School Sport Unit

2024 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

It is with immense pride and enthusiasm that I present the Annual Report for the School Sport Unit. As we reflect on another significant year, I want to celebrate our achievements, acknowledge the challenges we overcame, and reaffirm our commitment to fostering a vibrant sporting culture in our schools.

This year, we have seen remarkable success stories that highlight the talent and dedication of our students. From grassroots to state and national championships, our student athletes have excelled, showcasing not only their skills but also their sportsmanship and resilience. The hard work of our teachers and support staff, who dedicate countless hours to nurture these young athletes, is a great credit to the department and demonstrates the importance of our programs.

As we navigate a world that values health and wellbeing, our mission to promote physical activity among students is more important than ever. We understand the connection between physical activity and emotional resilience. Workshops and resources were provided to schools to empower educators to incorporate physical activity into daily routines, fostering a holistic approach to student wellbeing.

Inclusivity is a cornerstone of our philosophy. We believe every student should have the opportunity to participate in sport, regardless of background or ability. This year, we expanded our focus on adaptive sports to ensure students with disability have equitable access to sporting opportunities. We also offered professional development for teachers and coaches to help them create inclusive environments. The positive feedback demonstrates a growing commitment to diversity in school sport.

Looking ahead, our vision remains clear: to provide high-quality sporting experiences for all students in NSW. We are committed to connection, inclusion, and program growth as we strive to elevate school sport to new heights.

None of these achievements would be possible without the tireless efforts of our dedicated staff and volunteers. I extend my heartfelt thanks to our principals, teachers and administrative staff for their passion and commitment to our students.

I wish to thank Murat Dizdar, Secretary, Martin Graham, Deputy Secretary, Teaching, Learning and Student Wellbeing, 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 also want to express my gratitude to parents, carers and community stakeholders for their unwavering support. Their belief in the power of sport to transform lives fuels our mission and motivates us to strive for excellence.

I am honoured to lead the School Sport Unit and encourage you to read the 2024 School Sport Unit Annual Report, which provides a summary of the year and includes program-specific achievements.

Peter Banks





School Sport Unit 2024 impact



446,000+
Students

1,420+
Schools

14,470+
Participated in the PSC 10 week Challenge

12,600+
Members of Viva Engage community

349,000+
Website users

5,980+
Thinking while Moving resource users

375,000+
Livestreaming views

Sport education teaching resource

17,000+
active users

Facebook

13,000+
Followers

78,300+
Page visits

235,400+
Audience reach

100+
News stories reporting on School Sport Unit programs and events.

860+
State Championships and Association trials held

3,800+
Teachers participated in professional learning

143,000+
Students from

1,550+
Schools

Enrolled in the School Swimming and Water Safety program

School swimming and water safety classroom resources

4,800+
users

11,225
Students

1,507
Schools

Participated in opportunities for students with disability

23,000+
Page views of the Sport safety guidelines

700,000+
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 that of our students and partners.

We will ignite 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 2024, 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 26 RSSP events were streamed during the year, resulting in an overall total of 365,141 views. The breakdown of these views is as follows:

- PSSA sports - 267,209 views
- CHSSA sports- 102,932 views.

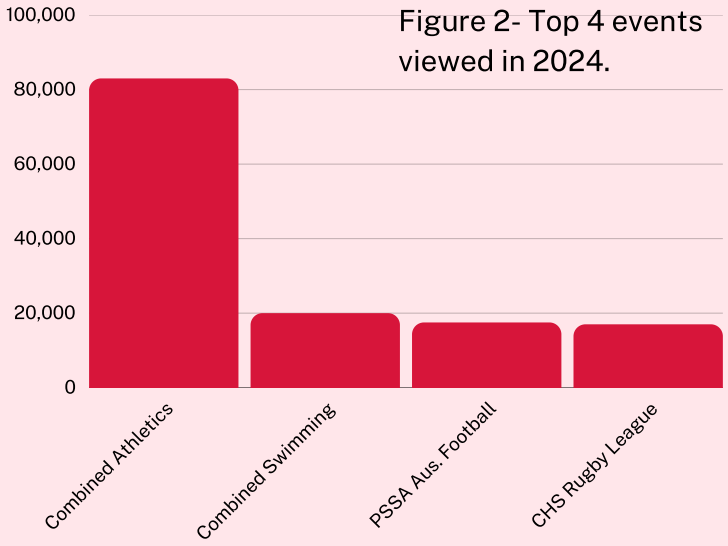


Figure 2- Top 4 events viewed in 2024.

