

An Assessment of Paddle Education in NSW
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Relevance of Survey Results: The survey had an excellent uptake by the coaches (47.8 %) suggesting that coaches want to be heard, but the sample is slightly skewed towards those with Foundation/L1 awards and coaches over the age of 50. The uptake by PAQS educators was around a third of the total number of registered members but the sample is representative of qualification although slightly skewed to those over the age of 50. Paddle educators under the age of 30 are poorly represented in the survey. The survey captured the gender distribution quite well with a slight female bias in the coaching cohort and a slight male bias in the PAQS educator cohort.

Major Outcomes:

1. Those surveyed are committed to paddle education with 90 % planning on renewing when their PA registration expires. However, several barriers to renewing qualifications were identified (1) Insufficient assessors making sign off difficult when travel is restricted due to covid; (2) Renewal process on the PA website is too laborious with low value of effort for gain; (3) PaddleLog is a major issue with PNSW educators; (4) Uncertainty in the paddle industry following lockdowns is one of the main barriers to PAQS educators being uncertain about renewing their registration; (5) Timely reminders for renewal to allow for delays in getting first aid and Working with Children clearances updated; (6) Lack of confidence in abilities leading to failure to re-register.
2. The high engagement by coaches suggests that they want to be heard. There appears to be a general disillusionment with PA through the way that the new coaching structure has been designed and implemented. For example, L1 coaches underwent more rigorous training than the new replacement course (Foundation Coach) but L1s have been relegated to a Foundation Coach award. Furthermore, there are currently no courses available through PA to upgrade L1/Foundation coaches to L2 nor can L2s upgrade to L3. There has been little, if any, communication by PA regarding this.
3. Demographics are skewed in favour of male educators. Having paddle educators of different genders working together greatly increases the effectiveness of the education program.
4. Demographics are heavily skewed in favour of 40+ years in age with around 75 % of the educator cohort over 40 years of age. As with gender, having paddle educators of different ages working together greatly increases the effectiveness of the education program and also provides a natural succession path.
5. PAQS and Coaches are interested in more learning resources, primarily delivered through real-time methods like face-to-face or webinars. There is a great deal of interest in PNSW co-ordinated education networks.

INTRODUCTION.

The National Training Provider structure for Paddle Sports has recently been changed with Paddle Australia (PA) now providing all courses through its Education webpage (<https://paddle.org.au/education/>). Paddle Education is divided into two streams that operate independently under the current model; (1) PA Qualification Scheme (PAQS) and (2) Coaching. Under PAQS, qualified PA Leaders include Supervisors, Guides and Instructors who have the ability to deliver Basic Skills to Leadership programs, usually within a commercial framework. PA also provides a pathway for experienced Instructors to become Assessors. Under Coaching, PA offers online courses for Introductory Coaches all disciplines (who coach under the supervision of a higher-level coach) and Foundation Coaches in Flatwater (with a practical log requirement) and Slalom (with face-to-face practical and logbook assessment). Current Level 1 coaches, qualified under the old face-to-face system have been reregistered as Foundation Coaches. PA is currently preparing higher coaching qualifications under the new scheme although previously qualified Level 2 coaches retain their current qualification. Coaches usually operate in a club or Institute/Academy of Sport environment.

The new training structure for Paddle Education has been operational for a few years and as NSW heads out of covid lockdown, PaddleNSW (PNSW) felt that it was timely to reach out to all paddle educators¹ in an effort to quantify the current paddle education climate and identify gaps in paddle education and distribution through the state. A major concern is the high attrition of paddle educators state-wide.

The goal of this study is to determine what resources PNSW can offer to improve Paddle Education in the state and feed back to PA any issues with the Education Program.

METHODS.

This project was run under the Macquarie University PACE program. Karly Ogenovski was assigned to PNSW to set up a survey, deliver it via email, analyse and interpret the data, and present outcomes in a report. Lynn Parker (PNSW Co-ordinator for PAQS) and Margi Böhm (PNSW Coaching Co-ordinator) supervised the project and prepared the final report.

A list of current PAQS and Coach paddle educators in NSW and the ACT was obtained from the PA Education database in August 2021.

Participants: The biggest problem with these kinds of projects is to get people to participate. A variety of different platforms for the delivery of the survey were considered. In the end, it was decided to use email and an electronic Survey Platform in order to maintain control over the anonymity of participants. This excluded the use of social media like Facebook etc.

The PA Education list was checked for duplicates, resulting in 317 unique paddle educators state-wide. An email explaining the program (Appendix 1) together with a link to the survey (Appendix 2) was sent everyone on the list. Only 23 emails bounced, 19 of which were PAQS educators and 4 coaches. Thus, of 227 emails sent to people with a PAQS qualification, 69 participated in the survey (30.4 %); of 67 emails sent to PA registered coaches in NSW, 32 participate in the survey (47.8 %). The survey had a total participation of

¹ Includes all individuals with PAQS and/or Coach qualifications registered with PA.

34.4 % with a conservative margin of error of 9.9 % ($CME = 1/\sqrt{N}$, where N is the number of participants).

Survey Development: The initial set of questions covered group demographics and qualifications, decisions and barriers to renewing and/or furthering current qualifications; experiences working within the PA Education website; support for paddle educators in NSW; delivery of support in the future; development of support network amongst paddle educators in NSW; and well-being of paddle educators in NSW. This survey was sent to 3-4 PAQS and 3-4 coaches who were asked to do the survey as well as provide suggestions for improvement. Care was taken to include participants across a variety of qualifications. Most of these suggestions were applied to the final version which was sent to paddle educators on the PA paddle educators list for NSW. The surveys submitted by the test subjects who chose not to redo the survey were kept in the database because the changes were minor.

Data Analysis: The demographic of paddle educators in NSW was determined from the PA Education dataset. These data were also used to determine the representativeness of the sample. The data for PAQS and Coach qualifications are reported separately in tune with their independence in the PA system, although the final synopsis includes a discussion of the similarities in needs of both groups. The data are represented as a percentage with the number of participants in brackets where appropriate, e.g., 70% (130) means 70% of respondents or 130 unique participants. In some cases, the total number of respondents is higher than the total number of participants. This is because some paddle educators have more than one relevant PAQs qualification and some coaches are qualified across different disciplines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

Paddle Educator Demographics: Paddle sports have traditionally been dominated by male participation at all levels. This is reflected in the current demographics of paddle educators in NSW with 69.1 % (215) male and 30.9 % (96) female; ratios reflected in PAQS educators (68.9 % male) and Coaches (70.0 % male). The gender distribution in the survey results are 62.5 % (20) male and 37.5 % (12) female for the Coach cohort, compared with 77.9 % (53) male and 22.1 % (15) female for educators with PAQS qualifications. These results suggest that the survey generally captured the gender distribution of paddle educators across the state with a slight bias towards male in the PAQS and female in the Coach cohorts.

