



**COMPETITION RESTRUCTURE
&
COMPETITIVE PATHWAY
REVIEW**

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Introduction

Over the last 18 months, Swimming New Zealand (SNZ) and the Events Advisory Committee (EAC) has worked together to assess and understand various issues relating to the current competition pathway and structure of meets in NZ.

One issue for example, is of the 431 meets held throughout NZ in the 2018/19 year, the primary driver in determining when these events occurred, particularly at a regional level, is historical or financial. Not athlete development or performance, which should be the key determining factor if we are collectively trying to improve the overall performance of our swimmers at all levels.

If we are serious about improving the performances of our swimmers, particularly on the international stage, then we need a competition structure and competitive pathway that has international performance outcomes. This should be the primary driver when determining when all events are scheduled. The scheduling of events in isolation of each other, needs to stop.

Another key area of focus has been the visible lack of alignment between club, regional and national meets and an uncertainty as to the purpose of many of these meets. The result of this is the gradual reduction of membership numbers and only a small group of athletes who are ready to compete and perform on the world stage.

Both SNZ and the EAC agreed on the need to complete a full (club-region-national) competition structure and competitive pathway review to address these issues and ensure we are able to maximise our potential as a swimming nation.

In January 2019, the ***New Zealand Competition Restructure Working Group*** (the Working Group) was established to lead a review of the existing competition structure and competitive pathway and provide a detailed report, including recommendations for change, to the board of SNZ for its consideration in mid-2020 with any approved changes coming into effect in early 2021. The Working Group is:

- Todd Mason - Chair
- Jon Winter (EAC)
- Lesley Huckins (EAC & TAC)
- Sue Southgate (Taranaki)
- Lars Humer (Otago)
- Brigitte Mahan (Canterbury)
- Alastair Johnson (BOP)
- David Lyles (Auckland)
- Darren Ward (Waikato)
- Mat Woofe (Waikato)

Issues Identified

Since its inception, the Working Group has met several times and conducted a detailed review of the current competition structure. They have identified the following key issues as being significant barriers to maximising our swimming potential both domestically and internationally:

1. Qualifying times between regional champs, NZ Division II, NZ Age Groups and NZ Opens, have been reviewed in isolation of each other with little regard to the overall development and progression of athletes.
2. There is little coordination between SNZ and Regions in relation to the timing, purpose and structure of National and Regional meets.
3. There is too much emphasis on having 'approved meets' in order to gain qualification for regional or national meets. The reason for having approved meets has become blurred resulting on these becoming the norm as opposed to the exception.
4. Most national events are at capacity, in terms of venue, so growth is almost impossible with any changes to these meets being driven by venue capacity as opposed to improving performances.
5. The timing of Division II in the last 4-5 years has diluted the importance of some regional championships.
6. The NZ Short Course Championships clashes annually with the Swimming Australia State Teams event.
7. There is no agreed age group format consistent across all events.
8. There is limited understanding and knowledge of Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) and how this should be applied to an effective competition pathway and structure.

The Working Group is now in a position to release its recommendations for feedback which it believes will address the identified issues above and help improve the performances of our swimmers domestically and internationally.

To ensure that the Working Group's proposed changes would be robust and have maximum impact, it also looked at frameworks, plans, ideas and research papers from around the world including Irish, Scottish, British and Australian Swimming.

Summary of DRAFT Recommendations:

Listed below are the Working Group's draft recommendations based on its detailed review of the existing competition structure and competitive pathway.

The purpose of releasing these draft recommendations is so that Working Group can receive and digest feedback from the swimming community prior to finalising its recommendations for board approval in mid-2020.

Listed below is a summary of the draft recommendations with further detail and the traditional for each recommendation outlined further on in this document.

