

## Delivering Professional Development in a technological age

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AUSTSWIM – The Australian Council for the Teaching of Swimming and Water Safety<sup>1</sup>

AUSTSWIM is the Australian Council for the Teaching of Swimming and Water Safety who deliver quality training and licensing for teachers in the aquatics industry.

The AUSTSWIM Teacher Licence is the current industry standard for swimming and water safety teachers and is recognised as the optimum training of Learn to Swim Teachers in each state and territory of Australia and many countries overseas.

To maintain their licence AUSTSWIM teachers must complete a minimum of 40 hours practical teaching and a minimum of 10 hours professional development over a three year period. Approximately 4000 AUSTSWIM Teachers renew their licence annually.

As a peak industry body we have identified a need to provide opportunities for teacher's access to relevant and quality training as part of their ongoing professional development.

In 2010 AUSTSWIM launched its new AUSTSWIM Teacher of Infant and Preschool Aquatic course, a shift from face-to-face delivery to a blended learning strategy has been a great success for AUSTSWIM with an increase of 40% attendance over six months.

Since developing this new online platform it has opened up numerous on-line opportunities for our organisation including professional development workshops, Skype training, webinars and the ability to resource share. With on-going development, this technology will assist us in providing all AUSTSWIM licensed teachers particularly those in rural and remote areas with the opportunity to access AUSTSWIM Professional Development workshops via their computer.

### **Benefits include:**

- Convenience and portability
- Cost
- Flexibility
- Higher retention
- Global opportunities

### **Common barriers we have overcome include:**

- Bandwidth/browser limitations may restrict instructional methodologies
- Time required for downloading applications
- Managing learning software can involve a learning curve
- Student assessment and feedback is limited
- Are computers replacing human contact? – The Net is not right for all training

Whilst we acknowledge the fact that some traditional hands-on courses can be difficult to simulate in an online portal AUSTSWIM's vision is that every Australian will be taught to swim by an AUSTSWIM licensed teacher, enabling them to safely enjoy aquatic environments and activities. The only way we can continue to succeed at achieving this vision is by opening up varied learning opportunities for our AUSTSWIM Teachers and we can continue to achieve this by understanding that: 'Good teaching is good teaching, no matter how it's done.'

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