

SAVE LIFE SURFING AUSTRALIA

SAFETY INITIATIVES

Wednesday 1 April 2015

MEDIA RELEASE: Save Life Surfing Australia to take control of Surfing

Save Life Surfing Australia today announced that it will take control of surfing in Australia from April 1st 2015.

Australia's peak water safety organisation has become aware that many surf rescues are performed by untrained surf board riders. Reports suggest that many of these untrained surf board riders appear more competent in the surf than surf club members. The number of these rescues may even exceed the total performed by surf club members.

In one extreme example, two ten year old boys got surfboards for Xmas, went straight to the beach wearing nothing more than board shorts, and helped an elderly lady get out of a rip. These boys had no formal training, were not wearing high visibility clothing, had not filled out a risk assessment before going out and went straight back out surfing without completing an incident report. Clearly, something is wrong here.

Changes effective from April 1st 2015

In order to improve surf safety, the following minor requirements for all surfers will come into effect from April 1st 2015

- 1 All surfers are required to **join a surf club**.
- 2 The **minimum age** for surfing in breaking waves shall be 16.
- 3 Surfers are not permitted to surf until they have completed the **bronze medallion** course.
- 4 All surf boards must have a **current inspection sticker**.
- 5 Surfers shall wear **high visibility pink singlets** and club caps at all times in the water.
- 6 Learning to surf must be in the presence of a level 1 or higher **accredited coach**.
- 7 The minimum ratio of one qualified **water safety** person to every five surfers is mandatory.
- 8 A **risk assessment** must be completed and filed prior to all surfing.
- 9 **Helmets** must be worn in surf exceeding one metre.
- 10 If 2 or more **surfers fall off** their boards, surfing must cease immediately, and a new risk assessment prepared.
- 11 In the event of a **rescue, an incident report** must be completed.
- 12 Surfers are required to complete **25 patrolling hours** each year before being allowed to compete.
- 13 The first 3 months surfing training shall be conducted on **flat water**.
- 14 When surfing as a **team**, all surfers shall be from the one club.

Mr Graham Holden, the president of Save Life Surfing Australia, said that "we expect some resistance to these changes but, over time, we expect surfers will see the safety benefits far outweigh any negative issues."

Mr Holden also said that "We welcome surfers into our organisation. We expect these small changes will double our number of patrolling members and double the number of rescues we can take credit for."

"While we will never eliminate risks in the surf, we continue to use a framework of risk control measures and management to reduce risk. In any situation multiple risk control measures are activated to make the environment as safe as possible for our members and the community."

Save Life Surfing Media Team: