

Annual Report Guidelines

April 2026

Importance of Annual Reports

Annual reports are an effective way to showcase your club's or branch's achievements over the past year while acknowledging the valuable support of members, the wider community, sponsors, and government bodies. They also serve as a powerful tool for attracting new members and funding by highlighting the essential services your organisation provides to the community. In addition, the inclusion of financial statements is a mandatory requirement under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and the Department of Fair Trading.

Not-for-Profit (NFP) Reporting Requirements

Clear and transparent reporting is increasingly important in the Not-for-Profit (NFP) and charity sector as community expectations continue to grow. Being open about activities, governance, and finances helps organisations build trust and demonstrate their commitment to accountability.

The ACNC supports transparency by setting minimum governance requirements and publishing information about registered charities on a public register. This allows the community to easily access information and make informed choices about how they support not-for-profit organisations.

Defining your Charitable Purpose

Clubs and branches are required to include their charitable purpose in their annual reports. This purpose explains why the organisation exists and what it is working to achieve. It must benefit the wider community and cannot focus on providing benefits to individual members. Clearly explaining this helps volunteers, donors, and government agencies understand the value of the organisation's work.

Charitable Fundraising Act

Affiliated clubs and branches must comply with the NSW Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 and the regulatory requirements of the ACNC under the Charities Act 2013 and ACNC Regulations 2022. This includes clearly documenting how funds raised support the club or branch's charitable purpose. This documentation is particularly important for clubs operating on Crown land, which are subject to additional requirements under the Crown Land Management Act 2016.

For further information on charitable fundraising obligations, refer to the NSW Fair Trading Charitable Fundraising Guidelines, linked [here](#).

Acknowledgement of Funding

Clubs and branches are encouraged to acknowledge organisations and individuals who have supported them with funding or in-kind contributions over the past financial year. Recognising this

support shows appreciation and helps demonstrate how essential it is to the delivery of Surf Life Saving activities.

Permission must be obtained before publicly acknowledging individual supporters. Where supporters wish to remain anonymous, a general statement recognising anonymous donors can be included.

Unlike commercial sponsorships, donations made under charitable fundraising requirements cannot involve benefits for the donor, meaning a simple acknowledgement such as listing names in reports or on an honour roll is advised.

Partner/ Sponsorship Recognition

Recognising sponsors in annual reports is important, as it provides an opportunity to thank them for their continued support and generosity. Where possible, sponsorship logos and relevant photographs should be included, along with accompanying text that clearly demonstrates how their support has assisted the club or branch throughout the year.

In addition to acknowledging local club and branch sponsors, the following national and state-level partners must also be recognised in annual reports for the 2025–2026 year, in the order listed below.

National	State
DHL	Your Local Club
Izuzu	ABE's Bagels
Qantas	Ingenia Holiday Parks
Westpac	Sharkskin
Ampol	

You can download approved sponsor logos for use in your annual report from this [Dropbox link](#).

Fundraising Distributions

The Surf Life Saving Foundation should be recognised for fundraising on behalf of clubs and branches. By coordinating fundraising centrally, members can spend less time on fundraising activities and more time delivering lifesaving services. This approach also helps ensure funding is shared fairly across the state.

Clubs and branches should also acknowledge the support of the general public and donors. Annual reports should explain how funds received were used, such as buying rescue equipment or supporting the training of surf lifesavers.

Government Recognition

All clubs and branches should acknowledge the following organisations in their annual reports:

- The NSW Government, through its Emergency Services portfolio, for ongoing funding of statewide operations and programs that benefit clubs, members, and the broader community.
- The NSW Government, through the NSW Office of Sport, for ongoing support to increase participation, safety, and facility usage in Surf Life Saving, including funding provided under the Surf Club Facilities Grant Program.
- The Federal Government, for the Beach Safety Equipment Funding, which provided \$10,000 to each Surf Life Saving Club for the purchase of essential rescue equipment, first aid supplies, and medical resources.
- The Federal Government, for ongoing Vocational Education and Training (VET) funding, which strengthens training capability across the state and supports members to gain the skills and qualifications required to perform their lifesaving roles safely and confidently.

If your club or branch received funding through the NSW Government's Community Building Partnership Program, make sure to thank the Premier and your local State Member of Parliament in your annual report.

If your club received funding through the Office of Sport Surf Club Facilities Program, your annual report should also acknowledge the Premier, the Minister for Sport, your State Member of Parliament, and the Office of Sport.

Preparation of Financial Statements

To assist in the preparation of club annual statutory accounts, the SLSNSW Finance Team have created the 'Statutory Accounts and Registration Review' checklist, which can be found [here](#).

This checklist aligns with the requirements of the ACNC requirements. It is designed to assist Treasurers to review the statutory accounts prepared by their external accountants to ensure all the required elements are included, provides links to the auditor requirements and audit report formats, as well as the required formats of club responsible person declarations.

The SLSNSW Finance Team periodically reviews club financials with reference to the 'Statutory Accounts and Registration Review' and provides feedback to clubs highlighting areas which require adjustment in the current/ future statutory accounts.

Treasurers and/or external accountants and auditors are encouraged to contact the SLSNSW Finance Team at finance@surflifesaving.com.au if they have any questions around the requirements of financial reports.

Other Annual Report Inclusions

Key elements of an effective annual report include a clear articulation of the club or branch's vision and/or mission, objectives, strategies, performance and outcomes.

