



Club Manual for New and Existing Clubs

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Dragon Boat South Australia Club Manual

Foreword

Welcome to all new clubs joining the dragon boating community, and congratulations to existing clubs for your continued commitment in the exhilarating world of modern dragon boat racing. Dragon boating is recognised as one of the fastest-growing aquatic sports globally, offering excitement, teamwork, and camaraderie.

The purpose of this manual is to provide centralised policy guidance and clear instructions for both new and established clubs, as well as individuals participating in dragon boating. It serves as a resource for understanding club governance, operational requirements, and best practices for successfully managing and growing your club.

A detailed table of contents is provided at the beginning of the manual for easy navigation. Information is organised into section areas to facilitate quick reference and ease of use.

This manual contains foundational information for clubs, particularly those making changes to their structure or committees. Additionally, a comprehensive checklist is included to assist clubs in fulfilling governance responsibilities—specifically those related to Dragon Boat South Australia (DBSA) registration requirements, in line with Australian Dragon Boat Federation (AusDBF) guidelines.

Upon submission of all club details, DBSA registers the club on Revolutionise Sport ('Rev Sport'), providing access information for the 'Members' section of the DBSA website. Each club must nominate a contact person for Rev Sport, typically the President or Treasurer, though any club member can be selected. General access is available through the DBSA website at www.dragonboatsa.com.

This manual is designed to support your club in establishing, developing, and maintaining a successful organisation. Please note that the information contained may be updated or changed after publication.

Given the importance of governance, a checklist is provided to help your club during establishment and as a reference for ongoing operations. The details in this manual are particularly useful for clubs undergoing committee changes, helping ensure new members understand their governance responsibilities. It is recommended that the checklist be used as part of the Registered Club Committee handover process.

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1.0 History

The Dragon Boat Festival is celebrated annually on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, commemorating the death of Qu Yuan. Since Qu Yuan's passing, dragon boating has become a vibrant and spectacular part of Chinese sporting culture, marked by unique traditions and festivities.

1.1 Modern Dragon Boating

Modern dragon boating has evolved from ancient fertility rites and folk traditions that honoured Qu Yuan. By 1970, particularly in Hong Kong, dragon boating became a formalised international competitive sport, featuring standardised rules and equipment. The sport now enjoys global recognition, blending cultural heritage with modern competition, including traditional ceremonies like "Awakening the Dragon" (dotting the dragon eyes) before races.

Today, dragon boat racing is a truly global sport, with the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) recognising member associations in nearly 90 countries and territories worldwide. Australia, New Zealand, the US, Canada, Britain, Ghana, Egypt, South Africa, and many nations in Europe and the Americas actively participate. Dragon boating attracts enthusiasts from diverse backgrounds, both as competitors and spectators, and is acknowledged as one of the fastest growing water sports.

Standard dragon boats are 12 metres long and 1 metre wide, adorned with a dragon head and tail. DBSA's boats comply with IDBF standards, sourced from approved manufacturers. Smaller boats, known as 10's boats, measure 9 metres. Essential equipment includes the rudder or sweep oar, drum, and drummer's seat.

1.2 Benefits of Dragon Boating

Dragon boating is an affordable and easily accessible sport that promotes fitness. It delivers a host of physical, mental, and social benefits, making it a rewarding and inclusive activity. Dragon boating welcomes people of all fitness levels and ages, fostering teamwork and unity. It is an excellent way to meet new people and build lasting friendships, with social and corporate teams gaining firsthand experience in teamwork and dedication required to paddle these demanding boats.

2.0 Dragon Boating in South Australia

Since 1985, DragonBoat SA has supported more than a dozen teams competing regularly, alongside many part-time and social teams. The DBSA Board can consist of up to nine Directors, with no fewer than five and not more than seven Member-elected Directors, plus up to two Board-appointed Directors, as outlined in the constitution. Half of the Board is elected each year at the Annual General Meeting, with all positions being voluntary. Board members serve as contacts for specific clubs and are assigned portfolios. For a list of current portfolios, refer to the DBSA website, [DBSA Board / Committee Charters - Dragon Boat SA](#).

2.1 Volunteers

Volunteers play a crucial role in the success of dragon boating. Their involvement in committees, as race officials, boat handlers, marshals, and general helpers ensures the sport's smooth operation. Volunteers are also vital for corporate and school events. DBSA values and cares for all volunteers, who, along with accredited Race Officials, help events run efficiently.

