

# SurfLIFE

ISSUE 44 – September 2020

Surf Lifesaver of the Year  
Tony Worton (Camden Haven  
SLSC), SLSNSW President  
George Shales OAM



SURF LIFE SAVING  
NEW SOUTH WALES

# 24 HR ROW

## Raises Thousands To Save Lives

The 24 Hour Row for Mental Health successfully raised \$130,000 after a marathon effort by surf clubs throughout the country.

In what was an outstanding achievement, more than 600 surf club and community members from 18 locations across four states kept rowing machines going for 24 hours on Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 August. The total distance rowed was over 11,884km.



Funds will be distributed to two mental health charities, Gotcha4Life (all locations) and One Eighty (Northern Beaches clubs) who will rollout mental health support and resilience programs for Surf Life Saving members and their communities during this difficult time.

In its third year, the 24 Hour Row was expanded outside the Northern Beaches area with other surf clubs enthusiastic about the chance to lend their support to the worthy cause.

“Multiple clubs showed interest in taking part after their clubs and communities were impacted by recent suicides,” said event founder Mel Wellings from Avalon Beach SLSC. “We never thought we’d end up having 18 clubs but we were determined to make it work for everyone so we could raise more funds than ever for our charities who will in-turn help our friends and family who need support,” Wellings said.

Technology played a big part this year not only allowing teams to drive their own fundraising for the common goal but also to keep connected with each other via the live stream. Through Zoom, all 18 locations, as well as a number of Victorian participants, were connected for the full 24 hours. The Zoom was then live streamed through Facebook allowing the world to tune in and watch as the rowers kept pace through the night.



The event was embraced by clubs of all sizes, from small country towns like Tathra on the Far South Coast and Moana in South Australia to some of our biggest surf clubs like Maroubra, North Cronulla and Tallebudgera in Queensland. But no matter where the club, each had the same overwhelming enthusiasm and support from their communities.

South Coast club Gerringong had 72 participants row after an outstanding response to the event. Organiser Mitch Payne said even the local football and cricket clubs jumped onboard. The club ended up being the top fundraising team, generating over \$21,000.

At Maroubra SLSC, organiser Craig Hawkings shared a special achievement: "One of our Under 23 male rowers took on the Olympic marathon distance in one go and smashed it in under three hours," said Hawkings. "There were a lot of really positive and inspiring moments that came out of the 24 hours and we were so glad to be part of it."

South Curl Curl SLSC participated for the second year. Sally Liebke said it was an amazing weekend with a fun energy for everyone involved. "It was great to see how many people from our club and community got behind the event. We had over 150 people put up their hand to jump on our official rowing machines, however

so many more jumped on the spare ones throughout the 24 hours to get involved."

Surf boat sweep Conrad Pearson from Mordialloc SLSC in Victoria rowed two hours from his home in lockdown, but jumped into the live Zoom stream to be part of the event.

"It's good to be able to roll some kilometres out and see everyone else doing the same thing across the country," said Pearson in a live interview with his young sons. "It's really great to watch and good support

**We need to build mental fitness so people aren't worrying alone. If we stand around and do nothing suicide numbers will get worse so that's why this weekend's event is so important**

for everyone. It's a bit strange being down here not being able to be together with your training partners, crewmates and club members but we're trying to stay strong," he said of the state's stage four lockdown.

"It's been difficult because as clubbies and especially surf boat rowers, we rely so much on being together and being part of a crew. There's a lot of withdrawal symptoms but something like this has been a motivator for people all round Australia," he said.

Gotcha4Life founder Gus Worland held back tears on Sunday as the final hour ticked over. "It's unbelievable to see where we are now in the third year.

The atmosphere, the attitude and the energy, people just wanting to do well. It's been brilliant to be around it," he said. "There are so many people here that aren't club members and it shows how much of a hub these places are for support and connection, really the perfect place for this event."

As soon as the clock hit midday all venues stopped for a minute's silence to remember those lost and reflect on their own efforts. Worland said it was emotional for everyone, "I've been in tears more often than not seeing the sense of community and knowing that

the money will be coming right back here looking after the people who are generating the funds."

The significance of the event is it will save lives, Worland reinforced: "We need to build mental fitness so people aren't worrying alone. If we stand around and do nothing suicide numbers will get worse so that's why this weekend's event is so important, because there are so many people putting their hand up saying they'll do something."

One Eighty's Maddie Walsh was also thrilled the event went ahead this year and noticed a strong sense of community connection. The funds raised for One Eighty will go directly towards their programs based on early intervention and prevention of youth suicide.



“What a fantastic event to be a part of each year,” said Maddie. “As a result of the 24 Hour Row we’ll be funding Lifeline Accidental Counsellor training and Mental First Aid for free to members of the community as part of our [Community Support Program](#). These training sessions provide participants with the confidence and skills to support someone experiencing a mental health problem and to know where to refer them to additional professional support. We’ll also be able to train up more of our volunteer facilitators and continue expanding [Open Up](#), our peer to peer support group.”

Mona Vale SLSC lifesaver and Minister for Planning Rob Stokes completed an hour of rowing at both Avalon

and Mona Vale clubs. Stokes said initiatives like the 24 Hour Row show the social and cultural importance of Surf Life Saving and the opportunity for communities to feel connected through their local clubs.

