



# ORIENTATION TO HIGH PERFORMANCE **PARA-SWIMMING**

WELCOME	3
FOREWORD	3
OUR PARALYMPIC HISTORY	5
ORIENTATION TO HIGH PERFORMANCE	6
SWIMMER SUCCESS FACTORS	7
THE PARALYMPIC PATHWAY PROGRAMS	9
ATHLETE SUPPORT TEAM	17
AFTER THE PERFORMANCE PATHWAY PROGRAMS	21
FURTHER INFORMATION	21
CONTACT DETAILS	24

## WELCOME

This comprehensive guide to Swimming Australia’s (SAL) world-leading Paralympic Performance Pathway programs has been designed primarily for young aspiring athletes, but is also relevant for support people and coaches. As an aspiring para-swimmer, you are part of something really special that should be nurtured and developed.

After reading this handbook, you should have a good understanding of:

- the pathway you can take to potentially become an Australian Dolphin
- the expectations of you in each of the structured programs in the pathway, including what the success factors are, and
- what’s included in the programs.

We encourage you to take the time to consider being part of the Paralympic pathway programs with your support people. If you need more information about the programs, activities and events, the Paralympic high performance staff and Paralympic mentor coach will also be a great resource. You’ll find contact details at the end of this handbook.

## FOREWORD

Identifying and developing extraordinary sporting potential can be a tremendously exciting journey. It typically involves a rare blend of coaching art, science, environment, systematic planning and luck. Potential of this kind is often described as ‘gold dust’—rare, valuable and requiring skilful handling along the journey to transfer into world and Olympic and Paralympic excellence.

Throughout the handbook, we’ll guide you through a series of checklists that set out the fundamental elements that are within Swimming Australia’s pathway programs, as we seek to make the winning edge in elite sport. Using the pathway programs to forward plan will help reassure potential swimmers that you are part of an exciting and world leading system.

Performance pathway programs cannot guarantee success. However, if approached candidly and honestly, they can and will determine an athlete’s readiness to grasp one of the most challenging, stimulating and rewarding endeavours in sport.

We look forward to having you with us on the journey.

**Jacco Verhaeren**  
*National Head Coach*



Welcome athletes, coaches and parents.

The Paralympic performance pathway is an extremely rewarding journey. For some it will take up a significant portion of their lives while for others it may be a special and brief period. I am sure whatever the involvement it will be a valuable experience and the friends and memories will last a lifetime.

Australia has had much success in the pool at Olympic and Paralympic games and while it takes individual talent to succeed there are many other factors outlined in this orientation handbook to help ensure you are on the right track.

As a swimmer with a disability we understand that your impairment may have already provided you with many challenges in life. Successful para-swimmers embrace these experiences and transfer the determination, tenacity and resilience they have developed into their swimming. Your story out of the pool doesn't define who you are but when combined with your pursuit of sporting excellence does contribute to Swimming Australia's and the Australian Paralympic Committee's (APC) rich history of performance, pride and passion for success.

One vital ingredient in being a successful swimmer is your support network—even more so when you are overcoming an impairment. It is important to focus not on what you can't do, but on doing what you can do, better. Your team around you is key, and good communication between you and your coach will ensure you leave no stone unturned in your pursuit of success.

Attitude is critical and you wouldn't be reading this if you didn't already display enormous talent. This resource will outline the steps to becoming a member of the Australian Paralympic swim team. Making the team and reaching the top of the podium is a great honour, but it comes as a result of years of hard work, dedication and commitment.

Take a look at our Paralympic champions. Their impairment doesn't define them or their approach to training. They are elite athletes striving every day to be better than the last. This is the mentality we look for in aspiring para-swimmers.

We hope this resource and advice helps you to plan your experiences and provides a platform for you to have a lifelong affiliation with the water and continue swimming to the best of your ability. The choice is up to you; you will get out what you put in. If you invest in continually improving—training harder, smarter and better—your outputs will be faster, smarter and better too.

I wish you well and look forward to working with you and your coaches in this next step in your swimming career.

**Adam Pine**  
*Paralympic Performance Manager*

## OUR PARALYMPIC HISTORY

Since the first Paralympic Games in Rome in 1960, swimming, or para-swimming as it is now known, has been one of the main sports of the Paralympics. Para-swimming is governed internationally by World Para Swimming (WPS). In Australia, the Australian Paralympic Committee (APC) is the recognised National Federation (NF) for the sport. Through a mainstreaming agreement, the APC entrusts SAL to deliver all aspects of the sport pathway including the preparation of the Paralympic swim team. Australia has a proud and decorated history in para-swimming. Since the mainstreaming agreement was put in place in 2008, Australian swimmers have earned 36 gold medals at Paralympic Games and consistently finished in the top five of the medal rankings.

**Following are some of the major highlights in Australian para-swimming history:**

In 1966, the Australian Paralympic swim team won a startling 44 medals. This resulted in Australia ranking second on the medal tally.

**1966**

**2000**

In 2000, Siobhan Paton won an amazing six individual gold medals on home soil. At that time, this was the most gold medals ever won by an Australian athlete at a single Games.

In 2008, Matthew Cowdrey won five gold and three silver medals and was recognised as the most successful athlete of the entire games.

**2008**

**2012**

At the 2012 London Paralympic Games, Matt was named Australia's most successful Australian Paralympian of all time after adding five gold, two silver and one bronze medal to his impressive career achievements. Also at the 2012 Games, Jacqueline Freney took over Siobhan's record of the most gold medals ever won by an Australian athlete at a single Games, winning a record eight gold medals from eight events, and achieving two world records.

