



SURF LIFE SAVING
NEW SOUTH WALES

Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB)

A Guide for New Competing Clubs



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As at 25/03/2019

Disclaimer: This is a guide only. Please refer to the current rules, circulars and/or updates provided for the most up to date information.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief History of the IRB

Inflatable Rescue Boats (hereafter referred to as 'IRB') are a vital part of Australian Surf Life Saving and have come a long way since the first powered operated craft was developed in Queensland in 1957.

In 1969 Warren Mitchell (Avalon Beach SLSC) returned from a lifeguarding stint in England where he saw a 4.5mtr inflatable craft being used by British Sea Rescue Services. Warren approached the Dunlop Company and obtained a 4mtr boat, fitted with foot straps and with a 20hp motor. He developed skilled techniques unheard of in England, let alone Australia. Bob Millett (Ocean Grove SLSC) also toyed with this new concept experimenting with a 3mtr boat. Both Warren & Bob joined forces, seeing the potential of such a craft for lifesaving.

In 1974 the Australian Government gave a \$60,000 grant to Surf Lifesaving Australia for the development & manufacture of inshore rescue boats. The inflatable rescue boat proved itself and went on to have the biggest impact on surf rescue techniques since the introduction of the Malibu board in the 1950s.

John Fallon and Cliff Spong wanted to prove the durability of the IRB's so in December 1974 the two set off from Milson's Point in Sydney at 10am and spent 4 days traveling up the east coast of Australia arriving at Coolangatta at 2.30pm. Although the trip lasted 4 days, the actual driving time over the 750km distance was only 31 hours 38 mins with stops at Fingal Beach, South West Rocks and Evans Head before reaching the Queensland coast.

Two years later Cliff teamed up with Kees Van Yperen and a 2 man crew from Woodside Beach SLSC to conquer Bass Strait in what would be the first ever crossing of the 160km distance in an IRB. The trip started at Port Albert near Wilson Promontory with overnight stops at Flinders Island, Bicheno on the Tasmanian Coast then finishing at Clifton Beach near Hobart just in time for the Australian Surf Lifesaving Championships.

1.2 Brief History of IRB competition

IRBs have only been a recent edition to Surf Life Saving as has the competition. Although competition started in the early 1970s, a set of competition guidelines were not established until 1976. From this period all the way through to the late 1990's strong competition teams existed throughout Australia, with their innovation and love of the sport contribution to the evolution of the IRB and its role in saving lives. Competition was briefly suspended in 2000/2001, and has only been revived in recent years.

Historically the events have been held in the winter; as competitive resources and personnel are usually on patrol or supporting surf carnivals. In September 1975 the first National Carnival was held at North Cronulla. The first NSW State IRB carnival was held in 1981.

1.3 IRB Safety

WARNING: IRB competition can be inherently dangerous. IRB competition participants acknowledge that they are exposed to certain risks during IRB competition including but not limited to leg, spinal and neck injuries, physical exertion, contact with the IRB, temperature, weather and water conditions and even drowning. All members through their participation in IRB events agree with, acknowledge and understand this warning and accept and assume the inherent risks in IRB competition.

Course Judges will monitor and observe all driving, operating, safety practices and techniques. Should such practices and techniques be considered to be unsafe, dangerous or contrary to the rules or procedures of the event, the Course Judges have the authority to immediately disqualify the offending competitor/s from the event and/or issue a safety infringement.

For public safety, signs or banners shall be displayed to provide a 50-metre buffer zone on either side of the competition area. These may be the same signs used to indicate IRB training and shall be a minimum of 1 metre x 1 metre.

For example:

***“CAUTION – KEEP CLEAR
POWER RESCUE BOAT
TRAINING”***

or

***“CAUTION – KEEP CLEAR
POWER RESCUE BOAT
EVENTS”***



1.4 What is IRB Competition

APPENDIX A – TYPICAL IRB COMPETITION AREA

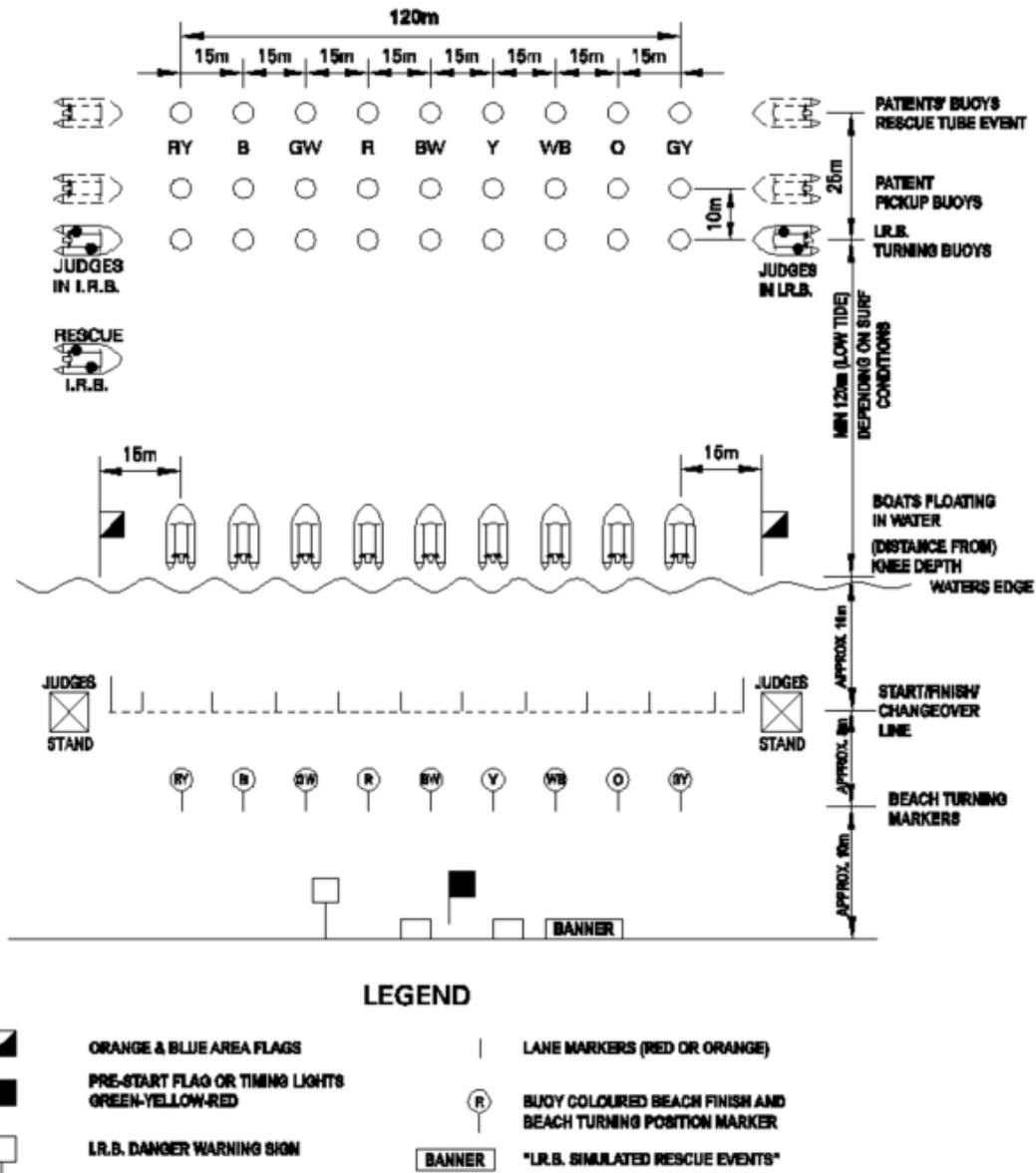


FIGURE 1: TYPICAL INFLATABLE RESCUE BOAT COMPETITION AREA

(Distances approximate only)

(NOTE: The beach setup relative to the positioning of the buoys may be adjusted dependent upon the prevailing surf conditions)

1.4 (cont.) what is IRB Competition – EVENTS

Please refer to the [Surf Sports Manual](#) for detailed descriptions of each event. A brief account is provided below;

IRB rescue: Teams are comprised of 1 patient, 1 driver, and 1 crew member. The patient is positioned on the seaward side of the designated buoy. The driver and crew member are on the beach side of the crew start / finish line adjacent to their beach position indicators. On the starter's signal, the crew launches the IRB, precede through the surf to pick-up their patient, round their buoy, and return to shore to finish the event.

