



# Surf Life Saving Australia Policy

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## 1. SLSA'S YOUTH MISSION

SLSA's youth development and activities will enrich the lives of young members through fun, involvement and the acquisition of personal, lifesaving and competition skills, in a safe aquatic environment.

## 2. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

SLSA's mission is to provide a safe beach and aquatic environment throughout Australia. This is achieved through a number of means including public education, provision of lifesaving services, and the development of SLSA members.

Approximately 50% of SLSA's membership is under the age of 18. Youth members have unique needs due to their social, emotional and physical developmental growth. Consequently, it is important that SLSA establishes an environment that nurtures these members and provides them with an opportunity to grow.

SLSA youth programs provide a safe, educational and enjoyable environment that promotes the Australian way of life and a healthy active lifestyle. This policy includes guidelines for instruction in lifesaving, surf sports and development for members aged between 5 and 17 years.

## 3. OBJECTIVES FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN SLSA

- To provide the best possible lifesaving experience for all youth with the view to encouraging long-term active participation.
- To provide opportunities for youth to participate in and enjoy lifesaving and competition in an aquatic environment by offering a wide variety of activities suited to the skill and maturation levels of all youth.
- To ensure the youth are safe on Australia's beaches through the provision of surf safety education programs.
- To develop a team based philosophy encompassing leadership, camaraderie, teamwork, and fun.
- To promote social, emotional and physical growth and development in a healthy and safe environment.

## 4. AN INCLUSIVE ORGANISATION

SLSA is an organisation with a strong history and plays a significant role in articulating Australia's national identity. Through the delivery of lifesaving services, SLSA provides members with opportunities to develop physically, socially and emotionally. The skills and abilities developed by SLSA's youth members are not specific to surf lifesaving and allow for growth and development in other aspects of their lives.

Surf lifesaving programs embrace all Australians regardless of their ethnicity, religious or cultural background, gender or socioeconomic status. Programs cater for young people of all body shapes, sizes and physical abilities. By providing a broad range of learning opportunities to all young Australians, SLSA ensures long term involvement that leads to safer beaches through a greater understanding of beach safety and the training of future surf lifesavers.

Despite our acceptance of all Australians, clubs need be aware that different groups have different needs that could affect the conduct of youth programs. Such problems could include the wearing of swimwear by children with body image



problems, conduct of events on particular days/dates, minimal swimming ability, reduced mobility, etc. Clubs must respect the needs of all members and cater for these needs wherever possible.

## 5. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG SURF LIFESAVERS

Young people, particularly between the ages of 5 and 17 experience significant changes in growth and development. Physical activity is required for normal growth and maturation. It is recognised that surf lifesaving programs play a vital role in developing not only the physical aspect but also the psychological, social and emotional attributes of young people. SLSA understands that whilst activity is crucial to a child's development, there are potentially harmful effects for young people participating in inappropriate activities, including overtraining.

SLSA recognises the uneven spread in growth and maturation in young people. Therefore, recognition of individual needs within chronological age groupings, including emotional or psychological maturity, needs to be considered when determining the developmental status of a young person.

Surf Life Saving activities should be organised so that young people have positive experiences regardless of developmental status and should be focussed on FUN and LEARNING. These learning opportunities should focus on personal improvement in both surf sports and surf lifesaving. Young people have differing learning needs, and these needs should be catered for throughout all youth programs.

Generally sporting and teaching organisations emphasise the following stages in youth development:

- **Play** when children develop a love for physical activity and group interaction in a context that lets them have fun whilst experimenting within the experiential environment and group context.
- **Broad experiences** when young people master basic skills with the emphasis being on fun. These are the sampling years when children are getting interested in physical activity across a range of experiences.
- **Progression** when a greater focus is placed on skill development, but fun and enjoyment are still important.
- **Specialisation** when some young people become more serious about their activity and are keen to refine their skills. A focus on positive experiences remains essential in the specialisation phase.
- **Recreational Participation** throughout each of the above stages where youth establish ongoing interest in the recreational value of physical activity.

These stages are particularly relevant to surf lifesavers in that there are a variety of different opportunities available and hence a broader number of skills to develop. The specialisation stage becomes important as a young surf lifesaver finds their niche within the organisation.

Pathways enable young people within SLSA to move progressively through to a desired destination or level of competency. Clear pathways give our junior members the opportunity to:

- Gain appropriate surf lifesaving skills
- Move easily through different stages of SLSA
- Be motivated and have fun while developing skills
- Inspire members to stay involved in SLSA long term

SLSA youth programs encourage young members to develop their surf awareness skills, grow into proficient surf lifesavers and experience the wide range of opportunities that Surf Life Saving has to offer.

SLSA's developmental pathways are diverse and provide all members with a range of opportunities depending on their skills, maturation levels and interests. It is important that these opportunities are delivered in the manner identified in Table 1 below to ensure the development of our members is staged and appropriate to their skill and maturation levels.



