

SurfLIFE

ISSUE 43 – June 2020



SURF LIFE SAVING
NEW SOUTH WALES

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ROCK FISHER RESCUE

Wins Rescue of the Month

The lifesaving rescue of a 32-year-old rock fisher, who was swept into the water without a life jacket, has been awarded the SLSNSW Rescue of the Month for March 2020.

At 10am on Sunday 22 March, two men in their early 30s - believed to be from Marylands in Newcastle - were rock fishing at a remote location near Boulder Bay, Port Stephens when they were swept off rocks by a large wave.

Two people, who were nearby and witnessed the incident, threw lifejackets to the men. Unfortunately, only one of the men was able to grab a lifejacket.

The Surf Life Saving NSW (SLSNSW) State Operations Centre was notified by a call to Triple-Zero (000) requesting assistance and immediately tasked the Port Stephens Support Operations Team and the Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopter to the incident. A jetski and an IRB (inflatable rescue boat) were tasked to the scene and quickly proceeded to Boulder Bay.

The SLSNSW RWC (jetski) operator, Ben Fruend, arrived on scene first and rescued the man wearing the lifejacket. He then grabbed the second man who was now unconscious and pulled him onto the jetski sled.

A short time later a lifeguard from One Mile Beach arrived on a jetski and the Fingal SLSC IRB, crewed by James Worall and Glen Dunkley, arrived on scene and the unconscious man was transferred into the IRB for assessment and treatment. Unfortunately, the man could not be revived.

The survivor, who had managed to grab a lifejacket before being rescued, was taken to One Mile Beach where an ambulance transferred him to hospital in a stable condition for treatment.

Surf Life Saving NSW Director of Lifesaving, Joel Wiseman, commended the response of the volunteer surf lifesavers.

“While this is a tragic incident, had it not been for the swift response of our surf lifesavers and the fast deployment of multiple lifesaving assets, a second life may have been lost,” said Joel Wiseman.

“Our lifesavers worked in tandem with lifeguards and we’re extremely proud of their efforts. They are very deserving recipients of the Rescue of the Month award,” he said.

The Port Stephens Local Government Area (LGA) is a Declared Area where the wearing of a lifejacket is mandatory when rock fishing. Failing to wear an appropriate lifejacket while rock fishing in a declared area may result in a \$100 on the spot fine.

Surf Life Saving NSW extends its condolences to the family and friends of the deceased man.

The SLSNSW Rescue of the Month aims to recognise excellence in lifesaving. Each month a ‘Rescue of the Month’ is awarded at State level for the most outstanding rescue performance for that period. Monthly winners have the chance to win the National Rescue of the Month and become finalists for the SLSNSW Rescue of the Year which is presented at the annual Awards of Excellence. Laerdel are proud supporters of Surf Life Saving NSW. Rescue of the Month winners receive Laerdel gift vouchers as recognition of their achievements. Ten prizes are awarded annually.

The volunteer lifesavers were awarded SLSNSW Rescue of the Month for March 2020.

MEGA MEN RESCUE 16-YEAR-OLD BOY

An off-duty surf lifesaver is being hailed as a hero after saving the life of a 16-year-old boy who was caught in large swell at Coledale Beach late in the afternoon on 26 May.



The 16-year-old boy had jumped into the surf off the rocks at North Coledale beach at 4.45pm to go surfing with a friend. However, he forgot to attach his body-board leash and quickly got into trouble in the large swell and strong current and was separated from his board.

A local resident who had been walking near the beach phoned Triple-Zero after noticing the

boy in trouble in the large swell, being dragged by the current close to the rock platform. Fortuitously, off-duty surf lifesaver Kyle Mathiesen, from Thirroul Surf Life Saving Club, was alerted to the situation when he heard members of the public screaming for help to rescue the boy and was first to respond.

Kyle quickly assessed the surf conditions before stripping

down to board shorts, grabbing a board and swim fins and running down to the beach. He paddled out to the boy who had been thrown his board for buoyancy by an onlooker. He was just metres from the rock platform, struggling to swim against the strong current and nearing exhaustion. He had been in the water for 25 minutes.



Kyle reached the boy and provided reassurance while he paddled him away from the rocks. He waited until there was a break in the waves to paddle the boy back through the break to the safety of the shore. The rescue took more than 10 minutes due to the size of the swell and rough conditions.

"I had a quick look at the conditions and paddled out. I reached the guy and said to him 'are you tired' and he said 'yes'. So, I said to him 'come on mate, let's do this together' and I swam him back to the beach," said Kyle Mathiesen.

"Thankfully, the woman who spotted the kid in trouble raised the alarm and called Triple-Zero and then was able to throw him his board. She really set it up as a successful rescue," he said.

The boy's father, Phil Campbell, who watched the rescue unfold from the beach, was very relieved when his son was returned safely. He thanked Kyle for saving his son's life in such treacherous conditions. He also thanked Surf Life Saving NSW Duty Officer Anthony Turner, the Coledale SLSC callout team and the other emergency service teams, including police and ambulance

paramedics, who responded to the call to Triple-Zero. The Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopter was also tasked to the incident.

The boy's aunt, Michelle Burt, said that the response of emergency service personnel was incredible.

