

Whangamatā Surf Lifesaving Inc.

President's Introduction(s) - Report – 2025/26 Season

Welcome

Welcome Life Members, active, associate, and junior surf members; Board colleagues, Committee Members, sponsors, friends and supporters of the Whangamatā Surf Lifesaving Club to our 2025/2026 AGM.

..... **[Apologies/previous minutes, etc/appointment of officers and committees/Club Officer Reports]**

Club Captain's Report

To get us focussed on the activities over the season that are closest to our purpose (and hearts), I've asked Grace to kick us off with the Club Captain's report for 2025/26. I will then present the finance report and my report.

President's Report (including the Finance Report)

Thanks Grace and to all those individuals and teams called out in your report. Also, a big thanks to you for your significant personal contribution to the season and the Club. In particular, putting in place the new Club Service award structure.

This is my last AGM as President – nearly a decade on the Board/nearly 9 years as President. Its been an honour and a privilege to be a custodian of this special organisation. Today is all about looking to the future – and providing a few reflections for my last captive audience (and some potentially lame metaphors!).

A few key highlights of the 25/26 year:

- Our new clubhouse is complete. Last year we had no home for our AGM, now we are sitting in a completely renovated/re-furnished clubhouse. As they say it's been a journey, with total project costs coming in at around \$4 million, for a facility recently valued for insurance purposes at around \$7million. More on Project Transform later.
- Key membership statistics.
 - Associate members – 491
 - Active Lifeguards – 79
 - Juniors – 198
 - Total members = 768
- Today we have put in place a refreshed leadership group for the Club; a terrific mix of new and old heads. An exciting new-phase for the Club and its membership, and fantastic to see a strong local community presence across all of our Club leadership groups.

Observations on the 25/26 season

Without repeating too much of what Grace has already covered in her Club Captain report, I just wanted to highlight a few things from me about the 25/26 year and lifeguarding season.

- Volunteer patrols – This service was largely delivered by a core team of patrol captains and local active members. It was a tougher year than expected pulling patrols together on the shoulders (due largely to changes in the number/age/experience profile of our lifeguards), but the lifeguard leadership team and our wider group of active members stepped up.

- Our SAR squad has been a key contributor to our lifeguard efforts this year (both in terms of call-outs and supporting volunteer patrols). This is a highly capable group of local members built over the last few years by the leadership of that group. A real success story.
- Our sport program continues to be strong, with a talented junior group giving a solid Oceans performance and our small, but highly talented, senior team again finishing in the Top 10 at Nationals. A number of our athletes are also living and competing in Australia. While we are sad to see less of them, it's great to see our people excelling more widely. Big thanks to our coach Moritz and our Sport Committee members/parent helpers.
- We are also back competing in IRB Racing, with Paul Philips managing and supporting this group of members. Thanks also to Steve Pipe and a number of other highly-committed members, for continuing our proud legacy of surf-boat racing. We also had former Club crews/members competing for other clubs (due to changes in where they live and work, etc) and continuing to succeed.
- From a Club Board perspective the year has been all about getting the "Build" done – a (blessing and curse) – I will touch on this more later.
- SLSNZ is currently undertaking a Club Service Model Review. Consultation is underway and a "hybrid" preference is emerging as a preference. This could involve some administration/co-ordination activities relating to volunteer roles (training/recruitment, etc) being centralised (regional/national) providing a better use of the national resources (and optimising club resources); while retaining individual club support (thanks for comments from our Committees).
- We received funding from SLSNZ to pilot a South beach camera – a trial will commence in the 26/27 season.

Club Finance's – 24/25 Annual Statements

Firstly, I just want to acknowledge Lisa Marvin who has served the Club for more than 10 years in various capacities – as a long-time Board member/ finance director and as the chair of the junior surf Committee for many years (constantly improving/expanding our offering). Lisa stepped down from the Board in October 2025, with myself and other Board members assisting the Club Manager with finance matters until today's appointment of a new Finance Director.

In summary, the Club's 24/25 financial statements reflect an organisation with a large project in progress.

In terms of Club operations/performance, the absence of a building impacted/limited club accommodation and bar revenues with donation income also being largely directed towards the Transform project (putting pressure on the limited un-tagged operational funding the Club receives). However, revenue (including lifeguarding related Crown funding) and expense profiles were otherwise relatively normal (NB: The SLSNZ regional guard funding which cycled through the Club has been removed as regional guards are now paid direct by SLSNZ). While the Club makes an accounting loss, largely due to depreciation (albeit its assets are generally funded by grants/donations) the Club generates a cash surplus. The Club supports core programs from its self-generated (not Crown/SLSNZ funding) with circa \$50-60k a year, which includes a paid guard contribution (for non-SLSNZ funded peak lifeguarding activities that the Club considers are necessary) and sport/junior surf coaching.

The balance sheet as at 30 June, 2025 reflects strong cash balances (Transform influenced) as well as around \$300k of cash reserves. A strong position built over many years.

...in terms of 30 June 2026 – the Club statements will reflect the Project Transform build being completed.

Project Transform has cost the Club around \$3.6m (core build and operational fit-out); with a \$4 million total project cost. This reflected around \$500k additional costs on the build than we projected this time last year. Final building related payments were paid in Feb/early March. Based on a recent insurance valuation the Club facilities have been valued at nearly \$7mill.

