

SurfLIFE

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SURF LIFE SAVING
NEW SOUTH WALES

COOGEE LEGEND

New Life Member of SLSNSW

Sydney Branch Life Member and Coogee SLSC all-rounder, Doug Hawkins is the latest volunteer to be awarded Surf Life Saving NSW Life Membership following the organisation's Annual General Meeting on 11 November.

Doug's time in Surf Life Saving began at the turn of the century and has continued without pause and with purpose for 22 years.

He revolutionised the Nippers program at club level and across the state and has played a major role in the recruitment and retention of junior lifesavers during his time.

Indeed, a tangible outcome of his youth engagement program, the 'Coogee Blueys' – designed to build more defined connections and establish an identity for young people within the club – has seen Coogee's patrol teams burgeon to the point that now two in every five patrolling members are under 18.

Doug is an active and passionate trainer, assessor and facilitator at club and branch level, and has held down a multitude of important roles including

Youth Director, and Vice President of Coogee SLSC.

"In a sense of the SLSNSW values, we say we're creating great Australians and building better communities," he said.

"When your Nipper program is strong, then that's exactly what you're doing.

"I think that's why it's been such a big focus for me. More than 27,000 Nippers across the state, which is 40,000 parents – that's an enormous number of people that we influence and share our values with.

"If even some of them walk away wanting to be a part of it, then we've done our job.

"Where else can we do something like that? Influencing young people in such a way, working with people from all different walks of life, using your own skills to make a difference."



Doug Hawkins

Like most, Doug doesn't do what he does and wait for the recognition. That said, Life Membership of SLSNSW represents two decades of work that mattered.

"It means a lot. I think it's a weird thing to say but to have the work recognised to me means the work has been positive and has made a difference, and that to me is the biggest win," he said.

"To know things have been beneficial to people, that the work has been proactive and productive, it's nice to sit back and see that.

"It's not about the recognition, though. I come back for the people. To see the joy on the kids' faces in Under 9s and they finally got out the back of the surf for the first time, and the joy on a new junior lifesaver's face in their patrol uniform for the first time, or the Bronzies when they complete their course.

"There's no other organisation like it."

SLSNSW President, George Shales said Doug was a very deserving recipient of state Life Membership.

"The commitment and dedication displayed by Doug has been recognised by SLSNSW and the elevation to Life Member is an absolute acknowledgment of the impact he has made to this organisation and many young future lifesavers, families and the community," he said



Unique Rescue

in Flood Relief Efforts



Flood relief efforts across the state took a unique shape in October this year when volunteers were tasked to a camel in distress in Moama as it waded through increasingly deep flood waters.

"I've been doing surf life saving for a long time but this one just blew me away," Thirroul SLSC member, Anthony Turner said.

"Naturally it's all flooded through there and if it [the camel] went into deep water, it would've drowned.

"We were able to coach it into the shallower water and along the fence line of the paddock where it lived.

"It must have been spooked by the water and gone wandering and the owner just couldn't bring it back.

"Everyone from Fire and Rescue NSW to the SES worked really well together on this incident, working collaboratively in difficult conditions.

"We dropped off some food for it as well – it's just lucky and a relief we were able to get it back to the shed

and away from the water where it could have drowned."

Taskings had taken many shapes for volunteers, with concerns for welfare and emergency calls for stranded persons requiring constant vigilance.

Despite this, there was still high spirits among residents.

"The community has been really resilient, a lot of them have their heads up even though they're exhausted," Anthony said.

"All agencies are very professional and keeping things safe, debriefing, and making sure we're safe as well as those we're responding to.

"We're all watching each other's back, working closely and working as a team."

In what was Anthony's first flood deployment, he said it was both challenging and rewarding, and a good measure of the skills he had developed to date as a lifesaver.

"It's definitely been an eye opener and it highlights how good our capabilities are in the water, our abilities in driving boats and the hazards in the waterways which shows we can be of value in so many areas," he said.



Anthony Turner (middle left) with members of Fire and Rescue NSW.

Avoca Beach Rock Fishing **SAFETY PROGRAM PROVES SUCCESS**

More than 100 rock fishers have walked away better educated in how to stay safe after Surf Life Saving NSW's popular rock fishing safety program, *Gone Fishing*, was successfully held at Avoca Beach on November 20.

Participants were met with a beautiful day on the Central Coast as a total of more than 300 people – rock fishers and families – learned all about vital safety measures and skill-building techniques specific to the popular but often deadly pastime from experts, including Maritime NSW, Marine Rescue and the Department of Primary Industries.

Rock fishers cycled through sessions including how to prepare for a day of fishing, how to pick a safe location, what safety gear to bring, how to assess the conditions and what to do if they get washed into the surf, among other crucial safety tools – tools which equip rock fishers to safely visit the coastline and then return home to their families.

In NSW from July 2021 to June 2022, 11 people lost their lives while rock fishing.