“Surf clubs are holistic parts of our communities. Yes, they’re focused on primarily making sure that beachgoers are safe on the beach and in the water but it’s also vigilance and service wherever we’re required,” Stokes said.

“The training, the education and the camaraderie that’s built around Surf Life Saving is really important for everyone in the community. Just such a fantastic group of people and the clubs are the best way to enjoy the Australian lifestyle.

“This is the perfect opportunity to come together as a community to support causes that do great work. We’ve had a lot of mental health and wellbeing issues during the pandemic and it’s been an enduring challenge here and across the world.”

Event organiser Mel Wellings says she is proud of what her local club has been able to achieve from humble beginnings three years ago. “

“It’s amazing to still see donations coming in, it just shows what an absolutely incredible and far-reaching impact we’ve had on so many communities this year. We’ll be back next year to do it all again and we can’t wait!” said Mel Wellings.

Congratulations to all the clubs and participants involved including; Tallebudgera (QLD), Coffs Harbour, Sawtell, Wauchope Bonny Hills, Port Macquarie, Avalon Beach, Avalon Beach CrossFit, Newport, Mona Vale, Collaroy, South Curl Curl, Maroubra, Elouera, North Cronulla, Gerringong, Tathra, Moana as well as members from the Victoria and Rowing Australia’s teams including Geelong Girls Grammar School (VIC) and the Men’s National Rowing Training Centre (ACT).

Donations are still open via [www.24hourrow.com.au](http://www.24hourrow.com.au)

\*Surf Life Saving NSW supported the 2020 24 Hour Row for Mental Health through its recent [Memorandum of Understanding with Gotcha4Life](#).



# Surf Lifesavers COVID SAFE on patrol this season



With summer fast approaching and what is anticipated to be one of the busiest patrol seasons on record, Surf Life Saving NSW has distributed personal protective equipment (PPE) to surf clubs and branches to ensure volunteer surf lifesavers are protected while on duty.

With hotter than average temperatures forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology leading into summer, and with more Australians holidaying locally rather than overseas due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, beachgoers are expected to flock to Australian beaches in greater numbers than ever this patrol season.

Steve Pearce, CEO of Surf Life Saving NSW, said that in planning for a busy season ahead in the COVID-19 environment, the number-one priority was ensuring the safety of volunteers on patrol at the beach and on the water this summer.

“We’re anticipating a very busy summer ahead and we’ve been working hard to prepare our clubs for operations to continue during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our clubs already have COVID-19 Safety Plans in place and we have revised our beach management guidelines. We are now distributing a large amount of PPE to

all our clubs - including disposable gloves, masks and hand sanitiser - to keep our members safe while on patrol,” said Steve Pearce.

“We’ve distributed COVID-19 PPE safety packs to all our 129 surf clubs and 11 branches across NSW. When our volunteer members turn up for patrol this summer, PPE will be provided to keep them safe if they are concerned about the risk of infection. We’re encouraging surf lifesavers to use things like masks and gloves

**We want to send a strong message to all our 75,000 volunteer members that Surf Life Saving NSW is working hard to keep them safe on the beach and on the water**

if they are in close contact with the public or providing first aid,” said Steve Pearce.

“Personal protective equipment valued at \$30,000 is being given to clubs to kickstart the season, in addition to the record \$1.2 million in funding already provided by Surf Life Saving NSW to encourage new and returning members to sign-up for the summer patrol season ahead. Many clubs are using the funding to waive or heavily subsidise membership fees, which is great,” said Steve Pearce.

Surf Life Saving NSW President, George Shales OAM said that with the official Surf Life Saving season due to begin on Saturday 26 September and large crowds forecast on the beaches, significant planning had been done to ensure patrols can go ahead in the safest way possible.

“With more people expected to head to the coast this summer, we want to send a strong message to all our 75,000 volunteer members that Surf Life Saving NSW is working hard to keep them safe on the beach and on the water - while they’re on patrol and responding to emergency incidents. Nothing is more important to us than the safety and wellbeing of our members,” George Shales said.

“Our PPE patrol packs, our record \$1.2m funding package to incentivise new and returning members, plus the work we’ve done in supporting all our 129 surf clubs prepare for a busy summer in the COVID-19 environment, will ensure that we’re prepared, as always, to respond to any coastal emergency while ensuring that our members and the public are kept safe,” said George Shales.

# Massive Search and Rescue Wins Award

An emergency incident response over the Queen's Birthday long weekend in June was the largest co-ordinated and resourced search and rescue operation in the history of Surf Life Saving Illawarra. The combined response from multiple clubs in the Illawarra branch, which saw over 75 Surf Life Saving personnel working together over a two-day period, won the Surf Life Saving NSW Rescue of the Month Award for June 2020.

At approximately 6.15pm on Saturday 6 June, Surf Life Saving Illawarra (SLSI) responded to a report that several people were in the water, north of the Bulli Surf Life Saving Club, screaming for help. Surf Life Saving Illawarra Duty Officer, Anthony Turner along with the Bulli SLSC Emergency Call Out Team were immediately mobilised to the location to provide on-water and ground support to other emergency service agencies.

