

## 2026 NATIONAL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP – DRAFT PLAYER SYSTEM

Dear State Executives,

Water Polo Australia would like to advise all States and Clubs of the proposed introduction of a National State Championship (NSC) Draft Player System, which will be trialled as part of the upcoming cycle.

The Draft Player System has been developed to maximise development opportunities for athletes within the National Age Group Program (NAGP) while strengthening the overall standard and competitiveness of the NSC competition.

Following the completion of final NSC team selections, States will have the opportunity to nominate athletes who were unsuccessful in gaining selection to their respective state teams into a WPA-managed Draft Player Pool. These athletes will remain eligible for consideration by States and territories requiring additional players to complete rosters or provide positional depth.

Water Polo Australia will work collaboratively with the receiving states and coaches to allocate draft athletes based on team requirements, positional needs, athlete development opportunities, and the overall competitive integrity of the competition.

The objectives of the Draft Player System are to:

- Increase participation opportunities for talented NAGP athletes.
- Support smaller states and territories in fielding complete and competitive teams.
- Enhance the quality and competitiveness of the NSC competition.
- Provide additional exposure to national-level competition and talent identification opportunities.
- Strengthen alignment between the NSC and the national athlete development pathway.

Importantly, the Draft Player System will only occur after all State selection processes have been completed and will not impact each State's ability to independently select its own teams.

Water Polo Australia intends to implement the initiative as a 12-month pilot program, with a full review to be undertaken following the completion of the NSC. Feedback will be sought from State Associations, coaches, athletes, parents, and national pathway staff to assess the effectiveness of the model and identify any future refinements.

### How the Draft System Works

#### 1. State Team Selections Finalised

- All States complete their NSC team selections by 31 July 2026.

## 2. States Nominate Draft Athletes

- Unsuccessful but *pathway-aligned* athletes are nominated to the **Draft Player Pool**.
- Athletes must be **ranked by position**.
- States must confirm they are **capable of competing at NSC level** and will contribute positively to the competition environment.

## 3. States Request Support (by 31 July 2026) States that:

- Cannot fill a full roster, or
- Need **additional positional depth**, submit a request to WPA for draft player support.

## 4. WPA Allocation Process WPA works with State associations and coaches to match athletes to teams based on:

- Positional needs
- Team depth
- Athlete readiness
- Maintaining competition integrity
- Deadline - by 7 August 2026

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any additional queries regarding eligibility and/or processes.

We look forward to working collaboratively with all States to strengthen athlete development opportunities and continue enhancing the National State Championships as Australia's premier age-group competition.

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