

# Memorandum

<b>To: All SLSNSW Members</b>
<b>From: Joel Wiseman, SLSNSW Director of Lifesaving</b>
<b>Date: 21<sup>st</sup> March 2020</b>
<b>Pages: 2</b>
<b>Subject: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Withdrawal of Patrolling Services Update</b>

On Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2020 the NSW Government have directed volunteer surf lifesavers and lifeguards to withdraw patrols where there are large numbers of people present, in order to comply with the Government's ban on mass gatherings in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Additionally, surf patrol captains and club captains are being given the discretion to withdraw patrols if volunteers are concerned about their own safety, irrespective of the numbers of people on the beach.

The COVID-19 outbreak represents a significant risk to the community, inclusive of our membership, and preventative measures must be put in place to lessen the impact wherever possible.

To assist volunteer members in adhering to this directive the following steps and information is provided.

## **What should I do when my beach has large numbers of people present?**

- There is no expectation for members to police number restrictions and members are not to engage in any situation that present a risk to their health or safety;
- The patrol captain or lifeguard should notify the State Operations Centre via radio that patrolling services are being withdrawn when it is obvious that the threshold of 500 has been exceeded;
- The patrol captain or lifeguard should lower the flags and ensure their patrol maintains a surveillance role wherever possible with patrolling members taking up vantage/surveillance points from the back of the beach or the clubhouse. Further information relating to patrols can be found in SOP LS3.3 [Club Patrol Requirements](#);
- The patrol captain should notify their club captain that this decision has been made and action has been taken;
- The patrol captain may notify their Duty Officer or Support Operations team operating nearby as these services will remain on callout duty to assist patrols and to respond to coastal incidents and emergencies.

## **How do I announce that we will be withdrawing patrol services?**

- Prior to reaching the threshold of 500 people patrol captains or lifeguards should make an announcement to the public to alleviate numbers and ask people to vacate or make alternate distance arrangements;
- Patrol captains or lifeguards may wish to use the following transcript in announcing a withdrawal of patrolling services once the threshold has been exceeded "The NSW Government have issued a Ministerial directive that

prohibits mass gatherings of 500 or more people in outdoor spaces. This directive is to deal with the public health risk of COVID-19 and its possible consequences to the community. This beach has now exceeded this limit and patrolling services are now being withdrawn. Please consider your need to continue swimming as patrol services are now withdrawing”;

- Lower the flagged or defined swimming area (i.e. beach closed due to Public Health Order).

#### **What should I do if people do not heed our advice?**

- It is possible that members of the public may not heed the advice of volunteer patrols or lifeguards. Members are always to ensure their own personal safety and that of any members in their charge;
- While members of volunteer patrol members are not able to undertake regulatory activity e.g. telling members of the public to leave the beach, members may still provide evidence to authorised council officers or police in their capacity as witnesses to any alleged offence. Further information can be found at SOP LS7.7 [Regulation Enforcement](#);
- Patrol captains or lifeguards should notify the State Operations Centre as per normal incident procedure and request additional support. This support may be in the form of their Branch Duty Officer, Lifeguard Supervisor, Council officers, Police etc.;
- If patrol captains or lifeguards feel at any stage theirs or their patrol’s personal safety is at risk, then they should proceed to their surf club until any disturbance has subsided. Further information and procedures can be found in SOP LS8.7 [Public Order Incident](#).

#### **What should I do if media arrive at our beach?**

- All media enquiries are to be directed to your club president, branch or SLSNSW media team on 0405 203 764.

#### **How long will this continue for?**

- It is imperative that we continue to review our operational practices to ensure that we meet the changing nature of this crisis. SLSNSW will continue to provide you with regular communications containing the most-up-to-date advice, policies and information - relevant to your roles as lifesavers, emergency first responders and community members.;
- All branches and clubs should ensure that they have reviewed their call-out teams and ensured that equipment is ‘rescue ready’ if your services was required to be tasked. Further information regarding call-out teams can be found in SOP LS9.9 [Club/Service Callout Teams \(Emergency Response\)](#).

For more information about COVID-19, visit the links provided below:

- [Surf Life Saving New South Wales](#)
- [NSW Health](#)
- [Australian Government, Department of Health](#)
- [World Health Organisation](#)