

Australian Water Polo High Performance Strategy 2024+

FINAL DRAFT FOR FEEDBACK

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Where does the HP strategy fit?

Strategy and Planning Framework.... *top down and bottom up*



Setting the scene....

Change is needed within Water Polo Australia's [WPA] high performance program to re-position the sport to deliver more sustainable podium success

- It's getting more competitive and harder to win consistently at Benchmark Events (see Appendices for performance trends)
 - Women's team result in Rio 2016 was its worst Olympic performance; declining performance profile in Tokyo 2020 cycle for both senior women and Youth
 - Men's team have never made it past quarter final stage at a World Championships or Olympics
 - Junior U'20 women and men's team performances also in decline on the world stage
- There is a lack of clarity on the 'performance model'. The requirements to win on the world stage and anchor the associated structures, standards and approaches to these needs are not clearly documented
- Current program strategy and structure not fit for purpose or aligned to leverage the strengths of Australian HP system [incl NIN and AWL clubs]; competition and DTE model does not optimise preparation of national teams for international BMEs
- High turnover of key senior management and HP leadership roles but quality people and technical experts now engaged; pathway significantly under-resourced; unstable financial position
- Future AIS HP investment is under significant threat if change is not adopted and performances don't improve in both men and women

....a new strategy is now required to re-set and refresh the WPA HP program towards 2024 & beyond



Purpose & Principles

WPA's high performance strategy **provides direction to guide future decision-making** and concentrates effort and resources to increase the probability of sustainable success

1	Focussed	Targets resources on <i>the</i> areas that have greatest impact on performance
2	Simplified	Sets unambiguous targets, clear priorities, high-level actions and priorities
3	Explicit	Uses deliberate language customised for WPA's context and needs
4	Aligned	Provides much needed clarity and purpose, clear roles/responsibilities to connect stakeholders and leverage their strengths

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Mission and Critical Success Factors

WPA High Performance Mission

To build and lead the Australian Water Polo high performance system to deliver repeatable podium success at Olympics and World Championships

Critical Success Factors	
1	Performance model clearly articulates the elements and benchmarks/standards to increase the probability of success at BMEs
2	Coherent domestic competition framework with clear purpose and scheduling that best develops players and prepares national teams for international success
3	Evidence and experience informed, national-led program structure and pathway - increases and prioritises team assembly periods and more concentrated quality DTEs with stakeholder role clarity
4	Reprioritise system expertise and resourcing, with primary focus on coaching to optimise individual international-level player development
5	Improve national leadership, visibility and strategy implementation with disciplined urgency ; fit-for-purpose structure, behaviours and ‘in-pool’ style/principles of play for Australian context

Note – it is recognised that there will be specific and different initiatives and actions required under each of these overarching critical success factors for both women and men

Draft Strategy on a page - Australian Water Polo High Performance Strategy 2024+



Vision: World-class high performance water polo system that wins on the world stage, develops great people and inspires our community

Defining Success:
Podiums - Stingers consistently winning medals at BMEs and Sharks regularly in the top 6
Inspiration - Teams and athletes have a positive influence on retaining and growing our water polo community
Reputation - Australian water polo is recognised as world-leading, optimising our talent pool and resources available - makes our community proud



Olympic Performance Targets:
Women - <u>minimum</u> top 4 2020 & consistently medal 2024 & beyond Men - top 6 2020 & 2024* – *medal target more likely with additional investment



Critical Success Factors:			
1	Develop Performance model	Clarity on ‘what it takes to win’; minimum DTE standards to ensure high performance	Devt & implement national player development curriculum
2	Review/change domestic comp structure & schedule	National league competition with clearly defined purpose, format and scheduling to best develop and prepare our athletes for international success	Clearly defined domestic competition structure - utilises the sport’s resources, best structure to develop HP athletes while maintaining competitive water polo comp opportunity for player retention
3	New national program structure	Increased commitment & support for f/t training; Gender specific solutions; increase assembly periods; men Euro pro club pathway; more comp vs top 6 nations	Increase investment in pathway coaching & DTEs – U’20 & U’18 focus; role clarity of stakeholders; improved IPP process
4	Improve HP coaching	Best coaches coaching in AWL; national technical direction & improve visibility in DTEs/age group programs	Targeted coach recruitment & development; flexible & balanced soft/tech skills reqd within nat structure
5	Enhance leadership and HP culture	Improved campaign plans & aligned budgets; governance, HP management & finance stability critical	Agreed values/behaviours statement & staff/athlete KPIs; Change entitlement mentality

