
To: State Administrators/Secretaries, National Committee Chairs, MSA National Board, State Presidents and National Recorder

From: Rob Abernethy (General Manager)

Date: Friday 26 June 2026

Subject: Update to Masters Swimming Australia (MSA) Swimming Rules including Multi-Class

At the recent MSA Board Meeting held on 18 June 2026, the Board approved the proposed amendments as submitted by the National Technical Committee (NTC) that require updates to the MSA Swimming Rules (inc. Multi-Class) which come into effect 9 July 2026.

The NTC proposed that the *MSA Swimming Rules (inc. Multi-Class)* be updated to integrate the current World Aquatics Competition Regulations – Part Two: Swimming Rules and Part Eight: Masters Rules (updated on 18th February 2026) subject to minor changes to conform with existing MSA Swimming Rules.

To view the updated MSA Swimming Rules (inc. Multi-Class) which come into effect 9 July 2026 please click here (note the updated MSA SW Rule are found below the current MSA SW Rules on the webpage):

<https://mastersswimming.org.au/rules-and-policies/msa-competition-rules/msa-swimming-rules/>

However, for transparency and ease of review, we have provided the summary documentation from the NTC review.

Background

World Aquatic review and update the competition regulations of all the aquatic sports, including swimming and masters swimming, periodically. The most recent review was undertaken early in the 2026 with the updated competition regulations being updated on 18th February 2026 and becoming immediately effective from that date.

Under MSA General Rule GR 4.1 the NTC will consider the rule changes made by World Aquatic and prepare a draft document of the MSA Swimming Rules incorporating those rule

changes that they deem are relevant to ensure the continued fairness, integrity and safety at all MSA pool competitions. The NTC has completed their review of the recent changes and prepared the necessary documents for approval by MSA.

These amendments have been based on the current World Aquatics Competition Regulations – Part Two: Swimming Rules and Part Eight: Masters Rules (updated on 18th February 2026) and the current MSA rules. In drafting the proposed amendments, the following points were considered:

- Inclusion of MSA's unique rules (e.g. Medical Disability swim rules).
- Use of World Aquatics wording where possible, only changing references to World Aquatics, Olympic Games etc. and replacing them with Masters Swimming Australia, National Championships etc.
- Incorporating World Aquatics Masters Rules at the appropriate places making reference to the World Aquatics Masters rule numbers for clarity. Note: World Aquatics have the Masters Rules as a separate section to the main World Aquatics Swimming Rules with unique numbering so they cannot easily be integrated into the main rules.
- Inclusion of 'Clarifications' to rules SW 2.3.6, SW 2.8.5 and SW 4.1.1

The most significant changes made by World Aquatics that have been incorporated into the MSA Swimming Rules (inc. Multi-Class) are:

- **SW 2.1.1M** - A list of the Technical Officials has been included again. This list was omitted from the World Aquatic Competition Regulations in 2022 but has been added back in their current 2026 update.
- **SW 3.2.4.4.6M** - Specifically outlines that heats are to run slowest to fastest in both heat and deck seeding.
- **SW 5.4 and 8.6 Freestyle and Butterfly:** Allows swimmers to be completely submerged when coming into the wall. Once some part of the head of the Athlete has passed the 5 metre-mark, immediately prior to reaching for the finish wall, the Athlete may be completely submerged.
- **SW 7 Breaststroke:** Additional wording has been added regarding an Athletes position when leaving the wall after a turn. The rule now reads:
"SW 7.3 It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time, except at the turn after the touch of the wall where it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast from the beginning of the first arm stroke after leaving the wall. From the start and throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order. All movements of the arms will be simultaneous without alternating movement."

- **SW 8 Butterfly:** Additional wording has been added regarding an Athletes position when leaving the wall after a turn. The rule now reads:
 “SW 8.2 It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time, except at the turn after the touch of the wall where it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast from the beginning of the first arm stroke after leaving the wall.”
- **SW 10 The Race:** There has always been a swimming protocol that an Athlete must remain in their lane until directed by the Referee to exit the pool but this was not formerly in the rules. This has now been added to the World Aquatic Competition Regulations: Part 8 Masters. The rule reads:
 “SW 10.2.8M An Athlete must remain in their lane until directed by the Referee to exit the pool (which may, at the discretion of the Referee, be during the race, after the race or after the start of the following race). An Athlete who has completed the course distance and directed by the Referee to exit the pool, must leave the pool as soon as possible without obstructing or otherwise interfering with any Athlete who has not yet completed the course distance.”
- World Aquatic have replaced the words swimmer or competitor with 'Athlete'.
- World Aquatic have replaced the word shall with 'will'.

Other than that there has been some rearrangement of the order of rules, some rules split into two rules and some minor rewording.