

June 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.

# SPORT REVIEW SUMMARY

## 21 RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

## NEXT STEPS

- Appointed steering group to focus on:
  1. Overseeing the review of Proficiency and Patrol Hour Requirements for Competition Eligibility policy 5.04 (Recommendation 1)
  2. Developing the detailed commercialisation strategy and financial model for surf sport (Recommendation 2)
  3. Working with SLSA partners to confirm the format and delivery model of the professional Ironman and Ironwoman series for the 2016/2017 season (Recommendation 3)
- The Board appoint a culture sub-committee (Recommendation 16) with an immediate focus on:
  4. Developing the modern mutual benefit model for surf sport, lifesaving and learning and development (Recommendation 18).
  5. Auditing the existing SLS Strategic Plan to determine how the positioning of SLS both publicly and to its members could be enhanced to reflect the agreed model of mutual benefit (Recommendation 20).

## 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