Officers from Wollongong Police, with assistance from the Marine Area Command, PolAir Helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft, the Ambulance Helicopter, Marine Rescue, Surf Life Saving Illawarra Duty Officers and Bulli SLSC members commenced a major search and rescue operation.

At 6:45pm, the Ambulance Helicopter confirmed that several people, including a five-year-old boy, were in the water with an overturned boat.

The helicopter crew winched two people aged 31 and 23 to safety - both conscious and breathing. They were immediately transported to Wollongong Hospital in a stable condition.

Conditions at the time were challenging for surf lifesavers because it was dark and the search pattern extended over a large area. There was a five knot westerly wind blowing, a full moon and moderate, 1.5 metre surf.

A dye pack was released by lifesavers to establish the movement of the

current so that they could determine the drift pattern to aid the search for the remaining missing people. SLSNSW Duty Officer Lachlan Pritchard assumed status in the command centre during this period along with Illawarra Director of Lifesaving and Duty Officer Daren Weidner.

Due to low fuel levels, the Ambulance Helicopter was unable to continue searching. Under the direction of Police Chief Inspector Darren Brown, an inflatable rescue boat (IRB) was deployed with two crew members on board.

After a risk assessment was conducted, the IRB crew assisted with the on-water search when the capsized boat was located by Marine Area Command.





The vessel was towed by Water Police to the base at Port Kembla Harbour, where police found the body of the missing five-year-old boy. Tragically, he had been trapped when the vessel overturned.

The search was suspended at approximately 11:20 pm due to difficult weather conditions and a briefing and meeting was conducted with all key services to plan for the resumption of the search the following morning.

The search resumed early the next morning for a missing 28-year-old male. Surf Life Saving Illawarra deployed IRB and RWC (jetski) crews to search the coastline from Austinmer, Thirroul, Sandon Point, Bulli (in the North) to Woonona and Bellambi (in the south). The SLSNSW State Operations Centre (SurfCom) provided coordination throughout the search operation.

SLSI UAVs (drones) were utilised in the search efforts. Duty Officers Turner, Pritchard, Evert and Weidner were embedded in the command post and were assisted by Bulli SLSC call out co-ordinators Jamie Caldwell and Maria Caldwell (SLSI Director Member Services).

The Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopter was tasked to conduct multiple sweeps of the area and Marine Rescue, Water Police and NSW maritime continued their search.

At approximately 1:10pm, a Marine Rescue vessel identified a body in the water near Corrimal and Water Police assisted in transferring the body back to shore.

All assets were stood down and a debrief for all agencies involved in the operation was conducted at Bulli Surf Life Saving Club. There were approximately 40 people in attendance.

Joel Wiseman, SLSNSW Director of Lifesaving, said that Illawarra Support Operations and its club call-out teams were invaluable in the search and rescue operation and took the lead in providing on-water assistance to NSW Police (the lead agency) in their endeavours to locate the missing people.

“The professionalism, teamwork, skill and leadership of Surf Life Saving members meant NSW Police had full confidence in our response,” Joel Wiseman said.

“As the Director of Lifesaving,

**The professionalism, teamwork, skill and leadership of Surf Life Saving members meant NSW Police had full confidence in our response**

I received multiple phone calls during the search from Incident Commanders, State Duty Officers, the Illawarra Branch President and Director of Lifesaving in relation to the response and I have to say the chain of command and leadership displayed by all on the ground was nothing short of exceptional,” said Joel Wiseman.

Bulli SLSC hosted a Forward Command Post and the club provided emergency services with all equipment required to ensure a seamless search and rescue operation. Local businesses dropped off food and thanked volunteers and emergency services personnel for their efforts.

Feedback from NSW Ambulance and Police was that SLSI’s services, equipment and professionalism in coordinating such a large-scale search was of a professional standard and that Surf Life Saving NSW is a highly competent emergency service and are experts in their field.

Peter Evert, Surf Life Saving Illawarra President, said that in the branch’s first full season as an emergency services organisation, the search and rescue operation was a great example of a multi-club, multi-agency, co-ordinated response from their support operations and club call-out teams.

George Shales, Surf Life Saving NSW President, congratulated Surf Life Saving Illawarra Support Operations on their Rescue of the Month award and for the professionalism shown over the two-day search and rescue operation.

Surf Life Saving NSW extends its condolences to the family and friends of the two people who tragically lost their lives in the incident.

Volunteers involved in the Illawarra search and rescue operation were: Anthony Turner (on call SLSI Duty Officer), Lachlan Pritchard (Duty Officer), Daren Weidner (SLSI Director of Lifesaving/Duty Officer), Peter Evert (SLSI President/Duty Officer), Bulli SLSC Emergency Call-Out Team under the direction of Jamie Caldwell (Club Coordinator), Markus Meier-Lindner (Bulli SLSC Team Leader), Keith Caldwell (Bulli SLSC President) and a further seven club members. These members assisted in the ongoing search activities throughout the evening.

# HIGH TECH

## Surf Life Saving NSW Operations Centre Opens

Surf Life Saving NSW will have better emergency communications and coordination capability, after the NSW Minister for Police and Emergency Services David Elliott officially opened the new State Operations Centre in Sydney on 13 September.