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Critical Success Factors | Overview



1. Performance Model	2. Domestic Comp Framework	3. Program Structure and Pathway	4. Coaching expertise and resources	5. Leadership, execution and fit-for-purpose HP culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence and experience informed 'gold medal performance model' that guides player and team development, training and competition programs and standards including – e.g. player experience and profile; capability; and team positioning <i>[see appendix 1 as example model]</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligned and integrated domestic competition program that best prepares national teams for international success Clear purpose for each competition at each level of the pathway DTE standards required to develop international quality medal winning players 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender specific program models that facilitate the right quantity and quality of player and team training to accelerate development and confidence to immediately impact national team perf Increased team assembly periods to build cohesion, combinations and standards Men's pathway that enables the best talent to play in the top professional European leagues Athlete wellbeing and engagement initiatives and practices to enhance performance and retention in and out of the pool overtime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimise and focus coaches time towards pool deck coaching, player development through targeted IPPs, and building a winning team dynamic Coaching and management 'team-based' structure to leverage individual skills National-led coaching community of practise established to share, learn and develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership aligned to new strategy – disciplined actions, decision-making and review [<i>..doing what we said we were going to</i>] Gold medal standards and values in all that we do both in and out of the water – athletes and staff Australian style/principles of play developed through an Australian HP program that best leverages strengths and optimises resources in people, DTEs and competition model



Proposed National roles and responsibilities in HP system

Leadership	<p>National direction, leadership and accountability over the HP system and programs.</p> <p>Provide capability building support to the system, based on the needs of stakeholders or to comply with National requirements.</p> <p>Maintain affiliations with peak international and national agencies: FINA, AOC, SA, AIS, ASADA.</p>
Daily Training Environment (DTE)	<p>Direction and Guidance around the standards and requirements expected for a DTE that facilitates high performance.</p>
Investment	<p>Plan and secure investment from high performance agencies at national and state levels.</p>
Coaching	<p>Appoint and engage national coaches.</p> <p>Set, connect and manage a national high performance coaching program.</p>
Athletes	<p>Selection and nomination of National representative teams, and endorsement of the categorisation of all athletes in the system.</p> <p>Development and management of IPP's for targeted priority athletes.</p>
Competition	<p>Establish a Nationally aligned and integrated domestic competition structure that best prepares our athletes for success on the international stage.</p> <p>Collaboratively set the strategic purpose of the AWL.</p>

Proposed NIN role and responsibilities



Purpose: podium success + inspiring the nation + building the reputation of Australian HP system

Role: Investment and capability building support based on prioritised sport needs

Focus Areas: HP leader development; HP coach development; campaign planning & review; athlete wellbeing initiatives to increase training/playing commitments & enhance retention over multiple-cycles



Purpose: WA athletes on national teams winning medals at BMEs

Role: DTE with priority coaching focus on individual player devt

Athlete Focus: U'18 and U'20 as well as home DTE for senior athletes outside of national assembly periods

Other: Assist in aligning and building capability to lift targeted AWL club DTE standards



Purpose: NSW based athletes selected on national teams and winning medals at Olympics

- **Role:** DTE with priority coaching and performance support for targeted individual player development

- **Athlete Focus:** National senior team athletes based in NSW as well as targeted national U'18 and U'20 athletes

- **Other:** Assist in building capability, and possible support, for a small number of NSW-based AWL clubs where the majority of national athletes play. Possible national partnership model if Sydney selected as location of centralised or hybrid-centralised national program



Purpose: Qlders on national teams winning medals at Olympic Games

Role: DTE with priority coaching focus on targeted individual player development and AWL Qld team success

Athlete Focus: U'18 and U'20 as well as home DTE for senior athletes during AWL season and outside of national assembly periods

- **Other:** Assist in building capability of Qld water polo system [i.e. resource development, education, etc]

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Proposed State and AWL Club roles and responsibilities in HP system

