



Hello to the members of the Midlands District Amateur Swimming Association (MDASA).

I write to you regarding a serious issue that faces our district and one that threatens to make it difficult for us to continue to provide opportunities for our swimmers to enjoy our wonderful sport to the fullest. Like all other sports, we rely on the sterling efforts of officials to run our competitions, and, like many other sports, we are struggling for sufficient officials. Currently we rely heavily on officials visiting from other districts to run our meets to the required standard and this impacts on how flexible we can be when scheduling these meets.

To run a meet to the required standard for it to be classified as a qualifying meet we need a minimum of 1 referee, 1 starter and 2 judges of strokes. Ideally, we would like to be in the position of having at least 3 times that number of officials within our district. This would allow us to roster officials for only 1 session of a 2 session meet as well as coping with officials being unavailable on any day. As the old saying goes, many hands make light work. We understand that parents would like to be able to see their children competing, so being able to have parents officiate on a part time basis would enable them to do a little of both at each meet.

The process of becoming an official is not as onerous as some other sports and it is certainly nowhere near as stressful as some others. Officials in swimming do not face any of the abuse that you may have seen in other sports and decisions are very rarely questioned at all, let alone in an aggressive manner. The number of decisions required are much less than say umpiring a footy match and most of those decisions are not quick, "once only" decisions either. When reviewing the stroke of a swimmer you get to see the stroke multiple times and even have the time to call over another official and get a second opinion, a luxury footy umpires do not get. The consequences of non-decisions are not something to worry about either, as it is very unlikely that a swimmer performing an illegal stroke will be quick enough to win medals they should not.

Our district Chief Referee, Gavin Parkinson, would like to encourage all members of our community to spend 10-15 minutes on pool deck at a meet and see how life would be if you were to be a technical official (TO). You do not need to do any quizzes or tests, they come later if you decide to pursue being a TO and they are easy! All you need to do is step forward and spend some time with our fabulous officials so that you can make an informed decision on whether being a TO is something you could do.

As I mentioned before, many hands make like work, and on behalf of the MDASA committee I would encourage as many members of our community as possible to consider Gavin's offer and think about taking the first step towards joining him and his colleagues in making sure that our swimmers can enjoy their sport to the fullest. We have some exciting new ideas "on the drawing board" to increase the number of opportunities for our swimmers to compete here in Ballarat, but we will need to be "self-sufficient" in terms of TO's for these ideas to come to fruition. You could join the TO's on pool deck at any of the upcoming meets at BALC or Gavin could also arrange for you to shadow a TO at a meet in Geelong as well if you desire.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact myself or any member of the MDASA committee, we will be only too pleased to have chat and perhaps allay any concerns you have about being a TO.

Yours in swimming,

Cameron Dole

President of MDASA