

## 2025 AON NEW ZEALAND POOL RESCUE CHAMPIONSHIPS REPORT

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Positive participant net promoter score of 61 (up from 56 in 2024)
- 558 Competitors (up from 460 in 2024)
- 33 New Zealand Clubs, 2 Australian Clubs, 1 NSW State Team & 1 Australian Lifesaving Team
- 24 volunteer officials, 20 volunteer water helpers, 12 SLSNZ staff & event contractors, 10 Aon staff & contractors
- 5 World Records (1 Youth, 2 Open, 2 Masters)
- 34 New Zealand Records
- Clear and timely communication prior and during event.
- Efficient delivery and officiating ensuring programming kept ahead of time
- Extremely positive event survey feedback
- Successful delivery with excellent brand engagement and activations through Aon
- Engaging stories and social media content
- Successful grant funding ensured event was financially sustainable

### CHALLENGES

- Delayed access to the pool due to running our event directly after Swimming NZ's short course championships at the same venue resulted in significant pressure on preparation as well as programming and event experience elements.
- Venue limitations in terms of space and flexibility - especially seating when all age divisions are competing
- Consistency of competition management system.
- Equity of peripheral event experiences across different age-groups, especially Aon activations and prizegivings.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Human resource
  - Look to have one more official per team allocated each side of the pool to assist with rotation for food, toilets etc.
- Event management
  - Allocated seating
  - Different location for briefings e.g. outside or large room
  - Do not follow Swimming NZ Short Course at the same venue
- Event tech
  - We need to properly explore options (swimify) well ahead of any event in 2026
- Health & Safety
  - Continue adding to functionality of Patrol App
  - Have a SLSNZ first aid kit on site as back-up
- Event experience
  - Continue current activations and investigate improved opportunities for seniors & masters competitors.
- Programming
  - Review mixed relay teams supported by deeper quantitative analysis of impact of mixed relay teams to help determine best implementation method.
- Financial
  - Continued focus on grant funding opportunities as well as direct income from organisational partners in order to reduce additional financial impact on the membership and ensure sustainable event.
- Communication
  - Early communication of competition dates, venues and programmes
  - Clear timelines for specific club and volunteer communications

## HUMAN RESOURCE

- 24 volunteer officials, 20 volunteer water helpers, 12 SLSNZ staff & event contractors, 10 Aon staff & contractors
- The number of officials were on the lean side at some stages (some pulling out last minute out of our control) which meant we had to ring some people in last minute.
- An expression of interest process for volunteer positions was competed with member-led appointments panel selecting the Event Referee and supporting them to select officiating roles. A continued focus has been improving the timing and communication of this process – notifying volunteers early so they can prepare accordingly.
- An additional focus has been continuing to improve the 'event experience' – AON branding & activations, commentary, photography & videography all contribute to this but do require an increase in staff/contractor time and therefore costs.
- **Look to have one more official per team allocated each side of the pool to assist with rotation for food, toilets etc.**

## EVENT MANAGEMENT

- Entry Information and programme was released well in advance (9 July) to allow clubs sufficient preparation time.
- The Event Management Committee (EMC) caught up regularly leading into the event via Teams meetings, WhatsApp messages and emails, which ensured alignment
- 2 x online calls with Surf Officials (1 x ILS related, 1 x Event Logistics related) and 1 x online call with Team Managers which allowed for information to be communicated well ahead of time and reduced timing of briefings and questions each day during the event.
- A known challenge was venue access and set-up. While delivering off the back of Swimming NZ's National Short Course Championships was well intended, it created significant pressure on preparation as well as programming and event experience elements. Only 84 (15%) competitors did both events
- Team Managers Meetings are hard to facilitate poolside
- Participant feedback regarding the venue were positive although indicated seating issues, especially when all divisions are racing (Saturday morning)
- **Allocated seating**
- **Different location for briefings e.g. outside or large room**
- **Do not follow Swimming NZ Short Course at the same venue**

