



**Water Polo**  
AUSTRALIA

# Selection Policy for Sharks and Stingers for “Competitions”

*Version 1*

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#	Review Date	Effective Date	Approved By	Changes
1	Nov 2025 – Jan 2026	17 Feb 2026	Board	New policy which replaces the old “2025 SELECTION POLICY For Sharks and Stingers National Teams for “Competitions””.

Review frequency: Annually

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## 1 Background

### 1.1 Purpose

- 1.1.1 This policy is made by Water Polo Australia Limited (“WPA”) under its constitution (“Constitution”) with the purpose of providing details of the process by which WPA will select Athletes for the National Team (being the open-age “Sharks” and “Stingers”) for certain “Competitions” (as defined in this Policy). In particular, the intention is:
- (a) to ensure that Athletes who are chosen in these teams are ready to perform at the highest international standard at the relevant Competition;
  - (b) to ensure that Athlete alignment with the WPA values and behaviours, including the Think.Act.Play guidelines, in and out of the water, is taken into account in selection; and
  - (c) to employ a fair and transparent selection process that ensures that all Athletes have the opportunity to challenge for positions in these teams.
- 1.1.2 Athletes are responsible for reading and understanding this Policy. WPA recommends that Athletes seek their own independent legal advice if they are unclear or uncertain about the operation or effect of this Policy.

### 1.2 Scope

- 1.2.1 This Policy applies to all Athletes who are eligible, based on the eligibility criteria described in this document, for selection in a National Team for Competitions. All Athletes must comply with the requirements of this Selection Policy, including in relation to eligibility, in order to be qualified for selection in the National Team for the Competitions. WPA’s other selection policies do not apply in relation to the selection of Athletes for these teams.
- 1.2.2 This Policy does not apply to selection of:
- (a) the National Team for any match, event or competition that is not a Competition;
  - (b) any national teams that are not the open-age National Teams, such as the national teams that are part of the national age group program (U16/U18/U20) or university games teams; or
  - (c) national teams selected for the Olympic Games, which will be dealt with by a separate Olympic Games selection policy.
- 1.2.3 This Policy does not apply to the appointment of WPA officials and coaches, including the National Head Coach. Unless another policy is created to deal with these appointments, the Board will appoint the National Head Coach and the CEO in conjunction with the HPC and GM-Performance has responsibility for and discretion in respect of the appointment and removal of other officials and coaches. Any decision by WPA in that regard is final and not subject to any approval or appeal under this Policy.
- 1.2.4 This Policy does not apply to selection to the National Squad or any Preparation Program. Unless another Policy is created to deal with these selections, any decision by WPA in that regard is final and not subject to any approval or appeal under this Policy.

## 2 Definitions and Priority of Documents

### 2.1 Defined Terms

The following words have the corresponding meaning in this Policy:

**Athlete(s)** refers to the eligible participant(s) who wish to be considered for selection into a National Team for the Competitions.

**Athlete Agreement** means the agreement that WPA requires selected Athletes to sign to participate in the National Team.

**Athlete Assessment Matrix** means an athlete assessment matrix in the form proposed by the HPC from time to time, an example of which is in Annexure B.

**CEO** means the Chief Executive Officer of WPA as appointed from time to time.

**Competition** means:

- (a) any men's and women's World Aquatics World Cup events (including Division 1, Division 2 and Finals);
- (b) any men's and women's World Aquatics Championships;
- (c) any men's and women's Water Polo World Championships Oceania Qualifier; and
- (d) any other men's and women's international event that WPA declares is subject to this Policy.

**GM-Performance** means the General Manager – Performance of WPA as appointed by WPA from time to time or equivalent / replacement role.

**HPC** means the High-Performance Committee as appointed by WPA from time to time.

**National Head Coach** means the national head coach of WPA as appointed by the Board from time to time.

**National Squad** means any group of players selected to participate in a Preparation Program which will be defined for each campaign.

**National Team** means each open-age team selected by or with the approval of WPA to represent Australia at a Competition, including the male "Sharks" team and female "Stingers" team.

**Preparation Program** means the program relating to the preparation of a National Squad or National Team to compete in a Competition.