"The police, ambulance and rescue teams were there in five minutes. How quick was that! They had jetskis ready and a helicopter on the way. I can't even get a hamburger that quickly. These guys are mega-men," said Michelle Burt.

"I want to nominate Kyle for a bravery award for what he did. This bloke is a legend! It would have been a recovery situation if he didn't get him out of the surf when he did. He was exhausted and there was only ten minutes before it got dark.

"Nobody should have been out in the surf that day – not even good surfers. It was like a washing machine out there," she said.

A hazardous surf warning had been issued by the Bureau of Meteorology for the Illawarra region at the time of the incident.

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The woman who **DARED TO DREAM**

To many in Surf Life Saving, Gina Crick is a woman who's done it all. But Gina says there's more to do.

In 1973 Gina Crick joined Woonona Surf Life Saving Club and became a member of the Ladies Auxiliary. Back then her role was serving ice creams at the clubhouse tuck shop. Under the existing Surf Life Saving regulations at the time, that was the limit of women's official involvement.

Gina's husband Kevin was a council lifeguard on busy Austinmer Beach and Gina wished she could do likewise. She knew she had all the skills to be a lifesaver.

Gina was allowed to do her Resuscitation Certificate in 1975. Then in the summer of 1980, when Surf Life Saving Australia changed the rules to allow women to achieve their Bronze Medallions, her chance came. She was not going to miss out.

She commenced training with an Austinmer Council lifeguard, who was an experienced trainer. She gained her bronze on the 13 December 1980 - after six weeks of intense



training. There was no special dispensation given to her. The same competency standards that applied to men, applied to women. Gina never asked for, or needed, any special treatment.

"Coming into Surf Life Saving as a woman, I didn't want to change anything. I really just wanted to fit in," said Gina.

That same summer, with her prized Bronze Medallion in hand, Gina began patrol work. She also discovered a

new passion in training others and gained her Instructor's Certificate just one year later. There was now no holding back this powerhouse of enthusiasm and skill.

Since the early days, Gina has trained and inspired hundreds of young surf lifesavers. After competing in R&R, Gina joined the Illawarra Board of Examiners in 1984 - becoming the first woman to do so. Enthused, she nominated for, and was

appointed to become, a Boat Marshall at the NSW State Championships.

“Becoming an official and becoming part of the Board of Examiners was a big thing back in ’82, ’83. I was the only woman official in Illawarra,” said Gina.

Gina is a surf lifesaver by design and nature. She has worked tirelessly at her passion. So, it was only natural that she became a Life Member of Woonona Surf Club and the Illawarra Branch in 2012 and obtained her prestigious National Medal and Clasp in 2013.

Like many in the association, the true value of Gina becomes apparent when talking to those she has trained. She has encouraged so many young men and women to become competent surf lifesavers and then to use this confidence and skill to not just benefit our association, but to do well in life.

Most mornings Gina is found in the water, training children to swim and leading stroke correction classes. The water is a big part of her life.

Gina has competed in craft, water and beach events and today has amassed more Branch, State and National

medals in both veteran and open competition than she cares to count.

Today Gina is active not only in her home club of Woonona, but also neighbouring Bellambi SLSC - which she joined in 1999. She became Bellambi’s first female Club Captain and then President.

Gina, still participates in active patrols, still inspires others and is still saving lives. Her SLS award portfolio is impressive,

with an amazing 79 association awards to her name.

“Surf Life Saving for me means family, community and learning. It’s an amazing bunch of people. When you do patrols you meet people of all ages – it’s a really good experience,” said Gina.

At 64 Gina is still going strong and is not ready to give up being a surf lifesaver anytime soon.

“Surf Life Saving for me means family, community and learning. It’s an amazing bunch of people. When you do patrols you meet people of all ages – it’s a really good experience”



RECORD FUNDING PACKAGE

for surf lifesavers

On 19 June Surf Life Saving NSW President George Shales OAM and CEO Steven Pearce have announced a record funding package for all surf clubs in NSW to help them recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The funding package is one of the biggest single injections of funding to clubs ever made by Surf Life Saving NSW and is designed to support clubs as they open their doors and re-engage with their members in the lead-up to the new summer patrol season.

“Surf Life Saving Clubs, along with business and the community in general, have felt the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic acutely. Many surf clubs have lost significant income from the loss of revenue streams such as functions and venue hire and loss of sponsorship support due to the economic downturn,” said President George Shales.

“With the easing of restrictions now giving us hope for a return to the beach in time for patrols to begin in late September, we want to ensure all 129 surf clubs receive a kick-start to open their doors and welcome existing and new members to our Surf Life Saving family.

“To enable this, the SLSNSW Board has approved a financial support package totalling almost \$1.2 million,” Mr Shales said.

CEO Steven Pearce said that in developing the unprecedented support package, many factors affecting clubs were taken into account - including the loss of trade to generate revenue, the closure of club facilities and the inability of members to train to remain proficient and physically



and mentally fit and engaged.

“We identified many impacts and significant threats to both the safety of our volunteers and the ability of clubs to resume operations and meet their patrol obligations for the upcoming season,” said Steven Pearce.

“Some of the factors that have informed the need to commit to this funding support package were the sudden and premature dislocation of members from clubs, our clubs being unable to trade and generate revenue, loss of sponsors, families suffering reduced disposable income struggling to renew their current memberships and potential new members deciding not to become involved as they may not have the disposable income.