**2016**

The 2016 Rio Paralympic swim team consisted of 36 athletes, and for 22 of them, this was their first Paralympic Games. In Rio, the team achieved a total of 29 medals—nine gold, 10 silver, 10 bronze—and three world records. This included a total of seven individual gold medallists (Ellie Cole, Lakeisha Patterson, Maddison Elliott, Rachael Watson, Brenden Hall, Tiffany Thomas Kane, and Tim Disken).



Since London 2012, para-swimming has been recognised as a truly equal discipline alongside Olympic pool and Olympic open water swimming within SAL's high performance structure. Para-swimmers aspire to achieve the same goal as their Olympic counterparts: to wear the green and gold as an Australian Dolphin.

With this recognition has come increased investment in all aspects of the sport pathway, including sport science, training and competition environments, coach development, talent identification and athlete development. At the same time the level of expectation has grown and to be successful athletes must strive for the highest standards of professionalism, preparation and performance.

## ORIENTATION TO HIGH PERFORMANCE

Since its creation in 2011, ninety athletes have been supported by Swimming Australia's Paralympic pathway system and have succeeded in joining the Australian Dolphins swim team. Athletes who have progressed through this system recently won 29 medals at the Rio Paralympics. On top of this, during the four-year Rio Paralympic cycle, Australian swimmers were awarded more than one hundred IPC World Championship, Commonwealth and Paralympic medals.

Swimming Australia is the national sporting organisation for the sport of swimming. To prepare Australia's next generation of swimmers for senior performance excellence, SAL invests in important pathways activities. This takes athletes beyond the state and territory swimming association programs and into the national arena. In the Paralympic discipline this consists of two programs that advance through to the pinnacle—swimming in the Australian Dolphins swim team.

These programs are managed by Paralympic high performance staff and receive funding from the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and the APC. The Paralympic pathway programs will assist athletes and coaches to prepare swimmers for elite performance by focusing on the three Es: education, environments and experience.

### Education



Whether you're a swimmer, coach, parent or supporter, you will have access to subject matter experts and be provided with information in a format that will be engaging and innovative. You will have all of the training and testing data you need to help you set your goals and achieve them.

### Environments



Our Paralympic performance programs will engage you to apply what you've learnt in your daily performance environment (DPE) and regular training camps throughout the program. The training camps are invaluable for you to improve your skills and adopt an optimum routine to take home and help get the most out of your DPE.

### Experience



If you're going to be an elite swimmer, it's important to have opportunities for learning and development both domestically and internationally. We aim to provide these opportunities through taking part in competitions and training experiences around Australia and overseas. These opportunities may vary year to year and differ from one cycle to the next as events and opportunities arise.

## SWIMMER SUCCESS FACTORS

If you're reading this, you're probably wondering what it's going to take to progress your swimming to the next level. The attributes listed below are traits regularly demonstrated by Australian Paralympic medallists, and are what we describe as the Swimmer Success Factors.

Get ready to master these success factors if you want to join the Paralympic pathway programs. Some may come more naturally than others, but these attributes can be developed over time with hard work and commitment.

### Professional attitude and approach

You plan a way forward, with an idea of where you want to get to. You are honest about your level of commitment and you always strive to meet the standards required at each level. You also think about how you can overcome the challenges you may face during your development.

### Commitment

You commit to working hard. You invest a growing proportion of time and effort towards your development. You stay up-to-date with the program aims, make sacrifices, overcome challenges, make your strengths stronger and address your areas for improvement.

### Organisation

You plan ahead to ensure you are consistently in the right place at the right time. You have a view of what the forthcoming year looks like because you have mapped out your priorities, including racing, training, and all of the other demands outside of swimming (like exams, coursework and holidays).

### Technical skills

You are continually building, developing and fine-tuning your swimming technique, tracking your technical development and striving to enhance your technical skill set.

### Physical capabilities

You are maintaining baseline physiological fitness levels throughout the year and pushing hard to meet the physiological standards at each stage of your development to allow you to fulfil your swimming potential. You work hard to maintain the ideal body composition and to strengthen your core and posture to maximise efficiency and minimise injury.

### Independence and accountability

You make decisions independently, often under pressure and sometimes with limited clarity or control over processes and outcomes. Being able to use the support systems in place, but also taking ownership of your own swimming development, is vital.



