



# **MISSING NIPPER SCENARIO**

## **SEARCH & RESCUE GUIDE**

Updated 14 September 2016



## **Background**

Search and Rescue (SAR) techniques are taught by SLSA at a number of levels, including a basic technique in the SLS award – the 'bronze medallion'.

Surf Life Saving New South Wales (SLSNSW) is undertaking further research into SAR procedures with particular attention to those techniques relating specifically to SAR of submerged or missing persons in the in-shore surf environment and the current SAR methods employed by SLSA, other agencies and ILS member organisations.

Upon the National Body, Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) completing the research and review of SAR techniques at Surf Sports events, it is envisaged that recommendations will be made regarding possible techniques that could be revised and/or included by SLSA in its training awards.

SLSA currently provides two lifesaving awards, where surf lifesavers are taught the skills to conduct an in-shore or shallow water SAR as well as the operational processes required to conduct the search.

In the Bronze Medallion, surf lifesavers are taught the technique of surface dives, which is a series of "duck dives" through the surf to locate a submerged victim and or objects.

There other SLSA awards, which is the Power Craft Operator award. This award provides specific detail on SAR techniques using rescue power craft and the procedures required to conduct such SAR effort.

## **In shore / white water SAR procedures**

In Australia all SAR operations must be controlled and coordinated by the relevant SAR Authority, which as noted that in most cases will be the Water Police.

The appointed Club Safety & Emergency Management Coordinator (SEMC), formally know as the Emergency Services Coordinator (ESO) or Branch Duty Officer and/or the Authority will be responsible for instigating the commencement of the search as quickly as possible.

The Authority will be responsible for the conclusion of the search.

For SLSNSW Surf Sports events the existing technique of surface dives, which is a series of "duck dives" through the surf to locate a patient and or objects will be implemented in a controlled environment and undertaken by qualified surf lifesavers.

The in-shore/white water search will only be conducted after an appropriate risk assessment has been conducted by the SEMC or Duty Officer to evaluate and mitigate risks to SAR personnel.

All searches will be conducted in maximum depths of 3-5 metres, provided it has been confirmed safe to do so after the initial risk assessment.

Where available, search and rescue kits (dye and grid maps), will be utilised to determine current and surf movements and search area.



## **Response, Commencement and order of events**

In the event of missing/submerged persons at a Surf Life Saving Sydney (SLSS) Surf Sports event, response time is crucial. The following points outline the initial response to be initiated by the appointed SEMC or Duty Officer until such time that Water Police arrive to assist with coordination of the SAR.

**In all incidents where a search is required, the highest priority must be to focus on rapid response to commence the search.**

The following points detail SLSS SAR response before handover to the relevant Authority.

1. Where practical and safe to do so, an immediate response to commence the search can be undertaken by proficient lifesavers, who have been previously identified as part of the SAR Initial Response Team (Team of 20 pax).

Each member of the SAR Initial Response Team will wear a high visibility yellow lycra vest and fluoro cap. Rescue tubes will be made available as well. This initial response team must be supervised by a patrol team leader.

2. The incident needs to be immediately called into SurfCom, advising of the situation and requesting for a SLSS Duty Officer to attend. For example:

*'RESCUE RESCUE RESCUE, SurfCom, SurfCom this is Coogee Patrol'*

Wait for a response from SurfCom and then advise the 4Ps:

### **Position, Problem, People, Progress**

SurfCom will immediately notify the SLSS Rescue Coordinator and a Duty Officer will be sent to the location.

3. Whilst the immediate response team have commenced the Search, the remainder of the SAR Teams will gather at the search and begin preparing themselves for the Search.
4. Before embarking on a full scale SAR the SLSS Incident Controller must obtain relevant incident details including:
  - i. Background details of the incident;
  - ii. Location of missing person last seen;
  - iii. Location and time;
  - iv. Description of the person;
  - v. Direction of wind, currents and tidal movement;
  - vi. Whether the use of aids contained within the SAR kits (Grid Maps, Dye) will assist;  
and
  - vii. The Risk Assessment of the Search Area.
5. The SLSS Incident Commander will initiate the request of Emergency Services such as Police and Ambulance.
6. If appropriate the Power Craft Coordinator or IRB Captain in consultation with the

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SLSS Incident Controller will release dye into the water to assist in determining the Search Pattern and Search Area.

The Search Pattern will be determined on the day but otherwise will be as per the SLSSA Power Craft Manual and the Silver Medallion Aquatic Rescue Award.

Determine most suitable power craft (usually for SLSS events it will be an Inflatable Rescue Boats and/or Jet Ski).

7. The SLSS Incident Controller or nominee will brief all Power Craft Operators / Team Leaders and Search Personnel. After the briefing the search must commence.
8. Water safety personnel and proficient surf lifesavers will form 2 teams of 8-10 lifesavers per team.
9. Search personnel are to assemble and prepare for the search in the last known sighting of the person. This area will be marked with a single flag and anchored buoy (with beacon if available) approx. 10-15m from shore.
10. A buddy system will be in place for each team, each buddy must account for his/her partner before continuing their next dive and or progress within the surf. Each buddy must endeavour to remain no more than 1-2 metres apart.
11. At least 1 team member must enter the water with a rescue tube and swimming fins (although the swimming fins are optional).
12. Each team member must wear a high visibility yellow cap and a yellow lycra vest before entering the water.
13. Where practicable and safe to do so, the Power Craft Operator will monitor and coordinate the search teams from the shoreward side.
14. Each team will be observed by a patrol water safety team leader.
15. All search personnel will work under the direction and to report to the SLSS Incident Controller, unless advised otherwise.
16. The SLSS Incident Controller will maintain communications and report to the Authority in charge and work under their direction once they have arrived at the scene.
17. Under the direction of SLSS Incident Controller all relevant SLSSA Officials will be crowd control coordinators where the search is being undertaken.
18. Upon a successful retrieval of a patient the members of the search team, Ambulance Officers and/or the Authority will transport the patient to shore using the most appropriate method. The Incident Controller will coordinate the appropriate management and response.
19. A concise written record should be maintained during the course of the SAR by a member appointed by the SLSS Incident Controller and all Incident Report Logs to be completed.

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20. A debrief/recovery session for all search personnel involved should be held as soon as practicable after the retrieval, this is to be arranged by the SLSS Rescue Coordinator in conjunction with the Support Operations Manager.

### **FURTHER ACTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED:**

- Lifeguards / Patrol Captains to be notified.
- All water areas should be cleared ASAP by the Age Managers.
- All children should be moved to the back of the beach area in their age groups.
- Any witnesses who last sighted the patient should be taken to the SLSS Incident Controller so their details and account can be recorded.
- Parents to be identified and informed in a calm manner.