

Department of Education

Water Safety and Swimming Education Programs in Queensland State Schools

Audit Report

February 2023



Introduction

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing education of students and ensuring they have the knowledge and skills needed to be safe in, on and around diverse water locations.

This is exemplified by the Department of Education's (the department) *P-12 Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework* requiring Queensland state schools to provide a water safety and swimming education program, in Prep to Year 6, in consultation with the school community.

Supporting this, the department currently provides Learn to Swim funding, for state primary and special schools without a pool to support the delivery of water safety and swimming education programs. This funding is calculated annually and paid to schools automatically. In 2022, \$3.34 million was paid to eligible state schools.

In addition to the Learn to Swim funding, a Water Safety and Swimming Education Grant of up to \$3500 is available to state primary and special schools without pools with unique circumstances that present a barrier to implementation of a program and are not able to fund the program from the school budget. A cumulative total of \$150,000 is currently available annually.

On 15 January 2023, the Queensland Government announced that the Department of Education would conduct an audit of state schools. The intent was to gather information on how water safety and swimming education is delivered across Queensland state schools with a Prep to Year 6 cohort and to determine if additional support is required to ensure comprehensive and equitable delivery.

This report presents the Department's analysis of the school responses.

Methodology

On February 7 2023, principals from 1072 Queensland state schools with a Prep – Year 6 cohort were provided with an online audit.

The questions sought information on how water safety and swimming education is delivered in their school context.

100% of schools provided information.

Summary of findings

Queensland state schools are doing remarkable work in delivering water safety and swimming education programs for students in Prep to year 6 with 1058 (98.7%) schools offering a water safety and swimming education program.

Schools are working closely with their school communities to ensure the water safety and swimming programs meet the needs of students. Water safety and swimming education is delivered primarily through time allocated to the delivery of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education.

In 2022, 121 Queensland primary and special schools received Water Safety and Swimming Education Grant funding. All schools identified that grant funding would be utilised to support travel and pool entry costs, professional learning for staff, supervision or sourcing of external providers to deliver programs. This is consistent with the findings of this audit.

Access to a pool or a safe water way is a challenge faced by our discrete community schools such as Aurukun, Bwgcolman, Coen, Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw.

For our remote schools travel time to pool facilities is a challenge, with some schools facing a 3 to 5-hour return trip to the closest pool.

Local 'learn to swim' providers are providing significant support for schools without pools (51.2%).

Schools within south east Queensland face challenges to access local 'learn to swim' providers. Schools report that availability to swimming lessons and pool facilities is a challenge, given the number of schools wanting to access the facilities within the local community.

Schools with swimming pools provided higher portions of time to program delivery, with the most popular lesson allocation 10 x 45-minute lessons.

Audit Findings

Provision of water safety and swimming education programs

98.7% of schools (1058 schools) offer a water safety and swimming education program and 1.3% did not (14 schools).

Schools valued the autonomy to make local decisions regarding the structure and delivery logistics, based on local availability, cost-effectiveness, efficiency, timeliness and appropriateness to the needs of students.

Schools also reported the need for flexibility in the implementation of school water safety and swimming education programs.

Of the 1.3% of schools not offering a program in, 3 were Special Schools.

A number of schools that do not offer a program are our discrete communities, such as Aurukun, Bwgcolman, Coen, Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw.

These are complex communities and the department will work with schools to support contextual implementation of a water safety program. These schools have ongoing and persistent barriers such as lack of viable access to a pool or safe water way.

Implementation of a Water Safety and Swimming Education Program

Queensland state schools deliver water safety and swimming education programs using a variety of approaches.

The Department of Education has developed a Water safety and swimming education program (WSSEP) for Prep to Year 10.

Eight lessons of instruction and skill development support a whole-school approach to water safety and swimming education.

These lessons include classroom prior learning and water location learning aligned to the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework and the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education. Over 50% of schools surveyed indicated that they use this program across P-6.

