



## Year of the Surf Lifesaver – Celebrating 100 Years of Heroes

### Q&A

---

#### **Q: What is Year of the Surf Lifesaver?**

2007 Year of the Surf Lifesaver (YSL) marks the 100th anniversary of Surf Life Saving Australia, an organisation which has saved over 500,000 lives on Australian beaches.

YSL also highlights the important role of surf lifesavers and surf life saving clubs, along with the professional lifeguards in keeping Australian beaches safe.

The Year of the Surf Lifesaver will touch all Australians in a meaningful way by:

- Improving water safety education for Australian public and school children across the nation;
- Increasing public knowledge of the historic role of surf lifesavers in the development of Australian culture;
- Promoting awareness of Surf Life Saving's key capabilities, strongly position the authority for the future through donations and new members and extending an open invitation to all Australians to get involved in the celebrations

#### **Q: Who is the Australian Surf Lifesaver?**

A surf lifesaver is a person who demonstrates the character, skill and service that epitomises the best of the Australian culture. Surf lifesavers give their time as volunteers in the service of their communities. They are fit, skilled, team oriented and adaptable Australians.

The Australian surf lifesaver:

- Commits personal time and energy to maintain safe beaches around Australia
- Develops and maintains a high level of skill through ongoing training
- Provides leadership in maintaining and developing volunteerism as a valued characteristic within Australian society
- Epitomises the strength and character of the Australian way of life

The surf lifesaver is an Australian icon. Each person who wears the red and yellow cap is a recipient and guardian of that heritage.

## Q: What are some of the highlights of YSL 2007?

During YSL there will be an extensive array of celebrations and commemorative events across the nation. Below is a snapshot of the events currently locked in for YSL.

- **Between the Flags Travelling Exhibition:** In partnership with the National Museum of Australia, a major exhibition will reflect on the role surf lifesaving has played in shaping Australian beach culture. *Between the Flags* opens on 6 December and traces the proud history of the surf lifesaving movement, which emerged in Sydney in 1907. The exhibition will look at the golden age of life saving, when the lifesaver came to join the bushman and the digger as national Australian icons. The exhibition includes shark spears, trophies, early resuscitation gear, a surf boat and a surfboard with a shark bite taken out of it. *Between the Flags* is on show at the National Museum of Australia from 6 December until 18 February 2007, entry is free. [www.nma.gov.au](http://www.nma.gov.au)
- **'Between The Flags' - History Book:** *Between The Flags: One Hundred Summers of Australian Surf Lifesaving* is a new book detailing the history of the surf lifesaving movement. The book examines the origins of the movement, how its existence was threatened with the rise of the surfing culture, and how it has re-invented itself over the past 25 years to become the country's major water safety organisation and one of the largest volunteer organisations in the country. The book was officially launched by His Excellency, the Governor General, Major General Michael Jeffrey AC CVO MC.
- **Stamp and Coin:** SLSA is working closely with Australia Post and the Royal Australian Mint on the development of a series of stamps and coins to reflect the many faces of surf lifesaving. A set of coins commemorating 2007's Year of the Surf Lifesaver was unveiled by the Treasurer, the Hon. Peter Costello MP on 2 November 2006.
- **Australia Day Celebrations:** YSL will be prominent at Australia Day celebrations in all capital cities with possible recognition including flag and banner displays and dazzling surf lifesaving surf craft demonstrations.
- **Ambassadors Program:** Approaches are currently being made to a number of key Australians from all walks of life to lend their name and face to the 'Year of the Surf Lifesaver'.
- **Schools education program:** SLSA is developing a major primary and secondary schools education program. To be launched in January 2007.

## Q: Who are the YSL Ambassadors?

### International Ambassador - HRH Princess Mary of Denmark

Former Tasmanian surf lifesaver, Her Royal Highness, Crown Princess Mary of Denmark, will get back in touch with her Aussie origins by coming on board as the International Ambassador for YSL. Like most Australians, Princess Mary grew up near the beach at Clifton in Tasmania where she received her Bronze Medallion in 1993 and volunteered her time to patrol.

## National Ambassadors

**Brooke Hanson:** In 2004, Brooke made her first Olympic Games team to Athens and went on to win a silver medal in the 100m Breaststroke and was a member of the gold medal winning medley relay team.

