



SURF LIFE SAVING
NEW SOUTH WALES



Critical Incident Debrief Pack

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Critical Incident Debrief Overview:

Purpose-

It is the aim of this document to compile and reference all relevant procedures/processes and provide consistent and structured delivery for effective Critical Incident Debriefing.

What is a Critical Incident?

The environment in which Surf Life Saving operates has the potential for members to be involved in serious incidents of a high-intensity and a traumatic nature, and which do often involve death, serious injury and/or significant risk to lifesaving personnel.

Why should a Critical Incident Debrief be undertaken?

A critical incident debrief is undertaken to ensure that:

- 1) Member welfare/support is optimised
- 2) The ability to re-establish core lifesaving services is achieved
- 3) Obligatory paperwork and data is recorded, collected and forwarded appropriately
- 4) The Surf Life Saving response is documented for future review or for legal reasons (if required)
- 5) Surf Life Saving NSW is best positioned (through effective data collection) to provide drowning prevention recommendations to the Coroner and relevant local government authorities.

Who should deliver/lead Critical Incident Debrief?

The Branch Duty Officer (or equivalent) should lead every Critical Incident Debrief as part of the incident recovery phase. If a Duty Officer is not available an appropriate Branch Officer should be tasked to deliver the debrief.

When/where should a Critical Incident Debrief be undertaken?

The debrief should take place as soon as possible after the incident has finished, at a location which does not require much travel e.g. the Surf Life Saving Club. The debrief should be conducted in a secure room, with no thoroughfare and isolated from any media or public interference.

Who should attend?

All SLS personnel who were involved in the incident should attend, regardless of the level of involvement. Delivery of the debrief as soon as possible is important in this respect to ensure full attendance. Any personnel not in attendance should be recorded in the debrief form and followed up by the Duty Officer.

External agency / public involvement : A joint SLS-External agency debrief can be organised following or at a later date, involving the key senior members involved (Duty Officer, Patrol Captain, Senior Lifeguard, Police Sgt etc.).

What is involved in a Critical Incident Debrief?

The critical incident process can be broken into three separate parts:

- 1) Operational Debrief
- 2) Emotive Debrief (Psychological First Aid)
- 3) Expert Counselling (as required post incident)

1. Operational Debrief

The Duty Officer shall lead/coordinate the Operational Debrief and record each members involvement (who was involved and in what capacity), contact details and the sequence of events - from first notification through to the end of the incident. Key actions and timings are recorded as best able within the sequence of events.

CHECKLIST FOR DUTY OFFICERS:

Time:	Completed Form / Log:	Completed by:	Y or N
Within 48 hours post incident	Critical Incident Debrief Log – Operational (CIDL)– Completed in full	Duty Officer	
	‘Patrol Log’ – completed in full, copied and attached to Critical Incident Debrief Log	Patrol, handed to Duty Officer	
	‘Incident Report Log’ – completed in full, copied and attached to Critical Incident Debrief Log	Patrol, handed to Duty Officer	

NOTE: ALL paperwork sent to Branch Director of Lifesaving within 48 hours after incident

2. Emotive Debrief (Psychological First Aid)

Critical incidents can have a strong emotional impact, which can overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of the individual or group. Members may experience a number of different reactions to a critical incident, all of which are completely normal. Psychological First Aid focuses on member wellbeing and coping, and will form a significant part of the Duty Officer role when dealing with critical incidents.

The Duty Officer shall lead the Emotive Debrief session and in essence the first part of it can commence (covertly) within the Operational Debrief. Specifically in the Emotive Debrief the Duty Officer will:

- Observe and record any members displaying obvious emotional trauma
- Outline the effects that traumatic events can have on people (straight away and delayed on-set)
- Outline what support is available and how to access it (hotline, counselling sessions)
- Provide supporting information (brochures, contact information)
- Outline the process ‘from here’ as far as follow-up, accessing additional support etc.

CHECKLIST FOR DUTY OFFICERS:

Time:	Completed Form / Log:	Completed by:	Y or N
Within 12 hours of the incident	Names of ALL members involved sent to lifesaving@surflifesaving.com.au	Duty Officer	
Completed between 48 – 72 hours post incident	Critical Incident Debrief Log –Emotive (CIDL)– Completed in full	Duty Officer	
	Witness Statement forms (individual) – completed and attached to Critical Incident Debrief Log	Members, handed to Duty Officer	
	Photos of the scene e.g. swell, environment, signage, access points *NO photos of CPR, injury or the patient	Duty Officer	

NOTE: ALL paperwork sent to Branch Director of Lifesaving 48 – 72 hours after incident