Queensland state schools have a variety of choices as to how they implement their water safety and swimming education. Schools are well supported by a range of qualified external providers, who meet the department's requirements by use of alternate water safety and swimming education programs. (Table 2)

AUSTSWIM (32%) provided the highest individual level of program support (Table 1).

Support from other external 'local' providers (51.22%) including swim clubs/schools, the Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association and local aquatic centres was significant, demonstrating a high commitment from these local providers in supporting a school's delivery of water safety and swimming education programs.

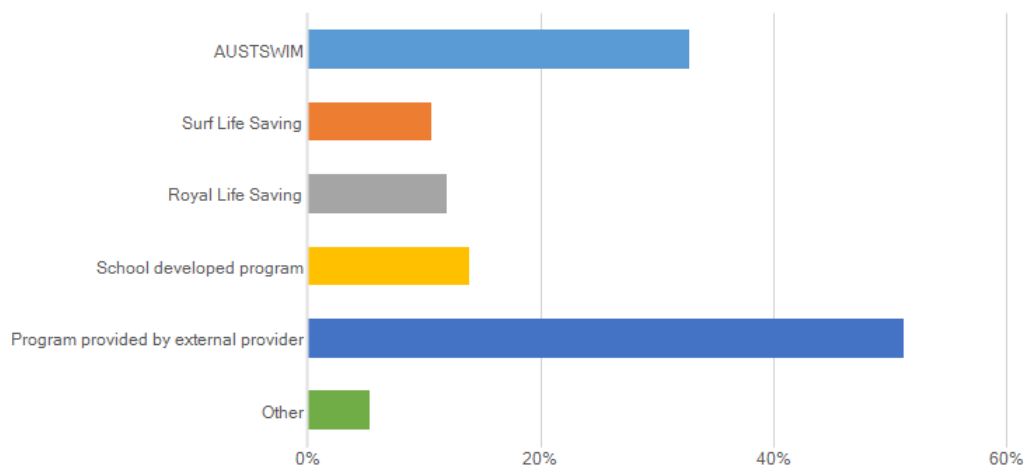


Table 1: Use of alternate water safety program

Data indicates that many schools use an external provider/s to either deliver a program to students, or supplement the teaching occurring in a school-based location.

Providers are mostly selected based on geographic location to the school and availability.

Program Implementation – Time Allocation

Program organisation, scheduling and delivery is a school-based decision incorporating many factors that affect every school differently. These factors impact on the amount time allocated to swimming and water safety instruction, and frequency of programs. Factors include:

- travel time;
- availability of water locations within the local area; and
- availability of staff to supervise and deliver programs.

Schools identified a wide range of approaches for providing lessons, including the number of lessons provided and lesson length. (Table 2)

The results indicate the most popular lesson allocation was **10 x 45-minute lessons** weekly closely followed by **5 x 45-minute lessons**.

In 2022, time allocated for swimming lessons per year level ranged from **180 to 360 minutes for schools without a pool; and 600 to 950 minutes for schools with a pool**.

Schools with swimming pools provided higher portions of time for program delivery, offering swimming in both Terms 1 and 4.

