

Athlete Leadership Camp Report June 6-8th 2025

Who went
Where we went
What happened
Feedback from attendees
Camp committee debrief
Camp budget report



Special Olympics
Australia



Athlete Leadership camp 2025 - overview

Camp Purpose

The overall purpose of the Athlete Leadership camp is to develop the leadership skills of Athlete Leaders to be advocates for Special Olympics. This year we welcomed a new cohort of 14 Athlete Leaders into the program, as well as further developed the leadership skills of 16 of our Athlete Leader Community (ALC) who expressed interest to come to the camp. The ALC members are those who have successfully completed the 2-year program (see Attachment 1).

The two-day camp focused on:

- Completion of the foundation modules of the Athlete Leader program for the new cohort
- Three themes of public speaking/storytelling, coaching skills and effective committee membership. These skill sets underpin the majority of the opportunities that come to Athlete Leaders and have mutual benefit for both Athlete Leaders and Special Olympics Victoria.
- Further building social connections within and between all those participating in the camp
- Team building activities
- Mentor engagement and extending their roles and skills.

What was different this year

Two Athlete Leaders joined our Athlete Leader program committee this year and were actively involved in the camp planning. Their input was fantastic and helped shape the camp program and logistics.

We had a new cohort of 14 Athlete Leaders from 6 Clubs in Victoria: Melbourne Inner East, Melbourne West, Melbourne North, Melbourne Eastern Ranges, Dandenong Casey and Barwon.

We paired up each new Athlete Leader with a mentor and also a buddy who was an Athlete Leader Community member. This was to ensure the comfort level of the new Athlete Leaders at the camp and ultimately, enable maximum learning, sense of camaraderie and fun.

Mentors are a crucial part of the Athlete Leader program, and this year we had 22 mentors come to the camp. Twelve of the mentors are LETR members and this year we saw 6 new mentors join the program – 5 from LETR and one from a SOV Club.

We introduced several new sessions this year to cater for the changing needs of our Athlete Leaders. The sessions were: ‘Governance and Being an Effective Committee Member’, ‘Showing up as an Athlete Leader’, ‘Telling your Story as an Athlete Leader’ and ‘Leadership in Sport’.

Camp Funding & Financial Position

As at 4th July, 2025 the camp financials show that the camp budget was achieved. Total expenditure matched the budgeted amount funded by a combination of the LETR grant as well as the income of \$150 from each Athlete Leader for their attendance fee. The overall camp cost of \$20.5K included guest presenters, new uniforms, stationery, printing and attendance at the camp.

Who attended the AL camp?



54 Attendees, including:

- 14 1st Year Athlete Leaders
- 16 Athlete Leader Community members
- 22 Mentors (LETR & others)
- 2 Camp designers & facilitators
(Fiona Moore & Anna Mezger)

Guest presenters

- Isabelle Woodin – Story Telling
- James Hammond, Taneille Crase & Serene Tan – SOV/SOA - Coaching session facilitators/Be Collective session
- AnnMarie Phippard – Governance & Being an Effective Committee Member
- Sarah Brown – Showing up as an Athlete Leader

Guests:

- Susie Bennett-Yeo, National Athlete Leader Coordinator, SOA
- John Palmer, Director SOA 2026 National Games

Overall feedback from all (41 respondents/ 77%)

Overall rating for the Athlete Leadership Camp	4.9/5
What did you think of the leadership training?	4.8/5



What I liked about the leadership training is improving my communication and understanding what it's like to be a better leader.

This leadership camp goes from strength to strength each year. The ultimate measure is seeing the difference between the first and second year AL's and the ALC members of course. Even over the 48 hours of the AL camp, the growth in confidence of the AL's is fantastic. We lay the ground work over that weekend then see them grow and flourish as the year progresses.

The camp was fun and full of fun activities and great educational content





- Each 1st year Athlete Leader was paired with a mentor.
- Members of the Athlete Leader Community were supported by a team of experienced mentors.
- There were 22 mentors supporting the Athlete Leaders.
- 12 mentors were from LETR.