SLSNSW CEO Steve Pearce,  
The Hon. David Elliott MP,  
SLSNSW President George  
Shales OAM, SLSNSW Director  
of Lifesaving Joel Wiseman



Mr Elliott said surf lifesavers play an important role in protecting the community and it is pleasing to open a centre that will properly support them.

“This facility will reduce response times, improve coordination between agencies and most importantly help keep everyone safe on our waterways,” Mr Elliott said.

“This \$550,000 project, delivered on time and on budget as part of a \$16 million investment into Surf Life Saving NSW over four years, will provide greater coastal surveillance and improved asset coordination.”

“The 20,000 active surf lifesavers in NSW play an important role responding to emergencies and it is pleasing that they will now have the most up to date facility to assist them,” Mr Elliott said.

On any given weekend in summer, Surf Life Saving NSW’s State Operations Centre (SOC) at the SLSNSW Headquarters at Belrose in Northern Sydney is a hive of activity, supporting beach patrols at 129 Surf Life Saving Clubs, managing emergency situations and search and rescue operations across the NSW coastline. The SOC also coordinates multi-agency responses with other NSW emergency



service organisations including NSW Police and ambulance, 365 days' a year. Last year alone it managed 438 calls for an ambulance and responded to 602 requests for assistance to coastal incidents and emergencies from police.

In addition to providing greater coastal surveillance capability, faster response times and improved asset coordination, the new State Operations Centre will double as a back-up emergency management centre for the Northern Beaches Local Government Area (LGA) and the North West Metropolitan Region.

The new State Operations Centre has been designed in consultation with other NSW emergency service organisations including the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service and builds upon learnings from the design of their emergency operations centres. Recent multi-agency emergency responses - including the response to the NSW bushfires in January - also helped inform the design of the new centre and how it can be used for maximum effectiveness for the protection of NSW communities.

Steve Pearce, CEO of Surf Life Saving NSW, said that with more people anticipated to visit the NSW coastline this summer, the new State Operations Centre broadens Surf Life Saving NSW's emergency response posture so it can more effectively respond to critical incidents and requests for assistance.

"With near record drownings last summer and a very significant increase in boating fatalities, it's

**The 20,000 active surf lifesavers in NSW play an important role responding to emergencies and it is pleasing that they will now have the most up to date facility to assist them**

vital that our lifesavers have the best communications and emergency coordination technology available to help save lives on the beach and on the water.

"We saw an unprecedented increase in emergency callout operations and requests for assistance over winter and as the weather warms, the beaches are only going to get busier.

"On busy weekends it is not unusual for the SOC to simultaneously coordinate over 300 Surf Life Saving

assets including patrols at 129 beach locations, on water rescue craft such as jetskis and jetboats, helicopters and more recently, our fleet of UAVs," Steve Pearce said.

President of Surf Life Saving NSW, George Shales OAM said that COVID-19 considerations means the new State Operations Centre will also play a pivotal role during the coming summer season in monitoring beach attendance and assisting

Councils and authorities to coordinate beach closures if requested.

"With many more people expected to head to the coast this summer, we want to send a strong

message to all beachgoers to respect the advice and direction of surf lifesavers and lifeguards - particularly regarding beach safety but also regarding social distancing requirements," said George Shales.

"This season we are reminding beachgoers to swim between the red and yellow flags at patrolled locations but to also adhere to the health orders regarding social distancing," he said.

**NSW Surf Life Saving Clubs to Receive**

# **\$4 MILLION IN GRANT FUNDING**

In July, the NSW Government announced that \$4 million in grant funding had been awarded to 26 Surf Life Saving Clubs across NSW.

The funding of grants between \$30,000 and \$350,000 was made as part of the Surf Club Facility Program, which provides grants for the upgrade, restoration or construction of Surf Life Saving facilities. This year, clubs in bushfire and drought affected areas were prioritised for assistance.

CEO of Surf Life Saving NSW Steven Pearce welcomed the announcement and said that the grants reflected the growing importance of Surf Life Saving clubs in the community and that they would ensure rescue facilities at the 26 clubs receiving grants remained rescue ready, safe, accessible and secure.

“The role of Surf Life Saving Clubs in the community is evolving quickly. Our reach now extends well beyond the water. During the recent bushfires that devastated much of NSW, thousands of people sought shelter in our clubs and in many areas our clubs became important recovery centres in the weeks following the fires,” Pearce said.

“Many clubs are the hub of their communities and our volunteer lifesavers should have access to fit-for-purpose facilities so they can focus on saving lives and supporting their communities in emergencies and times of crisis,” he said.

Three clubs receiving grant funding are Bermagui SLSC, Batemans Bay SLSC and Tathra SLSC on the NSW

Far South Coast. Bermagui SLSC was pivotal during the recent NSW bushfires, sheltering over 5,000 people at the height of the crisis. They will receive grant funding for the enhancement of their communication and evacuation facilities.

Batemans Bay SLSC and Tathra SLSC, which also sheltered thousands of people during the bushfires, will receive funding to upgrade their patrol rooms and clubhouses and to improve their call-out capability.

Cheryl McCarthy, Director of Lifesaving, Far South Coast Branch, said that the branch was grateful for the support of the NSW Government and that their clubs and members had endured a challenging season in terms of their bushfire response.