**Selection Policy Guide** means any Selection Policy Guide which may be published on WPA's website, as amended from time to time in relation to National Teams selected for a Competition.

**Selector's Agreement** means the agreement that WPA requires selectors to sign to be a selector under this Policy.

**Team Selection Panel** and **TSP** means the panel responsible for the selection of the National Teams under this Policy.

**World Aquatics** means the international federation for aquatic sports including water polo, that is based in Lausanne Switzerland and which is recognised by the International Olympic Committee.

## 2.2 Terms defined in Constitution

Where a capitalised term is not defined in this Policy, but is defined in the Constitution, it has the meaning given in the Constitution.

## 2.3 Inconsistency

In the event of an inconsistency between the terms of this Policy, the Constitution and any Selection Policy Guide, the following descending order of precedence will apply to the extent of the inconsistency:

- (a) the Constitution; and then
- (b) this Policy; and then
- (c) any Selection Policy Guide.

### **3 Selection Panels**

#### **3.1 Appointment of Team Selection Panel**

- 3.1.1 WPA will appoint the Team Selection Panel (**TSP**), which is responsible for the selection of the National Teams that will compete in each of the Competitions.
- 3.1.2 The TSP is appointed by the CEO and approved by the Board.
- 3.1.3 The TSP shall comprise of:
  - (a) GM Performance as Chair/Convenor;
  - (b) the relevant National Team Head Coach; and
  - (c) one independent selector.
- 3.1.4 When determining the independent selector (or a replacement selection if section 3.7.2 applies), consideration should be given to:
  - (a) the roles and responsibilities in Annexure A; and
  - (b) the selector being independent and not connected to Athletes in a manner which could reasonably give rise to an actual or perceived conflict of interest in the selection process.

#### **3.2 Roles and Responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities of the TSP include those set out in Annexure A.

#### **3.3 Information Considered**

- 3.3.1 The TSP is obligated to make informed decisions using all relevant information available to it, which may include but is not limited to:
  - (a) input from WPA national program coaches;
  - (b) relevant physical performance measures;
  - (c) relevant competition performances;
  - (d) behaviour and character assessments from coaches and support staff;
  - (e) performance analytics information relating to individual and National Team performances in training and in competition; and
  - (f) the categorisation of the Athlete (if any) with the WPA Athlete categorisation system.
- 3.3.2 The TSP may at its discretion and in accordance with this Policy give weight to the relevant information which is made available to it.

#### **3.4 Selection Process**

The National Team selection process will primarily be based on the TSP reaching consensus, however where this is not possible, each TSP member has a single vote. The Chair/Convenor does not have a casting vote in addition to their deliberative vote.

#### **3.5 Privacy and Confidentiality**

All members of the TSP are bound by and must make themselves familiar with the Privacy Policy (available on the WPA website) and are bound by the confidentiality clause in any

applicable Selector's Agreement.

### **3.6 Conflicts of Interest**

- 3.6.1 The Conflict of Interest Policy (available on the WPA website) applies to all TSP members. All procedures pertaining to the notification and management of any actual or potential conflicts of interest will be as defined in that policy.
- 3.6.2 In the situation where a TSP panel member is excused from selection deliberations or decision-making due to a conflict of interest, the CEO (with approval from the Board) may appoint an interim replacement selector, who is appropriately qualified to fulfil the responsibilities outlined in Annexure A, to replace the excluded panel member. The interim replacement selector will assume the voting rights of the excused panel member.
- 3.6.3 The excluded TSP member's input will not be gathered, and the excluded panel member will not have a vote or be involved in panel deliberations, in relation to the National Team in any position or positions on the team where the conflict of interest is a factor.

### **3.7 Key TSP member obligations**

- 3.7.1 TSP members must be available, willing and able to:
  - (a) attend all agreed selection activities as outlined in the Selector's Agreement;
  - (b) in the opinion of the Chair of the relevant TSP, act with integrity, objectivity and impartiality in all aspects of the selection process in complying with this policy and other related policies and documents; and
  - (c) ensure the decisions made during selection meetings are documented and that all such materials remain confidential to the TSP and Board.
- 3.7.2 A TSP member who is unable to fully meet all the requirements of section 3.7.1 may resign or be removed by the CEO and replaced by the appointment of a replacement member in accordance with section 3.1.