3. Expert Counselling– if required.

SLSNSW has a contract with a private counselling organisation. Expert counselling plays the following roles in SLS Critical Incidents:

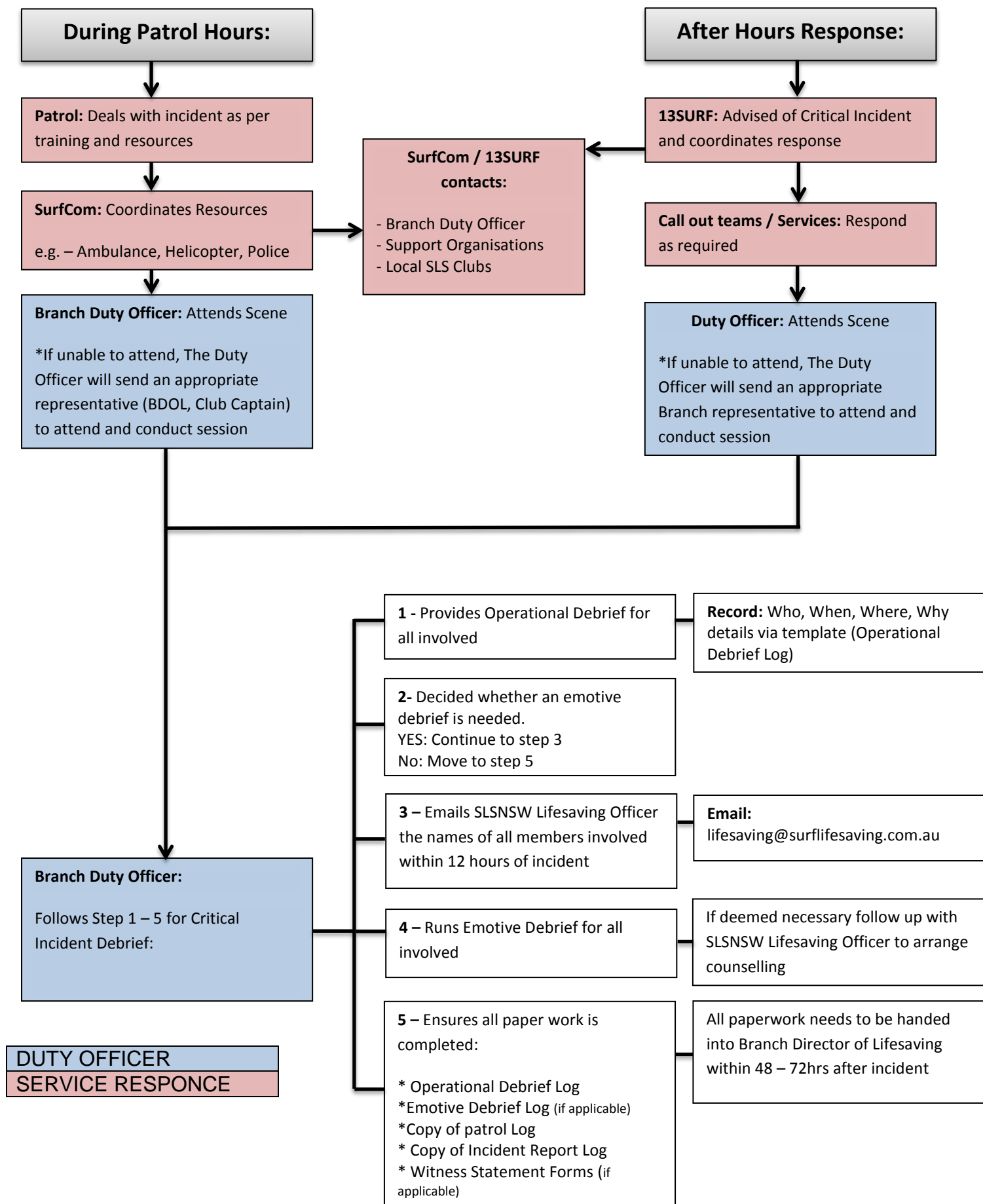
- Provision of trauma information/brochures
- Provision of three free 24/7 counselling sessions to members once approved by SLSNSW
- Provision of psychological first aid (emotive debrief) training to Branch Duty Officers and Peer Support Officers
- Provision of group counselling sessions for significantly traumatic critical incidents

Accessing expert counselling:

Individual Counselling Session (post-incident): Members (or their parents for 18years or younger) can request an individual counselling session as they deem necessary.

Critical Incident Debrief Programme:

Response Flow Chart



Critical Incident Debrief Procedure:

What incidents need a critical incident debrief?

