

Review of Council support of surf lifesaving- Executive Summary



April 2017

Executive Summary

This report supplements 'The Future of Surf Life Saving in Surf Coast Shire' strategy, and should be read in conjunction with it. The purpose of the report is to provide Councillors with clear guidance regarding Council's future support of surf lifesaving.

Surf Coast residents believe that local and state governments have a role to play in the funding of essential surf lifesaving services, including facilities, equipment and lifeguards. Council has subscribed to this belief for many years by annually contributing to professional lifeguarding services, and by sponsoring the Fairhaven clubhouse redevelopment in 2013/14.

But the introduction of the 'Fair Go Rates System' and the loss of large, non-competitive Victorian Government funding has altered the landscape, and forced Council to critically analyse its core responsibilities and budget demands.

The following recommendations are cognisant of the fact that surf lifesaving is both a legitimate sport and an emergency management activity; and the principles that Council exists to support its community and volunteers (including lifesaving clubs), whilst the State is responsible for facilities and prescribed activities on coastal Crown land (including professional lifeguarding services).

It's recommended that Council:

- 1 liaise with the Municipal Association of Victoria to convene and lead an advocacy taskforce, consisting of affected Councils and Agencies, to lobby for the State Government to recognize and assume its responsibility to adequately resource professional lifeguard services provided on coastal Crown land*

Recommendation 1 is supported by the following findings:

- DELWP are responsible for coastal Crown land (defined as land within 200m of the high tide mark)
 - Council has no responsibility or obligation regarding facilities or prescribed activities conducted on coastal Crown land (with the exception of Bells Beach Reserve)
- in a rate-capped environment, Council is challenged to adequately resource its own responsibilities, let alone those of the State and other agencies
- the State acknowledges the crucial role played by LSV in drowning prevention and delegates emergency management responsibilities (including professional lifeguarding) to them, and
- the vast majority of rescues and preventative actions relate to visitors to the municipality

- 2 *continue to support and nurture surf lifesaving, volunteers, communities, and visitors by:*
- 2.1 *agreeing that Surf Life Saving Club requests for clubhouse redevelopment support are eligible for consideration of a financial contribution by Council up to an amount that is the lesser of 5% of the total project value or \$250,000 (exclusive of GST)*
- 2.2 *encouraging Surf Life Saving Club participation in Council's annual community grants program*

Recommendation 2 is supported by the following findings:

- well designed and accessible surf lifesaving facilities are valuable community assets that can ease the pressure on Council to provide the same (particularly relevant in the high growth localities of Torquay and Jan Juc), and greatly enhance the beach experience of all visitors
- surf lifesaving is a legitimate sport and activity that promotes community health and wellbeing and strongly complements Council's responsibility to do the same
- surf lifesaving clubs are embedded in the shire's culture and enhance the municipality's reputation as the Home of Australian Surfing
- Council support of surf lifesaving is consistent with the Council Plan and the endorsed Future of Surf Life Saving in Surf Coast Shire strategy
- SLS participation rates are higher than for any other sport in the municipality, and strong population growth will only increase the demand for surf lifesaving services and facilities
- SLS clubhouse redevelopment projects score highly on Council's Community Project Assessment Matrix, and but for the question of land ownership, qualify strongly for budget consideration
- Council currently supports numerous other clubs operating on non-Council owned land (these clubs receive support when SLSCs don't, simply because Council manages the land)
- contemporary facilities are crucial to generating operational income and a trading profit, and are therefore fundamental to the financial sustainability and independence of SLS clubs (no reliance on recurrent Council support)
- SLS clubs are increasingly moving towards paid administrative positions, and contemporary facilities provide job growth both during construction, and afterwards in the hospitality field
- Council's current support of surf lifesaving is only 'average' (compared to other Councils), despite the municipality's reputation as the Home of Australian Surfing

- all Victorian Councils with a beach frontage provide some form of financial support to lifesaving clubs (capital contributions are the most common form of support), and
- large capital contributions represent 'good value' when annualised over the life of the asset and the associated benefits are taken into account