These gender ratios extrapolate into the different qualifications with a pronounced male bias for the higher qualifications (Table 1). The survey captured the gender distribution, although there is bias towards male respondents in the Instructor and Level 1 Coach categories.

Gender bias is also evident in the conditions for which paddle educators are qualified (Table 2). PA educators can obtain qualifications that cover water conditions from flatwater to whitewater and slalom to open ocean. Most PA Educators are qualified for flatwater conditions (52 % for PAQS and 54 % for Coaches) and whitewater/slalom (20 % for PAQS and 21 % for Coaches) with 20 % of PAQS also qualified for Coastal and Sea conditions. In the survey, 56.6 % (69) of qualifications were for flatwater, followed by 20.5 % (25) for whitewater/slalom, 15.6 % (19) for ocean/open sea, 2.5 % (3) for estuaries and 4.9 % (6) for conditions not listed in the survey, suggesting that the results capture the conditions over which most educators operate in NSW.

Table 1. Gender distribution for PAQS (N=324) and Coach (N=70) qualifications from the PA Education dataset (Aug21) expressed as a percentage.

Qualification	Male	Female
Supervisor	4	2
Guide	35	14
Instructor	28	16
Introductory Coach	11	4
Foundation Coach	27	10
Level I Coach	19	10
Level II Coach	11	6
Level III coach and above	1	0

Table 2. Comparison of gender and water conditions between all NSW paddle educators in the PA database and those who partook in the survey. Data are expressed as % per cohort.

PA Database	Flatwater	Slalom	Whitewater	Ocean/Open Sea	Estuaries	Outrigger	Other
PAQS Male	29.9		16.7	14.8	1.9		4.0
	22.2		3.1	5.2	0.3		1.9
Coach Male	37.1	4.3	12.9			8.6	7.1
Female	17.1	1.4	2.9			5.7	2.9
Total Male	31.2	0.8	16.0	12.2	1.5	1.5	4.6
Female	21.3	0.3	3.0	4.3	0.3	1.0	2.0

Survey	Flatwater	Slalom	Whitewater	Ocean/Open Sea	Estuaries	Other
PAQS Male	37.5		19.3	14.8	3.4	2.3
Female	13.6		4.5	3.4	0.0	1.1
Coach Male	38.2	5.9	5.9	8.8		5.9
Female	32.4	0.0	0.0	0.0		2.9
Total Male	37.7	1.6	15.6	13.1	2.5	3.3
Female	18.9	0.0	3.3	2.5	0.0	18.9

These results suggest that PNSW needs to engage with female paddlers towards building capability at the higher PAQS and Coach qualifications and across more water conditions. It is interesting that most PAQS educators operate in flatwater conditions using equipment more suited to flowing water. A quick preview of the PA and PNSW websites show little or no resources on flatwater equipment and its use (particularly paddles). There is information on the PA website describing different paddle strokes, but the equipment used is not particularly efficient under flatwater conditions. While we recognise that many PAQS educators use this kind of equipment, it would be useful to include information on other flatwater craft and paddles for those PAQS educators who wish to take advantage of newer boat and paddle

designs. It is also timely for PA to update PAQS education material on the different kinds of boats and paddles and how to use them properly.

The age distribution for paddle educators in NSW is strongly skewed to 40+ years with 72.5 % of PAQS and 72.9 % of coaches older than 40 years. Few young paddlers are involved in paddle education (Figure 1). This is not an unexpected result given the commercial nature of PAQS, the large group of volunteers involved in paddle education (viz., retirees), and modern training methods allowing athletes older than 30 to still perform at elite level (which affects the age at which these individuals have time to coach). The age distribution of participants in the survey is skewed towards the older paddle educators, especially among the Coach cohort (Table 3).

These results suggest that PNSW needs to develop a succession strategy to ensure that the age structure of paddle educators in the state does not keep shifting towards older categories as the current educators age. This means targeting current 30+ paddlers and exciting them towards sharing their experiences with others through PAQS and Coaching activities. One way to do this is to encourage entry level qualifications (Supervisor and Introductory Coach) and then provide incentive to upgrade to Guide/Instructor and Foundation Coach qualifications. Incentives can include cost reductions, membership benefits etc.

There appears to be an apathy among younger paddle educators to be involved in the survey. This may be due to the use of email as the delivery mechanism, but it could also be an indication of disillusionment or lack of interest in being part of the paddle education community. The attitudes of our younger paddle educators need to be further investigated.

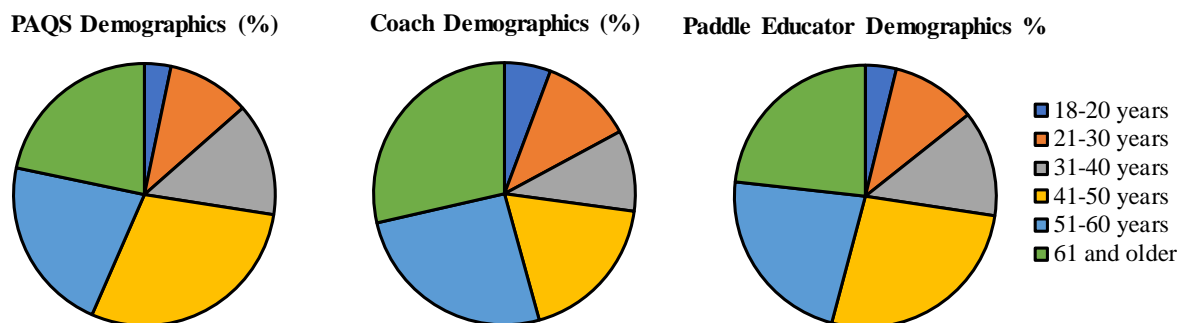


Figure 1. Pie charts, using data from the PA Education database, showing the age demographic for paddle educators in NSW.

Table 3. Comparison of age demographic between all NSW paddle educators in the PA database and those who partook in the survey.

	PAQS PA (%)	PAQS Survey (%)	Coach PA (%)	Coach Survey (%)
18-20 years	3.3	4.0	5.7	3.0
21-30 years	10.2	4.0	11.4	0.0
31-40 years	13.9	13.0	10.0	9.0
41-50 years	29.1	23.0	18.6	16.0
51-60 years	21.7	31.0	25.7	31.0
61 and older	21.7	25.0	28.6	41.0

It is important to have paddle educators operating across as much of NSW as possible. There are 45 clubs registered on the PNSW website (<https://nsw.paddle.org.au/clubs>) covering a very small area of the state (Figure 2). PNSW club membership among coaches is high with 87 % (28) of survey respondents identifying a club compared with only 42 % (29) for PAQS participants. This difference is not surprising because being a member of a paddle club is not a pre-requisite for any PA education qualification so there is no incentive for PAQS educators to be part of a PNSW club. Coaching, on the other hand, invariably occurs within a club environment.

