

SurfLIFE

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SURF LIFE SAVING
NEW SOUTH WALES

Lifesavers Aid in **Turtle Tagging Mission**

It was a call Sawtell SLSC's Amy Hannaford was more than happy to take and led to the most incredible day on the water for some volunteer surf lifesavers on the North Coast.



Late last year scientists from Taronga Zoo and the National Parks and Wildlife Service were supported by Amy and Woolgoolga SLSC – providing water safety and supervision – in conducting further research into the habitat and movement patterns of marine turtles in NSW.

"I actually went to uni with the lady doing the research and she got in touch because they'd collaborated with Macksville-Scotts Head SLSC in the past and they were planning on coming up again but this time a bit further north," Amy said.

"My daughter took the day off school to come along when she heard what we were doing. She's really interested in science and wants to pursue a career in this sort of field."

Using Woolgoolga's Inflatable Rescue Boat, the group surveyed the southernmost corner of Woolgoolga Headland.

In assessing the movements of marine turtles using satellite tracking technologies, as well as their diet, important habitats for turtles can be identified which can then be used for conservation management planning.

An excellent example of multi-agency collaboration outside of the traditional lifesaving and emergency management space, Amy said it was valuable to be part of a process which gives greater insight into turtle migration patterns, movement, and habitat use, and got to see first-hand how important the research is proving to be.

"We went out in the duck, and it didn't take very long for them. Turtles, when they're awake, are super quick but when they're sleeping, they just sit there," she said.

"The researchers were able to assess the turtles, with one needing to go into care.

"It was pretty sick, but I got a photo of it recently and it's doing a lot better at the marine conservation centre at Coffs Harbour.

"I felt like I got to make a meaningful contribution to the project. It was a nice reminder that Surf Life Saving can provide opportunities beyond patrolling. Putting our skills into action in such a positive way made my week."





Junior Lifesaver of the Year

FINALISTS NAMED

22 of the state's brightest young lifesavers will come together on the Northern Beaches in April for the Junior Lifesaver of the Year (JLOTY) Program.

Held from 15-17 April at The Collaroy Centre, the program assist young lifesavers to grow networks, establishing lasting connections and building knowledge through fun and interactive activities.

The JLOTY Program brings together all 22 of the Junior Lifesavers of the Year, nominated by the 11 Branches. At the end of the program, the overall NSW Junior Lifesavers of the Year (male and female) will be awarded.

Collectively, the group will further develop their skills by working with like-minded young members and the program aims to build a greater awareness of opportunities and individual abilities in the membership.

"I've been in lifesaving since I was a little Nipper and it meant so much to come to this camp and be with likeminded people, it really expanded my horizons," 2024 co-winner, Archie Weir of Kiama Downs SLSC said.

"The camp feels like it goes way too fast, but it's incredible, and I loved it."

"I love just being at the ocean, around the club, I love competing, I love patrolling, I love everything about Surf Life Saving," said fellow 2024 co-winner, Zara Hall of Moruya SLSC.

"It's an amazing few days. The facilitators who make it all possible are great."

2025 JUNIOR LIFESAVER OF THE YEAR PARTICIPANTS

Thomas Pockley – Far North Coast

Stella Byrne – Far North Coast

Kai Vigors – North Coast

Poppy Barclay – North Coast

Max Pengelly – Mid North Coast

Zada Robinson – Mid North Coast

Alfie Marshall – Lower North Coast

Sasha Belic – Lower North Coast

Ryan Boustead – Hunter

Grace Van Esveld – Hunter

Hamish Lawer – Central Coast

Mia Jamal – Central Coast

Max McDermott – Sydney Northern Beaches

Pearl Brown – Sydney Northern Beaches

Henri Delesclegs – Sydney

Emerson Su Shen Lee – Sydney

Nate Heffernan – Illawarra

Sienna Guisti – Illawarra

Lennox Harvey – South Coast

Polly Gazzard – South Coast

Archie Rosenbaum – Far South Coast

Ruby Bindon – Far South Coast



Major Honours

For NSW Surf Lifesavers

Congratulations to members of SLSNSW who have been awarded various honours in this year's Australia Day Honours list, as well as those who were honoured with National Medals in Batch 52.

Terrigal's Professor Julie Redfern AM was named a Member of the Order of Australia for her vast service to health and research, as well as to the community. Julie was the club, branch, and SLSNSW Volunteer of the Year in 2022.

She is currently the Director of Administration at Terrigal, where she played a vital role in helping the club to be named the Club of the Year at the Surf Life Saving Australia Awards of Excellence last year.

