

Media Release: 1 March 2018

CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF OPEN WATER SWIMMING

Swimming WA is hosting Round 10 of their Open Water Swim (OWS) Series at Mandurah Town Beach on Monday 5 March 2018 and hopes to attract more than 350 swimmers. Kevin Holtom, largely credited for the growth of open water swimming in WA will be in attendance to present a Club Participation Shield named in his honour.

Kevin, a life member of Swimming WA recalls the beginnings of open water swimming in WA: "Prior to the construction of the Beatty Park Aquatic Centre for the 1962 Empire Games (became known as the Commonwealth Games), all swimming clubs had their origins in the river and most of them conducted Swim Thru events as part of their club activities. These swims were generally around 1 mile long with the exception of the iconic Swim Thru Perth which was just over 3 miles long.

During the 60's and 70's, more suburban pools were built and clubs moved from their river venues to their local aquatic centres. The Maylands Swim Thru was the last of the club swims to go (in the late 80's) while the Swim Thru Perth was 'taken over' by the Claremont Masters Club in the early 80's and is still conducted by them to this day.

In the 80's, there was a surge in interest in longer swims than the once traditional mile event. It was during this time that WA's Shelley Taylor Smith was very prominent on the world scene of marathon swims (i.e. 25km+) and her efforts led to other swimmers to try much longer distances.

The 1991 World Championship 25km swim in Perth was a huge success in perfect conditions and resulted in a large growth in the sport. The inaugural Rottneest Channel Swim (RCS) was held in February that year and is now known worldwide as an iconic ocean swim. John Whitehead and Kevin were the two founding members of the RCSA.

Swimming WA has had swimmers in just about every World Championship, Pan Pacific or Oceania Teams since 1991. OWS Officials have likewise represented Swimming WA at many of these events. Only an Olympics berth remains an allusive goal. At the local level, the 90's and 00's saw more and more events appear on the OWS calendar. A fledgling series was commenced in 2006 which encouraged swimmers including novices to swim more often over the longer distances.

The original aim of increasing participation in OWS seems to have been a spectacular success, thanks to the efforts of many volunteers and office staff over a 30-year period. Over 6000 swimmers have competed in the Swimming WA ten-year anniversary events so far this season. Kevin retired from Swimming WA, National and International duties in 2008 with his mission accomplished".

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Additional information and event registration for the Mandurah event is via openwaterswimming.com.au. Online registrations for this Round will close 10pm Friday 2 March 2018, however there are registrations available on the day.

Ends.....

For further information, please contact:

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