“To assist clubs overcome some of these hurdles, Surf Life Saving NSW will be committing all operating surplus realised this financial year and accessing funds from reserves which we prudently set aside to secure the future sustainability of surf clubs, in the event of adversity or financial hardship. The COVID-19 pandemic is such an event,” Pearce said.

The package is based on reimbursements to clubs from fees paid during the 2019/20 financial year from a variety of sources, including affiliation fees, state sport event entry fees and insurances. Each club

will get a different amount, depending on their size and outlay in these areas.

The intent of the package is for clubs to use the funds to re-engage existing and recruit potential new members, to ensure the club has adequate patrolling members for the new season.

Ways in which clubs could make good use of the funds would be to subsidise or waive member fees, surf sport entry fees or implement other positive member engagement initiatives. In addition to the funding support package, Surf Life Saving NSW is also leading on a national member retention and recruitment campaign to launch prior to the season start.

The campaign aims to achieve coverage across all media platforms – including TV, radio and social media - calling on media to support Surf Life Saving as an iconic, grassroots community organisation.

“This is a major Surf Life Saving recruitment and retention campaign and we want this to be the reintroduction, re-invigoration and re-vitalisation of our membership, both current and future,” said George Shales.

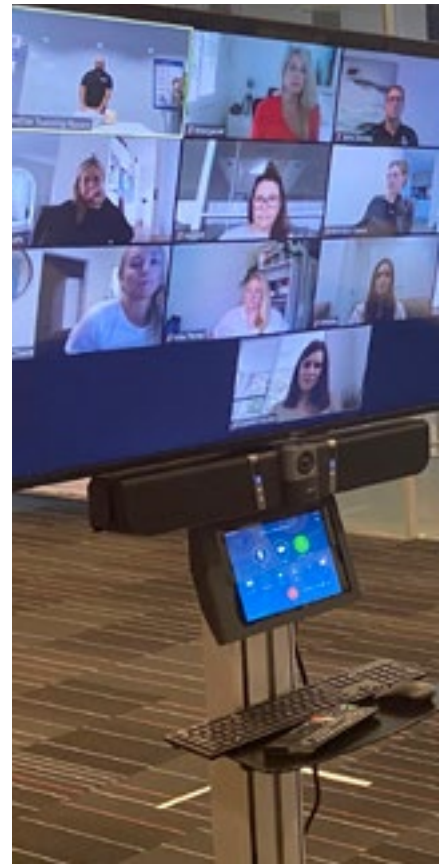
“Essentially, we are celebrating who we are, what we do and welcoming all our current and future members home to Surf Life Saving,” Shales concluded.

“This is a major Surf Life Saving recruitment and retention campaign and we want this to be the reintroduction, re-invigoration and re-vitalisation of our membership”



LEARN CPR IN YOUR LIVING ROOM

On Monday 4 May, Surf Life Saving NSW launched a ground-breaking online CPR training program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact more people are working, exercising and socialising at home due to social distancing measures.



“The risks of someone you know having a heart attack aren’t diminished during the Coronavirus crisis. In fact, with more people isolating at home, it’s even more likely that someone you know will have a cardiac arrest in the home environment,” said Dan Gaffney, COO of Surf Life Saving Services.

“We know that around 30,000 people experience cardiac arrest outside hospitals every

year and that only an average of nine percent of victims survive. Outcomes are vastly improved if someone who knows CPR responds quickly, so we created a CPR training program that is perfect for people to do at home while they’re isolating,” Gaffney said.

The new Living Room Lifesavers CPR training program is delivered by qualified trainers using a combination of online e-learning and live webinar

instruction - using video conferencing technology. Participants wishing to receive formal accreditation have the option to take a face-to-face, hands-on session after the COVID-19 social distancing requirements are relaxed.

Surf Life Saving NSW is one of the largest providers of certified CPR training in Australia, with qualified instructors training around 120,000 people every year. With the introduction of





the Government's mandated social distancing restrictions, SLS cancelled its face-to-face CPR training programs and moved quickly to re-engineer their exiting Bronze Medallion e-learning program, normally restricted for surf lifesaver access only, for online delivery to the public.

The Living Room Lifesavers program has been designed by Surf Life Saving NSW to cater for people working from home and for families wishing to learn CPR together. The e-learning component takes about 25 minutes to complete and the live webinar, led by a qualified trainer, takes 60 minutes. The optional, hands-on session takes 90 minutes with participants receiving a HLTAID001 Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

certification at the conclusion of the program.

Importantly, the Living Room Lifesavers program provides participants with instruction in safer CPR techniques to reduce the chances of COVID-19 infection. By removing the breaths component of CPR and instead focussing primarily on quality chest compressions, first responders can help someone experiencing a cardiac arrest while protecting themselves from the risk of contracting COVID-19.

It is anticipated that the new Living Room Lifesavers program will be popular with families, people working from home and professionals - like teachers and medical professionals - who need CPR certification to retain their professional accreditation.

More information about Surf Life Saving NSW's new Living Room Lifesavers program is available on the [SLSNSW website](https://www.slsnsw.com.au).





THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

for AI technology

A world-first scientific trial using artificial intelligence (AI) to help drone pilots identify shark species in real time was recently completed at five beaches in northern NSW.