Michael Byrne from Elouera SLSC also received an AM for his service to the community and the transport industry. Michael is club patron as well as a branch duty officer – celebrating a decade in the role last year – and RWC operator.

He has previously worn many hats within the club, most notably Vice President for a two-year period from 2014-16, and has been a Patrol Captain for nearly two decades.

The late Roger Lynch, a former member of Black Head SLSC, was recognised as an OAM recipient for his service to the Great Lakes community. Treasurer of the Black Head surf club for a three-year period in the last 60's and early 70's, Roger played his part in assisting a club which celebrates its centenary in October of this year.

Also receiving an OAM was Avoca Beach SLSC Life Member Dr Karen Douglas, for her service to medicine and the community.

Elevated to life membership of the Central Coast club five years ago, Karen has been a distinguished volunteer over a significant period. She has been an active patrolling member for nearly 40 years – 25 of which as a Medical Officer – and serves as an Executive Member.

Two members were awarded Emergency Service Medals for distinguished service in frontline emergency management – Sydney Northern Beaches Branch Life Member Michael Wasley and Julie Wilcox from the Lower North Coast Branch.

Michael Wasley has been a member of Surf Life Saving for the past 38 years and holds Life Membership of Sydney Northern Beaches Branch. At a club level, he has held executive roles as the director of Education, club captain and has been a consistent member of the Emergency Callout Team, assisting with after hours tasking for rescues, CPRs, missing persons and other critical incidents.

Michael remains proficient in a

Middle right, Julie Redfern AM and inset right, Julie Wilcox and Michael Wasley



multitude of awards spanning all portfolios – lifesaving, education, surf sports, support operations and member services and he continues to contribute through club, branch, state and national levels of the organisation.

Michael's commitment to sharing his skills and knowledge and mentoring others makes him a true role model for many youth members within Surf Life Saving.

Julie Wilcox has been a lifesaver at Forster SLSC for more than 30 years and has held various pivotal positions, including patrol captain and vice-captain, and has been actively involved in training and assessing members in frontline lifesaving skills.

Notably, she played a key role in introducing UAVs for beach surveillance and search and rescue operations, training over 100 members in this award and becoming the most senior pilot in the Lower North Coast area.

Julie's dedication extends beyond her own club, and she has been heavily involved in after-hours search and rescue work as a Branch Duty Officer, responding to critical incidents and fatalities. Julie's contribution to emergency management has showcased her unwavering commitment to Surf Life Saving, impact on the community and her distinguished service.

"I'm extremely proud of our members awarded honours this year and want to thank them for their commitment and dedication to our movement. Serving the community is at the heart of why we become surf lifesavers and these are all worthy recipients of such honours," said SLSNSW President Peter Agnew AM.



READ ABOUT OUR NATIONAL MEDALLISTS HERE



NEWPORT'S CONNER MAGGS WINS IRON SERIES

Ten minutes of surf sports action that needs to be seen to be believed – a near-flawless race, a capsized ski, and a sprint finish for the ages – was the foundation for a huge upset in the Iron Series finale, with Newport SLSC's Conner Maggs named the 24/25 champion at North Burleigh beach on Sunday 2 February.

Maggs was consistently there or thereabouts across all three weekends of racing, going back almost two months to Wanda in December and then Newcastle as well in the new year, but had yet to podium at the end of any race day and was perhaps at best an outside chance on paper heading into the final.

The revamped Iron Series saw the 24/25 iteration steadily eliminate athletes at every turn, culminating in a final day at the Gold Coast where three iron races – two two-person

eliminators and a deciding finale of eight athletes – would crown the newest winner.

As the only NSW male athlete to qualify for the final race of the Series, Maggs shot to the front of the pack to round the first can of the opening swim leg and never looked back – he hit the sand first coming out of the swim and board legs and raced a calm and composed, for the most part, final leg on the ski.

Having established a lead of between 8-10 lengths back to the chasing pack,

and catching a runner back to shore, an elated Maggs made his excitement known.

Cue one of the craziest finishes in Iron Series history.

A plunging wave just metres from the beach saw him nosedive and roll the ski where he was stuck underwater trying to release his foot from the strap, for the better part of eight seconds.

With fellow pink rashie qualifier, Joel Piper and former series winner, Matt



Bevilacqua making all the ground back up in that time, Maggs escaped the ski just in time for a sprint finish up the beach with Piper hot on his heels and gaining fast.

A dive across the finish wasn't enough for Piper, as Maggs held on in a remarkable and memorable race.

"I think I claimed it a bit too early," Maggs said after his victory.