The Working Group's draft recommendations are:

1. The **senior** (13 yrs. +) competition calendar be realigned into three distinct training and competition cycles. Each cycle would conclude with a significant racing opportunity eg Regional or National championships. These cycles being:

	Training Block:	Racing Month	Key Meet(s)
1.	September - November	December	All Long Course Regional Senior Championships.
2	January - March	April	NZ Opens, NZ Age Groups, NZ Division II
3	May - July	August	NZ Short Course Championships

2. Transfer the 17 & 18 years age group from National Age Groups to NZ Opens by adding a 18 & Under qualifying standard for Opens.
3. Qualifying opportunities for national meets, not counting Regional championships, are limited to an additional 10 meets per region to be known as "National Qualifying Meets". National Qualifying Meets will replace Approved Meets.
4. National Qualifying Meet times will not be required to enter Regional Championships.
5. Consistent age group categories are implemented across all regional and national events.
6. SNZ to re-introduce and administer the XLR8 Programme for swimmers who are 12 years and under, to promote the development of all strokes, and realign the 12&U competition calendar.
7. Each regional and national competition in the structure needs to have a clearly defined purpose and position within the athlete development pathway as detailed in Section 5.
8. The competition calendar be set for a four year cycle from January 2021 - December 2024 with the next competition review occurring in June 2023.

Summary of DRAFT Recommendations:

The Working Group also identified that the following, although not directly linked to the competition structure or pathway, will play an equal role in improving the performance of our swimmers:

1. All coaches, clubs & regions need to understand the rationale and purpose of the Competition Levels outlined in Section 5 and where their programmes, athletes and meets sit within it.
2. NZ should work towards being the most skilled competitive swimming nation in the world by having a higher level of skill execution at all levels.

Feedback Process:

	Date:
Feedback Open:	December 2019 – March 2020
Working group to review feedback received:	April 2020
Recommendation to SNZ Board	June 2020

How to Provide Feedback:

SNZ is asking for feedback from regional committees, club committees, club coaches, swimmers and other interested parties.

To submit feedback please refer to Page 16 and follow the link.

The Current State

In the 2018/19 year there were 431 meets held throughout NZ equating to 226,130 individual swims as per **Table 1** below:

Table 1

Meet Type	Number held	%	# swims	%
National Championship	9	2.09	21,901	9.69
Regional Championship	50	11.6	51,214	22.65
Inter Club Competition	234	54.29	120,322	53.21
Club Championship	45	10.44	10,327	4.57
Club Night	85	19.72	12,595	5.57
Other	8	1.86	9,771	4.32
Total	431		226,130	

Table 2 below shows that 305 or 72% of all meets (excluding National Meets) on the database are 'approved meets' used as national qualification meets. The Working Group has recommended (draft recommendation 3) that "National Qualification Meets" are limited to 10 per region (excluding Regional Championships). This is to enable coaches and swimmers time to focus on developing skills both in training and racing without the constant focus and distraction of achieving a national qualifying standard.

Table 2

Region	Approved Meets	All Meets	% of approved Meets
Auckland	24	65	36.92
Bay of Plenty	18	45	40
Canterbury West Coast	26	39	66.67
Counties Manukau	37	37	100
Hawkes Bay Poverty Bay	37	43	86.05
Manawatu	27	30	90
Nelson Marlborough	24	25	96
Northland	15	22	68.18
Otago	18	22	81.82
Southland	12	12	100
Taranaki	12	15	80
Waikato	16	28	57.14
Wellington	39	39	100
Total	305	422	72.27

The Current State

Table 3 below shows the current ad-hoc timing of the regional championships on the calendar in 2018/2019 with these championships spread across four months resulting in, for example, swimmers from Otago and Auckland being on completely different training cycles throughout these months.

A key draft recommendation from the Working Group is to align training cycles of all swimmers with the requirement for all Regional Championships to be in December (at the conclusion of the September-November Training Cycle).

Table 3

Junior Summer Championships	Held across 6 months
October	Counties
December	Wellington, Auckland, Bay of Plenty
January	Canterbury West Coast
February	Junior Festival
March	Waikato
Senior Summer Championships	Held across 4 months
December	Northland, Waikato, Otago, Southland
January	Wellington, Counties, Canterbury West Coast
February	South Island Town & Country, Otago Sprint Championships, Manawatu (Age), Nelson/Marlborough
March	Auckland, Manawatu (Open), Buller West Coast
Winter (SC) Championships	Held across 4 months
June	Hawks Bay Poverty Bay
July	Manawatu, Taranaki, Otago
August	Nelson/Marlborough, Bay of Plenty, South Island Champs, Auckland, Wellington, Aquaknights
September	Southland

Introduction of Competition Levels

Part of the Working Groups draft recommendations is to ensure that each regional and national competition in the structure has a clearly defined purpose and position within the Long-Term Athlete Development Pathway (draft recommendation 7).