2.2 Competitions and Race Distances

In Australia, dragon boat races are typically held over distances of 200, 500, 1000 (straight or turn), and 2000 metres (turn). The racing season in South Australia runs from September to March, featuring approximately 11 events plus additional competitions, culminating in the State Championships held over two days. The race calendar is available on the DBSA website, [Race Program - Dragon Boat SA](#) and includes national championships (AusChamps), during which clubs can qualify for the biennial World Club Crew Competitions.

A highlight of the national event is the Peter Bristow State vs State Trophy, where state teams compete. Selection criteria for the SA state team are available on the website, [State Team - Dragon Boat SA](#). Australia's national dragon boating team, "The Auroras", competes at the highest international level, including World Championships, Asian Championships, and the World Cup. The Auroras represent mixed crews across all age groups, from Juniors to Seniors. More information is available on the DBSA website, [Auroras National Team - Dragon Boat SA](#).

2.3 Race Categories and Divisions

All race categories and divisions are listed in the AusDBF Rules of Racing.

Available via the following link:

<https://cdn.revolutionise.com.au/site/u3po2oljdnklniom.pdf>

2.4 Race Rules and Conduct

Racing is governed by rules set by the IDBF, AusDBF, and DBSA. All participants must adhere to the DBSA general Code of Conduct, the AusDBF Member Protection Policy via the following link: <https://cdn.revolutionise.com.au/cups/ausdbf/files/zflgdmxtbf60fbjb.pdf> (especially Part B – Code of Behaviour), and the AusDBF National Code of Conduct, via the following link: <https://cdn.revolutionise.com.au/cups/ausdbf/files/nznjr6dgggtqwd0ma.pdf>.

DBSA enforces a zero-tolerance policy for poor behaviour, emphasising the importance of mutual respect and adherence to rules for the benefit of the dragon boat community. For details, refer to the website.

Crews must follow instructions and obey the Sweep while in the boat. Alcohol consumption is strictly prohibited for participants, as it impairs judgement and increases the risk of hypothermia. The use of performance-enhancing drugs is forbidden.

On race days at Aquatic Reserve West Lakes, dragon boats must keep to the left-hand side of the waterway (transit lane), while regular water protocol requires keeping to the right at other times. Refer to Policy 030: Dragon Boat Training Protocol West Lakes & Port River, <https://www.dragonboatsa.com/media/82537/030-dragon-boat-training-protocol-west-lakes-port-river-issue-10.pdf> for training protocols. Always be mindful of other watercraft and people and ensure the waterway is clear before turning the boat.

2.5 Race Starts

In South Australia, the following start types are used: Standing Start, Toggle Start, and Pontoon Start. For detailed procedures, refer to Policy [011-starts-and-starting-procedures-issue-8.pdf](#).

3.0 DBSA Provides

- Dragon boats and associated equipment
- Paddles for school and corporate teams and 'Dragon Pass' participants

- Approved buoyancy vests (PFDs) for corporate teams, school teams, and 'Dragon Pass' participants
- Organisation of the race calendar
- Race day setup through the Racing Committee and club participation
- Volunteer coordination for race days and corporate events
- Coaching support, including coaching and first aid courses
- Sweep training and accreditation; sweeps for school and corporate teams
- Team liaison with dragon boat networks in Australia (AusDBF) and internationally (IDBF)
- Interstate contacts for competitive racing
- Overseas contacts for international competitive and festival racing

3.1 Member Clubs Information

Member clubs can access forms, documents, governance information, policies, guidelines, insurance details, regatta schedules, meeting and forum minutes, coaching resources, and state team information on the DBSA website.

4.0 Club Checklist

4.1 Rules (Constitution)

To register as an Incorporated Association with Consumer and Business Services SA, clubs must have a constitution. This may be the Model Constitution from CBS, or custom rules written by the club. A copy must be provided to DBSA and can be uploaded to Revolutionise Sport.

4.2 New Club Application Process

New clubs seeking full membership with DBSA must:

- Have a minimum of 12 registered members
- Be incorporated through CBS with their own constitution, in line with the *Associations Incorporation Act 1985*
- Submit a written application to DBSA, signed by the applicant and proposer, including the club's constitution and a list of committee members (names and positions)
- Agree to abide by DBSA regulations and rules

Once recognised, clubs receive notification and all participants are required to pay applicable fees. Benefits include unlimited use of DBSA boats for training (subject to bookings), club insurance, and access to DBSA services and racing events. Boats must be booked via the DBSA Secretary, [dbsa-boat-equipment-booking-booking-request-form-v2.pdf](#). Refer to Appendix 1 for the New Club Governance Checklist.

4.3 Revolutionise Sport (RevSport)

Revolutionise Sport is an online management platform adopted by AusDBF and DBSA for managing organisation records, accreditation, corporate participation, club and individual registrations, and payments. After registration, clubs must nominate a primary contact for RevSport and forward details to info@dragonboatsa.com. Login details are sent to club management and members.