Surf Life Saving NSW Chief UAV Pilot, Paul Hardy, said field trials with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) at Kingscliff, Byron Bay, Lennox Head, Ballina and Evans Head beaches concluded in May.

“For the past three years, drone-based shark surveillance has been trialled to manually monitor NSW beaches,” Mr Hardy said.

“While research by DPI has found that drone surveillance is one of the most effective shark detection techniques, it is currently labour intensive and relies heavily on pilot skill and sometimes additional observers, to detect and identify species of marine life.”

“The new AI software helps our UAV pilots make accurate identifications, which means fewer beach closures and greater safety for NSW beach users.” Mr Hardy said.



The AI project is led by Dr Cormac Purcell and Dr Andrew Walsh (Macquarie University), with Dr Butcher (DPI) and Mr Andrew Colefax (Sci-eye), who have been working together to build an AI algorithm that reliably detects different shark species using drone video footage.

“Our team has been developing a new machine-learning algorithm that runs on mobile devices to identify shark species in real time from drones,” Dr Purcell said.

Surf Life Saving NSW and NSW DPI has been running trials of drones for shark detection since 2016 as part of the NSW Government’s Shark Management Strategy.

The new, AI trials have been implemented by DPI, Macquarie University and Surf Life Saving NSW, with pilots running the software every weekend since March and every day during the April school holidays.

Dr Butcher, from DPI, said data from the first weeks of the trial was used to increase the accuracy of the algorithm in changing conditions and that the AI model was then evaluated on new data in a blind test against expert observers.

“This is the first, independent, scientific trial of an AI algorithm for detecting shark species from drones,” he said.

Paul Hardy from Surf Life Saving NSW said the aim of the program is to increase the accuracy of shark identification to support beach management. He said that the AI software can run on sealed mobile devices without an internet connection, making it suitable for use in remote coastal locations.

“This approach will make current and future drone-based shark detection much more reliable and cost-effective, which will in turn make beaches safer for the Australian public,” Mr Hardy concluded.

Surf Life Saving NSW’s UAV program, which operates at 45 locations, is proving to be invaluable in marine creature management and search and rescue operations. This year 450 Surf Life Saving NSW UAV pilots flew more than 16,000 flights over the NSW coastline.

This approach will make current and future drone-based shark detection much more reliable and cost-effective

SHARKSKIN

supports frontline healthcare workers

When the Coronavirus pandemic reached Australian shores, both domestic retail sales and international exports were impacted, leaving many local manufacturers in hot water. But using some Aussie ingenuity, watersports apparel manufacturer Sharkskin has risen to the challenge, transforming their factory into a production line for protective equipment for frontline healthcare workers.

Sharkskin, who is a proud partner of Surf Life Saving NSW and manufactures wetsuits and other watersports apparel in Newcastle, was among the local businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many manufacturers, they were hit with an immediate downturn in demand for their products and faced the real possibility of having to stand down their 30-strong workforce.

“We got hit pretty hard with our overseas exports suffering the

most. We lost 80 percent of our export business overnight. It was a lot,” said Shane Holliday, Sharkskin’s Managing Director.

“Normally winter in Australia is our busiest time because we produce thermal wear. And the Sharkskin NSW IRB Championship series usually props us up through winter, but then that got postponed too,” he said.

In an effort to avoid standing down their team, Sharkskin came up with a solution that

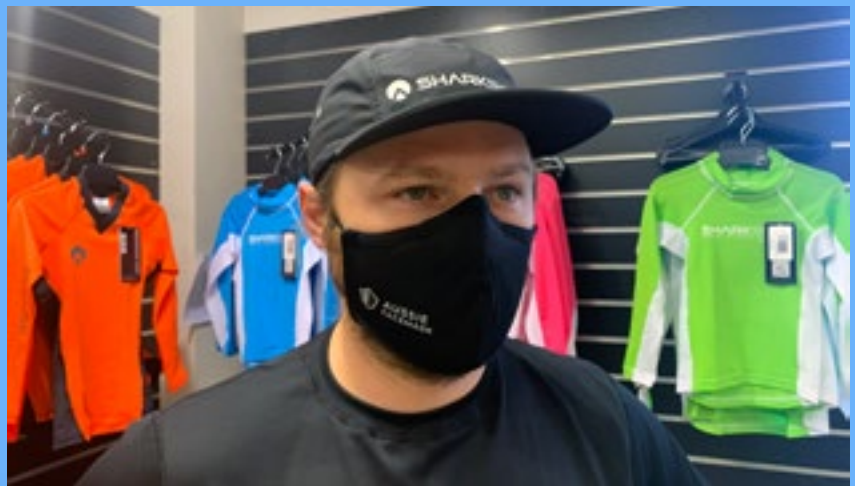


would not only keep their factory operational, but also benefit Australian healthcare workers encountering shortages of PPE (personal protective equipment) as they battled Coronavirus on the frontline.

Since March, the team at Sharkskin has produced more than 3,000 reusable anti-microbial theatre gowns and 1,000 anti-microbial hospital privacy curtains. They also have a new re-usable facemask product which will soon start rolling off their production line - with production numbers expected to top 5,000 units a year.

