



MEDIA RELEASE

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Testing of new buoyancy aids for surf lifesaving kicks off

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) in conjunction with James Cook University, VicLabs and SAI Global commenced the initial testing to develop the world's first specification/standard for low buoyancy water safety gear known as lifejackets.

The testing in Sydney, over Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th April 2014, will look at the minimum buoyancy levels required in lifejackets to bring a person to the surface, and the maximum buoyancy levels in lifejackets that allow individuals to move efficiently through the water without significantly impacting their physical exertion.

The research will investigate the performance of lifejackets that are currently non-compliant with the Australian Standard (Level 50), following recommendations arising from independent testing undertaken by SLSA in October 2013.

The pool testing will inform the minimum and maximum buoyancy level to give manufacturers a framework to develop specific lifejacket designs for surf sport activities. These products will then be further tested in the surf environment.

“Surf Life Saving Australia is committed to the ongoing enhancement of safety and protection of members and the community. This is step one in the independent testing of these types of low buoyancy products.

We will need to rigorously test potential equipment in surf conditions before we can ensure that it is fit for purpose” said Surf Life Saving Australia National Coastal Safety Manager Anthony Bradstreet.

The results of the testing will be made available to Standards Australia for their consideration in the development of any new Australian Standard below the current Level 50 lifejacket, and to the SLSA Personal Protective Equipment Working Group for their consideration.

Researchers from James Cook University and Viclabs (a National Association of Testing Authorities approved laboratory) are carrying out the testing with SAI Global overseeing and conducting quality assurance.

“There is no specification or standard available anywhere in the world that meets all the needs of lifesavers, lifeguards and extreme water-sports participants, part of this program will be to define and develop these specifications.

While we will never eliminate risks in the surf, we continue to use a framework of risk control measures to manage and reduce risks and this testing sits within this framework” said Mr Bradstreet.

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