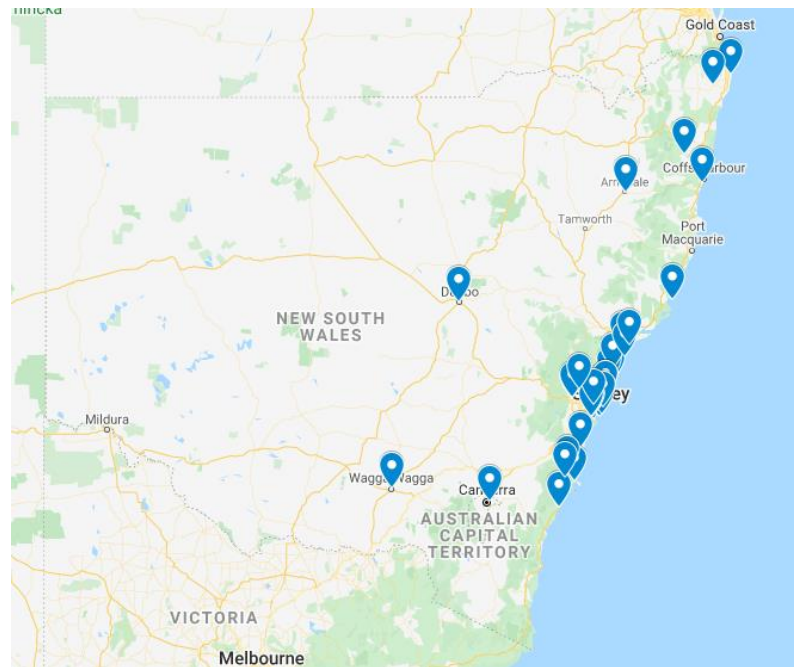
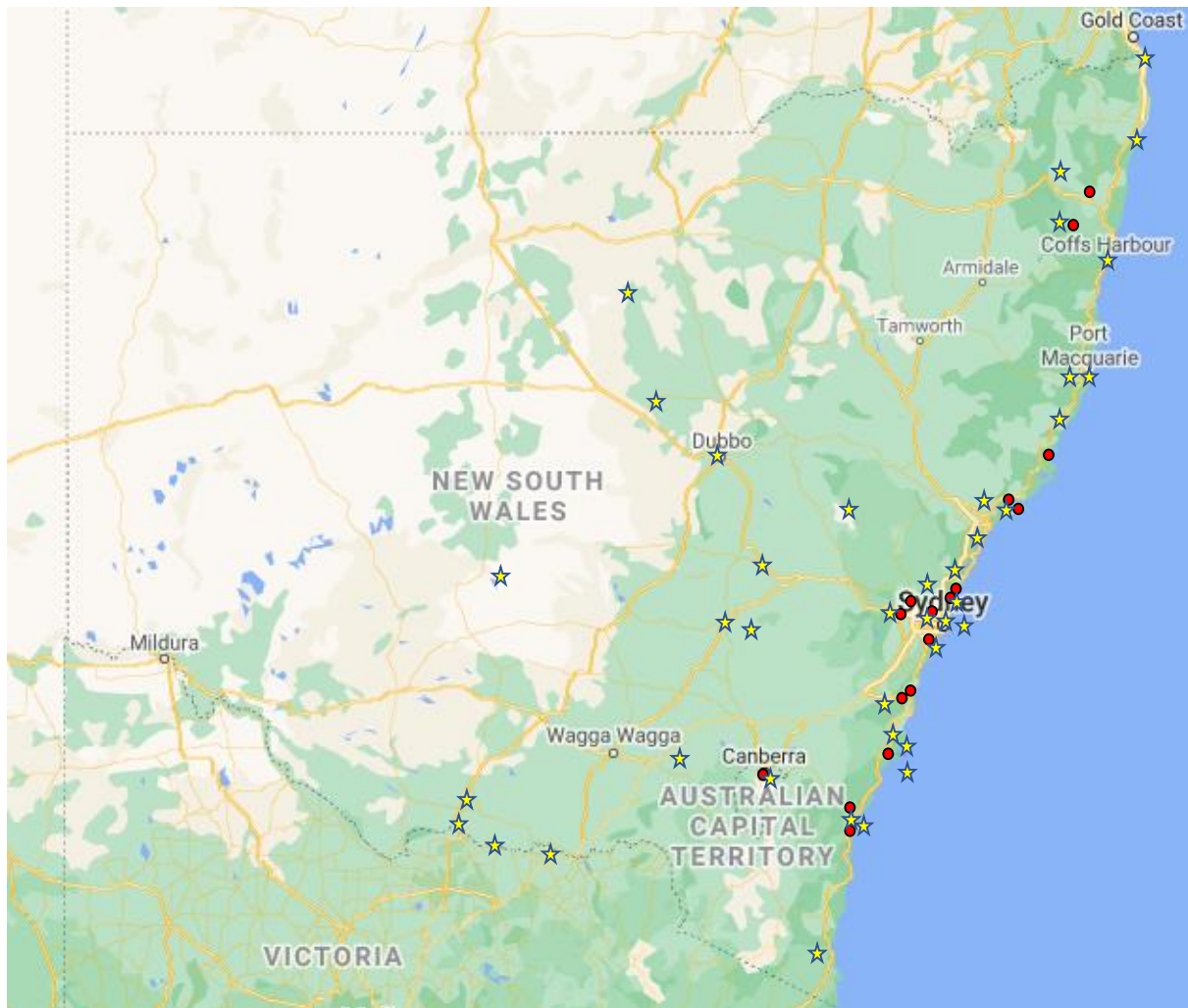


Figure 2. Regional distribution of paddle clubs registered on the PNSW website. Map from <https://www.google.com.au/maps/d/viewer?mid=1QPK-CLpIqxG3qejFgXEK6ThG1s5TNU91&ll=-32.39433512981681%2C147.88703889386682&z=6>

Participants in the survey were also asked to identify the waterway/s on which they usually operate to obtain a better idea of the regional distribution of paddle educators across the state. PAQS educators are reasonably well distributed throughout the state with several participants identifying large areas like “northern rivers”, “Murray River”, or “any whitewater in the state”. In contrast, coaching activities are concentrated in the Sydney Basin, the ACT and some coastal centres, with whitewater/slalom coaching at Penrith, Grafton and on the Nymboida River. No coaches from inland clubs, except for Burley Griffin Canoe Club in Canberra, participated in the survey (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Locations of PAQS and Coaching activities in NSW from information gleaned



during the survey. PAQS activities are shown by yellow stars; coaching activities by red dots. Map from <https://www.google.com/maps/>.

PAQS activities are quite well distributed throughout the state, but Coaching activities are regionally limited. It is possible that the distribution of paddle education activities is affected by survey non-participation bias. Other sources of information about where paddle educator operate need to be investigated (e.g., the PA Education database).

