



# SURF LIFESAVER

KEEPING YOU SAFE BETWEEN THE FLAGS

YOUR NEWS SUMMER 2019

## SURF LIFESAVERS MAKE DRAMATIC AFTER-HOURS RESCUE

**Y**iyang is a man in his mid-20s and it was about this time last year when he found himself in a life-threatening situation at Birubi Beach in Port Stephens, NSW.

Yiyang remembers arriving at the beach with his girlfriend and her brother at 5.30 pm. The volunteer surf lifesavers had finished patrolling for the day; however, there were still people swimming in the ocean so they too decided to head into the water.

“My girlfriend and I were playing around near the shore and her brother had walked out a little further,” Yiyang explained. “He would come over occasionally or wave at us, but then we noticed that he looked really worried.”

As Yiyang and his girlfriend headed towards the struggling man, they also found themselves being swept up in the rip current. They were powerless in the open water.

Back at the Birubi Point Surf Life Saving Club, the surf lifesavers were debriefing over the day’s events and noticed that a number of surfers were signalling for help. Upon closer inspection, it was



clear that the swimmers were caught in a rip current.

Patrol Captain Steve was quick to assess the situation and ordered his team to grab the rescue boards.

Angus, a 15-year-old new Bronze Medallion holder, was first on the scene: “I probably paddled out 100 metres or so to reach the brother. He was really pale in the face, and as I pulled him onto the board you could hear him gasping for air. This was my first major rescue, and it really hit me when I was out there that it was bad.”

Angus managed to place the man onto the rescue board, and while he was making the difficult journey to shore with the brother, the other surf lifesavers and

surfers were battling the ocean to safely rescue the remaining two swimmers.

Once the trio were returned to the beach, the rest of the team, who had been busy preparing the first aid equipment, spent at least 30 minutes monitoring their condition until the ambulance arrived.

Yiyang’s girlfriend and her brother were rushed to hospital and it is thanks to the commitment, swift action and skill of the volunteer surf lifesavers that everyone survived.

**This incredible rescue story has been captured on video. Watch it here: <https://www.slsfoundation.lpages.co/xmas-appeal-2018-video>**

## NIPPER SHOWS INCREDIBLE LEADERSHIP QUALITIES



Talia Vivar

**“FAR FROM DISENGAGING AND TURNING INWARDLY TO DEAL WITH SIGNIFICANT HARDSHIP AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE, TALIA DEMONSTRATED CHARACTER AND COMPOSURE BEYOND HER YEARS.”**

When it came to acknowledging an inspiring young member in the Surf Life Saving community, Christies Beach Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) joint junior chairperson Mandi Miller said it was hard to look past Talia Vivar.

Talia, aged 13, has been a Nipper at Christies Beach SLSC for nine years and has already made a big impression on her fellow surf life saving club members.

So much so that Talia was awarded Nipper of the Year (Female) at the 2018 Surf Life Saving South Australia Awards of Excellence.

Mandi said Talia’s sense of pride and community, coupled with an interest in the welfare and support of her peers, had elevated her to a position of leadership.

She added that Talia showed incredible strength and resilience after fracturing her elbow during

the 2016/2017 patrol season, resulting in several operations.

“Far from disengaging and turning inwardly to deal with significant hardship at such a young age, Talia demonstrated character and composure beyond her years and found ways to continue into season 2017/2018,” Mandi explained.

“Talia’s determination and commitment are a credit to her and despite being limited by her injury at times, she continued to participate and support her teammates in all Nipper activities.”

Talia said receiving the Nipper of the Year award made her feel like her hard work had paid off.

Talia plans to gain her Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) and move into senior surf lifesaving next year.

“I can’t wait to be on beach patrol and help the younger children,” she said.

### BUILDING NIPPER AWARENESS IN THE NORTH

Surf Life Saving Northern Territory has introduced Surf & Sail, an initiative to encourage interest in Surf Life Saving and specifically the iconic Nippers program.

Surf & Sail, organised in coordination with Australian Sailing Northern Territory, took place in January this year following a successful launch in 2018.

