

# North Steyne SLSC Water Safety Policy

**Name:** Water Safety Policy

**Date:** 16/09/2013

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## 1. Higher authority:

Nothing in this policy is designed to contradict the authority of a higher surf lifesaving authority, being SLSSNB, SLSNSW and SLSA. Where following these regulations causes a breach of a higher authority's policy, the rules and regulations of the higher authority will take precedence. The aim of this policy is:

- a) to develop specific and, where deemed necessary, stricter policies to reduce the risk to club members and the general public, and
- b) to provide club specific guidance for the application of higher authorities' water safety policies.

## 2. Preface

This policy sets out the risk management procedures and minimum requirements for the provision of water safety for surf lifesaving aquatic activities. All supervisors are encouraged to enforce higher standards where deemed necessary. This policy is designed to provide practical directions for North Steyne SLSC. This policy is designed to assist with practical decision making in water safety activities, however should be used in conjunction with other policies.

## 3. Definitions

**Buddy Procedure:** The buddy procedure is where activity participants of similar experience and ability participate in an aquatic activity together, continuously looking out for each other throughout the activity, and able to offer immediate assistance to each other if required. This procedure of water safety is specific to aquatic training activities where activity participants hold an aquatic rescue qualification of SRC or above.

**High Visibility Garment:** As defined in Section 6.

**Unqualified participant:** An activity participant who does not hold an award in surf rescue (SLSA Surf Rescue Certificate or Bronze Medallion/Certificate II Public Safety – Aquatic Rescue or recognised international equivalent). For example: Bronze Medallion candidates in training and junior members.

**Qualified participant:** An activity participant who holds an award in surf rescue (SLSA Surf Rescue Certificate or Bronze Medallion/Certificate II Public Safety – Aquatic Rescue or recognised international equivalent).

**Water safety:** The use of human resources and rescue equipment in aquatic environments to provide a level of safety to activity participants.

**Water safety personnel:** Qualified and proficient lifesavers (holding a SLSA Surf Rescue Certificate or SLSA Bronze Medallion - Certificate II Public Safety and Aquatic Rescue) who provide water safety for the activities listed above. Water safety personnel act under the leadership of the water safety supervisor.

**Activity leader:** A person who exercises control over an activity. Activity leaders must be suitably qualified for the activity they are responsible for. Activity leaders can include accredited Age Managers for junior activities and Training Officers for lifesaving educational activities. The role of activity leader and water safety supervisor may be combined.

SLS sanctioned aquatic activities: An activity that has been endorsed or approved by the relevant/managing organisation. This usually involves the activity being discussed and noted at organisation committee meetings or is a regularly occurring activity on an organisational calendar/diary.

Risk Assessment: Is the process of analysing the potential risk of injury or illness from exposure to hazards. Risk Assessment can be completed through either the Endorsed Risk Assessment Form in Appendix 1 or the SLS Water Safety Risk Mobile App.

Risk management: The process of recognising situations that have the potential to cause harm to people or property, and the act of doing something to prevent the hazardous situation occurring or the person being harmed.

IRB: Inflatable Rescue Boat

RWC: Rescue Water Craft, commonly referred to as a Jet Ski.

#### 4. Proximity

All water safety must remain within a safe distance of participants in order to effect a rescue if necessary. This must be discussed as part of the briefing prior to the activity to determine an appropriate distance for the specific conditions and activity.

#### 5. General Requirements

a) Water safety shall be provided to all club members undertaking any lifesaving training related activities.

b) A water safety supervisor shall be appointed for all activities where water safety is required. Subject to 5(c) the water safety supervisor must:

- i. Be over 18
- ii. Have been an active member of SLSA for greater than 12 months;
- iii. Be listed on the register of approved water safety supervisors as kept by the board and updated from time to time;
- iv. As an occasional procedure, a water safety supervisor may be approved for a period of 24 hours by the relevant Director (lifesaving, training, competition or nippers). Each individual may be approved a maximum of three (3) times in a season after which they may not be approved unless added to the permanent list;
- v. Must complete and maintain a risk assessment; and
- vi. Must be aware of all policies that relate to their specific activity.

c) The Club Captain may approve via written approval Water Safety Supervisors who do not meet the requirements of 5(b).

d) Minimum numbers must absolutely be maintained for each activity and may not be shared between activities being conducted concurrently [note: this expressly includes any craft].

f) If the risk assessment score yields a lower score than the Water Safety Supervisor believes to be reflected in carrying out the activity, risk management must be carried out for the higher risk level. This may include not carrying out the activity

## 6. High Visibility (“Hi Vis”) Garments

There are five high visibility fluorescent colours endorsed by SLSA that SLS affiliated organisations can choose to use:

- Fluorescent Pink
- Fluorescent Yellow
- Fluorescent Green
- Fluorescent Orange (recommended for all water safety personnel)
- Fluorescent Red

Vests must have been provided by SLSA or an affiliated organisation (including NSSLSC) or be checked with the Water Safety Supervisor prior to use.

