



National Aquatic Workforce Framework

> Strengthening safety, capability & credentialling



ROYAL LIFE SAVING
AUSTRALIA

and the

**NATIONAL AQUATIC
INDUSTRY COMMITTEE**

Royal Life Saving is focused on reducing drowning and promoting healthy, active and skilled communities through innovative, reliable, evidence-based advocacy; strong and effective partnerships; quality programs, products and services; underpinned by a cohesive and sustainable national organisation.

Royal Life Saving is a public benevolent institution (PBI) dedicated to reducing drowning and turning everyday people into everyday community lifesavers. We achieve this through: advocacy, education, training, health promotion, aquatic risk management, community development, research, sport, leadership, participation, and international networks.

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Australian Government

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Royal Life Saving Society - Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians and Elders past and present across Australia, with particular acknowledgment to the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional owners of the lands where our offices are located. We pay our respects to Australia's First Nations cultural and spiritual connections to water, and acknowledge the land where we work, live and play always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

> FOREWORD



Justin Scarr
Chief Executive Officer
Royal Life Saving Society – Australia

Aquatic facilities play a pivotal role in Australian communities, offering not only recreation, leisure and fitness opportunities but also crucial swimming and water safety education in a safe environment. Access to safe places to swim and ensuring swimming and water safety skills for all are critical interventions for drowning prevention, as highlighted in the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030.

It is this dedication to safety and community service that draws over 65,000 individuals to careers in the aquatic industry. Workers in the industry take significant pride in their contribution to safety and community enrichment, as identified in our research.

However, the industry confronts challenges including aging infrastructure, expertise shortages, training and development gaps, and the need for greater diversity and inclusion. These issues pose risks to both community safety and the industry's sustainability. Yet, there's positive momentum through collaborative efforts to lift and enhance standards, inclusivity, and workforce participation, which we resolve to continue supporting and expanding.

This National Aquatic Workforce Framework represents another milestone in our long-term commitment and partnership with the industry to build safer communities, a sustainable industry and a more skilled and capable workforce.

At the National Aquatic Workforce Symposium in March 2024, convened by Royal Life Saving Australia, over 50 delegates from diverse industry segments came together. This gathering was crucial in addressing workforce challenges and shaping a national framework based on comprehensive research and both previous and current symposium insights.

The framework's goals are to highlight and advocate a variety of career pathways offered in aquatic facilities, identify and map workforce capabilities across various job roles and enhance the sector's safety, quality, and consistency by emphasising the importance of safety and best practice in training and professional development. Strategies for its implementation include incentivising the attraction and retention of skilled aquatic professionals, supporting consistent levels of professional development and training for workers and leaders on key capabilities, promoting the aquatic sector as a rewarding career choice, and fostering a workforce that reflects the diversity of our communities. Further, we aim to advocate for adoption of this framework by employers, training providers and governments to elevate service quality and sector appeal.

This framework outlines the opportunities, skills, and career paths in the aquatic sector, aiming to fortify an industry crucial to community health, safety and drowning prevention. We believe this framework will make significant strides in strengthening our industry and its workforce, ensuring aquatic facilities continue as safe, inclusive places for everyone to learn, socialise, exercise, and enjoy the water safely.

Justin Scarr

> TESTIMONIALS

"As a major employer in the aquatic industry, Belgravia Leisure supports the framework's objectives of highlighting and advocating a variety of career pathways offered in aquatic facilities. The framework offers a structured and consistent approach to how the sector thinks about developing its people, as well as a resource that those considering a job in the sector can pick up to better understand the opportunities on offer, and that's something that we proudly support."

Nick Cox
Chief Executive Officer,
Belgravia Leisure

"As one of the largest employers of young people in Australia, in line with our global impact strategy around meaningful work, we are committed to creating and advocating for meaningful, just, and fair education, training and employment opportunities and working conditions for this, and future generations. This framework firmly contributes to these objectives and the Y is proud to have played a role in its development."

Alexandra Ash
Interim Chief Executive Officer, Y Australia

"At City Venue Management, we take pride in delighting and engaging our customers. The National Aquatic Workforce Framework supports this mission by offering clear guidelines that benefit the entire aquatic industry. This framework ensures a standard of excellence and professionalism, aligning with our goal of creating win/win solutions for all stakeholders."

Jay Clarke
Managing Director,
City Venue Management

"As leaders in inspiring community activity, we recognise the value this framework brings in setting industry-wide standards and practices that elevate our collective mission. It's another important step towards enhancing the professionalism and effectiveness of our field."

Todd McHardy
Chief Executive Officer,
BlueFit Group

"At the City of Gold Coast, our goal is to ensure that our aquatic facilities are not just amenities but essential community assets for health and recreation. The National Aquatic Workforce Framework aligns perfectly with this vision, providing a solid foundation for service excellence across the industry, which in turn helps us deliver safer, more effective programs to our community."

Tim Goward
Manager, Major Venues,
City of Gold Coast

"Sunshine Coast Council is committed to providing a diverse range of quality aquatic facilities and infrastructure across the region, which positively contributes towards the Sunshine Coast's character, identity and vibrancy and helps attain physically active and healthy communities. The National Aquatic Workforce Framework supports this commitment by setting industry-wide benchmarks that help the sector deliver consistently excellent and safe services."

Matt Howes
Team Leader – Aquatic & Lifeguard Contracts,
Sunshine Coast Council

"As part of our commitment to community safety and well-being, Logan City Council is continuously looking for ways to enhance the experiences offered at our aquatic facilities. The National Aquatic Workforce Framework is a crucial step forward for the industry, providing clear and consistent guidelines that help elevate the standards of aquatic safety and professional development across the board. We believe that this framework will not only improve the skills and competencies of the aquatic workforce but also ensure that the community enjoys safer, more engaging aquatic environments."

Brad Page
Venues & Events Manager, Logan City Council

"For the City of Greater Geelong, providing inclusive and safe recreational environments is paramount. The clarity and consistency offered by the National Aquatic Workforce Framework are invaluable in helping us and the broader industry maintain and elevate the systemic measures necessary for the workforce to deliver on this commitment."

Amanda Locke
Manager Leisure and Recreation Services,
City of Greater Geelong

"At South East Leisure our purpose is to create active, connected communities. The National Aquatic Workforce Framework provides a blueprint to attract and retain more people to our industry and effectively promote the pathways for a successful career in aquatics and leisure. I hope the framework leads to many experiencing a rewarding career through the industry."

John Clark
Chief Executive Officer, South East Leisure

"Aligned Leisure enriches communities and ignites connection through our people. This framework contributes to strengthening the whole sector by aligning capabilities and pathways to attract and retain high potential talent into our industry."

Shane Dunne
General Manager, Aligned Leisure & Education

› COLLABORATION & CONSULTATION

Extensive workforce consultation and research has been undertaken by Royal Life Saving Australia on behalf of the National Aquatic Industry Committee (NAIC), with extensive backing from the broader industry community, including: a Workforce Profile and Report 2019 & 2020, a Workforce Report 2023, the National Aquatics Symposium 2023, the Workforce Framework Survey 2024 and the National Aquatic Workforce Symposium 2024.

The following groups were actively engaged in the development of this framework through workshops at the National Aquatic Workforce Symposium 2024:

Aligned Leisure	Royal Life Saving – South Australia
Aqua Alliance	Royal Life Saving – NSW ACT TAS
Aquatic Recreation Institute	Royal Life Saving – Northern Territory
Aquatics and Recreation Victoria	Royal Life Saving – Queensland
Australian Swim Schools Association	Royal Life Saving – Western Australia
AusActive	Swim Coaches and Teachers Australia
AUSTSWIM	South East Leisure
Belgravia Foundation	Swimming Pool & Spa Association of Australia
Belgravia Leisure	Sunshine Coast Council
BlueFit	Swimming Australia
City of Gold Coast	Swinburne University
City of Greater Geelong	The Curious Co
HumanAbility	The Y (South Australia)
iSwim@Immanuel College	The Y (Victoria)
Leisure Institute of Western Australia	Western Australia Department of Education
Logan City Council	WYN Active
Lifeguarding Services Australia	
Life Saving Victoria	

Industry-wide survey

In preparation for the Symposium held in March 2024, an industry-wide survey was conducted to assist with developing this framework. Hundreds of participants across a diverse range of roles, locations, levels of experience and ages provided insights into the types of capabilities required to effectively execute their job function. Royal Life Saving Australia would like to thank those who invested their time and expertise into the surveys and workshops.

National Aquatic Symposium working group 2024.



National Aquatic Industry Committee



> INTRODUCTION

Background

Aquatic facilities are at the core of Australian community life and offer more than water-based activities; they are essential for promoting health, safety, fitness, fun and social connection.

The diversity of these facilities reflects the wide range of services they provide across different community contexts. However, the aquatic industry faces growing complexities and challenges, necessitating a cohesive strategy for recruiting, training, and developing its workforce.

The National Aquatic Workforce Framework (the framework) aims to address these needs, enhancing the sector’s professional standards and ensuring an evidence-based approach to workforce development.

This framework responds to the 15 calls in the Australian Water Safety Strategy for greater advocacy on career pathways and enhancing professional development systems for the aquatic workforce; four national symposia where delegates called for greater resources and advocacy on workforce capabilities, development and pathways; and three separate research reports conducted by Royal Life Saving Australia into the state of the national aquatic workforce. It builds upon existing safety and operational guidelines and seeks to go ‘beyond the qualifications’ detailing the full depth and breadth of capabilities workers in the aquatic industry require in order for the industry and the communities it serves to thrive.

At the National Aquatic Workforce Symposium in March 2024, convened by Royal Life Saving Australia, over 50 delegates from diverse industry segments came together. This gathering was crucial in addressing workforce challenges and shaping a national strategy based on comprehensive research and previous symposium insights.

Purpose and Development

Building on earlier industry work, the concept of a workforce framework as an initiative that could serve to improve attractiveness to the industry and retention of talent became more clear at the National Aquatics Symposium 2023. The discussions also centred on the need to better articulate the many career opportunities available in the sector and to bring clarity to the competencies and capabilities required for key roles.

Its goals include promoting aquatic careers, defining clear pathways for professional growth, establishing quality assurance systems for safety outcomes, and supporting the sector in effective workforce planning.

The framework aims to not only attract and retain talent but also to foster a learning culture and improve leadership within the industry, ultimately enhancing community trust and safety.

Scope

The framework specifically targets roles integral to water safety and drowning prevention, such as pool lifeguards, swim teachers, customer service staff providing safety information, aquatic coaches, aqua exercise instructors, and their management lines. It deliberately excludes fitness professionals in gyms, sports professionals in stadiums, and other non-aquatic roles found in aquatic facilities and recreation centres.

These areas, requiring distinct considerations, may be addressed by other specialised groups in the future.

> THE NATIONAL AQUATIC WORKFORCE FRAMEWORK

Framework Components

> Capabilities

This component includes the core values and behaviours, technical and soft skills, as well as the business performance knowledge necessary for effective performance in designated roles.

> Development & Pathways

This component focuses on continuous learning, identifying developmental milestones and career stages within the aquatic industry.

> Safety & Best Practice

This component upholds minimum competency standards and embodies a universal commitment to safety for all workers and leaders, serving as a guide for industry-wide assurance.





> RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Below is a summary of the key insights from the industry surveys and workshops:

Safety is paramount

Around 80% of workers and leaders identified that safety was their primary value, driver and concern when it came to what was important in the aquatic industry.

Capabilities are primarily influenced by work and role contexts

Workers and leaders identified that while there are many commonalities, specific job roles in the industry required differentiated capabilities and that often there were layers to capability depending on seniority, responsibility, portfolios and the context of their location and community.

Workers have a strong desire to continually develop

Over several years and separate processes, workers have identified they want further development, training and learning opportunities, regardless of their location or employer-type. Lowering access barriers and national streamlining and coordinating of approaches remain strong themes emerging from survey results.