Front: SLSNSW President George Shales OAM, Sawtell President Sheena McTackett, Gurmeh Singh MP, The Hon. Geoff Lee MP, SLSNSW CEO Steve Pearce



“The new funding will put us in a strong position to build resilience and future capability. We learned a lot during the summer bushfires and the funding will go a long way to strengthening our support of the Far South Coast community in the future,” Cheryl McCarthy said.

Surf Life Saving NSW President, George Shales OAM thanked the NSW Government for their ongoing support and said that the grants would allow significant upgrades to the 26 surf club facilities to improve amenities for members who protect lives on the NSW coastline.

“The Surf Club Facility Program facilitates the construction and upgrade of Surf Life Saving clubs and facilities which will make a significant

difference to improving club participation, usage and importantly will also improve the safety of swimmers at NSW beaches,” Shales said.

“As a gazetted emergency service organisation, it’s vital that SLSNSW emergency call-out teams can respond quickly to Triple-zero emergency calls along the NSW coastline. Fit-for-purpose facilities are an important part of ensuring emergency equipment is readily accessible so we can continue to be responsive,” he said.

Acting Minister for Sport, Geoff Lee, made the grant funding announcement at Coffs Harbour SLSC. He said that the amazing surf clubs and volunteers that supported

the community during the bushfires were truly deserving of this funding.

“Surf club volunteers provided refuge to thousands of people who were evacuated from the fires and those images of courage and selflessness epitomised the Australian spirit,” Minister Lee said.

“These men and women always put their bodies on the line to save us from danger and this funding is essential to keep their facilities updated for future generations,” Minister Lee concluded.



# Mona Vale SLSC Welcomes **FIRST FEMALE PRESIDENT**

It has been a big year for the Mona Vale Surf Life Saving Club on Sydney's Northern Beaches. Designs for a new clubhouse have been approved, planning is underway for the club's 100-year anniversary celebrations and members recently elected their first female Club President.

In this Q&A, Mona Vale SLSC's recently elected President, Paula Tocquer, discusses her passion for surf sports, the club she loves and her vision for a strong and vibrant Mona Vale SLSC as they approach their centenary year.

**Has the significance of becoming Mona Vale SLSC's first female president, and one of only 13 female Surf Life Saving Club presidents in NSW, sunk in yet?**

No, it is not where I thought I would ever be. We have been planning this for some time as a Committee. I have enjoyed being Club Secretary for the past four years and feel I have achieved a great deal.

My new role will be a steep learning curve, but I know former President Bryce Munro and the Committee will be there to support me. I will give my best to my club.

**Why do you think it has taken 100 years for Mona Vale to have a woman at the helm?**

Surf Life Saving has traditionally been a male dominated organisation. Women were only admitted as full members in 1980 and it has taken time for women to join Mona Vale SLSC, gain experience and knowledge and work their way up through the ranks.

We can proudly say that this Committee not only has a female President but nearly 50 percent of the positions will be held by women this season – Club Secretary, VP Finance, VP Member Relations – all women. We have a great team.

**Your election as Club President is very significant given it is only 40 years since women could become patrolling members. What changes have resonated most with you over the years?**

I joined Mona Vale SLSC in October 2008 and completed my Bronze Medallion the following January. I started competing and teaching 'Bronze' that year and finally completed my Gold Medallion in 2012. This was a big achievement for me. I really enjoyed learning all these new skills and meeting new people.

I have only been in Surf Life Saving for the past 12 years which really is not a long time at all compared to some of our longstanding members. Over the years I have seen many female members of our club excel and many young members really embracing vital roles within the club.

I think the younger members both female and male will not only contribute to the running of the club in the next few years but will bring a new way of thinking to all that we do.



**You have achieved a great deal in representing Mona Vale SLSC in surf sports events. What have been your highlights?**

Yes, I have trained over the past 12 years and it has taken some time to see the results. I must say though, I am lucky to have some great teammates such as Kris Monnock and Sophie Stokes. Without these ladies training and competing would not have been as much fun.

There have been many injuries and a few medals along the way. The most memorable medals would be the 'Aussies' (Australian Titles) Silver Taplin Relay in 2018 with Lise Layard and Lisa Critoph. Kris and I won Silver at 'Aussies' in 2019 for the Double Ski.

The ladies have had to face some big waves at both State and Aussies over the past few years. We have been trying to get that Gold Medal for double ski for some time now. We will keep trying. Anything can happen and usually does in double ski races! I love that event.

**What is your vision for Mona Vale SLSC?**

I have a great passion and love for our club and I will do my best to make sure our club continues to thrive within our community. We will be vigilant and at the top of our game as we provide the essential service of keeping swimmers safe. It is important that we continue to strengthen our 'one club' policies, from the youngest Nipper to our Life Members, all embracing this special place. When all our members show pride in the Mona Vale SLSC, respect each other and do their best for the community, we only get stronger.

**The club is about to celebrate its 100th birthday and is embarking on building a new architecturally designed clubhouse facility. What message do you have for members and the local community?**

When I moved from Bondi to Mona Vale in 2008, I joined the club to meet people and be a part of the community. I feel very much at home here. I don't know how many times I have swept the sand from the clubhouse and watched the numerous changes we have made to try and fit gear in and accommodate an ever-increasing membership.

