



## Swimming united in four-year plan for Tokyo 2020

Swimming in Australia has a proud and rich record in the archives of Australia's Olympic history.

The Australian Dolphins Swim team have worked hard to be a team the nation is proud of and in victory and defeat they have supported each other.

Swimming Australia President **John Bertrand AO** said the Dolphins had contributed greatly to Australian Sport.

"The Australian Swim Team has always been so consistent as a high performing sport on the international stage. The Dolphins have a proud history and a strong reputation and I believe we can be even stronger," Bertrand said.

"What we know is the level of competition at the Rio Olympics will be surpassed at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. History tells us that.

"So we are in the business of getting there faster than any other nation in the world. That was the focus of this review. What are the key lessons learned from Rio and how we apply them going forward."

The last four years has seen significant change as the sport re-built its culture and made significant progress, moving up the international ranks, ensuring the Dolphins are a team Australia can be proud of both in and out of the water.

Swimming Australia CEO **Mark Anderson** said this post-Rio review process was about building on the progress that we had already made.

"We can and will learn from our Rio experiences," Anderson said.

"We will build on the progress we have made and what was evident in Rio, both successes missed opportunities.

"The Dolphins went from seventh on the swimming medal tally in London, to second in Rio 2016, as a result of the three gold medals won by Mack Horton, Kyle Chalmers and our women's 4x100m freestyle relay team, Cate and Bronte Campbell, Emma McKeon and Brittany Elmslie.

"Medalling in five of the six relay events displayed the depth of the team and this is exciting moving forward. We know that we have the talent to challenge the world again in Tokyo 2020.



“Now, the time is right to take the next steps and this review is part of that process for in this next Olympic cycle.”

And following an extensive post-Olympic review and in keeping with its determination to improve its international status, Swimming Australia has today unveiled a four-year strategic plan as it prepares for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics.

One of the biggest changes will see a significant evolution to the Podium Centre Program, including a reduction from 14 down to nine Swimming Australia supported ‘High Performance Centres’.

With a reduction in the number of supported centres, high performance funding will go further and the standard of the daily performance environment for athletes and coaches will increase, as will the expectation on the centres.

A key change is the decision to shift Selection Trials events closer to the Benchmark Events such as the FINA World Championships and Olympic Games.

Australia’s National Head Coach **Jacco Verhaeren** admitted the Trials shift would be one of the key changes to emerge from the review and a change that would “resonate throughout the swimming community.”

“Our rationale behind the Trials shift is to create ‘more and significant competition’ leading into our Benchmark Events,” Verhaeren said.

The key factor in achieving this change is the support of our State Swimming Associations, and the scheduling of their state championship events in-line with benchmark Selection Trial events, 5 weeks from competition.

“This change will result in consistent racing in the months leading up to trials. Our system has been structured around the southern hemisphere summer, we now have facilities in warmer places and are able to host our trials closer to the Benchmark Events which are typically during a Northern Hemisphere summer.

“The majority of coaches and the people from within the system are actually very supportive, otherwise we would not have been able to achieve it, all these decisions have been made in close consultation with the coaches and that’s how it should be.”

There will also be the:

- Implementation of the Australian Swimming Framework (ASF) that will see Swimming Australia develop, apply and measure its high performance system against a national technical direction. This framework will see the



evolution of the Podium Centre Program to, Swimming Australia supported 'High Performance Centres'

- Increase of the roles of the State Swimming Associations (SSAs) in high performance swimming.
- Confirmation of four State Head Coaches who will join forces under National Head Coach Jacco Verhaeren in a Coach Leadership Team.
- Establishment of a National Transition Program at the National Training Centre/Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra.
- Decision to seek warmer climate venues in the lead up to Benchmark Events.

Swimming Australia CEO **Mark Anderson** added, "We are looking forward to this next phase in our high performance evolution."