“We’ve created a washable, reusable face mask for public use. It’s made from permanent anti-microbial material and silver thread so it’s very durable,” said Shane Holliday.

“Wearing a face mask will soon become the new normal for



people going out in public – just like putting a pair of undies on. You’ll just wear one!

“We’re actually expecting that wearing a mask may

“We’ve created a washable, reusable face mask for public use.”

soon become mandatory for spectators attending large sporting events. So, this is a product we may need to produce for some time,” Holliday concluded.

Sharkskin is an Australian success story with their

Newcastle factory producing specialised watersports apparel for both the Australian and overseas markets. They export to more than 70 countries around the world.

As the COVID-19 restrictions on watersports activities ease, Sharkskin will ramp up production to service its core watersport markets globally, thanks to the PPE production which has kept the Sharkskin staff and factory in full production though this challenging period.



Queen's Birthday Honours Recognise Lifesavers

Surf Life Saving NSW members were among those recognised for their outstanding contributions to the community in the Queen's Birthday Honours announced on Monday 8 June.

"On behalf of Surf Life Saving NSW, I would like to congratulate Greg Allum, Cyril Baldock, George Shales, Hugh Small and John Vaughan for their outstanding service, achievement and recognition in yesterday's Queen's Birthday Honours," said SLSNSW CEO Steven Pearce AFSM.

"Surf Life Saving's members are our greatest asset. Members who received awards in the Queen's Birthday Honours are outstanding members of the community.

"To be invested with an Order of Australia Medal or a Member of the Order of Australia Award is a significant achievement and reflects an exemplary contribution to the community. It is fitting recognition for our members who have gone above and beyond in their service.

"I would like to thank all our members who were recognised yesterday for their many years of service to Surf Life Saving and to protecting lives on the NSW coastline. As an organisation, we are very proud of their many outstanding achievements," said Steven Pearce.



Greg Allum AM

For significant service to surf lifesaving, international federations and the community.

Greg Allum is a member of Wanda Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) and Cronulla SLSC. He has been a member of the International Life Saving Federation (ILS), Sports Commission and Committees since 1996.

At an international-level, Greg was a member of the ILS Event Management Committee - ILS World Championships in 2018, 2016, 2014 and 2012. His roles included operations, technical advisor and Ocean Events Chair of Competitions and joint Architect and Custodian of the International Surf Rescue Challenge.

At a national-level, Greg was Technical Advisor, Surf Life Saving Australia from 2003 to 2020. Sport Technical Advisor, Surf Life Saving

New South Wales from 2005 to 2018. He was Sport Technical Advisor, Surf Life Saving Sydney, from 2012 to 2020.

Greg was a Board Member with Life Saving Chaplaincy between 2010 and 2016 and Patron from 2016 to 2020.

Greg was inducted into the International Lifesaving Federation Hall of Fame (Sport) in 2019. He received the Director of Surf Sports Award from Surf Life Saving Australia in 2018 and became a Grand Knight of the International Life Saving Federation in 2013.

Greg has been inducted into the Surf Life Saving Australia Hall of Fame for sport and prior to that, for administration.

To see Greg's full list of achievements visit www.surflifesaving.com.au



George Shales OAM

For service to surf lifesaving.

George Shales is a current member of Coogee and Maroubra Surf Life Saving Clubs. He has been a Surf Life Saving Australia Board Member since 2019 and President of Surf Life Saving New South Wales (SLSNSW) since 2019. He has been Sydney Branch Delegate since 2014 and received Life Membership in 2018. In 2018, George became a Life Member of Surf Life Saving NSW.

At a branch-level, George was President of Surf Life Saving Sydney Branch between 2014 and 2019, Director of Administration between 2009 and 2014 and Support Operations Manager between 2008 and 2013.

George has been a Duty Officer since 1991, an Assessor since 1986 and a patrol Member since 1982. He received Life Membership of Surf Life Saving Sydney in 2012.

George has been a Rescue Boat Skipper and Crew Member in Randwick District Surf Life Saving since 1985. He is a Life Member and recipient of a Long Service Award.

George was Supervisor at Waverley District Surf Life Saving from 1987 to 1990 and Assistant Supervisor between 1986 and 1987.

At North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club, George was a member between 1981 and 1995, Vice-Captain between 1988 and 1989 and Junior Captain between 1986 and 1988.



Cyril Baldock OAM

For service to surf lifesaving.

Cyril has been a member of Bondi Surf Bather's Life Saving Club since 1958. He received Life Membership in 1977. He was Club President between 1975 and 1976 and Vice-President, 1967 to 1968, 1974 to 1975, 1977 to 1978 and 1979 to 1980.

Cyril was Bondi Surf Bather's Life Saving Club Captain, 1964 to 1965, 1976 to 1977 and Vice-Captain, 1966 to 1967. He was a Committee Member, 1960 to 1961, 1963 to 1964 and 1965 to 1966.

At a branch-level, Cyril was a Sydney Branch Delegate from 1964 to 1965 and 1965 to 1966; Manager, Bondi Surf Carnival from 1963 to 1964 and 1966 to 1967 and Club Touring Team Manager from 1968 to 1969 and 1971 to 1972.



Michael Hickey OAM

For service to veterans and their families and to the community.

