



SURFING AUSTRALIA
HIGH PERFORMANCE
PROGRAM

2026 HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

Supporting Australian Athletes to become the **World's best surfers** and **people**.
We will be famous for being **The Dominant Surfing Nation**.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

INSPIRATIONAL PERFORMANCES AT BENCHMARK EVENTS	THE PIPELINE OF TALENT IN AUSTRALIA IS WORLD BEST	WE ARE WINNING & WINNING WELL
We meet our targets for event success across the Pathway from Olympics to World Juniors.	Australian talent is being developed to be Irukandji ready with skills that are leading internationally.	We commit to the exploration of what it takes to win alongside the holistic development of our athletes and our staff, recognising wellbeing as the foundation of sustainable success.

OBJECTIVES + TARGETS

1. Win an Olympic quota spot at ISA World Surf Games in qualification years (Men's & Women's)	2026, 2027 & 2028 (see ISA Olympic QS)
2. Meaningful contribution to winning the Men's & Women's WSL World championship	3/8 World Champs over 25-26-27-28
3. Performances that inspire at the LA2028 Olympics by the Australian "Irukandji" Team	1 Medal each athlete achieves 1 LA priority in 26
4. Australian Pathway Surfers build Irukandji Readiness	Each year targets set for 26-27-28-29
5. Most Australians in WSL top 10 (Women) and top 20 (Men) by 2028	Each year targets set for 26-27-28-29
6. Performances that inspire at the ISA & WSL World Junior Surfing Championships	ISA 4 Podiums (2 Golds) & WSL 4 Champions 25-26-27-28
7. World best coaches working with Australian surfers	Each coach has achieved an ICDP Priority in 2026
8. A world class U18 Junior State Development program	All 6 State Bodies Junior Programs are aligned to National HPP. Execute a National Pre-emerging Program. Talent UNLSHD objectives met.
9. Performances that inspire at Para, SUP, Masters and Longboard ISA events.	4 Teams sent to ISA. Ops support & integration. Para Surfing is in Bris 32 OLY

2026 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Surfing Australia's 2026 High Performance Program features a **45-athlete squad** across Pathway and Podium programs, from emerging talent to World Tour campaigners

The High Performance Program is built on Surfing Australia's *What It Takes to Win* strategy, with an Athlete focused, Coach Supported and integrated performance team approach to developing Olympians, World Champions and long-term careers.

Our program values are **Limitless, Elite, Fun & Authentic.**

Categorised athletes receive the following HPP Program support based off their categorisation level and Individual Performance Plans (IPP)

- Coaching
- Event Support
- Strength & Conditioning
- Physiotherapy & Injury Management
- Sports Psychology
- Athlete Wellbeing
- Medical service
- Judge expertise and Performance Analysis
- Filming
- Nutrition
- Acrobatics
- Camps
- Strike Missions
- Breathwork
- Creativity projects

PODIUM ATHLETES

The Podium Program supports Podium Potential, Podium Ready and Podium athletes currently competing on the Challenger Series and World Surf League Championship Tour.

These surfers are either preparing for, or already within, the current Olympic cycle, with a strong focus on competitive readiness, performance health and the continual refinement of the skills that give them the edge on the world stage.

Molly Picklum 2025 World Champion, Paris 2024 Olympian (NSWIS)

Stephanie Gilmore 8x World Champion, Tokyo 2020 Olympian (NSW)

Tyler Wright 2x World Champion, Paris 2024 Olympian (NSW)

Sally Fitzgibbons 4 X ISA Gold Medalist, Tokyo 2020 Olympian (NSWIS)

Isabella Nichols (QAS)

Sophie McCulloch (QAS)

Sierra Kerr (QAS)

India Robinson (VIS)

Ellie Harrison (VIS)

Jack Robinson Olympic Silver Medalist, Paris 2024 (QAS)

Ethan Ewing Paris 2024 Olympian (QAS)

Jacob Willcox (QAS)

Liam O'Brien (QAS)

Morgan Cibiic (QAS)

Callum Robson (QAS)

Oscar Berry (QAS)

Dane Henry (QAS)

Joel Vaughan (NSWIS)

Ryan Callinan (NSW)

George Pittar (NSWIS)

Jarvis Earle (NSWIS)

Winter Vincent (NSWIS)

Xavier Huxtable (VIS)

PATHWAY ATHLETES

The Pathway Program focuses on emerging and developing athletes under the age of 22 who have been identified as future Olympic cycle prospects.