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States

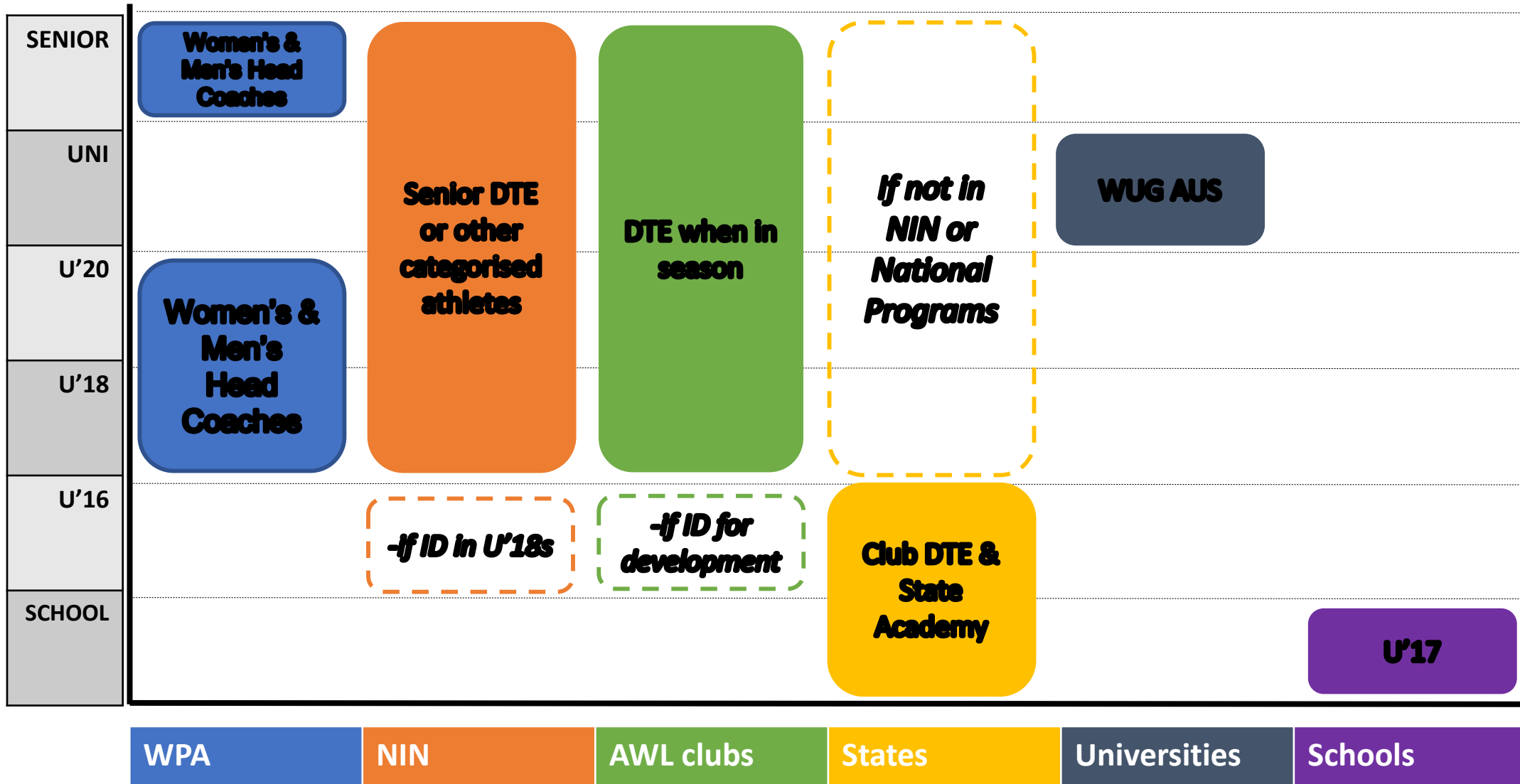
- Partner in SIS/SAS programs and facilitate the specific development of the underpinning U16 and younger athlete programs
- Manage and administer state level competitions for national pathway athletes at all levels, but primary focused support for U'16 and younger athletes
- Facilitate coach and official education and accreditation courses at the state underpinning level to the national programs, and work with National program coaches to identify talented Coaches and officials

Australian Water Polo League [AWL] Clubs:

- To train and select high level teams to participate in the AWL
- During AWL season provide a high performance DTE for national senior athletes and some priority U'20 and U'18 athletes
- Employ, or contract, HP coaches and performance support staff during AWL season
- Collaborate with the WPA High Performance team to ensure that consistent coaching and training philosophies are proliferated, and talented athletes, coaches and officials can be identified and nurtured