"I mean, I've always been a racer that wants to make the racing exciting, and I don't think I've done that on purpose, but my foot got stuck in the end.

"I was just kind of panicking trying to kick [his foot] out. My ski was facing back out to sea, I was facing the shore and my foot was stuck between the foot strap and the pedal.

"I almost had to turn my body 180 degrees before I was able to slide it out. But I just panicked and at that point I was like, 'I'm gonna come fourth here I've stuffed it up.' This is going to be an upset.

"Usually, my ski finish is really good, but I stood up out of the ski and I panicked, and then I couldn't feel my right foot when I was running up the beach and I just had to



give it everything I could. Lucky enough I got the legs to get home.

"I've dreamed of something like this since I moved over from South Africa."

In the women's racing, Lizzie Welborn, also of Newport, showed no signs of rust in the final stages of her tenth consecutive year in the Series – she finished third on

the podium in the last race behind Lucy Derbyshire and Tiarnie Massie.

It was a wonderful finish to a Series where Welborn picked up another big race win in Newcastle and further established herself as a role model and major player in Iron racing



NSW BOATIES WIN

Interstate Championships In Style

It was a victory several years in the making – NSW taking out the 2025 Interstate Surf Boat Championships and bringing an end to all talk of a Queensland three-peat on an action-packed day in Coffs Harbour.





Jetty Beach at Coffs Harbour on Friday 14 February was the setting for NSW's triumph, finishing 13 points ahead of their northern neighbours and a further point ahead of an excellent WA team in third place on the podium.

Team NSW managed six wins to the Queensland Cyclones' two – a domination of the team chasing a third straight title.

"It feels so good. I have not been a part of a state crew that has won yet, so this is just the best thing ever," NSW Team Captain, Nikki Berry from South Curl Curl SLSC said.

"Every year Greg (Team Manager Greg Heard) kept drilling into us that we have to take it back from Queensland and to get it done just feels amazing.

"Everyone was hot on everyone's tails this year but it is just so, so good to get one over Queensland."

The 2025 Surf Boat Interstate Competition saw 200 athletes go head-to-head with eight crews per state, representing NSW, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia.

The teams competed in Opens, Reserves, Under 23, and Under 19 categories in the Interstate Competition, held alongside the Australian Surf Rowers League (ASRL) Open 2025.

NSW crews put on a strong showing there too – all but two races of the ASRL Masters Championships and proving equally as commanding on Open Championships weekend (15-16 Feb).

Among the best results were the Wanda Weapons crew of Matthew Pescud, Bradley Querzoli, Nathan Spinner, Jack Spooner, and Hayden Ward winning the Open Male Final, Avalon Beach Chaos' Tegan Bilson, Laura Baierl, Lauren Petersen, Sophie Valentine and sweep, Nathan Wellings winning the Reserve Female Final, and Batemans Bay Hurricanes winning the trial U17 category.

James Collins, Jacob Pike, Kady McDonald and Kayden Smith, swept by Neil Innes, overcame strong teams out of the Currumbin and Caloundra clubs to win their division.





Lifesaving Tech Upgrade

To Improve Surf Emergency Response

Surf Life Saving NSW's State Operations Centre (SOC) is proud to have spent its first summer connected to a statewide emergency management messaging system which allows for internal information sharing and requests for assistance between key rescue and response agencies in NSW.

ICEMS, or the Inter-CAD (computer aided dispatch) Electronic Messaging System, is a crucial step forward for lifesaving across the state where SLSNSW has been able to rely on a more direct, streamlined pathway to rapid incident response between agencies.

NSW Police, Fire and Rescue NSW, and NSW Ambulance, among other organisations, operate through the network – a boon for public safety agencies which reduces phone calls and operator manpower by allowing agencies to message each other quickly and provide real-time updates and requests.

"ICEMS is a technical framework for exchanging information between Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) platforms," SLSNSW Chief Information Officer, Matt Ingersole said.

"It's like a private WhatsApp network for emergency services, allowing them

to securely message each other and instantly acknowledge and respond."

The SOC receives an estimated 800 emergency response calls each year from NSW Police and other agencies, with call times lasting an average of between 4-20 minutes, depending on the incident. ICEMS effectively removes this step, saving operators anywhere from 55 to over 200 hours of time which can free them up to focus on other duties.

"This is a huge step for us in making sure no time is lost when our volunteer lifesavers and lifeguards respond to incidents," SLSNSW CEO, Steve Pearce said.

"SLSNSW became a gazetted emergency service in 2019, and in aligning even more closely with our fellow NSW emergency services, we are further cementing our role in the public safety space.

