

# Darwin Surf Life Saving Club



JUNIOR DEVELOPMENT

**2026**

**NIPPER & Starfish**

**Nipper**

PARENT HANDBOOK

[www.darwinsurfclub.com.au](http://www.darwinsurfclub.com.au)

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## 1. OUR AIMS

We focus on having fun, teaching, enhancing skills and emphasising community awareness. We aim to ensure that beaches patrolled by Darwin Surf Life Saving Club are safe places to swim; to prevent the loss of life and to develop and educate our youth. *(Always swim between the flags of a patrolled beach)*

The vision for our Junior Members (Nippers) program is to provide a safe, friendly and welcoming environment where both Nippers and parents can learn about Surf Life Saving and to prepare our Nippers to eventually be patrolling members of our club.

The aims of the Nippers program are to:

- Develop surf awareness;
- Increase confidence and skills in beach related activities;
- Be inclusive and ensure the wellbeing of all children
- Offer training to those wanting to pursue competition or awards;
- Instil and re-enforce sun smart philosophies;
- Encourage enjoyable and healthy participation;
- Progress members towards surf awards for relevant age groups;
- Promote a child-safe culture and a culture of inclusion for all;
- Meet new friends.

## 2. ABOUT THE NIPPER PROGRAM

The **Nipper** program provides a fun way for children to enjoy the beach in a safe environment. Children participate in the Surf Life Saving Australia Junior Development Program, a sequential program of skills and surf understanding, which educates them on the safeties and hazards of the beach environment.

Surf life saving is an amazing activity for developing a child's confidence, knowledge and skills in the beach environment.

To join the Nipper program your child needs to be 5 years of age as at 30 September in the commencing year. The Nipper program accommodates age groups from 5years (U6) to 13years (U14).

Each year our Nippers are required to complete several competencies as part of their Surf Life Saving experience. These requirements vary depending on the age group. Age groups are determined by age on the 30<sup>th</sup> September each year (i.e. if your child is 9 on 30<sup>th</sup> September, he/she will be in the under 10 age group).

**Starfish Nippers** is a lifesaving skills program designed for children and young adults with a disability 6 years and older. The program aims to improve young

people with disabilities beach safety and water awareness skills. Originally started by volunteers at Anglesea SLSC, the Starfish Nipper program is now being run at lifesaving clubs around Australia and overseas. The program caters for participants with numerous disabilities including Autism, Asperger's and Down Syndrome.

Our Starfish group is an integral part of our Program at Darwin SLSC and meaningful inclusion is one of our key objectives; therefore, our Nipper age groups and Starfish group often team up and work together to achieve their goal of improving water awareness skills.

## **2.1 Number of Participants in the Nipper Program and Starfish Nippers**

The number of Nippers participating in any given age group shall be at the absolute discretion of the Director of Member Development and the Junior Coordinator. Membership and participation may be restricted so that each age group can maintain a healthy, manageable and safe level of participation.

## **2.2 Compulsory Skills Assessments**

Many activities are conducted in the water. To ensure that all Nippers have a suitable swimming ability to allow them to participate in these activities, Surf Life Saving Australia has developed a Junior Preliminary Skills Evaluation for each age group.

Every Nipper must participate in this evaluation, conducted by us, prior to participating in any water activity or training. The evaluation consists of a swim and a float which is progressively increased by age group and must be achieved before the Nipper may undertake any water related activities. We usually conduct this assessment in a pool environment at local pools and in the ocean at the beginning of each season.

If the Nipper shows successful demonstration of the Preliminary Skills Evaluation a second assessment known as the Competition Skills Evaluation is conducted to assess the Nipper for participation in water related events in competitions and carnivals.

These are two different assessments and one cannot be used to qualify a child for the other requirement.

Your child's pathway through the Nippers program is summarised in the table below:

