

Inclusive Beaches Handbook

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This content has been developed in partnership with Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect).



About inclusion

“As a society we should all view disability as just an expected part of human diversity and accommodate it accordingly. This will result in a truly inclusive environment for people with disability that empowers them to participate in society and all that it offers to the same extent as people without a disability.” – Australian Local Government Association.

Surf Life Saving Australia is committed to providing greater access and opportunities for people with disabilities to engage in surf lifesaving, so that every child and family can enjoy the benefits of being part of the surf life saving community.

This module is suitable for anyone who wants to learn more about supporting children with disabilities in Nippers and at the beach. The contents of this module/manual have been developed in collaboration with Autism Spectrum Australia.

“Inclusion is an attitude. It is about being an organisation where everyone feels welcome and valued. This starts from when a potential new member comes into contact with the club for the first time, through to the member actively participating in club activities.” - Surf Life Saving Australia

An inclusion model for surf life saving clubs

There are a number of ways that children with disabilities can be included in Nippers.



INCLUSION WITHIN MAINSTREAM

With the right support and understanding, inclusion within mainstream groups is achievable for many children. Some children may require a designated water safety buddy to support them, particularly in the beginning.

SIDE-BY-SIDE PROGRAM

For some children, a smaller, specialised group that runs alongside all other Nippers groups, at the same time and place, may be more suitable. In some instances, when a child has learnt the necessary skills and feels ready, they may wish to transition from this group into the mainstream group.

STAND-ALONE PROGRAM

A stand-alone program is a program run at a different time and or day as mainstream Nippers. For a club who does not have the capacity, volunteers or resources to run a program at the same time as a mainstream Nippers, a stand-alone program may be a more suitable option.

AD-HOC EVENTS

For families who are unable to make a regular commitment, ad-hoc events such as inclusion days can be a great way to learn basic skills, have fun and enjoy the surf life saving community.

How we can make Nippers more inclusive

Being part of Nippers has so many potential benefits for children. Nippers helps children learn about water safety, is a fun way to get physical exercise, and can bring a great sense of social inclusion and community.

More than 100 families with children on the autism spectrum told us about their experience at Nippers, and gave us feedback on how Nippers could be more inclusive for their child.

Here's what we've learned...



THINGS THAT CAN HELP CHILDREN



Clear predictable routine and well-structured activities



Smaller group size with high support ratio



More time for practicing activities



Celebrating individual achievements rather than winning



Being flexible & providing alternatives when activities are disliked or too difficult



A quiet setting for 'chill out' time



Understanding and acceptance of diversity from everyone at the club



Parent or sibling involvement



Calm delivery of instructions



Short sessions



Activities are optional, not mandatory

THINGS THAT CAN MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR CHILDREN



Overcrowding, chaos & noise



Unpredictable sensory issues or lack of sensory supports



Over reliance on verbal instructions



Lengthy periods of waiting



Focus on competition and pressure to perform

To help you remember these top tips, you can use the acronym DIVERS.

About inclusion – DIVERS

Demonstrate: Have I demonstrated each activity?

When explaining an activity, show your participants how to do each activity, so that they can see it for themselves.

Instructions: Are my instructions given one at a time or in simple steps?

It can become confusing when lots of information and instructions are given at the same time. Give each instruction one at a time, using simple sentences, such as “Everybody stand behind the start line.”

Give simple instructions while someone is demonstrating your words – “Watch Jack. Jack is holding the baton. Jack is running to the finish line. Jack is handing over the baton to Mia.”

Visuals: Have I used any visuals or gestures?

Using visuals and gestures can help reinforce and support understanding for many children. Try to use gestures to accompany your words and show your participants what you would like them to do.

Some visual supports, are available in the Members Area that you can use throughout your Nippers sessions, including step by step instruction books for each Nippers activity, and images of each activity.

Expectations: Have I prepared everybody so they know what to do?

Set up the environment clearly so that everybody can understand what is expected of them. Make sure the boundaries of the activity are identified, and consider visually marking start lines, finish lines and lanes. Make sure the expectations of behaviour are made clear. Families can prepare their child for what to expect by using the videos and stories at www.sls.com.au/inclusivebeaches

Roles and Rules: Does everybody have a role? Can rules be modified?