"We have made considerable progress, both as an organisation and as an internationally competitive and respected team and importantly we have major alignment right across our sport.

"But we are far from satisfied. We always planned to make further changes in this Olympic cycle and the review has identified further changes that we need to make to ensure that we continue to progress and achieve excellence.

"We are united in delivering this next phase of improvement leading into the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games and the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

"We have the right people in the right roles and with all the key individuals in place at the start of the Olympic and Paralympic cycle, and just over 12 months out from the Commonwealth Games, we will be well placed to take the next required step to deliver on our goals," Anderson said.

## 1. Swimming – Where We Stand

Following the 2016 Rio Olympics, the Australian Swimming Team is ranked number two in the world in Olympic Pool Swimming, five in Paralympic Swimming and 16<sup>th</sup> in Open Water swimming respectively.

The Australian Swimming Team (Dolphins) is one of Australia's most reliable



international performers. It has delivered an average of one third of Australia's total Olympic and Paralympic medals over the past six Olympics.

This includes one third of Australia's total Olympic and Paralympic Gold medals over the same period.

Swimming Australia President John Bertrand AO said the Dolphins have contributed greatly to the Australian Sporting history.

"The Australian Swim Team has always been so consistent as a high performing sport on the international stage. The Dolphins have a proud history and a strong reputation and I believe we can be even stronger," Bertrand said.

"Recently we have made great progress in establishing cultural values of which every athlete and staff member is proud. Our culture has developed a sense of pride within our team and the Swimming Australia organisation which is unique.

"Can we do better? Absolutely, but I believe this is a comprehensive high performance review and will enable us to do better in the future.

"The next steps will be key as we look to the 2018 Commonwealth Games at home on the Gold Coast and the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games."

Australia's High Performance Swimming system has continued to develop and adapt to the ever- improving international standards set at Benchmark Events (BME).

Swimming Australia CEO **Mark Anderson** said while we have made great progress, there is still work to be done.

"This past year we have made considerable progress, both as an organisation and as an internationally competitive and respected team. We have alignment across our sport and a collective goal," Anderson said.

"But, we are far from satisfied, there is always work to do and we will be continually striving for peak performance and world class standards in all that we do.

"We have the right people in the right roles, with all the key individuals in place at the start of the Olympic cycle. This will impact greatly on us delivering on our goals."

In this respect, the Dolphins continue to achieve significant performance advances over the current Olympiad, as reflected in our benchmark event performances in 2015 and 2016:

- Number 2 World Ranking at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, Brazil



- Number 5 World Ranking at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio, Brazil
- Number 2 World Ranking at the 2015 World Swimming Championships in Kazan, Russia
- Number 7 World Ranking at the 2015 Paralympic World Championships in Glasgow, Scotland
- Number 9 World Ranking in 2015 in Open Water Swimming.
- Number 2 Ranking at the 2016 Junior Pan Pacific Championships in Hawaii, USA
- Number 1 World Ranking at the 2015 World Junior (U18) Championships in Singapore





## 2. Swimming Together for a Faster Future

For the first time in the history of swimming in Australia, from 2017, Swimming Australia will develop, apply and measure its high performance system against a national technical direction, called the Australian Swimming Framework (ASF).

The ASF is an evidence-based framework to guide how SAL operates in and out of the pool.

The ASF will have a clear technical direction and, in the first instance, focus on high performance swimming.

Over the four years to 2020 it will be developed to cover the entire swimming pathway – connecting all levels of the sport as never before.

### HIGH PERFORMANCE SWIMMING PARTNERS

SAL has developed an internal and external partnership group that has had a significant impact on the development and effectiveness of its high performance swimming system.

From a swimming specific perspective, this includes:

- The State Swimming Associations (SSA),
- Australian Swimmers Association (ASA) and;
- The Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association (ASCTA).

