NSW Department of Education

School swimming carnival – guide for convenors

School swimming carnivals in NSW have a rich history steeped in tradition and celebration. These events bring students together to embrace fitness, friendly competition and water safety. Rooted in the values of physical wellbeing and camaraderie, swimming carnivals have grown into beloved traditions that connect generations.

Beyond competition, swimming carnivals promote teamwork, community spirit, and a healthy lifestyle among students. This guide is designed to equip school carnival convenors with the essential knowledge, tools, and strategies to organise a safe, enjoyable, and memorable swimming carnival.

Organisation and planning

Define the general goals and objectives of the event by considering the following:

Who is the carnival for?

- Whole school
- Part of the school, for example, students aged 8 years and up
- Competitors only
- Interschool competition, for example, zone or district

This will determine the number of participants that you need to cater for, as well as the structure of the carnival.

What type of carnival will it be and who will participate?

The type of carnival you have and who will participate is a school choice. There are many factors that may influence which carnival type is best, such as the facilities available, the number of staff available, the number of students and how transportation will be organised.

There are many ways to hold a school carnival. The 2 most common carnival types are:

- Traditional: students select which events they will enter and then participate at scheduled times.
- Participants only: the carnival is only for those students who are going to compete and have pre-entered an event prior to the day.

When is the carnival going to be held?

- Check the school calendar, check district/zone/association/state dates.
- Where possible, leave at least 3-4 weeks between school and district/zone carnivals to allow for a postponement and to finalise results.
- Set a date.
- Plan a back-up date marked in both the school calendar and organised with the venue.

A school swimming carnival offers benefits beyond individual participation and progression. It promotes unity and school spirit as students, teachers and families celebrate physical activity and teamwork. For all students, it fosters personal growth, boosting self-esteem and confidence. Additionally, its inclusivity encourages belonging and community, enhancing the school's positive environment. The greater the student involvement, the greater the potential benefits for the school.

Venue

Select a pool and try to book the venue 12 months in advance. Make sure the pool meets the requirements for your carnival. Consider the size of the pool and areas for students to sit, the number of public visitors at the pool and toilet facilities.

Some other factors to consider when choosing a venue.

- How will students travel to the venue?
- Does the pool have a PA system?
- Will the lane ropes be in place? Who will organise this and, if so, when?
- Are the lanes numbered?
- Does the venue supply equipment? (infinity starter system with built in strobe light & horn)
- Is there an area big enough for marshalling competitors?
- Is there a suitable covered area for recording results?
- Who will unlock the changeroom and other facilities?
- Does the venue have a canteen? Can you run the canteen, or does someone have a contract with the canteen?
- Is there cover for heat or rain. Can you bring your own coverage for officials?
- Are there facilities and services available for students with disability? For example, are there appropriate toilets/amenities, seating accessibility?

Program of events

The program of events may be influenced by the facilities at the venue, for example, the number of lanes in the pool, depth of the pool at each end.

- Develop the program taking the following into consideration:
    - Keep the longer races well separated.
    - For Primary - 100m Freestyle not too close to the 200m individual medley.
    - For Secondary – 200m events not too close to the 100m events.
    - Relay swimmers for zone carnivals can be decided on best times from individual races.

  Note: Holding all events at a school carnival (particularly Secondary) is generally not practical. Some events could be held separately before or after the event, or students could nominate by providing a personal best time for the distance
- If rules differ from World Aquatics and World Para Swimming, schools can create ‘local’ rules, published before the event and included in the program. Consult the PSSA Swimming and CHS Swimming Handbooks for guidance. While school carnival rules don't have to match, alignment where possible it is recommended.

- Ensure accessibility of the program of events for both staff and spectators. Provide hard copies for officials and consider making it available online for spectators and participants. If choosing the online option, communicate clearly with spectators and participants, and consider displaying multiple QR codes around the venue for easy access.
- Print large A3 posters of the event order and display these around the venue as a quick reference guide for students and spectators.

The program of events should clearly communicate the protest system in place. If you decide not to have any avenues available to dispute officials' decisions or results, this should also be clearly communicated.

