel comfortable. This will be through appointment of appropriate officials, targeted programming and use of mentors. Specifically:
  - Improved and targeted event promotions, use of social media
  - Programming for Youth/Senior Carnivals will be managed to ensure team and individual events in the Youth Arena do not clash.
  - Email with information and expectations sent to U14 and U15 competitors and their parents via SurfGuard
  - Implementation of U15 & U17 'Ambassadors'
    - Creating 'all age' club events at selected carnivals to increase comradery
    - Applying a 'case by case' common sense approach during the transition phase, particularly linked to U14 use of MALs (racing boards). We anticipate working closely with coaches and officials to modify events for U14s where required.

#### 5. How will the SRC Award be affected?

There will be no changes to the SRC Award. U14 competitors will still be required to obtain their SRC Award prior to competing at the Victorian Youth/Senior State Championships. The Youth Arena will have additional water safety as is currently implemented at Junior Carnivals.

#### 6. How do U14s compete in team events? What will happen to Belt & Reel, R&R and March Past Events?

- U14 team events will now be included at selected Youth/Senior Carnivals
- Belt & Reel events will continue to be scheduled at selected Junior and Youth/Senior carnivals as team events and run within the Beach Arena.
- R&R will continue to be scheduled at both Junior and Youth/Senior Carnivals in the R&R Arena.
- March Past Events will continue only at Junior State Championships, with all U14s invited to participate should they wish.
- If clubs would like to see the return of March Past at Senior State Championships, this can be requested through the Aquatic Sports Council.

#### 7. How does this impact Senior Competition?

Fundamentally there is **no** change to the structure of Youth/Senior Carnivals, A review of the 2017/18 season showed that on average, 42% of U14 Competitors also competed at Senior Carnivals season. LSV will change the terminology of a 'Senior' Carnival to 'Youth/Senior' Carnival. The U14 age group will compete in a Youth Arena with the U15 age group.

LSV acknowledges the concerns of members that U17, U19 and Open competition age groups will be impacted with the inclusion of U14s. However, U14s have been eligible to compete 'up' at Senior Carnivals for many years. This change will enable a more targeted approach to cater for the U14 and U15 Youth Arena and associated risk will be managed accordingly.

Venue selection for Youth/Senior Carnivals will include, where deemed necessary, additional water safety measures to ensure all competitors are adequately catered for in the Youth Arena.

#### **8. How do I become involved in Aquatic Sport decision making?**

- Each year, clubs nominate an 'Aquatic Sport Club Delegate' of whom receives direct communication relating to sport topics and is allocated voting rights on behalf of their club at Aquatic Sport Council meetings. This person is strongly encouraged to proactively circulate all information and gather any feedback from all club members prior to casting any votes.
- All members are invited to attend Aquatic Sport Council (ASC) Meetings as guests, held quarterly at Life Saving Victoria HQ. The meeting is a great platform for feedback and open conversation between Aquatic Sports Executive, LSV Staff and Life Saving Clubs. Meeting dates are posted via Club Circulars and on the LSV website.
- Club Circulars are released each Wednesday and contain essential information and announcements for clubs and members from Life Saving Victoria. LSV encourages all members to sign up to receive Circulars and share relevant information within their club.  
Subscribe via <https://lsv.com.au/mail-subscription/>
- Feedback is encouraged through [feedback.lsv.com.au/](https://feedback.lsv.com.au/) or via [sport@lsv.com.au](mailto:sport@lsv.com.au)

#### **9. What can I do about my Junior Victorian State Championship accommodation?**

LSV appreciate that some members have booked accommodation in Lorne for the weekend of Junior State Championships. Should you wish, please contact [sport@lsv.com.au](mailto:sport@lsv.com.au) for a referral letter to your accommodation unit if you are unable to obtain a refund. We encourage members to review the 2018/19 calendar (to be released shortly), as there may be opportunities to swap dates as an alternative option.

We recognise this will be a change for clubs and their members, particularly those impacted for the 2018/19 season. We appreciate those clubs who are playing a role in positively promoting the change and reviewing how they will implement at a club level.

We will continue to add to these FAQ as further questions arise.

For further information, please email [sport@lsv.com.au](mailto:sport@lsv.com.au).

*Date: 6 August 2018 (first prepared 17 July 2018)*

*Prepared by: LSV Aquatic Sport Executive*