Information about club membership is not currently available from the PA Education website. Only 42 % of PAQS educators identified a club compared with 87.5 % of Coaches. Clubs with both PAQS and Coach educators include Burley Griffin Canoe Club in the ACT, Dolls Point Paddlers, Kayak Share Club, Lane Cove River Kayakers, River Canoe Club, Sutherland Shire Canoe Club and Sydney Northern Beaches Kayak Club (Table 4).

Table 4. Number of paddle educators surveyed who identified membership to a particular club.

Clubs	PAQS	Coaches
Avoca Kayak Club		1
Brisbane Water Paddlers	1	
Burley Griffen Canoe Club	1	9
Dolls Point Paddlers	1	2
Illawara Canoe Club		1
Kayak Share Club	1	1
Lane Cove River Kayakers	1	1
Makai Paddlers		1
Manly Warringah Kayak Club		2
Newy Paddlers		1
NSW Sea Kayak Club	6	
Nymboida Camping and Canoeing	1	
Pacifica Canoe Club	1	
River Canoe Club	11	1
Shoalhaven Canoe Club	1	
Sutherland Shire Canoe Club	2	2
Sydney Nothern Beaches Kayak Club	1	3
Western Paddlers NSW	1	
Windsor Paddle Sports Club		1

It is useful to understand the nature of the clientele participating in paddle education programs in NSW. Most paddle educators work in a commercial and tourism environment (24.0 %) and with paddle clubs (24.0 %), with schools and youth groups (21.7 %) and with their peers (21.3 %). Only 5.9 % are involved in formal education of paddle educators.

When the group is analysed by specific qualification, Guides and Instructors mainly work with schools, in the tourism/government sector in a commercial capacity, and with their peers. In contrast, most Coaches operate within a club environment and in a volunteer capacity (Table 5).

These results suggest that resource distribution through clubs may be appropriate for Coaches. This avenue is useful as it allows local emphasis. Unfortunately, such an approach will not reach most PAQS qualified educators and resource availability via the PA and PNSW websites may be more appropriate. The downside of a centralised approach is that the resources tend towards generalisation. Many of the PAQS awards are very specialised so the usefulness of such resources will need to be carefully considered.

Table 5. Clientele utilising paddle educator services in NSW expressed as a % for each cohort.

	Schools	Paddle Clubs	Commercial	Government	Tourism	Education	Peers	Youth Groups
Supervisor	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
Guide	10.3	2.9	7.4	1.7	5.7	0.0	6.3	1.7
Instructor	12.6	9.1	8.6	2.3	7.4	5.7	15.4	1.7
Introductory Coach	0.0	4.3	2.2	0.0	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Foundation Coach	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
LI Coach	2.2	21.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	4.3	0.0
LII Coach	2.2	32.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	8.7	0.0
LII Coach	0.0	8.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0
LIII + Coach	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Issues around Renewing Qualifications: The survey data show that 90.1 % of paddle educators are keen to renew their qualifications when their current registration with PA expires with only 3 % not interested in renewing. The statistics are similar for educators with PAQS (89.9 % or 62) and Coaching (90.6 % or 29) qualifications. *These results suggest that those surveyed are committed to paddle education.*

More PAQS educators are unsure about renewing (7.2 %) compared with Coaches (6.3 %). Of the PAQS educators, one is a Supervisor, three are Guides, one is an Instructor. These five educators listed retirement, moving interstate, and covid uncertainty about their job status and the industry as being responsible for their hesitancy regarding renewal of their qualifications. This is understandable given that it costs \$\$ to re-register with PA. The coaches who are not sure about renewing their qualifications are both L1 coaches who expressed a lack of confidence in their abilities to coach as the main reason for their hesitancy. This is a major concern and reflects the inability of coaches to get good support during the last 18 months of intermittent lockdowns and covid uncertainty.

The PAQS educators (3 % or 2 people) who are not prepared to renew their registration are both Assessors which is a major source of concern given the paucity of Assessors in NSW. They both cite uncertainty in the future of the industry due to external factors such as covid and bushfires and that the renewing process is too laborious, especially since they are volunteers. There appears to be a fair bit of angst among paddle educators related to the PA requirement of having a smartphone to use the PaddleLog app. Only one coach is not interested in renewing his/her qualifications because the process is too difficult considering that s/he is a volunteer.

The survey results are concerning. Firstly, uncertainty in the paddle industry following covid/bushfires has highlighted a perceived inability by peak bodies like PA and PNSW to provide reassurance, support and flexibility to their volunteers. A key role for PA and PNSW is to reassure educators that challenges like covid/bushfires should not impact the future of the industry. This reassurance needs to be more than nice words. It needs to be accompanied with a clear plan showing how the industry can regroup and emerge stronger from events similar to those that have plagued us for the last 18 months.

Secondly, while financial assistance is offered through PA, it is not targeted at currently qualified paddle educators. Also, asking for financial support is very difficult for volunteers as it goes against the very essence of being a volunteer. There is also a reluctance to ask for help by those who have never had to ask for support from strangers before. These attitudes by the mainstay of community sport volunteerism are widespread across the sector and have caught most peak bodies by surprise – mainly because peak bodies in sport take their volunteers for granted and have not engaged closely with them in the past to know what makes a volunteer do what s/he does.

Thirdly, now is a very good time for PNSW to develop (if not already done so) a useful policy towards supporting volunteers and to advertise this widely, not just within the community. PNSW has already put into place fee waivers for Introduction to Coaching online courses (to 31 Dec 2021). New initiatives to help alleviate the angst of the last 18 months is to run webinars to help get paddle educators re-engaged with their craft following the long periods of inactivity due to covid/fire/flooding restrictions.

Also, PNSW should be working hard to convince PA to (1) extend the current registration period to counter the effects from time lost during the last 18 months; (2) allow for flexibility in logged hours; (3) offer free re-registration. PNSW should let its membership know about these activities so that the paddling community is aware of what the organisation is doing to support its volunteers.

Finally, the lack of confidence in ability to continue coaching together with the complaint that the renewal process is too difficult for volunteers is worrying as it suggests that these coaches have had little or no support within their local environment or club. Coach burnout is a major concern and it is apparent from some of the open questions in the survey that external support for coaches is desperately needed.

Barriers to Renewing Qualifications: Although the majority of paddle educators plan on re-registering when their current registration expires, 37.6 % (38) said that there were significant barriers to doing so. Of the 40.6 % PAQS educators experiencing difficulties with renewing their qualifications, 26 % felt that the process was too difficult, especially the sign-off process; 20 % had major issues with the PA logbook app and 20 % were unable to log hours due to bushfires and covid lockdowns. Similar reasons were given by the 31.3 % of coaches who experienced barriers to renewing their qualifications with half stating that the process was too difficult, especially getting their hours vetted; 19 % requested more clear communication and reminders from PA and 13 % had issues with the PA PaddleLog app.