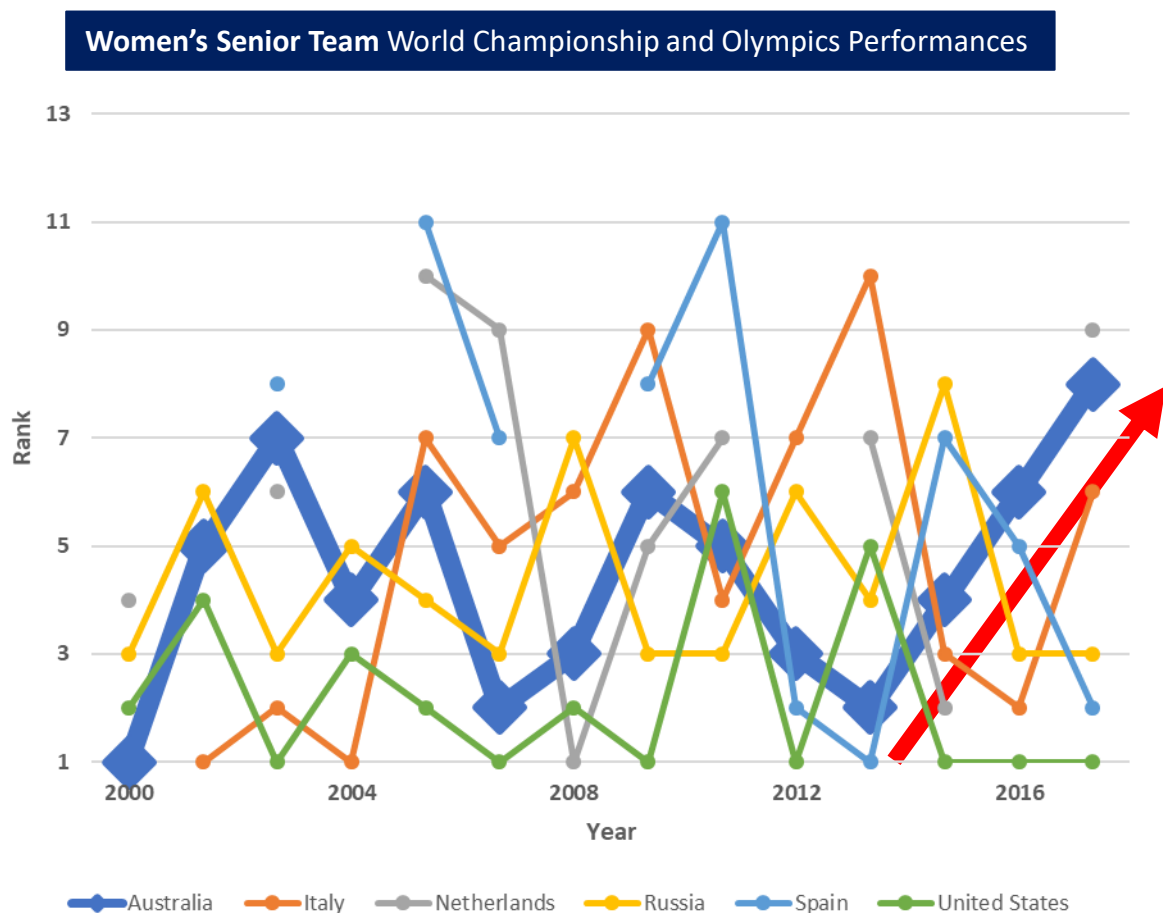
Proposed roles in the HP System



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APPENDIX 1

Women's Senior team World Championship & Olympic performances heading in the wrong direction....