Officials

Officials are essential at a school swimming carnival to ensure the smooth and fair conduct of the event. As student supervision must be undertaken by teachers, having teachers serve as officials as well brings several advantages.

- Teachers are familiar with the school's culture, policies and expectations, which helps maintain consistency and adherence to the school's values throughout the carnival.
- Teachers can also provide constructive feedback to students, fostering a positive learning environment. They can offer encouragement and guidance, whether students are excelling or facing challenges, promoting personal growth and development through the event.

The following are some considerations for ensuring officials are well prepared for the carnival.

- Utilise the School Sport Unit's **School swimming carnival-guide for officials** and **Swimming Officiating teaching resource** to help teachers prepare for the carnival.
- Try to give staff a preference of the duty or position they would like to have.
- Have clear responsibilities and duties outlined for each official and volunteer. Provide a printed copy of the rules and duties to the teachers before the carnival.
- If needed, parents/carers, community members and/or students from a local high school (if a primary carnival) can be used as officials. Give them a supporting role such as retrieving equipment or helping with marshalling.
- Schedule a briefing session for staff and volunteers before the carnival.

If you need additional officials, you can contact the local swimming club, local high schools and/or Swimming NSW.

Entry into events

Entry into events involves a systematic process to ensure organisation and participation of all students. There is a variety of options to choose from.

- Class entry form: The teacher nominates students by filling out a form and submits it to the carnival organiser by a specified date.
- House entry form: House captains or teachers complete nomination forms for different age divisions during a house meeting.
- Event entry form: Separate forms are created for each event. They can be completed by houses, classes or the school convenor.
- Individual entry form: This system is used for championship level competitions or when student participation depends on parent/carer consent through the entry form.
- Post entries: Entries are not accepted before the carnival. Competitors are called on the day of the event and heats are organised by the marshal.
- Pre-qualifying: Typically used for stroke events, schools conduct qualifying rounds before the carnival. A designated number of participants compete in the final.

Try to have a process that aims to include as many students as possible. The carnival provides an opportunity for students to try new activities, challenge themselves and contribute to the school's sense of community.

Students with disability – multi-class events

Schools must fulfill a legal obligation under the NSW Disability Discrimination Act to provide equal access and opportunities for all students. Inclusivity also shows a commitment to creating a diverse environment where all students can thrive and showcase their talents fairly.

Give multi-class swimmers a choice in how they would like to participate. This could be with peers of the same age and gender, other multi-class swimmers or within their classification. All multi-class swimmers' results should be recorded in the same way as for able-bodied students.

Students with disability don't need a formal classification to participate at a school carnival. However, they should be encouraged to progress along the Representative School Sport Pathway for its numerous benefits and opportunities. Schools are encouraged to provide support for students and families with the classification process.

Check if multi-class swimmers already have a sport-specific classification. Information on obtaining a classification can be found at Classification.

Encourage the classifying of students as early as possible, noting that a formal classification is generally not required until association level. Check with your zone executive or zone swimming convenor to determine the level of classification needed for students to compete before the school carnival.

Equipment

Considerations:

- Organise equipment at least one month before the carnival as this will allow time for repairs and purchasing additional items. The venue may supply or lease out equipment.
- Make a list of exactly what equipment you need - see sample checklist below.
- Make a list of resources you require for recording results for example recording sheets, laptops, timekeeper sheets, judging sheets. Remember tables, chairs and shelters for officials.
- Put a responsible person in charge of the equipment on the day. This person should issue the equipment and check that it is returned.
- Consider how equipment will be transported to the venue.
- Do you need a public announcing system? Check that it is charged, in working condition and that it is sufficient for your needs.
- Two-way radios are helpful for the use of key officials. Ensure batteries are charged and personnel using them are provided with a training session.
- Do you need additional shelter such as tents or umbrellas?

