

Transitioning Nippers to Youth Programs

Helping U13 and U14 members stay excited about what comes next

Why This Matters

The move out of Nippers is a major transition point. If young members cannot see what comes next, some will drift away just as they reach an age where confidence, belonging and purpose matter most.

A strong transition keeps young people connected to Surf Life Saving, helps them see a future for themselves and builds the next generation of active members, leaders and patrol volunteers.

What Young People Need At This Stage

Older Nippers usually want more than games and routines. They are starting to look for challenge, identity, independence, friendships and a sense that they are growing into something bigger.

That is why transition should be talked about early and positively. Youth pathways should feel exciting, not confusing or intimidating.

What To Start Talking About

For U13 and U14 groups, help members understand that the next steps may include:

- **Youth programs and development opportunities.**
- **Surf sports pathways.**
- **Further skills and awards.**
- **Leadership opportunities.**
- **Volunteer roles and patrol pathways.**
- **Social connection and belonging within the club.**

Connect The Dots

Young members are more likely to stay engaged when they can see how what they are doing now links to what comes next.

Make those connections visible. Explain how surf awareness becomes confidence. Explain how teamwork becomes leadership. Explain how participation can lead toward patrol, competition, mentoring and future club roles.

Keep It Positive

Avoid presenting the end of Nippers as the loss of something fun. Frame it as the start of something bigger.

Language matters. Instead of saying they are 'finishing Nippers', talk about them 'moving into the next stage' or 'getting ready for what is next in Surf Life Saving'.

Ways to Build Excitement

Simple strategies can make the transition feel real and achievable:

- **Invite youth members to speak to the group.**
- **Show older members in action around the club.**
- **Highlight youth events, camps or leadership opportunities.**
- **Talk about the skills they are building now.**
- **Celebrate milestones and readiness.**
- **Make the next step feel familiar rather than scary.**

What Age Managers Can Do

Age Managers do not need to deliver the whole youth pathway themselves. Your role is to encourage curiosity, answer simple questions and point members toward the people and opportunities that can help them continue.

You can also work with your JAC, youth leaders and club development people to make sure transition messages are consistent.

Involve Families Too

Parents often influence whether a young person stays connected. Help families understand that there are meaningful opportunities beyond Nippers and that the next stage is still supportive, social and development-focused.

Families are more likely to encourage the transition when they understand the pathway and can see its value.

Look For The Members Who May Drift

Some children are highly competitive and will naturally find a pathway. Others may not see where they fit.

Watch for members who enjoy the club but are quieter, less sporty, less confident or uncertain about what comes next. These are often the young people who most need a personal nudge and a sense of belonging.

Messages Worth Reinforcing

Keep these ideas visible in your conversations:

- There is a place for different strengths in Surf Life Saving.
- You do not have to be the fastest to belong.
- The club still needs you as you get older.
- There are many ways to stay involved.
- What comes next can be fun, social and meaningful.

Final Thought

A successful transition is not just about getting young people across a line. It is about helping them believe they still have a place, a future and a reason to stay connected to Surf Life Saving.