



BEACHSAFE

An update on beach and aquatic safety from Surf Life Saving Australia

Summer 2006-2007



The life of the beach.

Welcome to Issue 9

Welcome to BeachSafe, the newsletter designed to communicate and inform valued stakeholders of Surf Life Saving about latest initiatives and information relating to beach and water safety in Australia.

Who we are:

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) is Australia's major water safety and rescue authority, and is one of the largest volunteer organisations in Australia. Our mission is to provide safer beaches in Australia.

Our core activities include:

Lifesaving and aquatic safety services – through volunteer surf lifesavers in 304 Surf Life Saving Clubs, and professional support services through the Australian Lifeguard Service, Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopters, Jet Rescue Boats, Rescue Water Craft and SurfCom Communication Centres.

Why we exist:

Australia's coastline stretches more than 35,000 kilometres and there are some 11,000 beaches around the coast. There are about 60 million visitations to Australia's beaches each year. Despite significant advancements in technology, techniques and knowledge, people still drown on our beaches. Surf Life Saving exists to save lives, develop practices in education, prevention and rescue, and ultimately to meet the target of 'zero preventable drownings' as we set the benchmark for aquatic safety both in Australia and around the world.



On the Same Wave Program

In the wake of last year's riots at Cronulla, the Australian Government made a \$600,000 grant to Surf Life Saving Australia to develop and roll-out a program to bridge the perceived cultural divide between the movement and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. 'On the Same Wave' is now well and truly up and running, with the appointments of Lee Howell at SLSA as the National Project Manager, and Suzie Stollznov as the Surf Life Saving NSW Diversity Manager leading the charge.

The pair, who will be joined by diversity officers as the program is rolled out, are focused on developing a program which engages diverse cultural communities, educates them about beach safety and the surf lifesaving movement, and provides them with pathways to participate in lifesaving activities. The program will also include initiatives with the participating Sutherland Shire Clubs to provide cultural awareness training to existing members.

"Surf Life Saving has always accepted members from all backgrounds and all walks of life, however actively engaging communities to become involved is something that hasn't really been done in the past," said Mr Howell.

"On the Same Wave is unique in that it has given us the opportunity to actively educate and promote the movement in communities which may not

previously have felt comfortable in a beach or Surf Life Saving Club environment."

The program is a partnership between Surf Life Saving, Sutherland Shire Council and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, which Surf Life Saving Australia CEO Brett Williamson OAM says is long overdue.

"For many years our Clubs have been involved in various initiatives to increase their capacity to diversify their membership, however up until now we have lacked the financial resources to develop an overall approach," said Mr Williamson.

"Thanks to the partnership with the Australian Government through its Living in Harmony initiative, we are now able to provide support to young Australians of all backgrounds to be part of the Australian surf lifesaving movement."

Although initially targeting Sydney, the program will be rolled out nationally.



National Surf Safety Report released

The 2006 SLSA National Surf Safety Report was released on 1 December and presents data on coastal drowning deaths during the 2005–06 swimming and surfing season.

Key findings of this year's report are:

- Sixty-two people drowned around the coastline. This was an increase of five compared to the previous season, and six above the five-year average for 2001–06.
- 89 per cent (n=55) were male.
- 23 per cent (n=14) were aged between 40 and 49 years.
- 18 per cent (n=11) were in the 30 to 39 year old category and another 18 per cent (n=11) were in the 50 to 59 category.
- 15 drownings (where location was recorded) occurred within 1 km of the red and yellow flags.
- 56 per cent (n=35) occurred over the summer months.
- 50 per cent (n=31) of deaths occurred over a 62 day period between 27/12/05 to 26/02/06 — an average of one drowning every two days for this period.
- Unsurprisingly, the most common activity immediately prior to drowning was swimming or wading (47 per cent or n=29).
- Ten people drowned in rips, which continue to be one of the biggest killers around the Australian coastline.
- Rock fishing/fishing continues to be a high-risk pastime with 24 per cent (n=15) of people engaged in this activity prior to death.



The 2006 report will be sent to local government and other organisations shortly.

Tsunami and Flu Pandemic Response Plans



While it is hoped they will never be needed, Surf Life Saving NSW has launched detailed local responsive management plans for a Tsunami and Flu Pandemic. The plans which have been constructed through the assistance of the NSW State Emergency Service and the NSW Department of Health are a key identification of Surf Life Saving's important role in preparing the community for an emergency.

The plans have proven to come at a very good time with the NSW Department of Health and Office of Emergency Services conducting a large emergency management exercise just a few weeks after the finalisation of the plans.

The involvement that Surf Life Saving NSW's volunteer network of highly trained lifesavers and lifeguards would play in an emergency of this type is extremely high, and it is very important to know that they are able to be prepared and assist in this type of emergency.

Surf Life Saving leading the way in RWC Operations

Surf Life Saving recently hosted a national Rescue Water Craft (RWC) conference to train some of Australia and New Zealand's best lifesavers in rescue operations and training in an attempt to improve our world class service.

Keynote speakers from across the country and abroad, including Sergeant John Cox from the NSW Sydney Water Police who spoke on the vital role in the public safety system that surf lifesavers and RWCs play and how a more integrated service can be established, were also in attendance.

