



Freshwater Nippers

HANDBOOK
Season 26-27





A huge welcome to all returning and new families joining Freshwater Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) this season!

Our mission at Freshwater SLSC is "to ensure no lives are lost while on patrol, assist members achieve their full potential and support the community". We are here to educate our Nippers to be safe, capable and confident at the beach—starting with fun and play in U6s and progressing to surf rescue skills by U14.

This season, we are focused on three key goals:

- Championing Inclusiveness with Purpose
- Building Future Generations through Surf Sport and Camaraderie
- Driving Sustainable Growth and Retention.

For those keen to improve their skills, we offer extra coaching in beach and water events. And for parents and carers, there are so many ways to get involved, we need your support!

See you on the beach!





Overview of our Club

You are a member, and this is your club!

Freshwater SLSC has a proud history stretching back over 100 years. Our club continues to be one of the most influential in developing and promoting Surfing and Surf Life Saving in Australia.

We are a member based organisation, playing an important role in the Freshwater and Northern Beaches community. We welcome members of all ages, and provide opportunities to get involved - from being a Nipper through to being a regular Patrolling volunteer. Surf Patrols are conducted by our volunteers during the Patrol season from September to April each year.

At Freshwater SLSC Nippers, our aim is to promote an interest in Surf Lifesaving activities. We teach children water safety and encourage them through fun, education, and healthy competition.

The Nipper program runs from October through to March, each Sunday morning. The focus on junior development starts with Nippers and continues on to learning skills through courses such as Surf Rescue Certificate and Bronze Medallion as the base qualifications. It is the opportunities we provide and the loyalty of our members that allows a long term approach to development ensuring the sustainability and success of the club.

FRESHWATER SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

PREMIERS OF AUSTRALIA, 1952/53

NEW SOUTH WALES PREMIERS, 1952-53 * METROPOLITAN PREMIERS, 1952-53

Our Mission:

To ensure no lives are lost while on patrol, assist members to achieve their full potential and to support the community





What is a Nipper & why join?

With over 180,000 members and 315 affiliated Surf Life Saving Clubs, Surf Life Saving Australia represents the largest volunteer movement of its kind in the world!

Nippers is an activity based program run to educate young children about surf safety and surf awareness when visiting the beach. The Nipper program also offers participants the opportunity to meet a new set of friends while being challenged in activities controlled within a safe learning environment.

Nippers is Surf Life Saving for kids aged 5 to 13. It's about fun, water safety, confidence at the beach, and learning life skills. You don't need any equipment — just your child, a Nippers cap and hi-vis vest.

Each Sunday, Nippers learn:

- How to read the surf and stay safe
- Basic first aid and rescue techniques
- Beach sprints, flags, and surf swims
- Confidence, teamwork, and resilience

It doesn't matter if your child has never been in the surf. We build skills, at their pace. Participating in lessons that will provide them with a pathway to become a qualified surf lifesaver and a junior competitor (surf sport).

As long as your Nipper has turned 5 by 30 September, you are good to join!





What does Sunday look like?

- **Arrive early:**
 - U6–U9 by 8:15am
 - U10–U14 by 9:15am
- **Check in** at your age group's flag
- **Suncream and safety gear:** Hi-vis PINK rashie/vest, age cap, water bottle
- **Activities:** Sand relays, beach flags, surf skills, fun games, and teamwork

Parents are expected to stay on the beach. Bring a coffee, and be part of the action.

What will my Nipper learn over the season?

- **U6** - Intro to beach safety, patrol flags, sun safety (Slip, Slop, Slap), group behaviour, safe vs unsafe sea creatures
- **U7** - Reinforce safety rules, Sunsmart extension (Seek), boundaries, identifying beach hazards, basic eco-awareness
- **U8** - Sunsmart (Wrap), emotional awareness, personal safety network, rips intro, rescue signals, marine awareness
- **U9** - Wave types, rip escape basics, fitness prep, eco-walks, stronger Sunsmart habits, hydration & stretching
- **U10** - Identify rips, water cycle & club sustainability, safety networks, refine Sunsmart, basic skin cancer awareness
- **U11** - Beach signage, resilience, bullying response, communication skills, renewable energy & user safety awareness
- **U12** - SLISA rights/responsibilities, climate & erosion, skin cancer detail, personal well-being & fitness planning, rip types
- **U13** - SLISA policy & ethics, climate impact, CPR and infection control, F.L.A.G.S. safety tips, human body systems

First day? No worries — here's what you need to know!