Our camp presenters & facilitators



Session Value – mentor’s evaluation

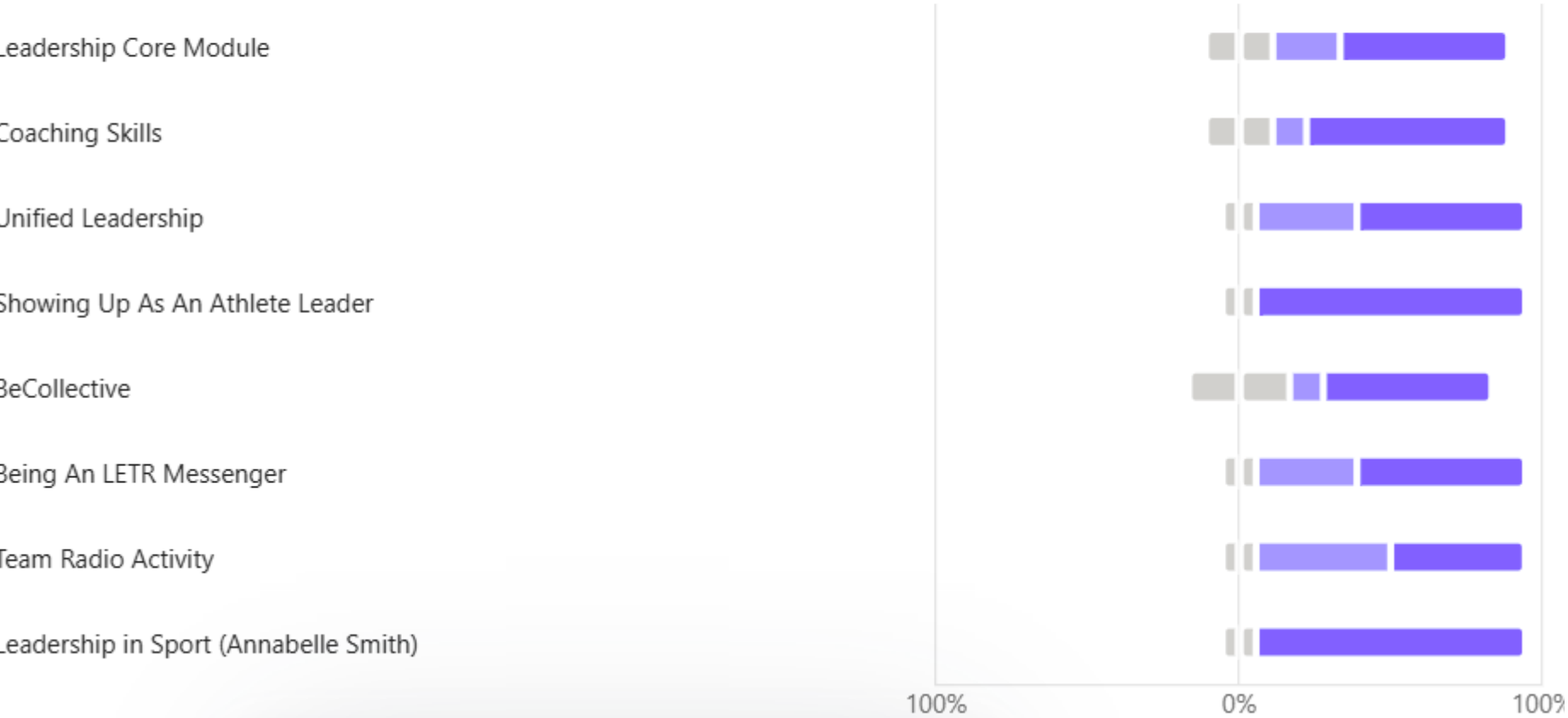
1st year sessions

Athlete Leader Community sessions

4. From your perspective, please rank the value of each session for your first year athlete leader.

5. From your perspective, please rank the value of each session for the athlete leader community.

1 - Low Value 2 3 4 5 - High Value



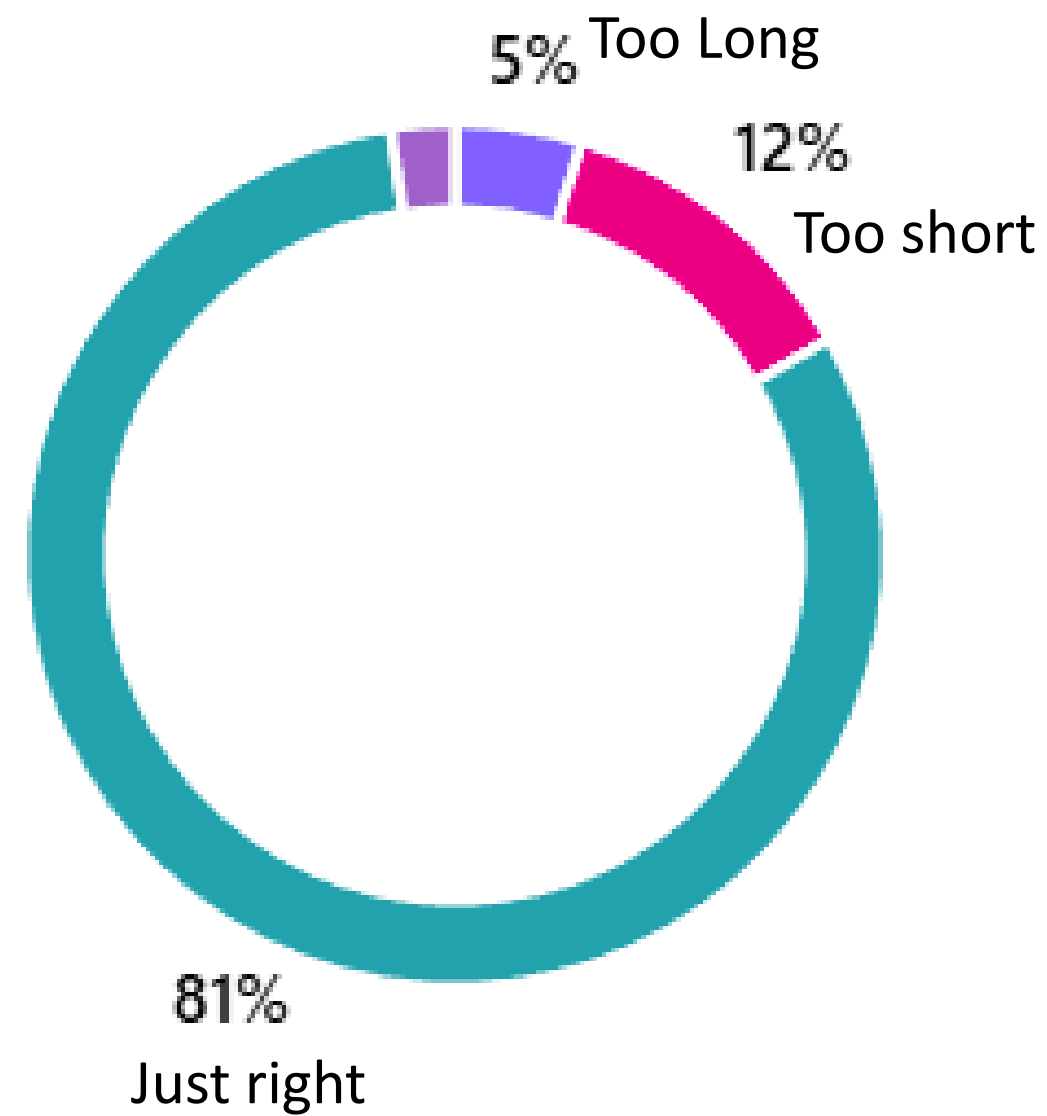
1 - Low Value 2 3 4 5 - High Value



The blue colours on the graphs show sessions rated either a 4 or 5 in value from the mentors perspective for the Athlete Leaders. The highest rated sessions overall were Showing up as an Athlete Leader and Leadership in Sport (Annabelle Smith – both groups attended these sessions together. For the 1st year Athlete Leaders, the Coaching Skills and Unified Leadership were seen by mentors as highly valued whereas the BeCollective session was rated a 3 by 33% of the raters. This was somewhat challenging because it required a level of IT skills to access and utilize the platform. For the Athlete Leadership Community the Governance and being an effective committee member was a standout with 83% of mentors rating the value of the session a 5.

Length of the Camp

81% of people answered *Just right* for this question, 12% of people answered *Too short* and 5% *Too long*.
The camp started on a Friday night and finished on the Sunday afternoon.



Camp Manyung - accommodation, food, location, grounds?

