SLSQ Guideline

Title: Best Practice Junior Activities Programs	**Department:** Membership
Guideline No: MSG01	**Version:** 1
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Introduction
Nippers is a structured program for young people aged 5–14 and their families. It builds surf safety, lifesaving capability and personal development through participation at the beach and within the surf lifesaving community.

At its core, Nippers:

- Develops foundational surf awareness and survival skills
- Builds confidence, teamwork and leadership
- Creates a pathway into surf lifesaving and the broader movement
- Provides a safe, inclusive and community-based environment for young Queenslanders

Principle	Standard / Expectation
Primary Purpose	Education and surf safety — building lifesaving capability in young people
Secondary Outcome	Surf sport participation as a complementary and rewarding element
Community Role	A family-oriented, inclusive program anchored in the club community
Pathway Function	Entry point into surf lifesaving — patrol, competition and leadership

Purpose
The intent of this framework is to:

- Provide clear, consistent guidance to clubs on program delivery standards
- Strengthen education, safety and program integrity across all Branches
- Support clubs delivering both baseline and high-performing programs
- Reinforce the core purpose of Nippers as a surf safety and education program first

Application

To support quality outcomes while allowing operational flexibility, the following program structure is recommended:

Minimum	Optimal (Recommended)	Maximum
14 Sessions	**16 Sessions**	20 Sessions

This structure provides:

- Sufficient time for learning, repetition and consolidation of core competencies
- Flexibility to absorb weather cancellations (2–4 sessions), without falling below minimum
- Capacity for clubs with extended programs to continue without restriction

Season Structure

- A minimum of 10 sessions should be delivered prior to Christmas with all educational modules completed
- Remaining sessions to be used for reinforcement, application and engagement activities
- This front-loaded model ensures core outcomes are met during peak engagement periods
- *Note:* Days where nippers is not run due to a surf sports carnival do not count as 'nippers days'.

Education-First Delivery

Nippers must be clearly delivered and communicated as a structured education program — one that builds surf safety capability incrementally over the season.

Best practice delivery includes:

- Delivery of core learning outcomes across 8-10 structured, sequential sessions
- Reinforcement of skills across the broader program, not just isolated sessions
- Clear alignment to SLSA competencies, outcomes and age-appropriate benchmarks
- JAC delivery guided by approved resources, frameworks and age-group plans

Volunteer and Family Sustainability

Setting a recommended maximum of 20 sessions is not just about program structure — it reflects a deliberate commitment to the sustainability of the people who make Nippers possible.

Junior Activities programs rely heavily on volunteer JACs, age managers, water safety personnel and parents. Overextended programs risk:

- JAC and volunteer burnout — coordinators running programs beyond sustainable lengths are more likely to disengage, step down or deliver lower-quality sessions toward the end of the season
- Family fatigue — families committing to 20+ Sundays across a full season, often alongside other sport and school commitments, may disengage before education outcomes are met
- Declining attendance rates — longer programs without clear structure tend to see attendance drop in the second half, undermining the 50% requirement and overall outcomes
- Workforce sustainability — retaining good JACs year-on-year is critical; a culture of overcommitment makes recruitment and retention harder
- The 14–20 session range is intentionally designed to give clubs flexibility while protecting the people who deliver the program.

Attendance

The 50% attendance requirement will be retained in full. This is a non-negotiable baseline, not an area for local discretion or flexibility.

Principle	Standard / Expectation
Minimum Attendance	50% of delivered sessions (as at date of award issuance)
Purpose	Ensures minimum engagement with education outcomes; maintains equity across clubs
Flexibility	Nil — this is a hard requirement, not a recommended guideline
Enforcement	Clubs must record and validate attendance using approved systems (nipper app or paper log)

Branch Cut-Off Dates

To support operational planning, program accountability and carnival-season readiness, formal cut-off dates have been introduced for junior activities members wishing to compete at a Branch Championship event.

Branch	Approach	Proposed Date
Northern QLD Branch (NQB)	Earlier cut-off date — reflecting the alternate season commencement and regional conditions	20 September
North Barrier Branch (NBB)	Mid-range cut-off date — reflecting July program commencement model	1 November
All Other Branches	Standard cut-off date aligned to southern QLD carnival calendar	31 December

Supplementary Learning

Clubs may deliver supplementary sessions to support completion of learning outcomes. These are enhancement tools, not a substitute for the standard Nippers program.

Supplementary sessions may include:

- Mid-week skill development sessions (not mid-week surf sports training)
- Make-up sessions for weather cancellations
- Targeted learning for specific age groups

Requirements for supplementary sessions:

- Must be recorded and validated through the approved attendance system (nipper app or paper log).
- Must be approved and minuted by the Club Executive Committee/Board for insurance purposes.
- Cannot replace the need for ongoing Sunday Nipper program participation.
- Must not be used to manufacture compliance with the 50% attendance requirement.