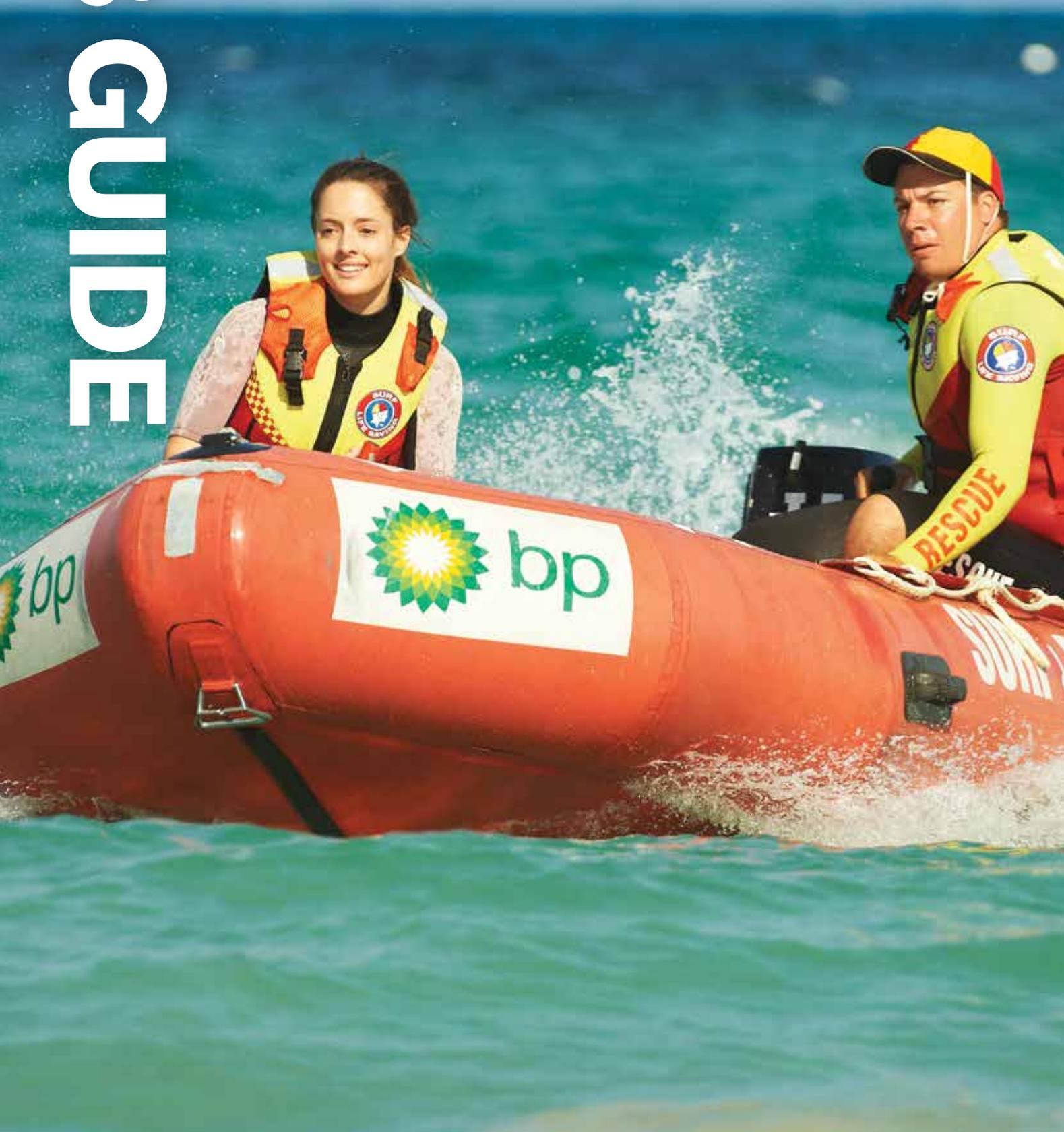


CLUB GUIDE





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SECTION 08

MEDIA OPERATIONS

8.1 MEDIA OPERATIONS

In order to ensure your club is in a position to promote itself to the wider community, and also to guarantee the right message is communicated by the right people, it is important to have a strong and ongoing relationship with the media in your local area.

Appointing a Media Officer

In order to maintain a controlled flow of information to the media, and ensure that the right people speak to the media when approached, each club should have a Media Officer. This is the person who all media enquiries to the club should be directed towards, and should also be the person who sends out media releases from the club.

In smaller clubs, this person will often be the Club President, however bigger clubs may choose to elect someone to specifically take on the role. Whoever takes on the role at each club, they must write well, be a confident speaker and be available on-call during the season to be contacted by the media. The Media Officer for each club should endeavour to develop a good relationship with their local media, as well as keeping in communication with media/communications staff at SLSWA.

Club Media Officers can at any time contact the Surf Life Saving WA Communications and Partnerships Officer for advice on media issues, and should always keep SLSWA informed of sensitive issues so as to ensure effective management of the situation.

Media Responsibilities

There are Media Officers at Club, State and National levels in the surf lifesaving movement, and each has a certain role to play in dealing with the media. In order to ensure the right person is conveying the right message, it is important all Media Officers keep to their responsibilities and don't cross into the areas of other Media Officers.

This is important not only internally, but also for the media who will know who to contact in regards to story opportunities.

Club Media Officers (or relevant spokespeople from the club, eg. Club President) should promote positive stories about the club, and also comment to the media when approached about issues of a non-threatening or non-political situation. The Club Patrol Captain can speak to the media about local incidents - but only after advising SurfCom. Clubs should not speak to the media about major incidents such as drownings and mass rescues; this should be left to the SLSWA Duty Officer or other SLSWA spokespersons as directed by SurfCom.

Clubs are not to use the media as a public forum for disputes with a member, another club, or the state and national bodies. Clubs that speak to the media are acting on behalf of Surf Life Saving, and must not bring the movement into disrepute.

When issues or news stories involve multiple clubs, SLSWA Media spokespeople should take care of these media opportunities. For instance, major carnivals within the State, announcement of State representative teams and multi-club sponsorships at a local level should be handled by the SLSWA Media spokesperson in consultation with the relevant clubs/people.

Any issue which is relevant across multiple regions within the state/country will be dealt with on a state/national level by the SLSWA Communications and Partnerships Officer or the National Communications Manager. If in doubt about any media issue please contact the SLSWA Communications and Partnerships Officer in the first instance.



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Below is a quick reference point to who should be handling media activity for various incidents and events. Incident Management will be referred to later in this section.

	Local Media Contact	Media Spokesperson	Also Contact
Club promotions, beach visitations, fundraising, sponsorship, Nippers, Open Days, Membership, etc	Club Media Officer	Club Media Officer or Club President	SLSWA Communications & Partnerships Officer (if deemed relevant or necessary)
State events, carnivals, announcements / launches, AGMs, sponsorships	SLSWA Communications & Partnerships Officer	CEO, President or Communications & Partnerships Manager	SLSWA Communications & Partnerships Manager/ CEO
Local incidents - individual/ small rescues, hazard warnings, safety messages	Club media officer, SurfCom	Club Patrol Captain	SLSWA Communications & Partnerships Officer
Major incidents – drownings, mass rescues, critical first aids and associated safety messages	SurfCom	SLSWA Duty Officer, Lifesaving Operations Coordinator, Community Safety Manager	SLSWA Communications & Partnerships Officer
Political issues, or issues/ events which are relevant across regions/State	SLSWA Communications & Partnerships Officer	SLSWA CEO or President	SLSWA Communications & Partnerships Manager

Media Contacts

It is important to develop a comprehensive media database for the areas you wish to convey your messages. In essence, this will mean contacting all media outlets in your area and recording contact details to create a media list. Be sure to speak to surrounding clubs to find out any key contacts they already have in the media. Develop relationships with as many media contacts as possible to ensure the best chance of gaining regular positive exposure.

It is important to keep your media database 'fresh', therefore all old and potentially new media contacts should be confirmed at the start of each season.

Dealing with the Media

The media can either be your friend or your worst enemy. However, if Surf Life Saving is confident in its practices both on and off the beach, there is no reason to fear negative publicity. In order to make sure the image of the movement continues to be portrayed in a positive light, it is important that media spokespeople at all levels act and react in a professional manner to all media opportunities.

Essentially, we need to be open and honest with the media, without providing information we are not able to discuss or that would be detrimental to the movement. For good examples of only giving the facts to the media and not embellishing, take note of television news stories when comment is given from police on incidents. They are more often than not straight to the point, and don't exaggerate the story nor give personal opinions.



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DO

Prepare

- Know all the facts
- Formulate a position and key messages
- Keep it simple

Be honest

Always return calls to the media

Always contact the media if you say you are going to

Keep them updated even if you don't yet have the information they want

Only give the media the facts they need to know

DO NOT

Do not bring the movement into disrepute

Do not speculate, exaggerate or give opinions

Don't comment on anything you are not authorised to speak on, instead refer them to the relevant body or spokesperson

Do not give patient's names out

Don't criticize other agencies

Presentation

Importantly, spokespeople should always be well-presented when fronting the media. You will notice that if a senior SLSA or SLSWA official appears on camera or for a press photograph, they will either be in a suit, or in an appropriate shirt with state or national branding.

Similarly, club and spokespeople should wear official club shirts when speaking about club issues, while full lifesaving attire with sponsor branding (in accordance with SLSA policy) should be worn by lifesavers speaking about lifesaving incidents.

Remember, when fronting the media for photographic or television opportunities, these are some of the few occasions the sponsors of surf lifesaving at club, state and national level get exposure which is more widespread than just on the sand. One of the main reasons the DHL partnership with SLSA has extended beyond 10 years is the media cut-through from the patrol shirt branding. Exposure in news and positive lifesaving stories increase this exposure which not only raises the profile of the movement, but also pleases current sponsors and impresses potential sponsors.

Controlling the Message

If clubs don't promote achievements like record membership, there is no positive media exposure. If spokespeople don't give opinions or exaggerate the facts, negative media exposure is negated or limited.

Even if the facts are against the movement, always just give the cold facts. For example, even if someone has drowned, the media should be told that "as soon as lifesavers became aware" that a person was in trouble, they reacted. (Remember however, that media interaction regarding major incidents should be handled by the SLSWA Communications & Partnerships Officer or Manager).

Never feel pressured to provide the information until you are ready. Simply wait until you have compiled all the relevant information until you comment to the media. Even then, if a journalist hits you with a question you are not sure of the answer to, tell them you don't have the information to accurately answer the question at this time. If they push further, let them know you will get the information for them, and make sure you always return calls.

In other instances, refer them onto the relative authority that should be able to help them. For example, if the media wants to know where a resuscitated patient was taken by ambulance refer them to St John Ambulance. Never comment about the operations of another agency.



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8.2 MEDIA RELEASES

A media release is a written communication designed to inform the media about something on which you would like them to report. It is the most common form of getting a message to the media and the wider community, and it is certainly the easiest and the best.

