



A Commission of the Australian Underwater Federation

Strategic Planning

23 September 2008

Draft Plan Development

A work plan was developed to:

- encompass the routine activities of Ozfin;
- provide progress and efficiency in updating its services (in accordance with the Objectives);
- encompass issues and tasks raised at the 2007 AGM; and
- to deal with other issues arising.

A draft Plan was developed from an assessment of these aspects (provided in more detail below). The plan was developed from the perspective of only one committee member and, as such, is only a draft for consideration by the incoming committee in 2008-2009.

The draft plan formalises objectives, actions, responsibilities and schedules for the normal running requirements of Ozfin, as well as provide strategic actions for resolving issues.

Vision

- To be established.

Core Objectives and Work Plan of Ozfin

A Strategic Plan must have objectives to meet Ozfin's core purposes. These are:

- To foster, develop and encourage participation of Fin Swimming activities throughout Australia.
- To continually improve the standard of competition.
- To assist with conducting National and International Competitions within Australia .
- To select and encourage teams to participate in International Competition.
- To assist Clubs and State organizations with information, rule updates, and promotional material.
- To ensure the accreditation of Coaches and Officials and work with them to achieve a high level of success for participants of all ages.

Although the task work is varied, the core activities of Ozfin are predominantly:

- AUF business and liaison;
- organising the annual national championships;

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- record keeping;
- communication and liaison, including newsletters and web page;
- administration of the association
- assisting squads for international competitions (in some years); and
- organising international competitions (in some years).

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

The identification of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) assists in planning for making the most of advantages and reducing risks. A draft SWOT analysis is presented in Table 1. This requires further brainstorming with the incoming Committee for 2008-2009.

Key strengths are: being under the umbrella organisations of AUF and CMAS; being a sport accessible to all ages and abilities; and having an inclusive, sociable outlook. Key weaknesses are: a low (and falling) membership; low profile and knowledge of the sport; and limited access to the sport in terms of coaches and squads.

Issues and Strategies

Membership, Communications, Promotion and Profile

Increasing membership is somewhat of a chicken-and-egg situation, with an increase in number of squads being limited by availability of lanes and coaches (which need memberships to fund them). Nevertheless, there are still many things that can be done to attract new members, as well as retain former members. These include:

- membership drives – active canvassing, advertising and demonstrations;
- facilitate joining – AUF web page;
- quality communications and communication products;
- visibility, presence and awareness of the sport;
- demonstrated services and value for money; and
- quality experiences, provision of services and reputation.

The latter two points cannot be faulted and some minor improvements are mentioned below. In terms of presence and awareness, finswimming once had increased exposure through an AUF magazine that was posted to all AUF members. There also used to be a combined national underwater championships, providing sport cross-over opportunities for AUF members of other sports, such as underwater hockey and spearfishing, would also compete in finswimming. Although re-combining competitions would not be a short term solution, it may be productive to provide communications about finswimming to all AUF members. We could also go one step further and provide articles for other swimming clubs and water sports magazines.

Visibility and awareness is improved by disseminating posters, brochures, newsletters, linkages to the web page and articles in the news. Another important aspect is

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identification, signage or 'branding' of members and events through the use of uniforms, banners, signage, stickers, swimming caps, etc.

Visibility and awareness is also greatly improved by articles in the media (newspaper and television). This usually requires a good 'hook' to interest journalists and compete effectively with other stories. A novelty, unusual or high profile event is needed to attract interest, which are few. We should take advantage of any opportunity as they arise, but also look at ways of leveraging usual events (*i.e.* find some spin). Uniforms, banners, signage, etc. are important in producing the right 'image' and reputation.

This strategy is reliant on quality communication products to inform, interest and 'show case' Ozfin and its activities. Newsletters, brochures and posters are useful, particularly in electronic form for wide dissemination (with links back to the web page). The website is critical for people to refer to as a first point of call, for the curious, interested or those wanting to be informed (including the media). The webpage is reflective of our reputation and maintenance is important to keep interest, respect and confidence (and provide core services).

The AUF is proposing to develop its webpage as a one-stop-shop for joining, renewing and payment of memberships. If implemented properly, this has the advantages administrative efficiency as well as attracting interested members of other underwater sports. The AUF web page is also a vehicle for promotional material.

Membership drives consist of a more concerted and active effort in attracting new members and retaining previous members. Care must be taken to ensure that efforts are not wasted for little membership returns. Targeting of effort needs to be carefully planned.