"I'd like to thank the NSW Government for its continued investment in lifesaving technologies."

Following significant testing stages and the development of a bespoke client for the organisation's needs, SLSNSW transitioned to ICEMS prior to Christmas and has had a successful – albeit operationally busy – summer using the system.

"We're already seeing the benefits of ICEMS in action," SLSNSW General Manager of Public Safety & Emergency Management, Brent Manieri said.

"SLSNSW's ability to receive new incidents directly, and then the ongoing updates that come through, is dramatically reducing the time for our lifesavers and lifeguards to respond to a reported incident.

"Every second counts as we all know, so this has been a crucial tech upgrade for us."

Woonona Member's Lifesaving Efforts **WAY BEYOND THE FLAGS**

There may not be a truer definition of 'beyond the flags' lifesaving than that of Greg Tuchin's first aid assistance rendered some 8,000km from his home club of Woonona SLSC and, perhaps more interestingly, more than 30 degrees Celsius below what he's used to in the peak of summer.

The 25-year veteran of Surf Life Saving – over a decade of which has been spent as a Patrol Captain at his Illawarra club – was skiing in the Tohoku region of Japan when his lifesaving skills were called on, far from the ocean but just as vital as they would be on a busy Sunday morning at Woonona beach.

"I was sitting in the gondola waiting to go back down the mountain after a full day of skiing when the attendant announced we would have to wait a few minutes while the ski patrol loaded an injured person on board," Greg said.

"The injured man's head ended up right near where I was sitting, and I asked the patrol if they'd like my help speaking to him.

"He was a bit panicked, so I asked him questions to divert his thoughts from his pain and it turned out he was from Sydney, so we chatted the entire gondola ride down the mountain."

Having established that the man was skiing with his wife and son, Greg attempted to get access to a green whistle or some oxygen, but neither were available.

"Between the bottom of the gondola station and the ambulance, while we were moving him, he stopped talking to me," Greg continued.

"He was quite pale, but it was about minus 5 degrees. I lightly slapped his face and tried to engage him but was getting nothing.

"I was really worried. I tried to take his glasses off to see if his pupils had dilated, like my ARTC training says, and that's when he told me not to take them off.

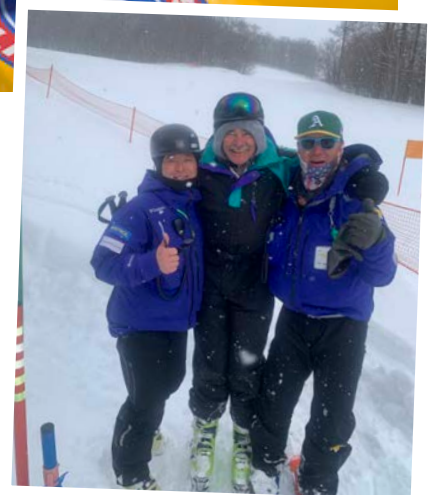
"I said 'I need you to keep talking to me,' and he acknowledged that."



Greg assisted with a handover to the paramedics and was able to clearly articulate their questions. He credits his training for being able to stay calm and play an important role in helping the man – who we later learned sustained five broken ribs and a cracked vertebrae but will make a full recovery.

"Through all my mentors in the club, who have decades more experience than me, I have learnt to stay calm and in control and to keep reassuring the patient by keeping them talking," he said.

"I am a firm believer in preventative actions. I can usually spot a group of people who are not regulars at the beach, so I will go over and talk to them about where to swim. Nearly all of them thank me for that.



"My training has given me the confidence to step in.

"I have always stressed, to my sons, and to the younger members of my team, that Surf Life Saving training gives you medical skills, teamwork skills and people skills that go much further than the beach."



SURF SPORTS ON SHOW

In Premier State Events

Surf Life Saving NSW proudly delivered both of its flagship surf sport events in the past few months, with Warilla Barrack Point SLSC playing host to the Country Championships for a second straight year in January, and the NSW Surf Life Saving Championships descending on Queenscliff and Sydney's Northern Beaches once again in March.

These carnivals are the pinnacle of racing in our state and provide a platform for all our athletes to compete, have fun, and build meaningful connections within the movement.

Hundreds of individual events were contested across the two Championships, with competitors aged eight to 80 all involved. It's a true spectacle and a highlight on the organisation's calendar.





» COUNTY CHAMPS



» STATE AGE CHAMPS



» STATE MASTERS CHAMPS



» STATE OPEN & SURF BOAT CHAMPS





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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 80,000 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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SLNSW 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.

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