



16 September 2015

This is an open letter to the members of the Port Kembla Surf Life Saving Club concerning the club's outstanding Lifesaving Service Agreement which was due to be signed by September 1, 2015. In NSW, all 129 clubs are required to have a signed Lifesaving Service Agreement in order to affiliate with Surf Life Saving and patrol the beach, enjoying the benefits that membership of the organisation brings. 127 of the 129 NSW SLSCs that enjoy membership of Surf Life Saving have signed their agreements.

It is with regret that I am compelled to write to you as the President of the Illawarra Branch of Surf Life Saving. It is extremely disappointing that the management of your club has decided to put the future of Port Kembla SLSC in jeopardy and I want to make sure all members are aware of the implications of the stance taken by your elected management.

Yesterday I asked the President of SLSNSW to convene a meeting of the State Council, which is made up of the Presidents of all 11 Branches in the state, representing 129 clubs along the NSW coast, to discuss the situation.

At the meeting I raised my concerns that the management of Port Kembla SLSC may not be representing the best interests of you, the members, and I have successfully negotiated another week (until 5pm on Thursday September 24, 2015) in which to ensure all members have the opportunity to consider the situation and voice their concerns with the club's management. The State Council was adamant that the Lifesaving Service Agreement was fair and reasonable and under no circumstances should there be any further concessions.

Over the past 18 months significant work has been undertaken by the Illawarra Branch, Wollongong City Council, our 17 clubs and Surf Life Saving NSW to implement a strategic restructuring of the lifesaving commitment that our clubs will provide to the residents and visitors in the Illawarra.

Many of our clubs have small memberships and are resource-poor but we support the ethos of Surf Life Saving - that we exist to provide a service to the public and reduce the loss of life on our beaches.

To ensure we provide a uniform service across the region and to give our community some certainty, lifesaving agreements are put in place for three years after extensive consultation is conducted with all the stakeholders and individual club capacities are taken into account.

In regard to your club, Port Kembla SLSC, the following concessions have been made in the new Lifesaving Service Agreement, which will significantly reduce the burden on the club and its members:

- For the majority of the season it has been determined that there is no need for the club to provide patrols on Saturdays.
- During the peak summer holiday period, 3 patrol members are being asked to volunteer alongside council lifeguards for 4 hours a day to protect the public on just 5 Saturdays (previously this was 11).
- Over the next 2 years, Port Kembla's total patrol hours will be reduced by 41 hours.
- Port Kembla SLSC has been given a powercraft exemption which means the club no longer needs to provide an IRB on Saturday patrols, reducing the burden significantly.

On Monday 16th June 2014, following a meeting with myself and SLSI Deputy President Peter Evert, your club resolved (as per their Minutes) to patrol Port Kembla beach during the peak summer holiday period for 4 hours per Saturday. For some unknown reason your club has decided to backflip.

You are a valued member of a club that has a long and proud tradition and your forebears over the years have made an incredible contribution to protecting the public.

What a tragedy that the club's management is willing to throw all that history and community goodwill away because of the personal views of a few who refuse to compromise and finalise the agreement, which has been negotiated in good faith by the Illawarra clubs and Branch, Wollongong City Council and SLSNSW.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the other 15 clubs in the Illawarra Branch for signing their lifesaving agreements, given the extensive consultation that has been undertaken over the past year and a half. Under no circumstances will any of these clubs be asked to provide patrols at Port Kembla Beach should your club's management continue to reject the agreement.

I urge you, if you wish to see the club, of which you are a member, remain part of the Surf Life Saving movement, that you question the decision made by the management of the club and ask that they complete the Lifesaving Service Agreement on behalf of the members.

Please contact your club urgently by email through secretary@portkembblasurfclub.com.au

Kind regards,

SURF LIFE SAVING ILLAWARRA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Val Zanotto', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Val Zanotto
President