## Preliminary Skills Evaluation table

Age Group	Preliminary Skill Evaluation	Competition Skill Evaluation	Cap Colours
<b>Under 6</b> Surf Play 1	Kick on wall with face in water Front glide. <b>Ratio 1:1</b> 30 second survival float with or without aid	<i>Ineligible to compete</i>	Orange
<b>Under 7</b> Surf Play 2	Torpedo/Front glide, kick 3m with face in water. <b>Ratio 1:1</b> 30 second survival float with or without aid	<i>Ineligible to compete</i>	Purple
<b>Under 8</b> Surf Aware 1	25 metre swim, <b>Ratio 1:1</b> (any recognised stroke) <b>Prefer Freestyle</b> 1 minute survival float	<b>Not required</b> Compete in Wade Race only in waist deep water	Green
<b>Under 9</b> Surf Aware 2	25 metre swim, <b>Ratio 1:1</b> (any recognised stroke) <b>Prefer Freestyle 150m</b> 1.5 min survival float	Minimum 150m open water swim	Yellow
<b>Under 10</b> Surf Safe 1	25 metre swim (Freestyle) <b>Prefer 150m. Ratio 1:3</b> 1.5 minute survival float	Minimum 150m open water swim	Red
<b>Under 11</b> Surf Safe 2	50 metre swim (Freestyle) <b>Prefer 200m. Ratio 1:3</b> 2 minute survival float	Minimum 200m open water swim	Light Blue
<b>Under 12</b> Surf Smart 1	100 metre swim (Freestyle) <b>Prefer 200m. Ratio 1:3</b> 2 minute survival float	Minimum 200m open water swim	Dark Blue
<b>Under 13</b> Surf Smart 2	150 metre swim (Freestyle) <b>Prefer 200m. Ratio 1:3</b> 3 minute survival float	Minimum 200m open water swim	Comp Cap
<b>Under 14</b> Surf Rescue Certificate or <b>SRC</b>	200 metre swim, (Freestyle, in less than 5 minutes). <b>Ratio 1:3</b> 3 minute survival float	Minimum 200m open water swim	Comp Cap
<b>Starfish</b>	Judged at the time <b>Ratio 1:1</b>	Distance Depending on each competitor.	Pink

For more comprehensive details of the Surf Education Programs for each age group, talk to the DSLSC Junior (Nippers) Coordinator.

## **2.3 Special Requirements for U6 & U7 Age Groups**

The emphasis in these age groups is to allow for Nippers to have fun and experience a small taste of Surf Life Saving. They will participate in a range of beach activities and shallow water activities only and may not under any circumstances participate in formal competition.

***All U6 & U7s must wear their age group coloured cap at all times during activities. See table on previous page.***

Participation in the program is subject to the following non-negotiable conditions:

- Having completed an enrolment and health form for the child prior to participating;
- The child being at least 5 years of age at the time of enrolment;
- **A parent/guardian remaining on the beach and assisting the Age Group Managers (AGMs) when requested and as required.**
- At least one parent **MUST** be a current registered member of the club (as defined in the Club's Regulations).

## **3. SUNDAY TRAINING**

### **3.1 Times**

Meet at Darwin Surf Life Saving Club, unless advised otherwise.

U6 – U14 9.00am to 10:30am - ***Sign On from 8:30am for a 9:00am start***

***All Nippers must be signed in by a parent/carer before going onto the beach and Signed off, by a parent /carer at the end of training, so that we can account for all Nippers.***

**PARENTS** - It is important that you **NEVER** leave your child unattended at Nippers. If a child is left unattended we may exclude that child from future participation in the program. As parents, you have a clear responsibility to act in a constructive and encouraging manner at all times that includes having an appointed carer present for your child for the duration of training.

Please advise the Nipper Coordinator or your child's Age Manager if you substitute the parent/caregiver responsible for your child.

## 3.2 Uniform and Clothing Requirements

Your child will need the following items each week:

- Swimmers
- Age Group Caps (purchased through the club)
- Long sleeve rash vest or protective top or stinger type suit **ALL AGES**. Rashies can be bought through the club.
- Wide brim or bucket style hat or legionnaire style cap. Can be bought through the club.
- Sun block (at least SPF 30+)
- Goggles
- Towel
- Water Bottle (filled with water only)
- Dry Clothes for after training (suggestion only)

Club rashie, swimmers, coloured age group caps, club competition caps and bucket hats are available for purchase at the Club. For all uniform enquiries and to order, please email [uniforms@darwinsurfclub.com.au](mailto:uniforms@darwinsurfclub.com.au)

*Please label all belongings clearly with your child's name.*

## 3.3 Age Group Cap (coloured) and DSLSC Competition Caps (Green and Yellow)

- All Nippers U6's through to U12's **must** wear a named, coloured cap that identifies them with a particular Age Group category.
- This assists Age Managers in identifying those Nippers in their Age Group and assists you in locating an Age Group on the beach at a quick glance and for safety reasons.
- Under 13's & U14's **must** wear the Darwin SLSC Competition Cap (*These caps can be purchased through the Club*).
- Darwin Competition Caps and Hi Vis Vests for **U9 – U14** (*SLSA supplied by SLSNT*) are required by all competitors, when competing at any interstate or NT State Title competitions.
- Please clearly write your child's name on the front of their cap. This helps Age Managers learn names and quickly return lost caps. In the unlikely event of something happening to your child they will be seen quickly.