Overview, Objectives and Highlight

Annual reports should include the following information:

- A brief history and profile of the club or branch
- The organisation's mission, purpose, values, and objectives
- Strategies for achieving stated objectives and outcomes
- A statement of intent or explanation of the club or branch's future direction, demonstrating a forward-looking and sustainable approach
- Key highlights from the year
- Performance measures and indicators, including key financial and non-financial information (for example, rescue statistics compared with the previous year)
- Funding received and a summary of financial results
- Case studies that demonstrate the practical impact and outcomes of the organisation's activities

Wherever possible, information should be quantified and presented using charts, tables, or infographics to enhance engagement and clarity. Comparisons with previous years or similar organisations are encouraged.

Overview of Programs and Activities

Annual reports should include an overview of the key programs and activities delivered by the club or branch, including:

- Member development and engagement programs, including youth involvement initiatives, open days, and community activities undertaken to promote and support Surf Life Saving activities
- Water safety and community education programs or campaigns, including those specifically designed to support:
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
 - Indigenous communities
 - People living with disability
- Programs focused on school-aged children, including swimming, water safety, rescue skills education and initiatives delivered in regional or rural areas.
- Innovation and continuous improvement initiatives, including advancements or developments that demonstrate the club or branch's commitment to progression and community connection.

Wherever possible, reports should include participant numbers to help demonstrate reach, impact, and outcomes.

Office Bearers

Annual reports should include details of the club or branch's elected office bearers, including:

- A list of current office bearers, with photographs included where possible to support transparency and engagement
- Office bearer reports outlining key achievements, responsibilities, and contributions during the reporting period
- A separate listing of patrons, vice-patrons, and life members, along with an acknowledgement of the valuable contributions made by members.

Statistical Summaries

Annual reports should include clear and concise statistical summaries, such as:

- Membership and patrol statistics, including participation levels and patrol activity
- Key financial figures and significant non-financial activities, for example preventative actions undertaken during the reporting period
- Participation data, including the number of people reached through community education programs, lifesaving activities, and competition events
- Digital engagement statistics, including website and social media analytics, to demonstrate the reach and impact of online communication channels.

Awards

Annual reports should recognise and celebrate the achievements of members through the inclusion of awards and honours received, including:

- A list of awards received by members, for example Junior Activity Awards, Long Service or Patrol Service Awards, Recognition Awards, Junior Lifesaver of the Year, Awards of Excellence, and external awards such as NSW Sport Awards, Community Citizen of the Year awards, or honours under the Australian Honours System.
- Examples of any media coverage received by the club or branch as a result of awards or recognitions.

Commitment to Child Safe Practices

Annual reports provide an important opportunity for clubs and branches to demonstrate their commitment to child safety and member welfare. Annual reports should include a clear child safety commitment statement, such as “[Club/Branch name] is committed to safeguarding children and young people”, and highlight relevant practices and initiatives that support a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment.

This may include examples of activities where children and young people have been actively engaged, as well as measures in place to support member welfare and child-safe practices. This information can be included within the President's Report, Membership section, or another relevant area of the annual report.

Use of Images

Annual reports are an important promotional tool. Choose images that reflect Surf Life Saving's purpose, professionalism, and commitment to safety. Where possible, images should show:

- Lifesavers in action

- Correct patrol uniforms with approved sponsor logos only
- Safe practices, such as wearing lifejackets when operating IRBs
- Community education and safety messages

Only use photos where permission has been given. This is especially important when including images of children and young people, including nippers and youth members.

Formatting

Annual reports should be clearly structured and easy to navigate. Consider including the following formatting elements:

- A table of contents, and where relevant an index, glossary of terms, and/or calendar of events, to improve readability and accessibility
- Consistent use of headings, fonts, colours and branding throughout the report

Tools such as Canva can assist with the design and presentation of annual reports, including the creation of charts, infographics, and visual layouts. Canva offers a range of templates that can be adapted to suit Surf Life Saving branding and reporting needs.

Consider how your annual report will be shared. Clubs and branches may choose to print a limited number of hard copies for key stakeholders while making the report available online. This approach can help reduce printing costs while improving accessibility.

How AI Can Help with Annual Reports

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, can help clubs and branches prepare annual reports more efficiently, particularly where volunteer time and administrative capacity are limited. Tools such as Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT, and Grammarly are easy to use, require minimal setup, and can support volunteers throughout the drafting process.

AI tools can assist clubs and branches to:

- Draft first versions of reports (for example, President, Director, or Program reports) based on dot points or notes
- Summarise meeting notes, program reports, or statistics into clear, plain-English content
- Improve clarity, tone, and readability, while retaining the club's voice and values
- Reformat content to suit annual report layouts (for example, turning bullet points into short narrative sections)
- Generate short captions or summaries for photos, case studies, or program highlights
- Support year-on-year comparisons by helping articulate progress or change without starting from scratch

When using AI tools, clubs and branches must ensure that:

- All AI-generated content is reviewed, edited, and approved by a club representative
- AI is not used to create or amend financial figures, compliance statements, or legally required disclosures
- Privacy and confidentiality are maintained – do not input personal, member, or sensitive information

- AI output is treated as a draft only, with full responsibility for final content remaining with the club or branch
- Terminology, names, and figures remain consistent across the report

In summary, AI assists with writing. It does not replace verification, accountability, or governance. Used appropriately, AI tools can reduce the administrative burden on volunteers and help clubs and branches produce clearer, more engaging annual reports that showcase their impact while maintaining transparency and compliance.

Reference Materials for Annual Reporting and Governance

Clubs and branches may find the following resources helpful when preparing their annual reports and meeting governance requirements:

- Surf Life Saving NSW Club Guide- available [here](#).
- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)- templates for governing documents, reporting templates, fact sheets, guides, and practical tips, available [here](#).
- NSW Government- charitable fundraising information and guidelines, available [here](#).