Aquatic facilities reflect complex communities and workplaces

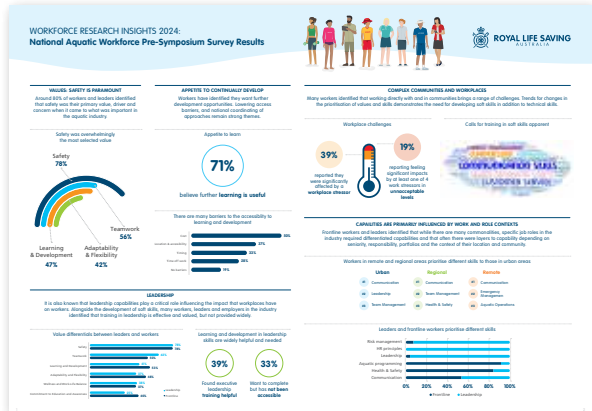
Many workers and leaders identified that working directly with and in communities brings a range of challenges, further strengthening the need to better map and understand soft skills as well as technical skills that can enhance the customer experience and prevent incidents. Increasingly it is soft skills (or lack thereof) which are the larger determinants of success or failure of organisations seeking to deliver frontline services in communities.

It is also known that leaders play a critical role influencing the impact that workplaces have on workers. Alongside the development of soft skills, many workers, leaders and employers in the industry identified that training in leadership is effective and valued, but not provided widely.

Industry training products primarily focus on technical skills, leaving a gap for employers and individuals to try and fill in the absence of industry-standard approaches. This suggests a significant opportunity exists to further develop and provide products which bridge the gap between technical skills training and soft skill development and reinforces the need for coordinating and streamlining approaches at the national level.



Read the National Aquatic Industry Workforce Report 2023



Read the National Aquatic Industry Workforce Scoping Survey 2024



Relationship Between This Framework and The Guidelines For Safe Pool Operations

Royal Life Saving Australia have maintained and developed the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation (the GSPO) since 1992.

The GSPO is the recognised national industry guidelines that describe and make recommendations as to the appropriate minimum standards of safety that should be attached to the design, ownership and operations of aquatic facilities thereby providing a recognised standard of care in a particular area of design and / or operations.

Amongst many other provisions, the GSPO has provided recommendations on what level of training and qualifications staff working in key roles at aquatic facilities, such as pool lifeguards, swimming and water safety teachers and others should hold in order to provide a safe aquatic environment to stakeholders owed a duty of care, such as pool patrons, staff, contractor and visitors, among others.

The GSPOs are developed by Royal Life Saving Australia under the guidance of the National Aquatic Industry Committee and includes key information for adoption by the Commonwealth, State and Territory and Local Governments and owners or operators of facilities, or locations with aquatic environments.

Management of aquatic facilities are generally responsible under State / Territory Work Health Safety regulations for ensuring the currency and documentation of staff, contractor and volunteer qualifications, and training specific to an individual aquatic facility.

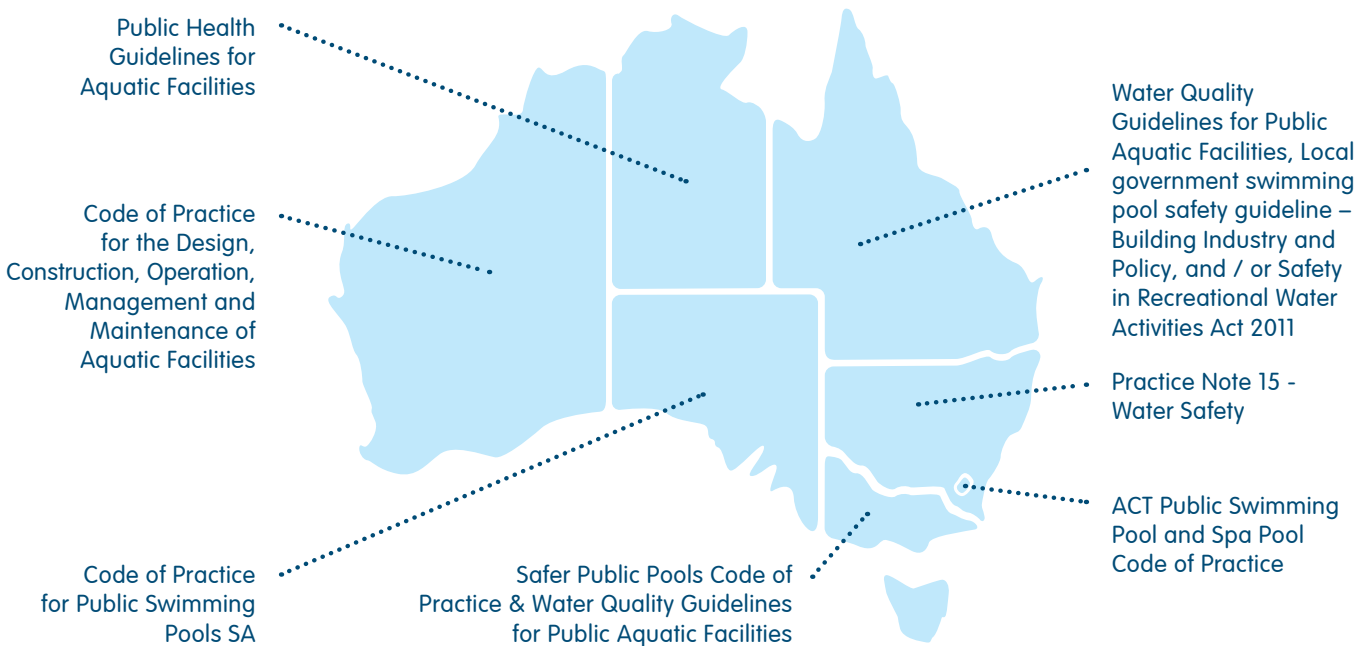
It should be noted that there are various national sporting associations, industry accreditation bodies and governing frameworks. The GSPO attempts to layout the frameworks for which Royal Life Saving Australia and the National Aquatic Industry Safety Framework has responsibility and can be used as a guide by aquatic industry employers to inform their safety management systems and processes. However, accrediting bodies and their processes are ever shifting and changing. Employers should continue to check with relevant bodies and associations for current requirements at regular intervals.

Nationally recognised training can only be provided by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) using endorsed (accredited) training packages and products, e.g. qualifications, skill sets, units of competency. To find an RTO authorised to deliver aquatic industry products visit training.gov.au and enter the current qualification, skill set, or unit of competency codes.

The relevant provisions of the GSPO have been reflected in this framework under 'Safety and Best Practice' headings in the Career Spotlight and Typical Industry Pathways sections of the framework.

Further sections of the framework provide guidance and structure around workforce development priorities, such as the capabilities required for the job that do not sit in accredited training products, less tangible capabilities necessary for particular job roles such as soft skills and serves to document and advocate the entry and career pathways that are available in the industry to a wider range of audiences.

There are further sources of information relating to safety and best practice found in state and territory codes of practice and similar documents. The map below includes examples of some of these.



➤ CAPABILITIES

The capabilities of both individual workers and the collective workforce are crucial for the success of organisations within the aquatic industry, and the industry's success as a whole, playing a pivotal role in drowning prevention and ensuring the safety of aquatic spaces within communities.

Capabilities encompass a comprehensive array of values, behaviours, knowledge, skills, and resources, translating into business performance, that individuals develop through training, learning, experience, feedback and practice. These capabilities are broad, adaptable, and enduring, enabling individuals to excel across various roles and situations beyond specific tasks or contexts. They include a diverse range of physical and cognitive abilities, aptitudes, mindsets, creativity, strategic thinking, self-awareness, teamwork, and more.

In this framework, we focus on the development of the aquatic industry workforce through four key components of capabilities:

- 1. Values
- 2. Behaviours
- 3. Skills
- 4. Business Performance

Values and Behaviours

Values serve as the foundational principles which motivate individuals to work and remain in aquatic industry roles, and which serve as a guide for influencing actions.

The aquatic industry is driven by values that manifest as behaviours, reflecting the passion and commitment of its workforce towards providing community service and achieving business objectives. These values and the behaviours they inspire are crucial for success within the industry, forming the backbone of service delivery through aquatic facilities. By defining behavioural expectations tied to values, the framework makes it clear what is required for success in specific roles, providing both clarity for individuals entering or advancing within the industry and assurance for employers about the capabilities of their workforce.

Details on behavioural definitions aligned with each role's values are outlined in supplementary documents and within the relevant Career Spotlight sections, based on extensive research and consultations with industry leaders.

Skills

Skills form a crucial component of capabilities. Skills contribute to a worker's ability to effectively perform tasks, solve problems and meet role expectations. Within this framework, skills have been broken down into three types to demonstrate the complex nature of skill progression through a career.

- 1. **Technical Skills:** Essential competencies chiefly acquired on the job or through vocational education and training (VET), specific to the aquatic industry, needed to perform job functions effectively.
- 2. **Soft Skills:** Interpersonal and personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance, and career prospects. Although many seem innate, they can be acquired and / or improved through on-the-job experience, mentoring, tertiary education, and professional development (PD).

Business Performance

Business performance calls on the dynamic integration and application of a combination of knowledge, skills, resources and additional capabilities in professional settings which contribute directly to individual and organisational success.

Skills Progression

As a worker progresses through their career, their skills develop with experience and the appropriate guidance, training and mentorship. This framework seeks to demonstrate the expected development of skills across a career in the aquatic industry by outlining the ideal skill progression through typical roles and pathways.

These skills have been categorised as per below, with supplementary information in the Typical Industry Pathway section of the framework.

Foundational Skills

Introducing the core competencies necessary for entry-level roles.

Intermediate Skills

Building upon foundational skills for more complex tasks and responsibilities.

Advanced Skills

Demonstrating a higher level of expertise and the ability to tackle advanced challenges.

Expert Skills

Signifying the pinnacle of skill development, with the capability to lead, innovate, and mentor within the industry.

This structured approach to capability development aims to cultivate a workforce equipped not only with the necessary technical, soft and business performance skills but also with the values and behaviours that underpin excellence in the aquatic industry.



> ENTRY PATHWAYS

Joining the Aquatic Industry Workforce

People enter the aquatic industry for a range of reasons and at various stages in life. This includes those entering the workforce for the first time, returning to work after time away, or looking for a change in career or lifestyle, or a combination of the above. The industry is well set up to accommodate people looking to join regardless of their previous work history or life stage.

For people interested in swimming, aquatics, sport or recreation the aquatic industry can offer a number of career opportunities and pathways. From becoming a lifeguard to teaching people how to swim to working in administration and management of aquatic facilities, there are a range of flexible job opportunities that promote the development of a diverse set of valuable and transferable skills.

Aquatic facilities are often large, multifaceted organisations run by governments, non-profits and/or businesses. As well as jobs involving being on pool deck or in the water, there are a range of customer and community facing positions and administration roles. For example, there may be opportunities to work in entry and senior level roles across functions, such as community activities and programs, customer service, asset management, operations and risk, finance and governance, marketing and communications, and leadership and management, all of which can facilitate the growth of a dynamic and rewarding career.

Entry Roles

Generally, most people first enter the aquatic industry as a pool lifeguard or swim teacher, which provide competitive rates of pay for entry level positions.

Both roles can quickly lead to early leadership positions such as duty manager or team leader roles, and then established leader positions such as operations or aquatic education coordinator roles. In addition, there are other more technical roles, such as aquatic technical operator, which involves managing the water quality and pool plant equipment.

Entry Qualifications

Gaining the necessary qualifications to enter the industry usually means doing a vocational education and training (VET) course or traineeship, such as the Pool Lifeguard, Swimming and Water Safety Teacher or Aqua Exercise Instruction skill sets, or certificate level qualifications such as the Certificate III in Sport, Aquatics and Recreation, with appropriate specialisations.

These provide nationally recognised qualifications that allow individuals to work anywhere in Australia.

Most of these courses are relatively short in duration and not too expensive to undertake.

For a list of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) able to deliver aquatic industry entry qualifications, see: training.gov.au.

> CAREER SPOTLIGHTS

The following section of the framework outlines those roles that are typically an entry point into the industry. Career Spotlights of these frontline roles are provided as an overview of the role’s capability needs, key competencies, and entry and development pathways.