### 3.4 Registration and Records

All members, one parent (associate) and child/children (Junior) need to be enrolled, via the online system, membership portal.

**IMPORTANT health issues or special requirements:** To ensure the safety and wellbeing of your child, please inform the Junior Coordinator of any health issues or special requirements for your child. We may need to disclose that information to your child’s Age Manager or to the duty Patrol Captain in order to maintain your child’s safety. Divulging any information about your child will be within the guidelines of SLISA’s Child Protection Commitment Statement (CPCS).

## 4. MEMBERSHIP FEES

One parent must be financial member of DSLSC, The minimum parent membership category is **Associate Member**. Membership fees (Nipper plus parent member fees) are payable at the start of the calendar year. Please discuss payment options with our Administration Coordinator. The 2026 \$100 NT Sports Voucher is accepted as payment of Nipper fees. Membership fees can be made via the secure **Payment Gateway**.

<b>DSLSC membership category</b>	<b>SLSA Category</b>	<b>DSLSC fee</b>
Nipper (Under 6 to Under 13)	Junior Active Member (5-13 years)	<b>\$75.00</b> (must also have 1 parent associate member <b>\$25.00</b> )
Cadet (Under 14 to Under 15)	Cadet Member (13 – 15 years)	<b>\$90.00</b>
Cadet, Active (Under 16 to Under 18)	Active (15 – 18 years)	<b>\$135.00</b>
Senior, Active (18yrs+)	Active (18 years and over)	<b>\$135.00</b>
Social	Associate	<b>\$25.00</b>
Family memberships		
<b>Family 1</b> - 1 active (patrol) parent + 1 child	Choose the appropriate category for each family member from the categories above	<b>\$145</b>
<b>Family 2</b> - 2 active (patrol) parents + 2 children		<b>\$295</b>
<b>Family 3</b> - 2 active parents (patrol) + more than 2 children		<b>\$390</b>

Age groups are determined by the your age on 30 September each year, for example a child aged 13 on September 30 will be a Cadet.

To finalise your membership you need to pay your fees. This can be done by clicking on the [SLISA Payment Gateway](#)

## **5. PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

As parents, you have an important role in the delivery and support of sporting activities for your children. We encourage you to share the experiences of the Nipper program with your children, especially with the younger age groups.

We welcome involvement within other aspects of the Club. This may include gaining various qualifications to assist in providing water safety, coaching specific disciplines, officiating, assisting with general administration and participating in social and fundraising activities or becoming a patrolling member of DSLSC.

We need your help each week with the following activities:

- Age Managing;
- Assisting the Age Managers to set up activities;
- Assisting the Age Managers during training;
- Assisting with packing up Nipper and Cadet equipment at the end of training;
- Ensuring your child washes and properly puts away surf boards they have used during training;
- Assisting with fundraising activities (ie; Club BBQ nights);
- Assisting with the BBQ on Sundays;
- Assisting with water safety (by first gaining a Surf Rescue Certificate or Bronze Medallion);
- Becoming an Official to assist at carnivals (short training courses are provided by Surf Life Saving NT).

## **6. CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

### **Parents, Caregivers & Spectators' Code of Behaviour**

- Remember that children participate in sport for their enjoyment and development.
- Encourage children to participate, do not force them.
- Focus on the child's efforts.
- Encourage children to play according to the rules and settle disagreements without resorting to hostility or violence.
- Never ridicule or yell at a child.
- Appreciate good performances by all participants.
- Respect officials' decisions.
- Show appreciation for coaches, age managers, officials and administrators.
- Respect the rights and dignity of others.

## Junior Member Code of Behaviour

*Please take time to discuss this code of behaviour with your child:*

- Play by the rules.
- Do not argue with an official.
- Control your temper.
- Work hard for yourself and your team.
- Treat all participants as you would like to be treated.
- Cooperate with your coach, AGM, teammates and opponents.
- Participate for your own enjoyment.
- Respect the rights and dignity of all other participants.
- Respect the equipment you use.
- Respect the club house.
- Be a good sport and applaud all good performances.

## Coaches/Officials' Code of Behaviour

- Promote and encourage fair play by and through its members.
- Ensure that the rules are fair and clearly understood by competitors.
- Abide by the rules and the spirit of the competition
- Be honest, fair and ethical in dealing with others
- Maintain strict impartiality
- Maintain a safe environment for others.
- Be respectful and considerate of others.
- Remember that young people participate for pleasure and winning is only part of the fun.
- Never ridicule or yell at a young competitor for making a mistake or not coming first.
- Operate within the rules and spirit of Surf Life Saving and teach your competitors to do the same.
- Ensure that the time competitors spend with you is a positive experience. All young people are deserving of equal attention and opportunities.
- Treat all members equally, regardless of gender, race or physical characteristics.
- Ensure that equipment and facilities meet the safety standards and are appropriate to the age and ability of all competitors.
- Display control, respect and professionalism to all involved with surf life saving. This includes opponents, coaches, officials, administrators, the media, parents and spectators. Encourage competitors to do the same.
- Obtain appropriate qualifications and keep up to date with the latest coaching practices and the principles of growth and development of young people.
- Don't interfere with the progress and/or conduct of competition unless called to do so by another official.