 **Arrive early** — Parking gets tight! Give yourself plenty of time, especially on sunny Sundays.

 **Come ready** — Swimmers or wetsuit on, hi-vis rash vest, age cap (with your child's name written on it), and sunscreen already applied.





How to join or renew

Registration is now open for the 2026/27 season and will close on 30 September 2026.

Membership is via the SLS Australia Members Portal

New members:

Go to https://members.sls.com.au/SLSA_MembersOnline/public/join/member-join

- **NEW members** provide a copy of their ID showing their date of birth either in person, or to admin@freshwaterslsc.com (this is a requirement of SLSA)
- This means a photo ID such as license or passport for parents / carers plus proof of date of birth for Nippers (birth certificate or passport)
- Your registration will not be finalised until payment and IDs are received for both Nippers and parents / carers.

Existing members:

Renew membership via

https://members.sls.com.au/SLSA_Online/modules/login/index.php

- One parent / carer from each family is required to join as a "General" member -- but we encourage you to join both parents where there are two!
- Payment of registration fees must be made at time of joining / renewal
- We welcome the use of Active Kids Vouchers

Membership Type	Membership Fee
Nippers (U6-U14)	First Nipper: \$130 Second Nipper: \$100 Third Nipper: \$30 Fourth+ Nipper: \$30
General Members	\$50 each





Nipper age groups

In accordance with regulations from Surf Life Saving NSW, a child must have turned 5 prior to 30 September 2026 for the upcoming season to be eligible to join.

Children are registered in their age groups according to the age of the child on 30 September. For example, if your child is 11 on 30 September, the child will be in U12s.

Carnival participation is strictly by age group.



Shop: <https://shop.freshwaterslsc.com/>

Age Group Caps - Season 26/27		
AGE GROUP	AGE AT 30 SEPTEMBER	CAP COLOUR
Under 14's & Competition	13	 Quarter
Under 13's	12	 Yellow
Under 12's	11	 Red
Under 11's	10	 Royal Blue
Under 10's	9	 Pink
Under 9's	8	 White
Under 8's	7	 Purple
Under 7's	6	 Pastel purple
Under 6's	5	 Lime Green



Uniforms and what to bring

NIPPER CAPS: Compulsory for all Nippers to wear each week and enables your Nipper to participate. Please use a sharpie to write Nipper's name on their age cap.

PINK HI-VIS RASH VEST: Hi-vis rash vests are compulsory for Nippers from U6 when entering the water. This includes even a simple wade and shallow water play. No Nippers will be allowed to enter the water without one.

DRINK BOTTLE: Water is a must and great way to wash out sand that may find its way into little eyes.

SUNSCREEN: Your child will be exposed to the sun so sunscreen application is essential.

WETSUIT: Your Nipper is welcome to wear a wetsuit, especially in the first few weekends when the water and air temperature can still be quite cool. All Nippers must wear their hi-vis vest on top of the wetsuit when the water.

GOGGLES: It is much easier to swim in the ocean if you have goggles. Please ensure your child has a pair of well fitting goggles that will withstand swimming through the waves.

ESSENTIAL ITEMS: Freshwater SLSC swimwear and accessories are available to purchase via our online store. We advise purchasing essential items such as Nipper Age Caps and hi-vis vests in the pre-season purchase period. You can then have all of your essentials on hand and ready to go for the first day. It can be very busy in the first few weeks of Nippers - and long queues! So be prepared and turn up ready to have fun! Just jump online and purchase your items - these can be collected from the office or pre-packed for pick up on Sunday mornings in the first few weeks.



Proficiencies

Swimming is an important part of the Nipper program and all surf clubs must ensure children have the appropriate swimming ability in order to participate in Nipper activities safely. The focus of Nippers is to introduce surf skills and awareness, however we are not a 'learn to swim' school.

If your Nipper is not a competent swimmer, that is okay. For U6 and U7, most of our activities are beach based.

For U8 and above, where water based activities become more extensive, Nippers who are not competent swimmers can still participate in water activities alongside their parent / carer . However, we recommend that they take regular swimming lessons as having basic swimming skills is essential for surf and beach safety. Improving swimming skills will ensure your Nipper can enjoy all Nipper activities and participate to their fullest with confidence.