IRB mass rescue: likewise to the IRB rescue, however teams have 2 patients to pick-up; one at a time, and return to shore with a transition between each rescue.

IRB teams rescue: Each team comprises of two drivers, two crewpersons and two patients. The patient is positioned on the seaward side of a designated buoy. The second driver and second crewperson shall position themselves at the changeover line. On the starter's signal, the first crew launch the IRB and proceed through the surf to the patient, picking them up and returning to shore. The driver, crewperson and patient shall exit the IRB. The first crewperson turns the IRB and must maintain control of it, while the driver proceeds to the start/finish line, rounds their respective beach position marker and visibly tags the second driver. After the tag the second driver proceeds to the water's edge to relaunch and restart the IRB.

IRB rescue tube: Teams are comprised of 1 patient, 1 driver, and 1 crew member. Patients are positioned at their respective patient buoys, set approximately 25 m on the seaward side of the turning buoys. Crew members are positioned on the beach side of the crew start / finish line, adjacent to their respective beach position indicators. On the starter's signal, competitors launch their IRBs, proceed through the surf and turn around their respective turning buoy. The crew member dons the rescue tube harness. After the IRB has rounded the turning buoy, the crew member with harness donned and the rescue tube held in a secure grip, enters the water and swims past the turning buoy to their patients. The crew member secures the rescue tube around the patient and tows the patient back to the IRB. Once the crew member makes contact with the IRB or driver, he or she may board before the patient. The driver may assist the crew member and / or patient into the IRB. Patients may assist themselves in boarding the IRB. After the "patient lift" into

the IRB has commenced, the driver drives the IRB around the team's respective turning buoy and returns to shore to finish.

IRB relay: This event is a continuous relay involving the four events detailed above. The four legs of this event shall be conducted in the order: 1 - IRB Rescue Tube, 2 - IRB Mass Rescue, 3 - IRB Teams Rescue and 4 - IRB Rescue. Six patients shall be taken to sea by the competing club's nominated "patient boat". Each leg shall be as per the individual event descriptions except for the start of legs two, three and four and the finish of legs one, two and three which shall be changeovers as detailed in the Teams Rescue event description.

1.5 Why is IRB competition important

IRB competition and racing promotes the skills required to complete a successful IRB rescue, a fundamental ability for patrolling members.

1.6 Why should Clubs get involved?

Lifesaving Sport competition plays a significant role in the preparation of a lifesaver to meet the physical standards necessary for saving lives in the water. IRB competition will help improve member's abilities, skills and knowledge on how to safely and correctly carry out an IRB rescue, which ultimately will keep their patrolled beaches safer. Furthermore the social, and interpersonal skills gained by any team sport will be boasted from IRB competition involvement.

1.7 Who can participate in IRB Competition?

Individuals can compete in IRB competition from the age of 15, dependant of their position/role that they resume within the crew. See below for a description of each position;

At the date of entry closure for the competition to be contested;

Drivers are required to:

- Be a minimum of seventeen years of age;
- Hold their relevant state maritime licence to operate an IRB;
- Hold their relevant drivers award;
- Be currently proficient as required by SLSA;
- Have logged twenty (20) specific in water IRB competition driving training under the supervision of a currently licenced IRB surf coach;
- Be endorsed by a currently licensed IRB surf coach as being competent for IRB competition.

Crewpersons are required to:

- Be a minimum of sixteen years of age;
- Hold their IRB crewpersons award;
- Be currently proficient as required by SLSA;
- Have logged twenty (20) specific in water IRB competition driving or crewing training under the supervision of a currently licenced IRB surf coach;
- Be endorsed by a currently licensed IRB surf coach as being competent for IRB competition.

