

MEMORANDUM

To: Branch Presidents, Branch Directors of Lifesaving, Branch Support Staff & Club Captains
From: Steven Pearce, Surf Life Saving NSW CEO
Date: 16 March 2018
Subject: Status of UAV (Drone) Operations in NSW

UAV (Drone) Operations in NSW

Background:

SLSNSW have been working with The Ripper Group for approximately the past three (3) years to undertake research and development in UAV search and rescue operations.

The UAV capability that had been in development for the previous three (3) years was fully activated in September 2017 with the deployment of UAV's in the Port Macquarie-Hastings region. This was undertaken to assist Council to provide surveillance across the busy school holiday period after a whale carcass had washed up on a local beach resulting in heightened shark activity.

In November 2017, the NSW Government agreed to a SLSNSW business case proposal to support the Department of Primary Industries' (DPI) Shark Mitigation Strategy. This support focused around providing UAV surveillance and data collection on the NSW Far North Coast.

In December 2017, Lifesavers and Australian Lifeguard Service Lifeguards began undertaking surveillance flights at nine (9) identified locations as part of the DINSS project. Flights are collecting data which will assist the DPI with their research into shark behaviour in the surf zone and have also provided SLS patrols with greater ability to minimise any potential shark interactions with the bathing public. This trial will continue on the NSW Far North Coast until April 2018.

These flights have allowed SLS to expand our operational capability and have allowed us to keep higher visibility over larger stretches of our coastline which was clearly evident on January 18th 2018 when the successful rescue of two teenagers at Lennox Head was completed.

The following are some clarification responses to frequently asked questions;

Q: Can my Branch or Club fly UAV's now?

A: SLSNSW UAV pilots are currently operating under The Ripper Group's Remote Operators Certificate (ReOC). This decision was made based on the relationship SLSNSW and The Ripper Group had formed in the past 3 years and so that we could implement the NSW FNC UAV trials and obtain clearance to fly in restricted areas.

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has strict regulations related to the use of UAV's, with heavy fines handed out for non-compliance. Part of this current UAV trial is to identify operational circumstances where SLS is unable to maintain compliance with regulations and to identify options to seek additional permissions or exemptions from CASA.

At present SLSNSW are only taking expressions of interest from interested Branches who may wish to undertake UAV operations. This will be done as part of a wide-scale review of the NSW FNC trial and will

provide various recommendations on how UAV operations can be further utilised across the breadth of NSW. No additional UAV operations will be approved during the course of the 2017/18 season.

2018/19 Lifesaving season and beyond

SLSNSW will finalise a full review of the NSW FNC trial in May 2018. This review will provide recommendations on ways in which SLSNSW can further enhance UAV operations across NSW.

This trial is providing SLSNSW with vital information on the various aspects of coastal UAV operations. The review is looking at what equipment is best suited to our harsh coastal environment so that we can provide our members with the best equipment for operational longevity and safety.

This review will also provide recommendations on how we can best train and support our members so that we can confidently expand operations across NSW knowing that our members have the highest standard of training and competency.

SLSNSW have drafted Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) for UAV operations by SLSNSW members and these will be reviewed as part of a wide scale review of all NSW SOP's in May/June 2018. At present SLSNSW are operating under The Ripper Group's SOP's and ReOC.

Why is all the coordination and oversight managed by SLSNSW?

CASA requires all ReOC operations to be reviewed, approved and monitored by a certified chief remote pilot due to the significant risk posed to the safety of people, property and other aircraft. SLSNSW's insurer also requires that we implement a centralised system to properly manage this risk. Any operations outside of this controlled centralised system by surf life saving clubs and branches are not covered under the SLSNSW insurer. We are currently reviewing systems which will provide oversight and monitoring of both pilots and aircraft, and this will greatly assist UAV pilots in planning flights and aircraft maintenance management in the future.

We are designing a UAV organisational structure in conjunction with our partners so that we can properly support all UAV operations across NSW. This structure will encompass the various parameters that are required to successfully and safely run a UAV operation.

Who do I talk to for more information?

If you wish to further understand our UAV operations and future planning, please contact Phil Ayres, SLSNSW Chief Operating Officer at payres@surflifesaving.com.au