



Coaches and Club Officials Communications with Minors Policy

INTRODUCTION

Riverton Aquanauts Swimming Club (the 'Club') recognises the prevalence of mobile devices, electronic communication and social media in today's world. Many of our swimmers, including many under the age of 12, use these means as their primary method of communication. While the Club acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, the Club also realises that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with Swimming Australia's [Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy](#) (matters or complaints concerning the safety and wellbeing of children or young people in swimming must be considered under this policy) and [Member Protection Policy](#) (this relates to matters concerning discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation, sexual misconduct, vilification and abuse).

GENERAL CONTENT

All communications between a coach or other adult, acting in a club capacity, and a swimmer/athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the [Riverton Aquanauts Handbook\(Code of Conduct\)](#) and all child protection policies as maintained by Swimming Australia and government bodies.

For example, as with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- drugs or alcohol use;
- sexually oriented conversation; sexually explicit language; sexual activity
- the adult's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and
- inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures

Note: Any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional.

It is inappropriate for adult coaches or club officials (18+ years of age) to communicate on a **one to one** basis with athletes under the age of 18 years by:

- text message
- e-mail
- instant messaging or through social networking sites (Messenger, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, etc.)

All electronic communication by the above methods should include a copy to a third party, e.g. copy to the parent or guardian.

Whether one is an athlete, coach, committee member or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask: “Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?” or “Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient’s parents, the coaching staff, the committee, or other athletes?”

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with swimmers is **T.A.P** - **T**ransparent, **A**ccessible and **P**rofessional.

Transparent: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo and expectations.

Accessible: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the Club’s records. Whenever possible, include a parent or committee member in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

Professional: All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of the Club. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member.

If your communication meets all three of the **T.A.P.** criteria, then it is likely your method of communication with athletes will be appropriate.

SOCIAL MEDIA – e.g. FACEBOOK, SNAPCHAT, INSTAGRAM, TIKTOK, BLOGS, AND SIMILAR SITES

Coaches and other club officials may have personal Facebook (or other social media sites) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of the Club join their personal page as a “friend.” A coach should not accept any “friend” requests from an athlete.

Should a young person request to become a named friend on a coach or club official’s social networking page or request that they become a named friend on their page the coach/club official should decline if any of the below apply:

- You are in a position of responsibility in respect of that child.
- You hold a position of trust and responsibility in respect of the child, the club or the association.

In addition, the coach/club official should remind the athlete that this is not permitted. Coaches and club officials and athletes are not permitted to “private or instant message” each other through Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or any other IM methods.

Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to “private” to prevent athletes from accessing the coach’s personal information. Coaches are advised to consider carefully what they post on any social networking site – coaches act as role models and must behave accordingly.

Coaches/club officials are reminded that ALL social networking websites have age restrictions which must be adhered to.

The Club has an official public Facebook page that coaches, club officials, athletes and their parents can all “like/join” for information and updates on club and team-related matters.

TEXTING

Text messages are **NOT** the preferred method of communication between adults and young people. If they must be used, they should be group messages with the parent and/or another committee member copied in.

In the event of an emergency, individual texts may be used but must be copied into the parent or guardian.

EMAIL

Emails are a positive and simple method of communication between coaches and young athletes and distribution lists/groups are easy to set up.

Group emails are preferred, but in the case of an email to one person, a copy must be sent to the relevant parent and/or another committee member.

HEJA APP



[Heja App](#) is an easy-to-use communication platform that operates much like any social media platform and can be accessed by coaches, club officials, parents and athletes. Importantly, it is specifically configured for use by the club, with varying levels of access and permissions. It allows the club to create our own ‘app’ that can then be used by anyone, regardless of their age on any mobile device.

All coaches and club officials are encouraged to use Heja as their primary source of communication to squad members.

REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by coaches or club officials through any form of electronic communication. This is to be submitted to the Club secretary via [email](#).

Document Control

Document Revision History

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