

## 2018 Westpac Swimmer of the Year Awards

### Swimming WA Hall of Legends Induction

#### Inductee: 1

**Name: Elizabeth Edmondson**

The Western Australian Swimming Association is thrilled to induct the very first inductee into the Swimming WA Hall of Legends. The Swimming WA Hall of Legends is designed to recognise the best of the best and our first inductee fits comes from the world of multi class swimming.

Elizabeth Edmondson was born on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1950 in Perth. On September 27<sup>th</sup> 1951, at the age of juts fifteen (15) months, she was diagnosed with polio. She spent fifteen (15) months in the hospital and started swimming when she was five (5) years old, at Crawley Baths in the Swan River.

The first strokes she learnt to swim were the backstroke, dog paddle and freestyle. She learnt to swim without using her legs placed third in a swimming competition during a competition in year one at school, in a dog paddle swim.

Around the time that Elizabeth was starting to prepare for the Paralympics, she was a student at St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls, a member of the West Perth Swimming Club, and an avid surfer. Edmondson put her surfing on hold to spend more time training.

*“Swimming allowed me to move through the water with a certain amount of grace and my disability seemed to disappear in the dimensions of the pool. It got me physically fit, which was a big plus. I enjoyed the competition, the travel and most of all people I met became firm friends. Sport has meant a great deal to me” she said.*

At the age of 14 years and 4 months, Edmondson was an Australian Paralympic competitor. She was the youngest competitor at the 1964 Summer Paralympics in Tokyo among athletes from all nations. She was the youngest Paralympic medallist for Australia for forty eight (48) years, until Maddison Elliott won a bronze medal at the 2012 London Paralympics. She won three (3) Gold medals in the 1964 Summer Paralympics in the following events;

- The Women's Class 5 - 50 metre breaststroke with a world record time of 1.04.6;
- The women's Class 5 - 50 metre backstroke with a world record time of 0.50.8;
- The Women's Class 5 - complete 50 metre freestyle with a world record time of 0.39.7.

And for good measure, she also won a Silver medal in the Class 4 - incomplete 50 metre backstroke event with a time of 0.52.3, that beat the old world record!

At the conclusion of the 1964 Games, Edmondson's parents acknowledged that swimming had greatly helped their daughter, but felt that she needed to quit the sport and

concentrate on her education because swimming would not provide her with standing in life. After the 1964 games, Edmondson returned home and prepared for school exams.

Elizabeth won a Gold medal at the 1968 Summer Paralympics in Tel Aviv in the 50 metre freestyle Class 4 - incomplete swimming event with a world record time and a Gold medal in the 100 metre open freestyle swim event with a world record time. She also won a Silver medal in Women's 50m Backstroke Class 4 - incomplete.

Elizabeth competed with limited mobility in the water, during her swimming career and could only use her arms and shoulders to move through the water. Edmondson's swimming coach, Tony Howson, claimed that her swimming times were similar to those of able-bodied girls of the same age. She stopped competing after the 1968 Games for financial reasons.

In 2006, she started to participate in competitive swimming again when she joined the Stadium Masters Swimming Club. In 2008, she qualified for the FINA World Masters Championships and swam a personal best time in the 800m Freestyle. From 2007 to 2009, she competed in several swimming events in a variety of strokes and distances around Australia in the women's 55–59 age group. In October 2007, at the 11th Australian Masters Games, she won 7 individual Gold medals and a Gold in a relay as a disabled swimmer. She also won a Bronze medal in a member of a team in an abled bodied relay event.

She went on to have a distinguished Masters swimming career swimming in the British Long Distance Swimming Association's One Hour Postal Swim from 2009 to 2012.

Elizabeth was awarded the Australian Sports Medal in 2000, in recognition of her work as a swimmer. Edmondson was inducted into the Swimming Western Australia Hall of Fame in 2008. In 2009, Edmondson was inducted into the Wheelchair Sports WA Hall of Fame and was awarded a Certificate of Commendation in 2012 by Masters Swimming WA for her services to Masters Swimming.

Ladies and gentlemen, please stand as we induct the 1<sup>st</sup> member of the Swimming Hall of Legends, Elizabeth Edmondson.