The goal is to develop these surfers to become “Irukandji ready”, with an emphasis on skill development, creativity, exposure and experience, alongside the gradual increase of competition and tactical focus as athletes progress through Junior and Qualifying Series levels to Challenger Series.

Isla Huppatz (QAS)

Charli Hately (QAS)

Ziggy Mackenzie (QAS)

Leihani Zoric (QAS)

Quincy Symonds (QAS)

Eliza Richardson (QAS)

Milla Brown (NSWIS)

Lucy Darragh (NSWIS)

Talia Tebb (NSWIS)

Mitchell Peterson (QAS)

Caden Francis (QAS)

Jesse Fergusson (QAS)

Harley Walters (QAS)

Maverick Wilson (QAS)

Ocean Lancaster (NSWIS)

Samuel Lowe (NSWIS)

Locana Cullen (NSWIS)

Kash Brown (NSWIS)

Lennix Smith (NSWIS)

Fletcher Kelleher (NSWIS)

Max McGillivray (NSWIS)

Brody Mulik (WA)

2026 PODIUM PROGRAM



	OLYMPIC SQUAD	WORLD TOUR ATHLETE	CHALLENGER SERIES ATHLETE
COACHING - IN DAILY TRAINING ENVIRONMENT	Allocated contact coach	Allocated contact coach	Allocated contact coach
COACHING AT EVENTS	SA event coach at select events	SA Coach at 4 WT events Network Coach	SA Coach at 2 x CS events CS COACH GRANT - \$750 per event
PERFORMANCE SUPPORT AT EVENTS	See WT	Physio and Filmer at 7/10 of events Psych, W&E at select TBC	Physio at Pipe and Newcastle CS
CAMPS	Podium Workshop 16 th -17 th Feb	Podium Workshop 16 th -17 th Feb	Podium Workshop 16 th -17 th Feb
STRIKE MISSION / WAVE POOL	Aligned to IPP	Aligned to IPP	TBC
JUDGE EXPERTISE	At select training days / Heat drills / select events	At select training days / Heat drills / select events	At select training days / Heat drills
ISA WORLD SURFING GAMES	Team Camp and ISA Event Support	Team Camp and ISA Event Support	Team Camp and ISA Event Support
IPP FUNDING (AMOUNT BASED ON LEVEL)	YES	YES	YES
PHYSIOTHERAPY	YES	YES	YES
STRENGTH & CONDITIONING	YES	YES & Gym arrangement at events	YES & Gym arrangement at events
WELLBEING & ENGAGEMENT	YES	YES	YES
PSYCHOLOGY	YES + Creativity program	YES + Creativity program	YES + Creativity program
MEDICAL	YES	YES	YES
NUTRITION	YES	YES	YES
ACRO	Weekly at HPC	Weekly at HPC	Weekly at HPC