Sometimes a child might not want to participate in the activities you have planned. Giving alternative roles or changing the rules in activities can increase inclusion and makes sure that nobody feels left out. It is helpful to have a few modifications for activities prepared.

Structure: Are the activities, the environments and the whole sessions clearly structured?

Routine and structure can help alleviate anxiety. Try to embed structure into your session by establishing some routines, such as staying consistent with the number of times you complete each activity and having a clear start and finish routine for each activity.

These tips have been developed into an Inclusive checklist (page 9) which you can keep in your Nippers folder, and use as a reminder throughout the season.

More top tips...

Waiting

Try to keep waiting times to a minimum and think of activities where everyone can participate at the same time. If you only have a small quantity of equipment, try running simultaneous activities so that everybody has something to do.

If there is a waiting period, nominate a “Distraction Person” within your team who can keep Nippers occupied. This might involve some quick exercises such as jumping jacks or stretches or playing with some toys you have set aside for this purpose.

Buddies and groups

If a Nipper with a disability is coming along to Nippers for the first time, we recommend matching them with a buddy volunteer (preferably a Surf Rescue Certificate cadet or bronze medallion holder), who can guide them through the activities and show them how to do things. This person may be required each time, or may be utilised less as the child progresses.

If you are hosting an event or starting your own program with over 10 new participants, it is a good idea to split the group into smaller groups, and to match each child with a buddy. Assign groups yourself, don’t ask the children to self-select. Nobody wants to be picked last! You can assign groups by using coloured caps or rash vests.

Transitions

Moving from one setting or activity to another can sometimes be challenging and routines typically play an important role in reducing stress. In Nippers, you can make transitioning between activities easier by preparing your participants in advance.

- Stay consistent with the number of times each activity will be completed. For example, let your Nippers know that they will each do 3 sprints, and warn them when it is their last go.
- Support transitions with a visual schedule. A visual schedule uses pictures of each activity so Nippers can see the activities they have completed and the ones they are about to complete.
- Avoid surprises by using a countdown to each activity.
- "Our next activity is Flags. Let's all move to Flags in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 – Let's go."

Gather as much information as possible

Every child is unique and by gathering as much information as possible, you will be better equipped to support each child in a way that works for them. Use the Nipper Information Form (page 10) to find out information about each child at registration night, or by sending it to parents in advance. Allow buddies and age managers' time to review this information before they meet their child, and encourage them to discuss the nippers likes and dislikes with parents/carer.

What to do if...

What do I do if someone is in distress?

- Stay calm
- Get on their level
- Keep them safe and make them comfortable
- Be patient
- Ask how you can help
- Look for a parent or carer
- Ask for assistance from a fellow volunteer if necessary
- Prepare them for any changes, and always ask the person before doing anything "Do you want to come with me to the tent?"
- Find something in common - distract them or engage in a different activity
- Keep the rest of the group running as usual

What do I do if something happens that makes me feel uncomfortable?

- Stay calm
- Understand that the behaviour might not be intended in the way it comes across
- Ignore, change subject or distract with different activity
- Stay positive
- Stop activity and put some distance between yourself and participant
- Look to parent or carer
- Ask for assistance from a fellow volunteer if necessary
- If it needs reporting, see an Age Manager or Supervisor and follow reporting process
- Reflect on what might be the motivator or stimuli here, and what measures can be put in place to prevent it.

What do I do if someone has sensitivities to the sand or the ocean?

- Think of ways you can modify an activity, to take this sensitivity into account. For example, you might change the starting position of flags if a child doesn't want to lie face down in the sand.
- Speak with parents to see what they can bring along that might help their child, such as a towel to sit on, or shoes to wear on the sand, or wet wipes to clean their hands after touching sand.
- Show them where the shower is, so they know they can immediately shower off the saltwater or sand afterwards.
- Acknowledge fears or dislikes.
- Provide an alternative role for anyone who really doesn't want to participate. For example, if a child is sensitive to the noise of crashing waves, but is happy to paddle at the shoreline, they can stay in the shoreline where they can be responsible for helping the others onto the boards and keeping track of how many turns everyone has had.