Patients are required to:

- Be a minimum of fifteen years of age **before October 1 in the season the competition** is being conducted;
- Hold their IRB crewpersons award;
- Be currently proficient as required by SLSA;
- Have logged twenty (20) specific in water IRB competition driving or crewing training under the supervision of a currently licenced IRB surf coach;
- Be endorsed by a currently licensed IRB surf coach as being competent for IRB competition.
- **Note:** *all patients are required to wear a helmet in training and competition (other than rescue tube)*
- **Note:** *all drivers, crew and patients are required to wear high visibility SLSA approved life jackets.*

Handlers are required to:

- Be a minimum of fifteen years of age before October 1 in the season the competition is being conducted;
- Hold their IRB crewpersons award;
- Be currently proficient as required by SLSA;
- Be a member of the same club or team as the crews and be entered a the competition
- Wear a competition cap and a distinctive high visibility vest or approved PFD
- Comply with all instructions of the officials
- Make every effort to ensure that they or the equipment that they are handling, does not impede another crew, otherwise both competitor and handler may be subject to disqualification

2. PRE COMPETITION

2.1 IRB Training

SLSNSW runs IRB competition development clinics yearly, to provide up and coming and experienced crews with theoretical and practical skills and knowledge, including but not limited to safety, rules and regulation updates, practical skills; starts, sprints, entering the boat, driving, turns, pickups and finishes. These development programs should be used as an introduction for crews, or as a brush up for experienced crews in addition to regular training.

2.2 Training logs

- Explanations and expectations

To be eligible to compete in IRB Competition all competitors need to be signed off by an accredited IRB Development or Performance Coach. *For information on obtaining coaching accreditations, please visit the [SLSNSW Coaching web page](#).*

2.3 IRB Competition Rules

Please refer to the [35th edition of the SLSA Surf Sports Manual](#).

2.4 Gear and Equipment

PFDs and Helmets

In all training and competition, it is compulsory for drivers, crews and patients to wear high visibility (conspicuous colour) SLSA approved level 50 Australian Standard (AS4758) lifejackets or Type 2 (AS1499-1996) lifejackets. It is not required for high visibility safety vests to be worn over the top of lifejackets. The wearing of approved helmets is also compulsory for patients in all events in both training and in competition. All PFDs and helmets must meet SLSA requirements please check the SLSA gear and equipment section on the member's portal for specifications. Helmets are to be in club colours (cap design) or alternatively clubs may place a competition cap over the top of the helmet as per the Surf Sport Manual. For further information refer to [Section 2 of the 35th Edition SLSA Surf Sport Manual](#).

2.5 Scrutineering

All IRB's, motors and fuel must be inspected by accredited scrutineers. This ensures a safe and equal competition with no unfair advantages or equipment tampering. All IRBs and equipment shall comply with the specifications of SLSA, scrutineering conditions and rules as specified by SLSA through circulars and bulletins.

All IRBs must have an "Approved Surf Rescue Craft" plate affixed and display SR number.

2.6 Team Manager Preparation

Team managers will register themselves and their best contact method with the event organisers. Information will be distributed on needs bases to team management regarding important information for the event. It is essential that managers regularly check these communication channels and distribute information to their team. It is also the responsibility of the team manager to make sure all training logs are completed, signed off and submitted to SLSNSW and ensure that all athletes are compliant with SLSA requirements and all relevant awards.

Team Managers Competition Check List

- Book accommodation,
- Ensure entries are submitted (generally close Sunday before competition),
- Entry payment (entry invoices sent by SLSNSW after entries close),
- Note; Draws & Order of events released on Wednesday before competition,
 - Review Draw and note event numbers and lanes for teams,
- Competition day;
 - 0600am arrive on site and start unloading gear, setting up tent and transporting IRBs to beach
 - Ensure SLSNSW have signed training logs
 - 0730am Team Managers meeting commences (approx.)
 - 0800am First Event (approx.)

2.7 SLSNSW Pre event information

SLSNSW will make all efforts to send updated and timely communications regarding the competition and pre event requirements/logistics to be completed. Information includes but is not limited to due dates for training log submissions, entries, weather updates, and contingency locations for the event, event timings and team draws.