**Clint Robinson:** Clint Robinson became Australia's first canoe / kayak gold medallist when he won the 1000 metres singles final in Barcelona in 1992. Clint was one of a special breed of sportsmen - lifesavers who learned their paddling skills in the surf, then applied them to the discipline of the Olympic kayak. He was also awarded an OAM for the finest national championship record of any surf lifesaver (when his gold-medal tally reached 30).

**Dr Fiona Wood:** Dr Fiona Wood is a plastic surgeon working in Perth, Western Australia and is the director of the Royal Perth Hospital burns unit and the Western Australia Burns Service. In addition, Dr Wood is also a Clinical Professor with the School of Paediatrics and Child Health at the University of Western Australia and Director of the McComb Research Foundation. She was named Australian of the Year for 2005 by Australian Prime Minister John Howard at a ceremony in Canberra to mark Australia Day.

**Grant Kenny:** Grant Kenny is a former Ironman, surf lifesaver and sportsman. Grant has always been a leader and a serious participant in all things in which he is involved. In 1980 he achieved an unprecedented, and to date unequalled, double victory winning the Australian Junior and Australian Open Ironman championships within the space of half an hour. He was to experience success for a number of years, continuing to win the National Senior Ironman titles in 1981, '82 and '83. In the 1980's he moved into another field of sporting endeavour - kayak racing. In 1984, at the Los Angeles Olympics with his K2 partner, Barry Kelly, the pair won Bronze. These days Grant is a successful Company Director, with interests in aviation, property development, and promotional services.

**Karla Gilbert:** One of the World's greatest Ironwomen with an impressive list of achievements in Queensland, Australia, World and Kellogg Ironwoman Series Champions throughout her career that spans over a decade. The Surfers Paradise Surf Life Saving Club member commenced competition in 1990 and progressed to win the Australian Open Ironwoman Championship in both 1993 and 1994. She then dominated to win four Meadowlea Ironwomen Series wins consecutively from 1997 to 2000. Karla retired in 2003.

**General Peter Cosgrove:** General Peter Cosgrove was the Chief of the Australian Defence Force from 3 July 2002 to July 2005, when he retired from active service. Cosgrove came to national fame in 1999 when, as a Major General, he led the international forces (INTERFET) in a peacekeeping mission to East Timor. The mission's success made Cosgrove one of Australia's most respected and popular military leaders.

**Trevor Hendy:** Trevor Hendy remains unchallenged as the "greatest Ironman in the World" and is the pride of Australian Surf Lifesaving and the Surfers Paradise Surf Life Saving Club. Trevor commenced competition in 1976 as a nipper and progressed to set a sporting record by winning six Australian Open Ironman titles while competing for the Surfers Paradise Surf Life Saving Club. Trevor was four-times winner of the Uncle Tobys Super Series. In 1999 Trevor retired from all Surf Life Saving competitive sports. Trevor was awarded one of Australia's highly respected achievements, a Member of the Order of Australia Medal for his dedication to the Surf Life Saving movement.

**Q: What are the key dates and activities for the YSL**

- **5 December 2006** Launch of 'Between The Flags' surf lifesaving exhibition at the National Museum of Australia. The exhibition will travel to Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth during the course of 2007.
- **26 January 2007** Australia Day Celebrations in capital cities featuring surf lifesaving displays.
- **January to March** Kellogg's Nutri-Grain Iron Man and Ironwoman series – to be shown on Channel 9 around the country over summer.
- **During February** Surf Patrol – a new 'observational documentary' TV series on Channel 7. This new 13-part, 30-minute series featuring surf lifesavers keeping the country's beaches safe over summer, promises to be one of the highlights of the Year of the Surf Lifesaver.
- **During March** Release of Commemorative Postage Stamps. Australia Post will release a special stamp issue to celebrate YSL and commemorate the centenary of surf lifesaving in Australia.
- **20-25 March** Australian Surf Life Saving Championships, at Scarborough Beach in Perth, promises to be a highlight of the Year of the Surf Lifesaver for all SLSA members.
- **20 October 2007** Surf Life Saving Australia Centenary Dinner.
- **20 October 2007** National club open day inviting all Australians to visit their local surf life saving club and see how they can get involved.

**Q: How is Tourism Australia working with SLSA**

Tourism Australia will work with Year of the Surf Lifesaver organisers to build a domestic and international leveraging program to maximise the events' exposure whilst capturing the essence of Aussie Beach culture into Tourism Australia's international marketing program.