Additionally, as a minimum, children must demonstrate basic levels of proficiency based on their age group prior to being able to participate in the program. Minimum requirements are stipulated by Surf Life Saving Australia to ensure the safety of all Nipper participants. Opportunities to demonstrate their proficiencies are provided prior to the season (September) and we will notify you of these dates through TeamApp and the website.

Junior Skills Assessment (pool proficiency)

Preliminary skills evaluation for U8 and above must be completed by all Nippers to participate in regular Nipper water activities. The preliminary evaluation includes:

- A front-down swim over a set distance, within a set time, relative to age group as per table followed. This must be completed in a continual sequence without a break or standing between with the exception of U8.
- A 5-second back float
- Submerging to retrieve an object from the bottom of the pool
- Tread water for a set time

If your Nipper does not pass the pool swim or competition proficiency on the first try, there will be further opportunities to pass the evaluation in the first few weeks of Nippers. It is important that they regularly practice swimming laps before attempting the evaluation again.

Competition skills evaluation is completed only by Nippers wishing to participate in inter-club Carnivals. This constitutes an open water swim of varying distances. Competition evaluation will be held at water training and in the first few weeks of nippers.

Surf Education Awards are made based on participation at a minimum number (6) of Sunday Nipper sessions and apply to all age groups.

The Preliminary Skills assessment and Competition Skills assessments are overseen by qualified bronze medallion members.

Nippers who have NOT completed the Preliminary Skills evaluation at the start of the season can still attend Sunday Nippers.

While this is not uncommon, our preference is for all Nippers to be water proficient.

Non proficient Nippers will need a parent, carer or dedicated Water Safety representative in order to participate in all water activities until such time the evaluation requirements are met.

Parents should come prepared to enter the water if their Nipper has not passed the evaluation.



Proficiencies

Just remember, it can be a big leap for some nippers to go from 1x swimming lesson a week in a 15m pool, to achieving the below. If your Nipper is not a strong swimmer, we recommend regular swimming lessons, or time in the pool with a carer, and practicing to swim the distance needed confidently. It's a good idea to go to a local pool and complete the test below to see where your Nipper is at. Let's set them up for success!

Age Group	Junior Skills Assessment (pool proficiency) Preliminary Requirement	Competition Requirement	Surf Award
U8	• 25m swim (no time limit) • Followed by swim underwater 2 meters • Front or back float 15 seconds • Submerge to touch bottom with hands	N/A	Surf Aware 1
U9	• 200m pool swim (continuous) in < 6 mins 30 secs • Front to back float 5 secs each side • Submerge to touch bottom with hands • Tread water for minimum 1 minute	Min 150m open water swim	Surf Aware 2
U10	• 200m pool swim (continuous) in < 6 mins 30 secs • Front to back float 5 secs each side • Submerge to touch bottom with hands • Tread water for minimum 1 minute	Min 200m open water swim	Surf Safe 1
U11	• 200m pool swim (continuous) in < 5 mins 30 secs • Front to back float 5 seconds each side • Submerge to touch bottom with hand • Tread water for minimum 2 minute	Min 200m open water swim	Surf Safe 2
U12	• 200m pool swim (continuous) in under < 5 mins • Front to back float 5 seconds each side • Submerge to perform forward or backward role (summersault) and then back down to touch bottom with hand • Tread water for minimum 3 minute	Min 200m open water swim	Surf Smart 1
U13	• 200m pool swim (continuous) in under < 5 mins • Front to back float 5 seconds each side • Submerge to perform forward or backward role (summersault) and then back down to touch bottom with hand • Tread water for minimum 3 minute	Min 200m open water swim	Surf Smart 2
U14	• N/A - SRC • If not SRCs, default to U13s.	Min 200m open water swim	Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC)



Parent & carer involvement

- We need your help — and we'd love you to join in! Our Nippers program is 100% volunteer-run, and it thrives on the energy, enthusiasm, and support of parents and carers.
- As part of registration, it is a requirement that at least one parent or guardian must also join the club, and it is essential that one adult is present on the beach during each session. You cannot just drop and go, for the safety of the children.
- Active parent involvement is what keeps the program both fun and safe. The more hands we have, the better the experience for our Nippers, and families. Whether you're keen to help weekly or just now and then, there's a role for everyone. For those participating in competition, it is a requirement to have at least one adult member have a volunteer role.
- No surf experience? No problem! Just bring your sunblock and a good attitude, we'll provide the training and guidance. Getting wet and joining in with your child not only supports the program, but makes it more enjoyable for both, or all of you.
- Many caregivers even go on to become Patrolling Members or gain skills like First Aid, IRB crew/driver, or Advanced Resuscitation. It's a great way to give back, stay active, and be part of a vibrant community.
- Want to know more? Speak to your Age Manager or contact a committee member — we'd love to get you involved!