While it is recognised there are a diverse range of roles and opportunities from beginner to leadership across the many environments in the national aquatic industry, the following roles are the most common and critical to maintaining safety:

- 18-19 Pool Lifeguard
- 20-21 Swim Teacher (Swimming and Water Safety Teacher)
- 22-23 Aqua Exercise Instructor
- 24-25 Coach
- 26-27 Customer Service (Aquatics)
- 28-29 Duty Manager (Aquatics)



FRONTLINE ROLE SPOTLIGHT: POOL LIFEGUARD



CAPABILITIES

VALUES & BEHAVIOURS

Safety	Remaining vigilant, proactively intervening to prevent accidents, and adhering to established protocols and procedures.
Customer Service	Through friendly interaction, clear communication, and pro-active deck management, lifeguards foster a sense of safety and belonging among pool patrons.
Teamwork	Promoting teamwork by collaborating effectively with colleagues, offering support and assistance, and maintaining flexibility to ensure smooth operations and a safe environment.
Learning & Development	Pursues regular training and feedback to maintain updated knowledge and skills, as well as prioritising continuous learning to ensure patron safety.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Aquatic rescue
First aid & oxygen use
Emergency response
Supervision & situational awareness
Risk management

SOFT SKILLS

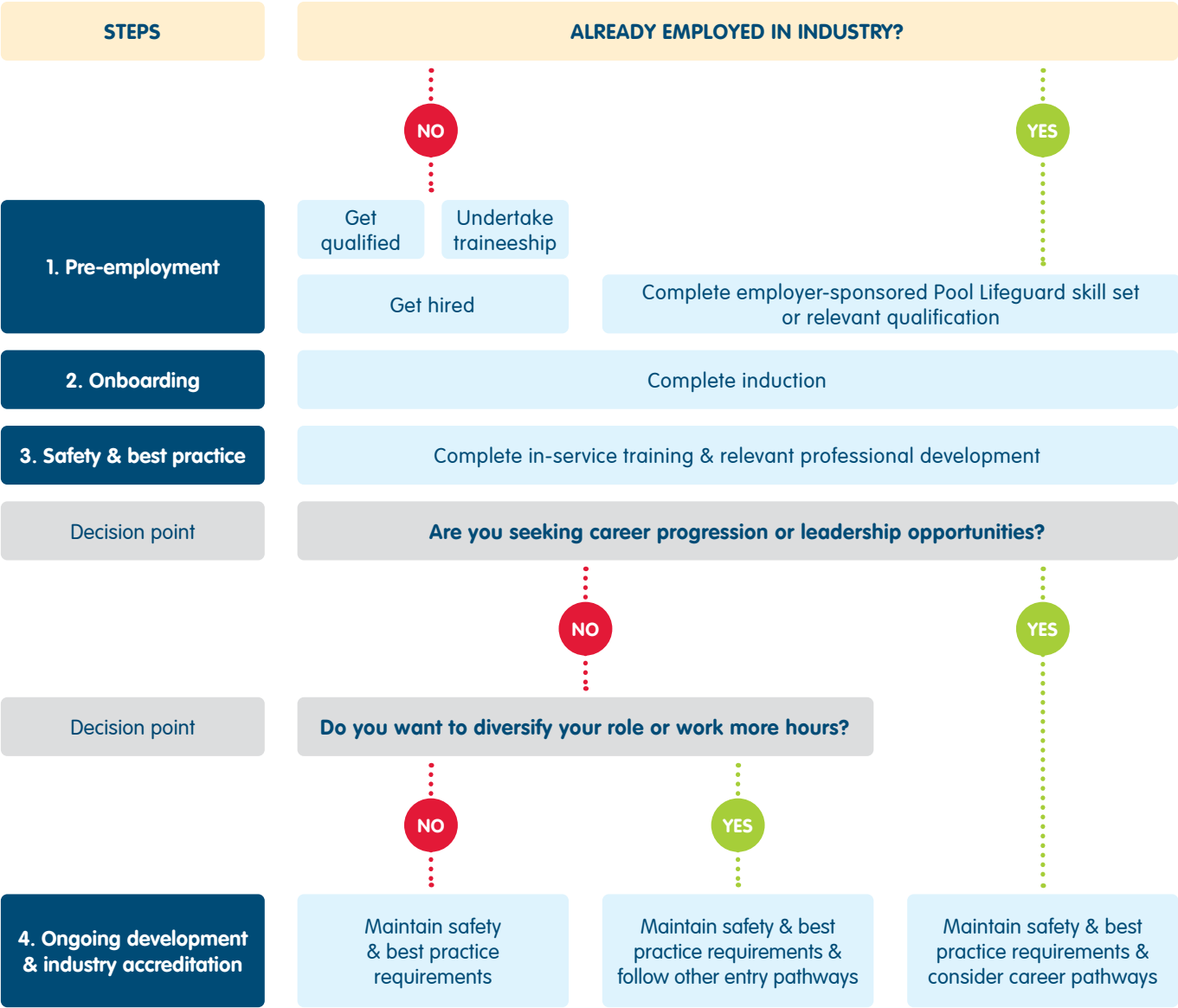
Communication
Teamwork
Conflict resolution
Professionalism
Problem solving

“Australian pool lifeguards are world renowned for their high levels of skill and knowledge in accident prevention and rescue.”

SAFETY & BEST PRACTICE

Initial Qualification	Re-Accreditation	Onboarding / Induction	In-Service Training	Health Requirements	Fitness Requirements
Nationally recognised Pool Lifeguard skill set Working with children check or equivalent	Annual re-accreditation of initial qualification	Orientation to facility, plant equipment, safety rules Emergency procedures Supervision plan Aquatic risk assessment Relevant plant and equipment Escalation procedures Child supervision and safety policies etc.	Three-monthly Includes: Operations manuals Industry practices Emergency planning Incident management	20/20 vision (with corrective lenses) Good hearing (with aid) Medical approval if required Immunisations	Annual fitness test: Object retrieval 25m swim 25m tow Patient extraction

TYPICAL ENTRY PATHWAY: POOL LIFEGUARD



Pool lifeguards are recognised for their high levels of skill and knowledge in incident prevention and rescue response. The role comes with significant responsibilities and requires many essential workplace skills, such as risk management, communication, teamwork, problem solving, decision making, customer service and performing under pressure, all of which are transferable to other industries.

Pool lifeguards should be strong swimmers and require a certain degree of fitness, strength, and stamina to act quickly in case of an emergency.

PATHWAYS

Typically, pool lifeguards progress in the industry through the Aquatic Operations Pathway into roles like duty manager or more senior leadership positions. However, many are students studying for a range of other professions.

Future employers value the teamwork, situational awareness, judgement and decision-making skills of Pool Lifeguards, particularly in stressful situations, as they have significant training in emergency rescue and response.

A TYPICAL POOL LIFEGUARD*

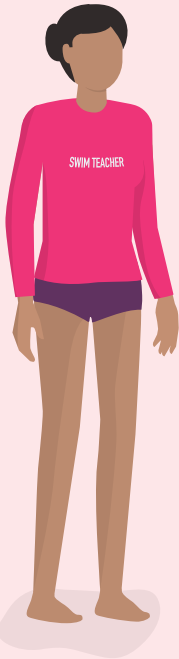
- is 24 or younger
- works part-time and casually
- earns between \$26 - \$35 per hour
- is studying
- works for a council or government run public pool
- most enjoys working with colleagues, being part of a team and being physically active
- thinks they will stay in their role for up to five more years

*According to Royal Life Saving research

DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS



FRONTLINE ROLE SPOTLIGHT: SWIM TEACHER



CAPABILITIES

VALUES & BEHAVIOURS

Safety	Prioritises the wellbeing of students through vigilant supervision, clear communication of safety protocols, and immediate action to mitigate risks.
Customer Service	Builds a sense of wonder, belonging, inclusivity, establishing connections with participants, and collaborating with parents and colleagues to create positive aquatic education experiences.
Teamwork	Contributes effectively within the team, collaborates seamlessly, provides valuable insights, and fosters a supportive environment celebrating achievements.
Learning & Development	Engages in professional development to enhance instructional techniques and adapt teaching approaches to individual student needs, fostering an effective and dynamic learning environment.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Lesson planning and organisation
Teaching skills
Safety & risk management
Class & group management
Observing & providing feedback

SOFT SKILLS

Communication with children
Inclusivity
Patience
Continuous learning

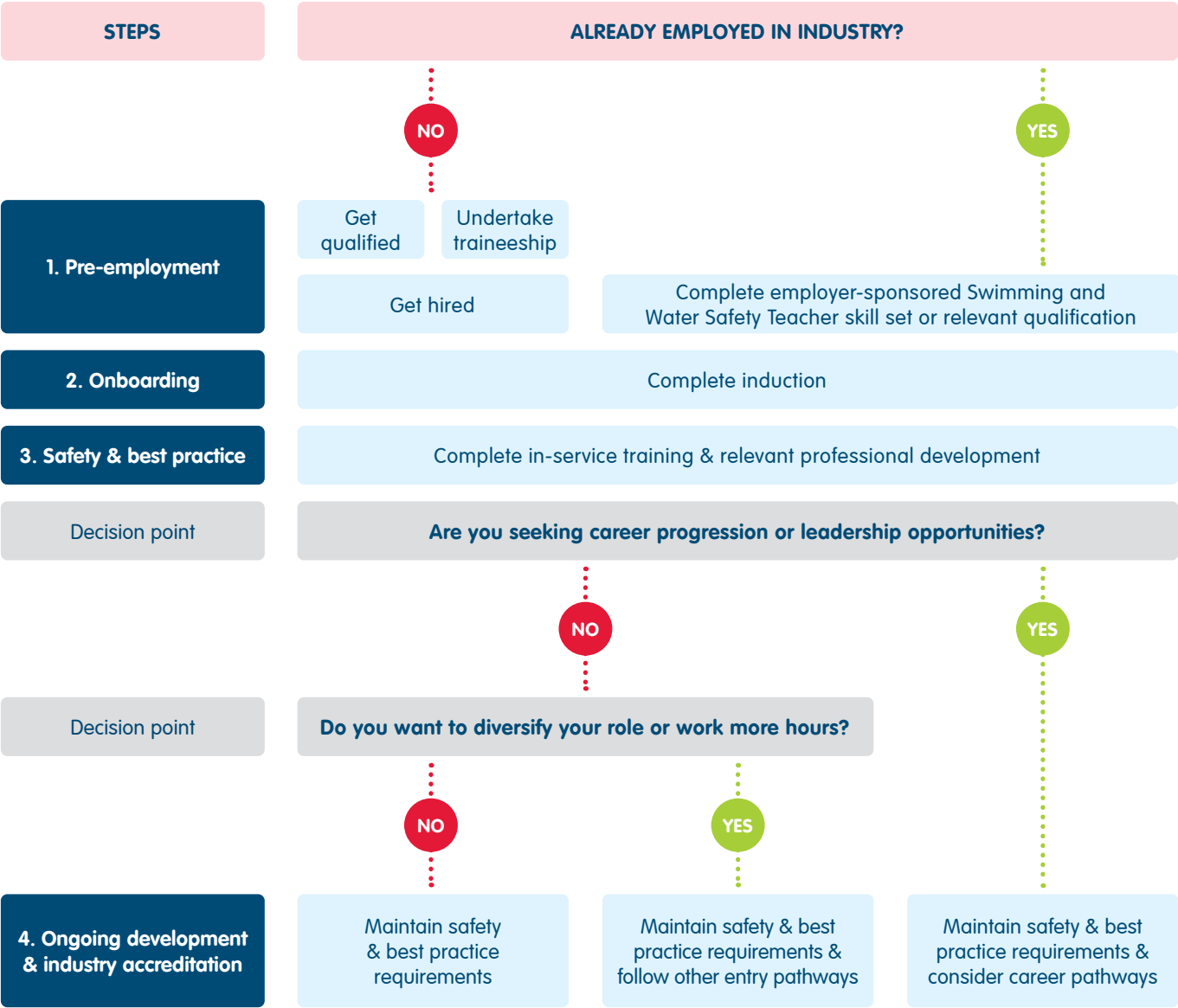
“Swim teachers play a vital role in saving lives by educating Australians on swimming and water safety.”