Average Rating 4.33 ★★★★★



Headlines of the feedback

Best parts of the camp (themes are represented here):

- I liked everything on the camp it was well planned and organized.
- Getting to know everyone. Setting rules for camp. Doing the scavenger hunt.
- The best parts of the camp were seeing everyone having fun and building new friendships. I really enjoyed the morning walks and really enjoyed Athletes vs mentors.
- Being able to ask Annabelle Smith questions about her career and definitely the Saturday games night.
- Great venue, well planned and structured sessions - with enough down time for athlete leaders/mentors to get to know one another.
- Passionate facilitators and external guests kept each session engaging and entertaining for all. It was wonderful to see the excitement in the athlete leaders as they could see first hand the opportunities they would be exposed to over the next two years.
- The Torch run always provides the athletes with a lot of pride.
- While the camp is rightly focused more on the athletes, the mentors benefit and grow so much over the camp as well.
- Showing up as an Athlete Leader - such a clever, fun way to show when & how Teams meetings go awry & how to fix it.



What you liked about the training

Training Content

- Help with public speaking.
- Having fun and learning new leadership skills.
- Learning how to be a good leader and the torch run.
- Not in order: Guest speaker, Annabel was fantastic. Radio activity. Getting to know you activities at the beginning. Showing up as a leader.
- Modelling team building skills and getting the athletes to work collaboratively.
- Meeting etiquette was fun and impactful. Annabelle was a standout guest speaker. The Torch run always provides the athletes with a lot of pride.

Overall Program and Execution

- Everything at leadership camp.
- The best parts of the camp were seeing everyone having fun and building new friendships. I really enjoyed the morning walks and really enjoyed Athletes vs Mentors competition.
- Seeing the athletes improve in their confidence throughout the camp.
- Being part of the stretches before going for the walk on the beach and playing tunnel ball on the beach. Enjoy being part of the Organising. Catching up with Mentors and friends.
- The team building and collaboration activities. New Athlete Leaders receiving a really good overview of what is required.

Activities and Program Flow

- Doing the activities with our group and having fun with my friends and getting to know the new ones. I liked the coaching team activity things.
- Getting to know everyone. Setting rules for camp. Doing the scavenger hunt.
- I liked family feud and I liked fancy dress night. The movie we watched. I think it was too serious. I think next time we should have a choice of two different movies.
- The games as it gave us a chance to work in a team and get to know one another ing the athletes improve in their confidence throughout the camp.

Personal Experiences and Reflections

- Helping others who were new leaders.
- I enjoyed the AL v Mentor component of this years camp I thought it was a great way to bring everyone together and connect when we had been separate for different sessions. Great way to meet the new athlete leaders and get involved with them. Annabelle was a great addition as a speaker and great that she was young and influential to our AL group. I know governance can be boring, however it was very well delivered and is critical for the AL to be across and aware of their presentation, why it's all important.
- Great venue, well planned and structed sessions - with enough down time for athlete leaders/mentors to get to know one another. Passionate facilitators and external guests kept each session engaging and entertaining for all. It was wonderful to see the excitement in the athlete leaders as they could see first hand the opportunities they would be exposed to over the next two years.
- In no particular order: * Assigning participants to animal groups - easy assimilation into the Camp. * The time spent one on one b/w 1st Years & Mentors to draw out the content for each ALs profile. Just needed more time & earlier in the Camp schedule. * The flow of the Camp content as delivered by Anna & Fiona. Very professional & pitched just right for the audience. * Separating 1st Years from AL Community for key sessions respectively. * Showing up as an Athlete Leader - such a clever, fun way to show when & how Teams meetings go awry & how to fix it. Sarah was a star moderator. * Matt & Kate's LETR presentation/s. More relaxed delivery this year. * The new crop of Mentors, particularly LETR members. Enthusiastic, earnest, engaged. * Annabelle Smith - very interesting speaker. She spoke with the audience not at them using language & descriptors that participants could identify with as athletes. Her longer term connection with Special Olympics added to her credibility.
- Having everyone together at the one venue where there are no outside distractions is highly beneficial. The agenda/syllabus for the AL's is excellent and having a variety of people present is really worthwhile too. As a mentor I loved the opportunity of spending more time getting to know all of the athletes. At SO events, it's difficult to get to know them and build trust. The LETR members, especially the fairly new ones get so much development out of the AL camp. While the camp is rightly focused more on the athletes, the mentors benefit and grow so much over the camp as well.

What would you like to do next as an Athlete Leader or Mentor?

