

Surf LIFE

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SURF LIFE SAVING
NEW SOUTH WALES

Jemma Smith

NSW's Golden Girl In Coolangatta

Five years after falling just seven seconds short of victory in the iconic long course, a dominant and thoroughly professional performance from Newport SLSC's Jemma Smith helped her to claim her maiden Coolangatta Gold title in October.

There was a matter of metres between Smith and eventual champion, Lana Rogers in 2019, after Rogers successfully came from behind to pass the NSW athlete on the final run leg.

A highly focussed Smith never looked like having history repeat this time around, powering ahead in the opening ski leg and never looking back as she worked her way to a comfortable and composed title.

In commentary for the event, 2014 Coolangatta Gold champion, Josh Minogue said she is the first NSW-trained athlete to win the legendary race.

"That's incredible, to be able to finish that, see that [finish] banner and be able to take it," Jemma said.

"I just tried to keep focusing on me. I knew that if I got too caught up with where everyone was, that's when you start to lose focus. I just really pushed the pace as much as I could.

"I think in 2019 it was so unknown for me. I'd never done it before, and it was such a competitive field.

"To be right up the top of that field, right up until literally the last couple of metres was something I was really proud of, but it definitely lit the fire in me to come back one day."

On the men's side of the draw, Newport's Jackson Borg put together a fantastic race to finish in third place while former Warilla Barrack Point SLSC athlete and surf sports legend, Ali Day claimed his 10th title from 10



starts with a remarkable sub-four hour effort across the 41.8km course.

His run to the finish line included embracing family and friends along the esplanade and even carrying his kids for a stretch, and Day later confirmed this would be his last Coolangatta Gold.

"Ali has been such a source of inspiration for me, not only the athletic feats that he's been able to set the bar so high. But the incredible person that he is and a role model. That's something that I really try to emulate and take a lot away from," Jemma said.

"To be able to stand atop of the podium today, with Ali getting his tenth, is just insane. It's so special to be able to do this alongside an amazing human being."

"I dreamt of this moment when I got to nine, and I think that's my best one yet to be honest. I don't think it will ever fully sink in," Day said.

"I hope there's a kid out there now watching me that can walk away and say they are going to do the race next year. But that definitely won't be me, 10 and done."





Top Gongs For NSW Volunteers at National Awards

Terrigal SLSC

NSW members and clubs have once again shone on the national stage, winning several awards at the 2024 Surf Life Saving Australia Awards of Excellence – including a Central Coast Patrol Captain earning the state an incredible third straight DHL Surf Lifesaver of the Year title.

Following in the footsteps of Shannon Fox (Wollongong City SLSC) in 2022 and Cheryl McCarthy (Bermagui SLSC) in 2023, this year's NSW Surf Lifesaver of the Year, Mollie Murphy (Umina SLSC) picked up SLSA's highest honour at the gala award dinner in Sydney on 9 November.

"I was so shocked, there are so many great lifesavers across the country and that's reflected in the nomination group this year, so I was very surprised," she said.

"We say it so much but the community within Surf Life Saving is so special. I think this award is going to be so special for the club as well, they've all been part of my journey since Nippers at U7s."

Mollie's big win was not the only one for the Central Coast, with Terrigal SLSC named the DHL Club of the Year – a first for the Branch at the SLSA awards.

"We've never been in a position like this before and we never thought we'd be here, we've just been working for our surf lifesavers and members and it's fantastic to have this transformational year recognised," Terrigal SLSC Director of Administration, Julie Redfern said.

Wins also in the Community Education Program of the Year category (Newport SLSC – Fit to Learn with Police Youth Command) and the Surf Sports Team of the Year category (Bulli SLSC's Open Men's Surf Boat crew) illustrated the depth of capability of members across the state, in fields of athletic excellence as well as invaluable community engagement, education, and support.

Cape Hawke SLSC and the Lower North Coast Branch was recognised for an incredible rescue conducted in March with a Meritorious Award. The rescue, which saw volunteers engaged after hours to assist in extricating a teenage boy from treacherous waters by a rocky cliff face near One Mile Beach, was named the NSW Rescue of the Year in August.



Rock Fishing Safety Program To Return Bigger And Better

Surf Life Saving NSW's highly successful rock fishing safety and skills program, Gone Fishing will return in 2025, with funding from the NSW Government allowing for the rollout of phase two which will target at-risk communities with a complete package of critical safety workshops, multicultural resources and free lifejackets.

Grant funding of \$300,000 has been committed to the program, which saw nearly 20,000 people educated through its first iteration between 2022 and 2023. During that time, 10 coastal safety sessions were delivered at locations across the state and more than 1,000 fit-for-purpose life jackets were handed out to participants.

The number of free lifejackets will rise to 1,200 in phase two, which Minister for Agriculture, Tara Moriarty – who was on hand to announce the funding – says is an important aspect of the program's delivery.

"Wearing a lifejacket can be the difference between life or death, and while recreational fishing is for everyone to enjoy, rock fishing is risky and we want to make it safer for those who can be at-risk such as beginners, new Australians, and tourists," she said.

"By making lifejackets and education freely available through the SLS teams along the coast we can make it more accessible and safer."

Indonesian-born rock fisher Rahadian (Hadi) Thahar will act as a program ambassador once again, helping to bring the teachings to life for his own, and other, multicultural communities.

Hadi has had first-hand experience of the dangers of rock fishing, and is proud of the opportunity to continue making an impact through the program.

"The stats tell the story – 95 per cent of people who attended a session walked away with something that they learned that was new, and that tells us that the messages made a difference," he said.

"The key learnings for me were that a lot of people think they're experts but when you come to one of these sessions you realise you don't know as much as you think you do."

Surf Life Saving NSW CEO, Steve Pearce thanked Minister Moriarty and the NSW Government for its support

of important in-community programs and acknowledged the organisation's desire to renew the program following its previous success.

"This is a multifaceted program that we're very proud of, with continued targeted education events and in-water safety demonstrations along the coastline, and also directly into non-English speaking background communities away from coastal locations," he said.

"We'll even be in bait and tackle shops with safety resources, it's so important to us that we spread this message far and wide.

"It's not just SLSNSW either, we are collaborating with around a dozen other agencies and councils including the Department of Primary Industries and multicultural groups to ensure the right messaging gets to the right people."



Rahadian (Hadi) Thahar
at Maroubra for the
announcement.

NSW REAFFIRMS **National Beach and Ocean Dominance**



Six wins on the trot was brought up in style by the NSW squad at the Australian Interstate Beach and Ocean Championships at Wanda on 13 December, even though a nail-biting finish saw just five points separate first and second when the podium was announced.

A 20-strong team of the state's best U17, U19 and Open athletes put together a stellar showing on the sand – medals in all but two events lay the platform for a victory which continued NSW's dominance of the Championships.

Mollymook SLSC's Ashton Neall and Swansea Belmont SLSC's Phoebe Doran were among those to pick up beach medals in the Opens – the former taking gold in the Sprint – while Phoebe's clubmate, Emerson Leadbetter continues to go from strength to strength, picking up the Flags and Sprint double in the Youth category.

In the water, Isabella Tate and Kaitlin Rees, from Cudgen Headland SLSC and Swansea Belmont, respectively, managed to see at least one of them podium in every Youth event, while the team of Olivia Clues, Charlie Verco (Newport SLSC), Nicholas Middleton and Britney Pierce (Wanda SLSC) was too strong in the Open Mixed Board Relay.

NSW Team Captain and Newport Ironwoman, Jemma Smith was a winner herself in the Open Female Single Ski, and said she was proud of her team's big effort.

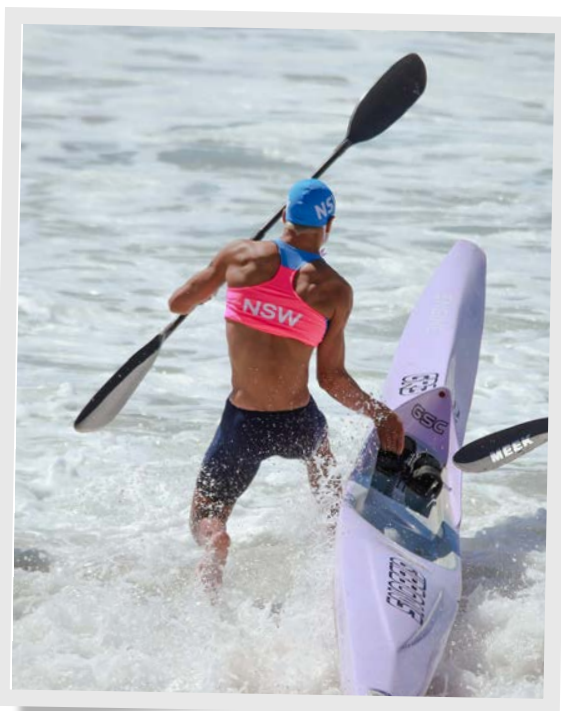
"It's a testament to the depth of incredible athletes we have here in NSW," she said.

"It's always such an honour to pull on the blue cap of your state, and always do your best and that's what the team did today.

"We were pushed right to the end by Queensland, but I'm really happy to be standing on top of the podium."

NSW then continued the good form into the Super Surf Teams League (SSTL), which took place from 14-15 December, where the NSW Junior Blues side took out the U17 competition.

Made up of the youth athletes who competed for NSW the day before, the Junior Blues topped the point score on both days to run away with the win.



Proud Junior Blues team member and young gun, Kaitlin Rees, banked valuable points for her team over the two days, taking out Saturday's U17 Female Single Ski and Sunday's U17 Female Board Race.

"We've got a really good team this year and the atmosphere is just awesome," she said.

"It's awesome to be in a team with those you compete against all year. The one time you get to put a cap on together and race. It's really good vibes and everyone's awesome in the team."

In the Open SSTL competition, NSW earned a podium spot with the Blues team once again – made up, as the Junior Blues were, of athletes who competed in Interstates.





Important Late Rescue **AT PALM BEACH**

It's the time of day that you expect to be packing up and heading home after a day volunteering on the beach, but surprisingly frequently, it's at that exact time when you are called into action.

If anything, we'd love this story to reinforce the message of only swimming at a patrolled location, between the red and yellow flags this summer, because if no one can see you, no one can save you.

On Sunday 3 November, the afternoon patrol at Palm Beach SLSC on Sydney's Northern Beaches had folded up the tent and was moving the gear back to the sheds, pleased with their shift. They'd had an influx of bluebottles around lunch time and the ocean had been choppy all day.

At 4.50pm the sun haddipped completely behind the headland of 'kiddies corner' but there were still visitors and swimmers spread along the 2.5km stretch.

Photographer Tim Shore (Shore Shot Photos) was at the beach with his daughters and, with his camera on-hand, captured an incredible sequence of shots that portray the real-life drama that was about to unfold in front of him.

"My little girls actually spotted the folks a few minutes earlier and said to me that they looked like they were in trouble," said Tim.

"I looked over and to be honest, they weren't, they were still on the sandbar and looked like they could touch the bottom. They were chatting and not panicking or anything."

Patrol Captain Cass Clinton had the team remain on the beach monitoring the area as the last of the gear was being packed up when one member

said, 'we could be on here!' As she looked in the direction of the same three people as Tim and his daughters.

"It was a split second that it unfolded," said Cass.

As a lifesaver, it's that split second you're trained for, you make the decision, and everyone just clicks into gear.

The group of three were now off the sandbank and beyond the break – they couldn't swim.

"They sent out two swimmers with rescue tubes, three boards and the IRB launched shortly after. The team was with the patients within two minutes in very difficult conditions," said Tim.

Tim provided commentary of the rescue as a member of the public.



"The two rescue tube swimmers managed to punch through the chop and get to the two (patients) which was fortunate because the boat needed to navigate the surf and shore dump to get out. The boat team handled it really calmly. Then it was a case of getting the two women into the boat which was a team effort between the guys in the water and the boat in the very bumpy conditions," he said.

"The lifesavers stayed in the water with the third person, who was well supported on a board by then, while the boat team whizzed the women back to the beach, and then returned to get the man.

"It's a really capable patrol and everyone was

great – it was really awesome to be honest," Tim added, proud of the professionalism and competency of the team.

On return to the beach the team attended to the patients. All were offered oxygen, and an ambulance was called for one who was visibly not well after taking on water.