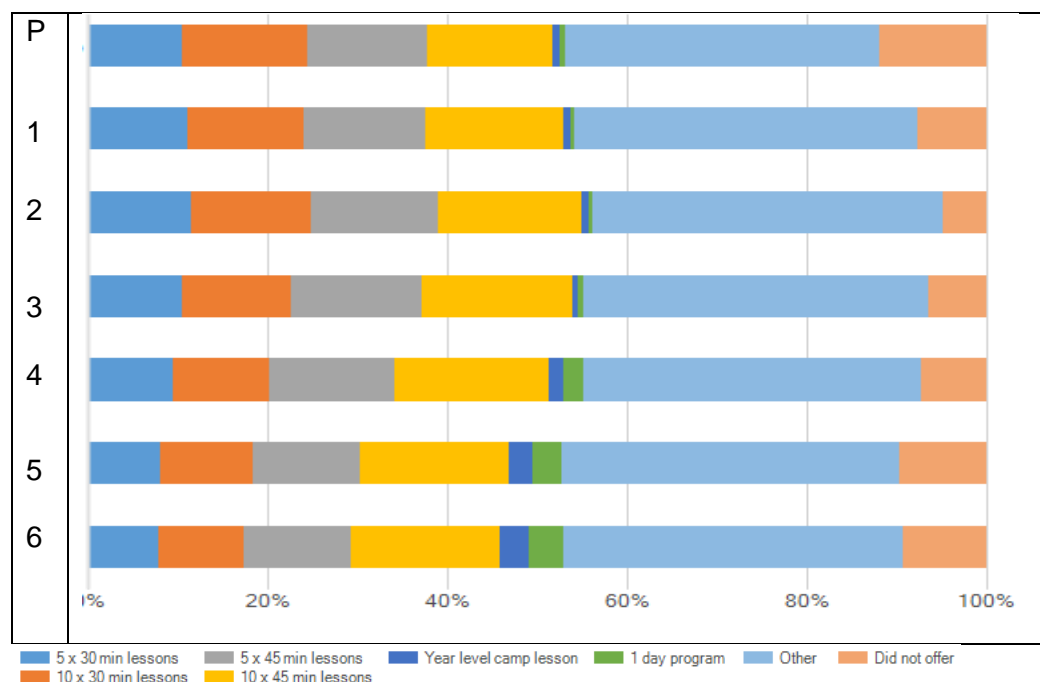


Table 2: Approach to swimming and water safety lessons by type and year level

Program Implementation – Delivery

Physical Education (PE) teachers and other external providers provide the majority of water safety and swimming education lessons in Queensland state schools. (Table 3)

Schools also indicated that a combination of the PE teacher and AUSTSWIM instructor are used to deliver programs.

The use of school camp instructors increases with the age of students from 0.2% in prep to 2.7% in year 6.

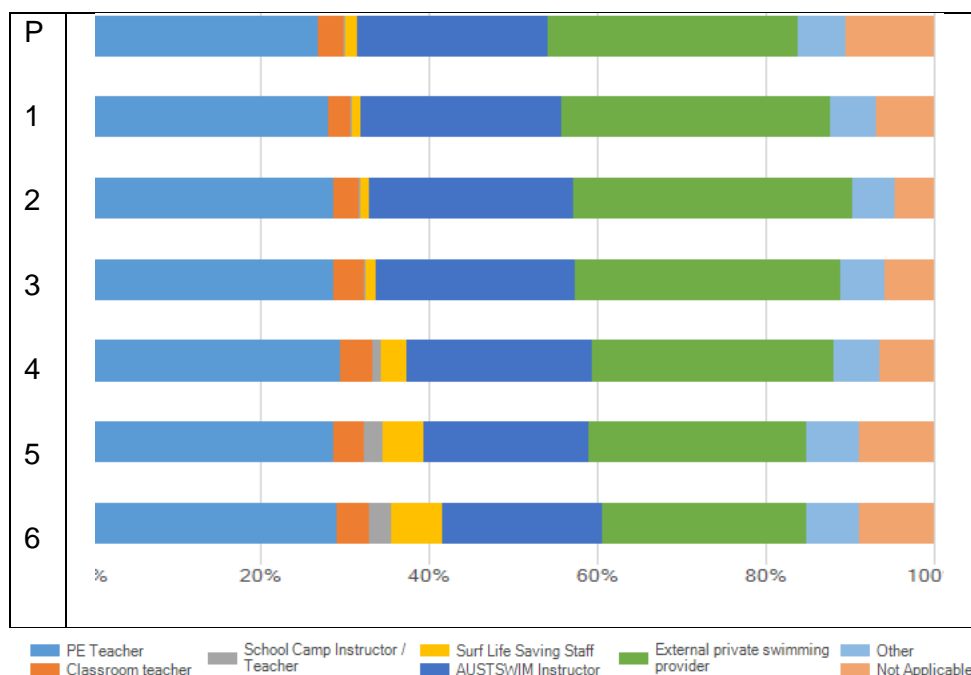


Table 3: Nature of delivery of swimming and water safety learning lessons by year level

Rural and remote schools tend to rely on camps or ‘back to back’ pool sessions and, in the case of schools of distance education, in-reach lessons are used to conduct programs for students. Schools advised that these and other strategies are used due to the limited access to local pools, to maximise student engagement and minimise costs and limit time away from school.

One example of this, is the highly effective collaboration between two rural schools to reduce travel and pool costs, and maximise learning time for students.

The principals of Drillham and Dulacca State Schools (Darling Downs South West Region) have developed a collaborative strategy to work together to deliver an intensive multiple day program. Students from both schools engage in the program at the same time at the pool in the larger town of Miles. To facilitate this program, the schools make use of the Specialist PE teacher, coordinate the allocation of staff and parent supervision; coordinate with the Western Downs Council pool in Miles and with multiple bus companies. Combining both schools’ ‘Learn to Swim’ funding and ‘Water Safety and Swimming Education grant’ has reduced costs for travel and pool entry and enhanced both schools’ ability to deliver a quality program to their students.

Classroom learning

Classroom learning opportunities are utilised to complement pool-based learning. They provide schools with additional time to deliver aspects of water safety and swimming education programs that may include preliminary water safety knowledge and learning. School

respondents identified that this is primarily provided through the delivery of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education. (Table 4)

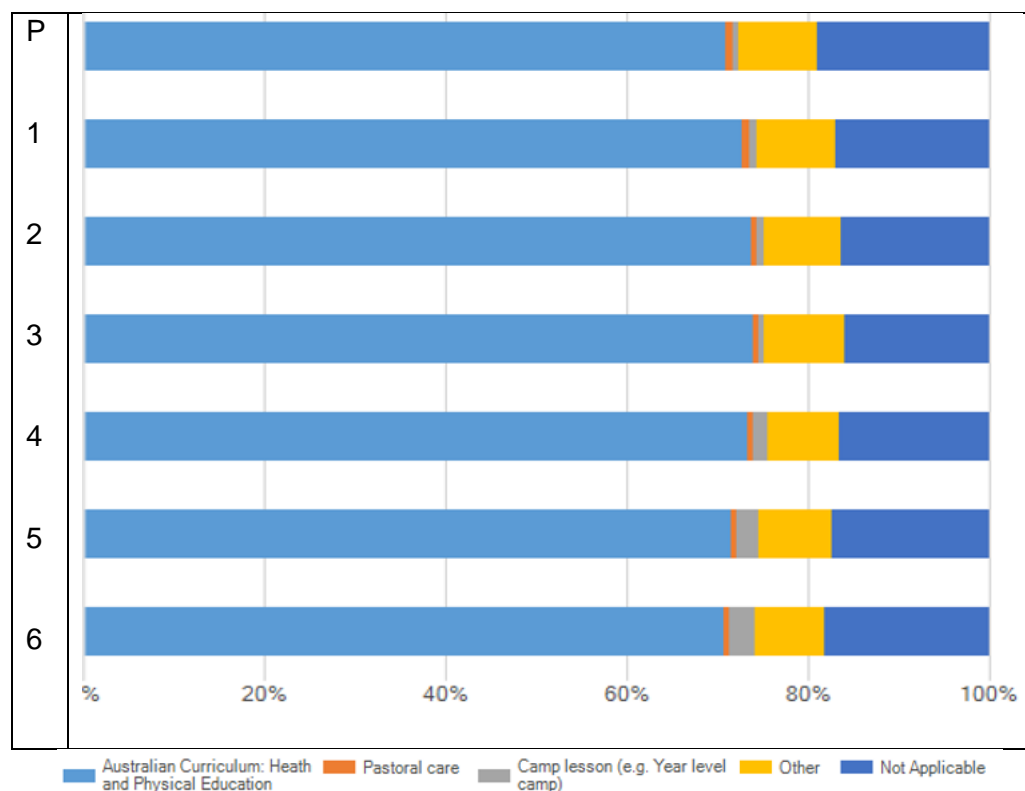


Table 4: Nature of delivery of classroom learning to complement pool-based learning

Program Delivery – Cost

Schools indicated that the cost to deliver a water safety and swimming education program ranged from under \$10.00 to \$100.00 (per student per year).

The amounts differ depending on student numbers, geographic location, access to qualified individuals, pool entry costs, and travel costs.

Schools are offsetting costs by using the department’s Learn to Swim funding, Water Safety and Swimming Education Grant funding, P&C funding, REAP (Rural and Remote Educational Access Program) funding, Sporting Schools funding and school budgets to reduce the cost of swimming per student.

For those schools where water safety and swimming programs were delivered during camp, schools reported that costs were up to \$340.00 per student.

Parental involvement – Financial

56% of schools reported parents/carers contributing to their child’s water safety and swimming education at school. (Table 5). Anecdotally schools advised that parental contributions tended

to be between from \$10 to \$40 a year. This amount varies depending on a range of factors identified below.

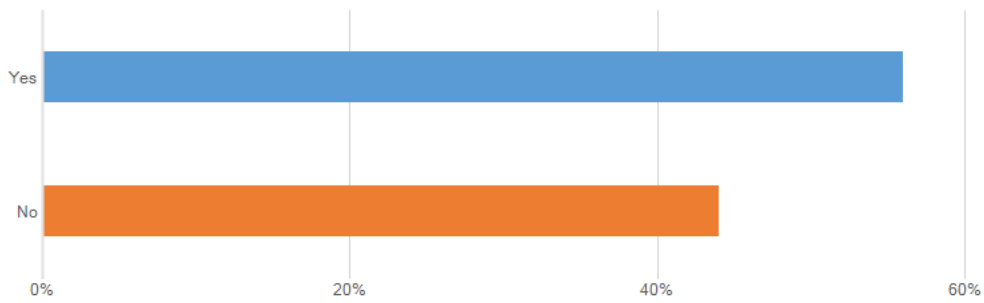


Table 5: Parental financial contribution reported

Use of parental contributions

Schools reported that parent/carer contributions received by schools subsidised: (Table 6)

- Travel to/from water locations;
- Pool entry (external location) or running costs (school pool);
- Employment of accredited swim instructors and/or lifeguards;
- Training for HPE staff to increase swimming qualifications.

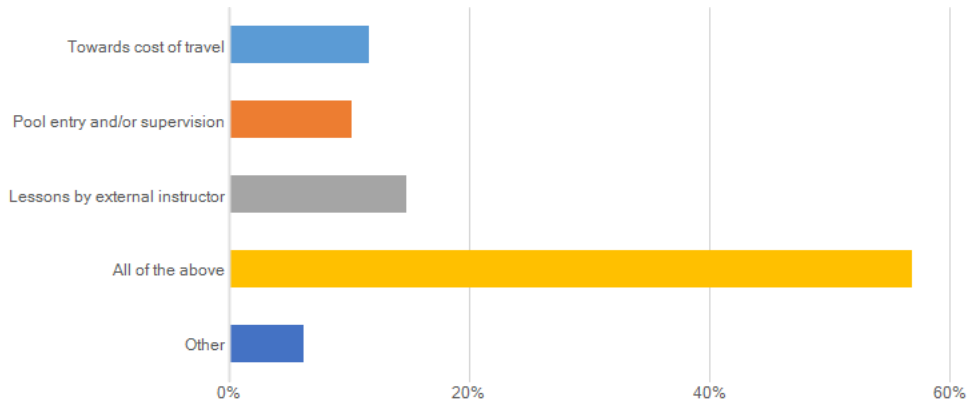


Table 6: Utilisation of parent / carer financial contributions

Parental Involvement – Decision making

Parents play an important role as equal partners, with schools, to maximise students' health, well-being and confidence. As outlined in the Parent and Community Engagement Framework, quality communication and parent involvement in decision making contributes to improved student outcomes. 30.3% of P&C Association and/or School Councils had a role in decision-making and design of the school's Water Safety and Swimming Education Program (Table 7).

