

Policy for teams participating in the Australian National Championships

Purpose of this policy

To provide players and teams with clear guidance on why and how state teams that fall outside the definitions in the Australian Underwater Hockey (UWHA) By-Laws can participate in the Australian National Championships. This policy supplements but does not override the by-laws.

Background

Each year an Australian state hosts the National Championships on behalf of UWHA. The National Championships is held in January each year and is an opportunity for teams from the six states (Qld, NSW, Vic, Tassie, SA and WA) and the two territories (ACT and NT) to compete for two titles:

Australian Champions in a category (Men, Women, Junior (U19), Junior (U21) or Masters)

Champion State (for the most competitive state that has entered at least three teams)

The National Championships aims to provide players with high quality competition, an opportunity to represent and compete for their state and is also a forum for player, coach and referee development. Participation by teams that do not automatically qualify as state teams is encouraged, but must be assessed on a case by case basis.

What is a state team?

The by-laws provide further detail, but broadly a state team consists of players who have lived in that state for six months prior to the competition and meet the gender and age requirements of the category. Teams have the option of co-opting two players who are from another state, or in the case of ACT and NSW, these states may be treated as one.

Can other teams play in the competition?

Yes, so long as each state fielding a team in that category agrees. The competition has a history of allowing other types of teams such as:

- A second team from the same state in the same category
- A team made up of players from a number of states
- A team that includes or is entirely made up of international players
- Teams in age restricted categories that have players that are outside the age limit

Any team wanting to participate in the National Championships can apply to UWHA to compete in the competition. Most teams will be accepted into the general round robin, but may not be allowed to play through to finals. The UWHA will consider each team in a given year based on the player mix and the circumstances of the tournament in that year. Prior decisions provide some precedent but do not mean that a team automatically qualifies on the basis of a decision made in a previous year.

Only state teams are eligible to win the title of national champions and to compete for champion state points.

How is a proposal assessed by UWHA and the states?

What are the pros and cons?

1. Will the team add to the quality of the competition in the category?
2. Will the addition of the team provide a development opportunity for Australian players who would not otherwise have the opportunity to play in the National Championships?
3. Will the team develop goodwill in the sport or build international linkages?

4. Are there unique circumstances around individual players that need to be considered, including their history of playing with a team or their development needs?
5. Will the addition of the team seriously affect the functioning of the tournament, including impact on the number of round robin games and the cost to players? Will the proposal have unacceptable negative impacts on other teams?
6. Will the proposal jeopardise the integrity of the Australian National Championships? This should always be considered against point 1 – there may be tension between the two.

Many of these points can be in conflict in a proposal. States need to consider the pros and cons of each proposal. A proposal might not be agreed in full by UWHA and the states and instead a compromise solution may be agreed.

How to apply to field a team with special circumstances

Teams (or for state teams, the state UWH committee rep) should submit proposal, along with a list of proposed players, to the Games Commissioner before the registration date for the National Championships. In some situations the Chief Referee should also be advised (the bylaws provide more detail). There are a range of scenarios that a team might be applying for:

- To be treated as a state team and allowed to win a title
- To be allowed to play through to finals
- To be ineligible to play through to finals, but to still be counted in the points for/against other teams
- To simply play the round robin
- Teams may propose other scenarios as well

Example	Special by-laws?	More details
A second state team applying to compete in a category	Yes - 9.6	Only one team from a state is to play finals (this is to protect against a situation where two teams from the same state are playing to be national champions). For this reason the state must nominate their 'official' team.
A state team seeking to have more than two players from outside the state or other rules and to still qualify as a state team	Yes – 9.4	This may be appropriate where players have a long history with a team, or the team would not be able to form without some additional numbers (ACT Women in 2008)
An international or 'barbarians' team	No, although 9.5 does apply	Barbarian teams are encouraged. They bring unique skills and game style and build connections with other countries. States can consider whether these teams play through to finals. Other options are also available such as additional games outside of the round robin to increase the barbarian team's playing time at the tournament.
A state team seeking to field international players	Yes – 9.4	Usually the same reasons as other non-state players.
Any other type of 'mixed bag' team	Yes – 9.5	This kind of team cannot compete for the title but can still request that they be eligible to play to finals (QLd Women in 2009)