

**FOR THE ROWERS BY THE ROWERS**  
**ZACCA (GARY WATTS) CV PRESIDENT 2015**

The election of the President at the forthcoming AGM is the most important for some years. Please take the time to read this, make sure that you cast a vote and make an informed decision.

**Introduction**

In 1992, during and following the Australian championships at Narrabeen, a group of sweeps got together concerned at the unfairness, the continuous lack of consideration i.e. 6 boat heats and 50% cuts, then moving the finals to another area, no amenities etc. It was decided that a 'Union' be formed.

Along with myself and the late/great Kevin 'Bluey' Myers OAM, Zom Knox and Matt Clymer, we attended a meeting at NSW State Centre offices in Roseberry with the then CEO Ern Davis.

Ern Davis was very helpful and after lengthy discussions during which NSW SLS asked us not to use the word 'Australian' in our name the ILOR (International League of Australian Surfboat Rowers) was born.

Soon afterwards, Zom, Matt and I formed Surfboat Promotions P/L to manage and run the Toohey's Blue surfboat competition and the Pepsi Cola event for Juniors in NSW.

It was at this stage that I incorporated the ILOR and became its 1st Chairman/President, Kevin 'Bluey' Myers OAM wrote the ILOR constitution.

At the time, Toohey's was also involved with SLSNSW and as the series was so successful media-wise, Toohey's decided to put some more money in and run a competition based on the then successful Uncle Toby's Ironman series.

Simultaneously, Uncle Toby's came to us with a proposal to compete in its Ironman series.

At the time we were well into negotiations with Toohey's until the then committee of SLSNSW decided that the Toohey's proposal wasn't good enough and scrubbed the whole idea.

Toohy's decided that it was all too hard, pulled out and we both missed out.

So we went with Uncle Toby's.

At the 1993 Australian Championships at Kurrawa, I presented SLISA with two lengthy discussion papers, the Future Financing of Surfboat Special Events, the Future of Surfboat Rowing in Australia, which had been approved by state rowing representatives.

SLISA never responded.

Later in the year at the first ILOR meeting in September 1993, as I had entered into a contract with Uncle Toby's, I felt that it was a conflict of interest to have the promoter sitting on the board so I handed it over to the elected President Ron Payne.

On 9 October 1993 the first event was the Uncle Toby's at Surfers Paradise.

All of the crews which competed were then summonsed by SLSQ to appear before a **formal civil arbitration hearing**; however, we were successful and gained the right to enter and compete in our choice of competition..

Our next event was Uncle Toby's at Bondi.

The following week a normal carnival was held at Terrigal

SLSNSW then banned all the Uncle Toby's crews from competing at the Terrigal event. Once again we were forced into court **on behalf of the boaties**, those volunteering patrolling surf club members and once again we were very successful.

All this was done to give you, the surfboat rower, the right to go into an event of your choice which is still relevant today.

***More importantly, as a result we then had a voice, SLSA stood up and took notice of who we were and what we stood for, the relationship became amicable, SLSA listened to and consulted with us from then on. This excellent consultation between us and SLSA never changed and improved as the years went on.***

### **Where are we today**

It was always envisaged that the ILOR/ASRL and all the members would have a say in the way our sport was run. Not today, as the ASRL - SBC is a sub-committee of SLSA and obliged to operate within its rules.

In addition, the ASRL is a competing event organiser.

There are less crews competing at local, state and national level than there were 10 years ago.

The number of clubs and crews attending the ASRL Open has dropped dramatically and alarmingly in just 7 years.

Triple Crown was cancelled after one season.

**Of 93 mainland crews - Colts, Fillies & Juniors - entered in 2015 Open, only 1 crew outside Victoria attended the Youth Stampede at Point Leo in January.**

None of the 24 objectives, strategies and KPI's of the Surfboat Committee (SBC) have been achieved since it started in 2011.

It was intended that the ILOR/ASRL Open was to travel to other states which it did from 1997 - 2007, and is now being held in NSW for 13 consecutive years from 2008-2020.

