

SPECIALISED ACCESS AND INCLUSION LESSONS (SAIL)

Framework

ROYAL LIFE SAVING
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Swim and SURVIVE
Access and Equity

BACKGROUND

The local pool is a vital community space where many people first experience weightlessness, learn foundational water safety skills, and escape the summer heat. Early swimming lessons introduce skills that foster lifelong participation in aquatic activities and build appreciation for the physical, social, and wellbeing benefits associated with the aquatic industry.

Australia's aquatic and recreation centres generate $12.84 billion in annual social value, highlighting their importance as essential public health and community infrastructure. More than 67,000 workers are employed nationally across the aquatic sector, including operators, lifeguards, swim teachers, and support staff[1].

Aquatic facilities receive 421 million visits each year, delivering an average economic benefit of $30.50 per visit. Earlier social return on investment (SROI) estimates reported $4.87 for every $1 spent in capital cities and $2.18 in regional Australia, based on $97.7 million in annual expenditure generating $380 million in social return. These figures have now been superseded by the 2025 valuation, which captures broader health, safety, and social outcomes across Australia's 2,103 public aquatic facilities[2].

In Western Australia, aquatic facilities deliver measurable benefits through increased physical activity, improved safety outcomes through drowning prevention and incident response, and strengthened social outcomes through community connection and equitable access. These findings are outlined in the 2025 State of Australian Aquatic Facilities report.

Despite these benefits, a significant challenge remains. Every new generation must acquire essential water safety skills, and it is critical that no one is left behind. People with disabilities face substantial barriers to safe aquatic participation. Autism Swim reports that half of all children on the autism spectrum wander, often toward water, and are 160 times more likely to drown than their peers.

Barriers such as limited access, a lack of suitable programs, and the cost of targeted swimming and water safety education for children with disabilities all contribute to inequitable participation.

Meaningful change is required. The establishment of the Royal Life Saving WA Disability Steering Committee, together with this Framework, represents an important step toward addressing existing gaps in swimming and water safety education and improving safe, inclusive aquatic participation for people with disabilities.

Barriers to Safe Aquatic Participation



Limited Access



Lack of programs



Cost of programs

Removing barriers creates opportunities for every child to learn essential swimming and water safety skills

[1] PwC Australia & Royal Life Saving Society – Australia. Health, Social and Economic Value of the National Aquatic Industry. Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, 2022. (Source of earlier SROI figures: $4.87 capital cities; $2.18 regional; $97.7M expenditure; $380M social return; ~4,000 frontline aquatic staff.)

[2] Royal Life Saving Society – Australia. State of Australian Aquatic Facilities 2025. March 2025. (Source of updated national valuation: $12.84B annual social value; 421M visits; 2,103 facilities; $30.50 benefit per visit; 67,000 industry workers.)

PURPOSE

The Specialised Access and Inclusion Lessons (SAIL) Framework is founded on the belief that every person, regardless of disability, developmental difference, or additional support needs, deserves access to safe, meaningful, and empowering aquatic experiences. It recognises that water is both a vital environment for learning essential life skills and a powerful therapeutic space. The Framework therefore seeks to remove the barriers that have traditionally prevented equitable participation.

The SAIL Framework aims to:

- Deliver lifelong water safety skills that equip individuals with the knowledge, confidence, and practical ability to navigate aquatic environments safely throughout their lives.
- Reduce drowning risk by ensuring no person is excluded from foundational swimming and water safety education due to disability or additional needs, closing a critical gap in community safety.
- Provide a supported pathway into mainstream aquatic participation, offering structured progression that respects individual capability while promoting inclusion in broader community programs.
- Promote holistic wellbeing across physical, social, and emotional domains through intentional, adaptive, and engaging aquatic experiences that foster confidence, connection, and personal growth.



SAIL ENDORSEMENT

The SAIL Endorsement recognises aquatic facilities and swim programs that deliver safe, inclusive, high-quality swimming lessons for people with disabilities. These standards ensure programs meet best-practice requirements in training, safety, accessibility, safeguarding, and reporting.

Facilities endorsed as SAIL Locations demonstrate excellence in disability inclusion and aquatic safety, and show a strong commitment to supporting people with disabilities through adaptive training and accessible facilities.