This will be achieved by allocating all meets into five 'levels' of competition closely linked to the recognised Long Term Athlete Development framework and based on an aligned coordinated annual calendar.

It is also proposed that the competition calendar would be set for a four year cycle from January 2021 - December 2024 with the next competition review occurring in June 2023.

	EVENTS	Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD)
High Performance	International Comps/ NZ National Teams	Training to win / Perform
Performance	NZ Opens/ NAGs	Training to Compete / Perform
Competitive	Div II Island Championships*	Training to Train / Develop
Regional	Regional Champs	Skill Development / Participate
Local	Inter Club, Club Champs, Club Meets	Fundamentals / Play

*** Island Championships**

The Working Group identified that by moving all regional champions to December, this opens a gap in the calendar for a meet of significant importance for certain swimmers, either trying to step up or prepare for their respective national meet eg an Island Championships or similar.

Proposed Competition Structure

The table below shows the **senior** (13 yrs. +) proposed competition calendar and training cycles as described in draft recommendation 1.

Event Type	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	
HP MEETS		STATE TEAMS		Various Australian State Champs							International Pinnacle		High Performance Level
National Championship Meets								OPENS/ NAGS				NZ Short Course	Performance Level
DIVISION II								DIV II					Competitive Level
ISLANDS CHAMPIONSHIPS							Island Champs (LC)				Island Champs (SC)		
Regional Championship Meets				REGIONAL CHAMPS (LC)						REGIONAL CHAMPS (SC)			Regional Swimmer Level
Inter Club & Development Meets													Local Level
	TRAINING BLOCK				TRAINING BLOCK				TRAINING BLOCK				

Notes:

1. All Regional Championships are held within a 6-7 week period, not set strictly in December or June.
2. The Island Championships (or similar) can be either a 'preparation' or 'last chance' meet for the following national meets (NZ Division II, NZ Opens, National Age Groups and Short Course).
3. Division II Championships would always be held **after** National Age Groups Champs.

Proposed Event Details Explained

EVENT:	NZ OPEN Championships
LEVEL:	Performance
PURPOSE:	To crown our National Open Champions and to select the best athletes to represent NZ at pinnacle events.
FORMAT:	Heats & Finals Open Q Times 18 & Under Q Times OPEN FINAL 18 & Under FINAL PARA (Multi Class) Swimmers can only swim in events which they have qualified for.
RECOMMENDED CHANGES	i. The introduction of an 18 & U qualifying time for each event to cater for the 17&18-year olds who can no longer swim at NZ Age Groups. ii. Introduction of an 18 & Under FINAL

EVENT:	National Age Group Championships
LEVEL:	Performance
PURPOSE:	To crown National Age Group Champions, whilst learning to enjoy racing at a national level; selection of the junior swim teams.
FORMAT:	Heats (combined ages) & finals in Age Groups Age Groups & Qualifying Times <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 13 years & Under• 14 years• 15 years• 16 years Swimmers can only swim in events which they have qualified for.
RECOMMENDED CHANGES	i. Reintroduction of a 13 & U age group, from a 13-years only age group. ii. Removal of 17 & 18-year olds age group

Proposed Event Details Explained

EVENT:	NZ Short Course Championships
LEVEL:	Performance
PURPOSE:	To crown National Champions both Age and Open, whilst learning to enjoy racing at a national level. To select swimmers for pinnacle international SC events.
FORMAT:	Heats in the morning act as Timed Finals for Age Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 13 years & Under• 14 years• 15 years• 16 years• 17/18 years Open finals in the evening (A & B) at night (10 lanes) PARA (Multi Class)
RECOMMENDED CHANGES	i. Reintroduction of a 13 & U age group, from a 13-years only age group.

EVENT:	NZ Division II Championships
LEVEL:	Competitive
PURPOSE:	To provide an introduction to competitive swimming at a national level & provide end of season racing for young age group swimmers.
FORMAT:	Heats (combined ages) & finals in Age Groups Age Groups & Qualifying Times <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 13 years & Under• 14 years• 15 years• 16 years + Swimmers can only swim in events which they have qualified for.
RECOMMENDED CHANGES	i. Reintroduction of a 13 & U age group, from a 13-years only age group.