The conference was held just one week before the NSW Department of Primary Industries Minister Ian McDonald announced a grant of over \$115,000 to SLSNSW to provide an additional four RWC services and support helicopter services to provide beach safety and shark mitigation strategies. Mr McDonald said that Surf Life Saving was to be commended for its excellent work in the water and the funding would support an already invaluable service.



Surf Life Saving conducts marine stinger symposiums

Surf Life Saving experts are currently spending 12 weeks touring central and north Queensland conducting Marine Stinger Management Workshops from Hervey Bay to Port Douglas.

The symposiums are open for local government officials, ambulance and hospital staff, schools, tourism providers, business operators and Surf Life Saving Club members and feature industry experts speaking about the latest advancements in marine stinger research and best practice tips for keeping people safer when swimming at the beach.

Surf Life Saving Queensland conducts these workshops as part of its role as a member of the Queensland Government's *Irukandji* Prevention and Response Working Group.

SLSQ Marine Stinger Coordinator, Dr Lisa-ann Gershwin, said the aim of the workshops was to not only present the latest information on marine stingers, but to also answer any questions people may have.

"The workshops are designed as an open forum that provide many important facts about marine stingers and marine stinger management, and also allow the general community and key stakeholders the opportunity to have their questions answered.

"In recent years there have been many advancements in marine stinger research, and Surf Life Saving is eager

to ensure that coastal communities in the northern regions of Queensland know the findings.

"It is all about teaching people how to enjoying aquatic activity in a safe way. We've found that some tourists and locals are afraid to go in the water for fear of the marine stinger presence - our objective is to educate people about the simple steps they can take to reduce the risk of being stung," said Dr Gershwin.

Photos courtesy Dr. L.Gershwin



Safety message for tourists this summer



variety of Queensland agencies, who are working together to reduce the rate of preventable injuries and deaths during this time.

"G'day, Have a Safe Holiday is a collaborative initiative of the Queensland Visitor Safety Group, which was established to work jointly on public safety issues," she said.

"The group includes Queensland Transport, Department of Emergency Services, Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ), Queensland Environmental Protection Agency, Queensland Health, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, Queensland Tourism Industry Council, Queensland Police Service and Tourism Queensland.

"Each agency focuses on its area of expertise, undertaking media activity over the Christmas holiday period which, together, will form part of a strategic approach under the *G'day, Have a Safe Holiday banner.*"

Holidaymakers to Queensland will be the target of a joint summer safety campaign.

Tourism Minister Margaret Keech said the '*G'day, Have a Safe Holiday*' campaign was essential in helping keep visitors to Queensland safe throughout the busy Christmas holiday period.

"The summer holidays are the state's busiest tourism season. Following the campaign's success in 2005-06, this is again a joint initiative of a

Brisbane icons form innovative learning partnership

Surf Life Saving Queensland and the Southbank Institute of Technology have formed a unique training partnership.

The agreement will see the newly formed Australian Lifesaving Academy (QLD) and Southbank Institute of Technology come together to provide innovative solutions and career pathways for the Academy's diverse audience of schools, surf life saving club members, corporations and the community at large.

ALSAQ courses consist of national qualifications including Public Safety, Senior First Aid, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and the traditional surf awareness, surf safety and the traditional surf lifesaving awards such as the Bronze Medallion.

Some of those courses have a high theory content that translates extremely well to e-learning. The relationship with Southbank Institute of Technology will provide the Academy with the ability to deliver

course theory components online through Southbank's Blackboard e-learning platform, enabling ALSAQ to reach more people and to ensure that courses are available to everyone, in metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

"ALSAQ's courses are national qualifications. We set a high standard in all of our training. It's important to us that we have high quality e-learning materials and a reliable, stable delivery platform. Our relationship with Southbank will give us the quality and stability we are seeking in technology enhanced learning," said ALSAQ Academy Manager Peter Gould.

Through its relationship with ALSAQ, SBIT will provide training pathways for Surf Life Saving members.

"We look forward to a close and exciting learning partnership with SBIT, that will see both parties bringing their considerable strengths in Vocational Education together to deliver training in new and innovative ways."



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Would you like to receive BeachSafe via email? Please contact your State Surf Life Saving office.

BeachSafe is distributed four times per year – summer, autumn, winter and spring to keep you informed and updated on the latest issues relating to beach safety and Surf Life Saving services.

If you missed the last issue of BeachSafe (Spring - 2006), email slsq@lifesaving.com.au to obtain your copy.

Surf Life Saving joins forces with emergency services to facilitate training workshops

Over the past six months, Surf Life Saving NSW has undertaken a major training program which has delivered specified Train-the-Trainer like courses in Senior First Aid, Spinal Management, Defibrillation, Advanced Emergency Care and Beach Management to over 100 key lifesaving facilitators.

The program was presented by some of the State's most experienced and professional trainers, who have come from backgrounds in emergency management, police, rural fire service, helicopter rescue, pre-hospital care as well as advanced knowledge in training and assessment methodologies.

The program has also been boosted with involvement from the NSW Ambulance Service, with local station members establishing relationships with the participants and providing practical experience in patient handovers through a series of mock scenarios.



NEW CEOs in Surf Life Saving

Brett Williamson OAM has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), to oversee the next period of growth and development for this iconic Australian organisation.

Brett, who has been CEO of Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ) since 1991, is one of the

most successful leaders of the surf lifesaving movement in the country.

Anthony (Tony) Scanlan has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of SLSQ. Tony has a long and prestigious career with some of Australia's key companies.

