



2023 REMIT FORM

SURFING NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED

Remit

Surfing New Zealand's National Team Qualification Policy – change to selection been made to National teams from a one-off competition, New Zealand Nationals. The quota level and qualification focused only policy to be reviewed and Nationals to become part of the Surf Series not being a separate quota level.

This remit highlights general problems by Surfing New Zealand in not delivering on its three key objectives of the Quota selection system despite a few recent changes to the policy on the 11 October 2023.

The main question from this remit which is fundamental to resolution of what is felt an unfair process of selecting National teams is -:

What is Surfing New Zealand's high-performance mission, objectives, goals, plan and making sure the qualification policies align with this.

A one-off Nationals selection does not support growth or development of high-performance surfing in New Zealand.

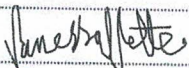
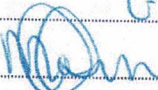
The main issues with the current qualification criteria are -:

1. Initial timeline of delivery
2. Lack of transparency in selection from certain quota levels
3. Lack of engagement with a wide range of relevant and affected stakeholders in its development.
4. The selection panel now consists of only management staff (2 Surfing NZ Employees – CEO and National convenor)
5. Lack of incentive for athletes to excel in high performance surfing.

Attached to this remit is a support document explaining all the above issues in greater depth and to highlight issues but also to be solution based. Attached also is a copy of a letter back to a concerned party from our region from the Surfing NZ Board to which some of the discussion of the support document answer to.

Club Gisborne Boardriders
Postal Address Level one, 74 Grey Street, Gisborne 4010
Telephone Number Business Private
Mobile Number 022-4078987
Email Address gisborneboardriders@gmail.com

SUBMITTED BY

Proposer Vanessa Vette
Club Gisborne Boardriders Club
Signature 
Seconder Malcolm Mersham
Club GISBORNE BOARDRIDERS
Signature 

NOTE:

Submission of remits close at 11:59pm, Friday 20th October 2023. All remits to be sent to benkennings@surfingnz.co.nz.

23 February 2023

Dear Amy,

Re: Surfing New Zealand NZ Team Qualification Policy

Thank you for the email and opportunity to provide a greater understanding about our New Zealand Team qualification policy.

Each year, management review our selection policy after teams represent New Zealand. Our selection policy remained unchanged since 2017.

Management outlined three options before amending the policy:

1. Status quo - selection
2. A policy focussed on qualification
3. A policy that evaluated athletes across a range of performance, fitness and ability

Management opted for option two.

After significant research, stress testing, results analysis, revisions, and feedback, Surfing New Zealand believe that the new qualification policy is robust, fit for purpose and aligned with the ISA and WSL.

The policy is easy to understand, transparent, objective and rewards performance. These are important pieces of feedback received in previous years from athletes and parents.

The policy was signed off by our board in December after we were presented with the updated policy. Board members on the Performance and Participation subcommittee were involved in the development of the policy.



PO Box 233,
Whangamata 3620



0212278732



www.surfingnz.co.nz



@surfingnz



benkennings@surfingnz.co.nz

During the process, we sought feedback from several sports administrators within our community, past New Zealand representatives and life members. Since publication, we have received positive feedback from ex WSL athletes and NZ reps, parents and members of the surfing community. We have also fielded concerns and questions from some parents of athletes on the other side of the spectrum. This is to be expected with a significant change in policy and we have worked to address these concerns and questions.

Current athletes and parents were not included in the development of the policy as they have a conflict of interest. This position is supported by Sport NZ and HPSNZ. The NZOC has also been part of this discussion.

The World Surf League has a 96% qualification policy for the World Tour. The percentages are similar for the WSL Challenger Series and WSL World Pro Junior Championships. The WSL often has two spots (out of 36) that are 'selected' and these are saved for injury wildcards or sponsor wildcards. Our policy allows for injured athletes to be named in teams under Clauses 9 and 10.

The International Surfing Association has also focused on a qualification policy for Olympic surfing. In 2020, all 20 Olympic spots in each division were based on qualification. For 2024 there are 24 surfers in the event and 96% of the athletes will qualify spots via the World Surf League and 2022-24 ISA World Surfing Games. The one selected spot is a universality spot and it still has a qualification threshold.

Australia is certainly a country that we based our policy on. We opted to remove their 'wildcard' clause and keep three qualification spots. Great Britain and South Africa have similar policies to ours as does the USA.

There is certainly merit in both qualification and selection options and each national governing body or sport will develop policy on the merits of both.

It is important to understand that we believe in the ability of our wider cohort of athletes to achieve results on the world stage. And if one of the wider cohort of athletes qualifies via their WSL ranking, the National Championships, or the NZ Surf Series, then we believe they have the required ability to represent New Zealand.