Preparation

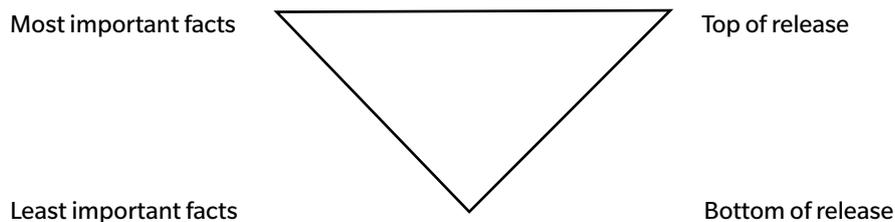
When deciding to put out a media release, put yourself in a journalist's shoes and ask yourself if you believe that what you're about to put out is newsworthy. If it's not, is there a way it can be? If it is not, then you're wasting your time and that of the journalist. As well as making a judgment about newsworthiness also think about your target audience – statewide, local, newspaper, online, television and/or radio? For instance consider if it will interest The West Australian, or Sunday Times, or is better targeted at the local papers, does it have enough visual impact for TV, or could it get a run on radio – it all depends on the subject matter and who you want to reach. If it is newsworthy, you need to clearly define what the most important key message is, and list all the other points in decreasing importance until you have all the information you want to convey. The points should also be arranged so that the release can flow logically from one point to the next without being disjointed.

Headline

Ideally the headline should five to eight words where possible, yet to-the-point and informative. The headline in a press release does not need to be witty, funny or full of alliteration; that is up to the newspaper sub-editor. The headline on a press release should be a straight up summary of what the whole release is about; eg. "Surf patrol season kicks off this Saturday".

Structure and Content

When compiling the release, use the inverted pyramid philosophy:



The most important part of your release is the opening sentence/paragraph. If you do not say something newsworthy here you are unlikely to get a journalist to read the rest of the release. Your opening paragraph should contain the who, what, when, where, why and how, with the rest of the release providing more depth;

eg "Volunteer surf lifesavers in Western Australia will mark the beginning of the 2014/15 summer season at the 'Launch of Summer Breakfast' at Cottesloe Beach this Friday." After this, you can add more depth to the opening statement with a few more sentences on the facts behind the story.

Where possible, keep your release to a page in length. Anything which is too long could be discarded. If needed, provide extra information in the form of a fact sheet, or refer them to a website where they can get more information.



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Finishing the Release

Always include contact information at the bottom of your release, so journalists can either get more information from you, or stay in contact with you in the lead-up to, or at, an event. Where possible, two contact numbers should be made available. If you are taking up almost a full page, it is often good to centre the word “ends” in the middle of the page to ensure the journalist doesn’t go looking for a non-existent next page.

Photography

Sometimes you will have an increased chance of securing print press if you are able to provide images. Sending out high-resolution photographs (at least 300 dpi) will slow down a lot of computers, however if you can include in your press release that print-quality images are available, some organisations will take you up on the offer.

Distribution and Follow Up

Once you have sent the press release via email or fax, you can follow up with a phone call to see if the media would like to do an interview or require any more information. Don’t just simply ask if they’ve received the release.

While it may seem daunting at first, as long as you’re not sending out press releases every second day, journalists and editors will get to know you very quickly and will be honest and up front as to whether they will run with a story based on your release or not. Once again, this comes back to making sure the release you are putting out is newsworthy. This decision in the first instance will ultimately determine whether or not journalists will want to follow up the release with a story.



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8.3 INCIDENT MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Positive interaction with media is important for the organisation. It is imperative however that those media enquiries are directed and handled by appropriate Club and State Officers depending on the type of enquiry. This section refers to handling media approaches/opportunities in relation to lifesaving incidents. All other approaches should be referred directly to and dealt with by Club and Media Officers.

Any media enquiry to a surf club member in relation to lifesaving-related events during the volunteer surf patrol season should be referred directly to the on-duty Patrol Captain. After patrol hours enquiries and out-of-season should be referred to the Beach Services Coordinator or the Communications & Partnerships Officer at SLSWA.

If the enquiry is of a general nature (eg patrol hours, surf conditions, bluebottles, etc), the Patrol Captain is able to handle this.

If the enquiry is about a serious incident (eg serious injury, mass rescue, drowning, etc), the Patrol Captain should direct the media to SurfCom and the SLSWA Duty Officer.

Rule of thumb:

If you are unsure as to whether or not you should answer a question or comment on to the media, always refer it to the next level. SurfCom and the SLSWA Duty Officer should always be informed. If there's any doubt, contact the Communications & Partnerships Officer or Manager at SLSWA.