## EVENT TECHNOLOGY

- Event technology was a known challenge leading into the event.
- In February SLSNZ was made aware that LiveHeats was not going to support electronic timing pad integration.
- We investigated alternatives but were advised that our timelines for a new solution were too short to be confident of successful implementation.
- The decision was made to use LiveHeats for all events (the lack of integration with timing pads only impacted Northern, Eastern & National Championship events), however it became apparent that the additional administration and the impact on officiating and experience (no ability to show competitor names, clubs and times on screen) was too significant and so the decision was made to revert to WAVES.
- WAVES served its purpose with a couple of glitches on day one (due to event set up as opposed to the software) however it does add additional admin for our staff with a significant amount of scratching and team changes received prior to the competition, which are handled by team managers in Liveheats. During the event there weren't many team changes or scratchings so easily managed.
- The administration around the inclusion of composite teams is a continued challenge for us to manage in any competition management system currently. With pool events these were pre organised by staff and published but with clubs changing their teams during the competition and pulling composite athlete back into club teams the management of who replacements are becomes incredibly hard to manage.
- The need for multiple points tables and manual typing of results used up an entire admin resource and made for delays in paperwork and accuracy for presentations. Best to use the reports from the competition management system (which is what we switched too during the event).
- **We need to properly explore options (swimify) well ahead of any event in 2026**

## HEALTH & SAFETY

- There was one incident to report (cut knee), which was logged via the Patrol App.
- Risk Assessment wise is still a challenge as our Operational Risk Assessment (ORA) via the Patrol App platform isn't designed for pool-based events which makes it hard to accurately record this information.
- First Aid is managed by the facility and they did a great job of this.
- Continue adding to functionality of Patrol App
- Have a SLSNZ first aid kit on site as back-up

## OFFICIATING

- Surf Official appointments were complete and communicated by the 7 July meaning volunteers had plenty of notice to ensure availability, book travel etc.
- The Officials did a great job pool side delivering this event. Worked well together and communicated effectively as teams through their reporting lines and to clubs.
- Officials adjusted to recent changes in rules well, helped by pre-event online 'clarity' session which reduced any contention at the event
- Participant feedback regarding officials was extremely positive.
- Volunteer feedback was highly positive relating to communication, catering and their overall experience.

## PROGRAMMING

- No significant changes were made to races or general order of racing that have been in place since 2023.
- The programme ran ahead of projected timings on all three days
- Participant survey results indicate there is still a preference for mixed relays over single-gender relays, however comments reveal having both options available would cater to all club's needs.
- Continued growth in numbers is making the event challenging to deliver in its current format – there is already approximately 25 hours of racing programmed over three days, which relies on timesaving through efficient delivery. Any disruption or delay has an impact on racing, overall time in the pool, other elements such as prizegiving's and activations and therefore overall participant and volunteer experience.
- Participants still rate programming as the area most requiring improvement, although this may be more an indication that it is considered the most important element of the event.

## EVENT EXPERIENCE

- SLSNZ & event partners Aon continued to find ways to elevate the experience beyond just the core element of racing. Branded assets and activations contributed to bring the event to life and enhancing the event experience for participants, supporters and volunteers. This included:
  - Event logo & merchandise
  - Medal lanyards & prizegiving podium
  - Officials & volunteer hats and free coffee vouchers
  - Signage outside and inside the venue
  - Free bbq, drinks, ice-creams and games as part of prizegiving
  - Photobooth and give-aways
  - Local Aon staff volunteering at the event
  - A high performance breakfast for coaches, parents & athletes to find out more about of high performance programmes
  - A volunteers dinner
  - HP athlete signing session
  - Pool-side presentation to recognise the New Zealand athletes who broke pool World Records.
- Participant feedback indicated strong support for AON as a partner and the event experience elements, if anything there was a desire for more, especially in relation to senior & masters competitors.
- Continue current activations and investigate improved opportunities for seniors & masters competitors.

## FINANCIAL

- Annual operating expenses continue to increase, particularly the cost of venue hire, which accounts for over 40% of overall expenses.
- Event Management work particularly hard to reduce any unnecessary expenditure without compromising the event experience. With current income streams currently limited to entry fees we were extremely fortunate to be given the opportunity to apply for and be successful in receiving funding from pelorus trust.

