



Welcome and Introduction

Welcome Life Members, active, associate, and junior surf members; Board colleagues, Committee Members, sponsors, friends, and supporters of the Whangamata Surf Lifesaving Club to our 75th Annual AGM. Thankfully, mother nature was kind to us this season, enabling all of our core program and club events to happen largely as normal.

Like I suspect many of you, I am feeling the big gap at the end of the table. I'd like to thank all those members and friends of the club who turned out to honour and farewell Richard last year. The Memorial Hall was packed to the rafters; the surf-boat guncarriage and the club-Haka were very special. The Club thanks clubbie, Dr Ben Jansen for the gift of the club-Haka he developed, which we will look to incorporate in significant club events.

I would also like to welcome a new face at the table. As many of you know our inaugural Club Manager, Andrea Paynter left last year to explore new opportunities and challenges. Filling those big shoes is Dianna (Dide) Harrison our new Club Manager. Dide joined the Club in November 2023 and has certainly had to hit the ground running over the peak. Dide is already making a significant contribution to the Club – most recently ensuring our connection with Beach Hop remains strong and growing (I think it's because her husband William rides a Harley!) and arranging for the evacuation of the Club for our renovations to begin. I have asked Dide to quickly introduce herself.

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Thanks, Dide, great to have you on board. I'd also like to call out Rachel Scott, our Club Administrator who worked tirelessly to ensure that nothing fell between the cracks as we brought Dide on board. Thanks Rachel.

Finally, in terms of faces up the front, our wonderful Club Captain, Matt Millward has very recently moved across the ditch and can't be with us today. Matt has also stood down as Club Captain. More about Matt and his successor later in the meeting. Brianna Norris, the Chair of our Lifeguard Committee will be presenting Matt's report outlining the achievements of our people across the Club. Lisa Marvin, the club Finance Director, will then take us through how the Club's finances fared over the last year.

I will then share some additional reflections on the season gone and provide a look forward into 2024-2025 and beyond. Over to you Brianna.

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The 2023/2024 Season

Thanks Matt/Brianna and Lisa and to all those individuals and teams called out in your reports. Also, a big thanks to you both for your significant personal contribution to the season and the Club.

As you have heard the Club remains in good heart and in a healthy financial position.

A couple of reflections and highlights from me on 2022/2023.

Lifeguarding:

The key numbers are worth repeating again, nearly 5,800 patrol hours; 47 rescues; 2 searches; 36 people assisted to safety; 10 major first aid incidents. On certain days/times over summer, SLSNZ data indicated that Whangamatā was the busiest beach in the country.

Many of you would have known that Matt Millward was the regional lifeguard supervisor for the Bay of Plenty over this summer (as well as doing volunteer patrols at Whangamatā). While this generated some useful tips for our team, it was also clear to him that we continue to run one of the most professional life-guard services in the Eastern Region (both paid and volunteer). You may recall that this was also recognised by various emergency services teams over the 22/23 season.

While conditions were not as dangerous and dramatic as the 22/23 season, our beach still managed to throw some challenges to our life-guard teams. Apart from some extremely hot and very busy days, the gift from last summer's storms seemed to be a sandbar that created a nasty shore-break as the tide went out. This created some challenging first -aid responses as Matt mentioned. Two of these were spinal injuries that required helicopter transfer to Middlemore's spinal unit. Thankfully, both patients suffered no permanent damage to their spinal cords. Through the family of the injured male swimmer (and our own contacts) we heard that the Middlemore spinal unit specialists had indicated that the immobilisation/treatment from our guards at the shoreline was the reason that this man will still walk. The consequences of this highly professional first response on him and his family were, in simple terms, life saving.

The quality of our lifeguarding activities is due in large part by the efforts of our Lifeguard Committee in terms of equipment levels; professionalism; and member development team – while maintaining a fun; inclusive culture. The Patrol Team roster system worked well – with people being accountable for their commitments and finding replacements if they had a clash. The Surf Sport Patrols; patrol exchanges with other Coromandel beaches; Fossil patrol and Wāhine Weekend all added to good patrol numbers throughout the season. The steady increase in local Whangamatā recruits – both young volunteers and for our SAR squad is great to see. Thanks, Bre and team.

Lifesaving Sport:

As Matt's report mentioned, another year of stellar outcomes achieved by our athletes/teams this season – massively supported by coaches/team managers and parents. It is worth contextualising our 7th overall place at Nationals – out of 48 competing clubs. This medal result was just behind the largest Lifesaving sport clubs in the country and ahead of clubs like Piha, Titahi Bay, Orewa, Fitzroy, New Brighton, St Clair and Muriwai – many of which train 12 months a year. A number of these athletes will be recognised tonight at the Club awards. The spirit and tenacity of this team (many of whom were part of the team that came 3rd at Oceans a few years ago) is nothing short of inspirational, particularly in view of the coach changes and athlete movements over the last few years. They are a great presence over summer around the club – always smiling and full of energy - both before and after every training session!