Athlete Leaders

- As an Athlete leader I would like to do next is to work on my Public Speaking – 8 mentions of more public speaking.
- Trying to come to more things when it's on the weekend.
- Tell a story. Organise an activity.
- Some public speaking and coaching and be an advocate.
- A wonderful Mentor in Gary very kind and very understanding and very patient when I got something wrong and he explained it to me which was very helpful.
- I would like to grow my skills and take on opportunities.
- I would like us to have more face to face meet up with everyone and have some social events and also maybe have a workshop for athletes that are keen to develop their skills post camp.
- Go to events.
- I am looking forward to the Polar Plunge as a Athlete leader.
- Definitely improving my public transport skills as I want to go to places where I have never been before and improve my public speaking skills.
- I prefer being a Mentor including LETR.
- As an athlete leader get more opportunities, but everything is okay for now 😊
- Continue building on my public speaking skills, my skills in helping out and organising events and would like to find a way to connect and communicate with athlete leaders in other states and other countries.
- I would love to expand on my public speaking and to volunteer at any events that come up.

Mentors

- I would like to remain involved with the ALC and develop the awards program further and see what else can be offered to the community in support as the ALC grows over time.
- Continue to support my Athlete Leader and help them to get the best opportunities possible.
- Support my two Mentees to achieve their year on year potential & to grow their confident in leading within their AL community & other pursuits.
- Build the relationship and find ways to support my athlete.
- Just continue to be a mentor and assist the athletes with their leadership training.
- Get more time to attend more event and mentor more people.
- Continue to support the camp and AL's. At LETR we absolutely love being involved in the AL program and funding the camp to ensure that money is not a barrier for AL's to be part of such a wonderful weekend.

What would you like to change about the camp?

Positive Feedback – No Changes Suggested

A significant number of participants expressed satisfaction with the camp, indicating they wouldn't change anything. Specifically, 12 respondents provided such feedback. Here are some representative quotes:

- "Nothing"
- "No, I haven't got any changes. I enjoyed my time being on the camp"
- "I don't think I would change anything I really enjoyed it."
- "Nothing, I enjoyed it."

Suggestions for Session Timing and Structure

Several participants suggested adjustments to the camp's schedule:

- Shorter sessions.
- Inclusion of downtime on Saturday afternoons to help manage fatigue and overstimulation.
- Extending the camp to two full days of learning, acknowledging potential cost implications.

Communication and Preparation

Feedback highlighted areas where better communication could enhance participant preparedness:

- Advance notice about wearing athlete uniforms for three days
- Information on bringing Special Olympics suitcases

Program Enhancements

Participants offered ideas to enrich the camp experience:

- Opportunities for first-year attendees to serve as guest speakers.
- More tactile learning activities, such as the "Team Radio" exercise.
- Team-building activities outside the campsite.
- Activities on Sunday that athletes can implement directly in their clubs.

Seasonal and Location Considerations

Concerns were raised about the timing and location of the camp:

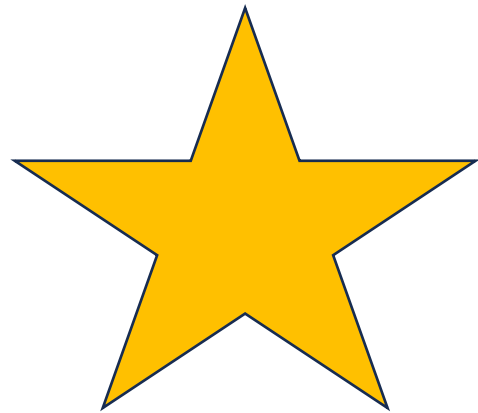
- Cold weather requiring extra packing and increasing the risk of lost items.
- Suggestions to move the camp to a non-holiday weekend.
- Recommendations for a more central location to reduce transport costs and improve accessibility.

Social Activities

Some participants desired more diverse evening options:

- Inclusion of a disco or dance party alongside movie nights.