Surf Life Saving Critical incidents may take the form of (but not limited to):

- Incidents involving death of a patient
- CPR (successful or unsuccessful)
- Drowning
- Failure to save a life
- Shark Attack
- A member of SLS is seriously injured

- Duty Officer attendance to scene - **COMPULSORY**
- Operational & Emotive Critical Debrief conducted - **COMPULSORY**

- Major injury with hospitalisation
- Major rescues
- Severe trauma
- Abuse
- Aggressive Behaviour
- Heat Attack
- Severe asthma attacks

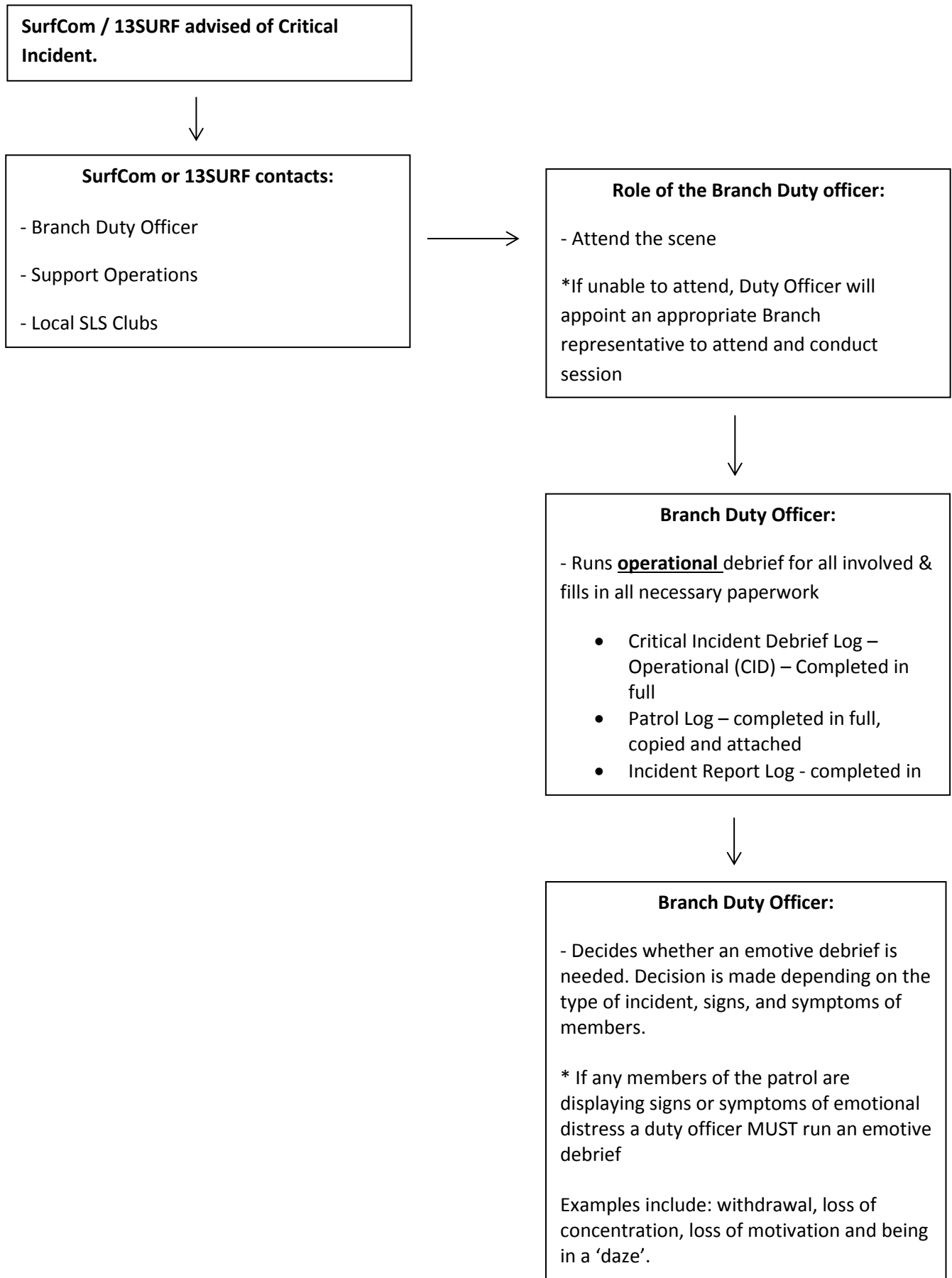
- Duty Officer attendance to scene - **COMPULSORY**
- Operational debrief conducted - **COMPULSORY**
- Emotive Critical Debrief conducted - IF requested by the Patrol or Club Captain