A senior executive of the ASRL said in an email in 2012 that previous ASRL committees didn't achieve anything as they didn't have their hand on the control panel, yet in my garage I have two magnificent Grand Prix trophies donated to the ASRL by SLSA and were returned to me when the Grand Prix was cancelled in 2008.

In the past 7- 8 years the ASRL has had more money than ever and what has been achieved?

At the moment our sport needs strong leadership and direction, the ASRL is not effectively representing the interests of surfboat rowers in Australia hence the decision to put my hand up as President in the forthcoming election.

### **About me**

I am a believer in the SLSA movement and I am a firm believer in safety.

Since 1994, I have developed and maintained the highest level cooperation with SLSA & SLSNSW

The helmet issue, in certain circumstances I believe in, but the way it has been handled is a worry and the current 'generals' who run the sport have not presented the issues in a properly informed manner. It appears that the younger rowers will never get the adrenalin rush in an 8-10ft surf, as the event will be cancelled.

My involvement in surf clubs:

Resuscitation @ 12

Qualifying @ 14

Bronze @ 16

Instructor's certificate

Chief Instructor

Boat Captain

Club Captain

Beach Inspector

3 Honour blazers at 2 clubs

patrolled the beach for 20 years

a rower, sweep and coach for 50 years

and have the honour of having a boat named after me.

Currently I still do an enormous amount of coaching with creditable achievements at State & National level and continued service to surf lifesaving which is not recognised.

Today, the reward for doing all that, I believe that if I wish to resume competing, I have to do my bronze again.

Now standing for President, I believe that the committee positions are not only for success in competition, the President and committee must have top-level management skills.

I have those management skills.

My management skills in **surfboat** related events are:  
the Toohey's Blue premiership  
the Uncle Toby's series (1994-1998)  
the NSW Sizzler series,  
the Uncle Toby's Survival series,  
the NSW Road Transport Survival series,  
the Coca-Cola marathon  
the Toohey's marathon  
the ILOR InterOceans & World championships @ at Mooloolaba (1995-1996)  
the current Ocean Thunder series (2004-  
the Ocean Thunder International in France (2008)  
instrumental in the Collaroy Young Guns

All of these events were sanctioned by Surf Life Saving.

With Matt Clymer, talked referee Mick Byrnes into having two sets of turning cans in our area at the Manly carnival, the first to do so and convinced SLSA officials to have softer cuts at the Australian Championships.

Two sets of cans have been used ever since.

With Greg Davies and 'Daffy' McKay-Gray organised the first ILOR Open at Terrigal in 1997 and subsequent Open events.

Following the Australian championships at Kurrawa in 1995 & 1996, with Peter Hickey, ran the InterOceans Championship and the ILOR World Championship at Mooloolaba, with the major prize a trip to USA to compete at Huntington Beach at the USA championships and telecast on Ch9.

In 2002-2003 Peter Hickey and other SLSA officials approached me to organise and conduct a new surfboat event.

Prior to agreeing to that I needed to ensure that I had one hour of television coverage on both Foxtel & Ch9. In partnership with Hickey Sports Marketing (HSM Group) we went on to achieve and deliver the sport of 'surfboats' to a global audience.

Ocean Thunder was the first and only surfboat event to have a dedicated one hour televised event both nationally and internationally.

In the 11 years, Ocean Thunder has paid out in excess of \$900,000 prizemoney to the competing clubs with additional finance to clubs which participate in the conduct of the event.

The additional high-performance competition of both Uncle Toby's & Ocean Thunder has not only seen those crews comprising at least 50% of the semi finalists but win every Australian Open Boat Championship during those years.

Ocean Thunder has been and still is the only surfboat event providing full national and international coverage.

For the past 11 years, I have a very professional team of officials and support staff running Ocean Thunder.

I never had any problems running Ocean Thunder, but in the last 7 years, the only problems I have encountered have come from within, that being the ASRL.

**My objectives are to go back to, 'for the rowers by the rowers', and to get our web site and chat forum up and running as it used to be.**

**Thank you for reading this, our sport needs a change of administration and direction.**