



# OFFICER & COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

July 2025



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## Welcome!

Thank you for joining the Surf Life Saving Sydney team.

This handbook helps you to become familiar with the management and operations of Surf Life Saving Sydney. If you are an experienced officer, please scan the document and complete the checklist below. If you are new to the role, please use the checklist below and check in with the links within the document to read the supporting documentation.

### How to use this handbook

Read through each section of the handbook and tick off each of the red items once complete.

This handbook helps you understand:

- Surf Life Saving Sydney's role and governance structure
- Your committee's role and your positional role
- Our purpose, vision and values and Surf Life Saving Sydney's role
- How to get the best from our meetings
- Ways we communicate
- How we spend and account for money and finances

Welcome again to your role. Do reach out to your Director or one of the management team if you have any questions or feedback throughout the season.

Best wishes

Elissa Hancock  
President



## Surf Life Saving Sydney Governance

### Branch Council

The Branch Council is the governing body of Surf Life Saving Sydney and comprises the Branch President (Chair), Deputy President, Director of Administration, Director of Finance and the Presidents of the 15 affiliated Surf Life Saving Clubs.

The Branch Council ratifies committee minutes and decisions, approves annual expenditure, and endorses policy and direction. The Branch Council meets every two months.

### Board of Management

The Board of Management manages the strategic direction of Surf Life Saving Sydney and reviews standing committee operations to ensure alignment with strategic priorities and planning documents. It comprises of:

- President (Chair)
- Deputy President
- Director of Administration
- Director of Finance
- Director of Lifesaving & Rescue Services
- Director of Education
- Director of Surf Sports
- Director of Member Services
- Director of Youth & Junior Development

### Standing Committees

The working committees of Surf Life Saving Sydney include:

- Lifesaving & Rescue Services Committee
- Education Committee
- Surf Sports Committee
- Member Services Committee
- Youth & Junior Development Committee
- Constitution Committee
- Finance and Compliance Committee
- Life Membership and Honours Committee
- Selection Committee
- Judiciary Committee

- Check that you understand the reporting structure of your role or committee
- Discuss your committee decision making roles at your first meeting



## Governing Documents

Surf Life Saving Sydney has a number of governing documents that provide the structure, requirements and direction. These include:

### Constitution

The Associations Incorporation Act 1985 requires any Incorporated Association to have a set of governing rules. These are recorded in the form of a Constitution which is a formal document detailing the rules and regulations. The [SLS Sydney Constitution](#) covers:

- Objectives
- Club affiliation
- Structure of the Branch Council
- General meetings and committees

### By-Laws

The [SLS Sydney By-Laws](#) are the overall guiding principles about how Surf Life Saving Sydney operates. Each officer and committee should be familiar with the By-Laws that cover their role and committee. The Surf Life Saving Sydney By-Laws cover:

- Duties of Officers
- Standing Committees and Subcommittees
- Rules of debate and conduct

### Strategic planning documents

Surf Life Saving Sydney develops [strategic planning documents](#) from time to time. These documents are important to how each officer and committee behaves and how they spend their time. Key parts of the plan include:

#### SLSA Vision (Our ideal future)

- Zero preventable deaths in Australian Waters

#### Surf Life Saving Sydney's Focus:

- Help clubs and lifesavers to be their best while striving to prevent drowning and injury along the Sydney coastline

Check – how does your role help clubs and lifesavers be their best?

Check – how does your role prevent drowning and injury?

#### SLSA Purpose (Why we exist)

- We save lives, create great Australians and build better communities

#### Surf Life Saving Sydney's Focus:

- Develop skilled lifesavers & leaders while fostering club and community collaboration and connection

Check – how does your role develop skilled lifesavers and leaders?

Check – how does your role foster club and community collaboration and connection?



## Values

[Organisational values](#) are aspirational. They help officers and committees to test their decisions and behaviours against what is identified as important to an organisation and its members.