Proposed Event Details Explained

EVENT:	Island Championships
LEVEL:	Competitive
PURPOSE:	To provide swimmers a stepping stone to National Age Groups or NZ Short Course. For those who are already at the performance level acts as last hit out before National Age Groups, NZ Opens or NZ Short Course.
FORMAT:	3 Days - Timed Finals Age Groups & Qualifying Times <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 13 years & Under• 14 years• 15 years• 16 years• OPEN PARA (Multi Class)
RECOMMENDED CHANGES	i. New Event ii. Qualifying times would be the same (North & South)

EVENT:	Regional Championships
LEVEL:	Regional
PURPOSE:	To crown the regional champions & provide a bridge level of competition.
FORMAT:	Heat & Final or Timed Finals - Depending on the size of the region & time available. Age Groups & Qualifying Times <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 13 years & Under• 14 years• 15 years• 16 years + PARA (Multi Class)
RECOMMENDED CHANGES	i. At all regional champs the oldest age group will be 16+ to ensure that there is enough competition for legitimate racing.

Realigned 12 & U Competition Structure and XLR8

Currently, the 12&U (Junior) structure is very basic from a national point of view. 12&U swimming should be focused at a club and regional level where swimmers are encouraged to participate, enjoy and cement a long-term involvement with swimming.

The pinnacle event for 12&U swimmers should be their Regional Championships held in either July and/or March.

Nationally, SNZ will coordinate the Junior Festival, held in February, with the primary focus of this event being the achievement and recognition of Personal Best's. SNZ will also re-introduce and coordinate the XLR8 Programme that promotes the development of all strokes.

At a local level, clubs, regions & SNZ need to be more creative and open to providing more meets that promote the development of key skills such as fastest breakout to 15m, fastest dead start from 15m turn and back to 15m etc. These meets should look to include members and non-members in an attempt to grow the base of swimming at a local level.

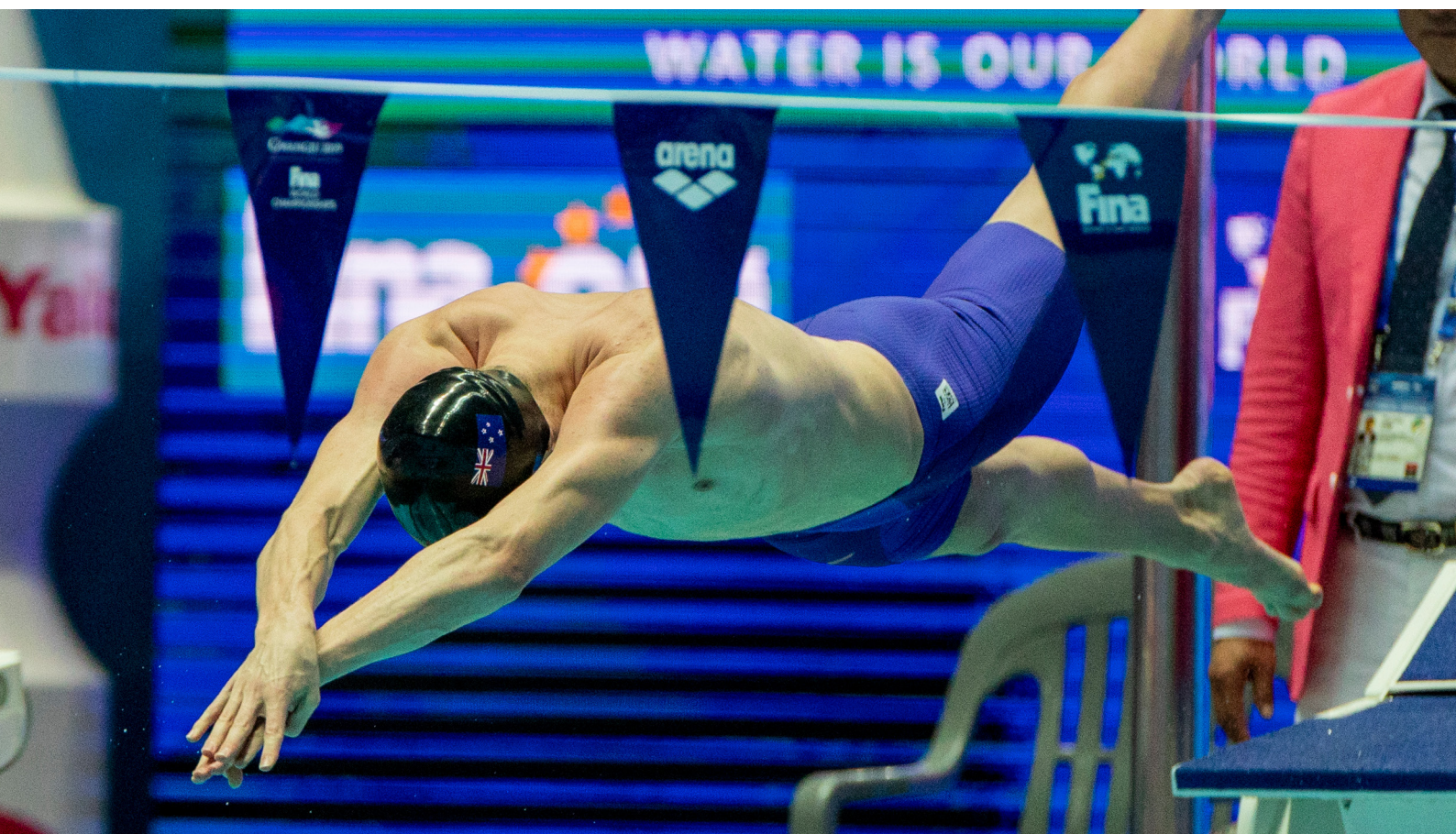
Local meets do not need to offer all events and should be short in total duration, and varied week to week, month to month. These meets are **extremely important** and need to continue but need to meet the diverse and changing needs 'swimmers' across the country.



