

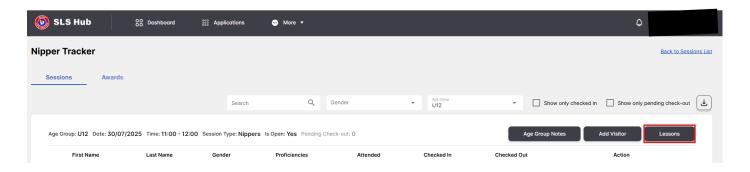
Surf Life Saving Australia - Bulletin

Title:	SLSA Junior Activities - 2025/2026 Start of Season Information		
Document ID:	Bulletin 01		
Audience:	State/Territory Development Managers, Junior Activity Coordinators, Age Managers		
From:	Learning & Development		
Date:	30/07/2025		
Summary:	Information on Junior Activities Age Groups, how to conduct the Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation, Age Manager courses and more.		

Background

All Junior Development Resources are available in an interactive, one-stop format on the SLSA Learning Management System which can be accessed via the eLearning tab on the SLS Hub (select the 'course' SLS – Junior Development Resources). Age Manager information, how to use the lesson plans and other useful information is housed in this area, along with easy to download age guides, worksheets, and frameworks. All these resources are also available for download in the SLS Hub 'Document Library' in PDF format.

All lesson guides from Stage 1 (U6's) through to Stage 3 (U13's) can be accessed via the SLSA Nipper App (see below graphic) and viewed on any phone or portable device when on the beach.



Major Changes This Season

1. Removal of proof of age

This season, a key change will be introduced to the new member sign up process. Proof of age, such as a birth certificate, is no longer required to be sighted for new members joining a club. This change will simplify the sign-up process, making it easier for everyone.

2. Water safety policy changes

As part of the regular policy review cycle, Policy 1.01 – Water Safety has been reviewed for implementation in the 2025/26 season. No changes were made to the Policy; however, two minor changes have been made to the SLSA Water Safety Procedure:

- 1. Water Safety Shorts: Shorts are now **optional** rather than a mandatory requirement for Water Safety Personnel and Nipper Safety Assistants.
- 2. Nipper Safety Assistant: The restriction of water depth at knee depth has been removed. Instead, responsibility is placed on the water safety coordinator to ensure that the Nipper Safety Assistant can safely assist.

3. Nipper Safety Assistant Award

The Nipper Safety Assistant award is designed to assist clubs with additional resources for water safety during Nippers. This Award allows individuals who do not hold a Surf Rescue Certificate or Bronze Medallion to support water safety personnel during Nipper activities under certain conditions.



Prerequisites:

- a) Be a current financial club member.
- b) Minimum age of 13 years.
- Hold the relevant working with children check for your state/territory.

For more information and to understand the Assessment Requirements, Roles and Responsibilities, please refer to the Nipper Safety Assistant Award on the SLS Hub.

Junior Age Groups

A child may join as soon as they turn five years of age. Under existing insurance arrangements, no club is to accept membership of a child until they reach five years. Should clubs have a demand to run programs for children under five years of age, they must organise their own insurance to run the program.

A child who reaches five years old after 30th September may join nippers for the rest of the season; however, this child must remain in the U6 nippers age group again the following season.

Junior Activities Evaluations

Conducting Preliminary Evaluation

Preliminary Evaluations must be completed before starting nippers each year. This is not a proficiency process, but a skills evaluation process to enable clubs to determine the level of water safety required for participants.

All new junior members should be supported by a 1:1 water safety ratio (water safety personnel: activity participant) when completing the evaluation. For all returning members, where knowledge of their ability is known, a 1:5 water safety ratio may be used (refer to SLSA Water Safety Procedure 1.01a).

Evaluations should be conducted in a low-risk environment. The Risk Rating function of the SLSA Operations App is used to determine the risk level for a location and activity. Further information on using the SLSA Operations App for risk assessments can be found in the Water Safety Risk Assessment User Guide.