Sample equipment checklist

Swimming equipment	Checked out	Checked in
Starting equipment		
Earmuffs or ear plugs		
Clipboards		
Whistles, bell		
Stop watches		
Book/pickup timing equipment if using e.g. Dolphin timing equipment		
Witches' hats and markers - a variety of colours		
Walkie Talkies and spare batteries		
Timekeeper recording slips		
Place Judge's recording slips		
Referee disqualification recording slips		
Place cards, place sticks		

Heat sheets		
Point score sheets (if scoring for numbers entering, then the marshal also needs a copy)		
Computer, extension cords and printer, as required		
Finals' sheets		
Programs		
Stationery – pens, pencils, stapler, staples, tape, highlighters, markers, paper clips, wet weather recording folders, clips, paper, pencils, spare paper		
Certificates		
House flags, school flags		
White flags (for umpires and field officials, if available)		
Yellow flags (umpires and field time clocks, if available)		
Tables and chairs		
Loud hailers (spare batteries) or a public announcing system		
First aid kit and student medication		
Sunscreen		
Garbage bags		
Batteries		
Hand sanitiser		
Spray disinfectant		
Rubbish tongs		
Shade tents (anchored)		
Staff sign-on sheets and refreshments		
Camera/video recording equipment (optional)		

Sample swimming carnival checklists

It is important to start organising a swimming carnival as early as possible to ensure a well - organised day is provided for students.

12 months prior to carnival day (end of the carnival)	
Book the venue (including back-up date).	☐
Publicise date/s on school calendar.	☐
Develop a budget. Costs can include: • venue hire • equipment hire and purchases • ribbons, medals and/or certificates • transportation.	☐
Update championship records Updating carnival records/results should occur immediately after each carnival. Ensure trophies/ribbons are ready for any upcoming award ceremonies.	☐
Evaluation notes from previous carnival • What went well? • What can be improved? • What needs to change/be removed?	☐

One or two months prior to carnival	
Book transport, confirm venue and any hired equipment.	☐
Publicise dates to students/parents/carers.	☐
Check equipment requirements, organise certificates, ribbons, trophies.	☐
Organise to have the pool lane ropes put in early on the day.	☐
Organise program and officials.	☐
Organise risk management plan and permission procedures.	☐
Organise and distribute information and permission forms to students/parents/carers.	☐
Organise recording sheets and officials' folders.	☐

One or two weeks prior to carnival	
Conduct a staff briefing to ensure teachers are familiar with their roles. Organise additional training, as required.	☐
Organise student entries (if occurring prior to the carnival).	☐
Hold house meetings and brief students on organisation of the day including travel to and from the venue and on behaviour expectations.	☐
Check the pool booking and all equipment is available as requested.	☐

After the carnival	
Check equipment is returned.	☐
Determine results such as age champion, house winners.	☐
Select team for the next level of representation, for example, zone/district.	☐
Organise the next level of representation, if required, for example, transport, permission notes, entries, as required.	☐
Update any school records.	☐
Evaluate the carnival, collect feedback from staff and students.	☐
Prepare for the next year's carnival.	☐

Suggested swimming carnival officials' job list

The number of officials required for each role can vary based on the scale of the carnival and the number of participants. Here are the suggested roles for officials, along with approximate numbers for a medium-sized school:

Role	Suggested minimum number	Notes
Carnival convenor	1	
Assistant carnival convenor	1	Where possible, the assistant is 'shadowing' the carnival convenor to succession plan.
Referee (stroke judge)	1	A member of the Executive team or the carnival convenor/assistant takes on the role.
Place judge	1	A member of the Executive team or the carnival convenor/assistant takes on the role.
Starter	1	Where possible, ensure the starter possesses experience and/or training in swimming starting.
Marshals/check starter	2	An experienced teacher familiar with the children. When ready one of the marshals would walk the children to the starting end and stand them behind the correct lane.
Chief timekeeper	1	An experienced teacher or member of the Executive team takes on the role.
Timekeepers	1 per lane	This can be reduced if you have access to electronic timing. See the timekeepers' section of the **School swimming carnival-guide for officials** for more information.
Announcer	1	A member of the Executive team or the carnival convenor/assistant takes on the role.
Lifesavers	2	One either side of pool. Can be pool staff if only watching school. Teachers acting as lifesavers must hold at least a Perform Water Rescue qualification.
Recorders	2	A teacher and a parent helper could do this job. Involves collating results, records and points' scores.