By joining Darwin Surf Life Saving Club you acknowledge and accept these codes of conduct and the SLSA Member Protection Policy.

We are committed to SLSA's Member Protection Policy and so we also provide a pathway for reporting breaches to this policy by following our grievance procedure. Any complaints or policy breaches should be reported by emailing the Club's Grievance Officer, at [grievance@darwinsurfclub.com.au](mailto:grievance@darwinsurfclub.com.au) who will adhere to the Reporting and Complaints Procedure as outlined in the SLSA Member Protection Policy and the DSLSC Constitution Section 43.

## **7. SWIMMING POLICY**

Being able to swim competently is an integral part of making children safe at the beach as well as allowing them to actively participate and enjoy Surf Life Saving activities.

**The Nippers program is not a “learn to swim” program.** We strongly encourage you to enrol your children in “learn to swim” classes or a swimming squad.

We do recognise that swimming in the sea is a new experience for many children and that even competent pool swimmers can find this challenging at first. Our aim is to encourage children and to help develop their confidence and their swimming skill level in the sea, as well as provide surf education.

## **8. SAFETY**

Safety is our first priority for all activities. Safety extends to safety on the beach, in the water and also the protection of all children.

### **8.1 Water Safety**

We endorse SLSA's Water Safety Procedure (May 2014). This procedure outlines the ratio of Water Safety Personnel to Junior Activities participants. The ratio ranges from 1:5 (one **qualified** person to five children) but may be decreased to 1:10 after a pre-activity risk assessment has deemed the Junior Activity to be 'low-risk conditions'.

The pre-activity risk assessment is carried out by the Water Safety Supervisor. The risk assessment notes the water conditions, weather conditions, the skill level of the participants, and identifies any other hazards. If the risk level is considered anything other than acceptable low-risk, then the activity may be modified, postponed or cancelled.

A **qualified** person is one who holds a proficient aquatic rescue qualification. The aquatic rescue qualifications are an SLSA Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) or Bronze Medallion (BM). The ability for us to run Nippers may be hampered by our ability to

have the correct ratios of qualified persons to Nippers. We strongly encourage you to gain this qualification and we run courses regularly (please ask the Junior Coordinator about upcoming courses). This is a great way to become involved with your children and we appreciate any assistance.

## **8.2 Sun Safety**

We aim to teach children about all aspects of surf/beach safety, including sun protection. We encourage all participants and spectators to follow these procedures:

- Seek shade wherever possible;
- Wear a long sleeve top;
- Wear a wide brimmed hat, bucket style hat or legionnaire style cap to protect face, ears and back of neck;
- Use a maximum protection broad spectrum sunscreen (at least SPF 30+) even on overcast days and re-apply after water activities;
- Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek and Slide.

## **8.3 Medical Conditions**

Any medical conditions or special needs must be noted on the Health Information Form at enrolment or on renewal of membership.

**IMPORTANT:** To ensure the safety and wellbeing of your child, please inform the Junior Coordinator of any health issues or special requirements for your child. We may need to disclose that information to your child's Age Manager or to the duty Patrol captain in order to maintain your child's safety. Divulging any information about your child will be within the guidelines of SLSA's Child Protection Commitment Statement (CPCS).

## **8.4 Nipper Safe Program**

To reinforce Surf Life Saving Nippers as a safe and positive environment for children to learn and develop, anyone over the age of 15 assisting with any activity must hold a current Working with Children Clearance Notice NT Ochre Card (police clearance certificate).

*Clearance Notices are designed to keep children safe by preventing those who pose a risk to the safety of children from working with them, in either paid or volunteer work. Everyone who is issued with a Working with Children Clearance Notice will also receive an Ochre Card. Further information can be obtained from <http://www.workingwithchildren.nt.gov.au/>*

Darwin Surf Life Saving Club follows the Surf Life Saving Safeguarding Children and Young People Program, underpinned by the Surf Life Saving Australia Member Protection (MPP) policy.

