**Position Statement**

**Baby and Toddler Submersion**

**ASCTA/Swim Australia supports a progressive, relaxed and supportive environment for Baby and Toddler submersions.**

* The introduction of babies and pre-schoolers to water must be very careful and gentle in order to prevent long-term fear of water being developed.
* The teaching of submersion as a practice should take place between baby and parent or carer in the water in a structured session.
* The teaching of babies and toddlers should only be undertaken by holders of a suitable specialist baby and toddlers teaching certificate such as the Swim Australia Teacher of Babies and Toddlers qualification
* Teachers should hold a recognised CPR qualification
* Teachers must ensure they are working within the guidelines set out in the ASCTA/Swim Australia Code of
Conduct which includes safeguarding, code of ethics and professional conduct
* The maximum teaching ratio is 12 adult – child pairs to 1 baby and toddler teacher. A risk assessment may be required to calculate how many pairs one teacher can safely teach during a lesson. Pool space, age and abilities of the pairs should also be taken into consideration as numbers may need to be reduced to deliver safe effective lessons.

***Submersions***

ASCTA/Swim Australia places the willingness and acceptance of the baby or toddler at the forefront of its submersion policy. Submersion practices which are carried out on a baby or toddler without their obvious willingness is likened to enforced behaviour and is not ethically acceptable. More over these practices can compromise healthy brain development of babies.

*Any submersion practice that does not take into account the readiness of the baby as demonstrated by ‘baby cues’, irrespective of the consent of the accompanying adult, amounts to a forced submersion and is contrary to best practice.*

* Intentional submersion should only take place when the baby/toddler shows signs that they are ready, and only then as part of a fun exercise. If carried out at an inappropriate time, submersion may lead to distress and may result in a long term fear of water.
* The number of intentional submersions per session should be built up progressively at the baby/toddler’s pace.
* The frequency of intentional submersions should be based on the age, physical ability and experience.
* Submersion practices should be stopped immediately if there are any signs of distress or unhappiness.
* Submersions should only take place with the active involvement of the baby/toddler; it should not be attempted when they are looking away or are unaware of what is about to happen.

***Forced submersion is contrary to best practice; it must not be carried out.***