

# 2024 National Championships Report

## – Masters Swimming Northern Territory (MSNT)

### CONVENOR'S REPORT

It is with pleasure that I report on the successful 48th National Championships. Feedback during and after the event was overwhelmingly positive, with the overall demeanour of the competitors throughout the meet exemplified the "friendship and fun" part of the AUSSI motto; and the results attested to the "fitness" component.

#### The Venue

The event was held at Parap Pool in Darwin, a new pool built to World Aquatics standards and opened in 2018. The pool itself was completely fit for purpose. But the venue suffers from a total lack of permanent spectator seating and shade over any part other than the pool itself. Seating, in particular, created logistical problems in terms of sourcing, transport and positioning and the portable shade cover provided for both officials and spectators was less than adequate.

Despite these problems, the overwhelming feedback from competitors was positive, with many commenting on how much they enjoyed the tropical parkland setting because of its stark contrast with air-conditioned indoor centres in which they normally compete.

From an organisational perspective, preparation of the pool and its surrounds presented a major workload for the organisers and added significantly to the costs. This included: shade and temporary seating (commercial hire); touch pads and associated electronic/computer equipment (hired from Swimming NT); and external catering for officials (Casuarina Swimming Club). A large trailer of ice water was provided free by Power and Water NT and commercial vendors supplied food and coffee for competitors and spectators. Volunteers received a free coffee voucher when they signed in each day.

#### Registration

There were 547 individual entries and 538 took part, making this the largest single-sport event ever held in the Northern Territory. This was financially beneficial but created some logistical problems that are outlined below.

#### The Program

The program used was Option 2 from the National Championships Meet Guide. This proved to be too long for the time available and consideration should be given to providing an option that has only the 800m Freestyle and perhaps some relays on Day 1.

#### Registration Procedure

Registration was via the Swim Central system, which caused a major problem with non-seeding of heats because of the inability to submit entry times on it. One of the results was that heats with widely varying times internally took far longer to run than they would have otherwise with proper seeding.

#### Finance

The basis on which the budget was framed was to break even or make a small profit on operating costs, thus keeping entry fees as low as possible, and to make a modest profit from sponsorship. To this end the budget had a break-even point of 375 that was based on the attendance of 393 at both the 1993 and 1999 National Swims in Darwin and on five events per swimmer. In hindsight, this was over-conservative but, for a small branch such as the MSNT, there is no room for risking a loss of even modest proportions.

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In the event the operating profit was significantly higher than anticipated. There were several reasons for this, the main ones being the larger number of entries than projected and the high number of events per swimmer. Relay entries were also significantly above the 160 estimated in the budget. Some expenditure items, eg, printing, were much lower than budgeted because of last minute in-kind government sponsorship (from, eg, electorate offices) that obviated the use of commercial printers, while others, eg, medals and trophies, were higher than budgeted. Cash sponsorship (which cannot be factored into budget estimates) also provided a substantial top-up to the operating profit.

Preparing a National Swim budget is an imprecise exercise when the number of entries and the number of events per entrant are so difficult to predict; however, given the experience of the last three National Championships, it would appear safe for future organisers to budget on the basis of seven swims per competitor where 12 individual entries are permitted.

### Grants And Sponsorship

MSNT was fortunate to receive a grant of \$15,000 from the NT Major Events Corporation, a government body established to provide support to events ranging from sporting championships and cultural festivals to children's events and music festivals. The focus of NTMEC is on increasing the economic benefits from these major events and independent research has shown just seven NTMEC-supported events delivered an economic benefit of \$8.4 million to the Territory in the 2020-2021 financial year.

One of the Organising Committee members was responsible for seeking sponsorship from individuals and businesses.

Sponsorship was divided into three categories, Major - \$4,000 or more, Minor - \$1000 to \$3,999 and Race Sponsor - minimum \$200.

There was one Major Sponsor – NTMEC @ \$15,000; 9 Minor Sponsors, including two members of Darwin Stingers who gave \$1000 each, and Darwin City Council, which subsidised half the pool hire cost; and 24 Race Sponsors, all members of Darwin Stingers Club.

### Profit and Loss

Masters Swimming Northern Territory  
National Championships  
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Account	Total \$
<b>Trading Income</b>	
4010 - Registration	48,870.00
4020 - Individual Entries	31,554.00
4030 - Relay Entries	5,120.00
4040 - OWS Entries	7,840.00
4050 - Presentation Dinner	21,185.00
4052 - Shirts	4,050.00
4054 - Swim Cap	2,500.00
4060 - Programs	640.00
<b>Total Trading Income</b>	<b>121,759.00</b>
	<b>0</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	
	<b>121,759.00</b>
	<b>0</b>
<b>Other Income</b>	
4070 - Sponsorship	11,900.00
4075 - Donations	4,900.00
4080 - Grants	15,000.00
8001 - Bank Interest	453.01
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>32,253.01</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>	
6001 - National Sanction Fee	5,782.00
6002 - Sundry Expenses	2,347.31
6003 - Accommodation, Travel and other Expenses for Officials	3,249.30
6005 - Transfer Fees	3,150.53
6102 - Promotions	4,872.87
6201 - Swimmers Bag	2,530.76
6202 - Competitor Swim Caps	2,392.50
6203 - Competitor Shirts	4,514.40
6301 - Pool Hire - 4 days	3,600.00
6302 - Equipment Hire	500.00
6401 - Pool Expenses	12,956.00
6402 - OWS Electronic Timing	5,868.40
6403 - OWS Other Expenses	3,439.19
6501 - Medals	11,732.39
6502 - Trophy Engraving & Replicas	789.60
6602 - Refreshments	2,804.50
6603 - Officials Shirts	2,358.40
6604 - Volunteer Shirts	963.60
6701 - Presentation Dinner Meal	23,000.00
6703 - Band/DJ	640.00
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>97,491.75</b>
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>56,520.26</b>