For more information on the program please visit the SLSA website <https://sls.com.au/safeguarding/>

## **8.5 Dangerous Conditions**

Dangerous conditions will include:

- extreme low or extreme high weather temperatures;
- high or strong winds;
- rough or dangerous seas;
- any other condition which causes concern for the safe participation of all members.

It should be assumed that Sunday training will proceed regardless of the inclement conditions but that such activities will be modified to take account of those conditions and to ensure the safe participation of all members.

In the rare event that it is deemed necessary to cancel training this will be at the sole discretion of the Director of Member Development, Director of Life Saving and/or the on-duty Patrol Captain. In such a case parents and/or guardians will be notified of the cancellation as soon as practicable. Notification of any cancellation will also be posted on our DSLSC Facebook page.

## **9. AGE GROUP MANAGERS**

Where practical all age groups will be allocated Age Managers who are parents or interested members, who have volunteered to manage the age group. They are responsible for the coordination of activities on Sundays.

### **9.1 Qualifications of Age Managers:**

All Age Managers must:

- Be current registered and financial members of the club;
- Have a current NT Ochre Card;

We also encourage Age Managers to:

- Complete the Age Managers Course;
- Gain their SRC or Bronze Medallion.
- Gain knowledge of SLSA competition rules and skills to pass on to Nippers
- Be aware of the SLSA Member Protection Policy and Water Safety Procedures.

Age Managers are allocated to an age group and their responsibilities may be interchangeable with other interested parents who are willing to participate and assist the Age Managers with their responsibilities. We strongly encourage any person who is keen to assist to speak to the Junior Coordinator or Director of

Member Development.

## 10. INSURANCE

All registered and financial members and that are proficient in their age/category requirements, are insured under Surf Life Saving Northern Territory's policy. This includes participation in Club training and competing at sanctioned Surf Life Saving NT events.

## 11. COMPETITION & CARNIVALS

### 11.1 Informal competition

Each Sunday we encourage all Nippers to achieve, do their best, and develop to their full potential, whilst having fun. Challenging competition is just one element of this development process.

### 11.2 Formal Competition

We also encourage formal competition for Nippers in under 8-14yrs through Club Championships. To compete, Nippers must have achieved their "Competition Skills Evaluation" for water events. This is to ensure capability of completing the competition course in a reasonable time.

To ensure the safety of all Nippers when competing in a carnival, only Nippers who have achieved their competition skills evaluation for their relevant age group will be allowed to compete.

We will also consider the conditions, the course and the physical and emotional state of each Nipper on the day of the Carnival. Only Nippers who are **confident, competent** and in **a fit state** to complete the course in a safe and timely manner will be allowed to compete.

Carnivals are a great way for Nippers to practice their skills in a friendly atmosphere. We encourage our Nippers to improve their personal bests. Carnival attendance is not compulsory.

**Under 6's and Under 7's do not compete at official Carnivals. Under 8's can compete in a wade races only. However, U6's – U8's are able to compete in In-house carnivals.**

### 11.3 Carnival Days

We aim to provide some competition days throughout the Nipper Season. Nipper training will commence as usual at 9:00am sometimes earlier due to tides. Nippers must remain with their age groups for the duration of the Carnival. We encourage parents to assist at Carnivals.

Carnival/Competition dates will be posted on the Events Calendar <http://www.darwinsurfclub.com.au/the-club/events-calendar/> and posted on the DSLSC Facebook page.

We encourage all Nippers to participate in competition activities to assist them to understand the processes for competing at NT Championships.

### 11.4 NT Championships

These are held in August/September each year, at the end of the season. NT Championships are hosted on a rotational basis between all NT clubs (Mindil, Gove Peninsula, Darwin and Broome)

This is a great opportunity for all DSLSC active members to participate in events. Additional training sessions will be run throughout the season. If you would like further information regarding NT Championships, please talk to one of the DSLSC Directors of Competition, Life Saving, Education, Junior Development, Club President or Nipper Coordinator.

## 12. SURF EDUCATION AWARDS

Surf Life Saving Australia has developed a comprehensive training program for Nippers. The content is tailored to each age group and with the exception of the Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC), the program is based on participatory evaluation and not assessed on competence.

In other words, Nippers need only be actively involved in the training to be eligible for an award. We believe this is the best way to introduce children to surf life saving where fun takes priority over being 'tested'. There is a surf education award for each age group. Please talk to Director of Junior Development or the Nipper/Youth Coordinator if you would like to view a summary of each award.

The SRC is the introductory award for patrolling members of the club. This is usually obtained as an U14 member (*participants must have attained the age of 13 years*) and **does** require assessment which includes:

- Written or oral examination;
- Performance of basic skills;
- Simulation of rescue scenarios.