

How to Guide – Briefings and Debriefs

Below are the key points to consider when conducting briefings and debriefs.

Briefings

- Make sure everyone is present and receives the same information
- Cover relevant safety and work health and safety considerations
- Explain the situation as it is known at the time, even if information is limited
- Clearly state the task and what crews are expected to do, and confirm expectations for SITREPs
- Advise what search pattern is expected
- Confirm whether an On-Water Commander will be appointed
- Confirm the communication plan, including which radio channels will be used
 - o Decide whether all crews will use one channel or whether separate command and operational channels will be used
 - o Brief the On-Water Commander separately on their role and communication channel
- Discuss preferred search line spacing, noting this may need to be adjusted once crews assess visibility and conditions on the water
- Assign call signs and make sure everyone understands their call sign
- Provide all known information about the person or vessel of interest
- Advise crews that any new information will be passed on as it becomes available
- Confirm whether other assets are expected, such as Marine Rescue, Police, ambulance or helicopter support
- Clearly state that “No Duff” will be used for a real incident or emergency.

Use the below guide on how to do a verbal SMEACS briefing		
S	Situation	What has happened?
M	Mission	Objectives of the operation – What are you trying to achieve?
E	Execution	Action plan – How are you going to achieve the outcome?
A	Administration & Logistics	Sourcing and preparing personnel and logistics – Who will use your resources?
C	Command, Control & Communication	Reporting hierarchy and communications methods – Who are you reporting to and how?
S	Safety	Identify known or likely hazards, or welfare concerns – What could cause harm?

Debriefing

- Use the link to provide your debrief notes. [SLSNSW Operational Debrief 2026-2027 – Fill out form](#)
- Ensure you ask what are the sustains? what are the improves?
- Make sure everyone involved has an opportunity to provide feedback
- Record specific observations and explain why something worked or did not work for example:
“Communications worked effectively because radio traffic was kept brief and clear.”
- Remind participants that Member Wellbeing support is available
- Encourage participants to look out for each other following the exercise