

July 2016

BACKGROUND

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) undertook a national review to understand how sport and recreation programs and products can be better leveraged to increase the effectiveness of our surf lifesavers to deliver on the Surf Life Saving (SLS) core purpose to save lives, create great Australians and build better communities.

Despite steady membership growth over the past 20 years, SLS has seen a decline in participation rates in sport and recreation programs over this period. A core element to our 2020 vision of reducing coastal drowning by 50% is the need for a large workforce of physically capable surf lifesavers.

The origin of sport activity in SLS has always been about supporting volunteer surf lifesavers to be rescue ready, however declining participation indicates that existing program and products are not meeting the needs of our members in a modern, competitive, sport and recreation market.



A GAME PLAN FOR CHANGE

As a result of the review, four key components were recommended to enable both sport and recreational participants to flourish as members of SLS, and therefore strengthen the physical competence of surf life savers around Australia:

- A. Revitalise the competitiveness of surf sports to raise the SLS profile, inspire young athletes to achieve, and support the broader SLS community as being the pinnacle of surf based athleticism. This involves
 - i. Improving the fitness, skills and capability of our surf life savers.
 - ii. Looking at the current barriers to sport and active recreation.
- B. Launch recreational memberships to attract non-competitive participants, families and other interested groups, and engage community which is broader than just SLS. This may be attained through the development of programs such as ocean swims, active for life initiatives and programs aimed at primary and secondary schools for example. Recreational memberships can also form a pathway for participants to become active surf sport members in the future.
- C. Review and enhance the digital media and information technology platforms to better engage and interact with surf sport and recreation members and the general public.
- D. Develop and reinforce the SLS culture as one that makes for strong surf communities and ultimately safer beaches.



METHODOLOGY

A broad range of research was undertaken to provide the evidence for the review, drawing data from:

- A survey of 2,276 SLS members and non-members.
- Interviews with 118 members and external stakeholders of SLS sport and recreation.
- Nineteen (19) workshops across the country to gather input from members.
- A written submission process.
- Focus groups and social media posts.

The proposed recommendations and model for the future of surf sport was presented to 60 Surf Life Saving leaders from across Australia at the SLSA National Sport Summit in November 2015. Summit participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback over a two-day series of workshops. The research, independent thinking and multi-level feedback underpin the themes and priorities reflected in the final report.

21 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

1. Review SLSA policies to provide greater flexibility and access to surf sport competition.
2. Develop a surf sport commercialisation model to leverage SLSA's surf sport properties
3. Work with new and existing partners to connect the Ironman and Ironwoman series into Surf Life Saving's athlete pathway.
4. Implement an innovative promotional program through digital medial platforms to reinforce the role the surf sport plays in developing capable surf life savers.
5. Develop a strategic, cohesive model to attract, retain and motivate people in surf sports, particularly through the breakout age of 12-17 years, retiring athletes and coaches.
6. Assign a surf sport review steering group to oversee the implementation process, maintain momentum and ensure the integrity of the objectives.
7. Appoint a Participation Manager in SLSA senior management to collaborate and implement new participation initiatives.
8. Formally recognise recreational membership within the SLSA membership structure to build a pathway for non-active to active members and provide clubs with a clear framework to leverage recreation opportunities should they choose to adopt.
9. Target individuals and likely groups as potential recreational members; including but not limited to nipper parents, ocean swimmers and existing surf life savers.
10. Develop a series of nationally-constructed but locally-delivered programs and products for SLS clubs to offer their local communities.
11. Provide a separate insurance category for recreational members so that members can participate in SLS offerings without holding a surf lifesaving qualification.
12. Provide a platform where clubs can distribute, obtain and deliver existing recreational programs to expand their offerings that suit their local community and culture.
13. Develop a digital strategy to promote the benefits of surf lifesaving and sport to a wider audience.
14. Continue to test new event management system, to support recreational events.
15. Pursue the outcomes of the SLSA IT review and embrace the digital opportunities.
16. Reinforce that to achieve the SLS strategy, each area of the SLS movement must support each other to achieve its objectives.
17. Assign a sub-committee of the SLS Board to restore and reinforce the unified SLS purpose and culture

18. Develop a communications strategy that reinforces SLS strategy and the mutual reliance of lifesaving, surf sport and learning and development.
19. Develop actions for both lifesaving and surf sport participants to acknowledge and support each other's role in the SLS community.
20. Audit existing public messaging to identify where there may be gaps in the representation of SLS.
21. Integrate sport and recreation and learning and development messaging into public safety and fundraising campaigns.

NEXT STEPS

- Appointed steering group to focus on:
1. Oversee the review of Proficiency and Patrol Hour Requirements for Competition Eligibility policy 5.04 (Recommendation 1)
 2. Board appoint a culture sub-committee (Recommendation 16) to take steps to restore the unified purpose and culture.
 3. Create a development program which develops leadership and capability of club coaches (Recommendation 5b)
 4. Develop a modified sport product for use by clubs, branches and state entities (Recommendation 5c)
 5. Target retiring surf sport athletes to take on coaching, management, officiating and administration roles (Recommendation 5e)
 6. Review the development and implementation of a Recreational Membership (Recommendation 11-12)

BENEFITS OF THE REVIEW TO MEMBERS

- Reduction in barriers to participation.
- Greater opportunities to engage in surf sport activities.
- Improved delivery of surf sports to meet member needs.
- Use of surf sports to increase SLS profile within the community.
- Opportunities to engage both existing surf lifesavers, new surf lifesavers, and nurture them into outstanding surf lifesavers.
- Increased education and awareness of surf lifesaving within the wider community.
- Greater opportunities for clubs to increase membership and engage community.
- Improved communication, engagement and information delivery