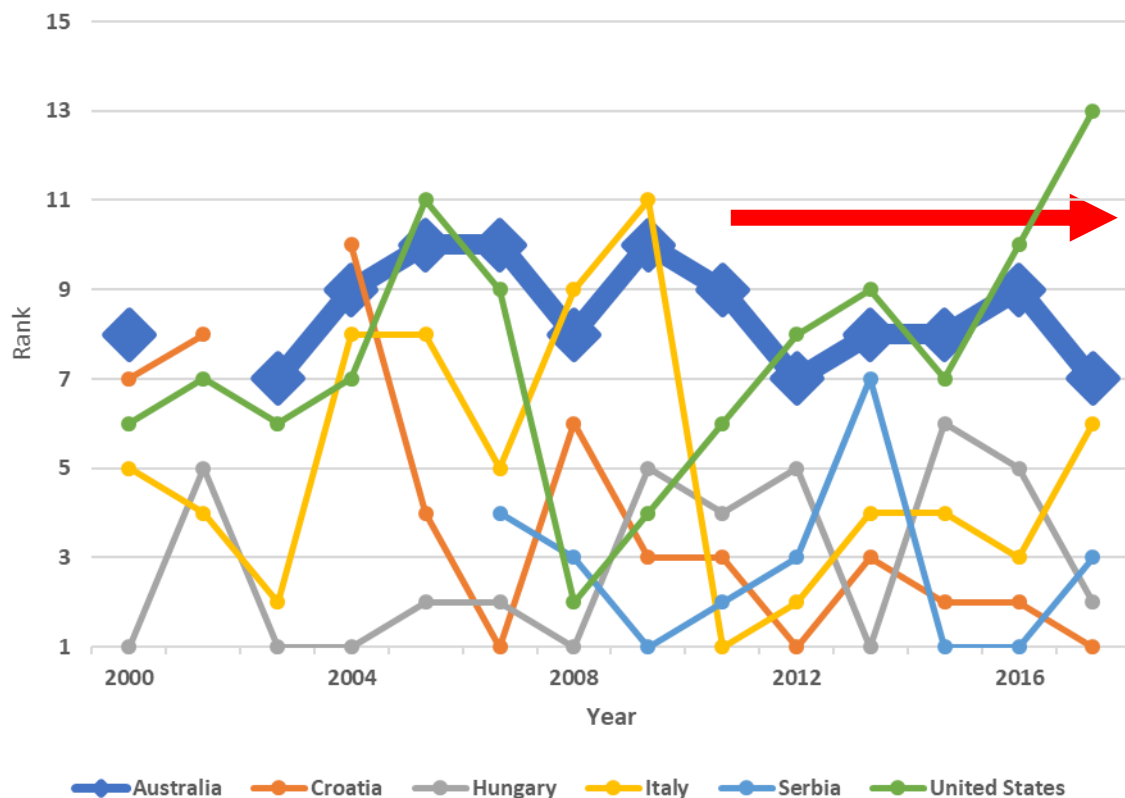


- ✓ Australia gradual decline since 2013....but proven past capability to win medals & remains in the top 8 medal “zone”
- ✓ USA remain dominant and constant medalists
- ✓ Some level of unpredictability with nations coming from outside top 6 from World Championships to win a medal at Olympics the following year – Netherlands ‘08; Spain ‘12; Russia ‘16 - a positive for Australia based on the current performance profile
- ✓ Australia performed at its best in periods where assembly time was increased and optimised; AWL was at its strongest; nationally driven athlete IPPs in play with DTE role clarity; stable leadership; talent pool and player depth was at its greatest
- ✓ More countries are investment more funds into women’s water polo; more teams are competing at the Olympics; new semi-professional leagues and teams have been established overseas – growing international competitiveness
- ✓ All medal winning nations have a centralised, or hybrid centralised, component to their program with the exception of USA that has highest level women’s domestic league and biggest talent pool in the world

APPENDIX 2

Men's Senior team unable to break-through into quarter finals at World Championship or Olympics.....

Men's Senior Team World Championship and Olympics Performances



- ✓ Australia consistently in 7th to 10th position but have failed to make it past the quarter final stage - noting positive silver medal result at 2018 World Cup [annual BME]. Competitiveness of this event not at the same level as Worlds/Olympics but remains a positive break-through performance
- ✓ Predictable and concentrated performances with Serbia and Croatia very consistent medal performers and more recently Italy performing well
- ✓ Unsurprisingly, these nations and their associated clusters of top national players, play in a small number of concentrated professional clubs participating in the highest level leagues in the world:
 - training full-time; elite competition ready; and, regular testing of combinations against world-class opposition;
 - have first choice athletes selected for water polo in these countries – high profile, history of success, strong ambition in the pathway to represent for the long-term; and,
 - also, have high quality domestic competition to produce talent but AWL not at the same level so an alternative focus and prioritisation of quality DTEs, complemented by a sound AWL, is required in medium term