It is recommended that a member who is delegated to assess Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluations:

- Has a minimum of two (2) years' experience as an Age Manager;
- Is a minimum of 18 years old;
- Holds a proficient Surf Rescue Certificate or proficient Bronze Medallion; and
- Is approved by their club and noted at a club meeting;

OR, if none of the above:

Is a qualified Australian Swimming Coach*;

Appendix 1 outlines the national standard for the Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation. Some states, branches and/or clubs may set distances and/or requirements above this standard. Requirements cannot fall below the national standard. Please ensure that you liaise with your respective Junior Activities Coordinator for confirmation of the specific requirements for your members.

^{*} to increase flexibility for clubs, a qualified and accredited swim coach can complete the evaluation. In this instance, refer to Appendix 4 for a template with the required information for this evaluation.



Following the Preliminary Evaluation

Any child who does not meet the required preliminary evaluation level will require more supervision when involved in water-based activities at the club's discretion.

Any child that completes their evaluation competently can progress to water-based junior activities noting a 1:5 water safety ratio (water safety personnel: activity participants). For still water/pool activities or low-risk conditions (which have been ascertained after a risk assessment) the ratio may be expanded to 1:10 water safety ratio (water safety personnel: activity participants) as per SLSA Water Safety Procedure 1.01a.

A maximum supervision ratio of 1:5 (water safety personnel: activity participants) applies as per SLSA Water Safety Procedure 1.01a to ensure the evaluations are conducted in a safe aquatic environment.

Competition Evaluation

From the age of 7 years (U8), juniors in some states can begin to compete in branch, state, and national competitions. Refer to your State/Territory for age requirements within your area. To ensure that all junior members who wish to compete have the required ability, strength, and fitness to compete, they must be able to complete the Junior Activities Competition Evaluation for their age group. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the National standard.

Age Award Certificate

For Nippers to be eligible for the relevant Age Award Certificate, all required age group education lessons must have been successfully completed. A minimum of 50% attendance for the duration of the Nipper season is also required. This award recognises the dedication and development of our Nippers on their lifesaving journey, serving as both a celebration of their progress and a valuable support document as they transition into future volunteering and employment opportunities.

Age Managers

An Age Manager plays the lead role in the journey of nippers from U6's through to U14's. Age Managers must manage all facets of their age group on the beach with the help of Age Manager Assistants. Please note that Age Manager to Nipper ratios are determined locally. Make sure you are familiar with the specific ratios determined by your club.

There is a course for Age Managers available online, and some States/Territory will also offer this in person. An important component of the Age Manager course is the practical session on the beach which is organised by your club's Junior Activities Coordinator. Although the Age Manager award is granted upon completion of the online/face to face course, individuals should be supervised until the practical session is completed, as this is when they apply their newly acquired skills.

Age Manager Requirements

- Minimum 16 years old
- Completion of the online SLSA Child Safe Awareness course
- Successful completion of the online Age Manager course (or face to face equivalent)
- Annual completion of the Age Manager Skills Maintenance (watched the annual Age Manager video)
- Hold the relevant working with children check for your state/territory. Refer to the table below for WWCC obligations, noting that parent exemptions may apply in some states.

State	Is WWCC required for under 18's?	Is a WWCC required?
NSW	No	Yes (with some exceptions)
QLD	No	Yes (Blue Card)
VIC	Yes	Yes
SA	Yes	Yes
WA	No	Yes (Parent exemption may apply)
TAS	Yes	Yes
NT	Yes	Yes

Age Manager Award and Proficiency

Age Managers must complete annual proficiency by watching the SLSA Age Manager video. Once the video
has been watched in full, the Age Manager award will be automatically updated in SurfGuard.