## PARTICIPATION DATA

Division/Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Junior								150	158	194	217
Senior/Masters								190	274	266	267
Masters											74
<b>Total</b>	580	603	688	536	500	347	N/A	340	432	460	558

Organisation	Clubs	Participants
SLSA	4	33
Northern	8	165
Eastern	8	204
Central	10	120
Southern	7	39
<b>Totals</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>561</b>

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

- Venue & timing
  - There are a limited number of venues that can host a 50m pool event that also satisfy all the other requirements of mobilising over 500 competitors and additional volunteers and supporters. This also means demand for these venues is high from other user-groups such as swim schools, waterpolo and swimming. This results in limited windows of when we can deliver our event in its current format.
  - Running off back of short course at same venue had limited benefits – significant constraints in particular around set up and resulting time compromise impact on programme and overall event (fitting in prizegivings, breaks for volunteers etc). Only 84 (15%) competitors did both events.
  - With the completion of Parakiore (Christchurch) there will be questions as to when/if pool rescue nationals will be held there.
    - We are currently seeing a good bounce-back from covid and year on year growth at nationals as well as continued improvements in the experience side with Aon’s involvement while hosting in Auckland. A 3<sup>rd</sup> year will help us nail this, especially as timing looks to be beneficial for potential international participation in relation to LWC26.
    - Parakiore is an untested for pool rescue events and so we need to run interclub & regional events there first before committing nationals there
    - While attendance at nationals isn’t the only success measure, it is important. 39/558 participants from the South Island attended this year’s Nationals in Auckland (16.5% of the 194 participants who competed at Southern Regions). If a similar low % travelled from the North Island it would have negative impact on numbers, quality of event and financial sustainability.
    - Hopefully, the new pool drives increased interest in pool rescue in the SI as well as other initiatives like pairing a High-Performance event with a SR event in 2026, which will hopefully mean positive feedback going back to NI clubs to create hype/interest about a future Christchurch nationals.
- Junior competition
  - There is currently an inconsistent approach between our ocean/beach events and pool rescue for juniors.
    - In recent years, SLSNZ has made changes to how its junior events are presented in an effort to re-frame the experiences of young people in our sport to align closer with current international & Sport NZ research that is focussed on keeping young people engaged and participating in sport for longer.
    - Currently our ocean/beach competitions are positioned as fun, festival and engaging opportunity for members to participate while pool rescue celebrates 10-year-old national champions. isn’t consistent delivery or messaging, for the same participants.
    - As Pool Rescue engagement grows and programmes get tighter, we need to look at ways for enhanced delivery for those involved. Additional days add cost, time and volunteer resource, so is reviewing who is participating is worth discussion.

# PARTICIPANT SURVEY RESPONSES

## Respondent profile

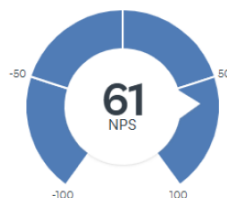
165 'participants' (30%) from 29 clubs (78%) completed the post-event survey

- 4 Coaches
- 6 Team Managers
- 56 Junior Competitors (U11-U14)
- 14 Masters Competitors (30+)
- 43 Senior Competitors (15+)
- 41 Parent/Spectators
- 1 'Other'

## Q. How likely are you to recommend Aon Pool Rescue Nationals to a friend or colleague? (1-10)

10	81
9	25
8	38
7	16
6	2
5	2
4	1
3	1
2	0
1	0
	166

## Net Promoter Score: Overall



DETRACTORS (0-6)	PASSIVES (7-8)	PROMOTERS (9-10)	NET PROMOTER® SCORE
3.80% 6	31.01% 49	65.19% 103	61

Venue Experience	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Facility is Easy to Access	2	5	11	88	59
Seating was good	5	9	41	80	30
Food & Drink were convenient	0	2	31	84	48
Comment Themes	Café closed too early Seating was an issue, especially on Saturday with juniors, seniors and masters. Should allocated seating for clubs & spectators. Toilets were regularly blocked				

Officiating	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Officials were approachable & helpful			24	71	70
Officials were knowledgeable		2	29	68	67
Comments	"Officials were super helpful and amazing they helped you when you needed it and they were very kind" "This was hands down the best pool event I have been to where the officials were calm, respectful and seemed to be enjoying themselves. There has clearly been a shift in attitude/ direction which is great to see"				

<b>Event Promotion &amp; Awareness</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
My club promoted Nationals effectively	2	3	11	101	49
I received or could easily find event information from organisers	1	4	7	99	55
Media and stories generated excitement	1	4	48	71	42
Social media content was engaging and showcased the event well.	1	8	35	74	45
Comment Themes	Want to be able to access more photos				