Surf Life Saving Sydney has identified what the SLSA values mean to our management group

- **Safety** - SAFETY FIRST. We develop a culture of safety with our members and with the public
- **Trust** - We develop trust through our actions. Protecting the flags on the front line and by being open and honest with each other behind the lines.
- **Respect** – People come to the beach for fun. Respect the public, the ocean and each other. Act with integrity and model respectful behaviour.
- **Caring** - We support and exhibit concern for people on and off the beach. We value life and well-being.
- **Responsibility** –We are compliant, accountable and deliver and what we say we will.

Check – What do these values mean in your role

Check – What do these values mean in your committee or group

## Policy

Surf Life Saving has a healthy range of policies at a State and National Level. We encourage you to familiarise yourself with the policy documents that may impact your role. Reference to policy documents will be important when making decisions or providing advice.

[SLSA Member Portal](#) – see document library in the menu bar

[SLSNSW Website](#) – policy tab has download of forms and policies

## Codes of Conduct

SLS Sydney has an important compliance role, we check the standards of award candidates, gear and equipment and patrol compliance and fair play across our sport. Most of these roles require Surf Life Saving Sydney to be the regulator of policy. Knowing this, it is important that we also comply with policy, codes of conduct and procedures. Our role will be to model good conduct and exhibit compliance in our own behaviours.

The [SLSA Code of Conduct](#) at Attachment A provides guidance.

## Good Governance

Governance is the system that controls the way SLS Sydney is managed and operates. It is the way the Board, Directors, Executives and other position holders are responsible for their actions.

Governance is made up of the following components:

1. Administration
2. Risk management
3. Ethics
4. Compliance

Check – What organisational policies impact on my role that I should review?

Check – Reflect on your role and how you practice good conduct and governance principles



## Meetings and decision making

Decisions are made by those who show up! The meeting structure of Surf Life Saving Sydney is the engine room of the Branch. Officers explore ideas, share information, and make decisions. Productive meetings are an important part of our operation. Here are some tips to assist you and your team to get the most out of the meeting structure and your volunteer effort.

### Preparation and Future Focused

Plan your portfolio and agenda for the year early. Consider what agenda items you will carry forward to meetings during the year and the timing. Meetings work best when you bring future focused agenda items to the group for exploration and approval. Surf Life Saving Sydney is working to move from report driven meetings (reporting on the past months activity) to future focused projects and ideas. For example, if you are planning to conduct an RWC training group in September, present an agenda item to the LRSC in July with a draft expression of interest circular, key dates, target groups and recruitment strategy.

### Agenda

Good meetings have a planned agenda. Each officer should submit agenda items to progress their portfolio prior to the meeting. Meetings are about decision making so consider formulating a recommendation with the agenda item. Apply the mantra “bring solutions, not problems”. This allows committee members to know in advance what decisions they will be asked to make prior to the meeting. Surf Life Saving Sydney has a standard meeting agenda template used for committees via the BoardPro Program. Consider ordering your business items with the most important ones first. Use General Business for reporting historical activity that has been undertaken since the last meeting if not part of an agenda item.

### Decisions

A key attribute to a successful meeting will be the decisions that are made at the meeting. Much has been written about good decision making however here are a few guidelines to assist:

- Prepare a sound recommendation prior to the meeting.
- Provide supporting documentation, a business case or relevant information as part of the proposal.
- Recommendations can be a formal item that is noted, an item that is approved or an endorsement of a course of action. Would you consider any amendments should they be presented?
- Do your homework – does the decision you are about to make conform to organisational policy?
- Have you undertaken preliminary stakeholder buy-in?
- Does the proposal help achieve our vision and purpose and conform to our values?
- Have you considered the resource implications of your proposal, such as staffing, time and financial approval? What current activities may need to be cut to support this new proposal?

### Approval of Decisions

Decisions made in committee structures are not endorsed until the meeting minutes are ratified by the Board of Management. For example, if you have approved expenditure for \$6,000 for a program/clinic/carnival in your own committee meeting, expenditure may not take place until the committee minutes have been reviewed and approved by the subsequent Board of Management



meeting. Directors will highlight important, controversial or expenditure decisions when presenting their minutes to the Board of Management.

