

MEDIA RELEASE

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CHRISTMAS AND SUMMER HOLIDAY SEASON BEGINS ON THE BEACH

Far North Coast surf life savers will be back on patrol again this weekend as the Christmas and Summer holiday season gets underway. Beaches on the Far North Coast will be patrolled from Yamba right up to Fingal Head on the Queensland and NSW boarder.

Surf Life Saving NSW, in partnership with local councils, will provide safe flagged swimming areas, undertake rescues, first aid treatment and provide surf and beach safety advice, as well as provide an after hours emergency response service, during the holiday season.

Lifeguards contracted to local councils and a support operations fleet of Rescue Jet Skis, Duty Officers, Communication Centres (Surfcom) and the Ballina Jet Rescue Boat will join volunteers from Far North Coast clubs in protecting beaches from Durambah through to Yamba.

“Our lifesaving services play an important part in ensuring the northern NSW coast remains one of Australia’s top summer holiday destinations,” said **Michael Gibbs, SLSFNC Marketing and Public Relations Liaison.**

“We’re looking forward to a busy summer and the community can assist us in ensuring they enjoy our beaches in safety. Make sure that you only swim at patrolled beaches. Stay between the red and yellow flags which mark the safe swimming locations.”

“Surf lifesavers and lifeguards are there to make sure you stay safe during the festive season, but it so important that people share the responsibility by not taking silly unnecessary risks,” said Mr Gibbs.

Each beach on the Far North Coast has varying surf conditions that can sometimes be dangerous to those who are unfamiliar with a particular beach or break, and that by following some common sense rules can avert a tragedy.

Emergency Services Coordinator for the Far North Coast, Jimmy Keough, believes many incidents could be prevented if swimmers knew more about rip currents and most importantly how to avoid them in the first place.

“People should always swim at patrolled beaches, between the red and yellow flags – this is the best way to avoid a rip current, but statistics show some people are flaunting this message and drowning as a result,” said Mr Keough. Surf Life Saving is focusing on this problem by making patrol information easier to find through the website www.beachsafe.org.au and a new iPhone application.

You can survive a rip current, by knowing your best options :

- To avoid rip currents, always swim between the red and yellow flags.
- For assistance stay calm, float and raise an arm to attract attention.
- To escape a rip current, swim parallel to the beach.
- Conserve your energy; waves can assist you back to the beach.

“Surf Life Saving’s key safety message remains - **always swim between the red and yellow flags**,” said Mr Keough. To find patrolled beaches in NSW please visit www.beachsafe.org.au or download the free ‘Beachsafe’ iPhone application.

Weekend beach patrols will continue through the summer season and until the end of the Autumn school holidays next year with all clubs and lifeguards patrolling beaches from Yamba to Fingal Head. With the Tweed Coast and Byron Bay, now becoming a popular destination, and an alternative to the crowded Gold Coast beaches, this summer expects to be very busy.

“Throughout the season we get enquiries from members of the public about how to become a Surf Life Saver or a lifeguard, and we definitely are always on the lookout for new members, and now is a great time to join up. Most surf lifesavers start their training with the Bronze Medallion which enables them to patrol the Beach” Mr Keough said. If you are interested in joining simply speak to your beach patrol these holidays.

Always remember “swim between the flags” and if you require emergency assistance always call 000.

Ends.

For further information, and photo opportunity please contact ;



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