"It was a good day, nice day, the places I've been going lately have been not too safe and I'm turning around and going home because it's not worth it, it's not worth my life, so I thought I'd come here to learn a bit more," Carson of Avoca said.



"You always think you know everything but there's always something else to learn so it's really important to brush up on your knowledge," Ahmed Mahmood from Western Sydney added.

"No fish is worth your life, we want to always get back home to our family and kids."

For Jst Jannatul Ferdaus – a resident of Mount Druitt but originally from Bangladesh – the course was important not only for her own understanding of the dangers of rock fishing, but for the safety of her young sons.

"My sons are very excited about fishing, any kind of fishing, they love it all," she said.

"So, to know the safety is very important.

"I will recommend to people I know to come to this program."

SLSNSW Community Education Manager, Julia Kiss said that the program utilises local fishers to the area so the information is current and tailored to regional conditions.

"We've had really great feedback that participants are learning things that they just weren't aware of," she said.

"They feel like they're getting real knowledge from real rock fishers which really gets the message across."

Member for Terrigal and Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, Adam Crouch was there on Sunday to meet participants and thank Surf Life Saving, saying that it was fantastic that all the participants were taking home a free, properly fitted life jacket that will help save lives along the coast.

"We know that rock fishing is a very popular sport but at the same time, one of the most dangerous in the world," he said.

"It's great to see people of all ages here and at the end of it, they get a life jacket that will keep them safe."

With the support of the NSW Government through the Department of Primary Industries, Surf Life Saving NSW will host a minimum of 10 coastal and 10 in-community workshops aimed specifically at multicultural and at-risk groups, including 1,000 free lifejackets and crucial lifejacket-fitting advice from experts.

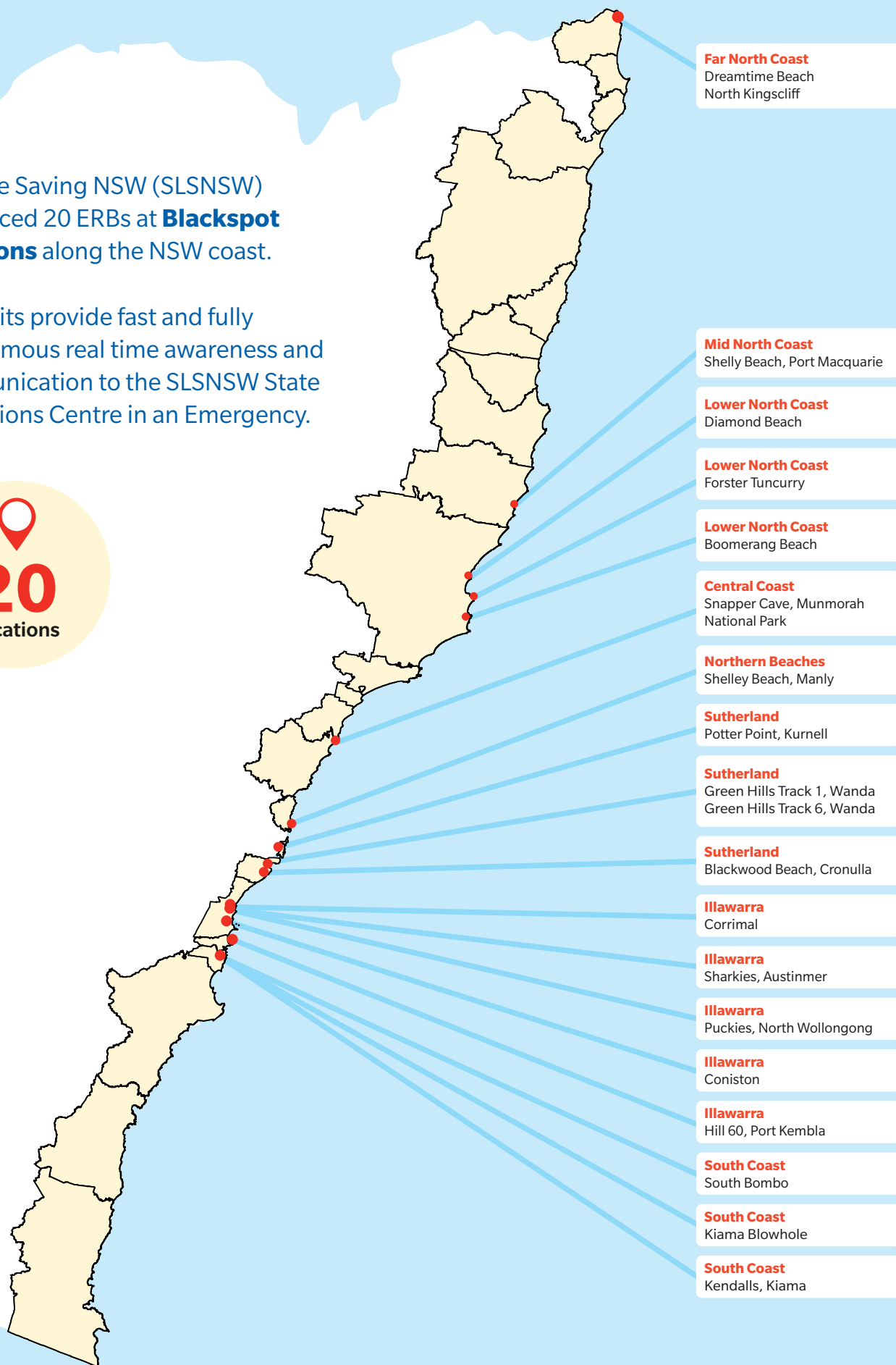
The program ran again at Coffs Harbour in early December and is set down for metropolitan Sydney and La Perouse next year.