<b>Partnering with Aon</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
The Aon branding around the venue added to the event experience	1	0	33	84	48
I have a good understanding of what Aon does and their brand	4	8	40	82	32
Aon activities enhanced the event.	1	3	24	56	82
Aon's values align with SLSNZ and the event's purpose	0	1	5	64	43
Comments	<p>"Love AON and the support they show SLSNZ. The branding is clean and makes it feel like a national event. Without the AON stuff it would just feel empty. I think the branding adds a lot to the event, it's not just recognition for AON, although it is bloody good recognition"</p> <p>"Would have been nice for the seniors to have to cool experience that the juniors got at prizegiving, and a way to mingle with clubs"</p>				

<b>Rank what needs the most improvement for next year?</b>		
<b>1 = Needs the Most Improvement</b>	<b>1s</b>	<b>Average</b>
Event Programming	27	3.6
Event Communications	21	3.9
Event Promotion (Media, Social Media)	10	4.7
Food and Drink Options	12	4.9
Event Footage (Photography, Video)	12	5
Quality Officiating	14	5.3
Prize Giving	18	5.5
Poolside Layout	26	5.5
Commentary	11	6.4
Comment Themes	Prizegiving's were too long and should be throughout the event Seating was an issue	

<b>Which team composition do you prefer racing in?</b>	
No gender designation	20
Single gender only	24
Mixed only	51
No preference	58
Comment Themes	Would be good to have both single gender & mixed Non-designated genders could work in juniors

Has the timing of event after Swimming Short Course Nationals been suitable?	
Didnt apply to me	76
No	36
Yes	53
Comment Themes	Those who did both were very tired by end of week Would be good if there was a gap between

# VOLUNTEER SURVEY RESPONSES

## Respondent profile

16 volunteers completed the post-event survey

- 14 of 24 officials Coaches
- 2 of 20 water helpers
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**Q. How likely are you to recommend Aon Pool Rescue Nationals to a friend or colleague? (1-10)**

10	8
9	2
8	3
7	1
6	1
5	
4	
3	
2	1
1	
	16

Communication	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I was satisfied with the Expression of Interest process			4	7	5
I was satisfied with the communication and timing of my volunteer role appointment			2	8	6
I understood my role and what was expected of me			1	8	7
I received or could easily find the information I needed before the event			1	8	7
Meetings were informative and well-run				10	6
I knew who my team leader was and received clear direction from them	1	0	3	6	6
I knew who to contact if I had questions during the event.			1	7	8
I found TeamReach useful as a volunteer.		2	4	5	5

<b>Catering</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
I was satisfied with the quality of food provided				10	6
I was satisfied with the quantity of food provided		1	1	9	5
I appreciated the opportunity to attend a volunteer dinner		1	5	7	3

<b>Rank what needs the most improvement for next year?</b>		
<b>1 = Needs the Most Improvement</b>	<b>1s</b>	<b>Average</b>
Quality of uniform	5	3.1
Early confirmation of my role	3	3.2
Clear description of my volunteer duties	1	3.8
Volunteers' dinner or social gathering	0	4
Catering during the event	3	4.5
Event communications	2	4.7
Reimbursement and allowances	1	4.7

### **Volunteer comments - Key themes (AI generated)**

#### 1. Communication & Coordination

- Positive: Good pre-event meetings, clarity around roles, helpful team dynamics.
- Challenges: Mixed messages between team leaders, last-minute changes, poor communication around scratches and race order, especially for composite/junior teams.

#### 2. Volunteer Support & Wellbeing

- Positive: Some officials felt well-supported and appreciated the team camaraderie.
- Challenges: Reports of burnout, lack of basic provisions (e.g., snacks, drinks, coffee)

#### 3. Admin & Process Improvements

- DQ form process was a major pain point – too complex and time-consuming.
- Suggestions to simplify tech access (e.g., shared laptops, templates), better scratchings communication, and more streamlined event documentation.

#### 4. Marshalling & Athlete Flow

- Issues with marshalling juniors, composite teams, and relays – very time-consuming.
- Coaches being nearby helped, but lane checking and block readiness need improvement.
- Calls for better systems to manage kids and relays more efficiently.

#### 5. Food, Uniforms, and Logistics

- Lack of water/snacks and no drink tickets during long event days.
- Desire for more frequent food runs and proper breaks.
- Uniforms (long-sleeved shirts) were uncomfortable – more practical clothing preferred.
- Some noted positive experiences with accommodation and logistics like parking.