



SLSA Water Safety Procedure

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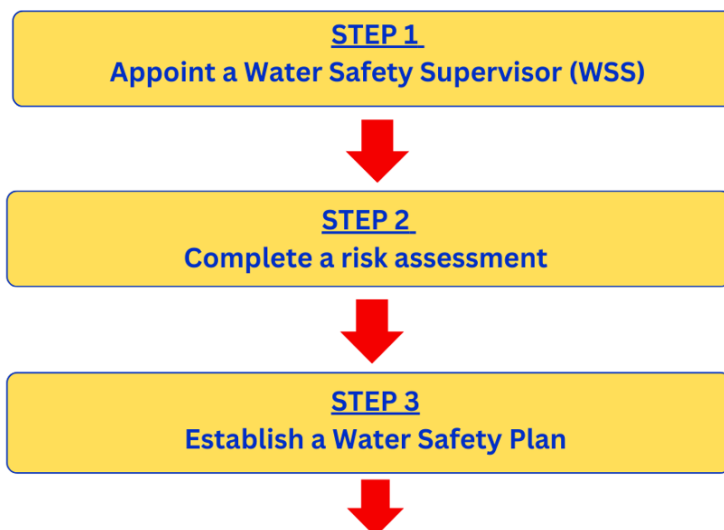
INTRODUCTION

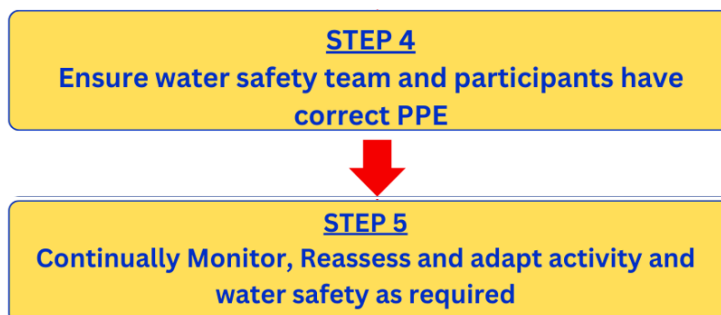
The water safety procedure outlines the requirements for the provision of water safety for aquatic activities within Surf Life Saving (SLS). These procedures have been developed using risk management principles, Work Health and Safety (WHS) legislation and regulations and many years of experience with the provision of water safety for aquatic activities.

It is essential that all members running activities within the aquatic environment have sufficient understanding of the procedure to apply it accurately, with a risk-based approach. Activity organisers have a responsibility to all participants to ensure that water safety is provided to suit the conditions.

All members must follow the SLSA Water Safety Procedure, or the State Equivalent, as a minimum when providing water safety services for members activities.

PROVIDING WATER SAFETY FOR AN ACTIVITY





STEP 1 – APPOINT A WATER SAFETY SUPERVISOR (WSS)

The water safety supervisor is the team leader for the water safety team and responsible for ensuring that the water safety plan is appropriately applied to suit the conditions, the activity and the ability of the participants.

Qualifications

- Proficient SLSA Bronze Medallion (required) AND
- Proficient Silver Medallion Patrol Captain/ Silver Medallion Beach Management (recommended)

Responsibilities

- Ensure safety of all activity participants and that the appropriate water safety plan is in place, suitable to the conditions and meeting the minimum requirements of this procedure.
- Conduct and document a pre activity risk assessment and develop a water safety plan with appropriate ratios.
- Consult with Patrol Captain/ Lifeguard on duty (if applicable)
NOTE: that the Patrol Captain/Lifeguard is the ultimate authority on the beach (notwithstanding Local and State Government requirements / Legislation).
- Always remain on the beach in the activity area, providing coordination and a point of contact for the water safety team.
- Conduct ongoing risk assessments, ensure risks are addressed as required and the water safety plan is implemented appropriately.
- Be aware at all times of the safety and welfare of those involved in the activity and act immediately if they have safety concerns.
- Manage any incidents as required.
- Supervise Water Safety Personnel (WSP):
 - Ensure WSP are qualified, proficient and are wearing the appropriate uniform.
 - Ensure that the most suitable rescue equipment is available.
 - Ensure all activity participants are briefed on the conditions likely to be encountered during the activity.
 - Request that WSP advise the WSS of their competency levels in relation to the activity and conditions and if they have any pre-existing ailments that may impact on their participation.