- Age Managers who have not been active for five years or more will need to complete the full Age Manager course again.
- The third party 'on the beach' assessment paperwork is no longer required. However, practical mentoring sessions remain essential and will be coordinated at the club level. The removal of this administrative step does not eliminate the need for practical and ongoing mentoring.
- The Age Manager Assistant Award is available only to members aged 13-15 years (see below).

Age Manager Assistant

Being an Age Manager is an important and rewarding role—and having support on the beach is vital. We encourage members aged 13 to 15 years to become Age Manager Assistants to help facilitate beach activities and begin developing their instructional skills. Once a member turns 16 and is proficient, they are eligible to be upgraded to an Age Manager.

Requirements

- Aged 13 to 15 years
- Completion of the online SLSA Child Safe Awareness course
- Successful completion of the online Age Manager Assistant course (or face to face equivalent)
- Annual completion of the Age Manager Assistant Skills Maintenance (watched the Age Manager Assistant video)
- Hold the relevant working with children check for your state/territory. Refer to the above table for WWCC obligations.

Age Manager Mentor

The Age Manager Mentor role offers an opportunity for individuals to develop leadership skills while providing on-the-beach support to those new to the Age Manager role. For further information, please contact your Club Junior Activities Coordinator or relevant state/territory staff.

Volunteer Leadership Course

The Volunteer Leadership course is an online learning program for all Surf Lifesaving leaders no matter their experience or role. As a frontline leader you can explore leadership approaches, improve your communication and interpersonal skills, and learn strategies for navigating difficult conversations through online learning and reflective activities.

Whether you're new to the Age Manager role or looking to strengthen your approach and leadership style, the Volunteer Leadership Course provides useful tools and insights to help you lead. To access this course, log into your State or Territory eLearning platform, search for 'Volunteer Leadership Module' and click enrol.

Gear and Equipment

Please ensure that all gear and equipment used during Nipper programs is safe for aquatic use. It should not be severely worn or degraded and must be checked regularly. It is also important to check that the equipment used is covered under your club's insurance.

Risk Management

Please ensure that the Surf Risk Rating (SRR) App is completed by the appropriate personnel—such as the Water Safety Supervisor—prior to the commencement of any Nippers session on the beach. This requirement also applies to any training sessions held outside regular Nipper hours, such as coaching sessions.

For further guidance, please refer to the Water Safety Risk Assessment Guide or SRR User Guide.

Sun Safety

SLSA strongly recommends the use of sun protection during all Surf Life Saving activities. While sun safety is vital for everyone, childhood and adolescence are particularly critical times to prevent skin damage that can lead to cancer later in life. Clubs are encouraged to embed sun safe practices across all programs.



Sun Safe Practices that you can implement at your Nipper program:

- <u>Promote Awareness:</u> Make sun safety part of your club's culture by highlighting its importance in newsletters, social media, and signage around the club.
- <u>Protective Clothing:</u> Encourage Nippers to wear long-sleeve, high-visibility rash shirts. If that's not possible, suggest wearing a long-sleeve garment underneath their high-visibility rash shirt.
- <u>Sunscreen Use:</u> Supply each age group with sunscreen and ensure nippers apply before the start of the program and reapply every two hours or after they have been in the water.
- Provide Shade: Set up tents or shelters on the beach for nippers to rest under between activities.
- <u>Shade and Scheduling:</u> Limit time spent in direct sunlight by scheduling non-water activities in shaded areas whenever possible.
- <u>Encourage Full Coverage:</u> Ask nippers, Age Managers, and helpers to wear broad-brimmed or legionnairestyle hats and long-sleeved shirts during non-water activities.
- <u>Program Timing:</u> Where possible, schedule activities outside peak UV hours. Consider delaying or modifying activities on days with extreme UV ratings.
- <u>Education:</u> Teach Nippers how to apply sunscreen properly, covering commonly missed areas such as ears, back of the neck and feet.
- Recognition: Reward and recognise sun-safe behaviour among nippers and volunteers.