**Self-awareness and willingness to learn**

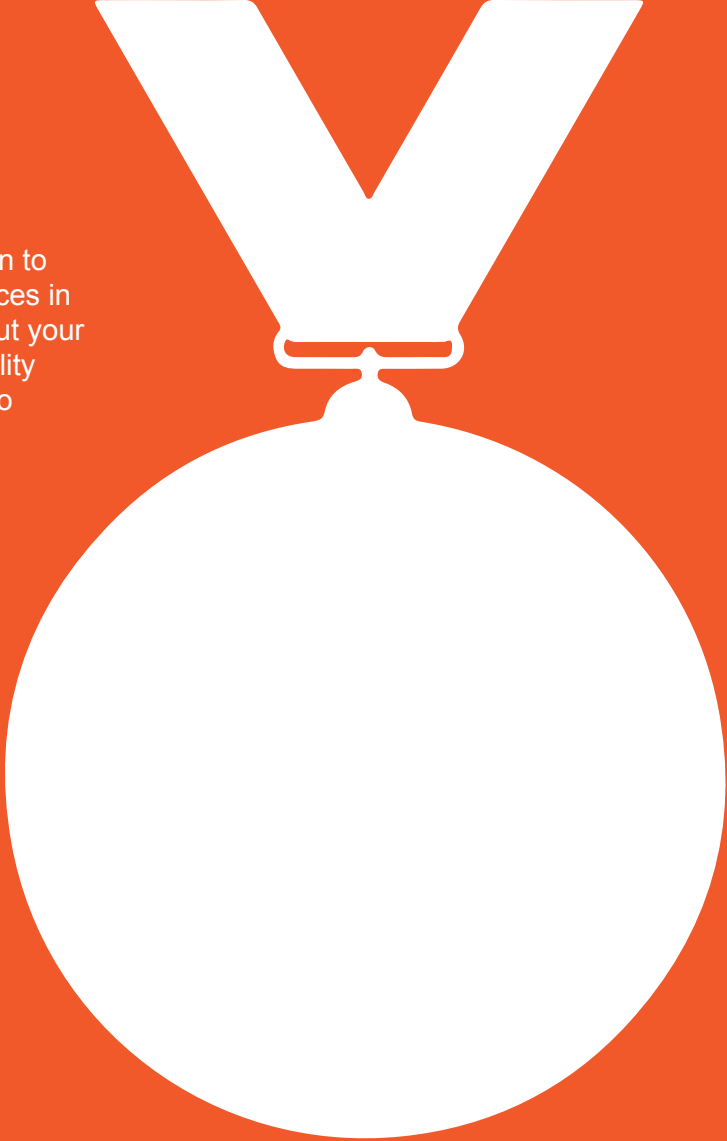
You know what makes you perform at your best and how to repeat it time and again. You are open to learning, committed to reviewing your performances in training and racing and desire to know more about your swimming than anyone else. You take responsibility for your development rather than leaving things to chance or time.

**Ability to deal with adversity**

Being able to bounce back from disappointments and setbacks is vital. You are able to remain focused when faced with unexpected hardships and you thrive on competitiveness.

**Ability to have fun**

Regardless of your goals and how far you aim to get through the Paralympic pathway programs, you need to enjoy the journey. Being serious about having fun is one of SAL's key philosophies. Striking a balance between professionalism and fun will help you stay motivated, committed and encourage a positive culture around you.



**THE PARALYMPIC PATHWAY PROGRAMS**

Your swimming journey has already begun. You've dedicated many hours to training and competing, and you have been successful. If you continue your journey through the Paralympic pathway programs, you will face many challenges along the way. This will require even more hard work and commitment, but will also be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life.

SAL's Paralympic Performance Pathway programs include the Talent Program and the Development Program. High performing athletes then progress through to the Para Performance programs and ultimately Australian Dolphins swim team selection.



*Figure 1: SAL para-swimming pathways programs*

**PROGRAM ONE: STATE AND TERRITORY PARA-SWIMMING TALENT PROGRAM**

The Talent Program is the entry point to the SAL para-swimming performance pathways programs and aims to prepare swimmers for the transition into the Development Program and beyond. In this program SAL provides an additional layer of support to identified athletes and coaches involved in the state and territory swimming associations' para-swimming pathways programs.

During the Talent Program, we encourage swimmers to build on their swimming technique, tactical awareness, professional attitude and physical capabilities already developed in the state and territory swimming association programs and DPE.

At this stage, we will expect you to commit to goals and put good habits and routines into regular practice. In this program there is also an increasing emphasis on frequent race experience and competition exposure, and we begin planning for international level classification.

## Selection guidelines

Each year, the Talent Program identifies and connects with around 20 swimmers per state who are:

- four-to-six years from a senior podium performance
- at the T2 and T3 levels of the Australian Swimming Framework (ASF) (See Further Information section for more details)
- ranked in the top 20 to 30 (three per nation) for Paralympic events, and
- aged 12 years or older.

These swimmers will be identified based on their potential to successfully represent Australia at major events. To make this assessment, the Paralympic mentor coach reviews swimmers' performances at each of the state and territory championships and the Australian Age Championships. Specifically, the following considerations will be made:

- technique (distance per stroke and stroke rates), pacing, start/turn/finish skills, competition progression, relative maturation age and training age
- performances from Australian Age Championships in the form of Multi Class Point Scores (MCPS) and world para-swimming rankings comparisons
- results from the SAL talent identification (TID) assessment protocols undertaken at the state camps where applicable
- sport class and impairment profiles, and
- feedback from the program visits of the state head coaches and Paralympic mentor coach.

## Program inclusions

The program provides engagement and high quality coaching advice and support from the Paralympic mentor coach via visits to the DPE, at competitions and remotely via contact with your home coach and state head coaches.

Athletes will also begin receiving exposure to the requirements of international classification.

In addition, your home coach can access technical and personal development via the Paralympic mentor coach and state head coaches, including mentorship and technical, competition and SAL compliance support.

You and your coach should communicate about important development, classification and competition requirements.

The Talent Program offers an exceptional opportunity to progress a swimmer's development. It is a tremendous opportunity for both coaches and athletes to grow and improve.

## Camps and competitions

There are no required camps delivered by SAL in this program; however, athletes are expected to attend specific competitions and be involved in state and territory association camps and programs. Swimmers are required to attend all national and state activities as part of the program to gain the full benefits. These include:

- Australian Age Championships
- own state or territory championships, and
- state association program camps and activities.

## Classification

Athletes in the Talent Program will continue to undergo classification in the national system until an international classification is obtained. Athletes with Review (R) status should ensure they undergo re-evaluation at the earliest opportunity and ideally at a classification opportunity held in conjunction with a domestic competition.

Athletes will now begin their own preparation for possible international classification processes. This includes:

- collecting required medical diagnostics information
- becoming familiar with WPS classification rules and regulations as they apply to their specific health condition and impairment type
- developing a sound understanding of their own health condition and impairment type, and
- having a sound understanding of their current sport class, sport class status and rule exceptions.