### **3.8 Quorum**

The TSP must have all 3 members present or engaged via phone or digital medium to form a quorum.

## **4 Eligibility Criteria**

- (a) To be eligible for selection to the National Team an Athlete must:
  - (i) be an Australian citizen who is eligible to represent Australia at the Competition as set out in the then current World Aquatics Competition Regulations;
  - (ii) be a registered Individual Member with a club Affiliate Member and State Member under WPA;
  - (iii) be financially current with WPA and their relevant club Affiliate Member and State Member under WPA (having no outstanding membership fees, fines, or other financial obligations that are more than 30 days overdue), provided that an Athlete will be financially current if they have entered into an agreed payment plan and they are complying with that plan;
  - (iv) not have breached any Anti-Doping Policy (unless the Athlete has already been sanctioned for the breach and completed the sanction imposed);
  - (v) not have at any time engaged in conduct (whether publicly known or not), which has brought or would have the tendency to bring WPA, World Aquatics, the

Athlete or the sport of water polo into disrepute, censure or ridicule, unless:

- (A) the Athlete was sanctioned for the conduct and has completed the sanction; and
  - (B) the CEO, in their discretion after consultation with the High Performance Committee, has determined that the conduct does not preclude the Athlete's eligibility;
- (vi) meet all eligibility rules imposed by World Aquatics; and
  - (vii) have signed and returned an executed WPA Athlete Agreement that applies to the relevant Competition or, if selected, be willing and able to comply with their obligation to execute an Athlete Agreement in accordance with section 10.
- (b) For clarity:
- (i) an Athlete does not have to be a categorised athlete or a member of the National Squad to be eligible for selection; and
  - (ii) an Athlete's conduct, character, and adherence to WPA values may also be considered by the TSP as a selection criterion under section 5.3.2(e) and 5.3.2(f), even where the Athlete meets the eligibility requirements above.

## **5 Selection Criteria**

### **5.1 Size of Team**

The TSP is to select the number of athletes for each National Team that are required according to the relevant World Aquatics competition regulations, plus reserves as it sees fit, or as otherwise directed by WPA.

### **5.2 Athlete Assessment Matrix**

The TSP will complete an Athlete Assessment Matrix. It is expected that there will be variations and differences in the assessments by each TSP member, however through discussion the TSP must form an agreed assessment of each Athlete in contention.

### **5.3 Criteria**

5.3.1 In selecting the National Team, the TSP will select those Athletes who, to the satisfaction of the TSP in its sole and absolute discretion, will achieve the optimum National Team compatibility and balance to achieve the best possible results for Australia at the Competition, while also providing opportunities to identified Athletes to obtain international experience, with a view to the next Olympic Games, and balancing the other considerations set out in this section.

5.3.2 The following will be considered by the TSP (noting that each may not be given the same weighting or any weighting by the TSP):

- (a) the output of the Athlete Assessment Matrix (noting that the TSP may select Athletes that are rated lower than other Athletes due to the criteria and other considerations in this section);
- (b) subject to section 5.3.4, consistency and quality of performance within the past 36 months:
  - (i) against teams ranked in the top ten, according to the World Aquatics world rankings at the time of the performance; and
  - (ii) in domestic competitions (Australian Leagues, National competitions, European

Leagues or USA NCAA competitions) and WPA camps;

- (c) composition and balance of the National Team including but not limited to positional coverage within the required team size;
  - (d) likelihood based on Athlete progression for the Athlete to be able to be in contention for a place in the Olympic Team for next Olympic Games, if they are given appropriate opportunities to play in the senior team in tournaments and on tours to continue their progression;
  - (e) prior level of adherence by the Athlete to the obligations contained in any current or prior Athlete Agreement; and
  - (f) the Athlete's likely contribution to the National Team both in and away from the competition environment which may include but not be limited to leadership capability, behaviour and overall contribution to the National Team performance and ability of the Athlete to demonstrate WPA and relevant National Team values and behaviours, including the Think.Act.Play guidelines.
- 5.3.3 The TSP may also consider other factors reasonably related to athlete performance, team composition or the objectives set out in section 5.3.1, provided such factors are documented in the selection records.
- 5.3.4 When considering performance under section 5.3.2(b), not all performances during the 36-month period need to be considered, but performance for a period of up to 36-months may be considered by the TSP. Performance beyond that time frame may only be considered by the TSP with reference to framing any individual athlete performance progression trend relevant to the selection deliberations.

