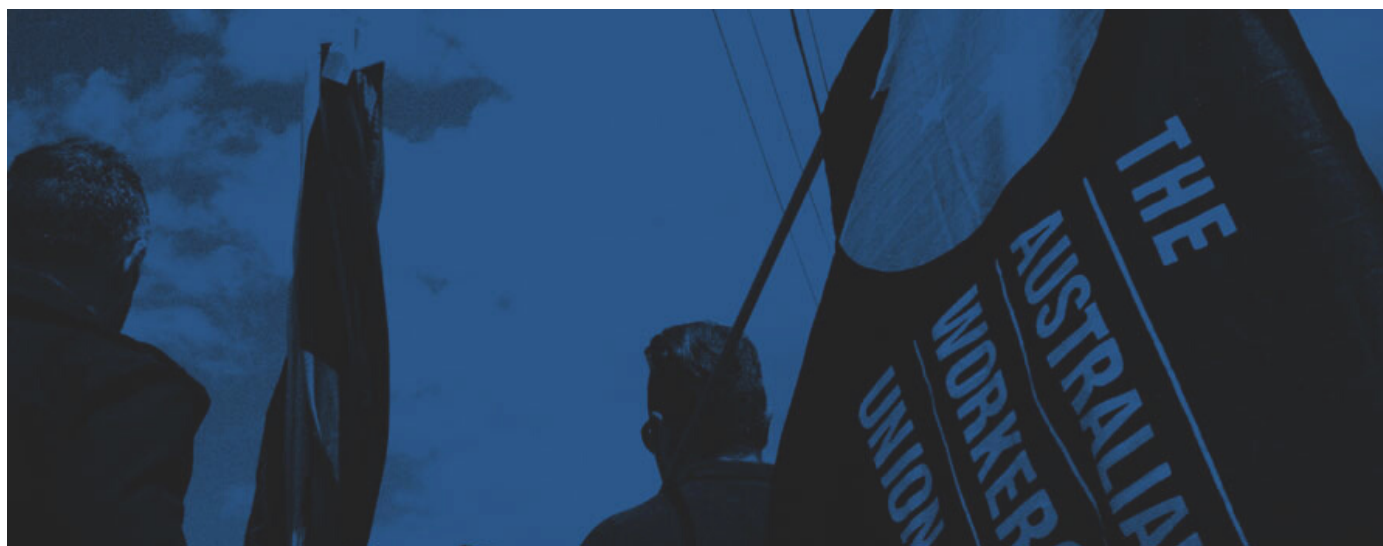




MARCH 2021

# SIA UPDATE

THE OFFICIAL SIA NEWSLETTER



## NEW MEMBERS & NEW WORKSITES

A warm welcome to our new SIA members, and a heartfelt goodbye and thankyou to those who have departed from the SIA, many moving into new careers in numerous industries. Your support of the SIA, your workmates and the greater aquatic community is much appreciated and we wish you all the best. Make sure you join your new union, and if you're not sure who that is, visit <https://www.australianunions.org.au/>.

COVID has had quite the impact on our industry, fortunately many of our members' employers engaged in JobKeeper which has resulted in a far greater retention of SIA members considering an 8 month closure. We have had a slight decrease but considering Austswim's report of over 50% of employers not engaging in JobKeeper and 'letting their staff go' during COVID, we've weathered the storm pretty well.

Since our Feb Update, we've welcomed new members from Belgravia Leisure, the Y, Ivanhoe Girl's Grammar, and Aquastars. SIA's following continues to grow with more employees showing interest in their workplace rights and seeking support.

**MARCH 2021**

## **EMPLOYEE SHORTAGES EXPOSE EMPLOYERS**

Yes, the industry is experiencing a shortage of teachers at the moment, but this...

**How would you feel if you'd been controversially terminated only to see your employer advertising for 'New Swim Teachers'?**

Swim Instructors Association

Currently there are a plethora of jobs out there for Swim Teachers, Lifeguards and Aquatic support staff. Austswim's employment report suggests that over 50% of employers didn't engage in JobKeeper and employees were discarded as businesses closed in March 2020 forcing swim teachers to seek alternative employment.

Many have reported having no engagement from their employers throughout lockdown or reopening of facilities. Aquatic facilities managed by councils were ineligible for the wage subsidy.

Reduced hours, and business 'restructures' due to COVID have been the driving force behind our members leaving the industry in search of more secure employment. After spending time away from their workplace, a number of members chose not to return to what they described as poorly managed, toxic environments, others cited low, underpaid wages as their main reason for leaving.

Unfortunately we saw a number of employers use COVID to get rid of employees, the same employers are now struggling to meet the demand of growing programs and are calling out for initiatives to attract teachers. None so blatant as Nunawading Swimming Club's Just Swimming Swim Schools, who blindsided 39 of it's longest serving teachers, sacking them in a Town Hall meeting, in front of nearly 70 participants. Employees were left bewildered and in tears at the reasons given by the General Manager on behalf of the board, making the Level 4 swim teachers redundant in favour of 'Junior levels' and suggested changes to their programs to no longer teach children under 5 years.