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Surf Life Saving NSW (SLSNSW)
has placed 20 ERBs at **Blackspot**
Locations along the NSW coast.

The Units provide fast and fully
autonomous real time awareness and
communication to the SLSNSW State
Operations Centre in an Emergency.



Emergency Beacon

Saves Two Men From Drowning on Far North Coast

Two males in their 20s were rescued at the notorious drowning hotspot, Dreamtime Beach on the state's far north coast after a woman activated the Emergency Response Beacon (ERB), alerting the Surf Life Saving NSW State Operations Centre that the men were drowning.

Lifeguards from the Australian Lifeguard Service were tasked to the incident at about 4.30pm on Monday 7 November when the call came through from the distressed young woman.

"We asked for more details from the operator in the State Ops Centre but there weren't any because one of the girlfriends had activated the beacon and she was upset and panicking," Lifeguard Supervisor, Lachlan Field said.

"That's where the beacons are life-saving because you have the location and you have cameras so you're not reliant on the informant, you can find out for yourself whether the person in trouble has gone round the headland or not, for instance."

In a remarkable turn of events, a member of the public took the initiative to retrieve the angel ring floatation device, which is attached to the beacon, and raced into the water to attempt to save one of the men. The second man was picked up and returned to shore by lifeguard Lachlan Field aboard a surf rescue jetski from Kingscliff.

"Those two people are really lucky, I doubt we would have gotten there in time without the beacon," Lachlan continued.

"On the phone, we may not have been able to get a location or assets there in time but with the ERB, we know immediately it's activated that the job is straight there."

"Dreamtime Beach runs for 2.5kms so without it we'd have had to start all the way down and search the entire beach before we got to the headland."

Both males were taken by ambulance from the beach and were conscious and breathing at the time of transport.

"We had great support from the Fingal Rovers SLSC as well, their call out team sent a buggy down and they had their inflatable rescue boat on standby should we have needed it," Lachlan said.

"We got there first because we're on duty down at Kingscliff already, but we had all areas covered, it was a great response from both lifeguards and lifesavers."

The ERB at Dreamtime is one of 20 currently positioned at blackspots around the state, the initiative managed by Surf Life Saving NSW and funded through the NSW Government.

Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, Steph Cooke said ERBs are continuing to roll out across the State.

"This is exactly what the Emergency Response Beacon was designed for, allowing members of the public to raise the alarm so our lifesavers can do what they do best along any part of our beautiful coastline. Each beacon helps our lifesavers respond faster to emergencies in the water," Ms Cooke said.



Icons of Summer

Team Up for Water Safety Day

Surf Life Saving NSW and the Sydney Sixers joined forces in December to spread a message of surf and water safety, signalling the start of summer and, just as importantly, National Water Safety Day – where the focus is on raising awareness of safe practices around the water.

The first day of summer, 1 December, was declared National Water Safety Day in 2020 in a bid to encourage all Australians to make water safety a priority. Vigilance around the water takes on added significance this year following the tragedy of record drownings last year.

In NSW between July 2021 and June 2022, there were a total of 55 coastal drownings, up 10 on the previous year and up 12 on the 10-year average.

The highest number of drowning deaths occur during the months of summer with beachgoers making the most of the beautiful coastline.

Last summer (December – February) 25 people lost their lives due to drowning, with the summer accounting for 46% of all drowning deaths across 2021-22. In January alone, 10 people, or 18% of the year figure, drowned on the NSW coastline.

“On National Water Safety Day, we are getting behind our volunteer lifesavers and we’re really keen to be supporting everyone to keep safe on the beach,” Sydney Sixers’ Fan and Community Impact Specialist, Hayley Frasa said.

“It’s one of the things you’re taught a lot when you’re growing up, is to swim between the red and yellow flags,” fast bowler, Stella Campbell added.

Fresh off the WBBL season where the team fell just short of the title in a hard-fought final against Adelaide, recovery time is short before the state season begins but that won’t stop the players from hitting the beach and celebrating summer in the best way possible.