2.8 Gear Preparation / Transport

It is the responsibility of individual crews to make sure their gear and equipment is up to standard and complies with SLSA scrutineering checks. This includes but is not limited to, compliance checks, safe equipment in good working order, compliant fuel use, and compliant motors. Transportation via trainer or otherwise to and from the event is the responsibility of individual crews.

2.9 Costs involved

- Equipment (IRB, motor)
- Helmet

- Life jacket
- Wetsuit
- Event entries
- Accommodation
- Transport
- Meals
- Uniforms
- Training

3. DURING COMPETITION

3.1 Example Site Map



3.2 Club Set Up (includes gear transport to the beach, tent set up etc.)

Clubs are required to bring their own boat, motor, fuel cell and all personal protective equipment (PPE) to all competitions. Trailers are used by clubs to tow boats and equipment; this is an individual crews/clubs responsibility to get all equipment to and from the competition. Clubs may also bring

and erect their own tents for competitors and spectators, for shelter when not competing. Event organisers will inform the team manager of the location to erect tents for each event.

3.3 Team Manager Meetings

If at all possible, each club should appoint a non-competing Team Manager to assist with the organisation of each team. Team managers meetings are conducted prior to the commencement of competition on each day of the event. Information discussed at these meeting includes but are not limited to; competition areas, spectator/tent areas, back of beach logistics, safety warnings, timing of events (timetabling), and other important event information that should be passes onto all competitors. It is a requirement that all teams have a team management representative at all meetings.

3.4 IRB Safety

A strong emphasis will be placed on safe driving, crewing and patient safety practices. All competitors must complete each event in a safe and controlled speed and manner or will face immediate disqualification from the event, and/or issue of a safety infringement and consideration for further penalties. A safety infringement shall be issued to any competitor deemed to have committed an unsafe practice. This will result in immediate disqualification of the competitor and their entire team (i.e. crew and patient/s) from the event in which the infringement occurred. The name of the competitor and the details of the infringement shall be logged through the safety infringement register of the relevant State and National Office. If a competitor receives more than one safety infringement in any one competition they shall be disqualified from the entire competition. Should a history of safety infringements be identified by an SLSA office or official in a twelve month period, the matter shall be referred to the relevant state or national officer/s for consideration of further penalties or disciplinary action.

3.5 Entry Limitations

IRB competition may be conducted in different categories of age, grade and gender. Apart from IRB Relay events, a competitor may not compete or nominate to compete in more than eight events at any one competition. IRB Relay events may be entered in addition to this eight event maximum. A Driver and/or crew may compete in a particular event once e.g. a driver cannot compete in an event in one team as a driver and compete again in the same event as a driver or crewperson in a separate team. If eligible to compete in multiple grades or age categories, drivers and crewpersons may do so, but may only compete in a particular event once e.g. open male rescue is a different event to the under 23 male rescue. IRB patients are to be considered as gender neutral with respect to their

participation in male and female IRB events. Patients may compete in any grade, age or gender category events but may only compete in a particular event once.