Media coverage

Prime time news coverage and printed articles throughout 2024 showcased the success of School Sport Unit events and the positive impact on NSW students, highlighting the value of these initiatives in promoting student wellbeing and engagement.

Media units across the state shared reports on School Sport Unit events and programs. This extensive coverage, from various regions, highlighted the importance that communities place on these programs, and supported their success.

In 2024, over 100 news articles reported on School Sport Unit programs, underscoring the strong recognition of these initiatives. A variety of selected news stories and broadcasts can be found on the Media coverage page of the School Sport Unit's website.

Student commentators

The 2024 NSWPSSA Primary Athletics Championship introduced secondary student commentators to the School Sport Unit's live-streamed coverage. This pilot initiative aimed to support students interested in media, television presenting or sports commentary. Over two days, secondary students were mentored by experienced commentators, gaining hands-on commentary skills at their own pace, while learning broadcasting techniques to engage an audience.

This model broadened the event's appeal and offered students an alternative way to engage with sport, highlighting an additional career pathway beyond direct competition. It also provided students with valuable experience that could open doors to future opportunities in the media and sports industries.

School Sport Unit award ceremony

The School Sport Unit leads sport education by promoting equity, wellbeing, and excellence across various settings. We recognise the important contributions of skilled and motivated volunteer teachers who dedicate their time to positively shaping young lives. These opportunities would not be possible without the unwavering support of dedicated principals across the state, who work tirelessly to create an environment where students can thrive both in and out of the classroom.



In its fourth year, unprecedented support from schools led to 56 nominations across 16 categories for the School Sport Unit Excellence Award. These included early career teaching, representative sport service, School Swimming and Water Safety programs, leadership in rural and remote areas, school-based sport organisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives, and sport delivery for students with disability.

The virtual award ceremony, produced at the department's Parramatta office film studio, was broadcast via the School Sport Unit's web application and celebrated the achievements of 45 award winners. This event highlighted the dedication of our teachers and the commitment of schools statewide to diverse and inclusive sporting initiatives.

School Sport Unit Excellence Award recipients 2024

Olivia Attenborough-Doyle
Ryan Everson
Mitchell Lambert
Melanie Reeves
Luke Hogan
Cheryl Norrish
Blair Newham
Luke Millar
Deborah Bolton
Nicole Smith
Charles Mill
Crescent Head PS (pictured)
Avril Boyle
Andrea Whyte
Mitchell Oxley
Christopher Marques
Rory Leighton-Popple
Tracy Clark
Donna Devine
Mathew Halloran
Max Robinson
Susan Northwood
Susanne Moore
Ron Pratt
Kate Hogg
Kristy Frost
Taryn Jacklin
Sandy Fenning
Stephen Clayworth
Kevin Squires
Amanda Munro-Jones
Belinda Graham
Jennifer Vine
Michelle Pigram
Adam Sargent-Wilson
Paul Tindall
Alicia Burns
Shane Knight
Paul McSweeney
Dean Kellaway
Kim Catton
Elaine Cater
Heike Forth
Donna Lane
Shelley Darcy

Representative School Sport Pathway



The Representative School Sport Pathway (RSSP) provides students with opportunities to compete in local school events and then all the way through to national levels. The School Sport Unit recognises the dedication of teachers, students and parents/carers involved in NSW school sport.

School sport supports students by fostering essential values of respect, resilience and relationships, collectively known as the 3Rs. Teachers actively encourage these values, guiding students to participate in sports suited to their talents, interests and abilities.

In 2024, the 13 School Sport Associations continued delivering high-quality selection pathways, along with tailored initiatives designed to meet evolving student interests. They successfully hosted combined state championships, including primary and secondary football in Tamworth and Coffs Harbour, volleyball in Bomaderry, rugby in Bathurst and basketball and hockey in Newcastle. Each event featured targeted coach education sessions, further enhancing the experience for both participants and coaches. These successes have paved the way for plans to hold a larger combined event across multiple sports in 2025.