Surf Life Saving Northern Territory development coordinator Laura McGrane explained that the program was developed to encourage participation in and around water, as well as to build the profile of both Surf Life Saving and Australian Sailing.

“We had quite a few people enquire about joining Nippers or joining one of the local surf life saving clubs,” Laura said.

The four sessions provided children with the opportunity to participate in Nipper board paddling and gain confidence when dealing with aquatic environments.

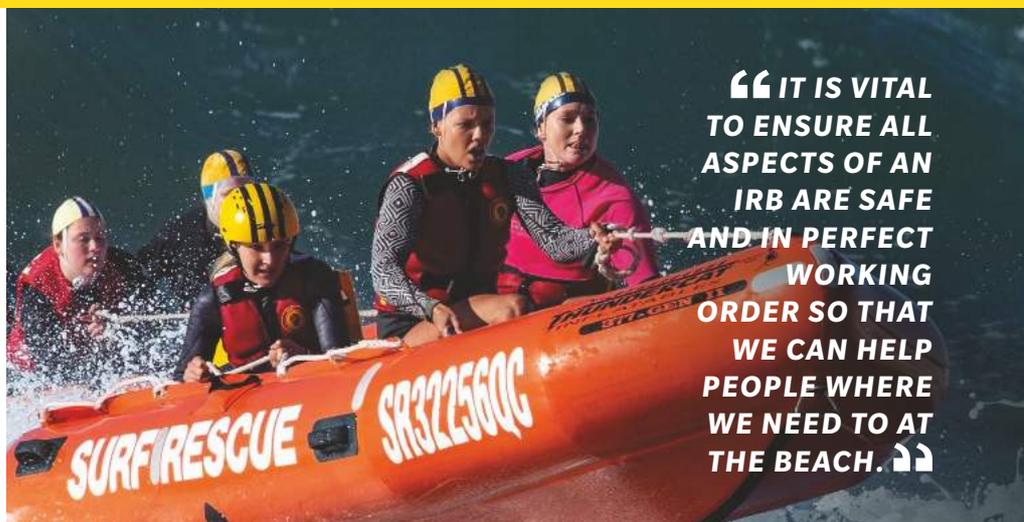
“The turn out from the four sessions was really good, especially the first session where we saw more than 200 kids come through during the three hours – it was great. In total, we saw around 500 children across the four days.”



Children participated in Nipper activities



(L-R) Samantha Thornton and Sonita Leng-Cole embrace after a race in 2018



“IT IS VITAL TO ENSURE ALL ASPECTS OF AN IRB ARE SAFE AND IN PERFECT WORKING ORDER SO THAT WE CAN HELP PEOPLE WHERE WE NEED TO AT THE BEACH.”

## DYNAMIC DUO

### SHARE PASSION FOR IRB

Meet Samantha Thornton and Sonita Leng-Cole: volunteer surf lifesavers at Alexandra Headland Surf Life Saving Club and Australian Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB) champions.

Samantha and Sonita, aged 27 and 23 respectively, joined Nippers at a young age and have been competing together in the IRB Championships for five seasons, achieving gold and silver medal places at state and national level.

A momentous time for the women was in 2015 – their first year competing as a team – when they won gold in the mass rescue race at the Australian IRB Championships. They also placed fourth at the 2018 Lifesaving World Championships for both the Interclub Female IRB Mass Rescue and Interclub Female IRB Rescue events.

The women, however, explained that IRB competitions are about more than delivering action-packed events – they play an important role in helping

surf lifesavers develop and enhance their skills so they can protect beachgoers.

“IRBs are vital pieces of rescue equipment that require skill to operate in the dynamic surf environment,” Samantha said.

“The competitions run throughout the winter and enable both drivers and crews to develop their skills and awareness in the boat. It’s a sport that requires team work, and brings us together in the winter months as we travel around Queensland to test our skills and train rigorously to better our abilities for the upcoming patrol season.”

Sonita explained that competitors were required to spend a minimum of 20 hours in an IRB prior to the competition season in a wide range of surf conditions.