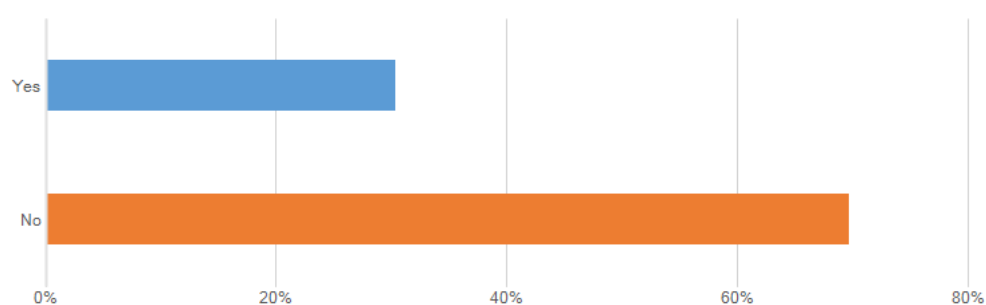


Table 7: Percentage of schools where P&C Association/ School Councils had a decision-making role

Non-participation of students

Parental consent is required for excursions including swimming pools.

The data identified that 452 (52.5%) schools indicated that at least one parent/carer had elected for their child not to participate in water safety and swimming education lessons.

Limited reasons for withdrawal were provided, however, some included:

- Illness including ear ache;
- COVID-19; and
- Personal reasons.

Opportunities for support

To support schools to implement water safety and swimming programs, the department sought advice regarding the challenges experienced in the implementation of swimming.

Schools **that offer** a program identified the following challenges: (Table 8)

- COVID as this was the first year back in swimming pools post COVID;
- costs associated with travel;
- entry to pools and lesson access; and
- travel time to and from locations.

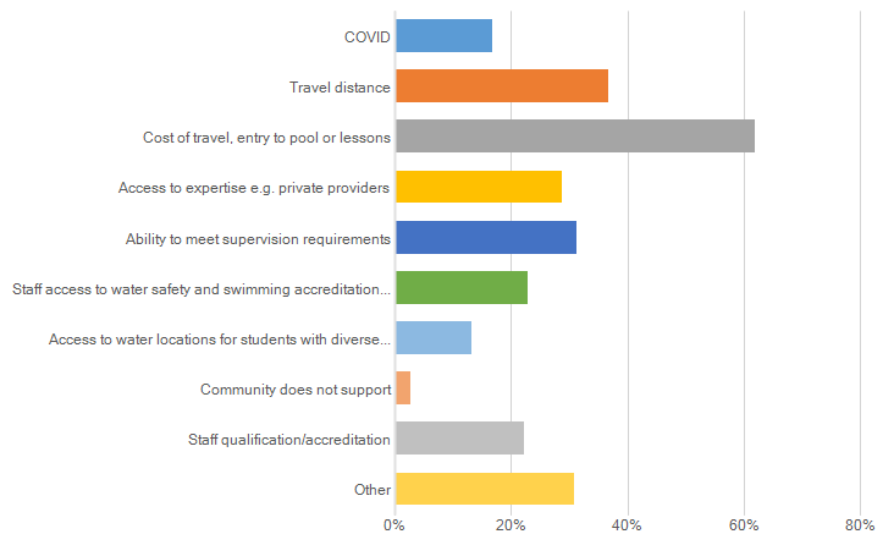


Table 8: Challenges identified by schools who delivered a water safety and swimming education program