Both PAQS educators and Coaches complained about the complexity of the re-registration process. For PAQS educators, finding an Assessor to vet their logged hours is not trivial as many work for themselves in quite isolated areas. This is technically less of a problem for coaches except that the impact on travel as a result of bushfires, flooding and covid restrictions over the last 18 months has severely limited access to L2 coaches who usually do the assessments at races. Communication by PA regarding flexibility with the registration period and the number of hours needed for re-registration would have helped alleviate the concerns of both groups.

Issues with the PA PaddleLog app appear to be a major source of concern for paddle educators. While having an electronic record of logged hours is desirable from the PA

perspective, it also needs to be time efficient for the paddle educators. The current perception is that the app is not useful except to log hours for re-registration and so this means extra work and hours for paddle educators beyond maintaining their diaries/logbooks. PA is working on the app as this report is being written and PNSW should stay abreast of these changes to keep the paddle education community up to date with major changes/improvements in this regard.

Finally, timely reminders for re-registration are critical because of the delays in organising First Aid (this is usually done through the club) and getting Working with Children clearance from NSW Policing. It can take up to 3 months to get WwC clearance, especially in the current climate. PA should consider sending out reminders at least 3-months before re-registration is due.

Some thought should be given to border communities and the ability to utilise assessors from another State.

Continuing Learning within PAQS and Coaching: Most PAQS educators in NSW are either Guides (49.1 %) or Instructors (44.6 %) whereas most educators with a Coaching qualification are L1/Foundation coaches (66.2 %) compared with 18 % who have a higher coaching qualification. These data suggest that PAQS educators are well distributed in terms of mid to high level qualification, but Coaches are skewed towards the lowest qualification that allows unsupervised activity. This means that paddlers who aspire to high performance or to making a national team will struggle to get appropriate coaching.

Only 25 % (25) of paddle educators surveyed said that they were keen to further their qualifications, with 31 % (31) undecided. Among PAQS educators, 23.2 % (16) were keen to improve their knowledge (29 % undecided) compared with 28.1 % (9) of coaches (34.4 % undecided). The main reasons given for the lack of interest in furthering knowledge is that paddle educators in NSW are satisfied with their current qualifications and that their current qualification meets their needs. PAQS educators also stated that the process to get a higher qualification was too tedious. Coaches queried the benefit of a higher qualification relative to the amount of work needed to get the additional knowledge and the lack of PA programs above Foundation Coach level (lower than the old L1).

These data show a strong uncertainty in the perceived value of getting a higher paddle education qualification. This is a major concern, especially in coaching where only 18 % of coaches are at a L2 or higher. At present, there is no course available through PA to upgrade L1/Foundation coaches to L2 nor can L2s upgrade to L3. If PNSW clubs are to become an artery in the roadmap for high performance athletes, the imbalance in higher level coaches needs to be resolved quickly. Based on the length of time it is taking PA to develop the Talent Coach (substitute for L2 Coaches) programs for the Olympic disciplines of sprint and slalom, it is going to be more than a year before club level coaches will have access to a higher qualification. In the meantime, PNSW should consider providing appropriate resources to help bridge the knowledge gap between Foundation/L1 and L2+ coaching. This will not only benefit PNSW athletes but will also place our coaches in a good position for upgrading when these courses become available from PA.

Resources and Support for Paddle Educators in NSW: Survey participants were asked to list the most important resources that would help make their jobs easier (Table 6). Overall, paddle educators are most interested in learning more about the latest updates on paddling technique, training strategies and equipment together with more information on how to teach paddlers more efficiently. Of least interest was information on handling stress in paddle education situations and general skills. PAQS educators also requested more information on paddling technique with less interest in how to write effective training programs. Coaches were less interested in the latest updates on equipment and managing risk and more interested in the latest updates in how to write effective training programs.

These results are fascinating. They suggest a general paucity of information in both PAQS and Coaching education programs on paddling technique, how to teach effectively and how to design effective training strategies. It appears that risk assessment and stress management is adequately covered. PAQS educators want more information on updates on equipment. Coaches, on the other hand, seem comfortable with their knowledge about paddling equipment but want more information on how to write effective training programs.

These results demonstrate that the Foundation Coaching course is not providing most club coaches with key information to support club athletes, especially those who wish to reach performance levels synonymous with NSWIS or AIS scholarship. PA mainly concerns itself with high performance paddlers in the Olympic disciplines of sprint and slalom, so it falls to PNSW to provide education support in these areas.

Table 6. Preference of information topics expressed as a percent of participant feedback. The total number of responses across all options is 180 for PAQS and 113 for Coaches.

Resource	All Educators	PAQS	Coaches
More information on general skills	6.4	8.3	4.4
More information on paddling technique	8.9	11.7	8.0
Latest updates on paddling technique	15.7	13.9	15.9
More information on how to teach paddlers efficiently	12.9	12.8	14.2
More information on how to prepare risk assessments	7.9	7.8	8.8
More information on how to write effective training programs	8.2	5.6	11.5
Latest updates on training strategies	14.3	11.7	15.9
Latest updates on equipment	11.8	12.2	9.7
Information on managing stress in paddle education situations	5.7	7.2	3.5
Latest updates on managing risk	8.2	8.9	2.7

Participants were asked about their preferred format for receiving additional information (Table 7). The majority of paddle educators prefer face-to-face instruction (38.3 %) although this is driven primarily by the PAQS educators. Coaches are comfortable with online webinars (30.2 %) followed closely by face-to-face instruction (27.0 %) whereas PAQS educators prefer face-to-face (41.4 %) followed by printed information online (29.7 %). Neither group was interested in access to health professionals but interestingly, 15.9 % of coaches were interested in access to research papers.

Face-to-face delivery was the first choice for PAQs educators and the second choice for Coaches suggesting that current online support is not hitting the mark. Given that webinars, the most popular choice for coaches, is a real time, face-to-face communication methodology,

it appears that both groups want real-time feedback and the sense that the information given up to date.

Table 7. Preference of information delivery options expressed as a percent of participant feedback. The total number of responses across all options is 111 for PAQS and 63 for Coaches.

Preferred Format for Information Delivery	All Educators	PAQS	Coaches
Online webinars	24.6	21.6	30.2
Face to face practical experience	38.3	41.4	27.0
Printed info provided online	25.1	29.7	23.8
Access to research papers	7.8	5.4	15.9
Access to health professionals	4.2	1.8	3.2

These results suggest a twin pronged strategy for maximum benefit to the paddling education community. Face-to-face learning opportunities will be popular with both PAQS and Coaches and it may be useful to organise an event that attracts both groups. A bonus of face-to-face is that assessors can be present to deal with some of the re-registration issues. The face-to-face events should be supported by online printed material and videos. The face-to-face weekends could be run at a central location such as the ACT or W Sydney Basin, especially if regional educators are struggling to travel to Sydney. Moreover, due to many educators being volunteers, the cost of travel should be subsidised by PNSW/PA.