## **5.4 External input**

The TSP may, from time to time, seek input from other WPA National program personnel on identified Athletes, however, must not share any confidential information in relation to the selection or non-selection of Athletes. Actual selection deliberations are the responsibility of the TSP and must remain confidential prior to and after the announcement of the National Team.

## **6 Extenuating Circumstances**

- 6.1.1 Notwithstanding anything contained within this Policy, an Athlete may notify the Chair of the TSP of any extenuating circumstances that may have prevented an Athlete from satisfying the eligibility requirements or from performing to their highest ability at any of the competitions or camps referred to in section 5.
- 6.1.2 An Athlete must notify the Chair of the TSP at their earliest opportunity and in writing, which may include email or SMS, that they intend to submit extenuating circumstances. Following informal notice being provided, the Athlete must as soon as practicable provide a more formal written summary of the extenuating circumstances, which may be submitted by email.
- 6.1.3 In considering the performances of Athletes, the Chair of the TSP at their absolute discretion, may recommend to the TSP that it gives weight (and if so, then what amount of weight) to extenuating circumstances which will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- 6.1.4 A decision as to whether extenuating circumstances shall be considered in relation to an Athlete, and if so then the weight that shall be given by the TSP to those extenuating circumstances, will be made by the TSP in its absolute discretion on a case-by-case basis.

## **7 Selection Process**

The selection processes and timelines will be developed for the National Team based on the dates for the respective Competition. Those selection processes and timelines will be developed for each National Team dependent on factors including their respective competition cycles.

## **8 Endorsement and Ratification**

Once the TSP selects the Athletes for the Competition, the list will be approved by the GM-Performance and then forwarded as soon as practicable for endorsement by the Board through ratification of the Chief Executive Officer.

## **9 Notification, Communication and Feedback**

### **9.1 Notification**

Athletes will be notified of National Team selection decisions in accordance with communication protocols reasonably determined by WPA.

### **9.2 Communication**

- 9.2.1 The selection processes, timelines, and any subsequent updates (including notification of selection decisions) will be clearly communicated in writing to all eligible Athletes and other stakeholders as soon as practicable.
- 9.2.2 Communication will be via official channels determined by the WPA (such as email, website publication, or member portal) to ensure equal access to information.
- 9.2.3 Athletes who are categorised “Podium Potential” or higher but are not selected in the National Team for the Competition will be contacted individually prior to any public announcement. WPA will at its discretion determine whether or not to advise other Athletes of the outcome prior to public announcement.
- 9.2.4 Where an Athlete is advised of the outcome of a National Team selection prior to a public announcement, the Athlete must keep the National Team selection confidential and must not release any information or make any public or private statement regarding the National Team selection, for the avoidance of doubt, this includes through all social media platforms until the National Team selection is released to the public by WPA.
- 9.2.5 Athletes are responsible for ensuring their contact details are up to date and for reviewing all selection-related communications.

### **9.3 Feedback and Wellbeing**

- 9.3.1 At their discretion, non-selected Athletes categorised Podium Potential or higher are provided with an opportunity to seek feedback from the respective National Coach, in accordance with the arrangements and process communicated at the time of National Team notification. WPA will reasonably consider any requests for feedback from other non-selected Athletes.
- 9.3.2 WPA, where possible, complies with any selection communication guidelines published on the WPA website.
- 9.3.3 All categorised Athletes not selected in the National Team have access to confidential counselling services co-ordinated by the Water Polo Australia Athlete Wellbeing Manager.