Funding additional build costs over this period was provided via some additional donations from very generous long-term supporters of the club (recognised in the foyer); additional use of club reserves; allocation of our operational surplus over the 25/26 summer and the Club putting in place some \$250k of debt with long-time Club supporters. Servicing and re-paying this debt over the next few years is expected to be covered by Club operational surpluses – which will need to be tightly managed/discretionary costs constrained (as well as being supplemented by new income streams). However, we are very hopeful of some support from SLSNZ re clearing this debt, which will enable the Club to do some of the final fit-out/finishing associated with the build.

This means that the Club's cash position for this off-season will be relatively tight (albeit this is a low spend part of the year), but manageable. Cash flows will be assisted by increased revenues from facility use and slightly better revenue generation over this summer than expected. Club cash reserves sit at about \$100k and should remain at that level heading into Spring when our core funding starts to pick up (subscriptions; SLSNZ; grants; facility use; bar operations, etc). The Board has been focused early this year on identifying additional income streams – facility use (subject to operational priorities); new sponsors; advertising, etc. There is some work underway.

Reflections on my term as Club President

- Like our beach/islands, as with the Club, some things are constant (our purpose; the need to adapt), but the tides come in and out. For the Club, our tide is the ebb and flow of new lifeguards and member. Our active lifeguard demography largely sits in the 15-23 year old cohorts. In my time I have seen 3 (amazing) Club Captains, along with multiple age-group cohorts (who are also firm friends) come, grow and move on. That said, we also have many “rocks” that always remain in place, being our senior lifeguard members and associates, particularly those with strong community connections/local residents. Managing through these tides, means the swell occasionally knocks you off your feet; you get caught in a rip; and it can be tiring – but is always a buzz seeing the great young New Zealanders the Club generates.
- Over the last 9 years the Club has managed through COVID; the loss of our patron – Richard Scelly; the rise of our amazing wahine lifeguards across the movement (with our Club/region lucky enough to have some of the leaders in this space such as Phoebe Havill) and SLSNZ/crown funding of core volunteer lifeguard activities. I was lucky enough to be President during a few of our “king” tides – Coromandel Club of the year/Patrol club of the year; incredible sport/surfboat performances (even with a coaching staff churn – testament to individuals); and getting Project Transform done (a 5 year journey). It's a long list when you write it down, but this Club is amazing at leaning-in and ensuring through thick and thin we deliver our core programs to our members and the community.
- Project Transform has been in progress for much of my term as Club President. It had to be done, both from a health & safety and fit for purpose perspective. Such a project impacted the Club in three ways – the availability of operational facilities; people and culture (recruitment; retention; connections); and finances – the middle one being the most critical.

Having no Club “home” as such definitely had an impact on members. Retaining connections/recruitment/off-season training activities and peak preparedness were all more difficult to manage. A big thanks to all those volunteer leaders on our Committees that led over the last two years. It was tough and I acknowledge that Club leadership/management was (unapologetically) build focused – as we needed to get our “home” back.

- Fair to say the physical build coincided with a slow moving out-going tide in our patrolling active member/lifeguard space (a “king” tide active member cohort moving on). That said, as always, there is a change underway – great people; emerging leaders; new energy – Tide coming in. Thanks to all those LG leaders who really dug in over the last two seasons. Particularly those members that stepped up to being part of our regional guard team – taking on the containers in 24/25 and the just finished club in 25/26.
- In terms of the wider people and finance “builds” in progress after the physical one, again I am upbeat and feeling an incoming tide in new and emerging lifeguards and members. On top of that, reflecting the SLSNZ member/participation curve, our older (and still active) membership is coming back with their families; as well as there being a much stronger local community engagement with the Club. This increased local member growth over the last few years is really exciting and is vitally important for Club depth. This local membership is now visible across SAR LG, JS and Sport – in terms of both active lifeguard members and volunteer leadership. The re-refresh of the wider volunteer leadership at this AGM is reflective of this direction of travel.
- Finally, I want to call out the thing that clubbies have always known and is now embedded in SLSNZ strategy ... involvement in surf lifesaving (in all its components) builds great New Zealanders. I have met some truly outstanding human beings through this Club – young and old. Thanks to you all for sharing your passion; sense of service and wisdom with me over the last decade.

Parting thoughts ...

- Keep thinking/connecting: We are at our best when we take time to connect across the whole Club and return to our core values/purpose/pillars – which have stayed constant, but need to be returned to regularly to look out into the future/check-progress (and continually embed these values as the tides go in and out).
- Be realistic re execution/but be ambitious. Plan for peak during the year – leverage the “premium” of locally based members, but don’t leave it all with them!
- Volunteer Patrols: These are the heart of the Club/surf life-saving movement. Get everyone on the roster more often!
- Being part of a surf lifesaving club is a family thing (and the Club in some ways extends your family): Keep it inclusive; keep it fun - more for parents/adult associate members – oldies like me!

So that is me signing off from what has been a fantastic, rewarding, and at times challenging, role with the Club. I will continue to support the refreshed Board (where they need me) and no doubt see you all on the beach next summer.

Some thanks ...

A quick thanks to all those who have supported me in my role over the years.

- Current Board members (Jono/Mandy/Lisa/Bryan and Grace), former members Mike Riordan; Jono Salisbury; Nathan Hight) and Club Patrons and Life members

- Volunteer Committee Chairs – and the wider membership (active members and their parents and supporters)
- SLSNZ – Chris Emmett, Avan Polo, Chaz, Hiria (and other Coro/Eastern Region chairs).
- Club Mangers – Andrea and Dide
- Sponsors and friends/supporters of the Club.
- My family
- Those of the above that helped and supported me to realise it was perhaps time to hand the baton to a new “tide” of volunteer leadership

Gavin Scott

Club President, Whangamatā Surf Lifesaving Club

4th April, 2026.