The Club also hosted 3 major regional Lifesaving Sport events, with our committee and supporters assisting with event set-up and providing sustenance by way of a very popular breakfast BBQ and coffee stall. I've received a number of comments from other Clubs about

our amazing hospitality and commitment to these events. The inaugural Sport Ball last year was also a great success, funding a new trailer and other equipment. Great work Nova, Sarah, and the rest of the lifesaving sport team.

Junior Surf:

Our most visible and in some ways important program - being the starting point for generating athletes and lifeguards of the future. Not to mention bringing in many highly engaged parents who put their hands-up for many things around the Club.

This is an incredibly busy space, so a big thanks to the Committee and coaching team for pulling this together for nearly 200 participants; and also, to the wider club membership, supporters (particularly the Lifesaving Sport gang) for assisting with the Coromandel Cup. (Which we won again!). Great initiative this year from the Committee to have a Junior surf parent morning tea, to talk about the different areas of the club and have a look around. Thanks Shelley and Rachel.

..... Looking Forward

As we head into our 75th Anniversary year, we also to continue to look out to the future in terms of both our people, physical assets; what we do and how we do it.

While supporting Committees/volunteers to run our programs every summer remains the Board's core focus, we also work hard to identify (and take small steps to solve) some of the longer term opportunities and challenges for the Club and the wider surf lifesaving movement. A couple of updates/observations on a few key topics and themes.

Our Club Facilities - Project Transform

As you would have seen in the recent newsletter there is some positive news here.

On Thursday 14th March we executed a fixed price contract for the primary renovations and extensions planned for the club buildings. The successful tenderer is Livingstone Building Ltd, a well-known and well-regarded Waikato and Bay of Plenty commercial construction firm. Livingstone appreciate that this project is both high visibility and a core piece of community infrastructure. They will be utilising local sub-contractors where we can.

Works will commence immediately after Easter and the Club will not be accessible so as to allow the builders to expedite the works, with a target completion date well before our main Christmas patrol obligations.

I look forward to seeing many of you over the next few days as we pack-up and clean-up. Our operational Committees have been part of our evacuation plans, and we are ensuring that equipment will be available for some off-season training activities and for the start of our patrol season. Our SAR squad will be operating from facilities arranged by the team members, and our administrative staff will work out of offices above Boot IT (near New World).

As Lisa reported, we hold adequate funds to meet our contractual commitments. These funds have been provided by individual donors, SLSNZ, the Lotteries Commission and a \$100,000 contribution from Club savings. SLSNZ has provided us with over \$1 million representing some 50% of their total 24/25 Crown funded capital pool available to all clubs. This cornerstone funding commitment is a reflection of the operationally focussed scope of our plans, and the regional and national profile of the Club.

Unfortunately, the support from Lotteries was well short of our expectations, a result of a nearly 50% reduction in the Lotteries Facilities Fund allocation.

There are, however, a number of additional variations we would like to complete during the project, for which further funding (circa \$300,000) continues to be sought so this work can be done as part of the core renovations and remediations. These include:

- Installation of new larger skylights to significantly improve the natural lighting on the first floor.
- Replace, upgrade, and modernize the 1st floor toilets, kitchen, and bar areas to provide the ambiance and functionality provided by the main renovations.
- Improve ventilation and heating throughout both floors, with specific focus on the downstairs toilet and changing room areas.
- Install new outdoor showers for club members.
- Carryout ground stabilisation in front of the extended gear shed that is used extensively as a turnaround point for patrol vehicles.
- Modernise the appearance of our extended tower/mezzanine area.

This “Stage 2” component of the Project will be critical for delivering a number on the wider member experience features of the Project and ensuring that the new spaces we are developing are modern and fit for purpose. We are relatively confident of securing additional institutional funding, but as noted in the recent club newsletter (and channelling the spirit of Richard Scelly QSM), this is the time for members and friends of the Club to help get us over the finish line in the way we want. A huge thanks to all who have supported us generously to this point.

For those who want to understand more about Project Transform there is an information session following the AGM. Just a warning if someone mentions restaurants and Australian surf-clubs I will quietly scream!

A big call out to Club life member/director Bryan Black Bryan who is managing this project for the Club. Without his drive and tenacity, we wouldn't be in this position, which in terms of lifesaving club re-builds, has moved at the speed of light. Bryan has pulled together as needed a great team of construction, design, materials supply, funding, and project management experts to assist him and the Club on various aspects of the project. Many are long-standing friends and supporters of the Club who are providing their time and energy (and in some cases significant materials) on a voluntary or significantly discounted basis. A special call out to our primary architect, long-time friend and supporter of the Club, Bruce Scott, who has borne the brunt of steering this project through the maze that is the TCDC consent process.

I have had the pleasure of working along-side Bryan and the team on this project as the primary Board liaison and can assure you that strong project and financial governance processes are in place. In addition to seeing first-hand the “Black” approach to project oversight, I have had a master class in how to squeeze contractors and suppliers for support! Thanks Bryan on behalf of the Club and the Board.