2026 PATHWAY PROGRAM



	CHALLENGER SERIES ATHLETE	QUALIFYING SERIES ATHLETE	PRO JUNIOR ATHLETE	U16 ATHLETE	U18 TALENT UNLSHD
COACHING - IN DAILY TRAINING	Allocated contact coach	Allocated contact coach	Allocated contact coach	Allocated contact coach	NA
COACHING AT EVENTS	SA Coach at 2 x CS events CS Coach grant- \$ 750 per event	SA Coach at 3 QS events	SA event coach at local events only	SA event coach at local events only	NA
CAMPS	Podium Workshop 16-17 th Feb Other TBC	Pathway Camp 1-4 th Feb QS Readiness Camp*	Pathway Camp 1-4 th Feb ISA Junior Prep Camp	Pathway Camp 1-4 th Feb Futures Camp x 3	2 x National Camps U18 girls
STRIKE MISSIONS*	17 yrs + receive 1 x Strike	17 yrs + receive 1 x Strike	17 yrs + receive 1 x Strike	Funding pending	1 x Air wave camp U18 girls 1 x Barrel Strike U18 girls
JUDGE EXPERTISE	At select training days / Heat drills	At select training days / Heat drills	At select training days / Heat drills	At select training days / Heat drills	NA
ISA WORLD JUNIORS	Team Camp and ISA Event Support	Team Camp and ISA Event Support	Team Camp and ISA Event Support	Team Camp and ISA Event Support	NA
WSL WORLD JUNIORS	Access to SA Coach or Network Coach at event	Access to SA Coach or Network Coach at event	Access to SA Coach or Network Coach at event	NA	NA
PHYSIOTHERAPY	YES	YES	YES	YES	At National Camp
STRENGTH & CONDITIONING	YES & Gym arrangement at events	YES	#YES	#YES	At National Camp
WELLBEING SUPPORT	YES	YES	#YES + Parent Program	#YES + Parent Program	At National Camp
PSYCHOLOGY	YES + Creativity program	YES + Creativity program	YES + Creativity program	#YES + Creativity program	At National Camp
MEDICAL	YES	YES	YES	YES	NA
NUTRITION	YES	#YES	#YES	#YES	NA
ACRO	Weekly at HPC	Weekly at HPC	Weekly at HPC	Weekly at HPC	NA

*ACRO available to athletes if on track with their IPP program
#Group based sessions

IRUKANJI TEAMS

The Irukandjis name was generously gifted to Surfing Australia by the Yirrganydji people of North Queensland. The team's tagline — '**Deadly in the Water**' — comes from the potent Irukandji jellyfish, reflecting both the cultural heritage and fierce competitive spirit of Australian surfers.

All elite Australian surfers, across Olympic Shortboard, Para, Longboard, SUP, Junior, and Masters disciplines, compete internationally under the Irukandjis banner and colours.

We send 6 Irukandji National teams to ISA's annually with selections are visible on our [website](#). Follow our athletes & the Irukandjis via: surfingaustralia.com/irukandjis & [@theirukandjis](#) on Instagram

CATEGORISATION LEVEL & BENCHMARKS

Athletes will be placed into a specific category based on their skills, age, and competition level.

- Emerging – U18
- Developing – U22
- Podium Potential – Open age
- Podium Ready – Open age
- Podium – Open Age