“I love heading down to the beach for a swim, it’s great for recovery but it’s



Sydney Sixers’ Maitlan Brown and Stella Campbell at Coogee with Nippers and young lifesavers.

also just relaxing,” all-rounder, Maitlan Brown said.

“For me it’s about rest and relaxation at the beach,” Stella added.

“I’ll take a good book, slip slop slap, sit in the sun with my friends then jump in the water to cool off.”

Surf Life Saving NSW President, George Shales OAM said that keeping safety in mind this summer was of the utmost importance.

“Spreading the message of surf safety with the Sydney Sixers just makes sense – two of the most iconic aspects of summer, the beach and cricket, coming together in the name of education and awareness,” he said.

“This is the first summer without restrictions in two years and we know beachgoers are busting to head to the coastline and make the most of the warm weather, but we really urge everyone to be cautious and not take unnecessary risks.

“It’s one of the things you’re taught a lot when you’re growing up, is to swim between the red and yellow flags”

“Simple things like swimming at a patrolled beach between the red and yellow flags, observing the safety signs posted around the area, not swimming under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and wearing a life jacket while boating or rock fishing can be the difference in ensuring you go home to your family.

“We’re really excited for the summer. Our volunteer lifesavers and lifeguards are ready and we can’t wait to see everyone at the beach.”



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Make your next team building day really count

Book your next team building session with Team Building With Purpose to take on the 'Corporate Lifesaving Challenge' and you'll be helping to save lives with 50% of the net profit going to Surf Life Saving NSW.

This Lifesaving themed session is fun, interactive and will challenge your team to draw parallels to their work environment, explore new ideas, different roles in a team and consider ways to improve the workplace.

Is your team up for the challenge?



To find out more or to book your session today, scan the QR code. Alternatively, call Team Building With Purpose on 02 9158 9600.



**Team Building
With Purpose**

Surf Sports to be Revolutionised by New Strategy

Surf Sports in NSW is set for a shakeup following the release of Surf Life Saving NSW's Surf Sports Reimagined – an inaugural surf sports strategy which will strive to position Surf Sports as NSW's first choice coastal sport & recreational pursuit.

The strategy is a culmination of previously commissioned reviews which have been consolidated alongside member consultations and workshops lead by leading sport and entertainment consultancy, The Gemba Group.

Over the next three years, the strategy articulates a need to for sport to be repositioned within the movement as a strategic enabler for other surf life saving functions.

SLSNSW Director of Surf Sports, Don van Keimpema OAM said the strategy is a key component to ensuring Surf Life Saving's prosperity moving forward.

"Sport is crucial to attracting new members and retaining existing members through both formal and informal physical activity," he said.

"The strategy development process highlighted our competitive advantage – the beach – and acknowledges that we're playing in a highly competitive sport and recreational marketplace, and we must adapt with consumer trends and innovations accordingly."

Highlighted within the strategy is the need to look to technology to improve the participant end-to-end experience and reduce the burden on our administrators and officials.

"The introduction of LiveHeats and RFID technology has already made a huge difference to carnival experience," van Keimpema added.

"We're also investigating how we can use the platform to introduce divisional racing and leaderboard concepts."

SLSNSW Surf Sport Manager, Jim Pinnington said Surf Sports Reimagined illustrates a need to challenge the

traditional delivery of surf sport products and services.

'Surf Sports needs to innovate quickly in an increasingly robust sport and active recreation marketplace,' he said.

"The call to action for clubs is to share best practice, collaborate, and work together outside of competition to ensure we develop the best products and services for members and non-members alike."

"Our goal is that every single one of our 129 clubs along the NSW coastline is delivering industry-leading community sport products and services, with local nuance and character."

SLSNSW President, George Shales OAM said growing surf sports participation through initiatives identified in Surf Sports Reimagined can only improve other key measurables.

"Attracting new members into Surf Life Saving through sport means more patrol hours, an increasingly diverse and inclusive membership, more rescue-ready personnel and a growth in commercial revenue to reinvest into our clubs and members," he said.



INGENIA CONTINUES SUPPORT *for NSW Lifesavers*

Ingenia Holiday Parks has extended its partnership with Surf Life Saving NSW for a further two years, supporting surf safety programs and volunteer events.

“We couldn’t be more thrilled to continue this journey with Ingenia Holiday Parks” said SLSNSW President, George Shales OAM.

“So many families enjoy holidaying on the coast, staying at holiday parks and visiting the beach. It’s a partnership that has such a natural fit.”

The last 12 months has seen Ingenia involved in the NSW Surf Life Saving Championships as a Supporting Partner and as the Naming Rights Partner of the Junior Lifesaver of the Year (JLOTY) program supporting the development of our younger members on their journey to be the lifesavers of tomorrow.