Inclusion, support & education

- Every child is welcome at Freshie. If your child has additional needs or would benefit from extra support, we're here to help. We're also working toward establishing a formal inclusion program and welcome all ideas, conversations, and volunteers.
- Let us know how we can make your family's Nippers experience the best it can be.

Please see details below on who to contact to find out more information on our Education program.

Role	Requirement	Job Description	Contact Name
Age Manager / Assistant	Working With Children Check, 2x online modules	Run an age group for Sunday morning Nippers, delivering the prescribed SLS curriculum and teaching beach safety	Age-coordinator@freshwaterslsc.com
Official	Working With Children Check, online module, face to face session	Officiate for Freshwater at carnivals and Club Champs	Carnivals@freshwaterslsc.com
Water Safety (Bronze Medallion)	Approx 6 week course Working With Children Check	Water safety	Junior-Education@freshwaterslsc.com



Communication



Step 1: Join the Freshie Nippers Community group on What's App (QR code) so you are up to date with all Club wide activities.

Step 2: Request to be part of any other groups within the Community ie your nipper's age group (to receive direct communication from your Age Managers), training groups, carnival groups etc

Step 3: Wait patiently while the admins approve

Step 4: Make sure you allow notifications so you are up to date with all communications

Social Media: Freshwater SLSC Facebook pages:
facebook.com/groups/FreshwaterNippers
facebook.com/freshwaterslsc
Instagram: @freshwater_slsc





Key dates 26/27 Season

5 September - Nipper Open Day

30 September - Registration closing date

11 October - Under 6 ONLY Orientation (8.30-9.30am)

18 October - First Day of Nippers

22 November - Freshwater Bennett Board Carnival

12 December - Twilight Nippers & Xmas Party

Dates Subject to Change

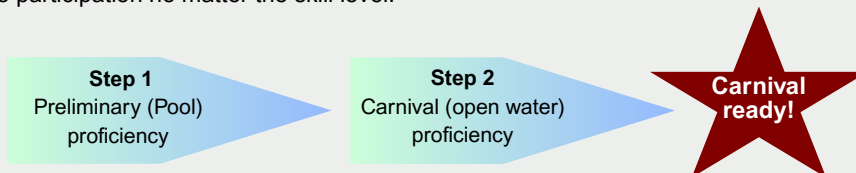
**Refer to announcements made via the Nippers Community in
WhatsApp for full details.**





Carnivals

- Competing at Junior Lifesaving Carnivals is a wonderful way to expand your nipper's experience. They are competitive but promote participation, friendship and teamwork.
- Carnivals are open to Nippers in U9's and above.
- Northern Beaches offer one special carnival just for U8 Nippers.
- Northern Beaches branch offers many carnivals for our nippers to try out and enjoy.
- Carnivals are typically on Sunday mornings and held at one of the local beaches.
- Some are water events based and some land events based and some offer both!
- In order to participate, Nippers need to pass both the preliminary and carnival proficiency - but beyond that we welcome participation no matter the skill level.



- We do strongly recommend that Nippers attend some beach or surf training sessions before they attend their first carnival - this gives them some knowledge and confidence of what to expect at the carnival and allows them to get to know the coaches and their teammates.
- If you are interested, there is a one-off fee per season to cover all carnivals for the season (the full cost is subsidised by the Club).
- For Nippers new to competing at carnivals, we will provide free carnival entry for a trial period up to (and including the Freshwater Nipper Carnival in November).
- All competing Nippers will need to purchase a Freshwater Quarter cap and obtain a free Red Live Heats wrist band from the Carnival Coordinator.
- Toward the end of the season, the major carnivals roll around being:
 - Branch Championships for both land and water (separately)
 - NSW State Age Championships
 - Youth Australian Championships (u13 and above) on the Gold Coast.
- Note the DRAFT calendar of carnivals set by the Northern Beaches branch can be found at <https://www.surflifesaving.net.au/surf-sports/calendar/>