"It was probably one of the bigger rescues I've been involved in," said Cass, who has been patrolling for four years.

"We had two new members who have only been patrolling a couple of times and they were amazing. But we're also lucky to have so much experience on our patrol from a retired doctor to specialist board paddlers

and swimmers. Everyone has their own strength and skills and when it's required, they all just work together perfectly," she said.

For Tim it was a great display of rescue response and coordination.

"As an observer, you could see all the training being put into practice. They all knew what to do, were focused on the task and seemed to intuitively know the priorities. Although I've no doubt they were all talking to each other to decide who to pick up first. It was very impressive," he said.

"Well done to the team, there are clearly some very safe hands looking out for us all at Palmy."

INGENIA HOLIDAY PARKS

Building Lifesaving Partnership



SLSNSW CEO, Steve Pearce, Ingenia Holiday Parks Executive General Manager Tourism, Matt Young and SLSNSW President, Peter Agnew AM at Coogee.

NSW volunteer surf lifesavers can continue to focus on the safety of the community this summer following the announcement that Ingenia Holiday Parks has extended its support of Surf Life Saving NSW for a further two years.

"Our journey with Ingenia Holiday Parks so far has been so important to our sustained growth as an organisation, and I think I speak for each of our 79,000-plus members statewide when I say we're delighted to continue this rewarding partnership," said SLSNSW President, Peter Agnew AM.

"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."

Indeed, having first joined forces in 2021, Ingenia Holiday Parks has supported surf safety and lifesaver development at the grassroots over the past three years – as the Naming Rights Partner of both the Junior Lifesaver of the Year (JLOTY) program and Beach to Bush.

These programs are flagships for the organisation within the youth development and educational space and pivotal to the journey of not only our lifesavers of tomorrow, but those who may be visiting the beach while they're on patrol.

In particular, the Beach to Bush program – which sees volunteer surf lifesavers head inland to promote

surf safety to primary school students across regional and rural NSW – has reached an incredible 23,000 students across nearly 200 schools over the two years that Ingenia Holiday Parks has supported the initiative.

"Our commitment to water safety has always extended beyond the boundaries of our parks, and in many ways, that starts with our youngest generation. By continuing our partnership with Surf Life Saving NSW, we are not only helping to nurture the lifesavers of tomorrow but also ensuring that we are actively contributing to a safer environment for everyone who visits Australia's waterways," Ingenia Holiday Parks Executive General Manager Tourism, Matthew Young said.

"Surf Life Saving NSW's dedication to training the next generation of lifesavers and promoting safety on our beaches aligns perfectly with our own values of care, responsibility, and community. This partnership helps to ensure there are capable, prepared lifesavers on Aussie beaches, and we're proud to play our part in that process."

As part of the partnership, Surf Life Saving NSW has delivered several

sessions of vital First Aid and Mental Health First Aid training to Ingenia Holiday Parks staff in their Brisbane and Sydney offices.

Of note, too, was an impressive, large-scale activation just outside of Wagga Wagga to mark the 30-year celebrations of Beach to Bush in November 2023. Nearly 1,000 students at The Riverina Anglican College in Boorooma came together to make the world's largest red and yellow flag – the iconic shape and colours that are synonymous with an Australian summer.

With the extension of the partnership, Ingenia Holiday Parks will support SLSNSW in delivering major events across the state.

"The partnership with Ingenia Holiday Parks supports our work in developing our members across NSW – it's fundamental to what we do," said SLSNSW CEO, Steve Pearce.

"This announcement comes at an important time for us with summer having just begun, and we're proud to have the support of Ingenia Holiday Parks as we promote our safety messaging ahead of what we anticipate being a hot, busy few months."

New Directors, *Life Members For SLSNSW*

Surf Life Saving NSW welcomed two newly elected Board Directors and four new Life Members at the organisation's Annual General Meeting on 1 November.

Shannon Fox from Wollongong City SLSC (Illawarra Branch) and Sue Hunt from Moruya SLSC (Far South Coast Branch) were elected to the Board by the NSW State Council, filling vacancies left by long-serving Directors, John Restuccia OAM and Kerry Clancy OAM.

SLSNSW President Peter Agnew AM thanked the outgoing Directors and welcomed Shannon and Sue to the Board.