Insert Endorsement Badge

CHILD SAFEGUARDING REQUIREMENTS

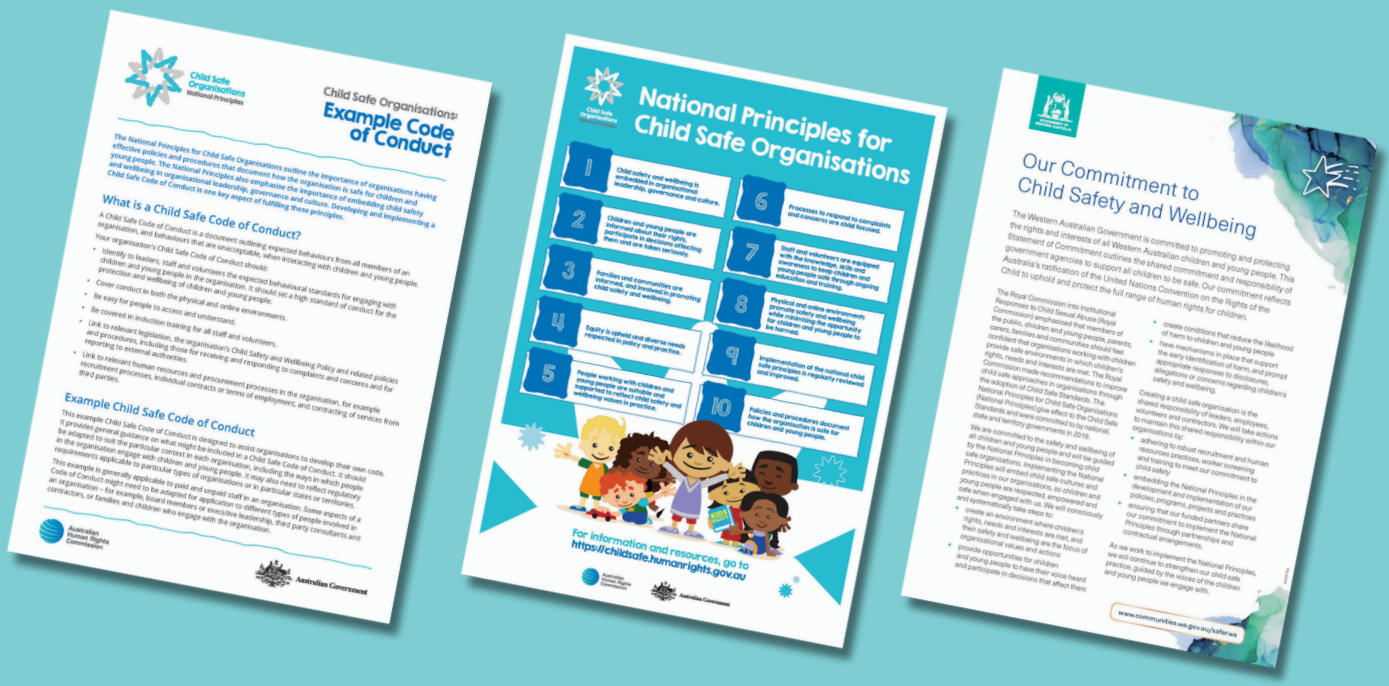
Royal Life Saving WA (RLSSWA)'s SAIL endorsement prioritises child safeguarding by ensuring all staff possess the vital capabilities needed to keep children safe. Consequently, SAIL locations must demonstrate full compliance with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Requirements



- A formal Child Safeguarding Policy including:
  - Working with Children Checks requirements
  - Code of conduct
  - Behaviour expectations
  - Safe physical contact guidelines
  - Photography and digital media rules
  - Complaint and disclosure pathways
  - Incident response procedures
- Mandatory Working with Children Checks for all staff.
- Mandatory reporting procedures for suspected harm.
  - Disability-specific safeguarding measures:
  - Communication supports for non-verbal children
  - Extra supervision for children with elopement risks
  - Trauma-informed handling of distress
- Annual safeguarding audits and continuous improvement plans.

EXAMPLES OF RESOURCES AND REQUIREMENTS



INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS, COMPETENCIES AND TRAINING

Instructor capability is fundamental to Royal Life Saving's SAIL endorsement. To uphold this standard, every staff member must undertake comprehensive training, be formally assessed, and consistently demonstrate competence in disability inclusive aquatic instruction. This capability extends beyond technical teaching skills. It requires instructors to understand diverse learner needs, apply adaptive teaching strategies, communicate effectively, and create safe, welcoming aquatic environments for people of all abilities.

RLSSWA's approach emphasises ongoing professional development, reflective practice, and evidence-based instruction. Staff are expected to maintain current knowledge of inclusive methodologies, respond confidently to a wide range of physical, sensory, cognitive, and behavioural needs, and model best practice inclusion in every session.