Insurance Costs

The best immediate strategies for reducing the impact of insurance costs are:

- increased membership (see above); and
- facilitation of the AUF plan to centralise membership and insurance – providing economy of scale.

These plans have been under discussion by AUF and its commissions for the last two years. Ozfin (and the AUF executive) is pushing for a resolution at the next meeting on 8 November 2008. I will be in China for the Asian Championships so an Ozfin delegate will have to be arranged. I will prepare a brief for the AUF delegate and lobby the other commissions beforehand to ensure they come to the meeting with a view to resolution (rather than implement more delays while yet another aspect is thought about).

Updating Administration and Systems

While recognising that most of our members are busy professionals, students or parents, hence time-poor, there are some aspects of the organisation that need or would benefit

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updating, including the web page, records, stationery and various documentation. A key driver for these updates is the strategy for increasing promotion and the profile of fin swimming. Some of this updating has already been done – Helen Rubin has been working on records and Helen Lane on stationery and coaching accreditation documents. I have also been working on updating stationery and template documents.

Some systems can be streamlined to make it easier and more efficient. For example, software can be developed to automatically update databases and records following a competition.

House keeping and updating is prioritised according to services to members and promotional value:

- update records (done, but an ongoing task);
- update web page with recent competition results, news and records;
- adapt webpage to include promotional material and newsletter (once prepared – as per membership strategy);
- compile promotional material into a central set for ease of dissemination, including to new/potential members and media (on web page but held by all committee members)
- implement streamlining records and webpage updating (alleviating pressures on a single person);
- update other public documentation accessible on the webpage, such as bylaws;
- update stationery and templates and compiling into a central set for ease of access for future committee members (to be held by the Secretary); and
- compile all Ozfin documents together into a central set for ease of access and distribution (to be held by the Secretary).

Coaching and Officials

A strategy is required for increasing the number of coaches in Australia. Updating manuals, guides and accreditation schemes for coaching and officials is an ongoing concern, as is applying for grants to fund this and coaching courses.

Training Materials for Remote Finswimmers

As there are only a few squads and there are occasional members in other states that may train alone, or in informal squads to start with, it would be advantageous to have materials to support this training. This could be in the form of:

- training schedules (drills and sets);
- descriptions of drills and sets (text, diagrams, photographs and video), say on CD; and
- support for national coaches to travel to area for initial training and demonstrations.

Equipment

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Equipment is difficult to acquire, with competition fins needing to be imported, which takes considerable time and organisation. The present strategy is to ensure everyone is aware when another order is going in and to order extra items in anticipation of needs. This remains a weakness of the sport.

Uniforms and Apparel

Uniforms are particularly important for team identification as well as profile, visibility and publicity. There is currently no established style or ready supplier. A difficulty is not having a fixed style that everyone is comfortable with and the low production numbers, making production runs difficult to organise. Strategies include:

- developing a fixed design and colours that everyone is comfortable with (AUF requirements are 70 % green and gold); and
- having artwork and design lodged with a nominated supplier for efficient supply when they are needed, such as before competitions.

Liaison is continuing with designers and suppliers, but further exploration of options is required. One supplier, FHS, has very good designs, but has a minimum of 20 per manufacturing run. The Australian finswimming image is currently suffering with no uniforms for small numbers of international competitors.

Competitions and Performance Incentives

Competitions are one of the incentives for training (apart from enjoyment and fitness reasons). Increasing the number of Australian competitions is advantageous in realising this (as well as raising the profile and help retain members).

Providing access for everyone to attend international competitions is invaluable in providing training incentives and raising performance standards. Ozfin has already recognised this with a fund to assist eligible swimmers. This can also be assisted by sponsorship, fundraisers and in-kind support.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is generally difficult to get without having a clean, professional and attractive image. Sponsorship is also reliant on exposure (easier for international events) or some form of advertising hook. Limited sponsorship can be from benevolent companies that expect little or no return.

Given a key to sponsorship is having something to sell, strategies include:

- update of promotional material;
- update of profile/image, including information sources (web), apparel and uniforms;
- media releases and magazine articles to demonstrate exposure; and
- identification of opportunities and development of sponsorship plans – e.g. a dive equipment manufacturer to sponsor “the fastest scuba divers in Australia”.