Regards,

The Surfing New Zealand Board

REMIT : Surfing New Zealand's National Team Qualification Policy.

The main issues with the current qualification criteria are -:

- the Quota system which it is based on is a **qualification focused only policy**, that does not deliver on all three key objectives outlined by Surfing New Zealand,
 - A policy that qualifies the best possible team of athletes
 - A qualification policy that rewards performance
 - A qualification policy that is objective
- the timeline in which the policy was delivered to the athletes was insufficient.
- the grey areas and lack of transparency in the selection from certain quota levels,
- the lack of engagement with the affected stakeholders,
- a selection panel that now consists only of management staff,
- lack of incentive to excel in high performance surfing.

Ultimately leading to unfair athlete selection and lack of delivering the best team of competitive surfing athletes to represent New Zealand internationally.

1. Selection of the National Champion

The major point of contention is the ranking of the National Champion title separate and ranked above qualification through the NZ Surf series. This entitles the National champion to gain automatic selection into the National team after one performance even though other levels of the quota system require the athlete to compete in 3 events in either the Australia/Oceania Qualifying Series or the New Zealand Surf Series.

One-off selection in the New Zealand competitive surfing environment does not comply with the overall goal of making the system more objective, rewarding performance or necessarily guarantee the best athletes to the NZ National team because of the following -:

Surfing is a sport that relies on a variety of factors.

- conditions and opportunities of the surf on a particular time/day/when heats are scheduled, and sudden change of heat length.
- where the event is held – local knowledge and experience on that competitive break is advantageous to local surfers.
- it relies on formal rules and process being followed by officials when mistakes have taken place in the competition environment, if not this can disadvantage athletes.
- attendance of athletes to a one-off event can be affected by a multitude of situations disadvantaging their chances of selection despite being ranked or within the high-performance calibre to make the NZ team – injury, financial restraints, sickness, bereavement.
- consistent and fair judging which has a subjective element to it and often in New Zealand without a full panel of judges it is still easy for bias and mistakes to dictate results – we have seen this through the large degree of difference in judging scores with 3 judges over the years – 4 or 5 judges makes a difference in delivery of more consistent and fairer scoring.

Automatically, as a one-off selection over a quota of a multitude of events it is not an even playing field for athletes to be selected. A multitude of events tests the ability of the athlete to adapt and perform in different conditions consistently, which should be a prerequisite for all high performing

athletes. Our athletes on the Challenger, Qualifying, Pro Junior, NZ surf, Billabong and Junior competition series demonstrate this.

The best surfer does not always win a one-off event but may still have made the finals for a variety of reasons and have the best profile for competing Internationally and that is why the Qualifying series NZ Surf series and Junior Series has more weighting.

New Zealand is not Australia and so the one-off selection that they do for ISA teams in Australia is worth noting but not relevant, Australian athletes do on average 10 competitions throughout the year, then get selected on those results to represent their State and then go to Nationals.

A National ranking point system is in place for the Australian junior athletes with different competitions worth different amounts. As an athlete you can see where you are ranked Nationally throughout the year. This does not necessarily include the fact that these athletes are also competing in club competitions, WSL Pro Junior competitions and Qualifying Series as well. A pro Junior win is more prestigious than representing your country in Australia at Worlds.

Very few countries in the world have one-off selections unless they have difficulty getting together but once a year, or have very few athletes to choose from eg: Fiji

This one-off event qualification to National teams that has been put in place by Surfing New Zealand management ("management" is made up of the CEO and the National Convenor- both employees of SNZ) – presently in how the quota works and with the small numbers of athletes competing in all levels, it gives no incentive for athletes to compete in any of the NZ Surf series or to want to push the level of their competitive surfing in the Qualifying Series.

2. Gray areas in the Selection criteria Quota system on objective measures for selection

Certain quality control levels have been set in achieving selection from qualifying series competitions and pro junior competitions in the Australia/Oceania Region but haven't taken in the differential of surfing standard in one of the most competitive surfing regions in the world in comparison to the level of surfing in New Zealand.

A New Zealand Qualifying Series athlete may be just outside of the present quality control – For example: The Australian/Oceania Qualifying series quota level for National selection requires a NZ athlete to make the top 20 women.

What happens if a NZ athlete places 21st on the Women's rankings but having not been available for the NZ Nationals and Surf series due to competing and training overseas, having more international experience and a reasonable placing in the hardest regional competition in the World (a 100 girls/women compete on the Australia/Oceania QS series)- does that mean they don't get selected and a less experienced New Zealand surfer who wins Nationals or the Surf series does?? (Who competes against 17 girls/women who do 3 competitions a year)

The quota level for the under 18 s competing in Australia should be acknowledged – if they achieve a top 30 placing this is demonstrating some skill and exposure to international competition and should be rewarded and counted in selection – top 10 in a 20 and under competition is unrealistic and then becomes a pointless and unmotivating quota level to strive for. It does not encourage our top young athletes to compete overseas in their regional competitions.

There is no quota level for NZ under 16-year-olds competing in Australia – International experience should be considered - if you look at our athletes that have been successful to date, they have all competed in Australia – this needs to be encouraged.

It needs to be clear what the weighting of each quota level is - otherwise it leaves Surfing New Zealand vulnerable to protest and arbitration on selection and the athletes unsure of what they need to do or how they will be selected. It is questionable whether a pure qualification only policy is appropriate with New Zealand athletes but needs to work alongside other selection criteria that do look at the athlete more fully.

The cut off for selection in the quota levels from the QS and Junior competitions needs to be looked at more closely – for example the QS cut off needs to be widened to say top 30 men and top 25 women, the Pro Junior should be in the top 25 also not top 10.

This highlights **what is Surfing New Zealand's high-performance mission, objectives and goals? and making sure qualification policies align with this.**

3. Athletes' rights and welfare

In the Olympic/professional era that surfing is a part of now it is important to note that a dictatorial style and culture is and needs to be something of the past and that transparency and accountability is forefront in our sport and administrative body. Process and planning need to be clear, as does the partnership it wishes to embark on with its stakeholders and high-performance athletes.

The NZ Board and CEO have received correspondence from various parties over the concern of the new selection criteria for National teams over the last 12 months. Their stance stated they had done significant research, stress tested, result analysis, feedback process before implementing this policy - there is no evidence of the research, stress testing, report on result analysis, the diversity and numbers consulted for the feedback process.

All Boardriders' clubs weren't consulted (our NSO's stakeholders) – who are made up of a percentage of competitive surfers. The Surfing New Zealand Board correspondence outlined that consultation was made with past New Zealand representatives, life members and ex-WSL athletes and New Zealand representatives, parents, and members of the surfing community, all of whom this policy does not directly influence and aren't necessarily up to date with present day issues and policies.

Current competitive athletes and parents who finance, advocate, and mentally support our current athletes and are the most up to date on what is happening in the present competitive environment were not consulted due to a "conflict of interest" – what is the conflict? All athletes should be catered for the right to due process and to be treated fairly – this includes a transparent and merit-based selection process, to work in partnership with Surfing NZ, given a true partnership model based on shared ownership, shared responsibilities.

The significant contributor to athlete welfare is the way the athlete is engaged with across every level of the organisation in other words the culture they operate within. To say that present athletes should not have been consulted with is not a conflict-of-interest issue – it is totally in their interests

that this selection process is fair and that they have a say in it and that it is delivered in a timely manner, not 3-weeks before a competition that had a huge influence of eligibility of selection.

The reality is that NSOs are the primary funding and selection options for our high-performance athletes who want to represent their country at pinnacle events. The dependency in terms of funding and selection creates an immediate and obvious power imbalance between Sporting Organisations on one hand and high-performance Athletes on the other. This power imbalance, and the relative age and experience of the athletes concerned, needs to be considered when determining how Sports Organisations can effectively and appropriately engage Athletes and a forum for their parents (the funders of our competitive environment at present)

The way Surfing NZ engaged their research is biased, they have been quoted as fielding concerns with "parents of athletes on the other side of the spectrum" – what the spectrum means or what context is implied can only be guessed as "being stakeholders who represent those that have been concerned enough over the unfairness of the selection policy and were never given the forum to put through their ideas" – it highlights the process and planning was poor as not all stakeholders that are affected by this policy were consulted. Surfing New Zealand needs to be careful that they are representing and delivering policies that have full and fair input from a wide and relevant range of stakeholders.

It appears the one-off selection policy at Nationals is to encourage overseas New Zealand athletes to be able to make teams – this has no major impact at the WSL, Challenger, QS level as everyone is competing at the same competitions and need to do a multitude of competitions to get a ranking but it does have an impact at Junior level.

For example, an Australian born athlete who has a parent from New Zealand can make the team displacing a New Zealand athlete who has to compete in the full junior series, and has invested their whole junior surfing career in New Zealand to be displaced – this does not encourage development in our juniors or incentive to compete and it would be questionable as to who New Zealand Surfing is actually representing.

It should be noted that concerns were put through to Surfing New Zealand before selections to teams were made based on the current selection policy.

4. Reduced selection panel

The Selection policy is a legally binding agreement therefore it is important that the policy is well drafted, clear, and unambiguous and that the athlete agrees with the selection policy. We understand and agree with the idea of selection being more objective – due to the problems with selectors bias, reduced judging panels influencing results and variable judging standards, and the above issues but selection has now been reduced to one person, the CEO, of which the National Convenor delivers all the athlete information for selection to. (the National convenor is an employee and work colleague of the CEO) – no neutrality is present.

In New Zealand, selection process needs to be very thorough because of the size and small numbers involved, last year's selections is a classic example of how it can reflect on the Selector if you don't have a fair and thorough selection and qualification criteria - a direct relative of the CEO (who was involved in an incident at Nationals where the Operations Manager (who is the CEO) did not follow process and rules set out by the ISA affecting another competing athlete) and secondly a very good friend of the CEOs, child were both selected. These were both one off selections from Nationals. If you have a wider base of selection events this is less likely to be questioned.

This also brings up the question should the CEO also be the Operations Manager – not only from a conflict-of-interest point in selection but from a workload perspective and having a wider view point to drive the sport forward.

To understand why a fair selection policy is important we need to consider the problems we have had in selection in the past.

New Zealand is a small country where many biases can come in to play.

- Conflict of interest of selectors
- Despite written selection policies athletes have been chosen who do not have the correct attitude, do not have the correct physical fitness, training ethic, ability to be a team player or have behavioural issues.

So having objective clear qualification criteria is supported and encouraged, the quota system is a step to develop this but the New Zealand Nationals needs to be part of the Surf series/Junior series with higher weighting in earned points – significant points to attract athletes to Nationals, clear performance pathways for athletes run by Boardriders/Regions with the support of Surfing New Zealand is a way of keeping athletes engaged and supported.

Educating and lifting the level of expertise in high performance coaching and management in surfing through attendance at such things as HPSNZ courses so everyone has the right skill level and are talking the same language to guide our young, emerging, and elite athletes is important. If selected to attend these well-run courses the participants must attend and then deliver what they have learnt, so sharing of information and a high-performance language and engagement is adopted. Selection should not be a "tap on the shoulder" but a formal application process with a panel of diverse and invested individuals in the growth of the sport being involved in selection.

The biggest skill lacking in our sport administration is the ability to develop plans so that you aren't doing one off events with no continuation or follow through for athletes. This doesn't need to be complex or time consuming but consultation with those you put on the High Performance courses into a voluntary committee, could be a way of them giving back, for example.

Where Nationals sits in the competitive season needs to be seriously discussed – looking at April/May as the final surf series event or is it kept in January, but the year previous Surf series/Junior competition leads into the final event at Nationals – both allow selection to National teams for that present year.

The latter option allows teams to be chosen early and high-performance programmes and preparation for World representative events to be possible – accountability of athletes to programmes which can be implemented by local providers needs to be thought about and implemented. Surf camps regularly of these chosen athletes: maybe you have a development squad to keep athletes hungry for selection and push performance. As has been demonstrated in the past athletes are prepared to pay for high performance input and if there is a clear timetable have chances to fundraise or find sponsorship to attend.

Investment in our talent base is lacking and there are holes now, a loss of talent due to no planned high-performance pathway has unfolded.

Perhaps developing satellite high performance areas – Auckland/Northland, Taranaki/Raglan, Coromandel/Bay of Plenty, Gisborne/Hawkes Bay, Christchurch/Dunedin but with a common overall plan and then camps to bring all concerned together could be a solution. Athletes need to be responsible for funding and paying for these opportunities as presently our NSO does not have that resource. Local funding and fundraising needs to be implemented by satellite areas.

Selection to these high-performance groups also needs to have criteria around it.

It also allows time for fundraising for athletes – athletes should know exact costs at least 8-12 weeks before a major international event for example.

Encouragement to get our athletes at all levels to Australia to compete is fundamental to the growth of competitive surfing and future success – we need to find smart ways of getting our talent to Australia – collaborating with Boardriders clubs in Australia, liaison with Surfing NSW, Queensland, Victoria

Without clear high-performance pathway plans it is very difficult to find sponsorship or funding – this should be a priority. What has SNZ spent on High performance development to date and achieved – this needs to be communicated with those affected with HPSNZ funding?

Surfing NZ needs to be clear and transparent on what funding is available for athletes at the beginning of the selection.

Surfing NZ has limited resource and skill base which stakeholders are aware of, but they do have a resource of people who have been attempting to initiate high performance surfing – we need stakeholders to take ownership but Surfing New Zealand needs to create the template – this involves clear communication and some vulnerability on their part and to start collaborating and to be totally transparent and most importantly a clear progressive plan for the next 10 years to advocate for our present and future high performance athletes.