If the following Signs and Symptoms are evident post incident, an Emotive Debrief **MUST** be run:

- Sleep disturbance
- Marked symptoms of anxiety: restlessness, irritability, anger.
- Withdrawal from others: loss of motivation
- Increased substance use e.g. drugs or alcohol
- Appearing like 'being in a daze' / feeling detached
- Difficulties with concentration, attention and decision making.
- Appearing preoccupied or emotionally 'flat' or fatigued

Critical Incident Debrief Procedure:

Operational Flow Chart



Critical Incident Debrief Log:

Operational

Name of Facilitator:	Date:
Time started:	Location:
Time finished:	

INTRODUCTION:

Preparation:

- ✓ Are you dressed neat and tidy and in a professional shirt or polo?
- ✓ Debrief taking place in a quiet room/area – secure from thoroughfare/media/public?
- ✓ Do you have the required forms/logs/paperwork?
- ✓ Are all members involved in attendance?
- ✓ Any U18 members involved – have their parents been invited (if able)

Welcoming Address:

Your address to the assembled people involved will include:-

1. Reinforce that the purpose of the debrief is not to apportion blame, but record the facts.
2. Your name and position within the organisation
3. A brief and relevant personal surf lifesaving background
4. The purpose of the debrief is:
 - Ensure all paperwork and information completed
 - Record key actions/times/sequence of events for internal records, police records, possible coronial inquests and media (to ensure professional and correct information is available from SLS)
 - Record all members involved
5. What will happen with information given at debrief?
 - Will be combined with other information from SurfCom and other SLS assets
 - Recorded internally as per SLS logs. Provided externally to NSW Police or Coroner (if requested) specific member information will not be disclosed to any other person or organisation outside of SLSNSW and the Club, without their prior agreement (i.e. Media).
6. **Reinforce that the purpose of the debrief is not to apportion blame, but record the facts and sequence of events**

CHECKLIST FOR DUTY OFFICERS:

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NOTE: ALL paperwork sent to Branch Director of Lifesaving within 48 hours after incident

RECORD OF ATTENDANCE:

	Name	Phone	Role	Witness Statement Y/N
Example:	John Doe	0410 111 222	IRB driver who rescued patient. Saw patient struggling in water and helped with CPR	Yes
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

ESTABLISH THE FACTS:

Date & Time of incident:	
Type of activity of the patient:	e.g. Swimming, surfing, running
Number of Patients:	
Exact Location:	
Tide:	
Weather:	
Swell / Wave Size:	
Number on Patrol (Bronze):	
Number of Lifesavers assisting:	
Number of Public assisting:	

BRAINSTORMING:

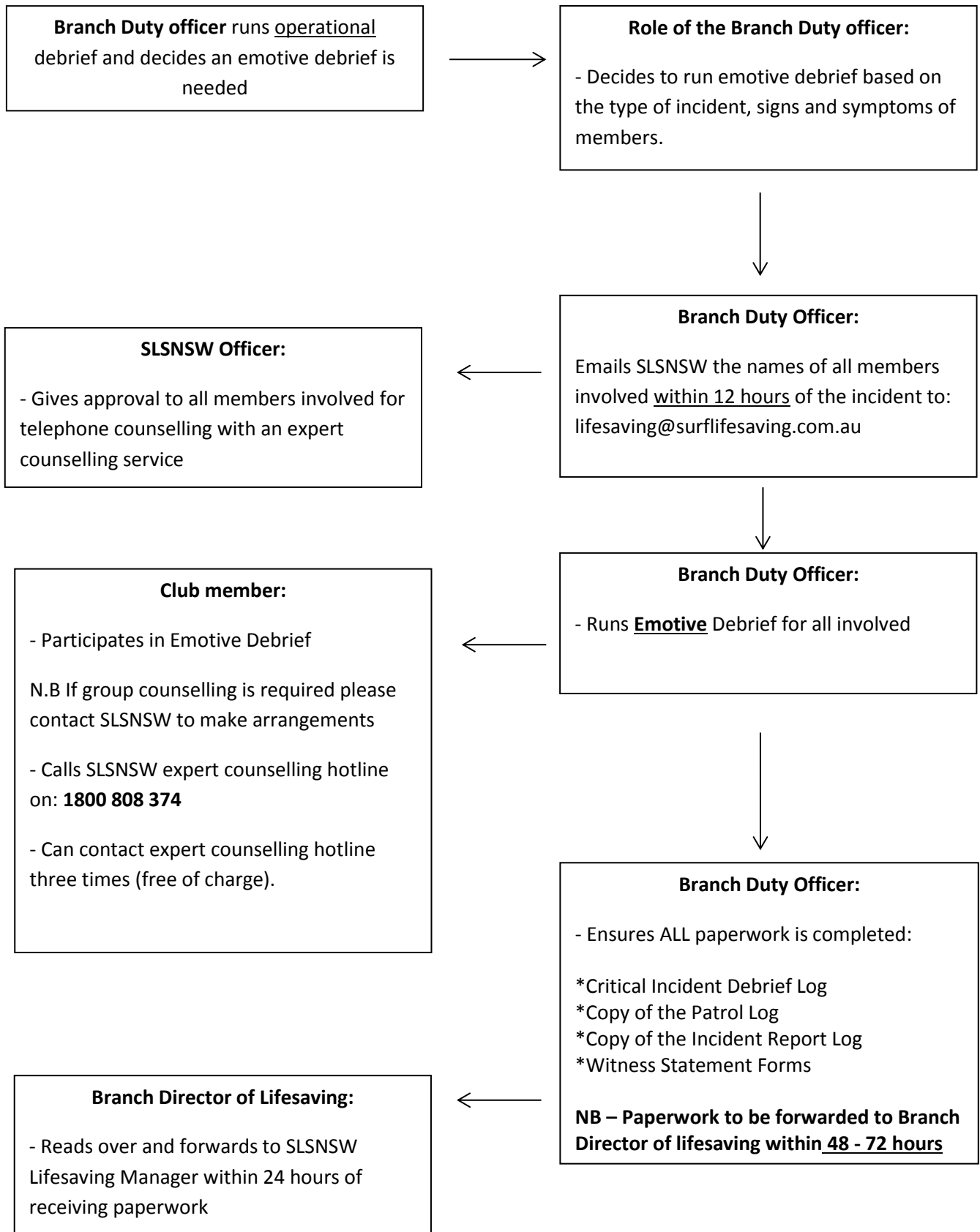
	Strengths:	Things to improve next time?
<i>E.g.</i>	- Communication between IRB and Patrol Captain on the beach	- Ensure that the Oxygen and Defibrillator are in a easier to access location
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

OTHER COMMENTS:

[illegible]

Critical Incident Debrief Procedure:

Emotive Flow Chart



Critical Incident Debrief Log:

Emotive

EMOTIVE DEBRIEF:

Introduction:

1. Outline that this session and follow-up options for support are all about protecting our members and helping ensure they continue to be involved in SLS and the impacts of the incident are minimised to personal life. Outline that it is ok to ask for help and additional counselling sessions should be organised for anyone who thinks they might benefit from it.

Trauma effects:

2. Open a discussion on the effects a traumatic incident can have on all members (the young/inexperienced and old/experienced alike).
3. Explain that everyone responds differently in the aftermath of a critical incident
4. Explain that symptoms can fall into four areas: Behavioural, Physical, Cognitive and Emotional
Some of the symptoms to watch for are:
 - Significant changes in an individual's social and professional functioning
 - Marked symptoms of anxiety: restlessness, irritability, anger.
 - Avoidance behaviour (avoiding communication, activities, places and people associated with the incident).
 - Withdrawal from others: loss of motivation
 - Appearing like 'being in a daze'
 - Appearing preoccupied or emotionally 'flat'
 - Difficulties with concentration, attention and decision making
 - Tiredness, fatigue
 - Increased alcohol consumption
5. Explain that these effects may not occur immediately but may occur in the weeks and months following the incident.
Immediate Support Available: Free 24/7 Counselling Hotline (maximum of 3 phone calls). Assure members that counselling is completely confidential and no information is shared with SLS or any other external agency.
6. Discuss with the Club Captain or Club President for a follow up to occur with each member to ascertain how they are coping with the situation.

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NOTE: ALL paperwork sent to Branch Director of Lifesaving 48 – 72 hours after incident



Details of Witness:

Date: _____

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ State: _____ P/code: _____

Contact Phone: _____ Mobile: _____

DOB: _____ Email: _____

Witness Statement Instructions:

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING NOTES CAREFULLY BEFORE COMMENCING YOUR STATEMENT:

- Provide lead up Information of events that occurred prior to the actual incident
- Include a description of weather, surf conditions, environment etc.
- Provide as much detail as possible about the actual incident including distances, times, speeds, size etc.
- Write only about what YOU personally saw and heard, actions undertook etc.
- Should be in first person e.g. I have & I went

What will happen to the information I give?

Surf Life Saving NSW will collate all information to form a clear overall report of the incident. This may help make recommendations to the Coroner and Surf Life Saving on how to prevent incidents reoccurring if possible



Details of Witness Statement:

[illegible]

Date: _____



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