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### Technical

The program ran behind the timeline each day by approximately an hour. Reasons for this were:

- We allowed 45 seconds between heats but because of the use of manual watches as back-up times extended the time between heats to approximately 60 seconds.
- Due to the difficulty older swimmers had exiting the water due to the positioning of the lane ropes adjacent to the wall each side of the pool the swimmers in the earlier heats were asked to exit the water at the completion of their swim which extended the break between heats. This was done as a safety consideration.
- Because backstroke ledges were used and there were only two IOTs at the start end of the pool, extra time was required for them to install the ledges. The majority of swimmers chose not to use the ledges and a majority of those who did use them had not used them before and had no idea of what they needed to do, which delayed the next heat while the IOTs installed the ledges and got the settings correct.
- AOE timing ran smoothly other than a technical issue on Day 4. The system had to be shut down and rebooted and checks done to ensure pads were active again before swimming could recommence, delaying the meet for 15 minutes. Back-up buttons and touch pads functioned satisfactorily with only the usual issues encountered at a meet that were immediately rectified with no delays incurred.
- The number of Technical Officials who volunteered to assist was a little disappointing and meant that there were minimal officials on pool deck for the entire meet, especially IOTs. It also meant that some of the non-swimming officials spent entire sessions on pool deck with limited opportunity for a break. This was a concern due to the heat, especially on Day 1, which had two 5-hour sessions. The officials were provided regularly with refreshments but, for some, a 15-minute break would have been appreciated.
- Pool set up was excellent each day and the support provided by the organising committee and the pool staff to resolve any issues was excellent.
- In general, calling for swimmers to assist with timekeeping worked reasonably well, except on Day 1. Allocating each state a lane to provide timekeepers for did not work very well.

### Competitor Problems/Disqualifications

#### (a) Total number of Infractions - 28

##### *Summary of Infractions*

Did not finish	4
Freestyle	3 - all start infractions
Breaststroke	6 - 2 start infractions, 4 stroke infractions
Backstroke	6 - all turn infractions
Butterfly	2 - stroke infractions
Individual Medley	3 - 2 backstroke turn infractions, 1 fly stroke infraction)
Relays	4 - all change-over infractions)

#### (b) Total number of Protests - 3

All protests were disallowed. Two related to stroke/turn infractions; one related to the official time posted on the results.

Exiting the pool was an issue for some of the older and less able-bodied competitors due to the lane ropes being adjacent to the pool walls and the positioning of the steps in the walls.

Swimmers need to be educated on the meaning of the various whistles the Referee blows. (ie, long drawn-out whistle blast to get swimmers onto the blocks, two short whistle blasts to exit the pool etc).

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When over the top starts were being used, swimmers were trying to exit the water when the next heat was being whistled up to the blocks. In the 50m events swimmers were getting on the blocks when the whistle was given at the other end of the pool for the previous heat to exit the water.

Swimmers need to be aware the Technical Officials will not always tell them they have been disqualified when they exit the pool. At this meet, due to the limited number of officials and using over the top starts, it was not possible to talk to those swimmers who were disqualified.

### Lessons to be Learned

- (a) National Championships need more Technical Officials than volunteered for this event. All states are struggling for Technical Officials, but this is especially true for small MSA member states like NT, TAS, and SA who rely on interstate volunteers to run the Nationals.
- (b) Consideration needs to be given to the use of backstroke ledges. The number of swimmers who knew how to use them was minimal and, more importantly, there were not enough IOTs to run them efficiently.
- (c) There needs to be a procedure in place for swimmers to talk to the Meet Referee about their DQ first and then, if they are not happy with the outcome of that discussion, they be given the option to submit a protest form. Consideration needs to be given to charging a fee to submit a protest. At this meet the swimmers went to the Help Desk when they saw on the Results Board that they had been disqualified and filled out the protest form. If they had had the opportunity to talk to the Referee first at least two of the protest would not have been submitted.

### Open Water Swim

The Open Water Swim was held in the Darwin Waterfront Lagoon, with 103 female and 59 male swimmers, starting in waves 2 min apart. There were three 1.6 km waves (2 laps) and two 3.2 km waves (4 laps). Electronic timing and timing chips were used successfully. There were no incidents or injuries and no disqualifications.

### Safety

Safety supervision in the 50m pool for warm-up prior to each day's program was done by members of Darwin Stingers Club, with lane signage for stroke separation and starts. Warm-up/cool down in the 25m pool during events was supervised by club members and pool staff. A club member who is a sports medicine practitioner was always available, as were pool staff, and the venue is only 100m from the St John Ambulance HQ.

Fortunately, there were no major incidents.

During their attendance the volunteers attended to eight people who suffered from minor complaints such as breathing difficulties and they needed only rest or oxygen.

### Social

A very successful Welcome Function was hosted by the NT Minister for Sport at Parliament House on Thursday 2 May. There were approximately 160 attendees, with many reporting that it was the best "Welcome to Country" they had attended. It was an informal and friendly start to the competition.

The Presentation Dinner was held in the grounds of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory on Monday 6 May with approximately 230 attendees. It was a beautiful venue on the harbour with wonderful views. There was an error in the provision of trophies – an unfortunate oversight, which has now been rectified. There were complaints about the time it took the food to be served. In hindsight, it would have been better for food service to begin 30 minutes earlier, as the venue was well aware of the numbers they were catering for. Last minute changes to the selected menu were not advised until food was served.