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Competition Results and Records

Results and records are currently updated by hand and is a time consuming task. Regular updating is required to inform members of competition results and properly acknowledge members that make new records. Certificates used to be produced for new record holders, but this has lapsed. Easy access to competition results and records is required to provide individual times and overall Australian Records for entries into local, national and international competitions.

A strategy for updating the record keeping process is:

- standardise format for competition results (essentially in place);
- review and revise database structure of all competition results;
- create means of automatically entering competition results into the database (for efficiency and reduction of handling errors);
- create reporting scripts to generate output tables for records and individual results;
- devise a means of efficiently updating these tables on the web page; and (eventually);
- devise a means of efficiently producing and posting certificates for new record holders;
- have a searching/reporting capability on the web page, a.k.a. AUSSI Masters website (a long term goal).

Management and Administration

There is presently considerable knowledge of the organisation and administration of fin swimming activities in a few highly experienced people. Longer-term opportunities are improved if this expertise is used to assist up-and-coming coaches, managers and administrators. Strategies include:

- mentoring (formal or informal);
- development of a hand-book or instructional guides; and
- facilitate handover of materials and documentation for new committee members through the use of a central repository/archive (as described above).

Strategic Work Plan

Many of the strategies to progress Ozfin are interrelated. For example, development of promotional material is beneficial for membership drives, media releases, raising profile of the sport, grant applications and sponsorship applications. The key core and strategic activities have been distilled into a Draft Work Plan for review by the Ozfin Committee (Table 2). Not all of the above ideas have been included as the Plan needs to be realistically achievable over the next 1-2 years. An annual review and update ensures that the remainder and new issues are dealt with accordingly.

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Table 1. **Draft** assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths.

Present	Strengths	Weaknesses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of inclusion, performance, fitness, enjoyment and safety. • Accessible all ages and abilities. • Sociable. • Established training and competition frameworks. • AUF – National administration and economy of scale. • CMAS – International organisation of the sport. • High representation and standard of Masters levels (records continually broken). • Support for teams and officials representing Australia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low, falling membership. • Low representation in Open and Junior levels. • Squads only in a few states (Tas, ACT). • High cost of insurance. • Low profile/knowledge of sport. • Small pool of coaches and officials. • Limited access to equipment (imported, expense). • Limited Australian competition schedule. • International competition access difficult (travel expenses).
Potential	Opportunities	Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed membership and participation. • Cross-overs from other sports. • Exposure in media. • Placings in international competition. • Government sports grants. • Squads in WA, Qld, VIC, NT. • Sponsorship. • Courses and accreditation. • Coaching and training advice and resources for swimmers remote from squads. • Building pool of coaches, organisers and team managers. • Increased scuba and open water events. • Continual improvement of systems and procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance. • Accidents and liability. • Unviable level of membership. • Loss of expertise and experience. • Reduced pool access. • Loss of support from AUF and CMAS.

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Table 2.1 **Core Activities.** *Draft* work plan for Ozfin Inc., 2008-2010.

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Schedule	Resources
Review and update work plan and strategies.	Review and revise work plan, including actions arising from the AGM.	Ozfin Committee	Every year immediately following AGM.	
a. Provide annual National Championships	Assist host Club with the organisation of events, including communications, resources, rules and officials.	Ozfin committee (Competitions Officer) Host club	2008 – Canberra 2009 – Melbourne?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry fees. • Communication resources. • Ozfin assets and resources, including banners, software, personnel.
b. Provide insurance at an affordable level.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Push through resolutions of AUF insurance changes at November 2008 AUF meeting. 2. Implementation of AUF insurance policy. 3. Develop contingency plan. 	Ozfin President Ozfin deputy to AUF Ozfin Treasurer	October 2008 – preparation of AUF submission. November 2008 – AUF meeting and resolution of issues.	
c. Facilitate organisation of State and Club competitions	Assist host Club with the organisation of events, including communications, resources, rules and officials.	Host club Ozfin committee	Upon event notification by Club – at least two months notice preferred.	
d. Encourage and maintain participation at every level	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase membership and raise profile. 2. Ensure safe, enjoyable and sociable environment. 3. Provide coaching and training. 4. Provide access to affordable equipment. 5. Provide competitions for all categories. 6. Provide support for participants with additional or different needs. 	Host club Ozfin committee All members	Ongoing Annual review of status and areas for improvement.	All Ozfin resources.
e. Increase standards of competition at every level	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase membership and participation in competitions (as above) 	To be discussed	To be discussed	