Externally, its partners include the:

- Australian Sports Commission (ASC),
- Australian Institute of Sport (AIS),
- State Institutes of Sport/State Academies of sport (SIS/SAS),
- National Institute Network (NIN),
- Australian Olympic Committee (AOC),
- Commonwealth Games Australia (CGA) and;
- The Australian Paralympic Committee (APC).

While SAL continues to work with its established high performance partner organisations, the changing demands of high performance swimming, limitations on the servicing to its system and improved external opportunities have enabled SAL to expand partnerships into new areas.

Another strategic shift from traditional partnerships is that from 2017, SAL intends to significantly increase the role of State Swimming Associations (SSAs) in high



performance swimming.

This will be driven through the engagement of **State Head Coaches (SHC)** employed to service QLD, NSW, VIC/TAS and SA/WA.

These positions will operate under the ASF, primarily employed and funded by SAL, and supported day-to-day through a partnership with the relevant SSAs.

The potential impact of a more streamlined, effective and unified high performance program, under the ASF, cannot be understated.

SAL intends to develop, monitor and engage with this opportunity for immediate true national alignment.

Combined with a significant focus on improved systems, data analysis, management and role clarity, the SAL HPU plan to be at the forefront of the Australian high performance swimming, as it prepares for the next four years and beyond.



### 3. Swimming Australia High Performance Centres

SAL has identified nine High Performance Centres employing ten coaches, run on a day-to-day basis by State Institutes, clubs and Universities, who will receive significant SAL investment over the cycle.

These Centres are an evolution of the Podium Centre Program which operated between 2013 - 2016 and Mark Anderson said the shift was necessary to ensure we provide world class daily training environments across Australia.

“This change has come about in an effort to raise our high performance standards, including the daily training environment of more of our athletes,” Anderson said.

“It is our aim to provide the best support and accountability to our athletes and continue to develop our best coaches across the three aquatic disciplines of Olympic Pool Swimming, Open Water Swimming and Paralympic Pool Swimming.”

The aim of the new high performance centres is to develop a funding, monitoring and evaluation model based on Athlete Performance, Coach Performance, and Program Performance against the Australian Swimming Framework.

We want to create a shift and provide world class daily performance environments for our athletes. We want to improve the quality and standard of each of these programs and the new high performance centres will be measured against the ASF and as such the standard will remain high.

The High Performance Centres are:

- **University of Sunshine Coast** – Chis Mooney
- **Brisbane Aquatic Centre, Chandler** – Simon Cusack and Vince Raleigh
- **Griffith University** #
- **SOPAC** – Adam Kable
- **Melbourne Vicentre** – Craig Jackson
- **Nunawading** – Scott Talbot
- **SA Aquatic and Leisure Centre/SASI** – Peter Bishop
- **HBF Stadium/WAIS** – Mick Palfrey
- **National Training Centre** – Tracey Menzies

# - Gold Coast based University, Griffith University (GU) have invested significantly into the development of an exceptional high performance environment. GU, along with Swimming Australia, are in negotiations with a highly qualified coach to take on the role of High Performance Coach and help grow this program from the ground up.





## 4. Swimming Australia Forms Coach Leadership Team

Four State Head Coaches have been appointed to work with Head Coach Jacco Verhaeren, the new role of National Transition Coach, Glenn Beringen and National Training Centre (AIS) Head Coach Tracey Menzies.

The four State Head Coaches are:

**Ron McKeon** (NSW)  
**Stephan Widmer** (QLD)  
**Rohan Taylor** (VIC/TAS) and;  
**Leigh Nugent** (SA/WA)

Swimming Australia CEO **Mark Anderson** said, “We recognize the importance for our organisation and associated bodies to work as one team. And we recognize the critical role that our talented and experienced coaches can play in leading our sport.

“We have made great progress in this area. We have a common goal and a common purpose and working together will assist us in reaching our goals.

“The sharing and transfer of knowledge is vital to our success and the Coach Leadership Team will play a pivotal role in that knowledge transfer and extension of skills into the wider swimming community.