### Action Planning

Action planning, capturing decision making and follow up tasks will be imperative for the success of any committee. Actions from the meeting and commitments made are recorded on the Action List within BoardPro.

- Check – Plan your meeting contribution for the year by being future focused
- Check – Be solution focused but play devil's advocate when making decisions to test outcomes
- Check – Discuss how committee members will exercise peer to peer accountability for follow-through on actions



## Communication

Surf Life Saving Sydney is an administrative hub for our 15 surf life saving clubs and officers, and communication is a key aspect to our operation. Communication to stakeholders is an important part of officer and committee roles.

Our Surf Life Saving Sydney Communications Plan identifies stakeholders into three categories:

1. Primary – those individuals that are directly connected with Surf Life Saving Sydney
2. Secondary – those individuals that rely on, and interact with, our services on a regular basis
3. Tertiary – those individuals that have the potential to interact with our services

It is important to consider the conduct you apply when undertaking your engagement and communications, ensuring that all parties are included and welcome. Find our [Commitment to Member Conduct](#)

### Our Stakeholders

SLS	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Club Presidents</li> <li>• Life Members</li> <li>• Branch Officers</li> <li>• Branch Committee Members</li> <li>• Carnival Officials</li> <li>• Award Assessors</li> <li>• RWC Operators</li> <li>• Duty Officers</li> <li>• Surf Rescue 30 Crew</li> <li>• UAV Operators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Club Officers</li> <li>• Competitors</li> <li>• Coaches</li> <li>• Team Managers</li> <li>• Training Officers</li> <li>• SLSNSW</li> <li>• SLSA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All members</li> </ul>
External		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsors</li> <li>• Supporters</li> <li>• Grant Providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public</li> <li>• Government</li> </ul>

### Communication Channels

Surf Life Saving Sydney communicates via the following media:

- Direct mail – email to offices and committees
- Circulars and Memos – formal information circulars
- Website – posting of information such as news, correspondence, dates and events
- Social Media – items of interest and news
- SMS Messaging – via SurfGuard or to officer groups
- Newsletter – Summary of items of interest to stakeholder groups

### Communication Protocols

The Surf Life Saving Sydney Office is the main hub for the distribution of all correspondence. The Director of Administration is the central co-ordinator of correspondence. The following protocols assist in ensuring open and co-ordinated communication.



- All formal correspondence to stakeholder groups should be sent out via the Branch Office. E.g. An email to Club Captains, a Circular to Surf Sports Officials, an agenda to a committee group.
- Officers are encouraged to communicate individually on a one-to-one basis with officers within their portfolio – e.g. Area Education Supervisor Waverley emailing CTO at Bondi.
- For more formal group emails an officer should copy in the respective Director/Manager – e.g. Area Lifesaving Supervisor emailing Club Captains in the area regarding Lifeguard feedback.
- For officers communicating with stakeholders outside their group a copy must be sent to the relevant Director or Manager.
- For communication to high levels of the organisation within the portfolio, such as SLSNSW or SLSA a copy must be provided to the Director of Administration. Eg; Director of Lifesaving writing to the State Director of Lifesaving.
- When writing to a stakeholder outside your portfolio group a copy should be provided to the relevant portfolio Director and the Director of Administration e.g. Director of Surf Sports writing to the State President – A copy must be sent to the Branch President and to the Director of Administration in advance.
- Any communication being distributed outside of Surf Life Saving Sydney, that includes a document that has been created and carries the Surf Life Saving Sydney logo must be passed through the BOM for endorsement prior to release. The logo identifies the document as representing Surf Life Saving Sydney views, and as such must be reviewed in advance of release.

## Newsletter

The new website that is being released in this coming season will also be joined by a reignited newsletter to our members. The Member Development & Retention Officer is the editor of the monthly newsletter and all officers are encouraged to include items of interest by the third week of the month, including image and text to [admin@sls.sydney](mailto:admin@sls.sydney)

## Social Media

The Branch Office is responsible for keeping the Surf Life Saving Sydney website and social media accounts up to date – officers should periodically review content on the sites and make recommendations for changes.

