



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Adelaide, Tuesday March 31st 2020.

Surf Life Saving Patrol Season Ends Early in SA

Surf Life Saving SA has announced that it is bringing forward the end of the volunteer beach patrol season by two weeks.

With volunteer beach patrols originally due to finish on Monday April 13th, the Board of Surf Life Saving SA (SLSSA) says that effective immediately, all patrols by volunteer surf lifesavers on South Australian beaches will be cancelled for the remainder of the season. This unique decision was made to protect the safety and welfare of volunteer surf lifesavers from potential infection by the COVID-19 virus and to discourage gatherings of more than two people on popular beaches.

In place of beach patrols by surf lifesavers, Surf Life Saving SA's Emergency Operations Group, which includes jet-skis, jet rescue boats, drones and the Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopter, will provide an extended presence, and our teams remain 24/7 rescue ready to respond to emergencies if required.

"We are proudly a member focussed organisation, and our first priority is ensuring the safety and welfare of these volunteer members. In light of Government announcements restricting public gatherings to no more than 2 people, it was clear that we were unable to continue beach patrols while at the same time implementing the necessary social distancing measures to protect surf lifesavers from the risk of COVID-19 infection," said SLSSA President, John Baker.

"We have a duty as lifesavers to protect the lives of the beach going public of South Australia. However, Surf Life Saving SA also has a duty of care to protect its volunteers. After careful consideration, and discussions with key stakeholders, we made the difficult but necessary decision to cancel the final two weeks of patrols, to ensure the safety of our members," said Mr Baker.

It is hoped the decision to withdraw patrols will also support Government attempts to reduce contact between people in order to stem the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Surf Life Saving SA CEO, Damien Marangon, said that so far this season, surf lifesavers in SA have already logged more than 70,000 volunteer patrol hours, and have performed 142 rescues across our beaches. However, with the cancellation of patrols, Mr Marangon is urging people to be safe if they do visit the beach and avoid getting into difficulty in the water.

"Our message has always been, and continues to be - stop, look & plan when swimming or recreating at the beach. We remind people to never swim alone, and if you're swimming at a beach without surf lifesavers present, exercise extreme caution, know your limitations, don't drink and swim and have a plan for if you do get into trouble.

We're aware that current social distancing requirements mean that people are more likely to undertake activities alone, but this doesn't mean that you should swim without someone else nearby. Unless going to the beach is essential, we strongly advise against swimming in the ocean," said Mr Marangon.

"With the cancellation of patrols, we're reminding people of their responsibility to look out for each other and to call Triple Zero if they see someone in distress in the water," Mr Marangon said.



John Baker stressed that although beach patrols were cancelled, SLSSA Emergency Operations Group assets and all of our clubs would remain on standby and could be called upon by other Emergency Services to provide assistance at any time if required.

“Our Emergency Operations Group and all of our Clubs will be fully ready to respond should they be required. Additionally, our jet-ski and drone operators, who are able to operate solo, meeting personal hygiene and social distancing requirements, will be proactively undertaking increased roving patrols, to provide beach coverage where possible”, said Mr Baker.

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