SAFETY & BEST PRACTICE

Initial Qualification	Re-Accreditation	Onboarding / Induction	In-Service Training	Health Requirements	Fitness Requirements
Nationally recognised Swimming and Water Safety Teacher skill set Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Working with children check or equivalent	Three-yearly industry license via an approved SWST Licensing Organisation Annual CPR re-accreditation	Orientation to facility, plant equipment, safety rules Emergency Procedures Supervision Plan Aquatic risk assessment Relevant plant and equipment Escalation procedures Child supervision and safety policies etc.	Three-monthly Includes: Teaching methodologies Swimming and water safety programs Simulated emergency response Resuscitation Aquatic rescue	20/20 vision (with corrective lenses) Good hearing (with aid) Medical approval if required Immunisations	Annual fitness test: 10m tow



TYPICAL ENTRY PATHWAY: SWIM TEACHER



DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

Swim teachers play a vital role in saving lives by educating Australians on swimming and water safety. They help people become confident swimmers, contribute to the creation of safer communities, and teach the essential principles and practices of water safety.

Swim teachers generally provide students with water familiarisation activities, water safety education, skill acquisition and parent involvement / education.

PATHWAYS

Typically, swim teachers progress in the industry through the Aquatic Education and Programs Pathway into roles like Duty Manager and / or Supervisor while in the industry. However, many are students studying for other professions, or parents with caring responsibilities pursuing a flexible second or third career.

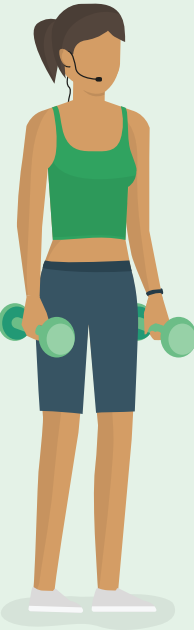
Future employers value the people management and education skills that swim teachers possess, as well as their understanding of program planning and delivery. These skills are highly transferable and valued in a range of industries, particularly in the education and training sectors.

A TYPICAL SWIM TEACHER*

- Earns between \$26 - \$35 per hour
- Works between 37 – 52 weeks per year
- Joined the industry between 15 – 24 years
- Has been in the industry for less than six years
- Works for more than one organisation and works across multiple facilities
- Most enjoys making a positive impact on people's lives and helping make people safe around water

*According to Royal Life Saving research

➤ FRONTLINE ROLE SPOTLIGHT: AQUA EXERCISE INSTRUCTOR



CAPABILITIES

VALUES & BEHAVIOURS

Safety	Prioritises the wellbeing of clients through understanding client needs, supervision, clear communication of safety protocols, and immediate action to mitigate risks.
Client Engagement	Builds a sense of belonging and inclusivity, establishing connections with participants, organised and able to work with diverse populations, including the elderly.
Teamwork	Contributes effectively within the team, collaborating seamlessly, provides valuable insights, and fosters a supportive environment celebrating achievements.
Learning & Development	Engages in professional development to enhance instructional techniques and adapt approaches to individual client needs, fostering effective and dynamic classes.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Planning sessions
Basic water rescues
Anatomy & physiology
Fitness knowledge

SOFT SKILLS

Communication
Time management
Cultural competency

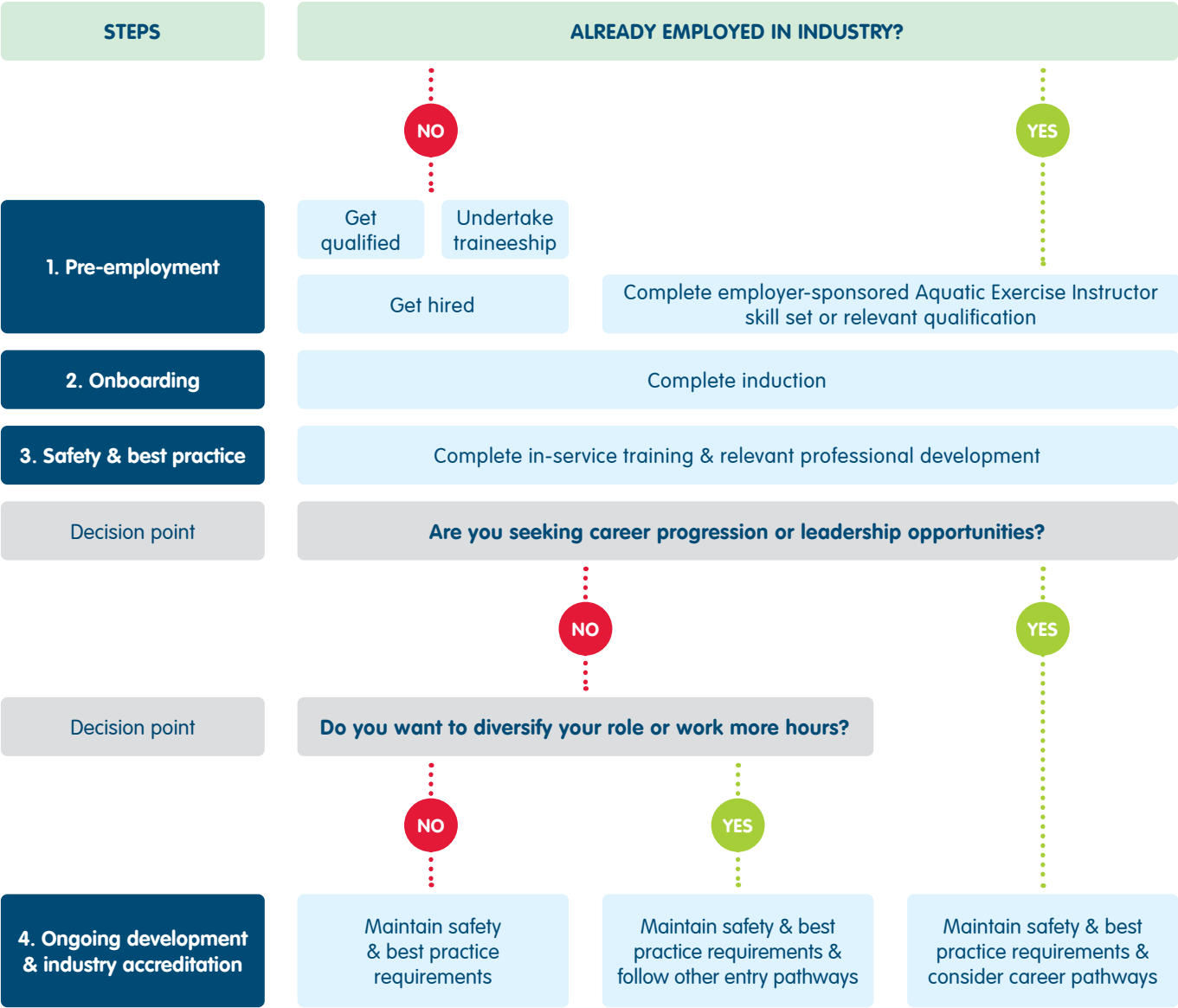
“Aqua Exercise Instructors provide valuable guidance, motivation and supervision in a class setting to optimise each participant’s health outcomes.”

SAFETY & BEST PRACTICE

Initial Qualification	Re-Accreditation	Onboarding / Induction	In-Service Training	Health Requirements	Fitness Requirements
Nationally recognised Aqua Exercise Instruction skill set Provide First Aid & Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Working with children check or equivalent	Professional registration with a recognised accrediting body Annual CPR re-accreditation Three-yearly First Aid accreditation	Orientation to facility, plant equipment, safety rules Emergency Procedures Supervision Plan Aquatic risk assessment Relevant plant and equipment Escalation procedures Child supervision and safety policies etc.	Three-monthly Includes: Teaching methodologies Plan and deliver aquatic programs Simulated emergency response Resuscitation Aquatic rescue	20/20 vision (with corrective lenses) Good hearing (with aid) Medical approval if required Immunisations	Annual fitness test: Demonstrate good health and physical fitness for the duties of their role



TYPICAL ENTRY PATHWAY: AQUA EXERCISE INSTRUCTOR



DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

Aqua exercise instructors are tasked with leading aquatic fitness classes at aquatic facilities. They design and deliver engaging workouts tailored to participants’ fitness levels and goals, emphasising water-based exercises for strength, flexibility, and cardiovascular health.

Instructors ensure the safety of participants during sessions, provide guidance on proper form and technique, and may also assist with program development and participant management. They may be called on to assist in rescue and first aid.

PATHWAYS

Aqua exercise instructors generally progress in the industry through either the Aquatic Education and Programs Pathway, or through an exercise professionals pathway, both of which allow them to take on greater responsibilities and develop as leaders.

Outside of the aquatic industry, Aqua Exercise Instructors have valuable skills and knowledge in human anatomy and physiology, leadership, training, and education, making them attractive to a range of employers, particularly in the healthcare or education sectors.

A TYPICAL AQUA EXERCISE INSTRUCTOR*

- Performs more than one aquatic industry role
- Works less than eight hours a week as an aqua exercise instructor
- Has a second job
- Undertakes three or more professional development sessions per year
- Works for more than one organisation and works across multiple facilities
- Most enjoys being physically active and interacting with people

*According to Royal Life Saving research

FRONTLINE ROLE SPOTLIGHT: COACH



CAPABILITIES

VALUES & BEHAVIOURS

Safety	Prioritises the wellbeing of athletes through vigilant supervision, clear communication of safety protocols, and immediate action to mitigate risks.
Athlete Development	Builds an environment which supports athlete performance, including: respect, inclusivity, psychological safety, goal-setting and resilience.
Teamwork	Is patient and flexible to support and adapt training approaches as needed and adept at motivating others.
Learning & Development	Engages in professional development to enhance techniques and adapt approaches to individual athlete needs, fostering an effective and dynamic learning environment.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Training plans
Domain expertise
Motivating others
Child safety
Injury prevention

SOFT SKILLS

Communication
Goal setting
Time management
Adaptability
Ethical conduct

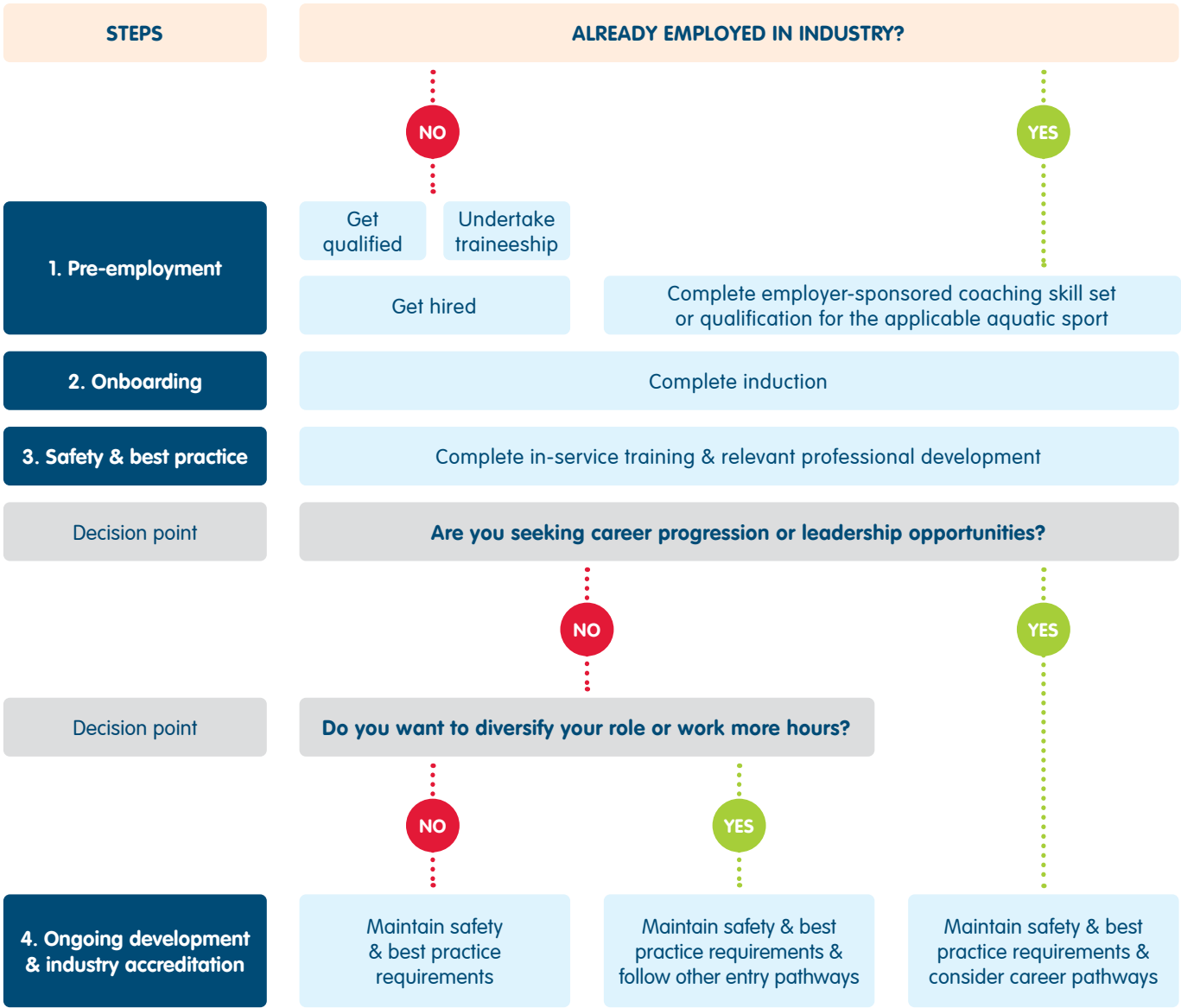
“Coaches train and instruct swimmers by analysing performances and developing abilities.”