Since December the employer has been continually advertising for 'Brand new Teachers' or lower level teachers which has left Just Swimming's terminated employees disgusted. Putting a shelf life on teachers so you don't have to pay them higher, minimum rates will not only impact the quality of a learn to swim program, but what about the implications for drowning prevention if other employers decide to cheapen their workforce in a similar way?

This has been a highly distressing time for many teachers whom had become very close, working together for many years. One employee suggested that "the impersonal nature of this whole situation has resulted in a decline in the mental health of so many of our teachers".

It would be great to see peak Industry Organisations advocating on behalf of their current swim teacher and swim coach members to support and retain them in the industry, in addition to the support of employers through extensive media campaigns offering initiatives for new teachers to come into the industry.

## MEMBER WINS

**JobKeeper Top Up Missing** - a Swimland employee found that his JobKeeper top up payment was missing in his end of employment pay and had been used to pay out his Annual Leave entitlements. The Employer suggested an explanation for this that raised a red flag and upon follow up from the SIA, with the support of the AWU Legal Advisor, the employer rectified the issue and suggested there had been an unintentional error made. Outcome: member \$920 better off in the long run!

***IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS ENDED THEIR EMPLOYMENT SINCE JOBKEEPER STARTED, CHECK YOUR FINAL PAY (or send it to [sia@awu.net.au](mailto:sia@awu.net.au)) TO MAKE SURE YOU HAVEN'T BEEN DISADVANTAGED!***

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**Wage Claim Win** - Jump! to Belgravia - A recent takeover prompted one member to double check her level and the appropriate pay rate she should be on. This led to the discovery that she'd been underpaid for the past 12 months based on her level, and hadn't received the adequate loading when working Saturday or Sunday.

After calculating the total of underpaid wages, SIA Organisers sent a formal wage claim letter to the previous Jump! owner requesting \$775 in back pay. After a couple of emails to and fro, including the employer running it past their lawyer, the wage claim was accepted and paid out.

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## PD Points for Quals Renewal

Do you need to renew your Austswim or Swim Australia Teacher qualification?

There's been a lack of in-house training for many SIA members across the past 12 months. For obvious reasons the usual quarterly face to face training done in many workplaces was unable to go ahead during business closures. Other members reported that no PD has been offered by their employers since March 2019, many others are expected to source their own PD. Check your agreement, or workplace policies for any clauses that include reimbursement for costs incurred for training and development so you're not left out of pocket!

External PD on offer by industry groups is often restricted to members of particular organisations, and otherwise can become quite costly. As such we're always looking to find and share low to Zero cost opportunities for our SIA members.

LSV offered a few different streams in their Aquatic, Fitness and Recreation (AFAR) PD series in 2020, the presentations are accessible via the following link: <https://lsv.com.au/pool-safety-services/afar/?fbclid=IwAR3Ma-h-tZcbgrWzDrmw1xiQsIPnJH9H-9BWdiuTnZjWePqRZdVitCyuI4Y>

Check out the Archived Section including 2021, Safety and Operations for any Facility, Operations or Health and Safety Reps and the Swimming and Water Safety Education presentations for the Swim Teacher, Coordinators, Deck Supervisors/TIC's.

## Mental Wellbeing Matters

The AWU Vic Branch has entered a partnership with ADA Australia, offering a free mental health service and drug and alcohol advice for all members and their family members. ADA provides actual counsellors that you can speak to, so when you or a family member get in touch you're not just referred onto your GP or somewhere else. All you need to provide is your AWU Member number.

### SIA campaigns

Through site visits over the coming months, Organisers will be sharing a Mental Wellbeing Matters Kit with all member sites. These will include posters with contact details for a range of Mental Health Services, along with booklets detailing laws around risk management, mental health hazards, controls and actions employees can take, along with info about Workers Compensation.

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# AWU-VIC IS PLEASED TO BE PARTNERING WITH ADA AUSTRALIA

HAVE YOU BEEN  
TAKING CARE OF YOUR  
OWN WELLBEING?



1 IN 11

Australians will  
suffer **depression**  
in any given year

1 IN 7

Australians will  
suffer **anxiety**  
in any given year

1 IN 5

Australian adults  
drink at levels that  
puts them **at risk of**  
**alcohol-related harm**



## TO ACCESS YOUR AWU-VIC MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT & LEARNING HUB



1. [Click here](https://adaaus.com.au/log-in/?o=awu) or enter the link into your browser:  
<https://adaaus.com.au/log-in/?o=awu>
2. Log in using your AWU membership number

To get the best experience out of the Hub, we have put together a step-by-step guide on how to create a shortcut for your mobile or desktop. This will allow you to access the Hub directly from your preferred device. [Click here](#) to view.

ADA Australia provides education and awareness training designed to enable individuals to manage their own mental health and/or substance abuse issues, understand the impacts they have on themselves and others, and provide management techniques and support for these issues.



Stay Safe,  
Be Well.

A Friendly  
Ear - CALL:

**1800 232 287**

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