

ATHLETE SELECTION CRITERIA FOR TALENT UNLSHD 2026 NATIONAL JUNIOR DEVELOPMENT SQUAD

TALENT UNLSHD PROGRAM MISSION

To identify, nurture, and develop the next generation of Australian female surfing talent, while building a strong and sustainable female national coaching network that empowers and supports their long-term success.

OBJECTIVES

To select the best under 14, 16 and 18 pre-emerging women and girls to attend two National Development Camps in 2026.

Athletes will experience a national high-performance environment including peer-to-peer learning, technical and tactical coaching, physical preparation support, and performance mindset development. All 12 selected athletes will be expected to attend both camps, with travel and camp costs covered.

ATHLETES TO BE SELECTED (x 12 TOTAL)

- 6 x Under 14 athletes
- 4 x Under 16 athletes
- 2 x Under 18 athletes

Selected athletes will join 6 x under 18 categorised athletes within the 2026 Surfing Australia National High Performance Program (SA HPP).

If the SA HPP cannot fill all six positions with eligible categorised athletes the positions will be filled at the discretion of the selection panel.

All selections will follow the same criteria and weightings defined in this document.

SELECTION PROCESS

Stage 1 – Selection of 12 Athletes for Talent UNLSD Junior National Squad

A total of 12 athletes will be selected based on the eligibility requirements and selection criteria outlined below. These 12 athletes will be expected to attend two National Development Camps, with travel and camp costs covered.

Where a selected athlete cannot attend the camp, the next best ranked athlete as per the selection criteria will be provided the opportunity and invited to attend for that specific camp. The originally selected athlete will retain their place in the program for the subsequent camp provided it falls in the same calendar year. This process will be communicated to the reserve athlete and forms a condition of accepting their position.

Stage 2 – Selection of 2 Athletes for Additional 2026 Program Activities

Following the completion of Camp 1, the Selection Panel will identify 2 athletes from the Talent UNLSD Junior National Development Squad to participate in further 2026 Talent UNLSD activities, which include:

- **One (1) Air Wave camp**
2 Air Wave camps total will be run with 4 athletes on each camp
- **One (1) International Barrel Strike Mission**

Please refer to the separate Selection Criteria for Additional Program Activity selection. Selection for the National Development Camps does not guarantee selection for these subsequent activities.

ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for assessment, athletes must be:

- Be under 18 years of age as of 31 December 2026
- Be turning at least 12 years of age during the 2026 calendar year
- Be an Australian citizen and eligible and available to represent Australia in international competition.
- Be a registered member of their State Body (SSO)
- Comply with all relevant SA policies and rules as amended from time to time
- Maintain the high standard of personal behaviour expected of an athlete
- Not bring themselves, the sport, SA or any of its partners into disrepute
- Not be subject to any suspension or disqualification imposed by Surfing Australia, state they are member of or other surfing authority having jurisdiction over the athlete or the competition.
- Be aspiring to a career as a competitive surfer
- Have strong work ethic and commitment

SELECTION CRITERIA

Athletes are selected against a criteria consisting of:

COMPONENTS	WEIGHT
Skill Matrix <ul style="list-style-type: none">Their technical ability assessed against Athlete Skill Matrix (below) which incorporates the fundamentals necessary to be a well-rounded high performance surfer.	40%
Rankings <ul style="list-style-type: none">Athlete's place on the Australian Junior Rankings for 2024 & 2025	30%
Future performance potential <ul style="list-style-type: none">Commitment: Athlete's commitment to the level of training necessary to achieve their performance outcomesState Body Endorsement: Recommendations from the relevant State Body regarding the athlete's professionalism and history of high-performance behaviours.	20%
Competition results <ul style="list-style-type: none">Podium results (1 to 3rd place) on the Australian Junior Series, Grom Comps and QS Events will be taken into consideration.	10%

Final weighting is at the discretion of the Selection Panel and may vary depending on athlete cohort and available performance information.

Where an athlete's evaluation is affected by a pre-existing injury, the Selection Panel reserves the right to consider pre-injury performance, including results, rankings, and—if requested—additional evidence such as video submissions or coach feedback.

PROGRAM SKILL MATRIX

Athletes are scored out of 10 for their demonstrated skill in each of the following areas.

The score is benchmarked against the best in their competitive age group. Scores are determined by the Selection panel based on provided Athlete footage, prior knowledge of Athlete's surfing from past competitions and coach assessment.

NOTE: Submitted athlete footage used to demonstrate the skill matrix may be from any time period and is not limited to the previous 12 months. Footage may show attempts within skill categories and does not require completed execution.

SKILL	DESCRIPTION
TURNS	<p>Speed, power, and flow.</p> <p>Angles - different and unique angles and approaches to different sections</p> <p>Variety - having an array of turns on both forehand and backhand</p> <p>Commitment - willingness to attack the steepest and most critical sections</p> <p>Combinations of major manoeuvres - ability to commit to multiple major turns in a row</p>
AIRS	<p>Progressive and innovative airs</p> <p>Speed, height, style, landings</p> <p>Variety - grabs, rotations, inverted, flips, forehand, backhand</p> <p>Critical sections - airs on critical sections / larger waves</p> <p>Consistency</p>
BARRELS	<p>Slabs and heavy barrels</p> <p>Point break, beach breaks</p> <p>Barrel riding technique forehand and backhand</p> <p>Style, approach, comfortability and adaptability with riding different types of barrels</p>
SOLID WAVES	<p>Commitment to approach bigger waves and sections with technique and skill</p> <p>Comfortability in bigger and more challenging waves</p>
SMALL WAVES	<p>Commitment to approach smaller waves with technique and skill</p> <p>Creativity in smaller waves</p>

SELECTION PANEL

Athlete selections will be determined by the Talent UNLSHD Selection Panel. The panel comprises key members of the Surfing Australia High Performance Program and a State Representative. The composition of the panel ensures the knowledge and capability required to make informed athlete selection decisions.

The Selection Panel shall be made up of the following members:

1. National High Performance Director
2. Talent Pathway Coach
3. State Representative
4. Judge Specialist
5. Independent coach

NOTIFICATION

Successful athletes for the 2026 program will be notified by 30 January 2026.

Selection applies to the 2026 calendar year only. Athletes must re-apply for consideration in future years.

Unsuccessful athletes will also be notified; however, individual feedback will not be provided.

INJURY

If a selected athlete becomes injured or otherwise unable to attend a National Development Camp:

- The next eligible reserve athlete will be offered the position for that specific camp.
- If the originally selected athlete is later cleared to return, they will retain their place in the program for the subsequent camp provided it falls in the same calendar year.

This process will be communicated to the reserve athlete and forms a condition of accepting their temporary position.

APPEALS

Decisions made by the Selection Panel are final and are not subject to appeal, in accordance with Surfing Australia policy.

APPLICATIONS

Applications can be submitted HERE and will close 5pm AEDT on the 26th of January 2026.