3.6 Example Order of Events

Event #	Events	Qualifiers
1 – 7	Male Mass (7 x Heats) (60)	5 from each to Quarters (30)
8 – 15	Male Rescue (8 x Heats) (68)	5 from each to Quarters (35)
16 – 18	U23 Tube (3 x Quarters) (21)	5 from each to semi (15)
19 – 22	Male Tube (4 x Quarters) (28)	4 from each to Semi (16)
23 – 25	35+ Mass (3 x Quarters) (24)	5 from each to Semi (15)
26 – 29	U23 Mass (4 x Quarters) (36)	4 from each to Semi (16)
30 – 32	Rookie Mass (3 x Quarters) (20)	5 from each to Semi (15)
33 – 35	Female Mass (3 x Quarters) (27)	5 from each to Semi (15)
36 – 39	Male Mass (4 x Quarters) (30)	4 from each to Semi (16)
40 – 43	Male Teams (4 Quarters) (35)	4 from each to Semi (16)
44 – 46	35+ Rescue (3 x Quarters) (24)	5 from each to Semi (15)
47 – 50	U23 Rescue (4 x Quarters) (37)	4 from each to Semi (16)
51 – 53	Rookie Rescue (3 x Quarters) (21)	5 from each to Semi (15)
54 – 56	Female Rescue (3 x Quarters) (27)	5 from each to Semi (15)
57 – 60	Male Rescue (4 x Quarters) (35)	4 from each to Semi (16)
61 – 62	45+ Tube (2 x Semi) (11)	4 from each to Final (8)
63 – 64	35+ Tube (2 x Semi) (18)	4 from each to Final (8)
65 – 66	U23 Tube (2 x Semi) (15)	4 from each to Final (8)
67 – 68	Female Tube (2 x Semi) (17)	4 from each to Final (8)
69 – 70	Male Tube (2 x Semi) (15)	4 from each to Final (8)
71 – 72	45+ Mass (2 x Semi) (18)	4 from each to Final (8)
73 – 74	35+ Mass (2 x Semi) (15)	4 from each to Final (8)
75 – 76	U23 Mass (2 x Semi) (16)	4 from each to Final (8)
77 – 78	Rookie Mass (2 x Semi) (15)	4 from each to Final (8)
79 – 80	Female Mass (2 x Semi) (16)	4 from each to Final (8)
81 – 82	Male Mass (2 x Semi) (16)	4 from each to Final (8)
83 – 84	35+ Teams (2 x Semi) (13)	4 from each to Final (8)
85 – 86	U23 Teams (2 x Semi) (18)	4 from each to Final (8)
87 – 88	Female Teams (2 x Semi) (12)	4 from each to Final (8)
89 – 90	Male Teams (2 x Semi) (16)	4 from each to Final (8)
91 – 92	45+ Rescue (2 x Semi) (18)	4 from each to Final (8)
93 – 94	35+ Rescue (2 x Semi) (15)	4 from each to Final (8)



95 – 96	U23 Rescue (2 x Semi) (16)	4 from each to Final (8)
97 – 98	Rookie Rescue (2 x Semi) (15)	4 from each to Final (8)
99 – 100	Female Rescue (2 x Semi) (16)	4 from each to Final (8)
101 – 102	Male Rescue (2 x Semi) (16)	4 from each to Final (8)
103	45+ Tube Final	
104	35+ Tube Final	
105	U23 Tube Final	
106	Female Tube Final	
107	Male Tube Final	
108	45+ Mass Final	
109	35+ Mass Final	
110	U23 Mass Final	
111	Rookie Mass Final	
112	Female Mass Final	
113	Male Mass Final	
114	45+ Teams Final (4)	
115	35+ Teams Final	
116	U23 Teams Final	
117	Female Teams Final	
118	Male Teams Final	
119	45+ Rescue Final	
120	35+ Rescue Final	
121	U23 Rescue Final	
122	Rookie Rescue Final	
123	Female Rescue Final	
124	Male Rescue Final	
125	IRB Relay (8)	

**** Subject to change**

3.7 Officials

As at March 2019, SLSNSW is implementing an Officials Quota for competition at NSW State Premiership Rounds and NSW State IRB Championships. Please refer to the current entry guide and relevant circulars for each event to check if this is applicable

2019 SLSNSW IRB Official Quota

To support the on-going delivery and development of IRB competition, a quota will be implemented in 2019 based on a Clubs individual entries per Round/Championship to grow the number of IRB technical officials.

Clubs without sufficient currently accredited officials are advised that members should be encouraged to complete the **online Technical Officials course**. The face-to-face assessments will be run during the Premiership. Members who have completed the online course will count towards the quota for the Premiership, however must be accredited to count for the State IRB Championships.

Competitors Entered	Minimum Officials Required
0 to 4	—
5 to 11	1 Official
12 to 19	2 Officials
20+	3 Officials

Please refer to the SLSNSW website for further information on official's courses and how to enrol.

4. POST COMPETITION

4.1 Results

For SLSNSW premiership rounds; Individual results will be announced throughout competition, with a progressive point score uploaded to the SLSNSW event website in the following week. Medal presentation for overall Premiership Round winners will occur at the NSW State IRB Championships, along with State Championship individual event medal presentation and overall champion club presentation.