## 7. Activity Specific Requirements

### a) Patrol:

- i. On patrol the risk assessment is deemed to have been carried out by the lifeguard on duty.
- ii. When the beach is closed, the risk assessment is deemed to be high and members are not to enter the water unless effecting a rescue.
- iii. IRBs may only be used as part of organised training as per paragraph 6(e).

### b) Education Training:

- i. A risk assessment for ongoing training must be completed prior to each session.
- ii. All those involved in water safety during a training course must be briefed, preferably prior to the commencement of the course.
- iii. A water safety supervisor must be present for all training sessions where club equipment is used.
- iv. Unqualified participants shall not use club equipment unless a water safety supervisor is present.
- v. All participants and water safety personnel must wear High Visibility Garments.

### c) Competition:

- i. A risk assessment for each activity must be carried out and uniform and PPE requirements specified at the beginning of each session or prior to the commencement of training.
- ii. The Buddy Procedure may be used for competition training where all members hold at minimum a Bronze Medallion or Surf Rescue Certificate.
- iii. All participants and water safety personnel must wear High Visibility Garments.

### d) Nippers:

- i. Parents who are not qualified water safety personnel may swim with the nippers to assist, however are to be treated as unqualified participants.
- ii. All participants and water safety personnel must wear High Visibility Garments.

### e) IRB training (competition and crew/driver training)

- i. A second IRB must be prepared to launch at all times during training with a proficient driver and crew (or two drivers). Where two IRBs are used they may act as water safety for each other.
- ii. The second IRB may be the patrol IRB when this is deemed acceptable by the patrol captain.

- iii. The IRB captain must be notified of all training.
- iv. All IRB patients must wear high visibility helmets during competition training.
- v. All participants and water safety personnel must wear High Visibility Garments.

f) Non-SLS Sanctioned Aquatic Activities (individual or small group practice)

- i. The Buddy Procedure may be used for competition training where all members hold at minimum a Bronze Medallion or Surf Rescue Certificate.
- ii. This section only covers training using club equipment; all other non-SLS sanctioned aquatic activities are deemed to be out of scope of the club's responsibility. IRB training is not covered by this clause and must be carried out in accordance with section f) above.
- iii. All participants and water safety personnel must wear High Visibility Garments.
- iv. The presence of the patrol does not remove any obligation under section 7. f)

## 8. Risk Assessment Process

a) A risk assessment for shall be completed for every SLS Sanctioned Aquatic Activity, regardless of whether it proceeds;

b) On completion of the risk assessment, appropriate risk management procedures must be identified and followed;

c) Completion of the risk assessment:

- i. The risk assessment must be completed and signed as required prior to the commencement of each activity.
- ii. Where activities are completed regularly a standard risk assessment may be developed with as many items as practical filled out, however this must still be signed prior to the commencement of the activity.
- iii. The risk assessment must be shown to the patrol captain or, where the activity occurs outside of patrol hours, the most senior authority present.
- iv. The more senior authority must provide verbal agreement for the risk assessment.
- v. The risk assessment must be submitted to the club administrative assistant either by placing the form through the mail slot in the secretary's office or electronically to [admin@northsteyneslsc.com.au](mailto:admin@northsteyneslsc.com.au).

d) A risk assessment form must be endorsed by the club Board of Directors and attached as an appendix to this document, the club may produce this or the form created by a higher authority may be used as directed;

e) The policy and all documentation must be reviewed, updated (where necessary) and endorsed by the Board of Directors at least annually;

f) Required ratios for water safety [note: an IRB counts for 2 water safety personnel only]:

Skill Level	Risk Assessment		
	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
Unqualified Participants	1:5	1:4	Activity Cancelled
Junior Activity Preliminary Evaluations	1:1	1:1	Activity Cancelled

Note: Where groups are mixed, the more conservative ratio must be observed.