Example of an Inclusive Event

An Inclusive Event could be run on a Saturday with mainstream Nippers, cadets and bronze medallion holders assisting with activities, or on a Sunday alongside mainstream Nippers.

Time	Activity	Notes
8.45am	Registration	
9am	Arrival at designated meeting point	Waiting activities prepared - sand toys, balls
9.05am	Sign on/roll call and buddy assignment	Toilets/sunscreen/rashvests updates from parents on any changes to nippers needs
9.10 am	Activity 1 – Beach Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beach Activity 1 – Rotate groups between modified flags, obstacle course, parachute Introduce relevant signals
9.10am	Activity 2 – Beach Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beach Activity 2 – Rotate groups between modified flags, obstacle course, parachute
9.20am	Activity 3 – Beach Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beach Activity 3 – Rotate groups between modified flags, obstacle course, parachutes etc. For flags or sprints, make sure activity boundaries are clearly marked. E.g. start line, finish line, lanes to run in and how to get back to the start line.
9.30am	Water activity 1 - Wades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotate groups between water activities (1:1 water safety ratio) Nippers to run in between rescue tubes held up by water safety, shallow water. Encourage nippers to dive under small waves and splash water.
09.40am	Water activity 2 – Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modified nipper boards and G-boards are available and are very useful for clubs running ongoing inclusive programs. If there are not enough boards for everyone to have a go, have a simultaneous water activity running, such as buckets and sponges.
9.50 am	Water activity 3 – Body Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catching little waves on body boards or swim time with balls etc.
9.59 am	Goodbye Routine – (e.g. could be a song, chant, cool-down stretches, group circle time)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is useful to signify the end of activities and reiterate some positive messages for Nippers.
10.00 am	Healthy food/drink to finish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise any waiting time by ensuring food and drinks are ready on time, as Nippers can be cold and tired and parents often have to rush home.

Establishing routine

Even in a one-off event, routine is important and there are a number of ways you can embed routine into the each activity.

1. Start each activity in the same way, e.g. stretch or do some jumping jacks at the start of each activity before asking everyone to listen and watch instructions.
2. Provide structure and routine within the physical environment – e.g. use yellow cones at the start line and yellow cones at the finish line.
3. Always countdown the final turn.
4. Finish each activity in the same way e.g. gathering in a circle and clapping or with a few minutes of free time in the sand.

Recommendations:

Allow a few minutes between each activity to transition to the next activity

Water safety ratios for Boards – 1:1 is advised

Keep group sizes small – 5 - 10 Nippers in each group

Try to build up to water activities and have water activities last – although many of the children will want to get started straight away with water activities, try and introduce the water throughout the session. Keep water activities such as Boards until last – as it can be difficult for Nippers to concentrate once they are wet and cold from the water.



Inclusive Checklist

Making Nippers inclusive for all children.

Clubs can use this checklist at any time to self-audit how inclusive sessions are for children with autism and disabilities.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICE		How often is the practice used?		
		Always or most of the time	Some of the time, but not most	Never
DEMONSTRATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal instructions are demonstrated (Instructors show Nippers what to do). 			
INSTRUCTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructors clearly explain the rules of behaviour (using simple instructions). 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructors check for comprehension, (such as asking if everyone understands, asking Nippers to demonstrate). 			
VISUALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructors clearly explain the sequence of activities (using a visual schedule). 			
EXPECTATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time warning and countdowns are used (e.g. during turns and transitions). 			
ROLES AND RULES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities are adapted where necessary (taking into account abilities, preferences and sensitivities). 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative choices are offered if a child does not want to take part in an activity. 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructors show an awareness of sensory differences, where needed. 			
STRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The set-up of each activity is clear for the children to see where to go and what to do. 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distraction activities are provided if necessary (to reduce waiting times). 			