STEP 2 – COMPLETE A RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk assessments must be completed prior to the activity commencing and regularly throughout the activity period by the Water Safety Supervisor or an appointed delegate. Risk factors must be continually monitored and reassessed with aquatic activities and water safety supervision adjusted



as required.

To ensure a comprehensive and accurate assessment, it is highly recommended that the Surf Risk Rating (SRR), accessed through the SLSA Operations App or LIMSOC be used as the primary tool to inform your risk assessment.

All risk assessments must be recorded and kept in line with document management guidelines for a minimum of 7 years.







STEP 3 – ESTABLISH A WATER SAFETY PLAN

The water safety plan must outline how supervision will be implemented to ensure a safe environment for the duration of the aquatic activity. Refer to your Club/Branch/State for further resources to assist with your water safety plan. All water safety plans must cover, at a minimum:

- **The outcome of your risk assessment**, including consideration for the conditions, the number of participants, the ability of your participants and the activity being undertaken.
- **The make-up of your water safety team**. See below the [roles in a water safety team](#), and [minimum supervision ratios](#).
- **Briefing**: As part of the establishment of the Water Safety Plan, all personnel should be briefed with regard to conditions, resources, risk and use of personal protective equipment.
- **Rescue Equipment**. All water safety personnel must have access to SLS approved rescue equipment. First Aid kit(s) and Defibrillator(s) need to be available at all times.
- **Emergency Response Plan**. A plan must be in place in the event an incident occurs. This must include roles and responsibilities, initial response and communication channels.

STEP 4 – ENSURE WATER SAFETY TEAM AND PARTICIPANTS HAVE CORRECT PPE

Below is a summary of the uniform requirements for the water safety team and activity participants.

ROLE	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL
<p>Water Safety Supervisor</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifiable orange vest or shirt 
<p>Water Safety Personnel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A long sleeve, high-visibility (fluorescent) orange rash shirt branded with 'WATER SAFETY' on the front and back of the shirt. Shorts as a minimum  <p>OR</p> <p>FULL SURF RESCUE UNIFORM WITH CAP</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high-visibility (fluorescent) orange cap secured under the chin OR a high visibility orange peaked cap 
<p>Nipper Safety Assistant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A long sleeve, high-visibility (fluorescent) green rash shirt branded with 'NIPPER SAFETY ASSISTANT' on the front and back of the shirt. Shorts as a minimum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high-visibility (fluorescent) green cap secured under the chin OR a high visibility green peaked cap 
<p>Nipper Participant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Visibility vest as the outermost layer Coloured cap, secured under the chin. 	
<p>Member Training Participant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Visibility vest as the outermost layer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coloured cap, secured under the chin.



STEP 5 – CONTINUALLY MONITOR, REASSESS AND ADAPT ACTIVITY AND WATER SAFETY AS REQUIRED

The Water Safety Supervisor (WSS) must be on the beach, in the immediate area of the activity for the duration of the activity. The WSS must:

- Ensure the water safety plan is being implemented correctly.
- Continually reassess the risk, ensuring that all participants are safe. All risk assessments must be recorded in line with document management guidelines, it is highly recommended that the Surf Risk Rating tool is used.
- Any changes to the risk profile must be addressed appropriately.

Water Safety Team Roles and Responsibilities

Water Safety Supervisor

Refer to [Step 1: Water Safety Supervisor](#).

Water Safety Personnel (WSP)

Qualifications

- Proficient SLSA Bronze Medallion OR
- Proficient SLSA Surf Rescue Certificate

Responsibilities

- Under the direction of the Water Safety Supervisor, provide water safety for activity participants.
- Be positioned on the beach and/or in the water as directed by the WSS.
- Be responsible for water safety in the appointed area.
- At all times be aware of the safety and welfare of those involved in the activity and immediately report any concerns to the WSS.
- Ensure a suitable level of competency is maintained to perform the role of WSP.
- Advise the WSS of any concerns or limitations prior to commencing activity.

Nipper Safety Assistant (NSA)

Qualifications

- Proficient SLSA Nipper Safety Assistant
- Note that reasonable adjustments can be made by the relevant State Centre to the qualification of the NSA based on local conditions and the “as low as reasonably practicable” (ALARP) management of risk.