As part of the partnership, Surf Life Saving NSW has delivered vital First Aid and Mental Health First Aid training to Ingenia staff in Brisbane and Sydney. The broader Ingenia team also engaged in the online ‘Kitchen catch-up’ program – a mental health and wellbeing session that provides basic knowledge and tools to help recognise when someone might be struggling and how to approach it.

One of the highlights of the year was the Beach Safety Roadshow that saw our Lifeguards head down the highway from Byron Bay to Bermagui in a Surf Life Saving NSW-branded Apollo motorhome, dropping into Ingenia Holiday Parks along the way to present to their guests. Hundreds of kids and families were educated on the dangers to look out for at the beach and how to stay safe.

“The engagement was really high and well received by our Holiday Park guests,” General Manager Tourism, Ingenia Holiday Parks, Matthew Young.

The next two years will see Ingenia continue as Naming Rights Partner of the JLOTY program as well as taking on the Naming Rights of the iconic Beach to Bush program which will be celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2023.

To mark the occasion of the partnership extension, Surf Life Saving NSW CEO, Steve Pearce presented Kristy Minter, Ingenia General Manager, People and Culture, a framed patrol cap.

“The partnership with Ingenia Holiday Parks supports our work in developing our young members and delivering beach safety messages across NSW – it’s fundamental to what we do,” Steve said.

“Ingenia is proud to be continuing the partnership with Surf Life Saving NSW and in doing so, investing in coastal safety which benefits our whole community including our holiday park guests.” Kristy added.



SLSNSW CEO, Steve Pearce, Ingenia Holiday Parks Events and Partnerships Executive, Siena Crisafi, SLSNSW Partnerships Manager, Helen O'Connor, and Ingenia Holiday Parks General Manager, People and Culture, Kristy Minter at North Bondi.



SLSNSW President, George Shales with Sydney Branch Team Captains at the presentation ceremony.

SYDNEY DOMINATES

at Interbranch Championships

A clinic of skill and speed on the beach has helped Sydney Branch to claim its first Interbranch Championship in six years, breaking a streak of three straight Sydney Northern Beaches titles in the process.

Athletes from the stretch of coastline encompassing Palm Beach to Manly had previously claimed seven of the last nine Interbranch Championships, including each of the last three, but simply couldn't keep up with their neighbouring Branch to the south over two action-packed and, at times, testing days on the NSW Central Coast.

Shelly Beach turned on the weather and the surf on the weekend of 3-4 December, with pumping waves ensuring water competitors from the Far North Coast to the Far South Coast were pushed to their limits. It was on the sand, though, that Sydney would absolutely dominate, claiming 10 of 12 possible Beach Flags events and the Open and U17 Mixed 2x1km

Beach Runs, among other results.

Interestingly, the Central Coast appears to be a happy hunting ground for Sydney Branch in its quest for Interbranch success – it has now won each of the last five Championships held in the region, inclusive of the weekend past and dating back as far as 2009 at The Lakes SLSC.

The only win Sydney Branch has claimed outside of the Central Coast this century came at Stockton Beach in 2002.

"Our coaches are just awesome, and they really instilled in us just effort on effort and that every place and every point counts this weekend," Sydney Branch team captain, Emily Maythers said.

"I think our beachies absolutely killed it, it's so good to have them as part of our team. The heavy beach program really suited us."

"In the water we just wanted to come together as a team and it really helped, the wins we got there made it all worthwhile too," Maythers' co-captain, Kai Robertson added.

While the margin from first to second would prove large once competition wrapped on Sunday afternoon, the fight for places on the podium proved to be the true battle of the weekend.

While Sydney Northern Beaches Branch ended up claiming second overall, they did so with a total point score just eight points greater than Hunter Branch,



who finished third. A further four points back was host Branch, Central Coast, ensuring just 12 points would separate second to fourth place.

Far North Coast finished on top of the Country point score, placing fifth overall, and dined out on a number of fine results across the weekend. Arguably none more so than a special come-from-behind victory in the U17/ Open Female Ski Relay, having entered the final leg behind Central Coast.

"We sort of threw this team together from the best ski paddlers we had in the team, we were only going in it for a bit of fun because we love the waves, but things just went our way," Chloe Jones said.

"I thought I was chasing Central Coast the whole time but then I lost them and when I was coming in everyone

was screaming at me and I thought that was strange because I thought I was going for second," Kloe Mills added.

"Turns out I was the first to cross the line."

South Coast, North Coast, Far South Coast and Mid North Coast Branches rounded out the final point score positions, with plenty of fun had by athletes who travelled long distances to compete.

Nicole Sims of South Coast Branch was lucky enough to do that beside some of her children.

"It's amazing, I was a bit nervous at first that they might be a bit embarrassed that it was mum but they're on the sideline there cheering me and wishing me luck," she said.

2022 NSW INTERBRANCH CHAMPIONSHIP POINT SCORE

Sydney: 1,014

Sydney Northern Beaches: 878

Hunter: 870

Central Coast: 866

Far North Coast: 786

Illawarra: 698

South Coast: 687

North Coast: 391

Far South Coast: 380

Mid North Coast: 218

"To be able to have that in common with them, we can discuss what we're nervous about or what we're looking forward to, it's good.

"My daughter tends not to listen to me, my son will, but I like to share the knowledge and show them what's possible."

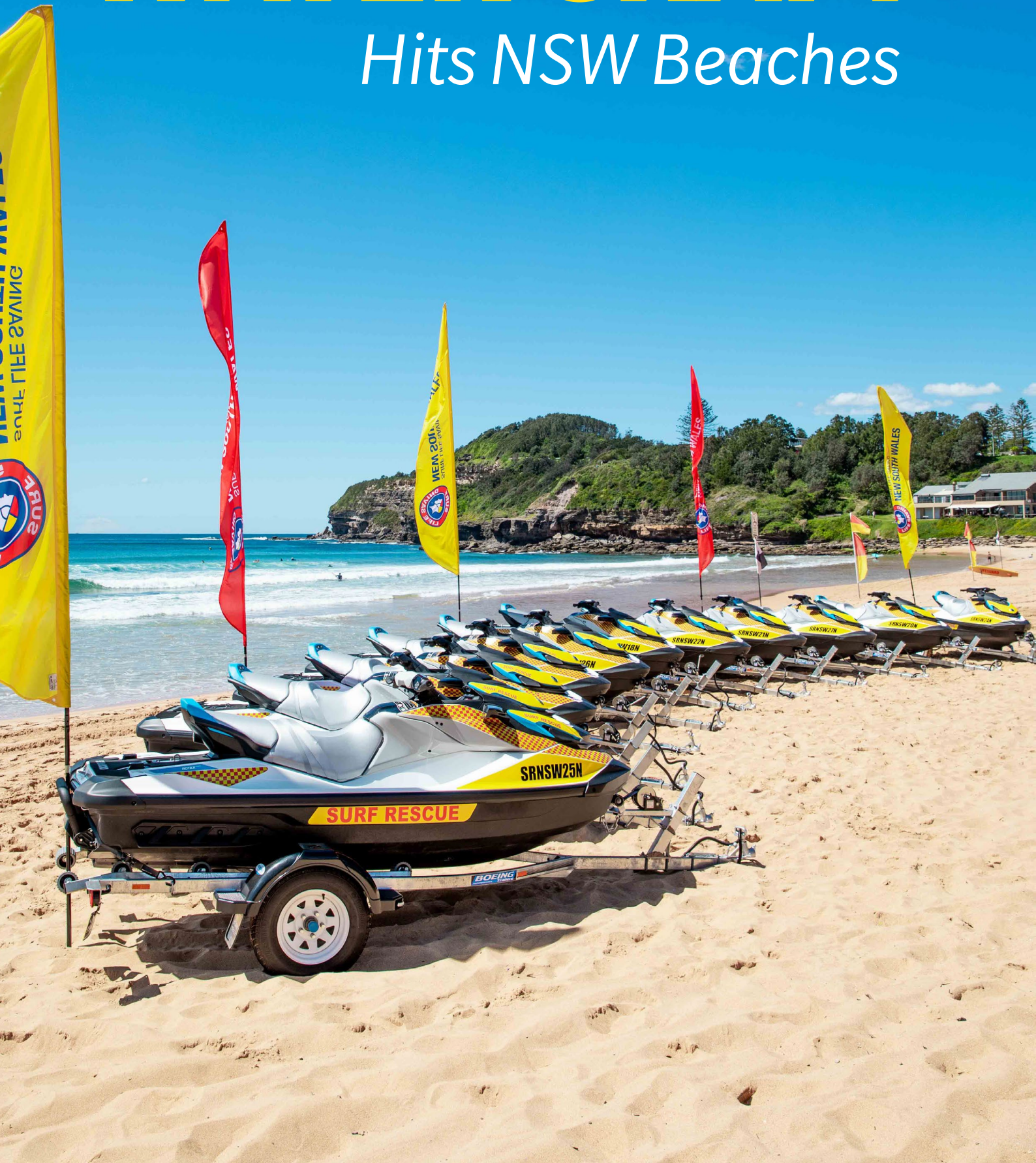


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NEW RESCUE WATER CRAFT

Hits NSW Beaches



The second delivery from a four-year NSW Government enhanced rescue funding will see each Surf Life Saving NSW Branch receive a brand-new jet ski to assist volunteers ahead of what is anticipated to be a bumper summer season.

Rescue Water Craft (RWCs) provide operational versatility to our lifesavers in red and yellow, with the capacity to reach people in trouble near difficult to access and often treacherous locations that larger vessels simply cannot such as near rock platforms.

