



SLSA History Fact Sheet #9

Surf lifesaving overseas

Australian surf lifesavers have always been committed to helping other nations develop and implement effective lifesaving organisations. SLSA's international connection goes back to 1925 when Charles Paterson, then President, travelled overseas and observed the lifesaving practices in England, Europe, the United States and Hawaii. SLSA's first international tour was in 1937, when they sent a team to New Zealand, followed by a tour to Hawaii in 1939.

In 1956, SLSA made the first steps towards the creation of an international lifesaving body. An international carnival was arranged to coincide with the Olympic carnival in Torquay, and representatives from New Zealand, America, Great Britain, Ceylon, Hawaii and South Africa were invited to a meeting, where the International Council of Surf Lifesaving was formed, with SLSA President Adrian Curlewis as President.



Some members of the 1965 Australian representative team who toured America.

In 1971, the World Life Saving Council (WLS) was formed to replace the by-now defunct International Council. Adrian Curlewis was patron of the new body, with Australians Kevin Weldon and Alan Whelpton as President and Secretary respectively. WLS focussed on education and development, but in the 1980s also began to organise international surf lifesaving competitions, resulting in the inaugural 'Rescue' event, in Southport (QLD) in 1988. However the existence of another international lifesaving body, Fédération Internationale de Sauvetage (FIS), which governed European countries, limited the scope of WLS. Following discussions between the two organisations in the early 1990s, FIS and WLS merged, and created the International Life Saving Federation, or ILS in 1993. ILS was formally constituted in 1994.

ILS continues to be the authority on international lifesaving, and SLSA continues to play a strong role in this organisation. Ex-SLSA President Alan Whelpton has been ILS President since 2001, and SLSA, RLSSA and SLSNZ play key roles in the development of lifesaving in the Asia-Pacific region.

Source: Caroline Ford and Ed Jaggard, 'Spreading the word: Surf lifesaving overseas' in Jaggard (ed) *Between the Flags: One Hundred Summers of Australian Surf Lifesaving*, UNSW Press, Sydney 2006

- For a full list of Australian representative teams, go to <http://surfsports.slsa.com.au>, and follow the links.
- For more information on ILS, go to <http://www.ilsf.org>