By consistently applying these practices, we can help reduce the risk of sun damage and support a healthier, safer environment for everyone involved in Surf Life Saving.

SLSA Nipper App

Any member holding the Child Safe Awareness award will have access to the SLSA Nipper App. Clubs must still allocate age groups to these members before access becomes active. This enables them to assist with attendance marking and competency evaluation tracking. However, Age Managers must continue to approve all competency completions. Access SLSA Nipper App User Guide HERE.

Improved Features:

- View all members across multiple age groups—fewer clicks needed for check-in/out.
- Option to label sessions as either 'Nippers' or 'Nipper Training'. Training sessions are not included in the 'attended' session count.
- Generate certificates across multiple pages with a single click (e.g., all U10 pages).
- Emergency contact access: Tap the telephone icon on the session screen to call the emergency contact directly.
- Add a visitor to a Nipper group (if they are a financial member and within the same age category).
- Enhanced filtering options to quickly see who is checked in and out.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Where can the Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation take place?

 These can take place in the ocean, rock pool, or local indoor/outdoor swimming pool.
- 2. Why do we do Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluations?

To record the baseline level of a child's competency in the water before they can commence junior activities. It also assists with determining water safety numbers for Nipper sessions each week.

- 3. Who can assess the Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation?
 - It is recommended that an 18+ Surf Life Saving member who is approved by their club, has a minimum 2 years' experience as an Age Manager and holds a proficient SRC/Bronze Medallion, or is a qualified Australian Swimming Coach. Read more in the <u>Conducting Preliminary Evaluation</u> earlier in the document.
- 4. How does a Swim Coach become endorsed to assess children for their Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation?

There is no need for a Swim Coach to seek endorsement to complete the Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation. They must provide their Australian Swimming Teachers and Coaches Associate number, their full name and email address, along with the names of the children that they have assessed. A template form is provided in Appendix 4 for this purpose.



5. Can children move down in Nipper age groups?

Yes, this is permitted however, they must complete the Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation and program for the age group they are entering. They will also receive the certificate of completion for this age group. E.g., a child who is eligible to be in U9's, can move down to the U8 age group if they would like to. This child will only complete the U8 Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation and program and will receive the U8 certificate of completion. Refer to the Surf Sport Manual — 37th Edition for competition age guides.

6. Can children move up in Nipper age groups?

Yes, however, they can only move up by one age level, and this undertaking requires that the child completes the Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation for the age group they are entering. e.g., a child who is eligible to be in U9's can move up to the U10 age group if they have satisfactorily achieved the Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation for the U10's age group. Refer to the Surf Sport Manual — 37th Edition for competition age guides.

7. What does reasonable adjustment in Nippers mean?

It means considering the impact of factors that could influence the ability of the nipper to reasonably complete the evaluation, for example:

- a) Environment swell, wind, waves, temperature, timing.
 - Solution deliver assessment in pool, closed water, reschedule, increase the rest time between sessions
- b) Capacity did many of the nipper's struggle?
 - Solution increase ratios, adjust timing/lengths
- c) Program was the assessment suitable to run?
 - Solution increase ratios, adjust timing/lengths

8. What happens when a child does not pass the Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation?

Any child who does not meet the required preliminary evaluation level will require more supervision when involved in water-based activities (at the club's discretion). E.g., if you have a nipper who doesn't meet the requirements for the propulsion component of the evaluation, you will need to ensure that this child is provided additional water safety when completing in-water activities. You may also wish to have this child wear a coloured wristband so they can be easily identified. Remember that this is not a Skills Maintenance/Proficiency, but an evaluation of competency. Another option may be to suggest that this child moves down an age group.

9. How do I become an Age Manager?

Contact your Club Junior Activities Coordinator (JAC) or equivalent to express an interest in becoming an Age Manager. Online learning courses must be undertaken as part of the Age Manager Training through the SLSA e-learning section in the SLS Hub. Read more in the Age Manager Award & Proficiency section above.