For athletes in the Talent Program SAL will begin the process of reviewing classification needs for individual athletes in line with program priorities, available opportunities and likelihood of progress to the performance program level. Athletes may receive advice from SAL about their needs, and possible international classification opportunities will be earmarked.

## Swimmer controllable

You will be introduced to the following characteristics during the Talent Program:

### Physical preparation

- Understands the basic factors of fitness that influence performance and the basic aspects of swim training programming.
- Performs well on aerobic capacity, sprint and kick/pull test sets, in different training and test environments.
- Demonstrates appropriate musculoskeletal range of movement, stability and robustness in a variety of training and competition environments.
- Understands their own health condition and impairment type and specific support needs they may have in the training and competition environment.

### Mental preparation

- Shows an emerging awareness and skills in personal resilience (the brain, growth mindset) based on the SAL Resilient MIND program.
- Shows an emerging awareness and skills in performance readiness (goal setting, focus, imagery) based on the SAL Performance MIND program.

### Technical preparation

- Understands the key technique points (distance per stroke and stroke rate) for each stroke and racing skills in a variety of training and competition environments.





## Progressing to the next program

You can expect to be in the Talent Program stage for between two and four years, depending on your progress. The next pathway program is the Development Program. Swimming Australia pathway staff and the coaching leadership team will work with each swimmer's home coach on what further support is required to aid progression.

## Visiting Athlete Program (VAP) camps

As part of the Talent Program, if an athlete is identified as likely to benefit from enhanced training, they will be invited to train at either the National Training Centre (NTC) in Canberra or the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) program in Queensland. These athletes are identified through feedback from the Paralympic mentor coach. The swimmers and their home coaches are invited to visit the NTC or USC for multi-purpose work in the pool and further coach/DPE education, classification-related impairment screening or, if required, rehabilitation.

To enquire about VAP opportunities contact the Paralympic performance manager [Adam.Pine@swimming.org.au](mailto:Adam.Pine@swimming.org.au).

## Moving on

There are many other routes you can choose if you decide you have other priorities, or if you aren't immediately successful in progressing to the Development Program. You can continue to improve within the Talent Program and apply the skills you have learned in your state program and DPE. To help you decide what your aspirations are and whether your commitment levels match the program expectations, you can ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you happy to commit more time to your journey?
- Are you progressing in training, testing and competitions based on the goals you've set?
- How long do you consider staying in the Talent Program? When should you move on from the Talent Program?
- Have you thoroughly checked and tried out other events and are you confident you are in the right event?
- Do you fully understand the current selection policy for the Development Program?
- Are you prepared for possible international classification?

To make a successful transition, communication is vital and spending time getting it right can save you a lot of time in the future. We encourage you to discuss these questions with the SAL Paralympic mentor coach and high performance staff who can advise you on your readiness to make the move into the Development Program. Talk with your home coach and other swimmers looking to advance to the next program too, to ensure you have explored all options.

## PROGRAM TWO: PARA-SWIMMING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Building on the foundations of the Talent Program, the Development Program has multiple aims depending on an athlete's current stage of development.

The Development Program aims to define the key individual ingredients for each swimmer to transition to the Performance Program and ultimately selection onto a senior team. However, as athletes enter the Development Program there is also a focus on helping swimmers master the correct fundamental technical skills needed in their events and to develop physical fitness in line with their biological maturity, underlying health condition and impairment group to cope with the demands of high performance swimming. Athletes will be benchmarked for their technical, tactical, physical, physiological and mental attributes from their Athlete Management System (AMS) testing profiles and competition performances. Preparation for international classification is also advanced in this program.

The program functions in two phases:

- Phase one is focused on individual benchmarking, via assessments at the SAL Paralympic development camp.
- Phase two is taking the swimmers on the program as a team or as individuals into an international competition and classification opportunity for that year, such as WPS World Series meets or Pan Pacific Para-Swimming Championships. (This is not a guaranteed aspect of the program as it relies heavily on available resources and priorities in the given year.)

## Selection guidelines

The SAL Development Program supports around 20 swimmers. Typically, they are:

- two-to-four years from a senior podium performance
- at the T3 and T4 stages of the ASF
- ranked in the top 20 (three per nation) in Paralympic events (See Further Information section for more details), and
- aged 12 years and older.

These 20 swimmers will be selected from performances at the Australian Championships and Australian Age Championships based on future potential and coach insights.

## Program inclusions

The program provides access to high quality coaching at a national camp and competitions with continuing support in the DPE. It will also introduce athletes to sport science and medicine support staff and the personal excellence team. Further activities will take place in preparation for international classification.

In addition, each swimmer's home coach can access technical and personal development via the Paralympic mentor coach and state head coaches, including mentorship and technical, competition and SAL compliance support.

The Development Program is subsidised by SAL and offers an exceptional opportunity to progress a swimmer's development. The dollar value each swimmer will get out of this program, including the cost of coach and program staff, sport science support and facilities that SAL provides, equates to around \$5,000 per annum in years where a camp is provided. It is a tremendous opportunity for both coaches and athletes to grow and improve.

## Camps and competitions

The Development Program will include camps, engagement at competitions and visits to the DPE. These contacts take place in various locations in Australia and possibly overseas. Swimmers are expected to attend all activities as part of the program to gain the full benefits.

These include:

- one national development camp (when scheduled)
- Australian Multi Class Age Championships or Australian Championships (April/July)
- own state championships (December–March), and
- visits to the DPE by the Paralympic mentor coach

## Classification

Again, athletes in the Development Program will continue to undergo classification in the national system until an international classification is obtained. Athletes with Review status should ensure they undergo re-evaluation at the earliest opportunity and ideally at a classification opportunity held in conjunction with a domestic competition.

