

Barbara Brooks - 2015 40 Year Achievement



Barb at her 30th Nationals in 2005

Barbara Brooks is a passionate and well travelled the only member to have swum at all forty of the National Masters Swimming Championships! Her story is inspiring and she swam her 40th National Meet in Hobart this year.

Barbara did not begin to swim competitively until she was eighteen years old; when on a whim, she joined Surrey Park Swimming Club (SPSC) with a friend in 1952. She was a poor swimmer at the start, but with good coaching, became proficient at freestyle and

found out she had great stamina, enough to win a state title and be selected into the Victorian swimming team in 1954. She swam in the 440 & 880 yards at the National Championships.

Barbara became secretary of the Surrey Park club in 1953 when the Club was languishing at the bottom of the Eastern Suburban ladder; and she and a very determined team set about making the club competitive. Within three years, the club was at the top of the ladder and remained there for the next nine years. The Club rewarded her with Life Membership.

As captain of the 1961 SPSC Women's Relay team, Barbara and her team mates knocked off the Olympic Women's Team at the State Championships – a feat that toppled a 19 year winning streak.

At the tender age of 22 and having won two silver medals at the 1957 State Championships, Barbara was left out of the Victorian State team because she was considered by the officials to be too old to compete. This was a huge disappointment for her but she continued swimming for her Club and tried to encourage Swimming Victoria to include events for older swimmers, but to no avail.

In 1974 a team of Masters Swimmers from the USA came to Australia and conducted a master's swim meet at Maroubra in Sydney. Barbara went up there and swam in the event and she realized that this was the opportunity that she had been waiting for, so she went home to Victoria full of ideas to establish a masters club. That Club was North Lodge AUSSI Masters Swimming Club and it started with 21 swimmers in November 1976 with the assistance of swimming coach, Jim O'Doherty.

Barbara became secretary of North Lodge Club, and as more clubs formed, the secretary of the Victorian Branch of AUSSI, a position she held for ten years. She became Vice President of the Victorian Branch in 1998 and President in 2001. In 1987 Barbara was recognised with a Life Membership of the Victorian AUSSI Branch. In 1969 she was presented with a Victorian Amateur Swimming (Swimming Victoria) Service Award for her long and continuous service to the sport of swimming.

As well as her administrative achievements and managing five children, Barbara has continued her competitive swimming and winning medals at state, national and world Masters events. She has also been recognised by the City of Melbourne for her contribution to swimming and she continues her involvement with Special Olympics.

She is also a qualified Referee, a coach, a Meet organiser and a strong advocate of the benefits and joys of swimming in a Masters Swimming Club.



Barb and her North Lodge team mates in Hobart in 2015