“We have a vision to achieve peak performance and to do that we need to create an environment of excellence, giving Australia the most effective high performance program in world swimming,” Anderson said.

Swimming Australia Head Coach Jacco Verhaeren said, “This will increase our involvement with all of our programs, with the coaches, throughout the country as well,” said Verhaeren.

“Stephan Widmer will continue to work with Swimming Queensland but now employed by Swimming Australia.

“Leigh Nugent had already been working successfully with SA and WA and he will continue in that role while Ron McKeon and Rohan Taylor will provide added technical expertise and leadership for NSW, VIC and TAS.”

The new State Head Coaches, together with **Glenn Beringen** as the new National Transition Coach, National Head Coach **Jacco Verhaeren** and National Training Centre Head Coach, **Tracey Menzies**, will meet-up every four-six weeks.



Verhaeren knows it is imperative to have the strong alignment with the States and knows that the States are different and will require different needs.

“What happens in Queensland may require a different approach for what happens in WA or the other States but what we do want is alignment within the Australian Swimming Framework.”

He also admits that NSW, for so long a stronghold of swimming in Australia, remains an area to concentrate on.

“We are closely aligned with Swimming NSW; we have created the new technical hub there as well, in collaboration with Swimming NSW and NSWIS.

“We are looking at the best possible possibilities that we have within the country so I’m very comfortable with Adam Who being in that role in NSW and having someone with the experience of Ron McKeon as a State Head coach is a huge advantage in the system we have formed,” Verhaeren said.



## 5. Swimming Australia launches National Training Centre Transition Program in Canberra

National Training Centre Head Coach, **Tracey Menzies** will lead a new National Talent Transition Program (NTP) in Canberra to better prepare athletes for long-term high performance swimming careers.

Former coach of Australia's greatest Olympian Ian Thorpe and a trailblazer for female coaches in swimming and women in sport, Menzies' goal for the new program is to identify swimmers with the potential for senior team international success.

The NTP will focus on aspects such as talent identification, gaps in Olympic events, swimmers in regional areas and swimmers requiring skill development.

Importantly, home coaches will also be recognised in this program, providing an opportunity for further development and skill transfer.

Home coaches of NTP athletes that are selected will be invited to take part in coach education and development programs, gain exposure to the wonderful facilities of the AIS in Canberra, and the daily performance environment including sport science and sport medicine practitioners, as well as integration with national camps.

Menzies said she was excited to get the program underway.

"This is an exciting time for Swimming in Australia, with the program forming a key part of the Swimming Australia High Performance System.

"It is a great opportunity for swimmers from across the country to come together to train with the NTC accelerating learning and technical developments to better prepare athletes for long-term high performance swimming careers."

"Our goal is for these swimmers to step up on to a national team. But also for these athletes to succeed in life. We want these athletes to be confident in their ability to perform both in and out of the water" Menzies said.

The program will allow more swimmers to have access to world class facilities and a high standard daily performance environment as well as support with critical transition from age group to open competitors.



## 6. Swimming Australia Shifts Trials to June

As a result of an extensive post Olympics review, Swimming Australia has today announced the Selection Trials for the Olympic Games Swim Team in Tokyo in four years' time will be held in June 2020 – five weeks before the Games.

The change comes as a key initiative amongst major strategic changes as it starts its next quadrennium towards Tokyo as it introduces more and significant competition.

One of the biggest shifts from the high performance review will see the Selection Trials swum five weeks before benchmark events like the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, World Championships and Pan Pacific Championships.

The change will be first implemented in 2018 for the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games – with the Championship Trials meet set for February next year.

There will also be a Trials meet in July 2018 for the Pan Pacs in Tokyo next August; the 2019 Trials five weeks before the FINA World Championships in Gwangju (Korea) and five weeks before the 2020 Olympics.