## 9. Responsibility and Escalation

- a) All water safety personnel are responsible for the safety of participants and answer to the water activity co-ordinator;
- b) The water safety supervisor is responsible for all activity co-ordinators;
- c) When activities are carried out during patrol hours, the water safety supervisor must obtain the patrol captain's agreement to the completed risk assessment form prior to the commencement of the activity and has authority over the water safety supervisor;
- d) The patrol captain jointly reports to the lifeguards and the club captain or his/her delegate (vice captain or express delegate)
- e) Where the activity takes place outside of patrol hours the decision rests with the highest authority present.
- f) Highest authority:
  - i. The most senior member on the register (as described in 5(b) iii.) present is deemed to be the highest authority present.
  - ii. The club captain is then above the highest authority present
- g) The highest authority present has ultimate responsibility and can overrule the decision of the lower authority.
- h) A decision of the highest authority present may be appealed to the club captain.
- i) The decision of the club captain is final.

## 10. Use of patrolling members as water safety

- a) Patrol members may only be excused from patrol for water safety where all patrolling requirements are met.
- b) Members on patrol may act as water safety during patrolling hours where they meet the criteria for Water Safety Personnel.
- c) The water safety supervisor shall not be signed on as a patrolling member when carrying out these activities unless they are in the course of training for patrolling members.
- d) Patrolling members must request permission from the patrol captain before being involved in water safety and must request permission again at least once per hour.
- e) The patrol captain may instruct any patrol member to return to patrol at any time and for any reason.
- f) The patrol IRB may be used to assist in water safety but only where minimum numbers are met by other means and the IRB must prioritise patrol activities.

## **11. Uniform**

- a) All participants and water safety personnel must wear High Visibility Garments.
  
- b) Where an item of clothing has been specified by the Board of Directors, it must be worn at all times during the relevant activity.
  
- c) Where specific safety equipment is provided all participants, with no exceptions, must wear it.

## **12. Gear and Equipment**

- a) Gear and equipment to be used during the activity and for water safety must meet requirements and be inspected prior to use.
  
- b) All water safety personnel to be counted for minimum ratios must use approved water safety equipment (note: as per SLSA policy, water safety equipment includes rescue tube, rescue board, IRB, SLSA approved racing boards only. Excludes: skis, surf boats, etc.).
  
- c) An IRB where used for water safety must be fully laden (including radio).

## **13. Briefing**

- a) The supervisor must conduct a water safety briefing prior to the activity
  
- b) This briefing shall meet the requirements of the activity as deemed by the water safety supervisor.

Appendix 1. Endorsed Risk Assessment Form

ACTIVITY INFORMATION	
Activity type/name:	
Venue/Beach:	
Date:	/ /
Time:	AM / PM
Number of participants:	

RISK ASSESSMENT		
<p>As a minimum, the following factors must be assessed when determining water safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Surf conditions</li> <li>▪ Weather conditions</li> <li>▪ Skill level of participants</li> <li>▪ Number of participants</li> <li>▪ Other location specific hazards</li> </ul>		
Potential Risk: (Please tick if risk has been identified)		Specific Details: Comments:
Dangerous surf	✓ / ✗	Wave height <input type="checkbox"/> Wave type <input type="checkbox"/> Water depth <input type="checkbox"/> Tide and current <input type="checkbox"/>
Bad weather	✓ / ✗	Wind <input type="checkbox"/> Temperature <input type="checkbox"/> Storms <input type="checkbox"/>
Skill level	✓ / ✗	No level of skill <input type="checkbox"/> Limited level of skill <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed level of skill <input type="checkbox"/>
Many participants	✓ / ✗	40-59 <input type="checkbox"/> 60-99 <input type="checkbox"/> 100+ <input type="checkbox"/>
Other hazards	✓ / ✗	Stingers <input type="checkbox"/> Sharks/crocodiles <input type="checkbox"/> Exposed rocks <input type="checkbox"/> Jetty/wharf <input type="checkbox"/> Debris/pollution <input type="checkbox"/>



RISK MANAGEMENT		
Please tick the action undertaken to minimise risk		Comments:
Modify activity	✓ / ✗	
Move activity	✓ / ✗	
Delay activity	✓ / ✗	
Cancel activity	✓ / ✗	
Full patrol on duty	✓ / ✗	
Increasing the number of water safety and rescue equipment	✓ / ✗	
Implement the buddy system	✓ / ✗	
Personal protective equipment	✓ / ✗	
Other (Please state)	✓ / ✗	
Other (Please state)	✓ / ✗	

WATER SAFETY SUPERVISOR INFORMATION		
Water Safety Supervisor Name:		
Water Safety Supervisor Signature:		Date: