School Sport Unit

2023 Annual Report



Arts, Sport and Initiatives
Student Support and Specialist Programs

NSW GOVERNMENT



The NSW Department of Education's Reconciliation Action Plan artwork represents community, school, friendship and family. Created by Suzanna, a student from Boggabilla Central School on Gamilaraay Country.

We acknowledge the Ongoing Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We celebrate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationship to Country, and their rich contribution to Australia.

We pay respect to Ancestors and Elders past and present. We recognise the important role that education has to play in walking alongside the leaders of the future. The department recognises that by acknowledging our past, we are laying the groundwork for a future that embraces all Australians; a future based on mutual respect and shared responsibility.



Leader's message

The NSW Department of Education places a high priority on physical activity and sport in schools.

Children and young people are at the centre of all decision-making in the department. The School Sport Unit continues to build on its position as the benchmark for equitable and inclusive provision of school sport and physical activity initiatives in the country. It is recognised nationally and internationally as a world leader in the development and implementation of sporting opportunities for students and teachers.

Research tells us there is an irrefutable interconnection between physical activity and positive wellbeing outcomes for students.

Participation in a range of physical activity opportunities, promotes healthy lifestyles, develops positive attitudes and has been shown to improve academic performance, school attendance and greater resilience.

As leader of the School Sport Unit, I am proud of the diverse and remarkable array of opportunities offered by the School Sport Unit team through the following programs:

- School Swimming and Water Safety
- Disability and Inclusion
- Professional learning
- Policy support
- Premier's Sporting Challenge suite of initiatives
- Representative School Sport Pathway, which is delivered from the grass roots level in schools to zones to Associations and then to our state programs, leading to NSW representation at School Sport Australia events.

To the principals and school staff who have actively supported our programs throughout the year, thank you. I commend the dedication, passion and commitment you and your staff have shown in supporting our students to become more physically active.

I wish to thank Murat Dizdar, Secretary, Cathy Brennan, Relieving Deputy Secretary in 2023, Dr Sylvia Corish, Executive Director, Student Support and Specialist Programs and Jordi Austin, Director, Arts, Sport and Initiatives for their strong support and advocacy for our programs.

I am honoured to lead the School Sport Unit and encourage you to read the School Sport Unit Annual Report, which provides a summary of the year and includes program-specific achievements.

Peter Banks





School Sport Unit

2023 impact



428,000+
Students

1,354+
Schools

12,500+
department staff

Participated in the PSC 10 week Challenge

13,140+
Members of Yammer community

214,450+
Website users

3,461,700
Page views

12,270+
views of the 10@10 classroom energiser videos

371,660+
Livestreaming views

Sport education teaching resource

12,500+
Users

76,500+
Views

Facebook

11,000+
Followers

43,400+
Page visits

127,200+
Audience reach

150+
News stories reporting on School Sport Unit programs and events.

800+
State Championships and Association trials held

5,000+
Teachers
Participated in professional learning

150,000+
Students from

1,400+
Schools

Enrolled in the School Swimming and Water Safety program

3,120+
Views of 'How to stay safe in and around water' video

10,286
Students
from
618
schools

Participated in opportunities for students with disability

31,700+
Page views of the Sport safety guidelines

370,000+
Students involved in Representative School Sport Pathway programs and events

Arts, Sport and Initiatives Strategy and Implementation Plan

Our values

Connection

We will advocate the benefit of our programs for our students, schools and community partners.

We will showcase best practice as feasible and achievable.

We will demonstrate impact and student and staff achievement through all our programs.

We will establish networks of practice within and across teams, ensuring engagement and development of our programs, staff skill and student opportunity.

We will empower and lift student voice and participation to elevate their perspectives, as well as providing opportunity beyond the classroom.

We will be known as knowledgeable partners and collaborators.

Inclusion

Through our programs we will demonstrate increased diversity – participation, choice and breadth of opportunity across locations, school type and ensuring state-wide reach.

We will purposefully leverage our resources, to extend inclusion.

We will ensure that we retain a focus on individual learning needs and high expectations for all students.

We will ensure our programs reflect the department's priorities of opportunity and engagement for students with disability, students in rural and remote settings, students from multicultural backgrounds, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

We will purposefully build staff and student engagement pathways to diversify our staffing profile, and to ensure equitable access to our programs for all students.

Growth

Our staff will remain committed to development and learning, our own and for our students and partners.

We will ignite a passion in students for lifelong learning and sustainable engagement with arts and sport.

We will extend excellence in delivery, tracking improvements in both our outcomes and process. We will harness innovation and creativity and integrate evidence of impact.

We will hold to growth and development through articulation of individual learning needs and pathways, coupled with high expectations for all.



Coverage of School Sport Unit programs and events

Live streaming

In 2023, live streaming was utilised in the Representative School Sport Pathway (RSSP). Live streaming connected families, friends, and classmates who were unable to attend the events in person, fostering a sense of community and support for our talented athletes.

A total of 30 RSSP events were streamed during the year, resulting in an overall total of 371,662 views. The breakdown of these views is as follows:

- PSSA sports - 267,824 views.
- CHSSA sports- 103,838 views.
- CHSSA combined cross-country event was a standout success, amassing a total of 20,895 views.

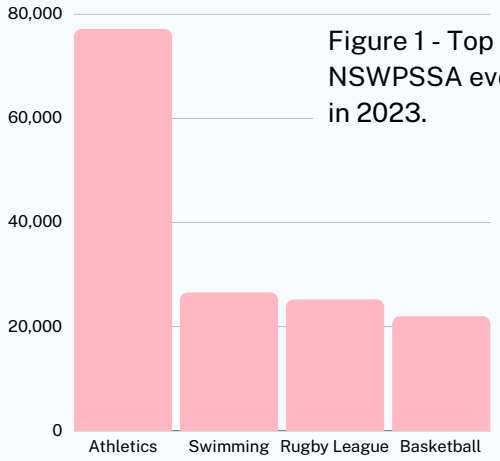


Figure 1 - Top 4 NSWPSSA events viewed in 2023.

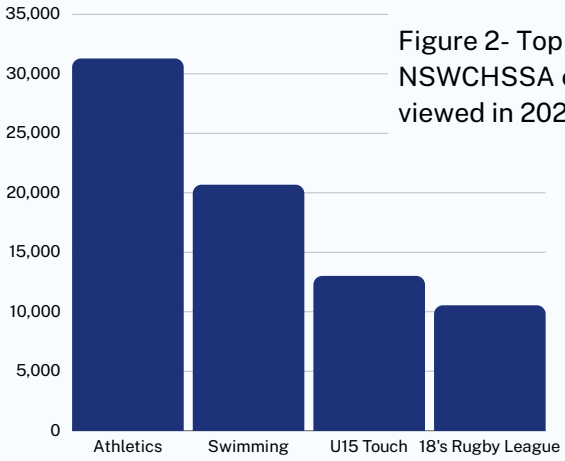


Figure 2- Top 4 NSWCHSSA events viewed in 2023.







Media coverage

Prime time news coverage and printed articles throughout 2023 demonstrated the success of School Sport Unit events and the positive experiences they provided for NSW students.

Media units from all areas of the state posted reports on School Sport Unit events and programs. This state-wide coverage across various regions supported School Sport Unit programs and highlighted the importance communities place on them.

In 2023, over 150 news articles reported on School Sport Unit programs. You can find a wide range of news stories and broadcasts on the Media coverage page of the SSU website.

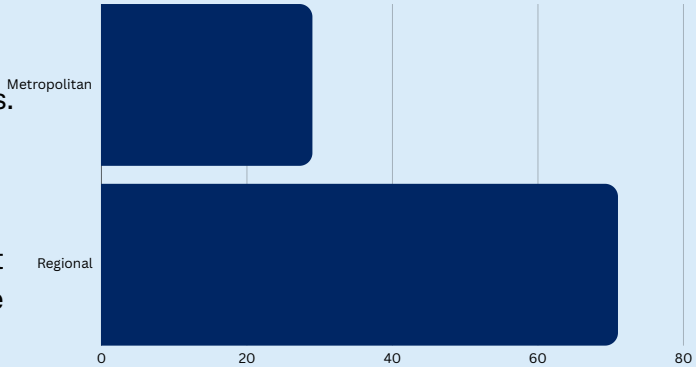


Figure 3 - Percentage of metropolitan and regional media coverage.

School Sport Unit award ceremony

As a leader in sport education, the School Sport Unit promotes equity, wellbeing and excellence in a variety of settings. We acknowledge that our programs are delivered by highly skilled, motivated volunteer teachers who positively shape young people's lives. The opportunities provided would not be possible without the support of caring principals across the state.

The School Sport Unit award ceremony identifies and recognises teachers, principals and schools from NSW who consistently support and deliver programs that allow students to achieve their best through sport and physical activity.

Celebrating its third year, unprecedented support from schools saw nominations for over 100 exceptional teachers across 13 categories. Categories including early career teaching, representative sport service, provision of School Swimming and Water Safety program, leadership in rural and remote areas, school-based sport and physical activity organisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives, and delivery of sport for students with disability were all well supported.

The virtual Awards ceremony, produced at the department's Parramatta office film studio and broadcast through the School Sport Unit's web application, served as a platform to actively acknowledge and showcase the remarkable accomplishments of 49 deserving award winners. This event not only highlighted the dedication and excellence within the teaching community but also the commitment of schools across the state to fostering diverse and inclusive sporting initiatives.

School Sport Unit Excellence Award recipients 2023

Joshua Williams
Tim Barrett
Sabrina Kliousis
Kurtis Smith
Goodooga Central School
Allan Duroux
Kylie Pennell
Rod Cornelius
Kyper Yap
Kirstie Tyerman
Louise Nixon
Penni Wallington
Hayley Lyons

Tim Bollard
Maurice O'Connor
Tania Pringle
Sarah Lindsay
Rachel Rapley
Debbie Middleton
Mark Healey
Drew Jones
Peter Nix
John Blackmore
Michelle Anson
Sue Milford
Maureen Dickson

Andrew Rodgers
Leonie MacGregor
Sarah Houston
Toby Pargeter
Matthew Batley
Denise Clune
Michelle Hanley
Dianne Maddern
Cathie Elsworth
Tony Nelson
Heather Rouen
Rob Deacon
Matt Lewis

Brett Ryan
Susan Kelly
Shellharbour Public School
Aberdeen Public School
Deb Healey
Natalie Skelly
Brett Thurgate
Dean Hillard
Gavin Holbourn



Representative School Sport Pathway



The Representative School Sport Pathway (RSSP) offers students in NSW schools the opportunity to participate and compete commensurate with their ability in a wide range of sports.

In 2023, the 12 School Sport Associations (10 regional and 2 state) continued to provide high-quality opportunities, including selection pathway programs and new initiatives tailored to local student interests. Participation in local competitions for less traditional sports surged.

There were in excess of 1,000 volunteer teachers who undertook various roles in the RSSP. These teachers dedicated their time above their regular teaching duties in fulfilling positions including Association council executive, sport convener, team coach or manager and championship official. The professional development needs of these teachers were also targeted and supported during 2023. Associations held meetings and conferences to provide learning experiences that enhance teacher capability when fulfilling such duties.

The School Sport Unit also continued its work to enhance the quality and visibility of the RSSP. Collaborations continued with the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) to design review processes for the RSSP. Data collection commenced in 2023 through the implementation of student and teacher, parent surveys. Further developments and dissemination of information is expected to occur during 2024.









School Sport Associations









NSW All Schools - Key program achievements

The department, Catholic Schools NSW, and NSW Combined Independent Schools Sports Council collaborate for the NSW All Schools secondary representative school sport program.

A review of the governance processes, identity and presentation of the program occurred in 2023. The focus areas included official appointment procedures, event management planning and brand identity. This review sought to optimise program delivery, visibility and stakeholder confidence. This review has already prompted the development of a new logo and a range of representative apparel.

66
NSW teachers represented as School Sport Australia officials

727
NSW students were All Schools representatives in 2023

81
NSW students were selected in Australian Merit Teams in 2023

77
NSW students received School Sport Australia gold medals

13
NSW students represented as School Sport Australia student officials

Policy and guidelines



The School Sport Unit enhances educational experiences for students and teachers through comprehensive policy support and targeted initiatives. We provide invaluable assistance to schools, delivering face-to-face and online professional learning opportunities, teaching and learning units, and facilitating accreditation courses for educators.

A year in review

In 2023, there was a focus on developing resources to help school staff manage sport and physical activity administration.

In June, the Secretary, Murat Dizdar committed to reviewing department policies. This led to a rewrite of the Sport and Physical Activity Policy, consolidating mandatory information from three documents into one clear and supportive document - The Sport and Physical Activity Procedures.

The Sport and Physical Activity Procedures is a supporting document of the Student Health and Wellbeing Policy.

150-minute requirement

Over 3,000 teachers accessed the Physical Activity across the School Day teaching resource. This 10-week teaching resource provides teachers with a scope and sequence, lesson plans and the resources required to deliver a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity throughout the school week in line with the mandated policy requirement.

Inclusive and adaptive practices

Seven new inclusive and adaptive learning units and an online professional learning course were released. In the last six months of 2023, over 1,000 teachers have used these resources to deliver quality sporting experiences tailored to a diverse range of abilities, interests, and confidence levels.

Aquatic rescue

Collaboration with Royal Life Saving Australia enabled us to provide support for teachers to undertake the 'Perform Water Rescue Accreditation' course. This qualification is designed to equip teachers with the necessary skills to comply with the department's Sport Safety Guidelines, specifically in relation to swimming and water safety.

One hundred and ten (110) Perform Water Rescue workshops supported 1,067 teachers to gain accreditation. This qualification ensures the safety of students during aquatic recreational activities and qualifies teachers to supervise various water-related activities during excursions, school camps and weekly school sport.

Concussion

The School Sport Unit took a pivotal role in promoting student safety, particularly in concussion awareness. Throughout the year, over 3,000+ teachers and school leaders completed the online professional learning course 'Recognising and responding to concussion'. Workshops conducted at principal conferences across NSW empowered school leaders to effectively recognise and respond to concussion, aligning with departmental procedures.

These sessions offer high-impact professional learning on identifying concussion and providing personalised support to students 'returning to learn' post injury.

Swimming and water safety

In 2023, the department's School Swimming, and Water Safety team played a pivotal role in tackling nationwide challenges stemming from a shortage of instructors and the closure of swimming pools. Successful collaborations with peak agencies were instrumental in overcoming participation barriers, particularly in regional and remote towns, by facilitating access to crucial teacher training.

The suite of opportunities provided by School Swimming and Water Safety is designed to be inclusive, ensuring accessibility for every public school. These program types offer flexible delivery options, allowing schools to choose the most suitable and cost-effective methods to meet the diverse needs of their students.

The Learn to Swim and Water Safety Program, specifically targets primary school students who have not confidently swum 25 metres by Year 2. This program aims to address early swimming challenges and equip students with fundamental water safety skills.

The Water Safety and Survival Swimming Program is available to all primary students, irrespective of swimming competency or year group. This program focuses on imparting critical lifesaving skills, emphasising the importance of water safety for every student.

The School Swimming and Water Safety team continue to demonstrate a commitment to addressing nationwide challenges and ensuring that essential water safety education is accessible to students across diverse geographic and skill-level backgrounds.






Teacher opportunities

This year, School Swimming and Water Safety welcomed several new staff members to its dedicated team. A total of 19 department teachers were recruited and underwent comprehensive training, fully engaging with the ethos and goals of the program. In parallel, six community members were also trained and actively involved in supporting our mission.

Our commitment to excellence extended beyond recruitment, with numerous swimming teacher staff members attaining their Royal Life Saving Australia Workplace Supervisor qualifications. This significant achievement empowers them to serve as mentors, overseeing and officially approving the qualifications of new staff members. This includes 16 Teachers-In-Charge, 19 community members, and 15 departmental swimming teachers.

2023 highlights

92%
of NSW primary schools participated in School Swimming and Water Safety

42,000
secondary students participated in School Swimming and Water Safety

8,074 students
with additional needs participated in School Swimming and Water Safety



Disability and inclusion



The School Sport Unit offers an array of inclusive sport and physical activity opportunities to support students with disability. These range from fun participation events for skill development including Come-and-Try Athletics and Multi-Sport days, through to the statewide team sport competitions of Boccia and Ten Pin Bowling.

These events are offered to all students with disability, from Kindergarten to Year 12, in Schools for Specific Purposes, specialist support classes, and mainstream settings.

Our Disability and Inclusion officers also support teachers and support staff through professional learning, school visits and provision of resources.

1,180
School leaders, teachers and support staff participated in Disability and inclusion focused professional learning

1,517
students from
153
schools
participated in Come-and-Try Athletics

5,168
students from
359
schools
participated in Multi-sport events



State Championship inclusion initiative

Concurrent with the NSWPSSA Combined Primary Boys and Girls Football Championships, the School Sport Unit's Disability and Inclusion team facilitated an all-abilities football opportunity for students. This event ran over two days and attracted 200 students from 19 schools across the wider Hunter area.

Students were supported to learn new skills and participate in a range of game-based football activities, modified and adapted to meet their needs. Students from the representative teams used their expertise to mentor and participate with these students in between their match commitments. They were also provided with the opportunity to participate in games of blind football and frame football.

1,728
students participated in the Ten-Pin Bowling state-wide competition



1,873
students participated in the Boccia state-wide competition

Premier’s Sporting Challenge









The Premier's Sporting Challenge (PSC) is designed to promote increased participation in sport and physical activity. 2023 marks 16 years of dedication to the PSC’s motto of encouraging 'more students to be more active, more often'.

10-week Challenge

The flagship program of the Premier's Sporting Challenge is a 10-week challenge (10wC) for students and staff in public schools.

