



SLSA History Fact Sheet #4

Surf Lifesaving Competition

Carnivals and inter-club competitions formed an important part of surf lifesaving from its early days, when surf lifesaving displays were used to raise public awareness of the organisation, and much-needed funds. Early events in these carnivals included those which would become synonymous with surf lifesaving competition, such as Rescue and Resuscitation (R&R), boat races and surf races, as well as those now less associated with the beach. Some of the events held at a carnival at North Steyne in 1910, for example, comprised an egg and spoon race, wheelbarrow race, 'cock fight', and 'dusting the bellman', in which blindfolded participants competed to be the first to strike the bellman with a bag full of coloured flour. Pillow fights, chariot races and games of tug of war were also common features of Australian surf carnivals for much of the twentieth century.

The Australian titles date from the first NSW championships which were held on Bondi Beach in 1915, at which the Bondi team won the R & R, the 'premiership' event. These titles have been held every year since 1920, with the exception of two seasons during WWII. The 1947 championships in Queensland marked the first time the Australian titles were held out of Sydney, and for almost fifty years following this they were held in different states around Australia. Since 1995 the championships have been held in Kurrawa, on the Gold Coast, and in 2007 will move to Scarborough, WA for three years.



Cottesloe surf lifesavers display their gymnastic skills on the beach

Many surf lifesavers have become local and national heroes through their success at these competitions. For a list of some of the highest, and most consistent achievers, see our Hall of Fame on the 'Who's Who' page of the

SLSA Website. The SLSA Hall of Fame honours those who have made outstanding contributions to the organisation in three separate areas – lifesaving, surf lifesaving sports and lifesaving administration

Throughout the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first, the Australian Surf Lifesaving Championships have played a fundamental role in raising public awareness of the surf lifesaving movement, as well as helping to develop and improve the skills of Australia's finest lifesavers. In the words of Barry Galton, they 'provide an opportunity to display to the public the discipline, technique, alertness and raw courage which sets these young men and women apart as life support servants to the community.' These displays have combined with countless courageous rescues to make the lifesaver a premier national icon who is not only celebrated within Australia, but recognised throughout the world.