Each club may appoint up to four full Admin users on RevSport, with others assigned limited access as needed. Clubs can create a free website via RevSport and process memberships online however will need an account set up for them first. Arrange this with admin@dragonboatsa.com.

4.4 Dual Membership

Individuals must be registered with DBSA with their primary club but may choose to join multiple clubs. They can train with any club but can only compete with their primary club in DBSA regattas and State

Championships. Appropriate registration and fee payment is required for access to Association facilities. At the Australian National Dragon Boat Championships, competitors may only race for their Primary Club.

Crew entries are confirmed at the DBSA Race Committee meeting ten days before an event. Clubs lacking sufficient paddlers for a category may apply for exemption to allow assistance from other clubs but will compete as a “Do not qualify” crew, ensuring fair progression for other clubs.

These rules do not affect IDBF Club Crew Competitions, which have separate regulations.

4.5 Club Logo

Club logos must be submitted to DBSA via email to admin@dragonboatsa.com.

4.6 Uniform

Club uniform designs require DBSA Board approval prior to production. Uniforms must comply with AusDBF National Uniform Guidelines, including branding requirements.

<https://www.ausdbf.com.au/policies/>.

Images of both the front and back of all shirts and singlets must be submitted. Sponsorship advertising must meet AusDBF and DBSA policies. Example images can be requested via email.

Paddlers should be appropriately dressed for conditions, wearing items such as:

- T-shirt or vest, shorts, and jacket
- Suitable light footwear (mandatory when entering/exiting the boat)
- Hat and sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Water bottle
- Towel
- Spare clothing

4.7 Buoyancy Vests – PFDs

Approved PFDs must be worn by all participants while on the water in South Australia. At West Lakes there may be an exemption for wearing PFDs for racing for paddlers provided they can swim 100 metres fully clothed, as per Annual Skills Policy 038 (swim test & capsize drill), <https://www.dragonboatsa.com/media/82587/038-annual-skills-capsize-and-swim-testing-issue-6.pdf>.

There are no exemptions for Sweeps, Drummers or 18 years and under paddlers.

4.8 Website Information

New clubs must submit basic information to DBSA for inclusion on the website. Updates should be sent to admin@dragonboatsa.com.

4.9 Membership

Membership registration and fee payments are managed online via RevSport. The anniversary date is based on when registration is completed. Annual subscription fees are set and approved by the Board at each Annual General Meeting for the coming season.

4.10 Insurance

DBSA arranges insurance for equipment and assets of registered dragon boat clubs in South Australia, using the same provider as AusDBF. Clubs are not required to use the preferred provider but benefit from competitive premiums. Asset information must be submitted for coverage. The DBSA Treasurer maintains an insurance spreadsheet. Clubs choosing DBSA insurance should complete and submit the spreadsheet promptly.

4.11 Participants

Standard dragon boat teams have up to 22 members; small boats accommodate 12. Roles include:

- Paddler: No special requirements regarding age, sex, athletic ability, or experience.
- Sweep: Steers the boat, leads the crew during training, racing, and emergencies. Should have a confident, loud voice. Clubs are encouraged to train more than one Sweep. Sweeps must hold a current first aid certificate and carry a mobile phone in a waterproof bag during training. On race days, Sweeps wear a two-way radio and check steering equipment before paddling. DBSA provides accredited Sweeps for school and corporate teams. There is a Sweeps Accreditation process and register; see the website for details, [Sweep Training - Dragon Boat SA](#).
- Drummer: Keeps the pace and timing with the lead strokes by beating the drum, communicates instructions, and monitors for false starts. Should have a strong sense of rhythm and a loud voice. During a capsize, the Drummer is second-in-charge after the Sweep. On race days, Drummers wear a two-way radio. Refer to Policy 009 for Drummer roles, [009-role-of-a-dragon-boat-drummer-issue-10.pdf](#).

4.12 Coach and Sweep

Each registered club must have an accredited Level 1 Coach and a Level 2 Sweep as a minimum, which may be the same person. DBSA can offer support and guidance regarding accreditation.

4.13 Dragon Boat – Equipment

4.13.1 Care of Equipment

Clubs are responsible for unloading, transporting, and storing dragon boats. Trolleys are available at Aquatic Reserve for moving boats to the water. After training or race days, boats should be rinsed and excess water removed before storage. Sufficient personnel are required to prevent manual handling injuries. The pulley storage system (Policy 034), [034-sop-lifitng-equipment-issue-10.pdf](#) is used. Gloves are provided at the Aquatic Shed. Wax is not to be used on paddles or boats, and pulley chains must be handled with care to prevent staining. Any damage should be reported to the DBSA Maintenance Committee via the Club Maintenance representative, and a Safe 365 report should be completed, <https://safe365global.com/aus/>.