Remember:

- Social stories and 'What to Expect' guidelines are available to families before the event
- Use the 'Nipper Information Form' registration forms for information on each child's needs

Nipper Information Form

About me	
My name is:	
My age is:	
My postcode is:	
I am a:	<input type="checkbox"/> Boy <input type="checkbox"/> Girl <input type="checkbox"/> Other
My goals at Nippers are:	
I have:	
And this is how it affects me:	
I need this equipment to access the beach:	
I am good at:	
I am not very good at:	
I like:	
I dislike:	
I become scared when:	
I become upset when:	
What calms me:	
I am:	<input type="checkbox"/> Verbal <input type="checkbox"/> Non-verbal
How you can help me understand:	
I have sensitivity to noise/sounds like:	
I do best when:	
I am happiest when:	
I like to be praised or rewarded by:	
What motivates me:	

Your surf club will provide you with a list of their water proficiency requirements.

Parent Priority Form

Start of Season

We want to see your child achieve their goals, no matter how big or small they may seem. Please complete the questions below and add any additional information you would like us to know about your child, or feel free to discuss further with your Age Manager.

Child's name:

Club:

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR CHILD'S CURRENT SWIMMING ABILITY?

- Very low (Unable to swim without assistance)
- Low (Swimming ability is limited and requires constant adult supervision)
- Average (Is able to swim 25m unassisted)
- Above Average (Is able to swim over 50m unassisted)
- Strong (Is able to swim over 100m unassisted)

WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVATION FOR ENROLLING YOUR CHILD IN NIPPERS?

WHAT GOAL WOULD YOU REALLY LIKE YOUR CHILD TO ACHIEVE THIS NIPPERS SEASON?

HOW CAN WE BEST SUPPORT YOUR CHILD TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/ PRIORITY AREAS:



Parent Priority Form

Mid Season Review

We like to keep an eye on progress and know if there is anything else we can do to support your child. Please complete the questions below and add any additional information you would like us to know about your child, or feel free to discuss further with your Age Manager.

Child's name:

Club:

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR CHILD'S CURRENT SWIMMING ABILITY?

- Very low (Unable to swim without assistance)
- Low (Swimming ability is limited and requires constant adult supervision)
- Average (Is able to swim 25m unassisted)
- Above Average (Is able to swim over 50m unassisted)
- Strong (Is able to swim over 100m unassisted)

HAVE YOU OBSERVED ANY CHANGE IN YOUR CHILD SINCE STARTING NIPPERS? (e.g. ability, confidence, attitude, motivation)

WHAT GOAL WOULD YOU REALLY LIKE YOUR CHILD TO ACHIEVE THIS NIPPERS SEASON?

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THIS GOAL?

WHAT IS WORKING WELL? IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE WE CAN DO TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?



Parent Priority Form

End of season progress report

It's important to reflect on our goals and achievements, no matter how big or small they may seem. Please complete the questions below and add any additional information you would like us to know about your child, or feel free to discuss further with your Age Manager.

Child's name:

Club:

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR CHILD'S CURRENT SWIMMING ABILITY?

- Very low (Unable to swim without assistance)
- Low (Swimming ability is limited and requires constant adult supervision)
- Average (Is able to swim 25m unassisted)
- Above Average (Is able to swim over 50m unassisted)
- Strong (Is able to swim over 100m unassisted)

HAVE YOU OBSERVED ANY CHANGE IN YOUR CHILD SINCE STARTING NIPPERS? (e.g. ability, confidence, attitude, motivation)

WHAT GOAL OR PRIORITY (IF ANY) DID YOU SET AT THE START OF THE SEASON FOR YOUR CHILD?

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THIS GOAL?

WHAT WORKED WELL? HOW DO YOU FEEL YOUR CHILD WAS SUPPORTED TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?



Creating a visual schedule

A visual schedule is a timetable of activities that uses pictures as well as words. A visual schedule displays pictures vertically, to show the order in which the activities will occur. Think of it as a 'to-do list' for your session with 2 columns, a column "to do" and a column for "finished."



A bodyboard with velcro strips works really well for this at Nippers.



When an activity is complete, you can move the picture into the "finished" column.



Keep the visual schedule with you throughout your session, and update it after each activity. This means that a child can glance at the schedule and know exactly what they have completed and what is still to come.

For more information, visit: www.sls.com.au/inclusivebeaches