“Generally, as a surf lifesaver, the worse the conditions are, the more likely it is that something will go wrong, so these are the conditions we should be most prepared and ready for.”

She explained that surf lifesaving equipment costs money to maintain, which is only possible because of generous public donations.

“Alongside the other equipment, it is vital to ensure all aspects of an IRB are safe and in perfect working order so that we can help people where we need to at the beach,” she said.

Commenting on the reasons she enjoys being part of the Surf Life Saving community, Samantha pointed to the training and development opportunities available.

“I believe that you should always try to keep learning in life and there is a remarkably wide range of opportunities for you to choose from in the Surf Life Saving community,” she said.

Samantha added that she believed there was a place in Surf Life Saving for everyone: “The people is what makes our organisation great and there is a place for everyone to help keep this legacy moving forever.”



## WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

If you are interested in volunteering or would like to learn more about possible roles at your local surf life saving club visit [www.sls.com.au/get-involved](http://www.sls.com.au/get-involved).

# VENTURING BEYOND

## THE RED AND YELLOW FLAGS

Tasmania is not typically synonymous with the beach but Surf Life Saving Tasmania CEO Tony van den Enden saw this as an opportunity rather than a hindrance.

Tony, who channelled his 'boisterousness' through Nippers and later rejoined Surf Life Saving as a volunteer in 1988, recognised the importance of providing services that went beyond the red and yellow flags in Tasmania.

"We patrol every Saturday, Sunday and public holiday between December and March. This is different to other states such as NSW and Queensland, which have longer summers and a larger profile," he explained.

"Our members have a unique skillset and we have worked hard to support them to use these in a way that makes a difference within the community all year round."

To remain relevant and break the drowning chain Surf Life Saving Tasmania delivers holistic inland, inshore and offshore rescue services and water safety education programs – held locally and internationally – as well as targeted enabler programs and activities for people who have recently moved to Australia and children with disabilities.

Surf Life Saving Tasmania has state wide emergency response teams and marine rescue units, which Tony said played an active role in supporting Tasmanian emergency services during search and rescue operations and large-scale natural disasters, such as floods and fires.

"When the floods hit Hobart last year, we had members who took days off work and were on standby for 36 hours. Their selfless, 'can do' attitude is very inspirational and I am so proud of our team. Our members don't often recognise how special they are because they just do it all the time," Tony explained.

"Surf Life Saving attracts a special type of person who is just so generous – you can pick them up and bolt them together as a team because we share that common goal."

Tony said the Surf Life Saving values and opportunities offered to members and the lifelong friendships formed were some of the reasons he was drawn to the movement.

"The organisation is so broad that there is something for everyone at every stage of their life. You have this amazing large network and family within not only your club, your region and state but nationally and internationally."



**“OUR MEMBERS HAVE A UNIQUE SKILLSET AND WE HAVE WORKED HARD TO SUPPORT THEM TO USE THESE IN A WAY THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY ALL YEAR ROUND.”**

## SUPPORTING A 'FAIR DINKUM' CHARITY

Jan Celledon has always had a special connection to the ocean. "My first beach memory was taking the train down to the Gold Coast with my mum as a young child," she explained. "My mum always loved the ocean and I inherited this love as well."

Jan, who was born and bred in Brisbane, Queensland, also has fond memories of taking trips to Fingal Head in NSW with her parents, sisters and family friends.

"I love everything that the beach represents – being on the sand, diving into those waves. I just love it all."

In addition to enjoying the beach, Jan relishes the opportunity to help others in her community. This is evident in the field trips that she has led for old neighbourhood friends up and down the coast, as well as the baking she does for her local church.

With Jan's appreciation for the ocean and compassion for others, it's not surprising that she is a longtime supporter of Surf Life Saving.

"I enjoy donating to such a wonderful, fair dinkum, charity," she said. "Surf Life Saving is an iconic Australian movement that has been serving the community for over 100 years. Let's face it,



where would we all be without those wonderful volunteers keeping an eye on us? It's a real comfort knowing that surf lifesavers are there."

Jan explained that she needed to reassess the various charities she was supporting a few years ago, and that Surf Life Saving was one cause that was staying on the list.