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Schedule	Resources
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Increase number of competitions available. 3. Improve access to coaching and training, particularly outside Hobart and Canberra. 4. Increase awareness and accessibility to higher level (international) competitions (these experiences provide incentives for training). 5. Provide support for international competitors – particularly juniors, students and some masters categories. 6. Facilitate access to improved fin technology. 7. Provide recognition of successes and records in communications. 			
f. Represent Australia at international competitions (junior, open and masters)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication of events to all members. 2. Encourage participation and communicate with coaches and potential eligible swimmers. 3. Implement team selection processes. 4. Provide management, administration, promotion and other support 5. Financial support for eligible members. 	Ozfin committee Selection committee National Coach AUF (for liaison with CMAS)	2008 Asian Finswimming Championships, Yantai, China 2009 CMAS World Championships, TBA. 2009 International Masters?	
g. Facilitate courses and accreditation for coaches and officials.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apply for sports grants. 2. Maintenance, revision and printing of coaching manuals and coursework. 3. Organise national training 	Ozfin Committee National Coach	One coaching and one officials course by end of 2010?	

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Schedule	Resources
	courses 4. Support members to attend international courses.			

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Table 2.2. **Strategic Activities.** *Draft* work plan for Ozfin Inc., 2008-2010.

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Schedule	Resources
h. Increase membership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Membership drive – brochure, posters and newsletters to non-current members and potential members through AUF and swimming groups. 2. Advertising (where free, such as posters on pool notice boards) and media exposure (e.g. DiveLog, swimming newsletters). 3. Facilitate opportunities for new coaches and squads. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ozfin Committee 2. State clubs 3. Members (send to a friend) 4. Cross-promotion through AUF 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initial drive in December 2008. 2. Major drive in May-June 2008 – ensure renewal of memberships. 3. Opportunistic actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters • Brochure • Web page
i. Improve communication about finswimming	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More regular newsletter. 2. Emails to announce events. 3. Develop production quality of newsletter (graphic design of template). 4. Develop production quality of web page. 5. Brochure about finswimming and Ozfin. 6. Magazine articles. 7. Media releases: newspaper and television articles. 8. Video and photograph resources/archive for communications. 9. Stationery – letterhead, business cards, etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ozfin Committee to direct processes. 2. Contributions from members with particular skills (such as photography, web page development, media liaison etc.). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Newsletter at least every quarter. 2. Update webpage every quarter (except summer holiday period). 3. Email to all members as soon as an event is declared (particularly international events). 4. Brochure and poster developed by December 2008. 5. Public articles (2 per year) produced once ancillary communications materials prepared and updated. 6. Media releases associated with each national 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochure • Web page • Video and photograph archive

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Schedule	Resources
			championship and any international participation, commencing 2009 once ancillary communication materials developed.	
j. Raise profile and awareness of finswimming.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve identity and visibility at training, events and competitions, for example: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. banners; b. sandwich boards; c. stickers; d. posters; e. swimming caps; f. uniforms and apparel. 2. Communications, magazine articles and media releases (see above). 3. Distribution of brochures (as per membership drive). 4. Organisation of community/fun/try events (<i>e.g.</i> the Faye Hoppitt Memorial). 5. Demonstrations, such as at swimming meets. 6. Participation in regattas and high profile events (<i>e.g.</i> Trans-Derwent Swim and international competitions). 7. Conversations with interested people, such in the pool – handing out brochure/card. 8. Presence on affiliate web pages and newsletters – AUF, other swim clubs, UW hockey, diving 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ozfin Committee to direct processes. 2. State coaches and squads 3. All members to wear/show logo, etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brochure, posters, banner, flags, stickers, cards, swimming caps developed by December 2008. 2. Uniforms and apparel designed and sourced by December 2008. 3. Uniforms and apparel produced in early 2009 – prior to CMAS World Games. 4. Membership drive as per above. 5. Communications as per above. 6. Continual organisation and participation in fun or cross-sport events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochure • Posters • Web pages (inc. AUF) • Stickers • Competition Banner • Swimming Caps • Uniforms • Apparel

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Schedule	Resources
k. Long term plan for organising next international competition in Australia.	<p>sites.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commence discussions on potential for hosting next Trans-Tasman, International Masters and/or Asian Championships. 2. Establish communications with other nations/CMAS bodies about international competition schedules. 	Ozfin Committee	Commence inquiries once date and location of CMAS World Games are known.	

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