## **10 Athlete Agreement**

Any selected Athletes that have not executed an applicable Athlete Agreement prior to

selection must sign and return an executed Athlete Agreement, that stipulates their obligations as members of the National Team, to the GM-Performance within 14 days of notification of selection.

## **11 Withdrawal or Removal of Athletes**

11.1.1 Should an Athlete withdraw (or be removed, for example, this may include due to injury or other health matter or due to no longer meeting the Eligibility Requirements outlined at section 4) from the National Team following their selection, the National Head Coach may request that the TSP select a replacement Athlete. The National Head Coach may also choose not to replace the player.

11.1.2 The TSP may select any Athlete based on the requirements of the National Team and in accordance with section 5 to replace an Athlete who has withdrawn or is removed from the National Team. If reserves have been chosen by the TSP, then the replacement Athlete should be chosen from the reserves except in the case of exceptional circumstances (which include that the skillset required to replace the withdrawn or removed Athlete is better matched by someone not in the reserves).

## **12 Appeals**

Appeals will be conducted in accordance with and will be governed by WPA's Selection Appeals Policy which is available on the WPA website. An Athlete wishing to appeal against their non-selection in the National Team for a Competition should note the strict timeframes and requirements in that policy and the specific grounds of appeal.

## **13 Amendments to this Policy**

13.1.1 This Policy may be amended at any time by WPA in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

13.1.2 This Policy can be also amended at any time by the Board if in its opinion such an amendment is necessary for any of the following reasons:

- (a) as a result of any change in National Team eligibility criteria or rule;
- (b) as a result of any change in the rules governing a Competition or a particular event in a Competition;
- (c) to give effect to the Policy following a drafting error or oversight; or
- (d) to clarify any ambiguity or otherwise give effect to the intended meaning of the Policy.

13.1.3 WPA will publish amendments to the Policy on its website and communicate the update to the relevant stakeholders within the WPA community, and those amendments shall take effect immediately unless otherwise stated.

## Annexure A Roles and Responsibilities

The Team Selection Panel (TSP) members will have the following specific responsibilities within the TSP along with providing overall identification and assessment of players.

Role	Specific Responsibilities in Addition to General Selector Duties
<b>Chair / Convenor of Selection Panel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair and Convene the Panel</li> <li>• Ensure all processes are followed and policies are adhered to.</li> <li>• Ensure all relevant information is available and considered by the panel members.</li> <li>• Ensure communication processes pre and post selection are followed.</li> <li>• Ensure all risk management strategies are considered, including but not limited to injury coverage, team culture, leadership, succession planning and depth chart management.</li> <li>• Provide medium and long term planning perspective around National Team for current and next campaign.</li> <li>• Ensure management of risk around depth of talent, contingency plans and succession planning.</li> <li>• Provide contemporary expertise and the ability to objectively evaluate selection options.</li> </ul>
<b>National Head Coach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the needs of the current campaign.</li> <li>• Provide contemporary water polo expertise and knowledge of international team playing systems, strengths and weaknesses and how that impacts on the requirements of the National Team.</li> <li>• Identify and articulate a clear performance vision and strategy including specific tactical systems, technical requirements and how individual Athlete roles and performances contribute to this strategy.</li> <li>• Demonstrate clear understanding of individual Athlete role(s) as well as capabilities within or across specific or multiple positions and their respective strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li>• Demonstrate leadership qualities to identify, balance and manage group dynamics with individual learning and performance styles to create a high performing team.</li> </ul>
<b>Independent Selector (suitably experienced athlete, coach or selector)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the needs of the current campaign.</li> <li>• Attend all agreed selection activities outlined in the Selector’s Agreement.</li> <li>• Provide contemporary water polo expertise and knowledge of international team playing systems and individual Athlete strengths and weaknesses and how that impacts on the requirements of the National Team.</li> <li>• Regularly watching and reviewing matches that Athletes being considered for selection are playing in. Demonstrate clear understanding of individual Athlete role(s) as well as capabilities within or across specific or multiple positions and their respective strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li>• Play the role of “critical friend” or “devil’s advocate” by replicating how an opposition coach will seek to defeat the National Team, or National Team plans in Competition and assist to reducing the possibility of this occurring.</li> </ul>