10. How do I become an Age Manager Assistant?

Age Manager Assistants play a vital role on the beach, supporting Age Managers each week during Nippers activities. These assistants are aged 13 to 15 years and are required to complete both the online Child Safe Awareness course and the online component of the Age Manager course to be eligible for the role.

11. Will my Age Manager and Age Manager Assistant award expire?

Both courses require annual skills maintenance, which is completed online by watching a designated video available through the SLS Hub (this video is free of charge). Your award will be automatically renewed for 12 months upon completion of the video online. If you participate in a face-to-face group session, your Junior Activities Chair (JAC) can arrange for the award to be manually updated. Please note that your State or Territory may have additional requirements.

12. Why am I not able to gain access to the SLSA Nipper App?

To gain access to the SLSA Nipper App you need to hold the Child Safe Awareness award. Your club's Junior Activities Coordinator also needs to allocate you to certain Age Groups. Until this has been completed you will not have access. If you require assistance, please refer to the SLSA Nipper User Guide here.

13. <u>Do I need a Working with Children Check if I am working with my own child's age group?</u>

Working with Children Checks are required in most states and territories; however, the specific rules and



requirements vary across jurisdictions. For more information, refer to the <u>Age Manager section</u> above and always confirm the latest requirements with your State or Territory office to ensure compliance.

14. What age group does my child belong to?

Age groups are determined by the member's age as of 30th September of that year. For example, if your child's birthday is 1st October 2018, then for the 2025/26 season their age in surf life saving terms is 6 years and would be placed in the LIZ are group.

and would be placed in the U7 age group.

Age Group	Age as of 30 September** 2025	DOB Date range
U6	5	1/10/2019-30/09/2020
U7	6	1/10/2018-30/09/2019
U8	7	1/10/2017-30/09/2018
U9	8	1/10/2016-30/09/2017
U10	9	1/10/2015–30/09/2016
U11	10	1/10/2014-30/09/2015
U12	11	1/10/2013–30/09/2014
U13	12	1/10/2012 - 30/09/2013
U14	13	1/10/2011 – 30/09/2012

^{**}unless ageing up or down applies in individual cases

15. Can Nippers wear goggles and/or wetsuits?

Yes, children are permitted to wear wetsuits and goggles at any time during Nippers activities for comfort and protection; however, a high-visibility rash vest must always be worn as the outermost layer. Goggles can be worn in the water at any time. Please note that during competition, wetsuits are only permitted if the water temperature drops below 16 degrees Celsius, in accordance with competition regulations. Refer to the Surf Sport Manual – 37th Edition for further information.

16. What award will each age group achieve on successful completion?

Some states/territory offer different awards for Nippers, however the SLSA awards for the various age groups are listed below.

Age Group	Award Name
U6	Surf Play One – U6
U7	Surf Play Two – U7
U8	Surf Aware One – U8
U9	Surf Aware Two – U9
U10	Surf Safe One – U10
U11	Surf Safe Two – U11
U12	Surf Smart One - U12
U13	Surf Smart Two - U13
U14	Surf Rescue Certificate

Further Information

If you require further information, please speak with your Club Junior Activities Coordinator in the first instance. Questions or feedback about the resources can be directed to development@slsa.asn.au



APPENDIX 1 – Junior Activities Preliminary Evaluation

Stage One: Under 6, Under 7, Under 8

Aquatic Play and Fundamental Aquatic Skills (FAS).

Recommended depth of safe aquatic environment – 1 metre

	Under 6 (DOB 1/10/2019-30/09/2020)	Under 7 (DOB 1/10/2018-30/09/2019)	Under 8 (DOB 1/10/2017–30/09/2018)
FIGURATION		Back or front float for a minimum of 10 seconds, recover to stand.	
Submersion	Submerge to touch the bottom with hands.		
D	From standing position in waist deep water, perform a front glide (1-2 metres) & recover to stand.	deep water, perform a front glide	Swim on front any stroke (distance 20 metres) followed by swim underwater (distance 2-3 metres).