4.13.2 On Race Days

At DBSA Racing Committee meetings, clubs are assigned roles for setting up and storing boats before and after race days. The organising club prepares a task list, and all clubs must ensure their allocated duties are completed on schedule.

4.13.3 Maintenance

Dragon boats typically undergo maintenance during the off-season, with the Maintenance Committee organising working bees as required. Clubs should report major maintenance issues to the committee through their representative for timely repairs.

5.0 Individual Requirements

5.1 Cost

5.1.1 Sports Teams

Sports team members must register with DBSA via the Revolutionise system. Membership and race day fees are set by the Board and published on the DBSA website.

5.1.2 Other Teams

Costs for school, social, and corporate teams are negotiated with DBSA, which also organises training sessions and provides Sweeps, Drummers, and Strokes as needed.

5.2 Paddles

Paddles must meet IDBF specifications. DBSA supplies paddles for school, corporate, and 'Dragon Pass' participants. Club members are encouraged to purchase their own high-performance paddles; contact DBSA for details.

5.3 Training

A positive approach to training enhances enjoyment, performance, and safety. DBSA provides training for school and corporate events. Clubs should submit preferred training times, venues, and boat requirements to the DBSA Secretary annually. Allocations are communicated and posted online.

6.0 Safety

Team Managers or Coaches must ensure all crew members review safety and training notes before sessions. Safety is the responsibility of every crew member.

6.1 Swimming

Crew members should be able to swim 100 metres in full uniform.

6.2 Before You Paddle: Safety Procedure

6.2.1 Know Your Number

When the full team is in the boat (including Drummer and Sweep), the Sweep calls for a head count, starting from the Drummer, then the front left paddler (Stroke), numbering down the boat from left to right.

6.2.2 Know Your Buddy

Your buddy is the person beside you in the boat. Look out for them in case of capsizes; their safety depends on you. The first pair of paddlers are responsible for the Drummer, and the last pair for the Sweep.

6.2.3 Know Your Safety Drill Procedure

All members must participate in a practice safety drill during initial training, as this will be used in the event of a capsizes. Each club conducts annual capsizes drills and swim tests, maintaining records for race days. Refer to Policy 038 for details, [038-annual-skills-capsizes-and-swim-testing-issue-6.pdf](#).

6.3 Safety Strokes

Emergency Stop ("Dig it in" or "Stop the boat"): On command, paddlers place paddles vertically in the water to stop the boat. This procedure should be practised during training.

Support Stroke ("Brace"): Also called "paddles on" or "paddles flat", this stabilises the boat and prevents capsizes. Used when not paddling, entering/exiting the boat, after races or practice sets, and always when stationary. Hold the paddle blade flat on the water and practise supporting your weight.

6.4 Paddling a Dragon Boat

Team discipline and a structured training program are essential for success. Clubs and dragon boat websites (DBSA, AusDBF, IDBF) offer advice and experience. DBSA provides coaching courses as needed.

6.5 Capsized Boats

6.5.1 During a Race

If a boat capsizes, remain calm and check on your buddy. Ensure no one is trapped or lost. The strokes check for the Drummer, and the last paddlers for the Sweep. If a crew member is missing, inform the Sweep immediately. Stay with the boat and distribute evenly along each side to prevent rolling. The Sweep will call a head count, starting with the person on their left, and repeat until everyone is accounted for. The rescue boat will take charge upon arrival. If instructed, right the boat; otherwise, leave it capsized to reduce injury risk. If required to swim the boat to shore, keep it inverted for easier handling. Once

ashore, repeat the head count and complete a SAFE 365 report for the Safety and Risk Portfolio, <https://safe365global.com/aus/>.

6.5.2 During Training

No rescue boats are present during training sessions. Follow the same procedure, raising the alarm if anyone is missing. The Sweep carries a mobile phone in a waterproof bag and should call 000 or 112 in emergencies. Training in pairs is recommended, with a second boat providing assistance and communication—not rescue. Complete a SAFE 365 report for the Safety and Risk Portfolio.

6.6 Other Risks: Heat Stress, Dehydration, and Hypothermia

Refer to Policy 010, [010-ausdbf-adverse-weather-conditions-guidelines-issue-10.pdf](#) on the DBSA website for guidelines on adverse weather conditions, including hot and cold weather.