I can't wait for the club to have a new building, but I will be sad to see the old place go after housing so many memories over the years. Mona Vale is growing. Our club is growing. The new clubhouse will welcome the Mona Vale Boardriders' Club and have better access for patrolling, plus beautiful areas to enjoy yoga or a meal with family.

Our Members' space has always been open to the wider community and we hope to see more new faces, like I once was, enjoying our brilliant new facility. The entire Mona Vale community will be able to share in something wonderful as we look forward to creating some new memories together.

# Stats Reveal

# TRAGIC INCREASE

## in Coastal Drownings



Higher than average number of coastal drownings

During the 2019/20 Surf Life Saving patrol season, surf lifesavers worked alongside other emergency service personnel in response to both the NSW bushfire crisis and in closing beaches due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was one of the most unusual patrol seasons on record.

Tragically, during the 2019/20 patrol season there were a higher than average number of coastal drownings. With 49 coastal drownings, the 2019/20 figures are above the 16-year average of 42 fatalities.

NSW bushfire crisis reduced summer beach attendance

The NSW bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic reduced overall beach attendance during the 2019/20 season by 21 percent from 7,647,513 to 5,513,781.

More than 20,000 surf lifesavers across NSW performed 2,526 rescues, 6,006 first-aid treatments and called 417 ambulances during a total of 555,672 patrol hours.

There were 193,965 preventative actions – a 20 percent increase on the five-year average. This was achieved despite the patrol season ending four weeks early due to COVID-19.

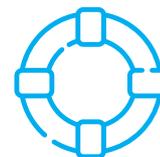
Unusually, boating-related coastal drownings were equal to the number of swimming-related fatalities this season. There were 11 fatalities which is more than double the number of boating-related coastal drownings when compared to the 10-year average of 4.1. Currently, 31 percent of NSW coastal drownings relate to boating activities.

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

COVID-19 pandemic brought an early end to the 2019/20 patrol season



**5,513,781**  
Beach Visitors



**2,526**  
Rescues



There was no reduction in the number of emergency support call-outs during the 2019/20 season. There were approximately 600 emergency call-outs which demonstrates that the number of support operations responses are not directly linked to beach attendance figures.

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.

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 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.

Many surf clubs became important hubs for the distribution of food and clothing to members of the community who had lost everything. This exemplifies SLSNSW's vision of surf clubs being not just surf lifesaving clubs but community hubs.

Our Beach to Bush regional education program visited 43 schools and 6,738 students received education sessions from 16 volunteers who travelled nearly 8,000kms across six NSW regions.

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 350. This resulted in a doubling of the total flights compared to last year – up from 7,500 to 16,821.

The 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.



**555,672**

Patrol Hours



**6,006**

First Aid Rendered



**193,965**

Preventative Actions

# A O E

**The achievements of Surf Life Saving NSW's finest were celebrated at the annual Surf Life Saving NSW Awards of Excellence on Saturday 29 August. Over 180 finalists, along with their friends, family and the wider Surf Life Saving community, took part in the virtual awards ceremony.**

The annual Awards of Excellence event celebrates the outstanding achievements of volunteer surf lifesavers across surf sports, education, administration, membership and lifesaving.

This year, the awards were hosted virtually due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. The state's top surf lifesavers were honoured in front of their peers with members from across NSW joining the virtual event via live video streaming.

Central Coast Surf Life Saving Clubs and members cleaned up on the night, picking up six major awards including Branch of the Year, with Umina Beach SLSC winning three awards including Patrol of the Year and the prestigious Club of the Year award (for the second year in a row). Umina's Kai Darwin won Youth Surf Lifesaver of the Year for the second year in a row - a terrific back-to-back achievement for the young surf lifesaver.

Umina Beach SLSC continues to make significant inroads into increasing engagement from sponsors, members and the community. Over the past five years they have increased membership by 26 percent, secured significant additional funding and have had numerous outstanding results in surf sports, education and training and retention.

Central Coast Branch President Stuart Harvey said it was easy leading a Branch like his because it has so many outstanding members.

"Our 15 clubs do an amazing job patrolling and engaging our wider community. They should all be very proud of their efforts over the last season," said Stuart.

The Illawarra Branch secured several of the most coveted awards with Bulli SLSC taking out Surf Sports Team of the Year for their unrivalled Open Men's Surf Boat Crew and David Winner from Coalcliff winning Patrol Captain of the Year. The prestigious President's Medal was bestowed upon Anthony Turner from Thirroul SLSC for his outstanding commitment and contribution to so many areas of Surf Life Saving.

The coveted Surf Lifesaver of the Year Award was taken out by Tony Worton from Camden Haven SLSC on the Mid North Coast. To win this prestigious title, lifesavers must have demonstrated sustained contributions to frontline patrol services and the wider Surf Life Saving movement.

Tony is in many ways, the backbone of the small Mid North Coast club. He is the Director of Lifesaving and Club Captain. Tony is also a member of the club's emergency callout team and has been involved in some significant rescues. In 2017 he received a Meritorious Award from Surf Life Saving Australia for a daring and brave rescue which saved the life of a young mother. For the past five seasons Tony has achieved the top patrolling hours for his club and branch - volunteering an incredible 700 hours.



SLSNSW Director of Lifesaving Joel Wiseman presents awards to Umina President Steve Scabill and Kai Darwin.



Central Coast Branch President Stu Harvey



Surf Lifesaver of the Year Tony Worton  
from Camden Haven SLSC

A very enthusiastic Tony Worton said he was blown away with receiving the award.

“I love it, I love everything about Surf Life Saving. It’s my passion.

“We do so much training at our club, to be rescue ready, and we know that in the blink of an eye, anything can happen on the beach and someone could be in serious trouble.”

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the official involvement of women in Surf Life Saving as active patrol members and so it was fitting that the Volunteer of the Year Award was won by Hunter Branch member Debbie Booth from Tea Gardens-Hawks Nest SLSC.

Debbie is the epitome of the selfless Surf Life Saving volunteer. She is passionate about education and contributes countless hours to deliver courses to Surf Life Saving members and Community Education programs to tourists visiting the Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest area. This season also saw Debbie mentor all the Branch’s trainers, assessors and facilitators through the introduction of the new online Surf Life Saving Australia Bronze Medallion program.

The ever-smiling Debbie Booth was typically humble in receiving her award.

“Thanks to my wonderful club, Tea Gardens-Hawks Nest and the whole Hunter Branch. This award is for every one of those volunteers - my friends for life,” she said.

Surf Life Saving NSW President, George Shales OAM said the virtual Awards of Excellence were a resounding success and worked brilliantly to bring all 129 NSW surf clubs together, despite the COVID-19 restrictions, to celebrate the outstanding efforts of members from the 75,000-strong membership.

“Last season was one of the toughest on record with bushfires along the NSW coast and the impact of the Coronavirus ending the summer patrol season early,” George Shales said.

“Despite the challenges we faced, our volunteers rose to the occasion – and they continue to do so in support of their communities. Each year our volunteer surf lifesavers put hundreds of thousands of hours into protecting the public on our beaches, but this year our members responded well beyond the beach and into the wider community.

“We couldn’t be prouder of the way our volunteers displayed courage, bravery and resilience in some of the harshest conditions. They are innovators, leaders, educators, athletes, watermen and women. They have proven themselves to be among the most skilled first responders on the NSW coastline and we are delighted to recognise the best in each field at our annual Awards of Excellence,” Shales concluded.

## 2020 Award Recipients

**Official of the Year:** Debbie Pawsey, Evans Head-Casino SLSC

**Coach of the Year:** Stephen Monaghan, Wauchope-Bonny Hills SLSC

**Surf Sports Team of the Year:** Bulli SLSC Open Men’s Boat Crew

**Youth Athlete of the Year:** Noah Steiner, Wanda SLSC

**Masters Athlete of the Year:** Paul Lemmon, Terrigal SLSC

**Athlete of the Year:** James Koch, Shelly Beach SLSC

**Administrator of the Year:** John Eyles, Woolgoolga SLSC

**Services Team of the Year:** Batemans Bay Bushfire Response Team, Batemans Bay SLSC

**Youth Volunteer of the Year:** Trae Hare-Boyd, North Steyne SLSC

**Innovation Award:** Australian Defence Force (ADF) Pilot Bronze Medallion Course, North Bondi SLSC

**Community Education Program of the Year:** The Gaza Surf Life Saving Project, North Steyne SLSC

**Trainer of the Year:** Doug Hawkins, Coogee SLSC

**Assessor of the Year:** Joe Mastrangelo, North Steyne SLSC

**Facilitator of the Year:** Gail Henderson, Redhead SLSC

**Lifeguard of the Year:** William Vaughan-Smith, Bega Valley Shire Council

**Youth Surf Lifesaver of the Year:** Kai Darwin, Umina SLSC

**Patrol Captain of the Year:** David Winner, Coalcliff SLSC

**Patrol of the Year:** Patrol 5, Umina SLSC

**Rescue of the Year:** Bronte SLSC

**President’s Medal:** Anthony Turner, Thirroul SLSC, Illawarra

**Branch of the Year:** Central Coast

**Club of the Year:** Umina SLSC, Central Coast

**Volunteer of the Year:** Debbie Booth, Tea Gardens-Hawks Nest SLSC, Hunter

**Surf Lifesaver of the Year:** Tony Worton, Camden Haven SLSC, Mid North Coast

# Surf Lifesavers Finalists in Rotary Emergency Services Community Awards

Four volunteer surf lifesavers were among the 28 emergency service personnel announced as finalists in the Rotary Emergency Services Community Awards 2020 by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, David Elliott in August.

The Rotary Emergency Services Community Awards (RESCA) recognise emergency service personnel who have gone above and beyond their call of duty and reflect the Rotary motto of 'Service above Self'. This is the first year that Surf Life Saving NSW volunteers have been included in the awards.

The RESCA awards are community-nominated and are the only awards where Emergency Services personnel, both paid and volunteer, are recognised in a combined awards program.

Awards finalists are drawn from Fire and Rescue NSW, the NSW Rural Fire Service, the NSW State Emergency Service, Marine Rescue NSW, Surf Life Saving NSW, NSW Ambulance and the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association.

Surf Life Saving NSW volunteers named as finalists in the awards are Tracey Hare-Boyd and Michael Wasley from the Sydney Northern Beaches Branch, Anthony Bellette from Batemans Bay SLSC and Karen Hickmott from Toowoona Bay SLSC.

