

ILT AND ILT FOUNDATION SWIMMING SOUTHLAND PRESS RELEASE

SWIMMING Southland is working with the ILT and the ILT Foundation to keep super coach Jeremy Duncan in the province on a long-term deal.

The Invercargill Licensing Trust and the ILT Foundation have approved a joint contribution of \$100,000 to Swimming Southland, with a good portion of that funding to be used to retain Duncan.

He has been Swimming Southland's head coach for nearly three years and keeping him in the province is seen as vital by local officials.

"He's a key component to our whole system," Swimming Southland executive officer, David Prattley, said. "He's put in place strategies and programmes to ensure more of our age-group swimmers come through the system to achieve results at New Zealand and international level.

"He's recognised nationally as one of the top young coaches in New Zealand. That's how good he is."

ILT president, Alan Dennis, said retaining coaches of Duncan's ability was important.

"You need the best coaches to attract and develop the best athletes and Swimming Southland recognises how good Jeremy Duncan is."

Local swimmers don't need to worry too much about losing Duncan. He has indicated to Prattley that he wants to stay long-term, and it was just a matter of working out a suitable deal, because he aims to make the biggest splash probably ever seen in Southland swimming.

"His personal goal is to get Southland swimmers on the New Zealand Olympic Games team in 2012. That's where he wants his contract to run through to."

And that Olympic goal isn't as fanciful as it may seem.

One of Duncan's star protégés is the exciting Natalie Wieggersma, who won the world youth (18 years and under) backstroke title in 2006.

Last year, she also swam an Olympic Games qualifying time for the distance but missed the New Zealand trials for Beijing, and possible selection, because of a shoulder injury.

And Prattley said the ILT and ILT Foundation's six-figure funding approval would also help develop Swimming Southland's high performance unit that Duncan runs.

Another big drive would be to try and bring more youngsters through to competitive swimming.

"Our key driver is definitely our swimming numbers," Prattley said.

"We want to make sure that our numbers are coming through all the time."

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