Conclusion

The intended benefits & outcomes of the recommendations contained within this review will:

- Provide an aligned and appropriately structured competition and training framework.
- Enable swimmers to focus on achieving their best performances at key points within a season in line with the new competition calendar.
- Provide coaches the time to focus on specific competencies, such as skill development, within a specific training period.
- Enable coaches to develop a more holistic training calendar focused on skill development, racing and competitions aligned to a nationally agreed training cycle.
- Enable better long-term planning due to the establishment of a revolving four-year competition calendar.
- Provide appropriate age for stage racing opportunities.
- Significantly simplify the training and competition cycle at all levels of our sport.



Questions that you might have

What will happen to the NZ Secondary School Championships?

The NZSSC will continue – but it is not seen as part of the main pathway. The events which are included in it will be tailored to promote inter school rivalry and competition with more relays and alternative events

Why move the NZ Short Champs into the school term, this will mean more time off school for most of the swimmers?

The working group discussed this at length, and looked at the other options but still thought this is the best option with the following rationale:

- A four-term school year doesn't provide the best framework for a competition / training plan for the sport of swimming
- For coaches to prepare swimmers for peak performance at each stage & for all levels (HP, Performance, Competitive & Regionally) they need time to prepare (hence the proposed structure is three blocks)
- National Age Groups is and will stay within the school holidays as this timing complements the proposed structure.

Why move all Regional Long Course Champs to December?

The working group discussed this at length & as shown in the proposal, currently the regional champs are too spread out to create a consistent national framework. The move to December has many benefits including, it's a good time to race, after school exams and before Christmas and New Year's break & then provides time for training camps in January.

There still needs to be a quality meet in the lead up to Opens & National Age Groups or NZ Division II Champs, the proposed 'Island Champs' fills this gap.

Pools would need to be booked well in advance as this would be the start of the summer school holidays.

Why isn't the Open Water Championships or a pathway identified anywhere in the proposal?

Currently the NZ Open Water championship attracts approximately 200 swimmers (2019) in the 4-years previous the event averaged 82 swimmers (per year). There does need to be separate piece of the work done on an open water pathway, Northland region has recently started the Northland OW champs and SNZ is aware that other regions are also looking to include OW in their regional events, but it wasn't seen as an immediate priority.

Questions that you might have

Why is the Junior Festival at a level below the regional championships?

The intent of Junior Festival is not to be the 'pinnacle' meet for 12 & U but a meet which promotes junior swimming, rewards PB's & fast racing.

The JF will still be coordinated by SNZ and will continue to grow with more investment.