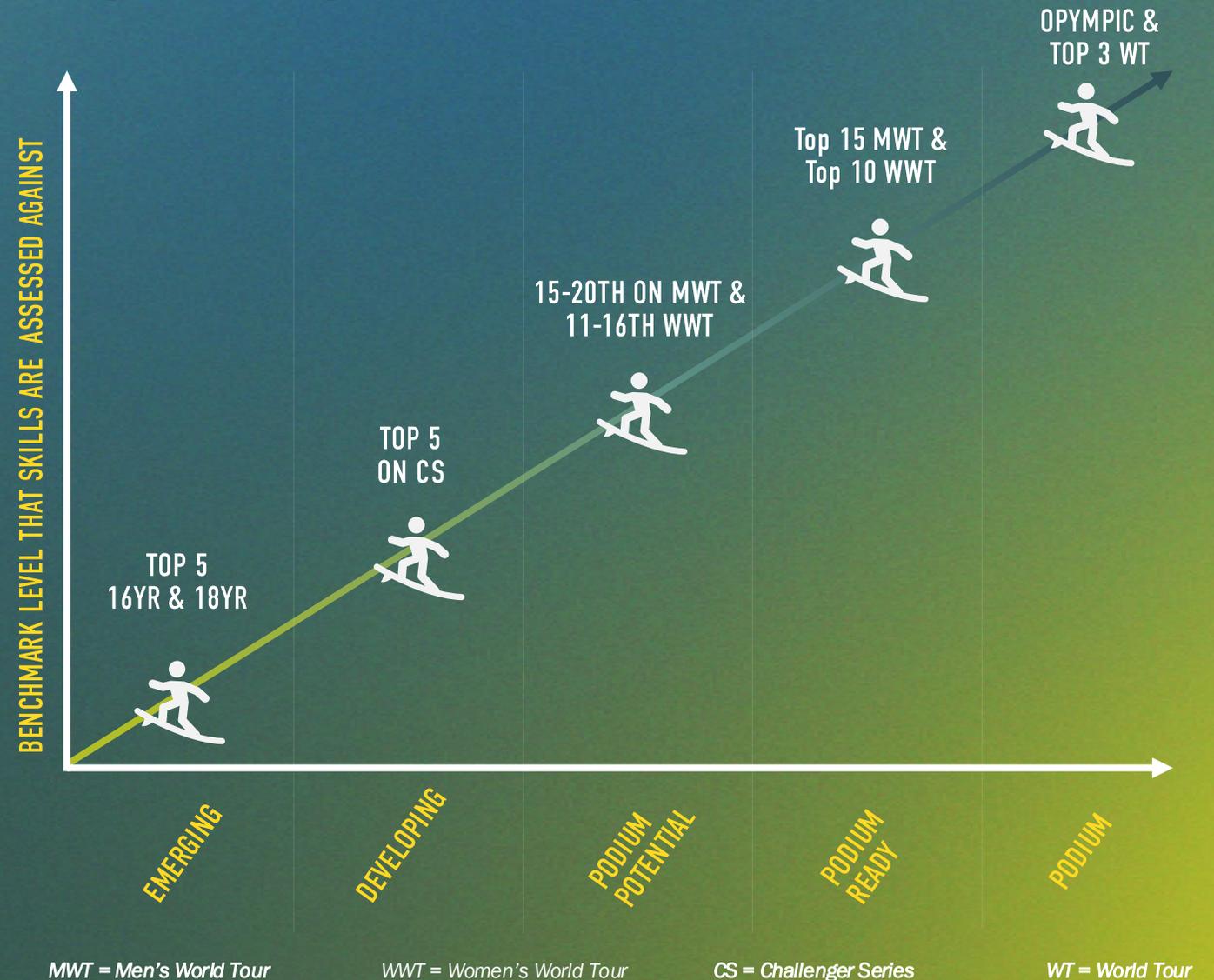
Athletes can be nominated for categorisation through State Bodies, SAHPP coaches, network coaches.

To be eligible, the surfer must have been part of a reliable and valid talent profiling process. Nomination closing date for 2026 will be confirmed in May 2026.

If eligible athletes will be sent an EOI and are required to self nominate to be considered.

Skill Matrix scores are decided by a panel of 5 judges.

International benchmarks are used by the panel to set the scale (see graph).



HOW TO ENTER THE HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

CATEGORISATION FRAMEWORK

In order to meet categorisation, athletes are required to:

- Demonstrate the performance capability to qualify for and compete in the LA 2028, BRIS 2032, or future Olympic Games by achieving a skill matrix score* of 7/10 (across a specified number of elements), as outlined in the [SAHPP FrameworkCategorisation](#)
- Demonstrate the ability to perform at benchmark events based off age and relevant tour level.
- Show improvement in the areas identified in the Individual Performance Plan (IPP)
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to training and attended national camps and events

The selection criteria is revised annually and based on recommendations and approval by the AIS. See [AIS Categorisation Framework](#)

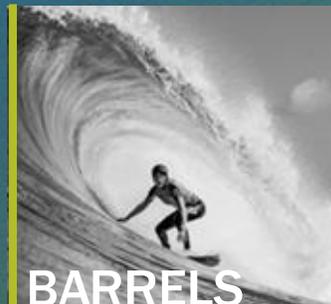
SKILLS (LEFTS & RIGHTS):



URNS



AIRS



BARRELS



SPEED, DRIVE,
FLOW

WAVE PROFILES (LEFTS & RIGHTS):