^{**} A child's age group is determined by their age as of 30 September of that year

Stage Two: Under 9, Under 10, Under 11

Applied Aquatic Skills.

Recommended depth of safe aquatic environment – 1.5 metres

	Under 9 (DOB 1/10/2016–30/09/2017)	Under 10 (DOB 1/10/2015–30/09/2016)	Under 11 (DOB 1/10/2014–30/09/2015)
Flotation	Tread water and/or any stroke sculling for a minimum of 1 minute.		Front to back float or back to front float, 5 seconds each side. Tread water and/or any stroke sculling for minimum of 2 mins.
Submersion	Submerge to touch the bottom with hands.		Submerge to perform forward or backward roll/somersault underwater, recover to surface, submerge to touch the bottom with hands.
Propulsion	stroke for 25 metres followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or sidestroke and/or back	followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or sidestroke	Swim on front through water any stroke for 25 metres followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or sidestroke and/or back sculling for minimum 50 metres.

Stage Three: Under 12, Under 13, Under 14

Junior/trainee lifesaver – pathway to SRC

Recommended depth of safe aquatic environment 1.8 metres

	Under 12 (DOB 1/10/2013–30/09/2014)	Under 13 (DOB 1/10/2012 – 30/09/2013)	Under 14 (SRC) (DOB 1/10/2011 – 30/09/2012)
	Front to back float or back to front float – 5 seconds each side. Tread water and/or any stroke sculling for minimum 3 minutes.		
Submersion	Submerge to perform forward or b underwater, recover to surface, so hands.	ackward roll/somersault ubmerge to touch the bottom with	Submerge to perform forward or backward roll/somersault underwater, do not recover to surface, submerge to touch the bottom with hands.



Swim on front any stroke for 75 metres followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or sidestroke for minimum 50	metres followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or	Swim on front any stroke for 100 metres followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or sidestroke for minimum 100
metres.	metres.	metres.

APPENDIX 2 - Junior Activities Competition Skills Evaluation

AGE GROUP	COMPETITION EVALUATION
U6	Nil
U7	Nil
U8	Nil (no water competition, except for wade which takes place in waist-deep water)
U9	Minimum 150m open water swim (any recognised stroke)
U10	Minimum 150m open water swim (any recognised stroke)
U11	Minimum 200m open water swim (any recognised stroke)
U12	Minimum 200m open water swim (any recognised stroke)
U13	Minimum 200m open water swim (any recognised stroke)
U14	Minimum 200m open water swim (any recognised stroke)

Note: Please note the definition of 'Open Water' is within your state/territory as this can vary. For example, open water may not mean you can complete the evaluation in a rock pool.

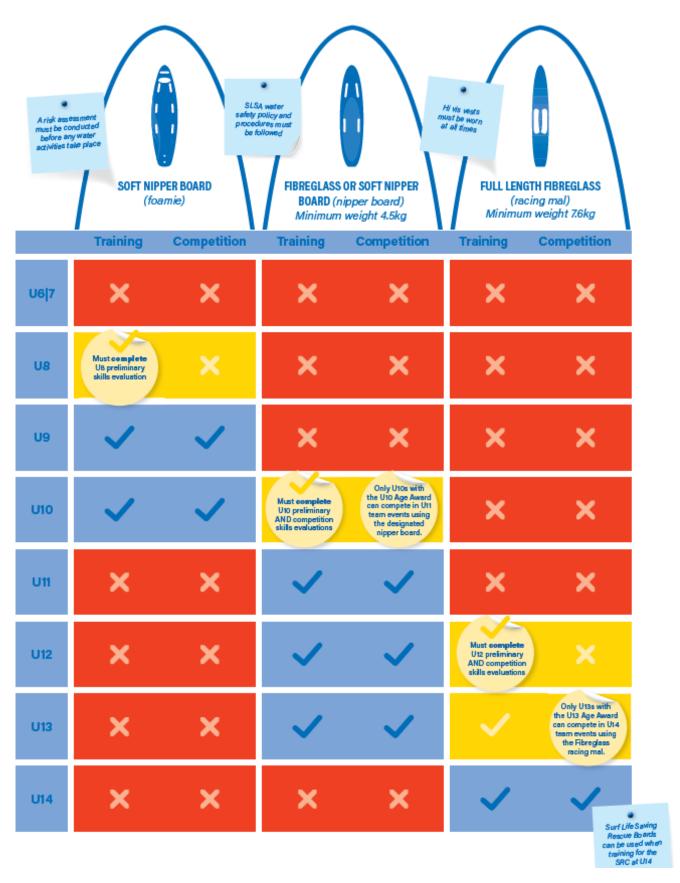
- SLSA Policy 5.04 Competition Eligibility Policy
- SLSA Surf Sport Manual 37th Edition