SAFETY & BEST PRACTICE

Initial Qualification	Re-Accreditation	Onboarding / Induction	In-Service Training	Health Requirements	Fitness Requirements
Nationally recognised Swimming Aus Development Coach or equivalent qualification Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Working with children check or equivalent	Professional registration with a recognised accrediting body Annual CPR re-accreditation	Orientation to facility, plant equipment, safety rules Emergency Procedures Supervision Plan Aquatic risk assessment Relevant plant and equipment Escalation procedures Child supervision and safety policies etc.	Annual Includes: Teaching methodologies Aquatic programs Simulated emergency response Resuscitation Aquatic rescue	20/20 vision (with corrective lenses) Good hearing (with aid) Medical approval if required Immunisations	Annual fitness test: Demonstrate good health and physical fitness for the duties of their role



TYPICAL ENTRY PATHWAY: COACH



DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

Aquatic coaches play a crucial role in the development of strong swimmers of all levels, from novices to competitive athletes. They design and implement training programs tailored to individual swimmers or teams, focusing on stroke technique, endurance, speed, and / or race strategies. Coaches provide feedback and encouragement during training sessions, analyse performance through video analysis and other tools, and collaborate with program participants and / or athletes to set and achieve goals. They also liaise with parents, organise competitions, and ensure a supportive and positive training environment. They may be called upon to manage and assist with water-based rescues and first aid.

Coaches also play an important role as mentors, leaders and role models, and as someone who can help develop swimming and aquatic skills across the community.

PATHWAYS

Coaches generally progress in the industry through the Aquatic Education and Programs Pathway, or through sport-specific pathways, most of which allow them to take on greater responsibilities and develop as leaders.

Outside of the aquatic industry, coaches have valuable skills in leadership and mentoring, as well as education, making them attractive to a range of employers.

- A TYPICAL COACH*:**
- Is 25 - 54 years old
 - Earns between \$26 - \$35 per hour
 - Works between 37-2 weeks per year
 - Works up to 15 hours per week
 - Joined the industry between 15 - 24 years old
 - Has been in the industry for more than six years
 - Is undertaking a course of study while working
 - Has worked for an organisation for three years or longer

*According to Royal Life Saving research

> FRONTLINE ROLE SPOTLIGHT: CUSTOMER SERVICE (AQUATICS)



CAPABILITIES

VALUES & BEHAVIOURS

Safety	Ensures patron safety through communicating safety information, such as child supervision.
Customer Service	Builds positive relationships with patrons and fosters a sense of belonging and connection, while providing speedy and accurate reception services.
Teamwork	Communicates openly, shares ideas, and provides support to colleagues to achieve common goals, enhancing the overall customer experience.
Learning & Development	Actively engages in ongoing training and seeks feedback to improve customer service.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Customer service
Product and program awareness
Telephone etiquette
Transaction management
Conflict resolution

SOFT SKILLS

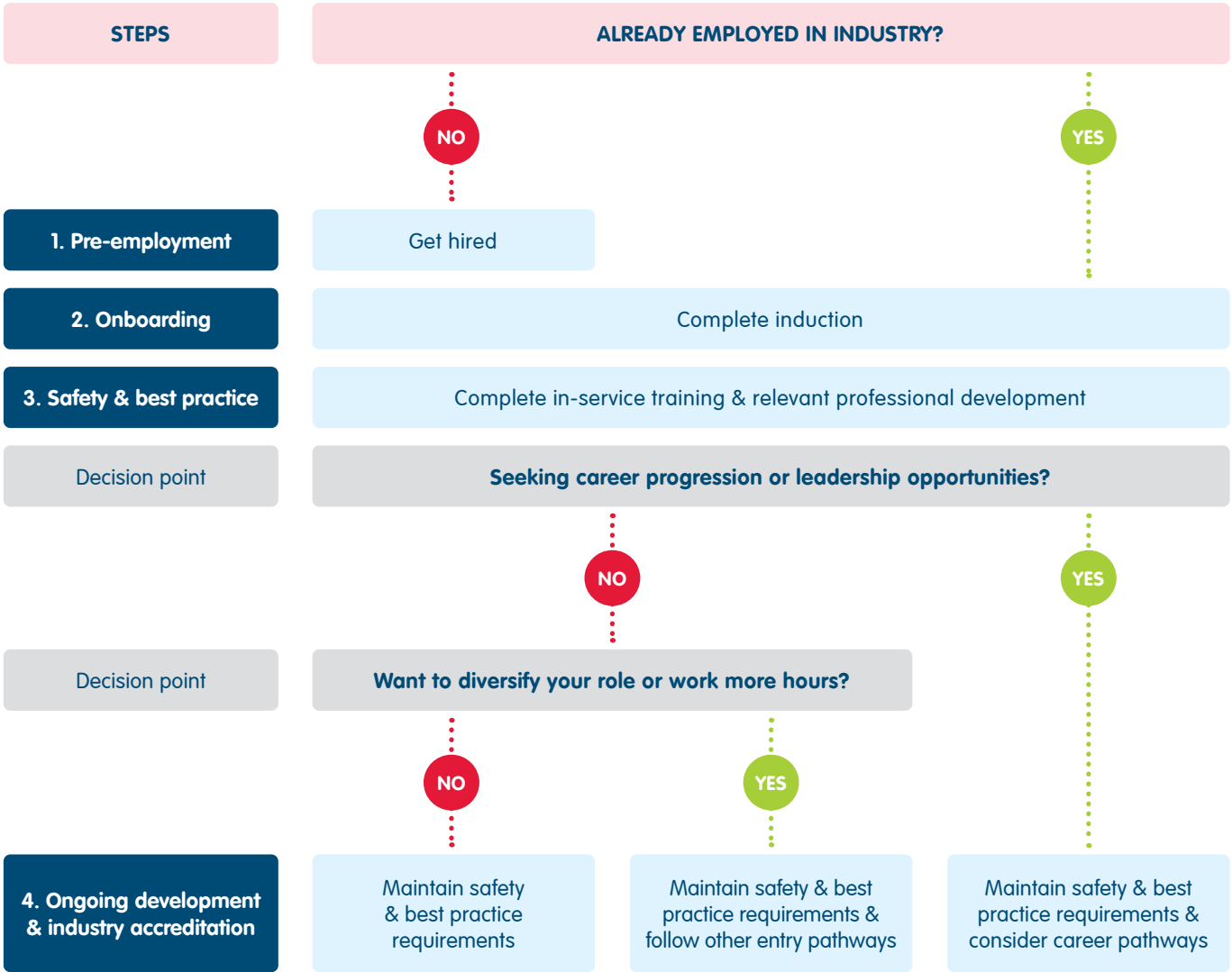
Communication
Problem solving
Empathy
Professionalism
Teamwork

“Aquatic facilities require a range of administration roles to ensure the management and operations of the facilities.”

SAFETY & BEST PRACTICE

Initial Qualification	Re-Accreditation	Onboarding / Induction	In-Service Training	Health Requirements	Fitness Requirements
Working with children check or equivalent Positive child safety reference	N/A	Orientation to facility, plant equipment, safety rules Emergency Procedures Supervision Plan Aquatic risk assessment Relevant plant and equipment Escalation procedures Child supervision and safety policies etc.	Three-monthly Includes: Operations manuals Industry practices Emergency planning Incident management Supervision Water rescues	20/20 vision (with corrective lenses) Good hearing (with aid) Medical approval if required Immunisations	General health and physical fitness declaration

TYPICAL ENTRY PATHWAY: CUSTOMER SERVICE (AQUATICS)



DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

Customer service staff at aquatic facilities serve as the frontline representatives, providing a welcoming and professional experience for visitors. They handle inquiries, bookings, and payments, both in person and over the phone. Responsibilities include managing membership registrations, scheduling appointments, and resolving customer concerns promptly and professionally. Additionally, they maintain cleanliness and organisation in reception areas, assist with facility access and orientation, and contribute to promoting programs and services to enhance the overall customer experience.

Furthermore, customer service staff at aquatic facilities play a vital role in communicating essential water safety information to users of the aquatic facility. They educate visitors on facility rules and regulations, such as appropriate swimwear, diving protocols, and designated swim areas. They also provide information on water safety campaigns, including the importance of supervision for children and the recognition of potential hazards and vulnerabilities.

PATHWAYS

Customer service staff generally progress in the industry through the Customer Service (Aquatics) Pathway into roles like duty manager or customer service team leader or manager.

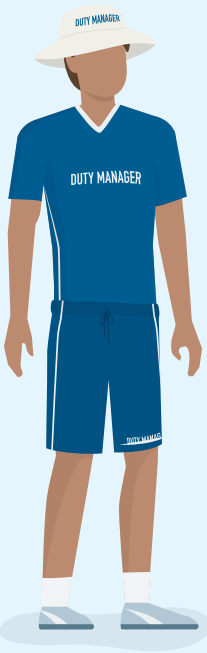
Outside of the aquatic industry, customer service staff have highly transferable skills and knowledge making them attractive to a range of employers.

A TYPICAL CUSTOMER SERVICE OFFICER*:

- Performs more than one aquatic industry role
- Has been in the industry for more than six years
- Works less than eight hours a week
- Works across multiple aquatic facilities
- Works for more than one organisation and works across multiple facilities
- Most enjoys having a positive impact on people's lives and the community

*According to Royal Life Saving research

➤ FRONTLINE ROLE SPOTLIGHT: DUTY MANAGER (AQUATICS)



CAPABILITIES

VALUES & BEHAVIOURS

Safety	Consistently ensures adherence to safety standards and best practice, swiftly addresses hazards, and fosters a culture where safety is paramount.
Problem Solving	Negotiates positive day-to-day outcomes through strong communication, feedback incorporation, and adaptability while maintaining a welcoming and inclusive environment for patrons and staff.
Teamwork	Promotes collaboration, mutual respect, and support among team members by leading by example, recognising individual contributions and emphasising collective achievement of goals.
Learning & Development	Is constantly learning about systems, safety and professionalism through seeking feedback, in-service training, keeping on top of policies and procedures, and supporting team.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Aquatic operations
Risk management
Safety guidelines
Emergency response
Cash reconciliation