REEF
BREAKS



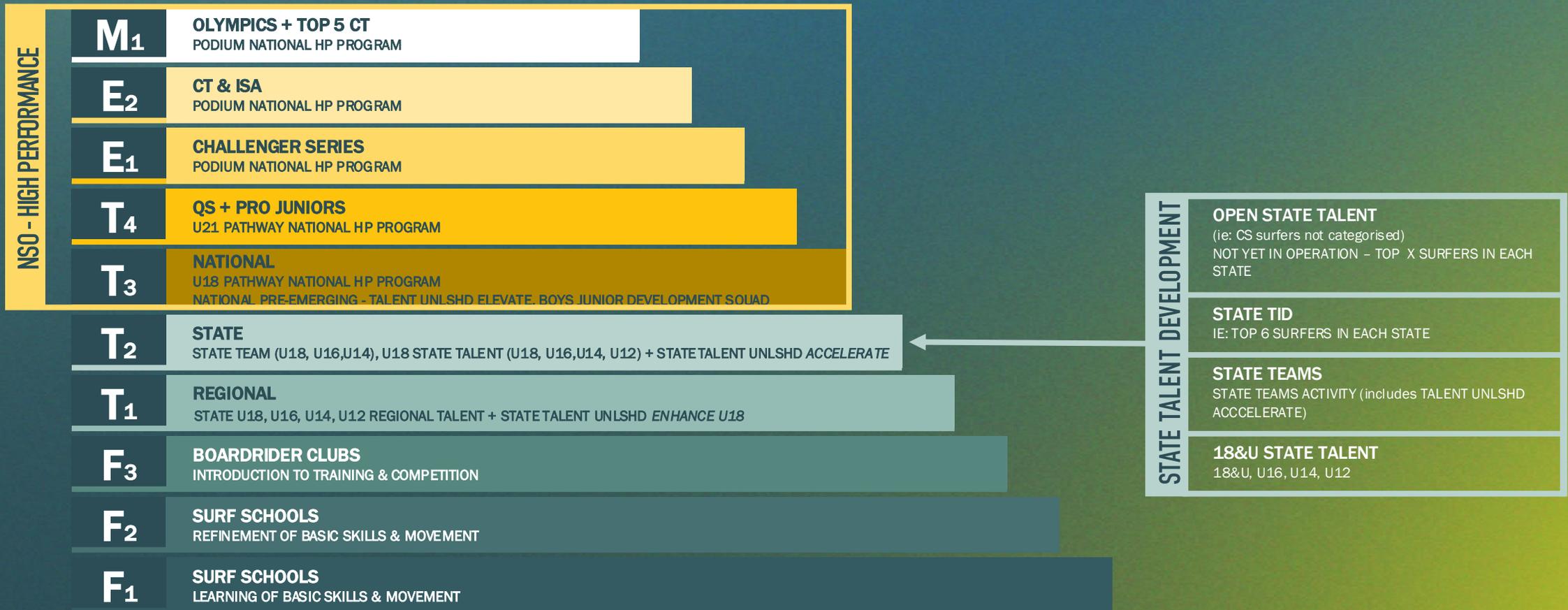
POINT
BREAKS



BEACH
BREAKS

* Skill Matrix scores are derived from the above elements

TALENT DEVELOPMENT INTO THE HIGH PERFORMANCE PATHWAY



THE HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAM TEAM



HIGH PERFORMANCE DIRECTOR

Kate Wilcomes

kate@surfingaustralia.com

0438752992

The High Performance Director is accountable for the High Performance Program and both Podium and Pathway program outcomes.



HEAD OF PRODIUM PROGRAM

Dion Atkinson

dion@surfingaustralia.com

0429265229

Head of the Podium Program responsible for Olympic, ISA, World Tour and Challenger Series program outcomes



PERFORMANCE SUPPORT & INNOVATION MANAGER

Paula Charlton

paula@surfingaustralia.com

0401360110

Leading the Performance Support team and innovation projects across the program



HEAD OF PATHWAY PROGRAM

Luke Macdonald

luke@surfingaustralia.com

0450922061

Head of the Pathway Program responsible for ISA Juniors, QS & Pro Junior & Pre-emerging level program outcomes