She went a step further by not only giving generous donations across the years but also deciding to leave a gift to Surf Life Saving in her Will.

"I know Surf Life Saving is a worthy cause, and I want to help in any way that I can. Equipment like Inflatable Rescue Boats (IRBs) and rescue boards are expensive and need replacing. I understand that this stuff doesn't last," Jan explained.

"I think more people should be mindful that it costs money to keep us safe on the beach and perhaps they should support Surf Life Saving. Everyone from Nippers through to volunteer surf lifesavers need assistance. They are all so important."



### LEAVE A LEGACY TO SURF LIFE SAVING

Like Jan, when you decide to leave a gift to Surf Life Saving in your Will, you are giving one of the greatest gifts possible. This one act of generosity will mean helping to protect and save the lives of many beachgoers, ensuring the Surf Life Saving movement continues for generations to come. **To find out more about leaving a gift in your Will, please contact Brett Lucas on 07 3177 5831 or 0435 797 306 or visit [www.slsf.com.au/bequest](http://www.slsf.com.au/bequest).**

Have you heard about the 10,000 Club? The 10,000 Club is a group of surf lifesavers who have made the decision to leave a gift in their Will to their club. Joining the 10,000 Club means you will be helping to achieve the goal of 10,000 club members nationally who have made this pledge. **To find out more about becoming a 10,000 Club member, please contact your Club President or Secretary.**



## HONOURING WWII FEMALE SURF LIFESAVERS

**W**omen who took it upon themselves to perform surf lifesaving duties during World War II have been formally recognised for their achievements.

Cathy Cole from the Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) has championed 'Honouring our First Female Lifesavers', an initiative acknowledging the women who patrolled the Central Coast beaches in NSW between 1942 and 1945.

Cathy explained that these courageous females protected beachgoers while 72 of the 76 male surf lifesavers at Terrigal SLSC were at war.

Surf Life Saving policy did not recognise female surf lifesavers at the time and so the women never received their Bronze Medallion.

That was until recently, when they were given their awards at

a ceremony held at Terrigal SLSC. The Governor-General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, presented the Bronze Medallions to six of the surviving women, some of whom were in their 90s, while 17 Bronze Medallions were posthumously awarded to their families. Another woman, who has since passed, received her award at a ceremony at the Gold Coast, while a woman who was heavily involved in surf lifesaving activity during the period was also acknowledged.

Cathy said the group demonstrated immense selflessness, thinking nothing of their decision to enter unfamiliar territory.

"They had no prior training and some of them didn't even know how to swim beforehand but they just took it on and saved lives over and over again.

What they did was heroic," she explained.

"I have since learned that these women went on to have full, interesting and powerful lives. They were school vice principals who worked to engage and empower young women, they were presidents of golf clubs in the 1950s, they were strong female businesswomen and social innovators."

The women are set to feature in a filmed interview series created by the young members of Terrigal SLSC.

The interviews form part of a new program that Cathy is helping to develop called the Inheritor's Program. It aims to provide young SLSC members with a greater awareness and respect for the surf lifesavers that have come before them.



### DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

Do you have a story to share about inspirational women performing surf lifesaving duties during World War II? Do you have another tale about the history of Surf Life Saving? We would love to hear from you.

Please contact us via mail, phone or email.

## FOND MEMORIES

There are many extraordinary stories connected to this period, and Noeline Ashworth is one supporter who shared her memories with the Surf Life Saving Foundation.

Noeline vividly remembers spending time at Terrigal Beach with her late sister Dot Berry and the other female surf lifesavers.

“They were a great group who always made me feel welcome. I was only nine or 10 at the time but remember being allowed to go to the beach when Dot was on duty. I would go across the road to get everyone’s lunches,” Noeline said.

Noeline also recalled the moment her sister’s husband, who was in Darwin with the air force during the war, saw his wife on the big screen as part of a 1944 Fox Movietone newsreel showcasing the women in action.

“He got the surprise of his life and had a hard time convincing his colleagues that it was his wife.”