Athletes will now be assisted and advised by SAL in preparation for possible international classification processes. Requirements for swimmers include:

- submission of required medical diagnostics information and administrative documentation
- a sound understanding of WPS classification rules and regulations as they apply to their specific health condition and impairment group
- a sound understanding of their own health condition and impairment type with the ability to confidently explain in detail
- possible classification screenings to assess underlying health condition and impact of eligible impairment for further diagnostics evidence collection, and
- regular reporting to SAL regarding change in condition or interventions.

For athletes in the Development Program SAL will prepare individual athlete plans for accessing classification in line with program priorities, available opportunities and likelihood of progression to the senior team. Athletes will receive advice from SAL about their needs. Athletes in this program may also be required to attend international classification opportunities either in Australia or overseas.

## Swimmer controllable

Athletes are expected to demonstrate the following characteristics during the Development Program:

### Physical preparation

- Commits to higher level and specialisation of training, and other factors such as dry land training and activation, recovery and lifestyle management.
- Completes fitness tests at home and state/national level programs.
- Develops ectomesomorphic profile and musculoskeletal robustness (optimal stability and range of motion/flexibility of major joint complexes).
- Understands and monitors their own health condition and impairment type and specific support needs they may have in the training, competition, team and travel environments.

### Mental preparation

- Demonstrates skills in personal resilience (the brain, growth mindset, self-regulation, ACT thinking skills) based on the SAL Resilient MIND program.
- Demonstrates skills in performance readiness (arousal, pre-race routines and visualisation) based on the SAL Performance MIND program.
- Shows skills in mental recovery and sleep based on the SAL Quiet MIND program.

### Technical preparation

- Develops optimal technique and refinement of coordinative profile through an increase in training volume and intensity.
- Shows particular focus on executing optimal technique for event specialisation.

### Tactical preparation

- Displays strong understanding of race analysis and refinement of optimal race strategy in training and competitive environments.

### Planning and communication

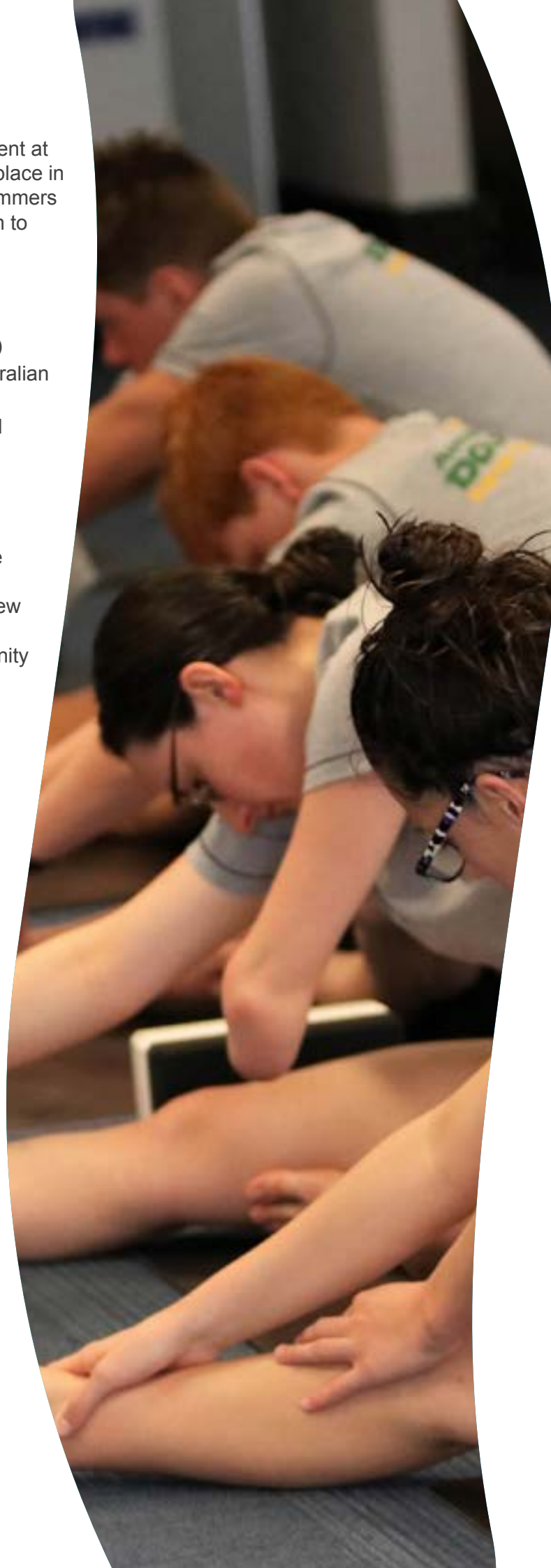
- Develops and adopts an annual plan, highlighting clear expectations with home coach and support team.
- Implements time management skills that reflect the importance of life balance for wellbeing and performance.
- Develops skills to identify, plan, undertake and evaluate personal and professional development activities facilitating progression, in and out of the pool.

### Athlete Management System

- Through the AMS, conducts regular and effective profiling and uses the training load and wellness diary.

## Progressing to the next program

The Performance Program is the next pathway program. There is no set time limit on how long you can be on the Development Program, but be mindful that the investment is considerable at this stage, and targeted towards only 20 swimmers, which creates a competitive process for selection. Continuation in the Development Program requires yearly improvement and commitment towards progressing to the senior team.