4.2 IRB Pack Down

At the conclusion of the event, it is the responsibility of teams to pack up all equipment and gear. The pack down process includes but it not limited to washing your IRB, packing trailers, bringing down tents and cleaning up your clubs area.

4.3 IRB Injury Follow Up

In the event of an injury, the individual must obtain doctors clearance to return to competition. Please note all injuries must be logged at the time of competition with the First Aid team on site.

5. FINAL NOTES

5.1 Divisions and Age Groups in SLSNSW Events

DIVISION	SSM:	DESCRIPTION:
... all competitors must have a common birthday calculated as at midnight on 30 th September in that competition season (17/18)		
U23	2.3.10	Members shall be eligible to contest the U23 division after attaining the minimum ages - refer to 3.3.2.4, a (i, ii). Members shall be no older than 22 years of age as at the 30 th September 2017.
35+	2.3.14 a	<p>Note 2: In Masters Team events, Masters may compete in only one Masters Team age category in each event discipline conducted at a competition. Further, Masters Teams are permitted to compete only in their own Masters Team/crew age category in which their team/crew qualify by way of ages unless there are insufficient starters. In such cases the team may compete in the next youngest Masters Team age category. Where a Masters Team event consisting of two competitors is conducted (e.g. double surf ski), the age of the younger competitor shall determine the age category; additionally where an event with three or more competitors is conducted the combined ages of the team members shall apply.</p> <p>Note: An example is a member must choose to compete in the 35+ Tube or 45+ Tube but cannot compete in both. However a member may compete in the 35+ Tube and the 45+ Rescue as an example as they are different disciplines.</p>
45+	2.3.14 a	

5.2 Rookie Division

SLSNSW has a rookie division; new clubs are encouraged to link up with more experienced IRB racing clubs for training and to get started.

Note: Formally known as the novice division.

The Rookie Division events are restricted to entry by IRB Drivers in their first 2 seasons of IRB competition. Rookie IRB Drivers are encouraged to utilise an experienced crewperson, however a Rookie crewperson is also permissible. Rookie events will not contribute to the overall point score at any round/event. If you compete in Rookie Division as a Driver you cannot compete in any other category/events (as a Driver) If you compete in the Rookie Division as a Crewperson or Patient you can compete in any other division in the same events as long as it complies with 3.3.2.5 Entry Limitations (a-g).

5.3 Pathways

Surf Life Saving NSW offers a number of IRB Athlete Pathways within NSW.

Development Clinics are run as the first step in this pathway for members who are both new to IRB racing wanting to lead into competition, and also currently competing members that aspire to represent their Club, State or Country. Clinics are hosted early in the year (March-April) and are run by experienced and knowledgeable IRB Coaches. Attending a clinic is the perfect start to the season, refining skills ahead of the SLSNSW Premiership Rounds and State Championships, where members will compete for their club.

For experienced athletes and crews, attendance at the Premiership Rounds and State Champs is encouraged for State Team Selection. Selection in the NSW IRB State Team to compete at the Australian Championships is a great representative opportunity, and may lead on to selection in the Australian IRB Team, competing at the World Championships.

5.4 Coaching

IRB coaches must first enrol in and complete the Development Coach and IRB Elective online modules through the SLSA Members Area.

Following completion of theoretical modules, members are to obtain club endorsement and make contact with an accredited IRB Coaching Assessor. The assessor and member are to organise a mutually agreeable time to meet and go through the member's theory assessments, training programs and view a practical training session.

Only after the assessor is content with the members ability to safely and successfully undertake a training session, will the assessment paperwork be signed off as competent and submitted to SLSNSW for processing. **It is strongly encouraged that members who are applying to become an IRB coach attend an IRB Development Clinic to be signed off**, and receive instructive information on IRB competition.

For further information on obtaining the coaching accreditation, please visit the [SLSNSW Coaching web page](#).

5.5 Competition Examples

[2018 NSW Sharkskin IRB Premiership Series Wrap Up](#)