Responsibilities

Nipper Safety Assistants (NSA) can support water safety personnel during Nipper activities when:

- It has been deemed suitable by the Water Safety Supervisor.
- Conditions are confirmed as low risk conditions with an assessment completed in the Surf Risk Rating (SRR) tool.
- The age group is U8 or below.
- Activities are shallow water only, below the waistline of the NSA. Activity should not require the NSA to proceed past their waistline.
- NSA do not make up more than 50% of the water safety team for the Nipper Activity.



Additional resources such as onlookers may be utilised to assist in mitigating risks; however, they do not contribute to the supervision ratios.

Note that reasonable adjustments to the above can be made by the relevant State Centre based on local conditions and the ALARP management of risk.

Supervision Ratios

All ratios specified in the policy are [Water Safety Personnel: Participants] unless otherwise specified. i.e. 1:10 indicates 1 Water Safety Personnel for every 10 activity participants.

These ratios are a minimum ratio only. The Water Safety Supervisor must ensure that there is appropriate water safety supervision for the conditions on the day. More water safety may be required for some conditions.

Where water safety supervision ratios are implemented, 75% of water safety personnel must be in the water during the activity and using SLSA approved rescue equipment. Where nipper safety assistants are used, all nipper safety assistants must be in the water during the activity and must not account for more than 50% of water safety personnel.

For activities where there is a mix of activity participants, the water safety ratio for 'activity participants **who do not hold** a SRC or above' must be applied.

SURF RISK RATING	ACTIVITY PARTICIPANTS WHO <u>DO NOT HOLD</u> A SRC OR ABOVE	ACTIVITY PARTICIPANTS WHO <u>DO HOLD</u> A SRC OR ABOVE
LOW RISK 1-8	1:10 [WSP: PARTICIPANTS] 1:5 [NSA:PARTICIPANTS]	Buddy Procedure
LOW-MID RISK 9-15	1:5	Buddy Procedure
MODERATE RISK 16-20	1:5	Buddy Procedure
MODERATE-HIGH RISK 21-24	1:5	Buddy Procedure
HIGH RISK 24-27	DO NOT PROCEED	DO NOT PROCEED
EXTREME RISK 28+	DO NOT PROCEED	DO NOT PROCEED

To access the Surf Risk Rating system, or resources related to it, you will need to:

1. Complete the SLS - Surf Risk Rating module contained within the eLearning component of the SLS Members Portal
2. Download the Operations App (accessed via PC, Android Phone or Apple device) or LIMSOC to access the Risk Rating in the menu; or
3. Attain resources / training through the Silver Medallion Patrol Captain's course (as directed by the members Club or Branch).
4. It is highly recommended that all members complete a practical induction session with experienced club members on the operation of the Surf Risk Rating tool.



NOTE: SLSA highly recommends the Surf Risk Rating tool be used in assisting with completing risk assessments. This tool has been developed using research and data to consider a range of factors and allows for centralized storing of data.

To access definition for [buddy procedure](#)

To access outline for the use of [rescue equipment](#) for water safety.

Additional Considerations

Junior Preliminary Assessments:

- Minimum supervision ratio for [junior preliminary swims is a 1:5 ratio](#).

Adaptive/Inclusive Nipper Activities and Adaptive/inclusive Events:

- The recommended ratio (as a minimum) for inclusive events is a 1:1 water safety: participant.
- Notwithstanding the above, ratios of 2:1 (water safety: participant) or greater may be implemented following an assessment of participants abilities combined with a low-risk surf risk rating. This is at the discretion of the Water Safety Supervisor and must be documented accordingly.

Nipper Safety Assistants (NSAs):

- Given the level of training provided to NSAs, it is acknowledged that not all conditions will be suitable for NSAs. It is the responsibility of the water safety coordinator to ensure that NSAs can safely assist.
- Can assist in low-risk conditions and for age groups of U8 and below.
- Can assist at a maximum ratio of 1:5 (NSA: Participant)
- Can only assist in shallow water activities (below waistline of NSA)
- Must not be more than 50% of the water safety personnel.
- Note that reasonable adjustments can be made by the relevant State Centre based on local conditions and the ALARP management of risk.