## Visiting Athlete Program (VAP) camps

As part of the Development Program, if an athlete is identified as likely to benefit from enhanced training, they will be invited to train at either the NTC in Canberra or the USC program in Queensland. These athletes are identified through feedback from the Talent and Development Program, the Paralympic mentor coach and the coaching leadership team. The swimmers, their home coaches and relevant state institutes or academies of sport (SIS/SAS) staff visit the NTC and USC for multi-purpose work in the pool and further coach/sport science and sport medicine (SSSM) education, classification-related impairment screening, or, if required, rehabilitation. After the VAP camps, these athletes will receive specific follow-up.

To inquire about VAP opportunities contact the Paralympic performance manager mentor coach, [Adam.Pine@swimming.org.au](mailto:Adam.Pine@swimming.org.au)

## NTC and USC scholarship programs

Swimmers in the para-swimming Development Program are welcome to apply for a residential training placement at the NTC or USC (see NTC program information). Upon application, they may be asked to attend a trial camp to be assessed for their suitability to be an NTC/USC scholarship program athlete.

To apply for a scholarship position contact the Paralympic performance manager, [Adam.Pine@swimming.org.au](mailto:Adam.Pine@swimming.org.au)

## Moving on

There are many other routes you can choose if you decide you have other priorities, or if you aren't successful in being selected to progress to the performance programs. You can continue within the Development Program (depending on your progress) or take the skills you have learned through the program and apply them in your state program and daily training environment. To help you decide what your aspirations are and whether your commitment levels match the program expectations, you can ask yourself the following questions:

- How well prepared are you for senior team performances? How do you compare to the world's best?
- Have you spoken with your coach about your four-year plan? Are you progressing in training, in your testing and in competition based on the goals you've set?
- What are your life plans/career aspirations?
- Do you have the finances and support to continue your journey?
- Do you fully understand the current selection policy for the Australian Dolphins team?
- Are you fully prepared for international classification?
- Do you still love the sport?

SAL high performance staff and the Paralympic mentor coach focus on asking the above questions to gauge your readiness and suitability. You will receive a great deal of support and advice from the staff as part of your time in the squad. As a reminder, the partnership with your home coach and other swimmers is vital for progression. A successful transition at this stage of development involves a significant step up and SAL staff are always on hand to help offer guidance for the way forward.



## ATHLETE SUPPORT TEAM<sup>1</sup>

This section is for those who support athletes in their swimming careers.

Swimming Australia aims to equip the athlete's support team with the knowledge to help your elite athlete with sport and life. The athlete's support team can consist of parents, partners, friends, coaches, family members, teachers, managers, and mentors.

As a parent of an athlete under 18 years of age, it is important to identify the people that are part of your child's support team (including yourself) and the role they may have. Your child's support team will evolve on their progression along the high performance pathway and it is important to notice these changes.

## Common athlete stressors

The following list comprises ten of the most common stressors that may trigger progression events in the athlete's journey. A progression event is something that impacts a swimmer's place in the performance pathway.

1. Injury and illness
2. Selection
3. Negative interaction with others in the sporting environment
4. Not meeting personal goals and expectations
5. Balancing all aspects of life
6. Expectations of family
7. Travel
8. Financial strain
9. Relationships outside of sport
10. Training demands

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Australian Institute of Sport Personal Excellence 'Significant Other' resource, developed by Matti Clements.

In addition to these 10 stressors, para-swimmers also contend with the stressor of classification, which can also trigger progression events in the athlete's journey, through a change in eligibility or sport class or status, for example.

## Can you help performance?

In your role as a support person you naturally have the best intentions of helping the athlete succeed. Research has demonstrated that effective relationships between support person and athlete are due to the following characteristics in a primary support team:

## Awareness of self and values

- Helps protect the athlete from the support person inadvertently projecting their values onto them
- Helps identify whether or not a support person is judging an athlete by a social or cultural norm
- Guides support person's assistance, in that it allows them to be aware of what they believe regarding human nature and change.



### Support person's ability to recognise own feelings

- Effective support people are aware, and in control of, their own feelings
- Effective support people recognise common feelings associated with helping (e.g., fear, disappointment, elation, confusion)
- Effective support people are able to deal with their own confusion and accept that they do not have all of the answers
- Ability to be a model and influence
- Support people model socially adaptive behaviours to athletes and practice what they preach
- Support people are able to form clear boundaries

### Ability to be altruistic and compassionate

- Support people help because they truly care and want the athlete to flourish. They do not do it to benefit themselves
- Ownership of a strong sense of ethics
- Valuing the support person's welfare will help to ensure no harm is done
- Beliefs about human nature guide support person's actions
- Ethical support people act in such a way as to maintain the confidence of the athlete
- Ability to serve as a catalyst for empowerment
- A support person seeking to empower an athlete will form the relationship on trust and shared power
- The support person does not 'do for' the athlete as this strips away choice and power
- The support person's goal is to guide the athlete into increasing his or her personal, interpersonal or political power

When dealing with a situation, it is important as the primary support person to always:

- make sure your thinking is grounded in reality
- demonstrate stress and frustration tolerance
- take time to consider and utilise flexibility in thinking, and
- listen, rather than trying to change or fix things

### Putting it into practice

As the primary support person you are made aware of situations that may be outside of your boundaries of expertise. To be an effective primary support person, it is important to know how to refer your athlete to the appropriate expert. The following are the stages of making an effective referral in the case that external support is required.

### Recognise

You notice or become aware of an issue that the athlete is having and you are concerned; however, the scope of the issue seems outside of your role. A referral may be required to a more qualified support person.

### Collect

Once aware of behaviour it may be important to gather some additional information to make the most appropriate referral.