By embedding these expectations into the SAIL endorsement, RLSSWA ensures that aquatic centres deliver programs that are not only safe and technically sound, but genuinely accessible, empowering, and equitable for all participants.).



Minimum requirements:

- Aquatic Teaching Qualification: RLSSWA Swim Teacher, AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety, or an equivalent recognised certification.
- Safety and Resuscitation: Current First Aid (HLTAID011) and CPR (HLTAID009) certifications.
- Inclusion and Diversity Training: Completed Disability Awareness Training
- Specialised Aquatic Training: Completed disability-specific aquatic training (RLSSWA, AUSTSWIM, Autism Swim, or others).
- Rescue Qualification: Current Bronze Medallion or an equivalent recognised rescue certification (desirable).

PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND DELIVERY MODEL

Endorsed SAIL providers should deliver the WA Swim and Survive curriculum, embedding specialised disability awareness and adaptive delivery models to ensure comprehensive inclusion.

PROGRAM STREAMS

Adaptive Lessons (1:1)	Tailored high-support instruction addressing complex communication, sensory regulation, and specific physical requirements.
Inclusive Small Groups	Peer learning (2-4 participants) grouping participants by skill levels, sensory profiles, and compatible learning styles.
Mainstream Transition Pathway	A criteria-driven, phased process to seamlessly integrate participants into standard Swim & Survive programs.
Recreation and Therapy Stream	Low-pressure sessions prioritising physical mobility, sensory soothing, water relaxation, and positive social interaction.

LESSON DELIVERY

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PRICING STRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS

To enforce accountability and fairness, SAIL delivery locations must maintain transparent pricing. Lesson costs must remain equitable without compromising participant safety under any circumstance.

Where the cost of one-to-one lessons exceeds $30 per 30-minute lesson, the SAIL delivery partner should explore available subsidy pathways, including disability-specific grants, philanthropic funding, local government support, and participant-specific funding sources, to help reduce cost barriers for participants.

Higher lesson costs may be justified where additional staffing, specialised equipment, complex behavioural support, or significant physical assistance is required to ensure participant safety and achieve quality outcomes.

Conversely, the cost of disability group lessons may be less than $30 per session where support requirements are lower, staffing needs are reduced, or economies of scale can be achieved through group delivery.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Continuous improvement is fundamental to maintaining alignment with RLSSWA endorsement standards.

Endorsed SAIL locations must demonstrate transparent reporting, timely compliance, and a commitment to ongoing service improvement. Monitoring activities may include annual compliance reviews, participant feedback, incident reporting, staff competency records, and assessment of facility accessibility and safety.

RLSSWA will work collaboratively with facilities to review performance against endorsement requirements, identify opportunities for improvement, and support the implementation of corrective actions where required.

Facilities must be safe, accessible, and appropriately equipped to meet the diverse needs of participants with disability. Findings from monitoring and evaluation activities will inform continuous quality improvement and contribute to the ongoing enhancement of service delivery.



ENDORSEMENT BENEFITS

RECOGNITION AS A ROYAL LIFE SAVING WA ENDORSED SAIL PROVIDER

Demonstrates commitment to delivering high-quality, accessible swimming and water safety education for people with disability and diverse support needs.

TRUSTED QUALITY MARK

Provides families, carers and referral agencies with confidence that lessons are delivered in line with recognised inclusion standards and best practice.

STAFF CAPABILITY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Access to specialised inclusion resources, training opportunities and industry guidance to support continuous improvement.

INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP

Positions endorsed providers as leaders in aquatic inclusion and accessibility within their communities.

ENHANCED PARTNERSHIPS AND REFERRALS

Strengthens connections with disability organisations, schools, allied health professionals and community support services.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Supports ongoing review of accessibility, participant outcomes and inclusive teaching practices.

USE OF SAIL ENDORSEMENT BRANDING

Permission to display the SAIL endorsed logo and promotional materials to demonstrate commitment to inclusion.

CONTRIBUTION TO SAFER COMMUNITIES

Supports equitable access to vital swimming and water safety skills for all members of the community

ENDORSEMENT PROCESS

1. Submit a SAIL Expression of Interest (EOI) together with a completed Endorsement Checklist.
2. The EOI and checklist are reviewed through an internal assessment process.
3. Applicants who meet the required criteria will be granted an endorsement.
4. Endorsements are reviewed annually and must be renewed to maintain endorsement status.

START YOUR JOURNEY HERE!
SAIL EOI Form

ROYAL LIFE SAVING
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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