Webinars, mainly aimed at the coaches can cover more specialised topics but should be recorded and made available on the website. The model used by the ICF is a good one where participants were listed but not visible onscreen and were able to ask questions *in situ* that other participants could highlight as interesting. An invigilator then compiled a list of the most common questions which s/he asked on behalf of the participants. This was very efficient and most participants got something out of the experience.

The interest by coaches in research papers suggests that they are seeking more information about their craft in the absence of opportunities to further their qualifications. This is a gap that PNSW can try and fill by utilising staff at the NSWIS Canoe/Kayak program and other academic members in the coaching cohort.

The survey results imply that PNSW develop an Education webpage that is easy to navigate and that is regularly updated with the latest information on the topics of most interest to paddle educators in the state. It would be good if the page also allowed educators to communicate with each other, share ideas and ask questions. There is an Education Facebook page that was set up for PAQS. PNSW should investigate extending this to cover all paddle education issues. Clear links to the Facebook page should be available from the PNSW website.

Finally paddle educators were asked which topics they would like to see discussed via a regular seminar series (Table 8). PAQS educators are most interested in learning more about paddling technique (40.7 %) followed by risk assessment and management (14.8 %). Coaches, on the other hand, desire more knowledge on training strategies and programs (30.9 %) as well as updates to paddling technique (23.6 %) and junior development (18.2 %). Coaches have little interest in learning more about risk assessment and management (1.8 %).

Table 8. Preference of topics to be discussed as part of a regular seminar series expressed as a percent of participant feedback. The total number of responses across all options is 81 for PAQS and 55 for Coaches.

Suggestions for Weekly Online Seminars	All Educators	PAQS	Coaches
Training Strategies/Programs	22.6	8.6	30.9
Junior Development/Encouraging involvement	7.0	6.2	18.2
Risk Assessment/Management	13.0	14.8	1.8
Techniques	24.3	40.7	23.6
Equipment	7.0	7.4	5.5
Navigation of Water Bodies and Weather Conditions	7.0	7.4	3.6
Trip and Event Planning	4.3	3.7	1.8
Nutrition and Fitness	5.2	2.5	7.3
Other	9.6	8.6	7.3

Earlier questions suggested similar interests between PAQS and Coach educators, captured here in the combined request for more information on paddling technique. However, that is where the similarity ends with coaches more interested in making people go fast whereas PAQS educators are more interested in safe practise.

Paddle Educator Networks: Survey participants were asked about how they interacted with other paddle educators and what sort of networks they are part of or would like to be part of. PAQS educators (35.9 %) and Coaches (51.6 %) interact most frequently through informal information sessions and secondly through the process of updating and renewing their qualifications (29.5 % of PAQS educators and 29.0 % of Coaches). Interestingly, a high percentage of PAQS educators (21.8 %) do not mix with other paddle educators. This is in stark contrast with Coach behaviour where only 6.5 % of coaches do not mix with other coaches. Only 12-13% of PAQS and Coach educators are involved in running qualification programs (Table 9).

Table 9. Percent engagement with different networking activities. The total number of PAQS respondents was 78 versus 31 for coaches.

Format of Interactions with other Paddle Educators	All Educators	PAQS	Coaches
Updating/Renewing Qualifications	29.4	29.5	29.0
Running Qualification Programs	14.7	12.8	12.9
Informal Information Sessions	38.5	35.9	51.6
Don't mix with other Educators	17.4	21.8	6.5

Most PAQS educators (25.6 %) and Coaches (26.3 %) rely on fellow paddle educators for support and continuing education (Table 10). Experts in the field and friends/family are also important (14.0 % and 15.9 % respectively for PAQS; 18.8 % and 15.0 % for Coaches). More paddle educators refer to PNSW (11.6 % PAQS and 10.0 % Coaches) for support and continuing education than PA (10.4 % PAQS and 7.5 % Coaches). Online education is more popular among coaches (11.3 %) than PAQS educators (7.9 %) and more PAQS educators do not seek support (7.3 %) compared with Coaches (1.3 %).

Table 10. Percent engagement with different groups for support and continuing education. The total number of PAQS respondents is 164 versus 80 for coaches.

Networks for Support/Continuing Education	All Educators	PAQS	Coaches
Fellow Paddle Educators	25.1	25.6	26.3
Friends/Family	14.3	15.9	15.0
Online Support Group	1.3	1.8	1.3
Paddle Australia	10.0	10.4	7.5
Paddle NSW	11.3	11.6	10.0
Experts in the Field	15.6	14.0	18.8
Scientific Journals	3.0	1.8	6.3
Online Education	10.0	7.9	11.3
Nobody	6.1	7.3	1.3
Other	3.5	3.7	2.5

There is strong support for participation in paddle education networks (82.6 % of PAQS educators and 84.4 % of Coaches). Interestingly, although only 50.8 % of PAQS educators preferred PNSW to organise network sharing, 69.9 % of PAQS educators are interested in sharing their expertise with a PNSW education group. In contrast, Coaches are evenly split between preferring a PNSW and club network (35.9 %) whereas 65.6 % of Coaches are interested in sharing their expertise with a PNSW education group.

These results provide PNSW with a clear mandate to take the lead on creating paddle education networks. Following data from previous questions, these networks can also be used to help paddle educators overcome some of the barriers to renewing and furthering their qualifications.

Insights gleaned from the answers to some of the Open Questions: Survey participants were given the opportunity to write answers in their own words for some questions yielding some interesting insights into the perception of paddle educators in NSW:

1. PA focuses all their funding and energy to a select number of individual paddlers in only two of the many paddle sports supported by the organisation. There is clear resentment of this and it would be wise for PA to undertake activities to show that it does not promote inequality. This can be done in several ways:
 - Have the high-performance athletes do a couple of online webinars
 - PA to distribute funding more evenly
 - Having a sole focus on the high performers could become a deterrent for new members to join if they were just after paddling for leisure
 - Likewise with juniors who feel overwhelmed by the pressure to perform or who are late bloomers and feel they are too weak or small to be competitive
2. There is a lack of communication by PA. With addressing the discrepancy in funding and attention this could help:
 - Funding to be sourced from other avenues as to distribute in other avenues other than high performers
 - Receiving funding for non-Olympic disciplines, access to money through covid funding

3. Information regarding qualifications and what qualifications to advance to is difficult to access and understand:

- Although this information is already available on the PA website, paddle educators are clearly not engaging with the information.
- To minimise this, one of the seminars could address information regarding qualifications and furthering them
- Whilst also providing a pdf of this information/where to access this information, so that they can refer to it when necessary

4. When it came to answering health questions, only 14 out of 95 participants came forth to answer

- In sporting areas there can be a stigma associated to mental health and health concerns
- Awareness around this should be more apparent on the PA or PNSW websites
- Having access to hotlines and forums available would be beneficial and help determent any stigma

5. Only 6 of 95 participants (6 %) are between the ages of 18-30, compared to 22% (21) who are 51-60 years old

- The low number of young participants are of concern as they the future educators and coaches
- With supporting junior development programs with equipment, paying coaches so that programs are sustainable and providing an exciting race program for juniors. This can aid in building up the demographic

Recommendation for future surveys:

- When sending out surveys in the future having known member close to the community will promote more responses

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The high engagement by coaches suggests that they want to be heard. There appears to be a general disillusionment with PA through the way that the new coaching structure has been designed and implemented. For example, L1 coaches underwent more rigorous training than the new replacement course (Foundation Coach) but L1s have been relegated to a Foundation Coach award. Furthermore, there are no courses available through PA to upgrade L1/Foundation coaches to L2 nor can L2s upgrade to L3. There has been little if any communication by PA regarding this.