Michael Hickey has been a member of Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club since 2009 and is an active patrol member. He has been a member of the Returned Services League (RSL), Rotary and Legacy organisations, diligently supporting veterans, their families and the community. He is currently the Personnel Committee Chair of Brisbane Water Legacy.



Hugh Small OAM

For service to surf lifesaving, and to athletics.

Hugh Small is a member of Cudgen Headland Surf Life Saving Club where he has been a patrolling member for 40 years.

At a club-level, Hugh was Treasurer from 1994 to 1998 and 2000 to 2002; Assistant Treasurer from 1965 to 1967 and 1993 to 1994; Gear Steward from 1965 to 1966 and Clubhouse Director from 1965 to 1966 and 1968 to 1969.

Hugh became a Life Member in 1994 and was a member of Cudgen Headlands SLSC Old Boys Association between 2000 and 2019.

Hugh was a Competitor at the Australian Surf Life Saving Championships in 1966 and the New South Wales Surf Life Saving Championships in 1966 and 1968.

Hugh received the 40 Year National Patrol Service Award from Surf Life Saving Australia.



John Vaughan OAM

For service to medicine and to surf lifesaving.

John Vaughan is a member of Wauchope Bonny Hills Surf Life Saving Club. He has been a Patrol Captain there since 2016. Since 2009 he has been a volunteer fitness coach for club members, running boot camp sessions three mornings a week to promote preventative health behaviours in his community.

John is a General Practitioner and has been a Member of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners since 1986, a Fellow since 1993 and a Fellowship Examiner since 1995.



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END OF STRANGE AND TRAGIC SEASON

Despite the NSW bushfire crisis reducing summer beach attendance and the COVID-19 pandemic bringing an early end to the 2019/20 patrol season, there were a higher than average number of coastal drownings during one of the most unusual patrol seasons on record.

The 2019/20 Surf Life Saving patrol season was unprecedented in many ways. It will be remembered for the way volunteer surf lifesavers worked alongside other emergency service personnel in response to both the NSW bushfire crisis and the widespread beach closures, caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, which ended the patrol season four weeks early. Tragically, the 2019/20 patrol season will also be remembered for a higher than average number of coastal drownings.

Although the NSW bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic reduced overall beach attendance during the 2019/20 season by 21 percent, more than 20,000 surf lifesavers across NSW performed 2,499 rescues, 6,023 first-aid treatments and 192,471 preventative actions - an impressive 20 percent increase on the five-year average. This was achieved despite there being fewer patrol days during the season.

Tragically, the increase in preventative actions at patrolled locations did not reduce the total number of drownings on the NSW coastline - outside patrolled areas. With 42 coastal drownings, the 2019/20 figures are above the 10-year average of 40 fatalities. Sadly, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the summer bushfires on reducing beach attendance has had little or no impact on reducing the number of deaths on the NSW coastline.



Unusually, boating-related coastal drownings were the most common this season. There were more than double the number of boating-related coastal drownings when compared to the 10-year average. Currently, 27 percent of NSW coastal drownings relate to boating activities.

Swimming-related drownings were the second most common after boating fatalities. However, they were down this

season by 10 percent compared to the 10-year average. Historically, swimming has been the activity that leads to most coastal drownings, so the reduction is good news for surf lifesavers who target swimmers as a key demographic in coastal safety messaging.

Emergency support operations were increased during the COVID-19 lockdown and call-out teams across NSW have been kept busy despite the patrol season concluding and the widespread beach closures. There was no reduction in the number of call-outs during the 2019/20 season - despite the reduction in beach attendance. There were approximately 600 emergency call-outs which demonstrates that the number of support operations

responses are not directly linked to beach attendance figures. Rather, activities like boating and rock-fishing in less populated areas are the activities that lead to the most requests for emergency assistance. Rock fishing continues to be Australia's most dangerous sport and this season's statistics show there has been no decline in coastal drownings related to this activity, with eight fatalities in the last 12 months – equal to the 10-year average. Shockingly, 81 percent of people who lost their lives rock fishing this season were not wearing a life jacket. It is unknown whether a further 14 percent of people who drowned were wearing a life jacket or not. A mere five percent of people who drowned were confirmed to have been wearing a life jacket.

There were a number of significant rescues this season that involved Surf Life Saving NSW volunteers going above and beyond to save lives. Many of these incidents and rescues occurred outside patrol hours and in challenging conditions.

The Surf Life Saving Sydney Branch, which includes some of

NSW's busiest beaches, once again had the highest number of drownings with nine fatalities during the 2019/20 season. However, this was down from 11 fatalities last year.

The Sydney Branch had the largest number of rescues by volunteer lifesavers with a total of 927 - followed by the Central Coast Branch with 567. Bondi Beach had the most rescues with a total of 271. The next

closest was Umina Beach on the NSW Central Coast with 113 rescues.

Surf Life Saving NSW President George Shales said that volunteers throughout the state had worked tirelessly during the season which was evidenced by the increase in preventative actions compared with last season.

"Clearly our vigilance is paying off and there were a number of life saving rescues, including resuscitations, that ended positively. We're proud of our volunteers who respond so professionally to these incidents – many of them outside volunteer patrol hours," said George Shales.

