

## Origins of Masters Swimming in SA

**The following article was written by Bill Stevens, former SA Branch Secretary and long-time supporter of Masters Swimming in South Australia.**

### Old Timers Swimming League

The origins of Masters Swimming in South Australia was the Old Timers Swimming League (OTSL). This group began in 1973, largely through the initiative of Doug Openshaw. The original Office bearers were:

President:	Doug Openshaw
Vice President:	George McKell
Secretary/ Treasurer:	Arthur Sansom
Assistant Secretary:	Josie Sansom
Committee Members:	Angelo Salvemini Audrey Lees Dianne Simons Don Redpath Jan Wrengel Les Curtin

An article in "AUSSI 1976" refers to the League being formed on 6 January 1974, but competitions were held as early as 10 March 1973. The first competition attracted over 100 swimmers.

The League's first Championships were held on 6 April 1974 and its last meet was held in August 1976. Meets were held in Doug Openshaw's 25 metre pool at Morphett Road, Warradale. The early swimming locations were Doug's Morphett Road pool, George McKell's Swim and Health Centre at Largs Bay and Ern Reddaway's pool at the Norwood Parade.

The Old Time Swimmer's League had a short but worthwhile life in that it was the movement that led to the foundation of an AUSSI Branch in South Australia. One of the handicaps for the OTSL was the attitude of the "amateur" association which seemed to fear that its purity would be tinged by exposure to the OTSL members. The OTSL club had been formed at the Parade Pool, and largely through the efforts of Josie Sansom, that the body became Adelaide Masters on 2 November 1977.

During 1978 the South Australian Branch of AUSSI was formed. Adelaide Masters was the first club. Atlantis and the Whyalla Duckbills affiliated in 1979 and the Marion, Central Districts Seals, Dolphin Masters (Bordertown) and the Timeless Tea Trees (now Tea Tree Gully Kingfishers) clubs affiliated in 1980. The State Council was established in April, 1980.

There are Secretary's Reports to cover the years 1979 and 1980 and the earliest AUSSI Minutes are those of its first Annual General Meeting held on the 13 May 1981 with Peter Gillett as President. Some long-time members talk of there being great enthusiasm in the early years for the "new" swimming organisation. However, it seems from them that the enthusiasm of the founders was waned during the first few years. Perhaps that this is not surprising because the drive that establishes something new does not always continue after the main goals are achieved. At the close of the 1995 year there were 10 affiliated clubs with a total membership of 656. By that time there were well organised interclub meets, State Championships, and Open Water swims (up to 6000 metres). The Branch and Club Officers had become competent in handling the fitness, recreational and social needs of adult swimmers in the ages of 20 years to 85 years.

Since 1978 a total of 24 clubs have affiliated with the South Australian Branch. At the end of 1995 the number was 10, all of which were in the Adelaide Metropolitan area. The Branch had not been able to

establish any long-term regional clubs, although efforts in that direction continue. Branch membership grew to 852 during 1986, this being the first year in which AUSSI SA hosted the AUSSI National Swim.

The Adelaide Masters Club, with the leadership of Vicki Murphy, previously hosted the 1980 National Swim. It was held on March 8 and 9. A National Council meeting was also held then. This was the first meeting at which appointed delegates attended, as distinct from those members who happened to be there at the time.

Membership has declined to average about 650 during recent years. During these years there has been an average of just over 200 new members which shows that AUSSI is an attractive sport/recreation but unfortunately there has been about the same number who did not re-register.

A good, but not large, group of swimmers has been established, and their performances in the water and in other activities associated with Fitness, Fun and Friendship are commendable. Several members have created World Records and many National Records have been earned by South Australian AUSSI members.

### **Interclub Swims**

The first Interclub Meet was held soon after the 1978 Nationals. A 1979 report says:

“More recently several picnic meets have been held at 50 metre pools, giving our members much needed experience in the “long course”. It is most encouraging to see members attempting longer distances too. Twelve months ago anything over 400 metres evoked gasps of dismay from the majority, but now 800 metre warm-ups cause little more than a resigned shrug of the shoulders, and 1500 metre time trials are quite popular.”

### **State Cups**

The first State Cup and Championships meet was held during August 1981 at the Parade Pool, Norwood.

### **Open water swims**

The first AUSSI participation in an open water swim was during 1979 when AUSSI members swam at the same venue and time as the amateurs but in a separate race. Later the AUSSI members staged their own Open Water Swims and these are now held regularly each summer.

Since AUSSI's inception in South Australia there have been excellent long-term contributions in the administration areas for South Australia and the National body. Names that readily come to mind and which are well known throughout the AUSSI world include:

Ivan Wingate	AUSSI National and State Life Member
Peter Gillett	AUSSI National and State Life Member (deceased 2007)
Florence Walker	State Life Member (deceased 2006)
Chris Potter	
Vicki Murphy	
Patti Morris	
Kit Simmons	State Life Member
Josie Sansom	State Life Member (deceased 1992)
Darryl Hawkes	AUSSI National and State Life Member.

There are also some original Old Time Swimmers League foundation members still active in AUSSI South Australia including Di Simmons and Don Redpath.

Bill Stevens

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