In the new proposed timeline, the Junior Regional Championships are positioned to be the finale for most 12 & U swimmers' season.

What will happen to 'approved' meets?

The terminology will change, these meets will be known as "National Qualification Meets." – meets where you can qualify for a National Championship. (Division II Championships, National Age Groups Championships, New Zealand Open Championships & New Zealand Short Course Championships) The number of National Qualifying meets are to be limited per region to a maximum of 10 per year.

What is the XLR8 Programme?

XLR8 was a motivational programme where swimmers score points across a combination of events and are ranked nationally on their performances. The programme recognises **versatility** and **all-round** ability, rewarding correct application of the processes necessary for **long term athlete development**.

The national XLR8 programme has been sitting in limbo for about three years, as questions were raised about how relevant it was nationally and did it need to be reviewed if it was going to continue.

Will we have enough technical officials?

There is a need for a nationally aligned TO development pathway to ensure we continue to develop a greater depth at regional and national meets. Region's will need to work together and align meets to prevent clashes with neighbouring regions.

There also needs to be more discussion nationally & between regions to ensure that the level of officiating at interclub and local meets is suitable to achieve the desired outcome of skill development and participation.

Questions that you might have

What happens now/what is the timeline/when could this all happen?

The proposal will be released to the membership for discussion and feedback will be sought from swimming clubs & regions. At the end of the consultation period (March 2020) the working group will meet to review the feedback and make any changes they deem appropriate.

The working group is aiming to get a final recommendation to the SNZ Board in June 2020 for signoff for a 4-year cycle, review starting in the 3rd year.

If this is achieved, the national events will move dates in 2021 but as the timeframe is shorter for regions, long course regional champs may stay where they have traditionally been in for 2021 & transition in 2022.

Feedback Process:

	Date:
Feedback Open:	December 2019 – March 2020
Working group to review feedback received:	April 2020
Recommendation to SNZ Board	June 2020

How to Provide Feedback:

SNZ is asking for feedback from regional committees, club committees, club coaches, swimmers and other interested parties.

To submit feedback please [CLICK HERE](#)

Apendix 1:

Regional Championship Age Group Matrix

To bring all regions into alignment the table below suggests the age groups & events for all regional championships. (recommendation 5).

Stroke	Distance	Age Group			
		13yrs	14yrs	15yrs	16 & Over
Freestyle	50	✓	✓	✓	✓
	100	✓	✓	✓	✓
	200	✓	✓	✓	✓
	400	✓	✓	✓	✓
	800*	✓	✓	✓	✓
	1500*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Backstroke	50	✓	✓	✓	✓
	100	✓	✓	✓	✓
	200	✓	✓	✓	✓
Breaststroke	50	✓	✓	✓	✓
	100	✓	✓	✓	✓
	200	✓	✓	✓	✓
Butterfly	50	✓	✓	✓	✓
	100	✓	✓	✓	✓
	200	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual Medley	100	✓	✓	✓	✓
	200	✓	✓	✓	✓
	400*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Freestyle Relay	4x50	15 & U			Open
	4x100	15 & U			Open
	4x200				
Medley Relay	4x50	15 & U			Open
	4x100	15 & U			Open
	4x200				
Mixed Medley Relay	4x50	15 & U		Open	
	4x100	15 & U		Open	

Appendix 2:

Junior Regional Championship Age Group Matrix

To bring all regions into alignment the table below suggests the age groups & events for all regional championships. (recommendation 5).

Stroke	Distance	Age Groups			
		10 & U	11yrs	12yrs	
Freestyle	50	✓	✓	✓	
	100	✓	✓	✓	
	200	✓	✓	✓	
	400	✓	✓	✓	
	800				✓
	1500				
Backstroke	50	✓	✓	✓	
	100	✓	✓	✓	
	200		✓	✓	
Breaststroke	50	✓	✓	✓	
	100	✓	✓	✓	
	200		✓	✓	
Butterfly	50	✓	✓	✓	
	100	✓	✓	✓	
	200		✓	✓	
Individual Medley	100	✓	✓	✓	
	200	✓	✓	✓	
	400				✓
Freestyle Relay	4x50	12 & U			
	4x100	12 & U			
	4x200				
Medley Relay	4x50	12 & U			
	4x100	12 & U			
	4x200				