Award levels for the 10-week Challenge reflect the daily activity time commitment - either as part of a class or team or as an individual. All types of moderate to vigorous physical activities count toward an award.

In 2023, 67% of 10wC schools attained Gold or Diamond awards, meeting or surpassing Australian Physical Activity Guidelines.

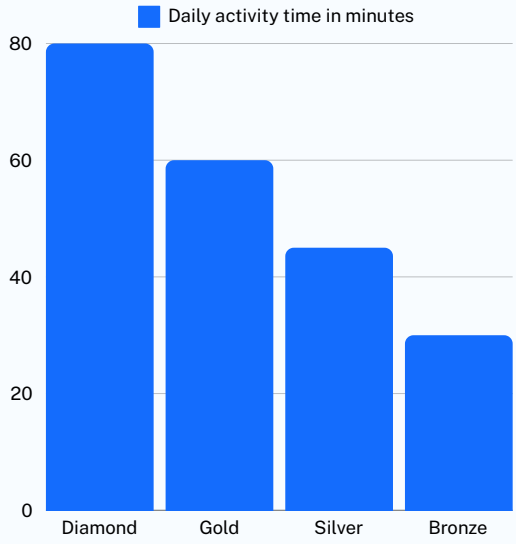


Figure 4 - Daily activity time required for each of the 10wC award levels.

311,507
Primary students
participated in the 10wC

116,650
Secondary students
participated in the 10wC

2,570
PSC
Facilitators
in the 10wC

18,000
Coordinating staff
in the 10wC

Teacher resource hub

Throughout 2023, the School Sport Unit delivered a diverse range of high-quality teaching and learning resources and many professional learning opportunities. These resources and professional learning initiative play a pivotal role in assisting schools to deliver engaging, research-based sport and physical activity learning experiences, with the aim of enhancing student wellbeing and physical activity levels.

Sport organiser conference - Connect, succeed and thrive through school sport

The inaugural Sport Organiser Conference, themed 'Connect, Succeed, and Thrive through School Sport,' hosted over 150 sport organisers from across NSW at Accor Stadium in Sydney Olympic Park on 28 March 2023. The event provided a platform for learning, collaboration, and networking. Professor David Lubans from the University of Newcastle delivered a keynote address, offering valuable insights into the significance of the interconnection between physical activity, sport and wellbeing. Attendees engaged in crucial topics, including policy updates, support materials, resources, and research to enhance the delivery of quality sport and physical activity. The conference also addressed the classification process for students with disability.

Sport and physical activity school health check

The School Sport Unit remains proactive in promoting student wellbeing through the strategic support of promoting physical activity in schools. Over 100 schools engaged in professional learning on the 'Interconnection between physical activity and wellbeing in schools'. We support schools in implementing evidence-based, whole-school sport and physical activity programs, using the Sport and Physical Activity School Health Check as a self-assessment tool. This ongoing support was tailored to address the specific needs of each school.

NSWPSSA professional development initiative

Thirty four teachers from across NSW participated in professional learning to support the NSWPSSA Swimming and Athletics Championships. It was designed to equip them with essential skills for officiating roles.

This professional learning course included sport-specific online modules, a pre-championship face-to-face workshop and involvement in officiating roles during the event.

The collaboration between the School Sport Unit's Representative Sport and Teacher resource hub arms successfully provided participating teachers with knowledge, skills, and connections to assume leadership positions in local school and PSSA programs. It also provided participants with the opportunity to pursue future coaching, managing, and officiating roles at the Association and state levels.

Primary Principals Association (PPA) - NSWPSSA - School Sport Unit combined conference

The inaugural conference brought together one representative from each Primary Principal Council across NSW. The conference provided the opportunity to share valuable insights, strategies, and legal requirements for implementing physical activity and sport in schools with principal colleagues at follow-up local PPA Council meetings.

The focus was on student wellbeing, engagement, and building a positive school culture through physical activity. The conference highlighted the alignment of the PPA, NSWPSSA, and the School Sport Unit.

The PPA supports NSW Government primary school principals in creating a well-resourced, enriching educational environment.

The NSWPSSA organises approved sporting opportunities at various levels, implemented through the School Sport Unit.

The School Sport Unit ensures compliance and supports principals in delivering physical activity programs.

Feedback was positive, and secondary school principals will be included in 2024 through Secondary Principal Council representation.

School Sport Unit

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The School Sport Unit Annual Report 2023 is available on the School Sport Unit's website app.education.nsw.gov.au/sport



The School Sport Unit will make the report available in other formats on request.

The School Sport Unit has not incurred any external costs in producing the report.