The ability of the jetski to respond quickly, its heightened manoeuvrability and the experienced personnel who operate them – all of whom have undertaken extensive training – make RWCs a valued vessel in SLSNSW's Support Operations fleet and ensure they are an important aspect of coastal patrols all the way to more serious situations such as search and rescue missions.

Over the past two years, RWCs have been involved in 704 rescues and 271 emergency call outs. In the same period, they have spent nearly 23,000 hours on the water keeping beachgoers safe.

"Overall, SLSNSW's core mission is to save lives, create great Australians and build better communities. The delivery of a fleet of new RWCs to our Branches helps us deliver on our mission," SLSNSW President, George Shales OAM said.

"In providing state-of-the-art Support Operations equipment and vessels to our Branches, we increase our capacity to save lives and, indeed, build better communities.

"We look forward to seeing these fantastic new rescue craft on the water this summer as our volunteer lifesavers from all 129 clubs patrol beaches along the NSW coastline."

RWCs are regularly involved in high-pressure rescue situations up and down the coast. In September,



a major incident involving a rock fisherman at Charlotte Head on the state's lower north coast ended positively when an RWC was launched from nearby Pacific Palms SLSC and navigated significant swell and a narrow cove to retrieve two men in their 20s who had fallen into the ocean.

The speed of response, agility and ability to get close to rock platforms are some of the craft's lifesaving benefits.

In keeping with SLSNSW's goal of providing volunteers with the best equipment available, the 11 vessels about to go into service are Sea-Doo model craft by BRP – one of the most reliable watercraft manufacturers in the market and a national partner of Surf Life Saving.

Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, Steph Cooke said the RWCs will enhance the ability of lifesavers to respond to emergencies.



"These jet skis will give our lifesavers the ability to get to people in trouble in the water quickly, and also allow them to reach those in treacherous locations like off rock platforms," she said.

"Our 20,000 lifesavers are better prepared than ever before and are ready for a big summer, but safety is a shared responsibility so I'm respectfully asking beachgoers to follow advice, avoid unnecessary risks and swim between the flags."



*Northern Beaches
Lifesavers Recognised*

FOR FLOOD RELIEF ROLE

Proving lifesavers are never truly off duty, Avalon Beach SLSC's Nick Sampson and Jason Dale's quick thinking and sound action in a high-pressure situation saw the Northern Beaches pair awarded the SLSNSW Rescue of the Month and an SLSCA Rescue Medal.

On their way back to a hotel on 4 July after a full day assisting the SES in response to the heightening flood emergency in the Liverpool area, Nick and Jason found themselves caught in flash flooding where, for close to three hours, they switched gears back into lifesaving mode to assist nearly 100 stranded vehicles.

Their rescue support varied from pulling people through car windows and carrying them to self-made evacuation points, to escorting and directing people through the waters.

Chief among their outstanding efforts was the rescue of an elderly woman who had been swept off her feet

into the moving water as well as a policewoman who had jumped in to assist.

Jason and Nick were able to rescue them both before they were washed into a nearby creek.

"If we weren't there, there would have been a significant number of cars



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that had broken down in the water and consequently a lot more people in vehicles so also a higher chance of somebody being caught in their car," Jason said.

"I think that would've played on my mind a fair bit if that was the outcome, but fortunately we were able to play our part."

"The people that we got out at the very beginning, by the end their cars were completely submerged," Nick added.

"Without a doubt there would have been fatalities at some point."

Lifesavers have been posted to multiple flood emergencies over the past 12-18 months, with thousands of volunteers turning their backs to the ocean to face the burning issues within their communities.

While it is far from the nature of a beach patrol during the summer, Jason said the skills are largely transferrable.

"It really comes back to beach management skills," he said.

"We were able to look at everything that was going down and make calls on how to prevent what was going on from getting worse.

"When we were interacting with other services, we were able to give a proper sitrep through the lens of what was happening quite quickly, rather than getting caught up in too much detail.

"Being able to identify risk to ourselves as well was important."

The pair also reflected on the exceptional interoperability of the agencies involved, inclusive of Surf Life Saving NSW, given the shared and unique skillsets allowed for great outcomes for many people.

"To be trained in those in-water skills as lifesavers are, it made a massive difference to a lot of people's lives over those weeks," Nick said.



Record Number of Lifesavers Bring **Beach Safety to the Bush**

More than 10,000 primary school-aged children, 86 participating schools, 14,000 kilometres travelled – these were the key numbers behind Surf Life Saving NSW's flagship education program, Beach to Bush, which took over regional and rural NSW in November.

A record number of volunteer surf lifesavers went bush this year to deliver important beach and water safety lessons to thousands of NSW primary school students – an interaction that, for many of the students, was their first with the iconic red and yellow.

Now in its 29th year, Beach to Bush is the largest and most innovative surf safety education program in Australia, having reached 264,000 primary school students since it began in 1994.

Students attending the program learned about the role of surf

lifesavers, why they should always swim between the red and yellow flags, how to spot a rip current, what to do if they get into trouble at the beach and the different types of marine life along the coast. Lifesavers also spoke about the hazards of inland waterways.

Children from regional and inland parts of NSW are often at higher risk than those from coastal locations because they are less familiar and unaware of potential surf dangers.

The key aquatic safety messages from the program can be applied to rivers, dams, pools and other inland waterways.

“It is Surf Life Saving NSW’s vision that every student has access to important coastal safety information – regardless of the size of their school,” SLSNSW Community Education Officer, Jenni Clarke said.

“Every year more and more families are heading to the coastline for holidays. Educating young Australians in safe beach practices grows with it. Some children who attend have never actually been to the coast or swum in the ocean, let alone learnt about rip currents and dangerous marine species.

“We had twelve tours this year with our lifesavers meeting students from the far north- west area of NSW at Yetman, as far west as Warren and out to Wakool and Albury in the Western Riverina in southern NSW.”

With nearly two decades of experience as a presenter, Sydney Northern Beaches Branch Director of Education, Adrienne Lowe was part of ‘Tour 1’ to the far north coast.

In her time, she has learned the value of the program and continues to be a part of it as she feels it “really makes a difference.”

“Many of the children are unaware of the dangers around the beach and their local waterways,” she said.

“Beach to Bush is such an interactive preventative program, it really makes a difference to the understanding of water safety for children in those rural and remote areas.



“I remember one year I did the program with a school outside of Burke in 42-degree heat under a tin shed. The students loved it. They love seeing real surf lifesavers.

“You’re always welcomed into the local community and have fun.”

The NSW Government (through the Deputy Premier) was once again the financial supporter for the Beach to Bush program.

As a Supporting Partner of the Beach to Bush educational program, ClubsNSW CEO Josh Landis said that the club industry is enormously proud of its long and close association with Surf Life Saving NSW.

“Australians love nothing more than cooling off in the water during the summer months and we are lucky to have some of the most spectacular beaches in the world. But the ocean and other waterways can be dangerous, so learning how to be safe in and around the water is vital,” he said.

“Your local club is a proud supporter of Surf Life Saving NSW and the Beach to Bush program. It is incredibly important to educate those in remote and regional communities about water safety and we look forward to continuing our long and successful partnership.”



Surfers Carve Up at **NSW BOARD RIDING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The NSW Board Riding Championships are back with a bang after the competitive return of the event at Merewether Beach in early October saw fantastic conditions pave the way for some strong surfing across the competition.

Ninety-six registered competitors from 28 clubs up and down the coast converged on the iconic location for the event – the first time it has been held since 2019.

“The last one was at North Narrabeen and it went really well there, good competitors and good numbers,” said event referee, Carlo Villanti.

“We’re back again though with good numbers once again and we’ve seen some really good surfing.

“In particular, some of the U13 kids and U14-15 kids are very, very good – it’s great to see.”

Indeed, the younger age brackets would put up some of the highest scores of the day, taking advantage of getting in the water early and laying down scores through consistent sets.

George Messiter of Coogee SLSC arguably was the cream of the crop, posting the second highest individual score across the day in the U13 Male Short Board final.

George would triumph by less than a point over Will Tebb of Avoca Beach – ironically, the son of the man who would go on to beat George’s individual high score later in the day. His father, Nigel,

would outscore George in the 50+ Male Short Board final.

It wouldn’t phase George, though, he was just thrilled to be out in the water.

“I love surfing – hot, sunny, you’re with your mates most of the time, and competing is good but it’s also stressful,” he said with a laugh.

“I thought it was going to be pouring rain, but it was clean and the waves came through in the final, so that was good.

“I was hustling for the better waves and going for a couple of big snaps.”



Later in the day, the Long Board divisions saw some first timers battle it out with seasoned heads.

In the Youth Female Long Board final, winner Isabel Higgs from North Curl Curl SLSC confessed to being “entered by the club” rather than her own choice, but she had loads of fun on the longer board.

“It was really tricky, but it was fun at the same time, I really enjoyed it today,” she said.

“I was a bit nervous; I’m not too used to riding it but the people at the club put me in and I thought, might as well give it a shot.”

Many competitors took the opportunity to paddle out for multiple categories, testing their skills across the age brackets. Lily Forbes from Cooks Hill SLSC was one of them, saying the opportunity to get back in the water and competing was too hard to pass up.

“I think I just wanted to be a part of the environment, come down with all my club mates to a local beach and just have a good day,” she said.

“This is my second time doing the Board Riding, it changes it up a bit from your usual board, swim, paddle, it’s good.”





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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 76,000 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

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Surf Life Saving New South Wales

T +61 2 9471 8000 | E info@surflifesaving.com.au

3 Narabang Way Belrose NSW 2085 | PO Box 307 Belrose NSW 2085 Australia

Fundraising Authority No. CFN11033 ABN: 93 827 748 379