LETR Camp Torch Run





Camp Committee Debrief

What worked well?	What needs to change?
<div>Logistics<ul style="list-style-type: none">Camp attendee spreadsheet – the go to for everythingTimeframe for new cohort every 2nd year – allowing 4 monthsHaving clear roles on logisticsHaving the Athlete Leaders on the committee – dining room planning and other tasks – buddies etc.Roles of ALs at camp – Morning stretches (group), Games night planning, Intros and panel for Annabelle SmithNew ALs being buddied up with the ALCs</div>	<div>Logistics<ul style="list-style-type: none">Getting the camp master spreadsheet with all details as early as possible – including LETR attendeesMore time for ALs on the committee to communicate with other ALs coming to camp for activitiesOrganisation of the stretches – use SOA Play for All CardsExplicit explanation of what is needed and the preparation neededWhat more could SOA/SOV staff do to assist? Finance side – eg. Bus deposit, camp deposit, thank yous and mentors giftsFiles in Teams (camp spreadsheet) for uniform requests & camp attendees who aren’t stayingALs on committee to be more in program designCamp form – add media release column, consider mentors & LETR peopleBus company if required needs to changeGovernance and process for those who didn’t attend – withdrew and also for late payment. Need refund statement and financial assistance form (payment plan) availability on camp form/ EOIsPrint out agenda in large format for dining rooms<p>Actions:</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">Review Camp Project Plan for tasks for SOA/SOV delegationAthlete Leaders could arrange fund raising for camp fees</div>
<div>Organisation<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pre camp briefing for new LETR mentor and contact infoHaving 1:1 ratio of mentors with new Athlete LeadersMeal choice was appropriate and people enjoyed itRoom sharing worked well – with buddies and new ALsCamp briefing – the plans about dining room plansAnimal groups for dining tasks, intro activitiesPre-requisite for tech sessions – come with passwords</div>	<div>Organisation<ul style="list-style-type: none">Change up dining room seating after lunch on SaturdayPre-requisite for tech sessions – come with passwords etc. check these on the Friday night</div>
<div>Uniforms<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overall design greatSizing instructions worked well</div>	<div>Uniforms<ul style="list-style-type: none">Quality of fabric not great re pulls etc.Length of polos – too long particularly for those who aren’t tall</div>
<div>Program<ul style="list-style-type: none">Guest speaker: Annabelle Smith – she met the brief in not only telling her story but talking about leadership in sport.Athlete vs mentors activitiesGovernance & Being an effective committee meetingTurning up as an Athlete LeaderStorytellingFinal video – is a highlight for all and has a huge impactBuilding on skills over planned program of 2 years and beyond – eg storytelling</div>	<div>Program<ul style="list-style-type: none">Getting the new ALs to talk more in small groups to share storiesBeCollective – more work needed to be done ahead of time, session needed to be structured with clear outcomes, too tech dependent – different ALs at different stages and became distressedConsistent session plan & outcomes – structure and sign posting along the way, learning outcomes, agenda, key topics, small amount of public speakingAssistant coaching needs practice interspersed into session (not just 10 mins at the end), no need to read out eLearning and more suitable for face to face learningRevisit achievements for each Athlete Leader during the camp – tick off key achievements, stickers & iconsAll SOI materials need updating and session design to match target audience and changing needs</div>

2025 Camp Budget vs Actual

LETR Camp Budget approved and transferred to SOA: **\$20,568**

Camp budget outcome: **\$20,520**

	BUDGET	ACTUAL
EXPENSES		
Accommodation	\$ 14,460.00	\$ 12,976.00
Camp Fees	\$ 14,460.00	\$ 12,976.00
Uniforms	\$ 3,808.00	\$ 4,072.04
Expenses	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.56
Games night & volunteer gifts	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.56
Photographer/Videographer	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Stationary& Materials	\$ 500.00	\$ 867.78
Transport	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 2,135.00
Training facilitation	\$ 2,150.00	\$ 2,150.00
Administration fees	\$ 450.00	\$ 810.00
Total Expenses	\$ 26,018.00	\$ 25,261.38
	Final camp expenses	\$ 20,520.38

Less revenue of **\$4741** from Athlete Leader contribution fees of \$150 per person

SOV Athlete Leadership program

ATT

ATTACHMENT 1

YEAR 1

- Participate in Athlete Leader camp
- Keep your Athlete Leader profile up to date
- Complete module Unified Leadership & SO Club structure
- Be involved in at least two activities promoting Special Olympics
- Engage with your mentor
- Attend at least 50% of AL meetings

YEAR 2

- Participate in Athlete Leader camp
- Keep your Athlete Leader profile up to date
- Complete additional training module
- Be involved in at least two activities promoting Special Olympics
- Engage with your mentor or mentor group
- Attend at least 50% of AL meetings

BEYOND

Be part of ongoing Athlete Leader Community

- Be involved in activities promoting Special Olympics
- Keep your Athlete Leader profile up to date
- Engage with your mentor group
- Engage with other Athlete Leaders
- Attend AL meetings where possible