SOFT SKILLS

Communication
Time management
Conflict resolution
Leadership
Customer service

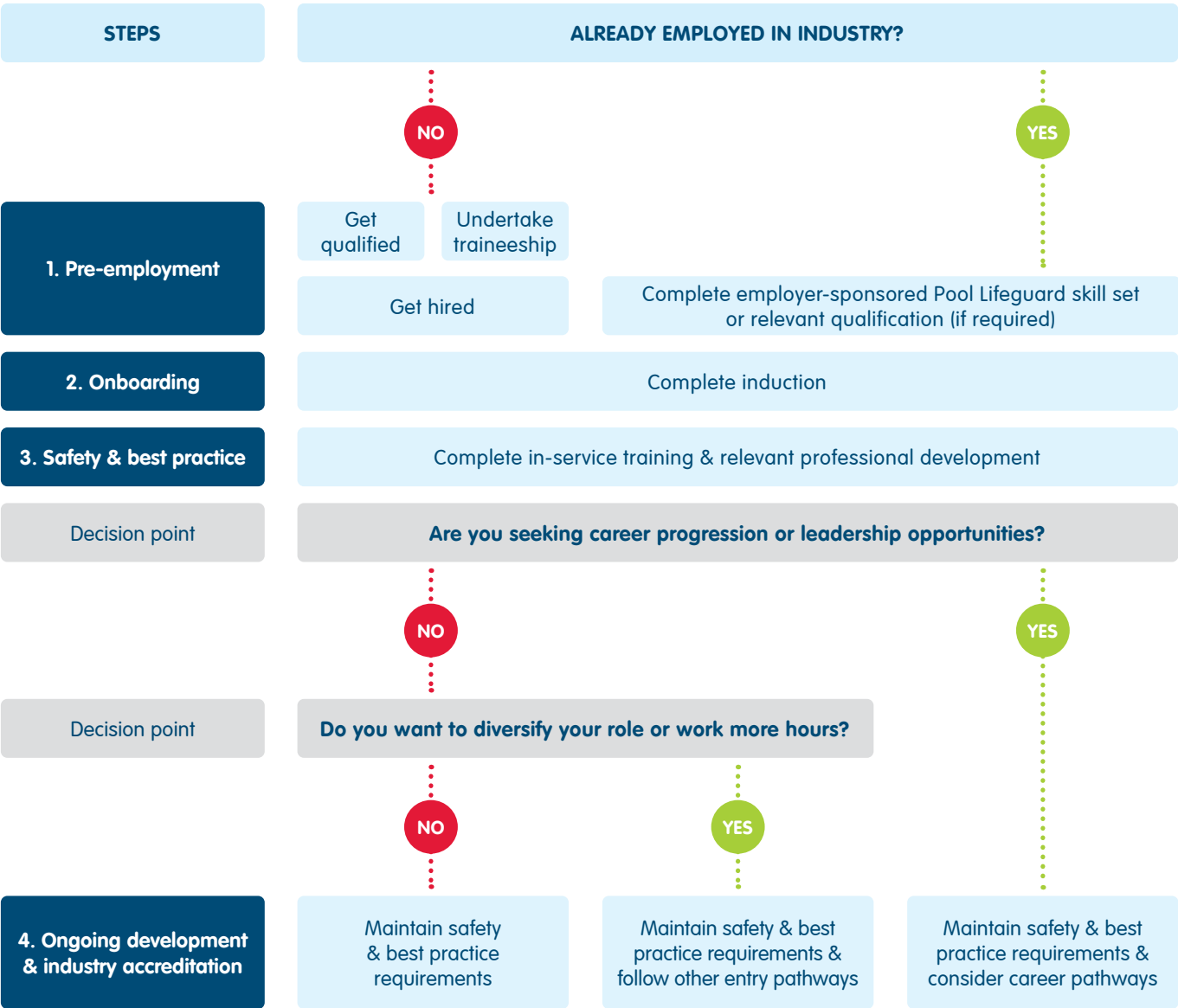
“Duty managers provide on-shift supervision and leadership of aquatic facility staff, ensuring day-to-day frontline operations run smoothly.”

SAFETY & BEST PRACTICE

Initial Qualification	Re-Accreditation	Onboarding / Induction	In-Service Training	Health Requirements	Fitness Requirements
Nationally recognised Pool Lifeguard skill set Working with children check or equivalent	Annual re-accreditation of initial qualification	Orientation to facility, plant equipment, safety rules Emergency Procedures Supervision Plan Aquatic risk assessment Relevant plant and equipment Escalation procedures Child supervision and safety policies etc.	Three-monthly Includes: Operations manuals Industry practices Emergency planning Incident management Supervision Water rescues	20/20 vision (with corrective lenses) Good hearing (with aid) Medical approval if required Immunisations	Annual fitness test: Object retrieval 25m swim 25m tow Patient extraction



TYPICAL ENTRY PATHWAY: DUTY MANAGER (AQUATICS)



DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

Duty managers provide on-shift supervision and leadership of aquatic facility staff, ensuring day-to-day frontline operations run smoothly. In addition to being responsible for coordinating emergency and incident response, acting as chief wardens and completing incident reports, they provide backup support to pool lifeguards to ensure the safety of patrons and appropriate pool supervision.

Often, duty managers assist in covering key areas of frontline service, update rosters, ensure facilities are clean and presentable, monitor water quality and ensure service area procedures are followed to comply with regulations and standards.

PATHWAYS

Typically, duty managers progress in the industry through the Aquatic Operations Pathway into roles like aquatic operations team leader or coordinator while in the industry. However, many are students studying for or already working in other professions, and are taking on casual or part-time work to fit around these other commitments.

Future employers value the prioritising, conflict management and problem solving skills duty managers possess, as well as their leadership, professionalism and risk management experience. These skills are highly transferable and valued in a range of industries, particularly those seeking to work in leadership and management.

A TYPICAL DUTY MANAGER (AQUATICS)*:

- Earns between \$26 – 35 per hour
- Performs more than one job role
- Joined the industry between 15 – 24 years old
- Has been in the industry for more than six years
- Thinks they will continue to work in current role for five years or less
- Also works as a pool lifeguard
- Works more than 26 weeks per year
- Works for one organisation

*According to Royal Life Saving research

> CAREER PATHWAYS

This section of the framework attempts to describe typical entry and progression pathways for key roles in the aquatic industry and outlines how workers develop capabilities over the course of their career in the industry.

Typical Career Pathways

The pathways introduced in this section are those that are typically followed. They are seeking to describe common experiences rather than prescribe a specific approach. It is recognised that there are a variety of organisational structures and that individuals progress through varied pathways depending on their own circumstances, opportunities, development, training and education, and employer needs.

It is recommended that the below diagrams be approached as a flexible guide or reference tool, rather than a rigid or prescriptive guideline as to what should be followed.

Continuous Learning

Progression through a pathway hinges upon continuous learning and development of individuals, with capabilities building upon earlier knowledge, experience and training.

It is recognised that workers must accumulate a broad range of capabilities not just at the current career stage, but for the next career stage in order to demonstrate readiness for progression.

Career Stages

Career stages are used in order to better describe the developmental milestones and capabilities required at different levels of experience, responsibility and authority.

They can be either linear or non-linear. Workers may find, depending on their circumstances and the organisation they work for, that capabilities vary from the ones described in the framework due to local contexts. However, the career stages used here acknowledge that there are differentiated capabilities required for frontline workers and leadership across frontline, early, established, senior and executive levels.

> TYPICAL INDUSTRY CAREER PATHWAYS

TYPICAL PATHWAYS	AQUATIC OPERATIONS	AQUATIC EDUCATION & PROGRAMS	CUSTOMER SERVICE (AQUATICS)
CAREER STAGE	TYPICAL ROLE TITLE		
Entry role	Pool Lifeguard	Swimming & Water Safety Teacher	Customer Service Officer (Aquatics)
Frontline leader	Duty Manager (Aquatics)	Duty Manager (Aquatics) / Aquatic Program Lead	Duty Manager (Aquatics)
Early leader	Aquatic Operations Team Leader / Supervisor	Aquatic Education Team Leader / Supervisor	Customer Service Team Leader (Aquatics) / Sales Lead
Established leader	Aquatic Operations Coordinator / Manager	Aquatic Education Coordinator / Manager	Customer Service Coordinator (Aquatics) / Manager
Senior leader	Aquatic Facility Manager		
Executive leader	Region / Area Manager		



> TYPICAL INDUSTRY CAREER PATHWAY: **AQUATIC OPERATIONS**

CAREER STAGE	TYPICAL ROLE TITLE	SAFETY & BEST PRACTICE	CAPABILITIES*			
			Values & Behaviours	Technical Skills	Soft Skills	Business Performance
Entry role	Pool Lifeguard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pool Lifeguard skill set / qualification & industry accreditation Quarterly in-service training Emergency procedures Child safety training Working with children check 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Customer service Teamwork Learning & development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aquatic rescue First aid & oxygen use Emergency response Supervision & situational awareness Risk management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Teamwork Conflict resolution Professionalism Problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural competency Programs & services knowledge
Frontline leader	Duty Manager (Aquatics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pool Lifeguard skill set / qualification & industry accreditation Quarterly in-service training Advanced supervision Emergency warden training Child safety training Working with children check 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Problem solving Learning & development Teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aquatic operations Risk management Safety guidelines Advanced emergency response Cash reconciliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time management Intermediate conflict resolution Customer service Intermediate professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate cultural competency Telephone etiquette Sales Leadership Intermediate programs & services knowledge
Early leader	Aquatic Operations Team Leader / Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pool Lifeguard skill set / qualification & industry accreditation Quarterly in-service training Supervision planning Aquatic technical operator Emergency planning Child safety training Working with children check 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Problem solving Learning & development Teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff management Incident management Incident / injury prevention Water quality control Advanced operational risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate communication Priority management Intermediate problem solving Advanced professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk management Rostering Contract management HR management
Established leader	Aquatic Operations Coordinator / Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pool Lifeguard skill set / qualification & industry accreditation Quarterly in-service training Supervision planning Aquatic technical operator Child safety training Working with children check Emergency planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Problem solving Learning & development Teamwork Customer service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security and crowd management Performance management Business writing Purchasing and budgets Project management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration Technology adoption Resilience Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate leadership Asset management Intermediate contract management Finance Intermediate HR Intermediate risk management
Senior leader	Aquatic Facility Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education desirable Child safety training Working with children check Emergency planning Advanced risk management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Customer focus Innovation Adaptability Inspiration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic planning Strategy implementation Workforce retention Revenue generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced communication Mentorship Decision making Psychological safety Integrity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced leadership Intermediate asset management Intermediate finance management Intermediate business development Advanced HR / IR management Advanced stakeholder management
Executive leader	Region / Area Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education expected Expert risk management Advanced contract management Advanced business development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Customer focus Innovation Adaptability Inspiration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce planning Financial acumen Partnerships Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex problem solving Relationship management Culture awareness / implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert leadership Expert financial management Advanced HR / IR management Expert stakeholder management

* It is assumed that a role at any career stage will possess the capabilities for roles earlier in the pathway.

➤ TYPICAL INDUSTRY CAREER PATHWAY: **AQUATIC EDUCATION & PROGRAMS**

CAREER STAGE	TYPICAL ROLE TITLE	SAFETY & BEST PRACTICE	CAPABILITIES*			
			Values & Behaviours	Technical Skills	Soft Skills	Business Performance
Entry role	Swimming & Water Safety Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Swimming & Water Safety Teacher skill set / qualification & industry accreditation (licence)Quarterly in-service trainingEmergency proceduresChild safety trainingWorking with children check	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SafetyTeamworkLearning & developmentCustomer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lesson planning & organisationTeaching skillsSafety & risk managementClass & group managementObserving & providing feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communication with childrenInclusivityPatienceContinuous learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Cultural competencyPrograms & services knowledgeAccess & inclusion extensionInfants & preschool extension
Frontline leader	Duty Manager (Aquatics) / Aquatic Program Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Swimming & Water Safety Teacher skill set / qualification & industry accreditation (licence)Pool Lifeguard skillset & industry accreditationQuarterly in-service trainingAdvanced supervisionEmergency warden trainingChild safety trainingWorking with children check	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SafetyProblem solvingLearning & developmentTeamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Aquatic operationsRisk managementSafety guidelinesAdvanced emergency responseCash reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Time managementIntermediate conflict resolutionCustomer serviceIntermediate professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Intermediate cultural competencyTelephone etiquetteSalesLeadershipIntermediate programs & services knowledge
Early leader	Aquatic Education Team Leader / Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Swimming & Water Safety Teacher skill set / qualification & industry accreditation (licence)Quarterly in-service trainingChild safety trainingWorking with children check	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SafetyProblem solvingLearning & developmentTeamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff managementIncident managementIncident / injury preventionWater quality controlAdvanced operational risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Intermediate communicationPriority managementIntermediate problem solvingAdvanced professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Risk managementRosteringContract managementHR management
Established leader	Aquatic Education Coordinator / Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Swimming & Water Safety Teacher skill set / qualification & industry accreditation (licence)Quarterly in-service trainingChild safety trainingWorking with children checkEmergency planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SafetyTeamworkLearning & developmentCustomer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff managementPool programming & logisticsClient & membership managementEducation program development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Intermediate communicationPriority managementIntermediate problem solvingAdvanced professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Program managementRisk managementRosteringContract managementHR management
Senior leader	Aquatic Facility Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Higher education desirableChild safety trainingWorking with children checkEmergency planningAdvanced risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SafetyCustomer focusInnovationAdaptabilityInspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strategic planningStrategy implementationWorkforce retentionRevenue generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Advanced communicationMentorshipDecision makingPsychological safetyIntegrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Advanced leadershipIntermediate asset managementIntermediate finance managementIntermediate business developmentAdvanced HR / IR managementAdvanced stakeholder management
Executive leader	Region / Area Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Higher education expectedExpert risk managementAdvanced contract managementAdvanced business development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SafetyCustomer focusInnovationAdaptabilityInspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Workforce planningFinancial acumenPartnershipsGovernance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Complex problem solvingRelationship managementCulture awareness / implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expert leadershipExpert financial managementAdvanced HR / IR managementExpert stakeholder management