The North Coast recorded the second highest number

Clearly our vigilance is paying off and there were a number of life saving rescues, including resuscitations, that ended positively. We're proud of our volunteers who respond so professionally

of coastal drownings with six fatalities during the 2019/20 season. Again, this is lower than last year's figure of seven fatalities and may relate to the increase in preventative actions in driving the total number of coastal drownings down in that area.

There were numerous standout Rescue of the Month awards presented to lifesavers who went above and beyond to save lives during the 2019/20 season. Four of these awards were for mass rescues which were performed outside patrol hours or at unpatrolled locations.

Significantly, two of these mass rescues were performed by junior lifesavers, or Nippers. Once again this demonstrates the impact Surf Life Saving training has in saving lives on the NSW coastline – even outside the flags. The award-winning mass rescues occurred at Bronte Beach, Redhead Beach, Seven Mile Beach and Wooyung Beach.

Of particular note this season is the way Surf Life Saving NSW embraced its new role as an emergency service. Our volunteer surf lifesavers responded, this time out of the water, during the NSW bushfire crisis in January, sheltering over 10,000 people as the bushfires descended on Bermagui, Broulee and Batemans Bay on the state's Far South Coast.

Furthermore, surf clubs and volunteer surf lifesavers pulled out all stops to support communities in the aftermath of the bushfires, support which continues now. Many surf clubs became important hubs for the distribution of food and clothing to members of the community who had lost everything. This exemplifies our vision of surf clubs being not just surf lifesaving clubs but community hubs.

Once again SLSNSW's innovative UAV (drone) programs, operating in separate partnerships with the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Westpac, proved to be invaluable in search and rescue operations and marine creature monitoring. UAVs are quickly becoming an essential tool in Surf Life Saving

operations and this year more than 100 pilots were trained by SLSNSW bringing the total number of trained pilots in NSW to 450. This resulted in a doubling of the total flights compared to last year – up from 7,500 to 16,821.

A world-first scientific trial using artificial intelligence (AI) to help Surf Life Saving UAV drone pilots identify shark species was conducted during the 2019/20 season. Surf Life Saving NSW, in partnership with the NSW Department of Primary and Industries (DPI) and Macquarie University, conducted shark spotting trials, using AI technology at five NSW beaches - Kingscliff, Byron Bay, Lennox Head, Ballina and Evans Head.

Surf Life Saving NSW CEO Steven Pearce acknowledged





the important work volunteer surf lifesavers across NSW do in protecting the Australian community in sometimes extraordinarily adverse conditions.

“This season surf lifesavers raised the bar in terms of their response in emergency and crisis situations. Nothing could have prepared our members for the ferocity of the bushfires on the NSW Far South Coast. However, our members responded quickly and calmly during the crisis demonstrating how important our movement is in protecting lives and supporting communities. Their response was nothing short of exemplary and the positive feedback from communities impacted by the bushfires has been overwhelming,” said Steven Pearce.

“Tragically, total coastal drownings this season are up on

the 10-year average. We can’t stress enough the importance of taking responsibility for yourself when visiting the coast. Please stop and think before putting yourself, your friends and family and our volunteer emergency personnel in danger,” Pearce concluded.

Surf Life Saving NSW Director of Lifesaving, Joel Wiseman said that in addition to beach patrols and the bushfire crisis response, SLSNSW’s Support Operations emergency callout teams continued to respond to coastal emergencies.

“Throughout the COVID-19 period of social distancing restrictions, our volunteers were as busy as ever. I continue to be impressed by every club in our state and the incredible work and time their members contribute to save lives,” Joel Wiseman said.

With the Surf Life Saving patrol season ended and no beach patrols scheduled until the red and yellow flags are raised again in September, lifesavers advise taking caution when visiting the beach.

“Although the red and yellow flags are not flying on most beaches at this time, lifeguards remain on patrol at some locations, including Main Beach, Byron Bay and One Mile Beach, Port Stephens. Plus, our Surf Life Saving Support Operations teams remain on standby to respond to emergency incidents along the NSW coastline,” Wiseman concluded.

*2019/20 Patrol season ran between Saturday 27 September 2019 through to Friday 27 March 2020. The patrol season ended four weeks early due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Women Celebrate **40 YEARS AS SURF LIFESAVERS**

Wednesday 1 July 2020 marked 40 years since women were given the opportunity by Surf Life Saving Australia to achieve their Bronze Medallions, don the iconic red and yellow patrol uniform and actively patrol Australian beaches as surf lifesavers.



Prior to July 1980, women's roles in Surf Life Saving Clubs were restricted to support and back-office functions. With the exception of a number of women who were allowed to patrol beaches as surf lifesavers during World War II, women were prevented from participating in active patrol duties on the beach. The prevailing attitudes of many people at the time were that women weren't physically capable of carrying out an aquatic rescue in the surf.

However, Surf Life Saving Australia's National Council passed a motion in early 1980 that recommended from 1 July that year, surf clubs across Australia allow women to become active patrolling members, after successfully obtaining their Bronze Medallions.

Although it was July and the beginning of winter, teams of women across Australia seized the moment they had been waiting decades for, taking the first opportunity presented to them to get their Bronze Medallions. Many women had been secretly training for this very moment in anticipation of restrictions being lifted. Finally, the rules that had relegated women to support roles and prevented them becoming active, patrolling surf lifesavers, had been changed and they were ready, willing and able to be assessed - cold weather or not.