Recommendation: It is important that PNSW take the suggestions made in this survey seriously and show commitment to the coaching cohort. It is in our interests to keep our coaches engaged and well informed and if this is not happening from PA at the moment, we should step in and fill the gap. The long-term gain in trust and loyalty will be worth it.

Actions:

- Be pro-active with PA regarding barriers to renewal of Coach qualifications. The barriers identified by the Coach cohort are similar to those for PAQS educators and are dealt with in item 3.

- Be pro-active with Coach Education in the absence of programs offered by PA at the moment – it will be at least a year before Talent Coach (replace current L2) programs will be offered for non-Olympic disciplines. The time is right for PNSW to step in and provide resources that will progress the knowledge of those Foundation/L1 coaches who want to upgrade in the meantime. This will benefit our athletes but also the coaches as they will be well positioned to upgrade when the courses become available.

The survey identified the following:

- Preferred format is webinars closely followed by face-to-face and written material online.
- Information can be disseminated at club level because almost all coaches are active in a club environment.
- Topics of interest include:
 - How to teach effectively;
 - Updates on paddling technique;
 - Updates on training strategies;
 - How to write effective training programs;
 - How to prepare risk assessments.

Personal communication with Lynn Parker by PAQS educators post-survey suggests that had her name been on the survey, more would have done it. The email was seen as coming from an “unknown” source.

Recommendation: It is important that PNSW gains the trust of the PAQS educators. At the moment they connect to a single person (the PNSW PAQS Co-ordinator). When Lynn retires from this position, there will be a big gap in the link between this group of paddle educators and PNSW. PNSW needs to be pro-active in seeking solutions to the issues identified in the survey to gain the trust of the PAQS educators so that they relate to the organisation rather than an individual. This allows for greater flexibility in succession planning.

Actions:

- Be pro-active with PA regarding barriers to renewal of PAQS qualifications. The barriers identified by the PAQS cohort are similar to those for Coaches and are dealt with in item 3.
- Be pro-active with PAQS Education. The survey identified the following:
 - Preferred format is face-to-face.
 - Information needs to be disseminated at PNSW level as PAQS educators are not necessarily involved in club activities. Most work in school and commercial environments. PNSW needs to be mindful that centralised resources tend to be generalised to hit as many of the target cohort as possible, but many of the PAQS qualifications are very specific so the usefulness of these resources needs to be carefully considered. PNSW should look into how to provide resources to the paddle education community in a time effective but useful way
 - Topics of interest include:
 - How to teach effectively;
 - Paddling technique;

- Training strategies;
- Updates on equipment;
- Updates on risk management and assessment;
- General skills appealed to both groups.

The PAQS community is ready for an equipment update. More than half of PAQS educators operate on flatwater and yet all of the PAQS education and paddle stroke information on PA website is based on flowing water techniques and equipment. There is no information about the latest equipment developments for flatwater craft both in terms of design and construction developments in boats and paddles. About 20 years ago, John Jacobi ran a *Big Kayak Test* that tested a range of equipment across a series of indicators (comfort, transportability, cost, performance etc). Perhaps it is time to do something similar involving mainly NSW boat manufacturers and suppliers. Also, perhaps we can consider an advertisement page on the website where suppliers etc can announce their latest equipment – a sort of *Go-To* for information on equipment in the business. Some educators may be looking at revamping their operations and younger ones may be considering joining the industry following the covid outbreak, so the timing is ripe for a project to update our knowledge of what is out there equipment-wise.

Those surveyed are committed to paddle education with 90 % planning on renewing when their PA registration expires. However, several barriers to renewing qualifications were identified and are listed below.

- Insufficient assessors making sign off difficult when travel is restricted due to covid.
 - Actions: related to broadening PNSW network regionally; developing networks to help connect educators; working with PA to allow remote assessing of educators.
 - Broadening PNSW club network regionally and encourage PAQS educators to be active in clubs. Registered clubs are clustered along the eastern seaboard but if we look at the locations of different PAQS activities, there are many paddling opportunities inland. There is an opportunity NOW to expand covid-type-epidemic-safe community sport. Paddling is perfect for this because it is conducted outdoors, equipment can be easily transported, it maintains a natural social distancing on the water (some rafting behaviours may need to be modified), and it is easy to keep social distancing rules while loading and unloading the boats. PNSW should consider a program to get out into the state and promote paddling to inland communities. A good place to start is where there are already PAQS activities but no clubs.
 - Developing Paddle Education Networks. There is a great deal of support for the development of Paddle Educator Network/s run/managed by PNSW with the flexibility for clubs to do their own thing. These networks will help reduce barriers to renewal and furthering qualifications as well as provide mentoring.
 - Working with PA to allow remote assessing of educators and allowing states to share education services across border communities.

- Renewal process on the PA website is too laborious with low value of effort for gain. PaddleLog issues are a major issue with PNSW educators.

Actions:

- Engage with PA to ensure that they *hear* the concerns of our members.
 - PNSW needs to stay abreast of any changes made by PA and guide them where necessary following the outcomes of the survey.
 - It is imperative that PNSW keep the NSW paddle education community up to date with major changes/improvements with the renewal process.
 - build a Renewal Assistance network so that our educators do not feel isolated as they will have someone they can turn to for help. There are many educators who are efficient with the PA website and can share their tips.
 - PNSW to engage with PA regarding re-registration requirements to provide incentives for participating in education activities like webinars, face-to-face education programs, paddle education networks etc.
- Uncertainty in the paddle industry following lockdowns is one of the main barriers to PAQS educators being uncertain about renewing their registration.

Actions:

- PNSW needs to put out reassurances of some sort to inspire PAQS educators to start operating again. This ties in with earlier suggestion around paddling being the ideal epidemic-friendly sport/activity. Can we come up with a clear plan showing how the industry can regroup and emerge stronger from the pandemic?
 - It is really important that any reassurances from PNSW have substance and are not a series of nice words. Australians are over nice words at the moment and cynicism of promises from bureaucracies is running at an all-time high.
 - PNSW needs to formally start negotiating with PA for flexibility in logged hours, free opportunities to upgrades through online courses, reductions in re-registration fees for renewals or free extension of registration by 18 months given the impacts of lockdown on meeting the requirements for renewal, etc.
- Timely reminders for renewal.