> TYPICAL INDUSTRY CAREER PATHWAY: **CUSTOMER SERVICE (AQUATICS)**

CAREER STAGE	TYPICAL ROLE TITLE	SAFETY & BEST PRACTICE	CAPABILITIES*			
			Values & Behaviours	Technical Skills	Soft Skills	Business Performance
Entry role	Customer Service Officer (Aquatics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency procedures Child safety training Working with children check 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Customer service Teamwork Learning & development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer service Product and program awareness Telephone etiquette Transaction management Conflict resolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Problem solving Professionalism Team collaboration Attention to detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural competency Programs & services knowledge Sales Programs & services knowledge
Frontline leader	Duty Manager (Aquatics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pool Lifeguard skill set / qualification & industry accreditation Quarterly in-service training Advanced supervision Emergency warden training Child safety training Working with children check 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Problem solving Learning & development Teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aquatic operations Risk management Safety guidelines Advanced emergency response Cash reconciliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time management Intermediate conflict resolution Customer service Intermediate professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate cultural competency Telephone etiquette Sales Leadership Intermediate programs & services knowledge
Early leader	Customer Service (Aquatics) Team Leader / Sales Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency procedures Child safety training Working with children check 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Customer service Teamwork Learning & development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff management Communication principles Customer relations & database management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate communication Priority management Intermediate problem solving Advanced professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Risk management Rostering Intermediate sales & marketing Advanced programs & services knowledge Contract management HR management
Established leader	Customer Service (Aquatics) Coordinator / Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency procedures Child safety training Working with children check Emergency planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Customer service Teamwork Learning & development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate sales & membership management Performance management Business writing Purchasing and budgets Project management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration Professionalism Technology adoption Resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate leadership training Advanced sales & marketing Intermediate contract management Finance Intermediate HR Intermediate risk management
Senior leader	Aquatic Facility Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education desirable Child safety training Working with children check Emergency planning Advanced risk management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Customer focus Innovation Adaptability Inspiration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic planning Strategy implementation Workforce retention Revenue generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced communication Mentorship Decision making Psychological safety Integrity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced leadership Intermediate asset management Intermediate finance management Intermediate business development Advanced HR / IR management Advanced stakeholder management
Executive leader	Region / Area Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education expected Expert risk management Advanced contract management Advanced business development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Customer focus Innovation Adaptability Inspiration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce planning Financial acumen Partnerships Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex problem solving Relationship management Culture awareness / implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert leadership Expert financial management Advanced HR / IR management Expert stakeholder management

The following case studies have been provided to highlight how a career in aquatics can take a variety of paths. Aspiring aquatic professionals can draw inspiration from these profiles, recognising the potential for growth and the importance of contributing to community through their work:

Tim Goward
Manager Major Venues
City of Gold Coast



Tim Goward, Manager of Major Venues for the City of Gold Coast, has a 30-year career in the aquatic industry that began as a competitive swimmer and evolved into roles as a learn-to-swim instructor and swim coach. His early involvement at a local swimming club in Brisbane laid the groundwork for his deep connection to aquatic sports.

Tim's career has been marked by several transitions, including a coaching scholarship that led to national-level success. He later moved into facility management, where he oversaw operations and developed community programs. For the past 12 years, Tim has focused on managing and planning new aquatic facilities for local government.

Reflecting on his career, Tim says, "I believe that in each one of my careers I have been able to take something away and be able to apply that knowledge and skill back into the aquatics environment." He values the dynamic nature of the industry and the positive impact of aquatic facilities: "We are providing service to our community and it is the impact that we have on people's wellbeing that motivates me every day."

"No day is the same and I get to be around motivated people who enjoy what they do, and while you may dip in and out of the industry like I have there is always a way to contribute." Tim's journey from a swim instructor to a senior manager underscores the potential for growth and the importance of contributing to community health and safety through the aquatic industry.

First Position: Swimming Instructor, Swim Coach

Early Leadership Roles: National-Level Swim Coach, Aquatic Facility Manager

Senior Leadership Positions:
Manager Major Venues, City of Gold Coast

Greatest Learning: I get to see the positive impact that the facilities and services that are provided have on the community

Alexandra Ash
Chief Executive Officer
Y Australia



Alexandra Ash's 17-year career in the aquatic and sports industry showcases a dedication to leadership and athlete wellbeing. Alexandra began as a personal trainer after returning from college in the U.S., taking her first full-time job at the Boroondara Sports Complex with The Y. Reflecting on this, Alexandra says, "I never thought, when I applied for my first role at 20, that I would be back at the same organisation at 35."

Over 13 years at The Y, Alexandra held various roles, culminating as Executive for Recreation in 2020. In 2021, she joined the RLSSA Board, appreciating the privilege of advancing national water safety efforts. "It is such a privilege to be the custodian of all the amazing work across the country," Alexandra noted.

In 2022, Alexandra became CEO of Gymnastics Australia, focusing on cultural change, psychological safety, and athlete wellbeing. "I am proud of the athlete-centred approach to my leadership," Alexandra highlights. Returning to The Y as CEO of Y Australia, she feels immense pride and responsibility: "Now, returning to the Y, I have a feeling of pride and appreciation of the significance the Y has had on my career."

Alexandra values the collaborative spirit at The Y and in the industry: "The collegiate nature of teams, the support when things are going great, and the joy of winning together are great feelings." She believes in the power of unity, stating, "We have a better chance of progressing our industry when we are working together."

Alexandra's career is a testament to the transformative power of dedication, professional growth, and collaborative leadership in the aquatic and sports industry.

First Position: Personal Trainer

Early Leadership Roles: Various roles at The Y, culminating as Executive for Recreation

Senior Leadership Positions:
CEO of Gymnastics Australia, CEO of Y Australia

Greatest Learning: The importance of collaboration and unity in advancing the industry.

Jay Clarke
Managing Director
City Venue Management



Jay Clarke, Managing Director at City Venue Management, has dedicated 35 years to the aquatic industry, establishing himself as a seasoned professional and second-generation aquatic centre operator. His career began as a swim coach, a role that provided him with essential industry knowledge and skills.

Throughout his career, Jay has worked in every aspect of the business. "I've worked in all facets, from swim coaching and daily operations to strategic management," he shares. His extensive hands-on experience and passion for continuous improvement have driven him to enhance business operations continually, making him a key player in the industry.

Jay's journey has equipped him with a deep understanding of aquatic centre operations. This experience has honed his ability to identify and implement improvements, driving operational efficiency and fostering growth. "My background has provided me with valuable insights into the industry's evolving needs, helping me excel in my current role," he explains. One of the greatest lessons Jay has learned is the importance of timely change. Quoting Seth Godin, he says, "Change almost never fails because it's too early. It almost always fails because it's too late." This perspective has guided his approach to managing and adapting to industry trends, ensuring that his operations remain ahead of the curve.

Jay Clarke's career highlights opportunities within the aquatic industry, emphasising the value of hands-on experience, strategic management, and a proactive approach to change. His story serves as an inspiring example for those seeking to advance in this dynamic field.

First Position: Swim Coach

Early Leadership Roles: Various operational and management roles in family-owned aquatic centres

Senior Leadership Positions:
Managing Director at City Venue Management

Greatest Learning: The importance of timely change to drive operational success and growth.

Sarahjayne Westberg
Infrastructure & Operations
Coordinator, City of Cockburn



Sarahjayne Westberg, Infrastructure & Operations Coordinator at the City of Cockburn, has devoted 21 years to the aquatic industry. She began as a casual pool lifeguard in 2003 while studying teaching. To expand her knowledge, she completed a pool operations certificate and worked as an aquatic duty manager. Her passion led her to pivot her study towards Sport and Recreation Management. Sarahjayne has held roles in swim schools, health clubs, sporting competitions, and aquatics. Now, she manages over 200 staff in one of Australia's largest facilities and serves on the board of LIWA Aquatics, recently launching a mentoring program to support future leaders.

Starting as a lifeguard, Sarahjayne gained firsthand knowledge of aquatic safety and operations. "Each position I've held has equipped me with diverse insights and skills," she notes. Her degree in Sport and Recreation Management broadened her strategic and administrative abilities, while her cumulative experiences have honed her leadership and operational expertise.

One of her greatest learning opportunities came when she was appointed as Infrastructure & Operations Coordinator at Cockburn ARC before its construction. "The role required diverse skills, from recruiting and training over 200 staff members to procuring equipment and managing contracts," she explains. Cockburn ARC, which opened in May 2017, is a pioneering aquatic and recreation centre integrating an elite AFL sports club and tertiary education provider. "Our mission to get 'More People, More Active, More Often' guided every touchpoint." Sarahjayne's unique and diverse experience is testament to the broad opportunities available to those working in aquatic facilities.

First Position: Lifeguard

Early Leadership Roles: Aquatic Duty Manager

Senior Leadership Positions:
Infrastructure & Operations Coordinator

Greatest Learning: The necessity of developing diverse skills with an emphasis on strategic planning and delivering exceptional service.

Liz van Deventer
Group Health and Safety Manager
Belgravia Group



Liz van Deventer, Group Health and Safety Manager at Belgravia Group, has dedicated seven years to the aquatic industry, starting as a swim teacher. During her undergraduate studies in Occupational Science and Therapy, Liz worked as a casual swim teacher, finding it one of her most rewarding roles.

“Whilst teaching children aquatic safety skills, I was gifted with direct exposure to different types of learning requirements,” Liz recalls. One impactful experience was teaching a non-verbal student overwhelmed by the sensory environment. “We found common ground and trust,” Liz explains. Tailored techniques and parental collaboration helped him gain aquatic skills and joy in swimming over two years.

Liz’s early experiences taught her valuable skills in organisation, communication, and problem-solving. “These are all foundational skills that have stayed with me throughout the many roles that I have held,” she notes. After completing her studies, Liz pursued roles in Occupational Therapy, safety, ergonomics, and risk, eventually returning to the aquatic industry as a safety professional at Belgravia Group.

Liz’s greatest learning emphasises the essential role aquatic facilities have in communities. She highlights the need for continuous research, innovation, and public policy influence to address aquatic workforce risks. She asserts, “being bold and innovative and influencing public policy is of upmost priority.”

Liz’s diverse career spanning across multiple industries that brought her back to the aquatic industry as an executive, is a testament to the value of early experiences and the transferable skills developed within, and outside the industry, that can be of benefit during senior roles within the aquatic workforce.

First Position: Swim Teacher
Early Leadership Roles: Various roles in Occupational Therapy and Safety
Senior Leadership Positions: Group Health and Safety Manager at Belgravia Group
Greatest Learning: The importance of continuous research, innovation, and influencing public policy to mitigate aquatic-related risks.

Ben Tudhope
General Manager - Partnerships
Aligned Leisure



Ben Tudhope, General Manager - Partnerships at Aligned Leisure, has a 20-year career in the aquatic industry that began as a Stadium Operations Coordinator while also swim coaching. Reflecting on his journey, Ben emphasises, “Anyone can progress and be successful in our industry—it is our biggest advantage.”

After five years of swim coaching, Ben transitioned to stadium management and later moved into local government, where he served as Leisure Services Manager for the City of Melbourne. He managed the reopening of Brunswick Baths following a redevelopment in 2013. Ben then held various positions with the Y, including Centre Manager, Area Manager, and General Manager, before joining Aligned Leisure in 2017.