Nella Keenan, from Port Kembla, was one of the first women to achieve her Bronze Medallion in 1980 - just six days after the new National Council rules took effect. She was part of a group of eight women from the Illawarra region who flew up to Coffs Harbour, where the water was warmer, to be assessed. She passed, and 40 years later, Nella is still an active surf lifesaver.

"Given the shift in consciousness and understanding of the movement towards gender equality, I feel proud and honoured that we were part of that paradigm shift happening here in Port Kembla and the world, blazing the trail for other females to follow in our footsteps," Nella Keenan said.



Jenny Kenny, from Cudgen Headland on the Far North Coast, was also among the first women to achieve their Bronze Medallions in 1980. Originally from Tasmania, Jenny had to wait until October for the water to be warm enough to complete the Bronze Medallion assessment.

"I lived in Hobart then and was a member of Carlton Park Surf Life Saving Club. A group of friends, who played water polo together, got together and we got a team training, ready to go. So, the minute we could in Tassie (it was a little bit later than some of the other states because of the cold) we did our Bronze. It was in about October and it was freezing cold - as you can imagine. But it was a great experience and we still keep

I feel proud and honoured that we were part of that paradigm shift happening here in Port Kembla and the world, blazing the trail for other females to follow in our footsteps

in touch with that great group of ladies who are still involved after 40 years,” Jenny Kenny said.

“My club was great. We were really encouraged by the guys to get a group together and they coached us. And seriously, we trained for so long. It was a really interesting experience.

“I was lucky in that respect; I know that there was a tougher attitude for some of the ladies in some of the clubs around the country.

“It was still tough at the time because nothing was set up for females to be involved as we were. You know, with change rooms at events and carnivals and all those things,” Jenny Kenny said.

In February Jenny Kenny was awarded Life Membership of Surf Life Saving Australia. This is a significant and rare honour that only 296 people have achieved. Jenny continues to be a trailblazer for women’s involvement in Surf Life Saving and was recently appointed to the most senior official position at the NSW Championships - Carnival Referee.



Ula Dalton from Caves Beach was a trailblazer for women’s participation in surf sport. She broke down barriers for women wishing to compete in surfboat and inflatable rescue boat (IRB) racing, being one of the first women in Australia to do both. At age 14, she started women’s surfboat rowing in the Hunter Branch then she began IRB racing, competing against men in an all-female team. She then agitated for change to allow women to compete in IRBs at a state and national level.

“With surfboat rowing there was originally a lot of push-back from a lot of people that said, ‘females cannot do this’. Once they realised that we were serious and not just there to prove a point, that we were better than the boys (although

that was a hidden agenda) and that we put in the hours of training, just as they did, they came on board and helped us out,” Ula Dalton said.

“It’s changed significantly now. The sky’s the limit these days. Women are involved in everything these days. You can do what you want to do,” Ula said.

While 2020 marks the 40th anniversary of women’s formal participation as active surf lifesavers, the involvement of women in Surf Life Saving began well before 1980. Women have had an active role in the movement since its inception – including those who served as surf lifesavers during World War II and were awarded their Bronze Medallions retrospectively just a few years ago.

“It’s changed significantly now. The sky’s the limit these days. Women are involved in everything these days. You can do what you want to do”



Passionate surf lifesaver Cathy Cole, from Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club, was instrumental in researching and locating Terrigal's wartime female lifesavers. Then in 2017 she coordinated the First Female Lifesavers recognition event, where women who were wartime lifesavers were presented with their Bronze

Medallions by the Governor General Peter Cosgrove.

"Women at my club patrolled the beaches during World War II when all the men from surf clubs went away. Those ladies trained for their Bronze, achieved their Bronze but were not able to get their Bronze. So, we researched it, justified it and got permission from SLSA to award those Bronze Medallions," Cathy Cole said.

"It's so fabulous to see women so totally involved now in every aspect of Surf Life Saving - and welcomed and appreciated. This hasn't always been the case - but certainly is now.

"They had to do something to enrich the movement and it was opened to women. And the

results speak for themselves. Women make up almost 50 percent of membership. They are involved at every level of competition, coaching, officiating, judging, teaching, assessing - you name it, they are involved in everything. And that has built our movement and set it in place for generations to come," Cathy said.

Surf Life Saving NSW recently launched an initiative to identify pioneering women in the Surf Life Saving movement who drove change and paved the way for all women to become active surf lifesavers. The role women have played in keeping beachgoers safe throughout SLSNSW's 113-year history is being celebrated throughout 2020, the 40th anniversary year.





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Our Mission

To save lives, create great Australians and build better communities.

Summary

Surf Life Saving NSW is the state's major water safety and rescue organisation, and with over 75,000 members, is one of the largest volunteer movements in Australia. The primary role of Surf Life Saving NSW is to save lives on our beaches, while other activities include developing our members through education, leadership and surf sports programs.

There are 129 surf clubs and 11 branches in the state which are affiliated with Surf Life Saving NSW, stretching from Fingal Rovers SLSC near Tweed Heads, to Pambula SLSC on the Far South Coast.

Contact Us

For contributions or suggestions for SurfLIFE please contact SLSNSW Media on 02 9471 8000 or media@surflifesaving.com.au



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