6.7 First Aid

Team Managers, Captains, and Coaches should be aware of any crew medical conditions (e.g., heart issues, blood pressure, back problems, epilepsy, diabetes, allergies, asthma) and ensure medication and an action plan are available. A first aid kit is stored at the boat shed; it is recommended that each club have their own kit. Sweeps and Coaches are required to hold current first aid certificates. Sweeps should carry a mobile phone for emergencies. At major events, first aid personnel are present.

6.7.1 AED Machine

An AED (defibrillator) is attached to the end of the storage racks on the right hand side of the shed at the Aquatic Reserve boat shed at West Lakes, and in the DBSA Caravan on race days. In a cardiac emergency during racing, attract the Umpire boat's attention, then proceed to shore. The AED is easy to operate; follow its instructions. Call 000 or 112 for an ambulance immediately.

7.0 Security

Ensure all personal belongings and vehicles are securely locked. Always lock the boat shed when leaving.

Ensure the club tent is never left unattended on race days so personal belongings remain secure.

Appendix 1: New Club Governance Checklist – Process to Follow

Date completed by Club	Documents	Comments	Confirmed by DBSA
Have the minimum number of people (12)		Provide a list of names to DBSA. Recruit enough members to meet requirements and send the list to admin@dragonboatsa.com.	
Be an Incorporated body through Consumer & Business Services SA	The Constitution for 'Incorporated Association – not for profit organisation' in SA.	A constitution is mandatory for registration. CBS provides a template and model rules for incorporated associations, which may be modified to suit your club's needs, provided they comply with the Act. Complete the online application with a copy of the constitution and pay the required fee.	
Has your club's new constitution been ratified by CBS?	Certification of Incorporation	CBS generally issues certification within 14 days if all requirements are met.	
	Has your club the required numbers of registered financial members?		
	Registered new members on RevSport. "Dragon Pass" is available for new people.	Ensure all prospective members are registered with DBSA as new members on RevSport and have paid the required fees.	
Has your club submitted an application form for membership to DBSA?	Nomination/Application for membership to DBSA.	Submit a written and signed application to DBSA, including the club's constitution and a list of committee members (names and positions).	

Club's Acceptance as a Member Organisation of DBSA	Acceptance provided in writing by DBSA. Appointed Board member to be club liaison.	Agree to abide by DBSA regulations and rules. DBSA Board decides on membership eligibility, providing access to boats, insurance, services, courses, website, and racing events.	
	Has your Club appointed representatives for DBSA subcommittees?		
	Subcommittee representatives for Racing and Maintenance committees.	DBSA has several subcommittees. Clubs must provide names and contact details to DBSA Admin.	
RevSport	Set up account, create portal, provide primary contact and list of club members with access.	Set up club portal with relevant details and visual logo. Work with DBSA Admin and attend training sessions. Opportunity to have a club website via RevSport.	
Club uniform	Submit uniform sample for Board approval.	Images of singlets, polos, shirts, etc. must be submitted before production. Board approval is based on guidelines.	
PFDs and paddles	Club members must have the necessary equipment (PFDs, paddles).	Initially, DBSA equipment can be used. Club members should purchase their own performance paddles, PFDs, and sporting equipment.	

Appendix 2 Existing Club Governance Checklist

Date Completed by Club	Activity	Comments
Section 4.1 – Rules		
	Rules (Constitution).	Any changes have been notified to, and approved by, Consumer and Business Services SA
Club Management Committees		
	Management Committee Members.	Changes notified to DBSA - Names and position, contact details
Section 4.3 – Revolutionise Sport		
	Revolutionise Sport primary contact person for the club. Names of people who have access either full or limited.	Changes updated.
Section 4.5 – Club Logo		
	Club Logo Image Visual.	Any changes advised to DBSA for updating website etc.
Section 4.6 - Uniform		
	Uniform Image Visual (Image) (Singlet, Polo, Short-sleeve, Long-sleeve shirts etc.).	Any changes have been approved by DBSA.
Section 4.8 – Website Information		
	Website spiel, a Photo and club website link.	If there have been changes, submit changes to admin@dragonboatsa.com .
Section 4.9 – Membership		
	All members of the Club are registered and paid the appropriate fee.	Ongoing checks.

Section 4.10 – Insurance		
	List of Club owned Equipment which the club wishes to insure under the National policy.	Up to date spreadsheet of insured items to be provided to the DBSA Treasurer when requested.
Section 4.12 – Coach and Sweep for the Club		
	Coach & Sweep.	Ensure that the club has both an accredited Coach and Sweep Notify Sweeps Committee.
Section 6.2.3 – Capsize & Safety drill and swim test		
	The annual capsize, safety drill & swim test has been done.	Date documentation completed.