PODIUM COACHING

PATHWAY COACHING

COACHING / SKI SESSIONS / HEAT DRILLS / TRAINING DAYS / IPP PLANNING / STRIKES + CAMPS

**All pending coach availability, funding and relevance to Athlete IPP*



Jay (Bottle) Thompson

jay@surfingaustralia.com

0413 148 841



Nathan Hedge (QAS Gen 32)

nathanh@surfingaustralia.com

0423 871 252



Pete Duncan

pete@surfingaustralia.com

0421 986 245



Chelsea Hedges

chelsea@surfingaustralia.com

0409 813 103



Ameer Donohoe (NSWIS Gen 32)

amee@surfingaustralia.com

0490 552 854

JUDGE EXPERT & PA

- Post competition reviews and analysis
- Judging insights
- Coach support
- Data Analysis



Pritamo Ahrendt

pritamo@surfingaustralia.com

0421 678 454

Call or email **Pritamo** to book

OPERATIONS

- Logistics and operational support for the High Performance Program, including improving program efficiencies and rolling out policies and compliance requirements



Operations Lead

Kia Schubert

nakia@surfingaustralia.com

0430 924 730



Operational Co-ordinator

Ellie Brookes

ellieb@surfingaustralia.com

TALENT UNLSHD PROGRAM



Program Manager

Hannah Jessup

hannah@surfingaustralia.com

FILMING

- Coaching filming support
- Video Storytelling
- Event filming at select events



Owen Milne

owen@surfingaustralia.com

0402 792 483



Hunter Vercoe

hunter@surfingaustralia.com

0488 371 706

Call or email **Owen** to book

STRENGTH & CONDITIONING

- HPC Based training
- Remote programming
- Home set ups & hub visits
- Gym coordination for comps



Glen Workman

glen@surfingaustralia.com

0428 132 413



Luke Neville (QAS)

luke.neville@dtis.qld.gov.au

Call or email **Worko** or **Luke** to book

PHYSIOTHERAPY

- Acute injury management - Therapy and exercise prescription
- Event Support (at select events)
- Rehabilitation Planning & Co-ordination
- Injury Surveillance
- Injury Risk Mitigation - screening & prescription
- Physical Performance planning - working with S&C to develop individualised training plans



Kate Niederer

katen@surfingaustralia.com

0408 784 351

Call or email **Kate** to book

MEDICAL

- General Practitioner and Sports Physician
- Medical Screening
- Treatment of illness and injury
- Referrals for tests, imaging and specialist consultation
- Available in person at HPC or via telehealth for interstate athletes
- Women's health consultations or referrals



Dr John Ward (QAS)

Chief Medical Officer (CMO)

QAS Athletes can book directly through Dr John's clinic SEQSEM (07) 5600 1381

Athletes can also contact Paula at paula@surfingaustralia.com to coordinate appointments.

PSYCHOLOGY

- Individualised Mental Performance skills to optimise functioning in and out of water
- Individualised mental health &/or referral support
- Group-based programs targeting event readiness, creativity, emotional intelligence & self-regulation skills



Jason Patchell (Lead Psych)

jason@surfingaustralia.com

0412 342 362



Tom Greer-Smith (QAS)

tom@surfingaustralia.com

0423 387 859

Call or email **Jason** or **Tom** to book

ATHLETE WELLBEING & ENGAGEMENT

- Holistic wellbeing and personal development support
- Education, career and transition guidance
- Life skills
- Personal brand development
- Parent education and engagement pathway



Michelle Mitchell (OAM OLY)

michelle@surfingaustralia.com

0458 160 033

Call or email **Michelle** to book

NUTRITION

- Support in optimising your diet to support training, enhance performance and stay healthy
- Provide guidance and education around real food solutions
- Supplement use for training, travel and competitions



Kerry O'Brian (QAS)

kerryobyran@gmail.com

0418 898 263

Call or email **Kerry** to book

THANK YOU



We thank everyone who plays a role in supporting our athletes — including Surfing Australia staff, parents, coaches, brands, managers, support staff, Boardrider clubs, and state bodies — whose commitment and belief help create the environment for athletes to thrive. We look forward to continuing to work closely with all our stakeholders and are proud to play a role in each athlete’s journey.

Surfing Australia’s High Performance Program is proudly supported by the **Australian Institute of Sport** through the Win Well investment, alongside program partners **NSWIS**, **QAS** and the **Australian Olympic Committee**. Together, this support enables Surfing Australia to create world-class opportunities for Australian surfers to develop, perform, and succeed on the global stage



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