APPENDIX 3 – Junior Surf Sports Board Guide

A Junior Surf Sports Board Guide has been produced to provide an easy reference to the approved board size(s) that can be used for each nipper age group from U8's-U14's. No board usage is permitted in the U6-U7 age groups. Please see the next page for the Junior Board Guide. This guide can also be accessed separately in the <u>SLS Hub</u> 'Document Lib<u>rary'</u>.

JUNIOR SURF SPORT BOARD GUIDE







APPENDIX 4 - Template form for swim coach to complete

Junior Preliminary Evaluations

Child's Name:		Age Group:	Club:		
Instructions for Evaluation: Based on the child's age group, please ensure they can complete the tasks outlined in the table below.					
Age Group	Flotation	Submersion	Propulsion	Task Complete/Comments	
	Back or front float for a minimum of 5 seconds, recover to stand.		From standing position in waist deep water, perform a front glide (1-2 metres) & recover to stand.		
	Back or front float for a minimum of 10 seconds, recover to stand.		From standing position in waist deep water, perform a front glide (2-3 metres) & recover to stand.		
	Back or front float for a minimum of 15 seconds, recover to stand.		Swim on front any stroke (distance 20 metres) followed by swim underwater (distance 2-3 metres).		
	Front to back float or back to front float – 5 seconds each side. Tread —water and/or any stroke sculling for a minimum of 1 minute. Submerge to touch the bottom with hands.	Swim on front through water any stroke for 25 metres followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or sidestroke and/or back sculling for minimum 10 metres.			
		Submerge to touch the bottom with hands.	Swim on front through water any stroke for 25 metres followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or sidestroke and/or back sculling for minimum 25 metres.		
Under 11	float – 5 seconds each side. Tread water and/or any stroke sculling for	Submerge to perform forward or backward roll/somersault underwater, recover to surface, submerge to touch the bottom with hands.	Swim on front through water any stroke for 25 metres followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or sidestroke and/or back sculling for minimum 50 metres.		
Under 12		Submerge to perform forward or backward roll/somersault underwater, recover to	Swim on front any stroke for 75 metres followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or sidestroke for minimum 50 metres.		
Under 13	float – 5 seconds each side. Tread water and/or any stroke sculling for minimum 3 minutes.	er and/or any stroke sculling for	Swim on front any stroke for 100 metres followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or sidestroke for minimum 50 metres.		
Under 14		Submerge to perform forward or backward roll/somersault underwater, do not recover to surface, submerge to touch the bottom with hands.	Swim on front any stroke for 100 metres followed by survival stroke(s) breaststroke and/or sidestroke for minimum 100 metres.		
Swim Coac	ch's Name:	Australian Swimming Tea	chers and Coaches Association Number:		
Swim Coac	h's Email:	Swim Coach's Signature:	Date conducted:		