Ben credits his success to learning from respected colleagues and stepping out of his comfort zone: “Find people you respect and can continually learn from; this is where the majority of your development will occur. Don’t be afraid to step out of your comfort zone; it will accelerate your learning and experience.”

He believes in the power of networking and learning from others in the industry. “Continue to develop your industry network, listen to and learn from as many people as you can,” he advises, highlighting the abundance of passionate and motivated people in the field.

First Position: Stadium Operations Coordinator
Early Leadership Roles: Leisure Services Manager at City of Melbourne, Brunswick Baths Manager
Senior Leadership Positions: General Manager at the Y; General Manager - Partnerships at Aligned Leisure
Greatest Learning: The importance of networking, continuous learning, and stepping out of one’s comfort zone.

Jasmine Poore
People and Culture Manager
South East Leisure



Jasmine Poore, People and Culture Manager at South East Leisure, has spent 22 years in the aquatic industry. She began her career as a gym instructor and swim teacher, and her journey has taken her through various leadership roles at YMCA Victoria and Cardinia Shire Council.

“My roles have always centred on community engagement, operational efficiency, and employee development,” Jasmine explains.

Jasmine’s extensive experience spans the Aquatic, Sport, Recreation, Local Government, and Community sectors. At South East Leisure, she focuses on enhancing the HR function and fostering a positive workplace culture. Her leadership has been instrumental in driving impactful initiatives and creating environments where individuals and communities thrive.

Reflecting on her career, Jasmine emphasises the importance of strong, empathetic leadership and fostering a positive workplace culture. “Each role has reinforced the value of strong, empathetic leadership and the impact of fostering a positive workplace culture,” she notes. Her diverse experience has highlighted the significance of continuous improvement and innovation in operational processes and employee development.

The greatest opportunity Jasmine has experienced in the industry is leading organisational change.

“Leading such initiatives taught me that an effective people-focused approach, communication, change management, and project execution are pivotal for organisational success and community impact.”

First Position: Gym Instructor
Early Leadership Roles: Customer Service Coordinator, YMCA Victoria
Senior Leadership Positions: People and Culture Manager at South East Leisure
Greatest Learning: The importance of strategic planning, stakeholder collaboration, and innovative thinking in driving organisational success and community impact.

Adam Luscombe
General Manager,
South Australian Aquatic and Leisure
The Y Victoria



Adam Luscombe, General Manager of South Australian Aquatic and Leisure, has dedicated 30 years to the aquatic industry, characterised by strong leadership, teamwork, and resilience. His journey began as a swim teacher and lifeguard, roles that instilled crucial skills such as listening, negotiating, and educating on water safety.

“These skills learned early as a swim teacher, coach, and lifeguard are crucial in teaching children, negotiating with patrons, educating on water safety, training staff, and building capacity,” Adam notes.

Throughout his career, Adam has leveraged these foundational skills to excel in various roles, including delivering major events, creating pathway programs, and generating significant social and economic impacts. His ability to build and lead great teams in local, regional, and state facilities has been a cornerstone of his success.

Adam attributes much of his professional growth to the exceptional individuals he has worked with. “From my early AUSTSWIM, Swimming Australia, and lifeguard days to coaching, SSCT, and now at the YMCA, I’ve had the privilege of working with innovative, creative, and inspiring partners, staff, and leaders,” he explains. This environment of continuous improvement and learning has driven both personal and organisational growth.

One of the most significant lessons Adam has learned is the importance of negotiation to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. “Negotiate to create a win/win for all,” he emphasises, highlighting the collaborative spirit that has defined his career.

First Position: Lifeguard, Swim Teacher
Early Leadership Roles: Aquatic Manager, State Sport Centres Trust
Senior Leadership Positions: General Manager Venues, State Sport Centres Trust, General Manager SALC
Greatest Learning: Negotiate to create a win / win for all.

➤ IMPLEMENTATION AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Ongoing Professional Development and Learning

Workers in the industry have highlighted that they want to participate in increased professional development and upskilling. Alongside this, there are significant opportunities to strengthen and systematise professional development and the continuous improvement of capabilities across the aquatic workforce.

Through continuous learning and development, individuals within the aquatic sector can aspire to and achieve high levels of professional success and satisfaction, contributing to the industry's overarching goals of safety, inclusion, and community service.

Several research initiatives for the aquatic workforce have identified key themes across the aquatic workforce which included:

- Workers generally desired to transition away from annual refresher training on the same content, and move towards a more continuing education and upskilling model. This needs to be balanced against research which shows detrimental impacts of drop-off on core technical competencies, particularly when it comes to rescue and resuscitation.
- Workers identified they needed more development in areas such as soft skills and business performance capabilities, not just the competencies and capabilities covered by industry training products.
- Workers identified that when it came to in-service training and internal professional development opportunities provided by their employers, in most cases these were limited, insufficient and did not meet the basic requirements of safety and best practice frameworks.

Taken together, these suggest that current licensing and accreditation schemes could be streamlined and coordinated to ensure workers have consistent and universal access to sufficient skills maintenance and learning and development opportunities. This will provide governments, community and aquatic facility owners and operators the trust that industry guidelines and standards are universally understood and adhered to across the workforce, while improving the standard of safety practices and service delivery across the industry and in the community.

➤ COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this framework by the aquatic industry is necessary in order for the framework to have a meaningful impact. Successful implementation requires a multifaceted approach, underpinned by a deep-seated commitment from both leadership and workers within the national aquatic industry.

Commitment and conviction is needed not only to recognise the intrinsic value of aquatic facilities in our communities but also underscore the critical role of a skilled, knowledgeable, and safety-focused workforce in safeguarding the community and elevating the professionalism and appeal of careers within our industry.

The Essential Elements for Maximising Impact

Industry-wide Principles

- 1. Implementation of the National Aquatic Workforce Framework:**
For the framework to effectively serve as a tool to support industry development and operational practices, a commitment to its full implementation and its comprehensive implementation and ongoing refinement is vital. This ensures that the framework functions as a guiding principle and tool towards achieving excellence in thereby enhancing the overall impact of the industry's efforts.
- 2. Alignment of Systems and Incentives:**
Aligning operational systems and incentives with the objectives of the framework will foster an environment conducive to continuous improvement, safety, and professional development. Such alignment ensures that the industry moves collectively towards its goals, thereby amplifying the framework's impact.
- 3. Commitment to Values:**
A shared commitment to core values, including safety, teamwork, learning and development, community engagement, adaptability, and ethical integrity, is essential. These values, identified through extensive industry consultation, must permeate all aspects of employee experience, workforce development, and service delivery, serving as the foundation for enhancing industry standards and practices.
- 4. Community Safety:**
Reaffirming our dedication to community safety is paramount. By focusing on drowning prevention, education, and the application of best practices in aquatic safety, as well as improving workforce safety capabilities, the industry can make a significant contribution to community wellbeing and enhance its value proposition to communities and governments.

Employer Commitments

- 1. Investing in Professional Development:**
Acknowledging that our staff and leaders are our most valuable assets, an investment in their professional development and capability enhancement is essential. Providing access to ongoing training, development programs, certification / registration systems, and career advancement opportunities will foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.
- 2. Adherence to Safety and Best Practice Principles:**
Operations must adhere to the highest standards of safety, as outlined in the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations. The commitment to maintaining safe, well-maintained facilities and a rigorous safety culture is key to maximising the framework's effectiveness.
- 3. Strengthening Career Development Pathways:**
Creating clear and accessible entry and career pathways within the industry and individual organisations is crucial for attracting, retaining, and nurturing talent. These pathways should recognise professional achievement and support the progression of individuals in alignment with their career goals.

Worker Commitments

- 1. Professional Excellence:**
Maintaining the highest standards of professional excellence, ethical conduct, and continuous learning is a commitment that each worker must make. This includes adherence to safety and best practice frameworks, personal skill development, and active participation in professional development opportunities.
- 2. Promotion of Safety and Community Wellbeing:**
Workers must commit to actively promoting safety within aquatic environments, including vigilant supervision, education on water safety, prevention and de-escalation of incidents, and emergency response. This proactive approach to safety is essential for maximising the framework's impact.
- 3. Engagement and Advocacy:**
Committing to act as ambassadors for drowning prevention and the enhancement of public safety in aquatic activities is crucial. By exemplifying the principles and values of the framework, workers play a pivotal role in its successful implementation and in promoting a culture of safety and professionalism within the industry.

The effective realisation of this framework's potential hinges on these commitments, embodying a comprehensive and unified approach to advancing safety, capability, and competency within the aquatic industry. Royal Life Saving Australia calls on all stakeholders reading this framework to uphold the above principles and commit to their implementation.

The development of this framework represents a culmination of extensive research, workshopping, and consultation. It is a comprehensive blueprint designed to enhance the capabilities, safety standards, and professional development of the aquatic workforce, ultimately contributing to drowning prevention and the provision of safer aquatic environments for communities.

Using the Framework

The framework serves as a guide, advocating for best practices rather than prescribing specific approaches for individuals or organisations. It encourages the aquatic industry to apply or adapt its components to enhance workforce safety, capability, adaptability, and leadership.

By documenting capabilities and advocating for clear career pathways, it seeks to broaden participation in the sector, supporting both organisational objectives and personal career aspirations.

Implementation Considerations

For the framework to achieve its intended impact, a collaborative and committed approach to implementation is required from all stakeholders within the aquatic industry ecosystem.

Governments are encouraged to recognise and support the framework’s objectives through policy and funding strategies. Aligning job skills priority lists and developing incentives and programs that strengthen the capabilities of the aquatic workforce are critical steps. Governments play a pivotal role in setting the agenda for skills development and employment, making their support essential for the framework’s success.

Employers within the aquatic industry should integrate the framework into their business systems. This includes aligning job advertisements, position descriptions, contracts, incentives, policies, performance indicators, and training and development programs with the capabilities identified in the framework. By doing so, employers will not only enhance the competency and professionalism of their workforce but also contribute to a safer and more inclusive industry.

Workers are encouraged to align their professional behaviours with the framework and commit to continuous professional development. Embracing the values, behaviours, and skills outlined in the framework will enable workers to grow within their roles and contribute more effectively to their organisations and communities.

Training Organisations and **Peak Bodies** should identify and bridge the gaps between Vocational Education and Training (VET) products and the workplace application of the capabilities needed in the aquatic industry, identified in this framework. In doing so, they can ensure that training programs are relevant, up-to-date, and aligned with industry needs, thus enhancing the employability and effectiveness of the workforce.

Industry Bodies, in collaboration with Royal Life Saving Australia, are tasked with supporting universal adoption of the framework and its integration with advocacy and business planning for future industry support initiatives such as professional development and recognition activities and similar initiatives.

Industry Licensing and Accreditation

There have been significant challenges highlighted in the research and the symposium workshops with the current architecture of industry licensing and accreditation schemes. The main challenge being that there are too many inconsistencies, and that there is difficulty tracking equivalency between schemes. For the industry to move towards a more mature and professionalised model, it is recommended that licensing and accreditation schemes be streamlined and coordinated, and possibly centralised.

While there is some evidence and appetite to review and update current systems, further work is needed to:

- 1) Explore what a viable and system of continuous learning could look like for the aquatic industry
- 2) Understand the full opportunities and risks of transitioning current systems
- 3) Consult and work with employers, workers, training, licensing and accrediting bodies to understand their specific needs and requirements and to co-design a suitable solution

Royal Life Saving Australia will continue to facilitate a collaborative and evidence-informed exploration of this opportunity with stakeholders.

In Conclusion

The successful implementation of the National Aquatic Workforce Framework demands commitment, collaboration, and action from all stakeholders. By working together we can ensure that the aquatic industry remains a vibrant, safe, and rewarding field of employment.

This framework sets the stage for a unified approach to professional development, safety, and service quality within the aquatic sector, promising a future where aquatic facilities continue to play a vital role in community health, safety, and wellbeing.



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> KEY TERMS

A workforce framework will invariably use a range of interrelated terms that can be defined and used in differing ways depending on the scope, function and context of the framework and each of the key terms within.

These definitions have been provided in an additional resource to enable a common and integrated understanding of the key terms in the context of their use in this particular framework.

Scan below to review the definitions.





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