Minister for Emergency Services, David Elliott said the awards are a fantastic opportunity to shine a light on the enormous contribution of emergency services workers.



"The past year has been an exceptionally challenging one for our community, and this is an appropriate time to pause, reflect and congratulate the individual emergency services for the service that they have provided," Minister Elliott said.

"As a state we are hugely indebted to all our emergency services men and women. We should never take for granted their commitment to protecting us and it is important that we acknowledge the unsung heroes who repeatedly go above and beyond," he said.

Surf Life Saving President, George Shales OAM said that being named as a finalist in the RESCA Awards was a considerable achievement and recognition of the selfless and ongoing commitment surf lifesavers give to emergency services and the wider community.

"As President of SLSNSW, I am thrilled to acknowledge the nomination of our four finalists in the RESCA awards and thank them, on behalf of the Board, for what they do for their Surf Life Saving clubs and the community as a whole," said George Shales.

Winners from each emergency service agency will be announced at the Awards presentation on Friday 30 October 2020. The overall winners from NSW will then represent the state at the National Awards to be held on 23 November 2020, hosted by Joint Patrons, the Governor General, His Excellency the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) and Mrs Linda Hurley.

The Dorothy Hennessy Emergency Services Youth Scholarship is run in conjunction with the RESCA awards. The scholarship is for a volunteer aged up to 25 for training and educational materials or equipment. Commissioners from the Marine Rescue NSW, Surf Life Saving NSW, NSW RFS, NSW SES, and the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association each nominate an outstanding individual for consideration of the scholarship. This year, Thomas Kennedy from Wamberal SLSC, has been nominated.

See over page for Surf Life Saving NSW Rotary Emergency Services Community Awards 2020 Finalists.



## Anthony Bellette

**Club Captain,  
Batemans Bay SLSC**

Like so many other emergency workers, Anthony Bellette's moment came when the most recent devastating bushfires threatened the township of Malua Bay on the Far South Coast. Anthony managed thousands of people seeking shelter at the Bateman's Bay Surf Club and communicated with other emergency services. When Batemans Bay SLSC became a recovery centre, he managed that as well. Thirteen years a lifesaver and now captain of Bateman's Bay SLSC, Anthony has devoted himself to the club and its operations.



## Tracey Hare-Boyd

**President,  
SNB Branch**

Tracey Hare-Boyd, the first female President of Surf Life Saving Northern Beaches Branch, manages a membership of more than 19,000 in one of the biggest surf lifesaving branches in the nation. With a host of awards to her name, she has been on hand to assist round the clock. When storms lashed the Sydney region in November last year, Tracey was part of the emergency call-out team that went out to help members of the community identified at high risk, without power and needing medical assistance. She and her team went door knocking at 400 homes in Belrose, Davidson, Forestville, Killarney and Duffy's Forest. Eighteen people were identified as requiring medical assistance and four needed hospitalisation.



## Michael Wasley

**Deputy President,  
SNB Branch**

With almost 30 years of service in the surf lifesaving movement, Michael Wasley has contributed at club, branch, state, national and international levels. Michael was selected by SLSA to travel overseas to train and educate lifesavers in the South Korean Lifesaving Association, Police and the YMCA. Last year he won the Sydney Northern Beaches Branch Lifesaver of the Year award for the second time and is always encouraging youngsters to become part of the Surf Life Saving Movement. Michael has conducted four seasons as Carnival Director of Sydney Northern Beaches Branch Special Needs Championships, which he started in 2017. Following the success of this event in 2019, Michael was appointed carnival director for the first SLSNSW State Championship Inclusive Event which is now a fixture of the Championship program.



## Karen Hickmott

**Director of Finance,  
Toowoona Bay SLSC**

Karen Hickmott has used her extensive experience as the parent and advocate of two children with significant additional needs, her formidable management and organizational skills and her passion and dedication for helping others to make a difference for many members of the community but particularly other special needs families. After joining Toowoona Bay SLSC in 2016, she initiated and continues to run the Toowoona Bay Stingray Nipper programme for children with additional needs. Karen has also brought her business skills to the role of Director of Finance for the Club for the last three years and is active in all areas of the club including management of major fundraising events, sponsors and grants, patrolling, competing in club competitions and even serving in the bar!



## Thomas Kennedy

**Wamberal SLSC**

Thomas helped his Wamberal patrol win Patrol of the Year last year and was an Athlete of the Year finalist. He joined Wamberal SLSC as a volunteer in 2012 and three years ago became a professional lifeguard with Central Coast Council. Tom spends more than 50 hours a week on the beach and is on-call in the off-season. He has given patient support assistance at Gosford Hospital, sought higher qualifications in rescue work and has taught beach safety to children.

**SLSNSW  
Dorothy Hennessy  
Emergency Services  
Youth Scholarship  
Finalist**



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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](mailto:media@surflifesaving.com.au)



Surf Life Saving NSW wishes to thank the following sponsors and supporters for helping our volunteers save lives on the beaches each year.

## Your local club



SLSNSW endeavours to ensure all information contained in *SurfLIFE* is correct and true, however accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracies or mistakes contained in the publication.

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