Actions:

- PNSW needs to inform PA that there can be significant delays in organising First Aid (this is usually done through the club) and getting Working with Children clearance from NSW Policing. It can take up to 3 months to get WwC clearance, especially in the current climate. PA should consider sending out reminders at least 3-months before re-registration is due.
- Lack of confidence in abilities leading to failure to re-register.

Actions:

- Improve mentorship for Supervisors and Introductory Coaches.

Demographics are skewed in favour of male educators.

Recommendation – the importance of having a good gender distribution in the paddle education cohort is driven by the benefits that different genders bring to the way ideas are generated, decisions are made and executed. Different genders do these differently and the diversity is well known to enhance group effectiveness. Furthermore, paddling is a very high skill activity and having access to different approaches to teaching, which is also generally linked to gender, greatly increases the effectiveness of the paddle education program.

Actions:

- Engage with female paddlers towards building a larger base of female paddle educators. Can we do this across water conditions? “Chicks with Paddles” regular online linkup across the state? What sort of topics can we use to get women in the paddling community engaged (recreational, competitive, non-PNSW members)? If we can get 10-12 monthly talks/discussion forums, we may be able to encourage attendees towards getting some sort of qualification and getting involved in the PNSW Education program.
 - Women friendly paddling equipment;
 - Teaching women paddling skills;
 - Menstruation and training;
 - Osteoporosis and training;
 - Women paddle tripping – exciting trips for women;
 - Talks by successful women paddlers – not only in competition but also in tripping.
- What happened to the Women in Coaching program run a few years ago by Anje Lees? How many of those women ended up getting qualified? Can we do anything to help them finish their qualifications.

Demographics are heavily skewed in favour of 40+ years in age with around 75 % of the educator cohort over 40 years of age. As with gender, having paddle educators of different ages working together greatly increases the effectiveness of the education program and also provides a natural succession path.

Actions:

- target 18-30 age group. Excite them about paddle education activities – perhaps by having them present in seminars and share their experiences. Encourage this group to get Supervisor and Introduction to Coaching qualifications and then provide incentives for them to upgrade to Instructor and the higher coaching quals.
- what sort of incentives can PNSW offer long-term and what are the *precedent* issues associated with introducing long-term incentive-based programs for paddle education? Reduced membership fees; lower competition entry fees; free PNSW brand clothing???

APPENDIX 1.

Email accompanying link to survey sent to all NSW paddle educators on the PA database.

Hi there,

My name is Karly, and I am a third-year student at Macquarie University. I am working on this exciting project with PaddleNSW and would like to invite you to complete the survey we have devised to help improve PaddleNSW's education services.

Here is a short message from CEO, Peter Tate.

Dear paddling industry colleague,

Recently, Paddle Australia changed the National Training Provider structure. Now the primary administration is performed by the State Sporting Organisation, and in the case of NSW and ACT paddling enthusiasts, that is PaddleNSW.

You receive this email enquiry as a current or recent educator - namely supervisor, guide, instructor, coach, or assessor. Now is an ideal time for PaddleNSW to reach out to all educators - firstly to check our collective status, and secondly to help improve our service to you.

As with any survey, a small proportion will trash the email because of irrelevance or lack of time. I hope this isn't you. If you no longer participate in the paddling industry, we wish you wonderful times ahead, however we still need your feedback to improve for the next generation. The survey won't take long.

If you are still educating, then please take this opportunity to provide raw and honest feedback. We won't be offended because we genuinely want to improve.

A later step after this questionnaire will be developing a mentor program. Would you like to be mentored? Would you like to mentor others? We need to develop an accurate and current communication network first.

We look forward to your response, and just as importantly, we look forward to all getting out on the water in large groups as soon as possible.

Stay safe and thank you.

Peter Tate.

Survey Information

The survey takes less than five minutes. Please assist our next phase of the project by promptly completing the survey.

To complete the online survey, please click [here](#)

Please note: if you are having trouble accessing the online survey, please feel free to contact me and I can arrange a PDF version.

Alternatively, the survey can be conducted over the phone - please contact me to arrange a time.

If you have any queries or concerns, feel free to respond to this email.

Thank you for your time,

Karly

APPENDIX 2.

Survey Questions.

PART A - Qualifications

1. What Paddle Australia Qualification (PAQ) or Coaching Qualification/s do you currently have?
 - 1A. For which craft are you qualified?
 - 1B. Why did you decide to get this qualification?
 - 1C. How do you feel about the qualification?
2. Will you renew your qualification/s when the time comes?
 - 2A. Why have you decided not to renew your current qualification/s?
3. Are there any barriers to renewing your qualification/s?
 - 3A. What needs to be put into place to reduce or minimise any barriers to renewing your qualification/s?

PART B – Furthering Qualifications

1. Are you familiar with the qualification options available to you through the Paddle Australia website?
2. Do you have plans to further your qualifications?
 - 2A. Why do you feel this way?
 - 2B. Can you please elaborate on why you feel this way and what needs to be done to encourage you to further your qualification/s?
 - 2C. Which further qualifications are you interested in?
 - 2D. For which craft?
 - 2E. Do the options available on the PA website meet your needs?
 - 2F. Why not? And if appropriate, which supplier will you use to further your qualifications?

PART C – Support to Deliver Paddle Education Programs

1. What sort of support do you need to enhance your delivery of paddle education programs?
2. What is your preferred medium for the delivery of support?
3. If PNSW were to organise a set of weekly online seminars, please list the THREE most useful topics you would like to see discussed by an expert in the field

PART D – Paddle Educator Demographics

1. Gender: How do you identify?
2. Current age
3. Where do you practise most of your paddle education activities? Identify the town/city and water body
4. Are you a member of a kayak/canoe club/s?
 - 4A. Which club/s are you a member of?
5. Assuming no covid restrictions, where do you use your PAQS or Coaching
 - 5A. What is the format of your activities with other Paddle Educators?

PART E – Paddle Education Networks

1. Do you utilise any paddle networks for support or for continuing education?
 - 1A. If you feel comfortable with sharing this information, please explain the format of your support network
2. Would you be interested in forming/joining a network in your area with Paddle Educators of the same qualification or higher?
3. Would you be interested in sharing your expertise as part of a Paddle NSW education group?
 - 3A. Although not mandatory, it will improve our ability to deliver if you provide your contact details (Name, phone, email) and region/s you work in
 - 3B. How would you prefer to share your expertise?

PART F – Well Being of Paddle Educators

1. Prior to covid, did you experience any health concerns associated with your PAQS and/or Coaching activities?
 - 1A. What was the nature of these concerns?
 - 1B. What sort of injury occurred?
 - 1C. How did this injury/s occur?
 - 1D. What sort of support networks were available to you, and did they help you recover?
2. Were you able to continue working normally during the recovery period?
 - 2A. Were you able to resume your PAQS and/or Coaching activities after recovery?