Table 1: Summary of Developmental Pathways in Surf Life Saving

Age	Outcomes	Pathways		
		Lifesaving	Surf Sports	Development
5-6	<b>Enjoyment &amp; Fun</b> <b>Group interaction &amp; participation</b> <b>Play based activity</b>	<b>Play based experiences</b> <b>Games and beach activities</b> <b>Shallow water activities only</b> <b>No competition</b>		
7-9 <i>(competing as U8,U9,U10)</i>	<b>Enjoyment &amp; Fun</b> <b>Learning</b> <b>Skill Development</b> <b>Group interaction &amp; participation</b>	<b>Surf Education</b> <b>Basic Resuscitation</b>	<b>Skill Development</b> <b>Broad Experiences</b> <b>Club / Regional Competition</b> <b>State Competition (modified rules as per Surf Sports Manual)*</b>	<b>Organised Group Activities</b>
10-12 <i>(competing as U11,U12,U13)</i>	<b>Enjoyment &amp; Fun</b> <b>Personal Development</b> <b>Increased self confidence</b>	<b>Surf Education</b> <b>Basic Emergency Care</b>	<b>Skill Development</b> <b>Broad Experiences</b> <b>State Competition</b>	<b>Organised Group Activities State</b>
10-12 <i>(cont.)</i>	<b>Improving Skills</b> <b>Demonstration of skills</b> <b>Awareness of responsibilities</b> <b>Social interaction</b>			<b>State Development Camps</b> <b>Retention &amp; Recognition Programs</b>
13-17 <i>(competing as U14,U15,U17,U19)</i>	<b>Enjoyment &amp; Fun</b> <b>Peer Interaction and teamwork</b> <b>Improving Performance</b> <b>Improving Personal Development</b> <b>Leadership skills</b> <b>Health and lifestyle awareness</b> <b>Organisational awareness</b>	<b>Surf Rescue Certificate (13+)</b> <b>Bronze Medallion (15+)</b> <b>Resuscitation</b> <b>First Aid</b> <b>Defibrillation</b> <b>Powercraft</b> <b>Training Officer</b> <b>AGES</b>	<b>Skill Development</b> <b>Broad Experiences</b> <b>Introduction of specialisation</b> <b>National Competition</b> <b>International Competition (16+)</b> <b>SLSA High Performance Program (16+)</b> <b>Coaching (16+)</b> <b>Officiating (16+)</b>	<b>Retention &amp; Recognition Programs</b> <b>Youth Leadership Camps</b> <b>Youth Panels</b> <b>Age Managers Course</b>

\*State centres are encouraged to career path state competition to establish competition steps appropriate to developmental stages of youth members.

Beyond the definition of youth in this policy (members under the age of 18 years) development pathways exist for surf life saving opportunities which extend across all ages.



## 6. PROVIDING A RELEVANT, QUALITY SURF LIFE SAVING EXPERIENCE

As young people develop and mature, they require increasing levels of responsibility and self-determination in relation to expressing, negotiating and following their interests. This policy acknowledges the need for greater responsibility and self-determination as young members mature with the support of SLSA youth programs. Thus increasing degrees of consultation and participation in program and pathways choices are encouraged within this policy.

Youth members have particular developmental needs and require support from a number of people to ensure they receive a positive, learning experience. These people include:

- Age Managers
- Parents and Carers
- Administrators
- Coaches
- Surf Sports Officials
- Lifesaving Leaders (eg patrol captains, senior mentors, peer mentors)

Each of these groups has a role to play in the development of SLSA's youth members. These roles include:

**Age Managers** – Are responsible for the care, safety, wellbeing and development of the junior surf lifesaver. They are responsible for facilitating the development of surf lifesaving skills (movement skills, surf awareness, etc.) and personal skills (eg. confidence, teamwork, leadership, etc). Age Managers play a fundamental role in the delivery of a learning program that encourages and develops young surf lifesavers.

**Parents and Carers** – The role of parents is critical to the young person's well-being and ongoing involvement. Supportive parents provide essential care, education and enthusiasm. A challenge for parents is getting the right balance between disinterest and overbearing involvement, and being able to read their child's changing support needs.

**Administrators** – Administrators play a primary role in the management of surf lifesaving, recruiting volunteers, training all personnel, ensuring leadership succession and maintaining a safe environment. There are various opportunities for young people to participate in administrative roles within Surf Life Saving.

**Coaches** – Coaches have a special responsibility to foster positive attitudes towards developing specific surf sports skills. Coaches play a different role in Surf Life Saving than they do in other sports, as members have a wide range of opportunities available to them. Hence, coaches are a resource that young members can choose to utilise in order to achieve specific surf sports goals (eg skill development, fitness, sporting achievements).

**Surf Sports Officials** – Surf Sports Officials are responsible for the safe and fair conduct of surf sports events. It is important that Surf Sports Officials recognise that young surf lifesavers have differing needs, and that the main emphasis of surf sports for youth is fun and development.

**Lifesaving Leaders** – Lifesaving Leaders have a responsibility to ensure that all members in his/her care are safe and are provided with an experience whilst on patrol that is both fun and developmental.



## 7. MEMBER SAFETY AND WELLBEING

SLSA recognises that every person involved in surf life saving needs to be treated with respect and dignity, in a safe and supportive environment. In order to protect youth members, SLSA at all levels needs to ensure:

- that safeguards comply with legal and educational requirements relating to the physical and psychological welfare of young people,
- that surf life saving clubs meet their duty of care to participants,
- that young people are treated fairly in all aspects of surf life saving, and
- that all young surf lifesavers experience a safe and nurturing environment.

It is the responsibility of all involved in delivering youth programs (see section 6 of this policy) to ensure that they comply with the requirements of this policy. SLSA has a number of policies and resources to assist members and clubs in maintaining a safe and nurturing environment, including

- Member Protection Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Limiting and permanent disability policy
- Risk Management policy
- Water Safety policy
- Sun Safety policy
- Asthma Policy
- Epilepsy Policy
- SLSA Surf Education Program
- SLSA Age Managers Course
- SLSA Junior Proficiency Requirements

All members should be aware of these policies and resources, and are required to abide by all policies relating to youth within SLSA.

### Surf Life Saving Australia

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