The RSSP also partnered with the Australian Olympic Committee's Olympics Unleashed program. To generate excitement leading up to the Paris Olympic Games 2024, Olympic athletes engaged students through educational seminars, live-streamed commentary and informal meet-ups, inspiring students to achieve their sporting potential. This successful collaboration will continue in 2025.

NSW All Schools

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

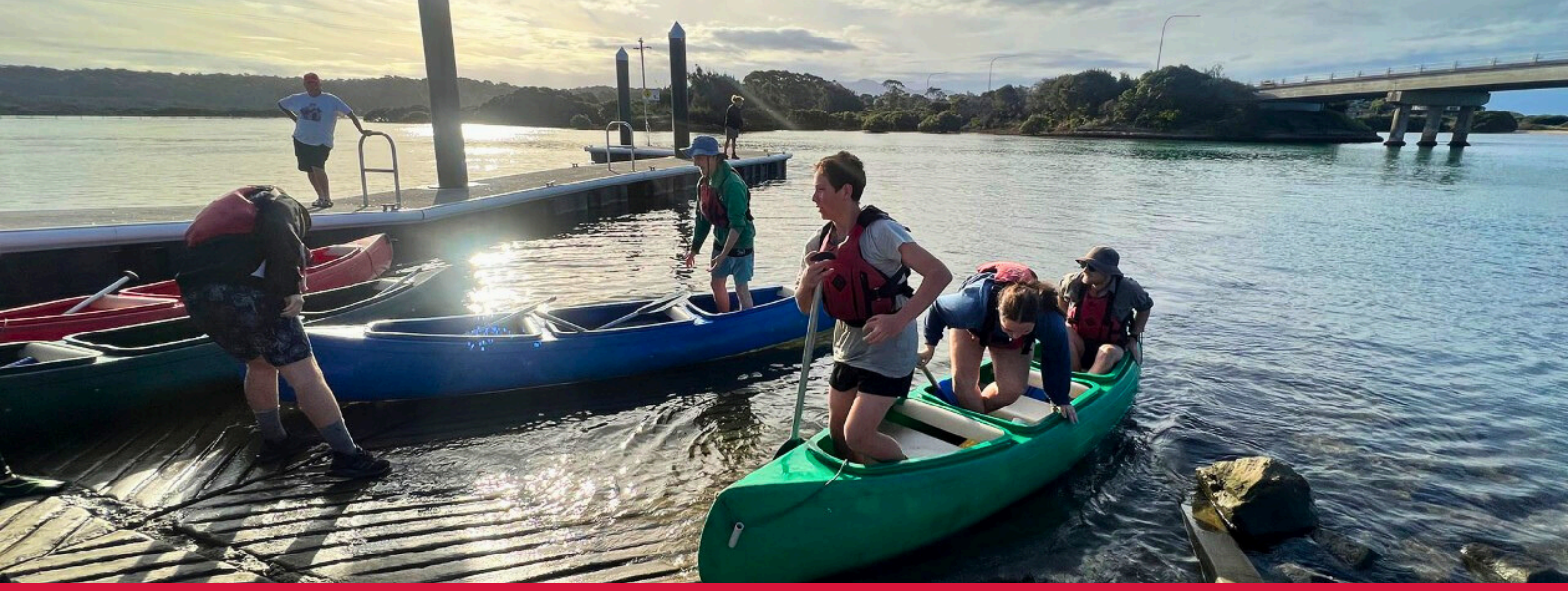
Queensland hosted the inaugural School Sport Australia (SSA) Games on the Gold Coast in 2024. Six primary and secondary sports came together to create a festival atmosphere, featuring high-level competition among some of the country's most talented students. A team of students and staff from NSW attended the games and were accommodated in a team village. NSW also appointed a 'Chef de Mission' to support students and team officials, ensuring they made the most of the Games' experience.

745 NSW students were All Schools representatives

82 NSW students represented as SSA officials

116 NSW students made Australian Merit Teams

60 NSW students received SSA gold medals



Policy and guidelines

The School Sport Unit significantly enhances educational experiences and opportunities for both students and teachers through comprehensive policy support and targeted initiatives. The team plays a crucial role in supporting schools by providing invaluable advice and assistance. This includes delivering a range of face-to-face and online professional learning opportunities, developing practical and effective teaching and learning resources and facilitating accreditation courses for educators. By offering these services, the unit ensures that both students and teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to succeed in school sport and physical activity.

A year in review

The former Sport and physical activity policy has now been consolidated within the new Student health and wellbeing policy, offering clear direction and guidance on implementing strategies, practices and systems to support student health and wellbeing.

The former Sport and physical activity policy has been updated to collate mandatory information into one clear, accessible and supportive resource: Sport and physical activity procedures, which is available as a supporting resource within the Student health and wellbeing policy. This resource offers comprehensive, practical and user-friendly guidance on planning, implementing and delivering the mandatory 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous sport and physical activity over the school week for every student in Years K-10.

Permission

A significant component of the Sport and physical activity procedures is the addition of support for schools in gaining parent/carer permission for participation in sport and physical activity. Created in collaboration with Legal Services, the Secondary Principals' Council and the Primary Principals' Association, these resources are designed to save time for schools and enhance the compliance and permission processes related to the provision of school sport. These resources are available at Permission.

Eight drop-in online sessions were held over a period of 4 weeks in Term 4, 2024 to introduce the new support materials to schools. Over 1,200 staff members participated in the sessions, gaining valuable insights and resources. Support will continue in 2025.

Specific sport and physical activity guidelines

The Specific sport and physical activity guidelines are also in the process of being updated to provide targeted support to schools in meeting the mandatory requirement. The re-designed resource will assist schools in developing appropriate risk assessments for sport and physical activity, including advice about duty of care, supervision, qualifications, safety equipment, infection control, weather conditions and emergency procedures. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by early to mid-2025.

Swimming and water safety

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

Secondary schools can apply for funding to support a school-initiated water safety education program for Stage 4 (Year 7 and 8) students. Schools are encouraged to explore a variety of training providers and opportunities to upskill their staff and enhance their swimming and water safety programs.

By taking advantage of these opportunities, schools can create a comprehensive approach to swimming and water safety education tailored to their community's needs.

The School Swimming and Water Safety team continues 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.

2024 highlights

84% of NSW primary schools participated in School Swimming and Water Safety

36,500 secondary students participated in School Swimming and Water Safety

12,750 students with disability participated in School Swimming and Water Safety

Teacher opportunities

The School Swimming and Water Safety program proudly welcomed several new members to its dedicated team this year. A total of 26 department teachers were recruited, each undergoing comprehensive training to fully understand and engage with the ethos and goals of the program. These teachers are now equipped with the skills and knowledge to make a positive impact on the students they work with.

In addition, 5 community members were also trained and have become actively involved, supporting our mission to ensure that every student has the opportunity to develop essential water safety skills. Their involvement is a key part of our continued success in delivering high-quality programs across schools.





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, to the statewide team sport competitions of boccia and ten pin bowling. All events are open to every student with disability from Kindergarten to Year 12 in participating schools. This includes students in Schools for Specific Purposes, those in specialist support classes and students in mainstream classes. Our Disability and Inclusion Officers also support teachers and support staff through professional learning, school visits and provision of resources.

2,136 students from **185 schools** took part in Come-and-Try Athletics

443 students from **37 schools** took part in Come-and-Try Football and Tennis

4,319 students from **358 schools** took part in 33 Multi-sport events

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

1,873 students from **435 schools** took part in the Boccia state-wide competition

Come-and-Try athletics

Students actively engaged in the Come-and-Try athletics program, which experienced significant growth compared to the previous year. Opportunities were extended to both regional and metropolitan locations, resulting in 11 successful Come-and-Try athletics days during Term 1.

Over 2,100 students with disability participated, experiencing athletics in a fun, inclusive and non-competitive environment. Simultaneously, 611 staff members had the opportunity to gain valuable insights into multi-class athletics and classification processes, enhancing their understanding and ability to support student participation.



Multi-sport events

Inclusivity is a cornerstone of the program's philosophy. Every student should have the opportunity to participate in sport regardless of background or ability, and all students deserve equal opportunities to engage in physical activity and develop life skills. This year the focus on adaptive sports was expanded to ensure students with disability have equitable access to sporting opportunities, enabling them to be active and involved. Professional development was also provided for teachers, equipping them with the tools and knowledge to create more inclusive sporting environments.

Premier’s Sporting Challenge

310,862
primary students participated in the 10wC

120,482
Secondary students participated in the 10wC

14,470 department staff participated in the 10wC

The Premier's Sporting Challenge (PSC) is designed to promote increased participation in sport and physical activity. In 2024, the challenge marked its 17th year of commitment to its motto of encouraging 'more students to be more active, more often.'

10-week Challenge

The flagship program of the Premier's Sporting Challenge is the 10-week Challenge (10wC), which is open to all students and staff in public schools. This program encourages everyone to engage in physical activity regularly, either as part of a class, team or individually. Award levels for the 10wC reflect the daily time commitment to activity, with all forms of moderate to vigorous physical activities counting towards an award.

In 2024, an impressive 70% of 10wC participating schools earned Gold or Diamond awards, meeting or surpassing the Australian Physical Activity Guidelines.

Moreover, 2024 saw a noticeable rise in participation, with more students across primary and secondary schools getting involved, along with an increase in participation from both school-based and Education Support staff. This reflects the growing success of the PSC in inspiring positive change within our schools and communities.

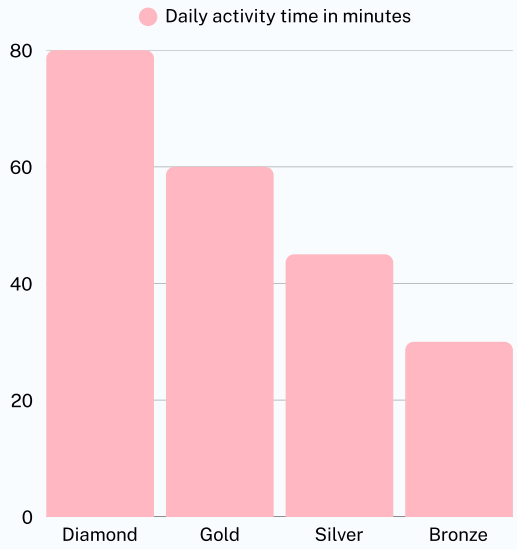


Figure 4 - Daily activity time required for each of the 10wC award levels.



Teacher resource hub

In 2024, the School Sport Unit provided a variety of high-quality teaching resources and professional learning opportunities. These initiatives helped schools create engaging and research-based sport and physical activity programs, all aimed at improving student wellbeing and increasing physical activity levels.

Sport and physical activity school health check

The School Sport Unit promotes student wellbeing through strategic support for physical activity in schools. In 2024, the Sport and Physical Activity School Health Check was updated to align with the new procedures, feedback from schools and input from the High Potential and Gifted Education (HPGE) team. This update ensures the health check remains a relevant and robust tool for schools.

Primary, secondary schools and Schools for Specific Purposes across the state continue to engage in professional learning on the 'Interconnection between physical activity and wellbeing in schools' and how to implement evidence-based, whole-school sport and physical activity programs. The Health Check will also be featured in a Tier 3 HPGE training option during the Term 2, 2025 School Development Day.

Our support is tailored to meet each school's specific needs, empowering them to foster a culture of wellbeing through physical activity.

NSWPSSA professional development initiative

In 2024, 26 teachers participated in professional learning to support the NSWPSSA Swimming and Athletics Championships. The training equipped them with skills for officiating roles.

The program included sport-specific online modules, a face-to-face workshop before the championships, and hands-on officiating during the event.

Through collaboration with the NSWPSSA, the initiative provided teachers with the knowledge, skills and connections to take on leadership roles in local schools and PSSA programs, as well as future opportunities in coaching, managing and officiating at the Association and state levels.



Sport Organiser Conference - Leading Through School Sport

The second successful Sport Organiser Conference, themed Leading Through School Sport, brought together over 150 sport organisers from across NSW at the department's Parramatta Office on 27 February 2024. The event offered a valuable opportunity for learning, collaboration and networking. Renowned educational leadership expert Steve Francis, along with Craig Brown, Principal, School Leadership Institute, delivered keynote addresses. They shared their leadership knowledge and expertise, focusing on how school sport organisers can apply these principles to lead effectively through school sport.

The conference emphasised the role of school sport organisers as key leaders in overcoming the challenges of managing sport and physical activity across schools. Attendees also engaged in discussions on important topics such as policy updates, available support materials, resources and research — all designed to improve the quality of sport and physical activity programs in schools. A special focus was placed on ensuring students with disability are supported in these activities.

School Sport Unit

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The School Sport Unit Annual Report 2024 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.