Buddy Procedure

The buddy procedure is where qualified activity participants of similar experience and ability participate together in the same aquatic activity. They continuously monitor each other throughout the activity and can offer immediate assistance to their buddy if required.

The buddy procedure for water safety can be applied to SLS member training of two or more activity participants.

All activity participants must hold a proficient aquatic rescue qualification of Surf Rescue Certificate or Bronze Medallion. In larger groups, the training plan and measures in an emergency can be the same for all participants. Participants should still, however, identify a buddy (of similar skill and ability).

Prior to the commencement of the activity or training session, qualified members should identify a buddy. In a group situation where there is an uneven number, a buddy group of three can be formed.

The WSS or buddies should form an agreed training plan. This plan includes:

- Specific activities to be completed.
- Duration of the activity (start and finish time).



- Location (and destination if applicable).
- Outline measures in case of an emergency. For example: carrying a mobile phone, notifying family/a friend of your training intentions.

During the activity, each buddy pair should be able to:

- offer immediate assistance to each other if required.
- Maintain communication – advise each other should training plans or conditions change.
- If you lose sight of or contact with your buddy, alert the WSS and/or other participants and commence searching immediately.
- In the case of emergency, assist their buddy to remove them from danger (where it is safe to do so).

Rescue Equipment

Rescue equipment used for the purposes of water safety must be SLSA approved and can include:

- Lifesaving rescue equipment listed in the [SLSA Approved Gear & Equipment List](#).
- SLSA approved competition boards.

It is highly recommended that an IRB or RWC be used for water safety if conditions allow.

NOTE: Where Water Safety Personnel are using rescue equipment that requires a specific competency and award e.g. powercraft, the operator **must** be qualified and proficient in the appropriate awards.

During the activity, rescue equipment must be on the water and close to the activity participants.

Equipment	Operator	Count towards Water Safety ratio
Rescue board	1 paddler	1
Rescue Tube	1 swimmer	1
IRB	1 Driver and 1 Crew	2
RWC	1 Driver	1
	1 Driver and 1 Crew	2

Definitions

Term	Definition
Activity Participant	An activity participant is a Surf Life Saving (SLS) member.
Adaptive/Inclusive Nippers & Events	Adaptive / Inclusive Nippers and Events includes sport and recreation activities that are activities that anyone can do, regardless of the level of their ability. This includes people with a disability.
Aquatic rescue qualification:	An aquatic rescue qualification includes (but is not limited to) the Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) and Bronze Medallion (BM).
Nipper Safety Assistant (NSA)	Nipper Safety Assistants are volunteers who help with water safety for participants U8 and below in low-risk, shallow water conditions at a ratio of 1 NSA to 5 participants, ensuring they do not exceed 50% of the water safety personnel, and remain no deeper than waist deep water. (Measured on the waist of the NSA)
Risk:	Standards Australia defines risk as the effect of uncertainty on objects (AS/NZS 31000:2018 Risk management - Principles and guidelines).
Risk assessment:	Standards Australia defines a risk assessment as the overall process of risk identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation (AS/NZS 31000:2018).
Risk management	Standards Australia defines risk management as coordinated activities to direct and control an organisation regarding risk (AS/NZS 31000:2018 Risk management - Principles and guidelines).
SLS Member	For these procedures, Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) separates SLS members into two distinct categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An activity participant who does not hold an aquatic rescue qualification - Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) or above e.g. Activity participants in training for the SRC or BM and junior members under 13 years. ▪ An activity participant who does hold a proficient aquatic rescue qualification.
Surf Sports Competition	A Surf Sports Competition is when two (2) or more clubs/entities hold an event consisting of activities defined within the SLSA Surf Sport Manual.
Stillwater activity	For the purposes of these procedures, SLS considers a stillwater activity to be one conducted in a man-made aquatic environment e.g. pool. Rivers and lakes are not considered a stillwater environment.
Water safety	Water safety is the use of human resources and rescue equipment in an aquatic environment to provide a level of supervision to activity participants.
Water safety personnel (WSP)	Water Safety Personnel are qualified lifesavers (holding a SRC or BM) who provide water safety. WSP act under the leadership of the WSS and are assisted by NSA.
Water safety supervisor (WSS)	A Water Safety Supervisor is the team leader for a group of water safety personnel.