### Facilitate

When a referral is required it is important that you clearly communicate to the athlete why you think the referral would be beneficial, provide details about the service you are referring them to, and establish what information the athlete is comfortable with you providing to the external support person.

### Review

Once the athlete has been referred to the appropriate service, discuss with the athlete the process undertaken to determine what went well or needs improvement in the future.

### Follow up

After the process of referral is completed it is important to follow up with the athlete and gauge whether or not the support you provided was effective.

### Referral contact list

It is a good idea to compile a list of contacts who can assist you in your endeavours. These roles may include:

- Treating medical specialist
- Sports physician
- Physiotherapist
- Psychologist
- Strength and conditioning
- Sports scientists (biomechanics and physiology)
- Dietitian
- Personal excellence advisor

### Your Swimming Australia support team

#### Paralympic high performance manager

The role of the Paralympic high performance manager is to oversee all programs under the Paralympic High Performance Program. In particular, they lead the planning, preparation and success of the Australian team at benchmark Paralympic competition.

#### National Paralympic mentor coach

The national Paralympic mentor coach is responsible for providing the technical support for swimmers and coaches on the Paralympic pathway programs. This includes the preparation and review of performances in the daily training and competition environment.





## State head coaches

In conjunction with the national Paralympic mentor coach, the state head coaches lead the development of performance swimming in their state and proactively inform and influence the technical support in the daily training environment for targeted pathway swimmers and coaches.

## Paralympic high performance science manager

The Paralympic high performance science manager is instrumental in overseeing the sport science support within the Paralympic pathway programs. The role aims to provide a direct link between the technical support from coaching staff to the sport science support in both the Paralympic pathway programs and competition environment. In addition, the role also supports the monitoring and tracking of coaches and swimmers.

## Paralympic pathways senior coordinator

The role of the Paralympic pathways senior coordinator is to assist the Paralympic high performance manager with the tracking and coordination of the para-swimming pathway programs. In particular, the role leads the planning, monitoring and tracking of classification requirements and advice for swimmers and coaches.

*Please see [swimming.org.au](http://swimming.org.au) for further information on athlete support.*



# AFTER THE PERFORMANCE PATHWAY PROGRAMS

## Transferable skills

Many skills are developed in elite sport participation that are transferable to other areas of life. You should think about what your transferable skills are and seek to maximise these in life outside of sport.

## Ongoing sport participation

Swimming is a sport for life, and after the Paralympic Performance Pathway programs you may wish to continue to swim for fun or fitness on your own, with friends, or in a squad. Alternatively, there may be opportunities for talent transfer to other sports.

## Continued involvement in the sport

Get involved in other roles in our sport. Your knowledge and skills are always welcome as a volunteer. Additionally, the Australian Swimming Framework provides an overview of the areas in high performance swimming that may be of interest for a future career, such as coaching, facilities, management, and services.

The participation pathway also provides many options for ongoing vocational involvement. Please contact your school or university guidance officer or personal excellence advisor for information on how to start a career in sport.

## Australian Paralympic Committee

The APC manages a number of programs that benefit Australia's Paralympians both on the sporting field and in everyday life.

Assisting Australia's Paralympians in their goals outside sport is also important to the APC. Through partnerships with sponsors and supporters, a range of employment opportunities are available through the Workplace Diversity Program. The Paralympic Speakers Program, where Paralympians visit businesses, schools and other workplaces to highlight the importance of workplace safety, also promotes safe work while enriching the lives of Paralympians.

# FURTHER INFORMATION

## Australian Swimming Framework

The purpose of the Australian Swimming Framework (ASF) is to detail the swimming athlete/coach development pathway from learn-to-swim to elite performance.

The ASF provides details about:

- what happens at each stage of the pathway from a holistic development perspective
- the programs that exist to foster athlete and coach development
- the aligned support services at each stage of the pathway, and
- the system leadership, partners and policies at each stage of the pathway. The ASF is available [here](#).

## FTEM

FTEM (representing Foundations, Talent, Elite and Mastery) is a model of athlete development. The model consists of the four major development and performance levels for swimmers, which are further broken down into 10 phases. Swimming Australia has adopted the FTEM model to portray its Australian Swimming Framework. For more information on the FTEM model, visit: [ausport.gov.au/ftem](http://ausport.gov.au/ftem)

## Athlete categorisation

A key strategy in the AIS performance system is to identify Australia's athletes with the greatest potential to contribute to AWE targets and ensure they receive the right support at the right time in their pathway.

To inform the swimming-specific nominations to the AIS athlete categories, SAL has developed the SAL Athlete Categorisation Nomination Guidelines 2017-2020. SAL will review its categorisation nominations after the annual domestic season and annual senior international benchmark events.

The AIS athlete categories provide a consistent basis, both within and across sports, to:

- identify the athletes with the greatest potential to contribute to AIS performance system targets
- inform the prioritisation of support to these athletes, and
- track athlete performance over time.

## Safe Sport Framework

The safety of children and young people in our sport is paramount. We want swimming to be fun, enjoyable and safe for all. All of us in the Australian swimming community have a role to play in ensuring that we keep our proud sport as safe and enjoyable as possible. Access to SAL's Safe Sport Framework is available at [swimming.org.au](http://swimming.org.au).

## Swimmer Agreement and Code of Conduct

In Australia, we are proud of our sporting ability and our reputation as a nation. Our society expects high standards of behaviour from all people in sport and it is vital the integrity of sport is maintained. At all levels within the organisation, Swimming Australia is committed to upholding these principles through our agreements and codes of conduct.

Each person who is selected for a Swimming Australia program will receive these documents, which highlight the organisation's principles and values, prior to the program activities. It is essential that program participants familiarise themselves with these documents and uphold these principles.

## WPS Classification Code and Swimming Classification Rules

It is the personal responsibility of athletes, athlete support personnel, and classification personnel to familiarise themselves with all the requirements of the IPC Classification Code and Swimming Classification Rules. The IPC Classification Code is available [here](#). The WPS Classification Rules are available [here](#).

## Anti-Doping

Swimming Australia and the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) are tasked with implementing initiatives that increase the skills and knowledge about anti-doping matters of people involved in sporting activities. For more information about anti-doping education, policies on athlete whereabouts and supplements, and prohibited medication lists, visit [swimming.org.au](http://swimming.org.au).

## Gambling, betting and match fixing education

Swimming Australia, through its Gambling, Betting and Match Fixing Policy, aims to ensure that our core values, good reputation and positive behaviours are maintained. While we recognise that betting is a legitimate pursuit, illegal or fraudulent betting is not. Fraudulent betting on sport is an issue globally for sport and our policies on this subject can be found at [swimming.org.au](http://swimming.org.au).

## Georgina Hope Foundation Swimmers Support Scheme (GHFSSS)

The Georgina Hope Foundation Swimmers Support Scheme has been established through the generosity of the Georgina Hope Foundation to provide funding to support elite swimmers in their training and competition environments, to assist them in pursuing educational opportunities, and to provide relief in cases of hardship or misadventure. More information is available at [swimming.org.au](http://swimming.org.au).

## dAIS athlete grant

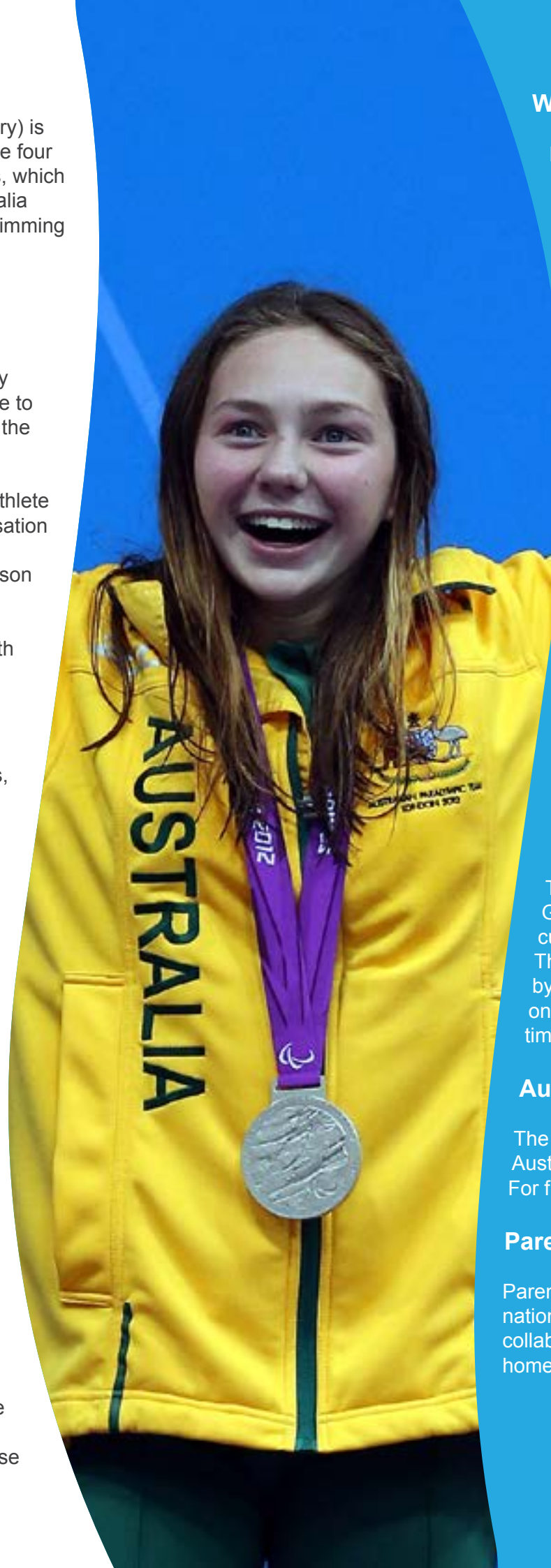
The dAIS scheme provides an opportunity for athletes in Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games sports to receive a direct cash grant from the Australian Government. As well as supporting current podium finishing athletes, dAIS also provides support to a growing number of talent athletes. The dAIS scheme supersedes the previous Direct Athlete Support (DAS) scheme and is administered by the AIS. Swimming Australia nominates athletes for inclusion in the dAIS scheme. Information on eligibility criteria, performance considerations, grant amounts, athlete responsibilities, indicative timetable, and supporting information required, can be found [here](#).

## Australian Swimmers' Association

The Australian Swimmers' Association (ASA) is the representative body for national level swimmers in Australia. The ASA is the voice for the swimmers and their point of contact for all issues affecting them. For further information visit [australianswimmers.com.au](http://australianswimmers.com.au).

## Parents of Our Dolphins

Parents of Our Dolphins (PODS) is an organisation for the parents, partners and friends of all Australian national representative swimmers. The corporation brings friends and family together in a supportive and collaborative way to provide ongoing support for Australian swimmers both internationally and here on home soil. For more information visit [poosaus.com](http://poosaus.com).





## CONTACT DETAILS

For all Paralympic pathway program enquiries, please contact:

### Paralympic Pathways Senior Coordinator

Michael Woods |  
Michael.Woods@swimming.org.au

### National Paralympic Mentor Coach

TBC |  
Contact your state head coach

## SPONSORS