Our People and how we do things.

We are a volunteer led organisation, and largely deliver our services through volunteers.

We do it because the purpose is clear; the contribution immediate and tangible; we (and our children) learn a range of amazing skills (both hard and soft) and we enjoy the company of others who join us on the journey.

This Club/movement builds great people. Day-after-day I see this in action around the Club and from what I see our people go on and do. Many of the observations above are testament to the quality of our people. Other organisations rate our people highly. In my experience, a member of this Club always seems to get noticed/secure an interview as they start their higher education and/or career journey. Every longer-term member of the Club I have spoken to over my decade or so knows all of this, and that is why they stay part of the organisation.

We will be using our 75th Anniversary year to celebrate this and the Board is looking for members from all stages of our history to come together to help us put a range of activities together next year as part of opening our re-freshed Club facilities. A first step will be to identify representatives from each “decade” to own engagement with that cohort of members, so we can include them and their unique stories. Watch out for more on this.

While we grow great people, our home in what is a small semi-rural seaside town for most of the year, and the age-profile and geographical spread of our member base, means that our active volunteers are constantly moving through the Club. I have got used to this and worry less, and this year is no exception with a cohort of senior lifeguards moving on with their life and some amazing younger members step up to the mark. That said, we seem to be getting better at keeping our mid-20s and adult members engaged, having them move into various Committee roles and continue to patrol. Retention, recruitment, succession (and avoiding burn-out) are perennial challenges for the Club and the organisation as a whole. We seem to have a good model (or maybe it is simply the people involved), and we will continue to look for ways to engage all members, their wider families and the community to be “in it for life”. Some great thinking came out of our engagement day earlier this year – with a clear message that we need to mix the serious stuff we do, with the social, fun stuff! As part of that day, over 30 engaged members endorsed our core strategic and value pillars (put together by a hard-working Board a few years back) – and explored how we could embed these aims and values more widely with the membership. Copies of a proposed re-fresh of our core objectives have been scattered on your seats, with work still in progress on a refreshed presentation of our Whangafam# values.

These statements of “who we are” will be slowly rolled-out this year.

In conjunction with this, the Board and club management will be working with our Committees and membership to re-shape/re-fresh some of our core process and policy documentation – and also put in place a more centralised electronic repository of such documents. This has been on the Board’s agenda for a few years now (and I’m claiming a COVID and building project excuse), but I’m sure our new spaces will energise us to freshen up these “ways of working” artefacts. I’m looking at Nathan Hight to hold our toes to the fire on this one!!!

One thing we have done is to make our Club award process more transparent, consistent, and aligned with the SLSNZ process (so it is easier to nominate for regional and national awards). Matt led this project with the Committee chairs and a number of senior Club members. The first stage of this activity was focussed on lifesaving sport and lifeguarding recognition, the next phase will focus on service awards – where we have some historical recognition and catching-up to do.

Our Community

In terms of volunteer recruitment/supporting our core services (whether via funding; collaborative activities, etc), we are continuing to work closely with the local community, and leveraging Dide’s strong sport and community administration background and the members of

our Club that call Whangamatā home. Taking some time to meet local stakeholders as part of on-boarding Dide was humbling in a sense of the incredibly positive community support of the Club. Apart from the respect of what we do on the beach, our recent support of the Xmas parade fair, etc has been noticed and appreciated.

In addition to this local focus, we are actively engaging with a large Auckland club to create some form of alliance around lifesaving and life-saving sport, with the objective of supporting our shoulder patrol activities and giving our athletes more opportunities to learn from/compete with others.

Finally, I wanted to mention that the Club has been funding a portion of our paid guard program for a number of years (based on our assessment of need) due to the static nature of the funding model in place between SLSNZ and the Waikato Regional Council (WRC). This is not sustainable and Coromandel club chairs are working with SLSNZ to engage WRC in funding discussions – with a focus on current Annual and Long-Term plan processes. This may attract some publicity.

Thanks

These reports simply can't cover everything people have done across the Club or identify all the individuals engaged. Put simply, nothing would happen without our membership/club community giving their time and energy across all facets of the Club some paid; mostly voluntary.

So, again, thanks to my fellow Board members; Committee members; Life members; associate members; active members; the SAR call out squad; coaches; parent helpers; gear stewards and fixers; uniform shop staff; bar managers; pizza makers; sausage sizzlers; sport officials; instructors; examiners; mentors; handymen; sponsors; donators; friends and supporters for another great year.

I also want to particularly mention our sponsors, some of whom have been supporters of the club for many years such as Whangamata Real Estate, Manco, Trust Waikato, GJ Garner; Sunnys; NZCT; Golden Homes and Lion. All our sponsors are detailed on the side of the surf club and on the boards in the annexe and main clubrooms.

Looking forward to next summer already. See you on the beach.

Gavin Scott

Club President

Whangamata Surf Lifesaving Club Inc.