The newsreel, called *Brother, have you been saved?*, was shown in cinemas across Australia, the US and the UK. It is from the collection of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia and can be viewed here: [www.nfsa.gov.au/latest/australias-first-female-lifesavers](http://www.nfsa.gov.au/latest/australias-first-female-lifesavers)



## YOUR STORIES

At the Surf Life Saving Foundation, we receive many messages from supporters about why they value volunteer surf lifesavers and the Surf Life Saving movement.

The reasons are widespread – from dramatic rescue stories, personal connections with surf lifesavers and childhood memories of being protected at the beach during summer holidays.

We love hearing your stories and wanted to share some of them here. Thank you for your ongoing generosity and commitment to Surf Life Saving.

Together, we can save lives today, tomorrow and into the future.

The people who generously give their time to ensure our beaches are safe deserve as much support as possible. They are an Australian icon and they do an amazing job. I’m very proud to support them.

Ms M, QLD

Over 30 years ago, when my children were little, we got swept out by a rip at Mermaid Beach. We were just getting back to where our feet could touch when the surf lifesaver came sprinting out and took my 8-year-old under his arms. What an incredible sight. I will always be grateful.

Mrs P, QLD

I truly believe in the incredible work being done by the surf lifesavers in saving lives in the past and in the future. Keep up the tremendous work and dedication.

Mr V, VIC

Australia is an island nation with the greatest percentage of our population spread around the coastline. We rely on our surf lifesavers to help keep us safe on our beaches. Surf Life Saving is a grassroots organisation dependant on volunteers and therefore very deserving of any donation I can give.

Mrs T, VIC

Over 20 years ago, I went for a swim at Mudjimba Beach (Sunshine Coast). Between the flags of course, but I must have drifted south and got caught in a rip. The young surf lifesaver on duty pulled me out. A few years later, my brother visited from England.

We went to the patrolled beach at Twin Waters, and the same happened to him. Two rescues: this is my reason.

Mr M, QLD

I donate in memory of my father, a passionate surfer and a member of Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club and later North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club.

Mrs C, NSW

With so many drownings over the summer, the work the surf lifesavers do is vital and I’m so glad to help.

Mrs E, VIC

The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships, known as *The Aussies*, pays respect to participating competitors for volunteering to keep beachgoers safe. Read about one athlete's journey as a surf lifesaver and elite competitor.

## ATHLETE PROFILE: MAX BROOKS, 23

**Q** When did your Surf Life Saving journey begin?

**A** It started when I was five and my parents took me to Nippers. I loved the beach and I loved the competition side to nippers.

**Q** How many years have you been patrolling?

**A** I started patrol when I was 13 so this will be my eleventh year of patrol.

**Q** Have you ever been involved in a rescue whilst on patrol? What happened? How did you feel about it?

**A** I haven't rescued someone whilst on patrol yet, but I have helped a number of people out of rips when I've been off duty.

**Q** What do you like most about being a patrolling member of your club?

**A** Knowing I can save someone's life. It's a good feeling to know that I have the ability to save others if they get into difficulty.

**Q** When did you start participating in surf sports?

**A** As soon as I could. I started in U8s with the wade, then U9s with beach running and U11s with the water side.

**Q** Which surf sport event do you most like competing in?

**A** Always the team events.

**Q** What are your sport goals/ambitions?

**A** To win an elite series or the IronMan and The Aussies.

**Q** What is your proudest surf sports moment?

**A** Watching my club, Newport SLSC, grow from an extremely small club to one of the most successful in the country in a matter of five years.

**Q** What are you most looking forward to at The Aussies 2019?

**A** The same every year. There is just a different feel around The Aussies than normal carnivals. Everyone is looking forward to the end of a long season and it is the most prestigious event of the year.



**THE AUSSIES**  
AUSTRALIAN SURF LIFE SAVING CHAMPIONSHIPS

**The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships • Gold Coast, Queensland • 30 March – 7 April 2019**

We train to have the skills to save a life. We compete to see who is the best. Are you ready? [sls.com.au/aussies](http://sls.com.au/aussies)

**Swim between the red and yellow flags.**



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