"Thank you to John and Kerry for their many years of service on the SLSNSW Board. With both retiring from the Board, I would like to record our thanks and gratitude for their contribution," said the President.

"It was good to see a number of outstanding female members nominate for positions this year. Gender diversity in our leadership team to better represent our broader membership is very important. I'm looking forward to both Shannon and Sue helping to shape the future of the organisation for the benefit of our members."

Shannon Fox is a highly commended young leader in Surf Life Saving, a patrolling lifesaver for 17 years and a former NSW and Australian Surf Lifesaver of the Year (2022).

In addition to her professional teaching career, Shannon has been a representative on major working groups and advisory panels at Branch, State and National levels from a young age. She has held positions of Club Captain, club Director of Education, Branch Duty Officer, RWC operator and national leadership program facilitator.

Sue Hunt has been a lifesaver since 2009, is a life member of Batemans Bay SLSC and is a dedicated volunteer and administrator in areas including membership, education and surf sports. Sue is a senior official, facilitator and has held various Director positions on the Far South

Coast Branch. She is also secretary of the Australian Surf Rowers League.

Meanwhile, Freshwater SLSC's Stephen Bennett, Sussex Inlet SLSC's James Connolly, Pambula SLSC's Frank Davey OAM, and North Narrabeen SLSC's Steve Haggett are the latest members to be awarded SLSNSW Life Membership.

Stephen's contributions to the movement have been sustained and highly valuable over a period of 35 years.

In that time, he has held significant roles at club, branch and state level, including stints as Freshwater SLSC President, a member of the Sydney Northern Beaches Branch Board of Management, and is the current Chair of the SLSNSW Services Board – a role he has held for nearly a decade.

James joined Surf Life Saving as a 14-year-old at Cronulla surf club and has been active among his three clubs, also including Tathra SLSC on the Far South Coast and now Sussex Inlet on the South Coast, for more than 60 years.

In the 70's, he was a foundation member of the now-Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopter Service as a volunteer crewman, has been a fervent supporter of surf boats as a competitor, official and mentor, and is a former president of Tathra SLSC.

Frank is a member that in his 34 years as a Surf Life Saving volunteer, has worn many different hats. As a Club President, Patrol Captain, Nippers Facilitator, Youth Development Coordinator, and gear steward, Frank has consistently demonstrated his commitment to Pambula SLSC and the movement's growth and success.

Perhaps his most conspicuous achievement was the establishment of the highly successful Wambiri Youth Development Camp which is a cornerstone for youth development within his branch.



SHANNON FOX



SUE HUNT



STEVE HAGGETT



STEVE BENNETT

Steve Haggett has also held many positions over more than three decades within the movement. At Dee Why SLSC, where he is a Life Member, he is a previous Club President, Club Captain, and Chief Instructor, among others, and he is also a Life Member of Sydney Northern Beaches Branch for his service as a respected official and assessor.

At state level, he is a former NSW Surf Lifesaver of the Year, NSW Volunteer of the Year, and has championed the success of lifesaving events within the surf sports program.

RECENT VIDEO *Highlights*



Beach to Bush 2024

11,000+ students reached, almost 100 schools presented at, hundreds of thousands of kilometres travelled. It sure is our flagship educational program for a reason!

Last month lifesavers hit the road for the 31st year of Beach to Bush - follow us on the journey as we catch up with some volunteers across the three-week program!



Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving

Come behind the scenes of our day at NSW Parliament last week when volunteers got to mingle and meet their local members and talk about the part they play in our movement.

It's also a great opportunity for the parliamentarians to express their thanks for the work that you do and learn about what we're up to over the summer period to help keep people safe on our beaches.



Restart a Heart Day

Wednesday 16 October was Restart A Heart Day. Each year we aim to reach as many people as possible to share the message and basic CPR skills that can save a life.

Our Academy Trainer Dan Gay was at Roseville Public School where the Year 5&6 students brought in their soft toys and pillows to learn all about it. Here's a look at the live session!.



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3. Select **Get Donation Reminder** at the bottom of the first page and download the easy fundraiser extension to your google chrome
4. Shop online at over 680 retailers and a donation will be made for free!



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 79,000 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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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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