Only one account should be held for Surf Life Saving Sydney, with no social media accounts being operated internal to the Branch.

Officers and Committees are encouraged to communicate important and newsworthy items via social media. The Branch staff are the avenue for posting. A procedure to request posts, can be accessed [here](#). An image and text will need to be provided, seven days prior to the planned release. For posts after an event, submit your request and image as soon as possible and every endeavour will be made to circulate it within 48 hours.

## Media Engagement

Only the President or appointed media representative may approve officers providing formal statements to the media.

- Check – Identify your stakeholders and define how you will best communicate with them
- Check – Keep others in the group in the loop when you communicate



## Finances

Surf Life Saving Sydney has implemented a Finance and Procurement Policy that is available [here](#) and also on our website. All office holders who may engage with branch funding must read this. This includes those who may seek reimbursement of funds.

Surf Life Saving Sydney operates under an annual budget. The financial year runs from 1 June to 31 May each year. Each Director contributes to the construction of this budget at the beginning of the year and is responsible for all expenditures and revenue that occur within their portfolio cost centres. Each month a budget update is provided at the Board of Management meeting and the bimonthly Branch Council.

### Budget

The annual budget is an estimate of income and expenditure each year. Any expenditure within a portfolio should be linked to the endorsed budget. Note that the budget is not an approval for expenditure but rather a plan for forecasting. Approval for expenditure is provided in the formal committee structure and delegation process e.g. spends under \$1,000 endorsed by committee, over \$1,000 endorsed at the BOM.

The budget development cycle is conducted in June & July each year and Directors will present their draft budget to the Finance & Compliance Committee. Detailed workings behind budget items should be undertaken.

### Delegation of Expenditure

Each Director has an expenditure delegation of up to \$1,000 for budgeted items. Items over \$1,000 require committee approval and a documented purchase order. The minutes of the respective committee will be ratified by the Board of Management prior to the expense being carried out.

### Expense Claims

From time-to-time officers and committees will have small items of sundry expenditure. The office staff will be able to support these expenses. All expenses for sundry items should be approved by the portfolio director prior to expenditure. Valid Tax Receipt or Invoice should be provided, and an expense claim form used to submit expenses.

<https://www.jotform.com/surflifesavingsydneybranch/expense>

- What do I need to do before I seek a reimbursement
- Check – what budget allocation is assigned to your area
- Check – plan expenditure via your committee

**Have an idea about information that would help you in your new role?**

**Please make suggestions for the improvement of this handbook**

**admin@sls.sydney**

**Best wishes in your role!!**



## Appendix 1

### Surf Life Saving Code of Conduct

Members and all people involved in any way with Surf Life Saving will:

- a) respect the rights, dignity and worth of others—treat others as you would like to be treated yourself
- b) be ethical, considerate, fair, courteous and honest in all dealings with other people and organisations
- c) be professional in, and accept responsibility for your actions
- d) be aware of and follow—at all times—SLS' standards, rules, policies and procedures and promote those standards, rules, policies and procedures to others
- e) operate within the rules and spirit of the sport, including the national and international guidelines that govern SLS
- f) understand the possible consequences of breaching the Codes and/or this Policy
- g) report any breaches of the Codes or this Policy to the appropriate PPA
- h) refrain from any form of Abuse, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation towards others
- i) raise concerns regarding decisions of PPA through the appropriate channels and in a timely manner
- j) provide a safe environment for the conduct of activities in accordance with any relevant SLSA policy
- k) show concern, empathy and caution towards others that may be sick or injured
- l) be a positive role model to all
- m) respect and protect confidential information obtained through SLS activities or services; whether individuals and/or organisational information
- n) maintain the required standard of accreditation and/or licensing of professional competencies, as applicable to the role(s)
- o) ensure that any physical contact with others is appropriate to the situation and necessary for the person's skill development
- p) refrain from intimate relations with persons over whom you have a position of authority
- q) agree to abide by the Codes
- r) maintain a duty of care towards others
- s) be impartial and accept the responsibility for all actions taken