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MEDIA RELEASE: Surf Life Saving Australia to support new standard for buoyancy aids (life jackets)

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) today announced it will support the Australian Standards Committee in developing a new Australian Standard specification for buoyancy aids for use in special performance activities including surf lifesaving.

Surf Life Saving Australia CEO, Greg Nance said that SLSA is committed to maintaining the highest standards of water safety and event safety for its members, beach goers and the general community.

“Our surf sport competition and training hones the skills of our lifesavers so they are rescue ready,” Mr Nance said.

“The outcomes of the recent independent testing of the existing Level 50 buoyancy aids and helmets - undertaken by SLSA in conjunction with independent agencies, James Cook University and SAI Global - were fully supported by the SLSA Board.

“Further testing will be required to determine buoyancy aids that are best fit for purpose in the surf zone. Currently, there is no compliant buoyancy aid manufactured that meets our fit for purpose requirements,” he said.

“SLSA remains committed to the ongoing enhancement of safety and protection of members, and supports further research to deliver a new performance buoyancy aid specification that could see significant benefits for a range of aquatic activities such as kitesurfing, stand up paddle boarding, kayaking and wakeboarding.

“The Australian Standards Committee CS-060 will undertake development of an “under 50” PFD performance specification.

“While we will never eliminate risks in the surf, we continue to use a framework of risk control measures and management to reduce risk. In any situation multiple risk control measures are activated to make the environment as safe as possible for our members and the community.

“We need to rigorously test potential equipment in all conditions in the surf before we can ensure that it is fit for purpose.”

Other equipment testing undertaken confirmed six new helmet designs that will meet the EN1385 Standard and fit for purpose criteria for use in surf lifesaving operations and surf sports.

“Every year, volunteers save on average over 12,000 lives. Our safety record and community service is something we pride ourselves on,” Mr Nance said.

The development of the new performance levels within the existing Australian Standard will be coordinated by the Standards Australia Committee CS-060 which includes a diverse range of industry professionals and experts including SAI Global.