

SurfLIFE

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SURF LIFE SAVING
NEW SOUTH WALES



Lifesavers honoured at **NSW AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE**

Nearly 500 volunteer lifesavers and their supporters have celebrated the most outstanding achievements during a challenging season, coming together on Saturday 26 August for the annual Surf Life Saving NSW Awards of Excellence event in Sydney.

The gala award ceremony culminated in roars of approval as the blue-chip award for the 2023 Surf Lifesaver of the Year was announced – Cheryl McCarthy from the Bermagui Surf Life Saving Club on the Far South Coast.

Cheryl's award was the 24th and final on a night in which volunteers from clubs up and down the NSW coastline came together to recognise the achievements of 76,000 members across the state and crown a new group of award recipients.

It was the second Far South Coast success to come from the five major awards categories, after Broulee Surfers SLSC picked up the Club of the Year going to great applause and some serious elation from the southern-most lifesavers in attendance.

Ben Bate from Narooma SLSC was also honoured as the Support Operations Member of the Year, a relatively new award acknowledging volunteer Duty Officers, call out teams, UAV and Rescue Water Craft (RWC) operators.

"What an amazing honour and so humbling to look around the room and see the number of incredible people, just to be mentioned alongside them is amazing so it's all still sinking in," Cheryl said moments after hearing her name read out.

"I think if you're volunteering, you need to do it because there's a smile on your face and because you love it and I genuinely do."

While it was to be Cheryl's night – a fine and worthy recognition of many years of great service – it was the Illawarra Branch that celebrated hardest earlier in the evening, picking up seven awards across five of the categories, including four alone for Bellambi SLSC.

Youth Volunteer of the Year and Youth Surf Lifesaver of the Year both fell early to Bellambi, being Halle Bone and Brody Roberston, respectively, while Jaclyn Percy scooped up the Trainer of the Year award and the Bellambi Callout Team was named the Services Team of the Year.

"Something must be going on, I don't know what it is, but it's awesome to see our club showing off the talent and skills we have," Brody said.



Further highlights on the night included a double victory for Tacking Point SLSC on the Mid North Coast, with Sandra Slattery winning the Administrator of the Year category and the club's Dippers Program – a modified Nippers learn-to-swim program for children with specific learning needs – won the Community Education Program of the Year.

Meanwhile, Dan Collins out of Redhead SLSC near Newcastle capped a magnificent season in the NutriGrain Iron series and at state and national level with the Athlete of the Year award.

The Central Coast Branch took home a fully equipped drone kit for winning Branch of the Year, thanks to the event sponsor, D1 Store – Australia's home for DJI.

The tiny Pacific Palms SLSC on the lower north coast was suddenly thrust into the spotlight when members





Jeanette and Jerrad Allen were honoured for their unwavering and selfless dedication, and the conduct of many brave rescues, with the prestigious President's Medal.

Minister for Emergency Services, Jihad Dib congratulated all the finalists on the night and thanked the state's volunteer lifesavers for their commitment to keeping the coastline safe.

"It's so difficult choosing just one winner out of a group of Surf Life Saving volunteers who sacrifice their precious time to help keep our beaches safe over the swimming season," he said.

"These awards are a great way of bringing our amazing Surf Life Saving volunteers together to celebrate them and everything they do to keep us safe

while we enjoy our beautiful beaches and other waterways."

Surf Life Saving NSW President, Peter Agnew ESM congratulated all winners on the night, and highlighted his pride at the wide representation of finalists from across all Branches.

"Another tricky season is in the bag but the field of candidates for all of the award categories highlights just how prepared we are heading into this summer; there were so many deserving recipients of these awards," he said.

"I'm very proud to be leading an organisation that represents so many people who have no hesitation in giving up their time to protect the lives of others."

2023 WINNERS

Youth Awards

Youth Surf Lifesaver of the Year
Brody Robertson (*Bellambi SLSC*)

Youth Volunteer of the Year
Halle Bone (*Bellambi SLSC*)

Youth Athlete of the Year
Conner Maggs (*Newport SLSC*)

Membership Awards

Innovation Award – Taking it to the Beach (*Ocean Beach SLSC*)

Services Team of the Year
Bellambi Call Out Team
(*Bellambi SLSC*)

Administrator of the Year
Sandra Slattery (*Tacking Point SLSC*)

Education Awards

Trainer of the Year
Jaclyn Percy (*Bellambi SLSC*)

Assessor of the Year
Steve Westcott (*Fingal Beach SLSC*)

Facilitator of the Year
Phillip Carter (*Maroubra SLSC*)

Community Education Program of the Year – Dippers
(*Tacking Point SLSC*)

Surf Sports Awards

Official of the Year
Rachel Soars (*Merewether SLSC*)

Coach of the Year
Glenn Beveridge
(*Wollongong City SLSC*)

Masters Athlete of the Year
Nathan Foster (*Kiama Downs SLSC*)

Surf Sports Team of the Year
U14 Female Board Rescue
(*Cooks Hill SLSC*)

Lifesaving Awards

Lifeguard of the Year
Mariah Jones (*Tweed*)

Patrol Captain of the Year
Rachelle Balez (*Scarborough Wombarra SLSC*)

Support Operations Member of the Year – Ben Bate (*Narooma SLSC*)

Rescue of the Year – Elouera SLSC and North Cronulla SLSC

Major Awards

President's Award – Jeanette and Jerrad Allen (*Pacific Palms SLSC*)

Branch of the Year
Central Coast Branch

Club of the Year
Broulee Surfers SLSC

Athlete of the Year
Daniel Collins (*Redhead SLSC*)

Volunteer of the Year
Brigid Collaery (*Coalcliff SLSC*)

Surf Lifesaver of the Year
Cheryl McCarthy (*Bermagui SLSC*)

FLAGS UP

As Volunteer Lifesavers Return To Beaches

More than 20,000 active volunteer lifesavers began patrols across the state on the weekend of 23-24 September. The NSW Premier Chris Minns and Minister for Emergency Services Jihad Dib took part in a symbolic raising of the red and yellow flags at Maroubra Beach on the Saturday morning, marking the start of the Surf Life Saving season.

Forecasts of an extremely hot and dry summer have lifesavers on high alert, with a major surge in numbers expected on beaches and waterways this season. At the same time, many surf clubs are experiencing problems attracting enough volunteers to meet the expected demand, particularly in regional areas.

On the first day of patrols, the Premier urged beachgoers to be cautious, to observe water safety advice from lifesavers or lifeguards and take responsibility for themselves and their families when heading to the coastline this summer.



"With a warm summer forecast, this season will be extremely challenging for our lifesavers and with more people expected to visit our beaches, the role of volunteer lifesavers will be vital in helping to prevent drownings," Minns said.

"This record funding injection of \$23 million makes an unequivocal statement about the paramount importance of beach safety and the role the organisation plays in keeping our beaches and coastline safe.

"Please follow the instructions of our Surf Life Saving volunteers, who are also putting their lives on the line each and every day to keep us safe.

"Swim between the flags, make sure you supervise your children, wear a life jacket where required and we'll all have a fun and safe summer."

Minister Dib thanked the Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club lifesavers kicking off patrols for the season.

"From Tweed Heads to Eden, NSW boasts some of the world's most pristine beaches and the world's best surf lifesavers. This is the largest amount of funding the NSW Government has ever committed to Surf Life Saving NSW and we are proud to deliver on our promise to

support these heroes in their vital work," he said.

"I want to thank our volunteers who give their time so that the community can enjoy a day in the surf, so please follow their advice to stay safe.

"By equipping Surf Life Saving NSW with vital resources and cutting-edge technology, we amplify their life-saving efforts and reaffirm our promise to protect our communities."

President of Surf Life Saving NSW Peter Agnew echoed this message. "We need help across the board and not just from those who can perform a rescue. You can volunteer as little or as much as you like and in every role, from admin, to first aid, to teaching Nippers or helping in the club canteen.

"You can learn new skills like flying a drone, or driving an inflatable rescue boat, improve your fitness and mental wellbeing and be part of a great community," said Peter Agnew.

Recognising the increased level of danger on beaches and waterways, the NSW Government has responded with an uplift of \$23m over the next four years to support Surf Life Saving volunteers with facilities improvements, equipment, training and education programs for at-risk communities.

The role of volunteer surf lifesavers this summer includes:

- Identify the safest part of the beach to position the red and yellow flags
- Patrol the flagged area and monitor the beach conditions
- Conduct preventative actions and rescue people in distress
- Provide modified first aid and assistance to people in trouble on the beach and in the water
- Work with other emergency services to assist with incident response away from patrolled locations or outside patrol hours
- Provide information to beachgoers about surf conditions, beach safety and beach alert or closure information (via [Beachsafe.org.au](https://www.beachsafe.org.au) or the Beachsafe App)



Illawarra Volunteer Wins Big *at Rotary Awards*



Woonona SLSC's Morgan Clarke has been recognised for more than 12 years of passionate mentorship and service to Surf Life Saving, named the Overall Officer of the Year in a Volunteer Capacity at the Rotary Emergency Services Community Awards.

At a lavish presentation evening on Saturday 12 August, Morgan was one of 19 deserving finalists from all facets of our emergency services, including three fellow surf lifesavers.

The Illawarra Branch Duty Officer (DO) and Woonona Club Captain was named ahead of South Coast DO Bradley Dawson, Hunter DO Glen Dunkley, and Sydney Northern Beaches DO Kieran Menzies to claim the Surf Life Saving NSW category, before then going on to be named the Overall winner on the night as well.

"I know the other finalists for Surf and I've worked with them all in some capacity, so I didn't expect to win the surf one let alone anything else," Morgan said.

"I remember pausing and thinking 'Are you sure?'"

"I was honoured and humbled. It's definitely not why we do what we do – I volunteer because I love being on the beach – but it's nice to be recognised as well."

Morgan wears many hats at her surf club, balancing several club roles with her passion for upskilling; where she participates actively in Search and Rescue exercises in collaboration with other agencies, and mentorship; where she works hard to grow club and branch participation numbers, particularly among women.

She leads by example, patrolling at two different clubs, and is a member of the callout team which has been regularly activated out-of-hours for major rescues in the Wollongong area.

"I'm really big on education as well," she said.

Above: Minister for Emergency Services Jihad Dib, Coogee SLSC's Kate Kyling, Woonona SLSC's Morgan Clarke, and SLSNSW CEO Steve Pearce

"Where we live, we're so lucky to have the coastline we have and I love taking the time with people who travel here to speak to them about where is dangerous and where is safe, what to look out for, those kind of things.

"I enjoy that teaching side, giving people who might not be familiar with the conditions the chance to enjoy the beach for what it is and not have to act after they've gotten into trouble.

"Preventative actions are the key."

Coogee SLSC's Kate Kyling was also a big winner on the night, taking out the Emergency Services Youth Scholarship.

The RESCA Awards is the only time all emergency services personnel, both paid and volunteer, are recognised in a combined program.

It is a community-nominated Award which reflects the reputation and esteem in which the finalists are held by their local communities.

Academy Program

to foster Athlete Development in NSW

Surf Life Saving NSW has announced the establishment of five regional Surf Sport Academies which will seek to underpin future athlete and coach development in NSW in a first-of-its-kind program within the movement.

The Academies will be supported by the NSW Regional Academies of Sport (RASi) network, providing professionalised athlete services and coach development opportunities pertaining to strength and conditioning, sports nutrition, sports psychology, media skills, preparing for performance and injury prevention.

The new Academies will align with SLSNSW's existing five regionally based Super Surf Teams and newly-created Surfboat Interseries Competition; the Northern Dolphins, Hunter/Central Coast Orcas, SNB Rays, Sydney Sharks and the Southern Penguins.

The alignment provides a clear athlete and coach pathway from Club & Branch representation through to Interstate team selection.

The academies will have an initial intake of 74, 15- and 16-year-old athletes, with a new cohort of 46 athletes to come in over following season to grow the Academies to capacity.

"For the first time, SLSNSW is providing a structured pathway offering to emerging athletes and increasing its investment in Surf Sport athlete development tenfold," SLSNSW Surf Sports Manager, Jim Pinnington said.

"The inception of the Performance Academies will provide unprecedented access and opportunity for aspiring athletes along the entire NSW coastline and prepare youth athletes for the elite demands of our sport."

The Academies are reflective of the organisation's commitment to the **Surf Sports Re-imagined** strategy released in late 2022, redefining the athlete pathway experience which was a key deliverable to emerge from the strategy.

"The inception of the academies reflects our commitment to develop and solidify our athlete pathway across all disciplines, and furthermore, it provides a framework to develop the number and quality of coaches in NSW," SLSNSW Director, Don van Keimpema said.

In aligning the Academies with one of the state's premier regional sports pathway developers, RASi, Group CEO, Brett O'Farrell believes SLSNSW is tapping into significant knowledge, skills and resources honed over more than three decades.

"The NSW Regional Academy of Sport has three main objectives, to talent identify regional athletes, to provide education and support to this talent and then to provide an opportunity to progress through the pathways," he said.

"The talented young surf lifesavers in this state will now have our resources and expertise at their fingertips as a tool to enhance their training and outcomes in their chosen disciplines."

Expressions of Interest for both athletes and coaches are being accepted immediately, with the initial intake of 74 athletes to be selected by the NSW Selection Panel ahead of an anticipated commencement date in late October 2023.





LIFESAVING 24 HOUR ROW

Building Mental Fitness

Rowers at Avalon SLSC and below,
Gus Worland with 24 Hour Row
founders, Mel and Nathan Wellings.

Thousands of Australians took part in the 2023 Gotcha4Life 24 Hour Row for mental fitness by keeping their rowing machines moving for 24 hours at surf clubs, gyms and schools.

The annual event, now in its sixth year, attracted more than 65 teams, including 37 surf clubs across Australia, to take part and saw locals, families, lifesavers, heroes, celebrities and politicians getting involved.

Kicking off at 12pm on Saturday 9 September and finishing 12pm Sunday on World Suicide Prevention Day, participants took turns for the entire 24-hour period to keep their team's rowing machine running non-stop to raise funds for lifesaving mental fitness programs which support their communities.

The 24 Hour Row raises funds for mental fitness foundation Gotcha4Life. With a vision of zero-suicides, Gotcha4Life delivers empowering and educational mental fitness programs and workshops in communities.

The funds raised by teams will be turned around to provide each of the participating communities with programs catered to their needs and requirements.

Surf Life Saving NSW CEO, Steve Pearce said that many surf club communities have been touched by suicide and the numbers supporting the cause show a desire to take action.

"Surf clubs are part of their communities and our volunteers love getting behind initiatives like the row that bring people together," he said.

"Building the mental fitness of our own members is also very important and many surf clubs have experienced the life-changing programs offered by Gotcha4Life through the funds raised each year.



What makes the event so unique is that each of the locations is connected via Zoom and live streamed through Facebook, something that has united participants in the event over the last three years.

"Being able to watch all the teams rowing together across Australia is pretty special," said Gotcha4Life Founder, Gus Worland.



"We're working together towards a common goal, we all want to end suicide and part of that is about helping people realise they don't have to worry alone. No one is alone throughout the event, right through the night you can tune in and see everyone rowing their hearts out."

The 24 Hour Row was started in 2017 by Mel and Nathan Wellings at Avalon Beach SLSC after a number of tragic suicides in the area. Initially it was just one club wanting to make a difference but neighbouring clubs who also saw the suffering and need to support their communities soon jumped onboard.

The word spread and given the event provides an easy and effective way to engage with people, it has grown exponentially since.

"We love this event because it brings so many communities together and shows solidarity and passion for a

suicide-free Australia," said founder Mel Wellings.

"We can't believe what started as one club trying to make a difference locally

has evolved to involve thousands of people and to think about the people it's helped and the lives we've saved is huge."



NSW participants:

Avalon Beach SLSC, Barrenjoey High School, Bay Pavilions Gym, Bronte SLSC, Bulli SLSC, Cranbrook Boarders, Cronulla SLSC, Drummoyne Rowing Club, Elouera SLSC, Era SLSC, Kempsey Crescent Head SLSC, F45 Manly, Fort Street High School, Long Reef SLSC, MacMasters SLSC, Manly Warringah Leagues Club, Manly LSC, Maroubra Boaties, Mona Vale SLSC, MusselRowers, Narooma SLSC, North Bondi SLSC, North Curl Curl SLSC, North Head Fitness, North Steyne SLSC, Norths Fitness Cammeray, Ocean Beach SLSC, Palm Beach SLSC, Pambula SLSC, South Curl Curl SLSC, South Maroubra SLSC, St Peters College Tuggerah, Stockton SLSC, Tathra SLSC, Umina SLSC, Wanda SLSC

Caves Beach Crowned Twice on **BUMPER IRB RACE WEEKEND**

A hoodoo of nearly a decade was broken on the Central Coast on the weekend of July 8-9 when Caves Beach SLSC emerged victorious from the 2023 Sharkskin NSW Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB) Championships.

In doing so, the Hunter club ended an eight-year run of Kiama Downs SLSC dominance and brought up its first Championships overall point score win since 2015.

On that day, Caves Beach shared the podium with second-placed South Maroubra SLSC and Kiama Downs, and history nearly repeated itself at Ocean Beach, though this time the minor placings were flipped as Kiama Downs was forced to settle for second.

It's a position that's unfamiliar to the South Coast club historically but became increasingly common as first the Sharkskin NSW IRB Premiership season, and then the Championships,





played out. Experience and talent aside, Kiama Downs simply couldn't match Caves Beach's weight in numbers and unbridled enthusiasm.

Inclusive of the five-leg NSW IRB Premiership series, for which Caves Beach was also crowned champions, and the Championships run on the weekend of 8-9 July, the Hunter club finished as the overall point score leader on five of a possible six occasions.

"We've got a young team and we've been slowly building up over the years, and we're bigger than ever now," competitor, Liam Kleyn said of his club.

"It's all sort of come together this year.

"The younger generation coming in has created a good culture, and we've also had a few people come back this year which has really helped as well."

The achievement, in no small part, comes thanks to the efforts of Coach and Team Manager, Scott Bryant, who has been part of the team for many years.

"He's just so inclusive and happy to have anyone and everyone come down," fellow Caves Beach competitor, Elisha Angel said.

"He's the driving force behind the team, he's the glue that holds everything together," added Liam.

South Maroubra, meanwhile, pulled together a performance that exceeded expectations – the Sydney club finishing third ahead of both Newport SLSC and Terrigal SLSC who figured

ahead of the Championships as the likely chances to threaten IRB racing's veritable power couple.

Instead, the two clubs fell down the leaderboard with Newport finishing the best of the pair in fifth, behind a very impressive Thirroul SLSC.

"We brought a good team this year, some carnivals we were competing with nine in the past so it's good to have bigger numbers," Thirroul competitor, Kinley Morgan said.

"The team is so chill, it's great to be a part of and there's so much support," added teammate, Jack Crick.





NEW LIFESAVERS

Breaking Down Cultural Barriers

Eight young Muslim men are the latest to graduate from Surf Life Saving's ground-breaking, culturally sensitive lifesaver training program, earning their Bronze Medallions and becoming fully fledged volunteer lifesavers at Wanda Surf Life Saving Club in mid-August.

It was the second Surf Lifesaver assessment in collaboration with Swim Brothers – a group founded by Omar Mahmoud and Feroz Sattar after a group of men from Revesby ASWJ Mosque almost drowned in a rip at a remote beach and were saved by off-duty surf lifesavers.

Swim Brothers began as a learn to swim program providing men from diverse communities with culturally-appropriate learn to swim training – both in the pool and in the surf.

People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities are significantly overrepresented in coastal drowning statistics.

The men join the group of eight who graduated in July 2022 and are now patrolling on Sutherland beaches.

Minister for Emergency Services, Jihad Dib, who presented the new lifesavers with their patrol uniforms, said the partnership that has been forged between SLSNSW and the Swim Brothers has delivered profound results.

"As we know, young men from non-English speaking communities are statistically highly represented in coastal drowning fatalities, and through this program, key lifesaving water safety messaging and information can now be relayed by these young volunteer lifesavers back into their communities," he said.

"These young men now become volunteers in what is one of Australia's most iconic organisations. I want to acknowledge that through programs like this SLSNSW is demonstrating it is

an inclusive organisation, with a role for everyone to help save lives, no matter what your background. I encourage women and men to join and learn important life-saving skills whilst also giving back to the community."

"We're very proud of our partnership with Swim Brothers – one which has so many benefits for Surf Life Saving and the community more broadly," SLSNSW President, Peter Agnew ESM said.

"It's a manifestation of SLSNSW's desire to deliver programs and support to both Swim Brothers participants and the wider community around beach and water safety, which is at the core of our mission as an organisation.

"If we can save even one life through this program, then that is something very valuable."

RECENT VIDEO

Highlights

HUNTER HOSTS SEARCH AND RESCUE EXERCISE

In July, surf lifesavers from Hunter Branch hit the water for a planned Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX) in conjunction with Marine Rescue. It was the first of two major SAREX operations on NSW coastlines during the off-season, with a second running in Batemans Bay in mid-September.

The exercises provide an opportunity for our volunteers to develop their skills, grow their knowledge and improve, as a whole, our inter-agency operability ahead of the new season which kicked off in September.



SEE HOW THINGS UNFOLDED
IN THE HUNTER



ROCK FISHING SAFETY NIGHT HITS HOME

As part of the continued push for rock fishing safety awareness, SLSNSW facilitated the Rock Fishing Drowning Prevention Night for the second straight year – a coming together of communities, organisations and cultures in an event full of discussion and storytelling.

Hosted in Bankstown, the night was an opportunity for panellists and speakers to discuss themes around drowning and drowning prevention, and share personal experiences as rock fishers and front line rescuers, all to promote the message of safety within our diverse rock fishing communities.



WATCH OUR RECAP OF THE NIGHT



LIFESAVERS WANTED ON LOWER NORTH COAST

In mid-September the SLSNSW team visited Cape Hawke SLSC to film a 30-second TV commercial ahead of the new patrol season. The Lower North Coast is in need of new members to assist around its six clubs, from Crowdy Head SLSC in the north to Pacific Palms SLSC in the south.

Several local members, including LNC Branch President, Ross Blowers and Pacific Palms SLSC President and 2023 SLSNSW President's Medal winner at the Awards of Excellence, Jerrad Allen, were in attendance to assist in the shoot, highlighting the beautiful region and showcasing the benefits of volunteering.



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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

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

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