Club championships

- Over one or two normal Nipper Sunday, we will run a "Club Championship" carnival.
- Every nipper (in U8-U14's) has a chance to compete in Beach, Surf and Iron Person events within their age groups.
- Club Champs are held at Freshie beach and mimic carnival conditions so all of our nippers can get a taste of what a nipper carnival might be like and also test the skills they have learned throughout the season.
- These are fun events where the focus is on participation and cheering on your nipper mates.
- Points are accumulated and tallied over the club championship rounds and we then award our winners at our presentation day at the end of season.
- To be awarded an Overall Club Champ award, all nippers must:
 - compete in each discipline relevant to their age group
 - be proficient
 - regularly attend Sunday nippers and/or carnivals (minimum 6 over the season)



Extra training sessions

- Training sessions are on offer throughout the season for proficient U9-14 nippers.
- Training is broken down into Surf and Beach sessions and usually occurs in the afternoons on weekdays and also Saturday morning.
- Training this season is set to kick-off from mid October.
- WhatsApps Community sub group "Training (Land Water)" will outline specific training sessions as they are confirmed for the coming season.
- Sessions are run by experienced coaches and are aimed at preparing nippers for competition at carnivals.
- Our coaches are typically ex-Nippers who understand the challenges and are great at motivating the kids to improve.
- We welcome all nippers to trial a few sessions before committing to the sessions for the whole season which does involve an extra flat fee of approx. \$125.00. This is payable either on registration, or during the first few months of the season.
- Come along and try a few sessions for free!
- For more information contact the Junior Sports Manager at sportsmanager@freshwaterslsc.com



Board hire

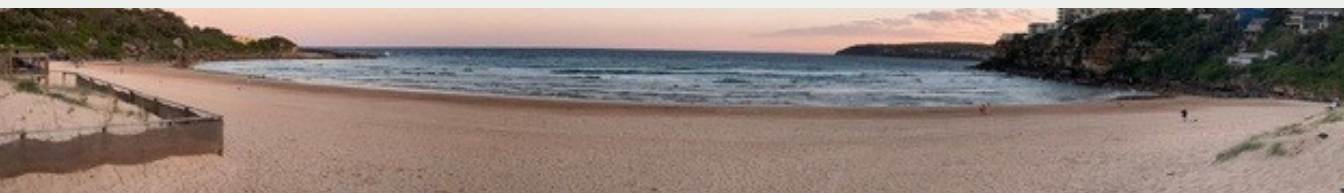
- If your nipper intends to train and compete in water events, we have foam boards (U9,U10), fibreglass boards (U11-U13) and racing mals (U14) available for hire and subject to availability.
- Cost per season:
 - Nipper Foamie (U9/U10's): \$125
 - Nipper Glass (U11-U13's): \$250
 - Nipper Mal (subject to availability): \$250
- As part of the agreement in hiring one of our boards, the expectation is that your Nipper will attend surf training and compete for Freshie at water based surf carnivals.
- If you are interested in hiring a board:
 - Complete the board hire agreement document located on our website
 - Make a payment through the SLSC portal
 - Forward a copy of your payment receipt and board hire agreement to our Board Coordinator at boards@freshwaterslsc.com
 - Our Board Coordinator will then be in touch regarding a suitable pick up time for your board from the club





Junior Activities Committee

Position	Contact
Chairperson	nipperschairperson@freshwaterslsc.com
Vice Chairperson	deputy@freshwaterslsc.com
Secretary	nippers@freshwaterslsc.com
Sports Manager	sportsmanager@freshwaterslsc.com
Sports Coordinators	sports-coordinator@freshwaterslsc.com
Water Safety Superintendent	water-safety@freshwaterslsc.com
Sunday Activities	junior-activities@freshwaterslsc.com
Boards Coordinator	boards@freshwaterslsc.com
Age Manager Coordinator	age-coordinator@freshwaterslsc.com
Carnival Coordinator	carnivals@freshwaterslsc.com
Education & Coordinator	junior-education@freshwaterslsc.com
Social Coordinator	junior-socials@freshwaterslsc.com
Social Media Coordinator	
Child Safety Awareness	childsafety@freshwaterslsc.com
Uniform Shop Coordinator	uniforms@freshwaterslsc.com





SEE YOU AT THE
BEACH!