The 2018 and 2019 scheduling will give coaches and swimmers time to get used to the change before the Trials for Tokyo.

Australia's National Head Coach **Jacco Verhaeren** admitted the Trials one of the key changes to emerge from the review and a change that will “resonate throughout the swimming community.”

“Our rationale behind the Trials shift was to create ‘more and significant competition’ leading into our benchmark events with the most significant competition closest to the benchmark event.

“As a result of that change we will have calendar alignment with all the State bodies from 2019. We are aiming to have an Open State Titles every month from January onwards.

Verhaeren said the timing was right.

“I came into the role as Head Coach 18 months' post London, our President John Bertrand AO at a similar time and our CEO Mark Anderson about 10 months post. The progress that has been made since is fantastic and now, with the right people in the right roles we continue to progress,” said Verhaeren.



“There was some good solutions around team culture, around Podium Centres, but we also knew 18 months before Rio that we were looking for an evolution of that system.

“So half-way through an Olympic cycle you are not going to change your dates for Trials, because we are going to practice and research that, we are not going to do that half-way through a cycle.

“So the rationale is and on top of that and probably more important, the system, the coaches, the people involved in Swimming Australia if we’d asked them a year ago “do you want to change the dates of Trials?” I would say for 80-90 percent the answer would have been no, “we want to keep it as is” and actually after Rio that has reversed, it is the other way around.

“The majority of coaches and the people from within the system are actually very supportive, otherwise we would not have done it, all these decisions have been made in close consultation with the coaches and that’s how it should be,

“The Trials changing was clearly out of the review – the newly set up structure with the podium centres and aligning the calendar and looking for more significant and better competition in between April and August that has been a result of the at least 18 months’ work because these changes you need to prepare for it, we need State alignment from SISSAS and State associations and we have that.





## 7. Dolphins turn back the clock for warm weather training

The Australian Swim Team will turn the clock back to the golden eras of the 1950s and 60s with specific warm weather training camps.

Swimming Australia will be look to cities like Townsville, Cairns and Darwin for its post Trials training camps.

Townsville became the base-camp for the preparation of the 1956, 1960 and 1964 Olympic teams as coaches sought the warmer weather.

The likes of gold medallists Dawn Fraser, Lorraine Crapp, Murray Rose, Dr David Theile, John Konrads, John Devitt, Kevin Berry and Ian O'Brien were all in teams that spent weeks in the sunshine of Townsville, training outdoors.

Swimming Australia National Head Coach **Jacco Verhaeren** said the warm weather training would be a major factor in the long term preparation and planning for Tokyo in 2020.

"What is particularly different to many other countries in the world is that we are in the southern hemisphere and dealing with winter in our most important phase of preparation and there is not a lot we can do about winter when people are more prone to illness or injury, things like that, we are covering those areas as well."

"What will happen post trials? A week later we will be on camp in warm weather so we will have athletes, coaches and programs for longer periods in a contained environment, where we can control such matters (as illness).

"And while we are up for innovation and development and trying to change things for the better, sometimes it is good to look back to successful people and how they did it (in the 50s and 60s).

"The current teams will be doing it for obvious reasons but I don't think it's no coincidence either that we are actually going back to a system that obviously worked great for Australia in the past."

Verhaeren said that what is truly exciting about the changes is at the end of the day a system or a structure doesn't win medals.



“Athletes win medals, coaches create success. Not a system not a structure but to be successful you need a solid system and structure and I think the exciting thing now is that people have bought in,” said Verhaeren.

“These changes have been made in clear collaboration and in conversation with the coaches.

“During the reviews we identified this is the way we want to go but we can only succeed if there is a great level of buy in and that clearly is the case.

“We are looking for alignment not everyone doing the same thing, we celebrate the diversity there is in various States with various coaches and athletes – I think that is one of the main things that creates the success in Australia.

“But despite all our differences we can surely collaborate on a higher level and that is exactly what we are doing.”