The 2007 Year of the Surf Lifesaver is an excellent opportunity to highlight beach safety messages, increase surf awareness and highlight to our target audience – the Experience Seeker what Australian's are know best for – our love for sun, sand the surf.

### **Q: How did surf lifesaving begin?**

During the nineteenth century, legislation banned bathing in public between the hours of 6am and 8pm. In the closing decades of the century, many regular bathers, who were becoming increasingly frustrated with the restrictive by-laws, began to lobby the state government and local councils to lift the bans. By the opening years of the twentieth century, Sydney's codes of morality had shifted enough that local police refused to arrest or prosecute a number daylight bathers who were dressed in what was deemed to be appropriate costume.

In the following years all of Sydney's seaside councils lifted their bans restricting daylight bathing, although the practice continued to be opposed by moral groups for some years. As a consequence of the lifting of these bans, the popularity of what was called surf-bathing increased rapidly.

With increased popularity came increased drownings and by the summer of 1906-07, Sydney was obsessed with the question of surf safety. Australia's first surf life saving clubs emerged on Sydney's ocean beaches in 1907 in response to this threat.

On 18 October 1907, representatives of the seven first surf clubs, along with other interested groups, met to form the Surf Bathing Association of NSW, which went on to become Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA).

### **Q: What is Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA)?**

SLSA is Australia's major volunteer water safety and rescue authority, and is one of the largest volunteer organisations in the country. In addition to this core service and responsibility, SLSA also contributes to the community by:

- Training volunteer surf lifesavers and lifeguards to undertake rescues, administer first aid and take preventative actions to keep our beaches safe;
- Developing and implementing community and school education programs, including to regional and rural communities.
- Providing helicopter, jet and offshore rescue boat services;
- Collecting and maintaining a database of geographical conditions, wave action and hazard ratings on all beaches in Australia;
- Developing an understanding of beach safety by maintaining a database of all coastal drownings, major incidents and first aid treatments attended by SLSA lifesavers or lifeguards;
- Managing and delivering surf sports events, including the Australian Surf Life Saving Championships.

SLSA is a charity which relies on the support of corporate sponsors and the generous support of the public through donations.

**Q: What services does SLSA provide?**

SLSA and its state centres provide patrol services on around 300 of the 110,111 beaches around Australia's 36,737 km of coastline. Services are provided by surf lifesavers who complete surf patrols in their own time – usually a half-day patrol every 2 to 3 weeks.

Each year, SLSA's trained volunteer surf lifesavers provide more than 1.4 million hours of patrol time on weekends and public holidays during the surfing season. SLSA also provides 70 per cent of professional lifeguards who work seven days a week in peak seasons.

The economic and social value of these services has been estimated at more than \$1.4 billion per year.

**Q: How many Surf Lifesavers are there?**

Since the formation of the first clubs in 1907, the movement has grown to now consist of 305 clubs and 112,589 members, 37,400 of whom actively patrol the country's beaches and 38,000 of whom are 'nippers' (or junior surf lifesavers).

Nippers start learning about surf awareness and safety through the 'SurfEd' program. They are also able to participate in board paddling, surfing, swimming, running, wading and other fun activities and games. Children can join nippers at any age from U/8 (7yrs) to U/14 (13yrs).

SLSA also provides more than 500 lifeguards and 70 per cent of contracted lifeguard services to local government and other land managers around the country.

**Q: How many rescues do surf lifesavers undertake each year?**

Australia's trained surf lifesavers spend more than 1.4 million hours patrolling Australian beaches and many more hours behind the scenes. Each summer, they rescue around 10,000 people, provide first aid to 25,000 and give safety advice (we call it a 'preventative action' as it warns people before they get into trouble) to more than 150,000 others.

In the 2005/06 season, volunteer members were involved in 10,775 rescues, taking to more than 520,000 the total number of lives saved since the formation of the original surf lifesaving association in 1907. Surf lifesavers also provided 38,309 first aid services and undertook 246,586 preventative actions during the season.

**Q: Why do surf lifesavers wear red and yellow caps?**

All trained surf lifesavers wear the internationally recognised red and yellow patrol uniform and are distinct by wearing the red and yellow quartered cap. Market research by SLSA shows that the red and yellow colours are the most easily recognisable in times of emergency on the beach. The red and yellow cap is an internationally recognised safety symbol and should not be used except by proficient Bronze Medallion holders.

**Sources**

SLSA: [www.slsa.com.au](http://www.slsa.com.au)