

Fiona Paignton



My introduction to swimming started in 1999 when my daughter Penny joined Arawa Swim Club. From the onset I was determined not to be one of those mothers who sit on the side and cop all the grumps when said daughter doesn't swim well or did not achieve that PB she was aiming for. I started off in the kitchen at club meets then decided to have a go at timekeeping. I loved it from the start and decided to take it slow but aim to do all the exams until I made it through to New Zealand referee. During this time, my husband became involved as a club coach and Penny was swimming her way to Juniors, Div2 and NAGS.

I became a national referee about 10 years ago and have been involved in National, Regional and Rotorua meets which is over 21 years

I love the camaraderie between officials at national meets and each year when we attend the first meet of the year it is like catching up with long lost friends.

As for our club swimmers it is a real joy to watch them come up through the ranks, how they are so delighted when they achieve their goals, and the respect they have for officials, coaches and each other is a credit to them. All of this makes my contribution to swimming worthwhile.

There are down sides from time to time, the early mornings, and long evenings at nationals, and seeing an athlete upset at being disqualified are for me the worst, but the good definitely outweighs the bad.

The highlight of my officiating career was being selected to officiate at the Samoa Commonwealth Youth Games in 2015. I loved the country, the people, and the swimming.

During all this time the satisfaction I get from my voluntary contribution to swimming, makes me feel good about myself. Knowing I can give back to the community some of the highlights I received while travelling round the country, to attend meets and watch my daughter thrive in this healthy environment is all the thanks I need.

One thing you all may not know about me is that I cannot swim!!!