

Policy

Management of Beach and Water Safety

Policy Statement

Council aims to facilitate the safe and enjoyable use of beaches and rock pools.

Council is committed to carrying out water safety functions and responsibilities to minimise the risk of injury or death. This includes providing public swimming facilities, patrols, lifesaving services, regulatory activities, education and community awareness programs.

Principles

Council will apply the following principles in managing the safety of the community using beaches and rockpools:

1. Risk management:

Council will take a risk management and evidence based approach to water safety to ensure appropriate mitigation strategies, lifesaving practices and community education programs are in place to address safety issues.

The identification, assessment and management of risk will determine which locations are provided with a lifeguard service, including both the scope and scale of the service. The provision of the service is subject to change pending the assessment of risk at any time.

2. Best practice

Council will adopt and implement best practice and continuous improvement to ensure that we provide a high standard service to the community. All processes and procedures will be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure Council remains up to date with industry standards and statutory and legal changes.

3. Compliance

Council will meet all relevant legislative and statutory requirements for beach and water safety management. The implementation of all relevant legislation includes the management of beach licence operators, beach events and compliance issues related to animals and crowd management.

4. Partnerships and collaboration

Water safety and rescue organisations and other community groups play a key role in promoting and providing water safety to the community. In the Northern Beaches the Surf Lifesaving Sydney Northern Beaches Branch, the individual Surf Life Saving Clubs and their volunteers are key partners. Council will collaborate, engage and work in partnership with these groups and others to provide the best possible service to our community.

5. Community support and engagement

Council will provide support to the Surf Lifesaving Associations and other community groups to facilitate the provision of high quality water safety services, programs and

facilities. This support may include financial and staff assistance and the provision of goods, facilities, services and equipment.

This includes the annual Surf Life Saving Subsidy program, which provides funds to the Surf Clubs to assist in the purchase of rescue equipment and to the Surf Life Saving Sydney Northern Beaches Branch to help cover administration costs. Financial assistance is also provided for the operations of the Surfcom Communications base at Fisherman's Beach.

6. Personnel training and qualifications

Council will ensure that the staff designated to operate the service are suitably qualified and trained. Staff will be required to have the lifesaving skills and qualifications necessary to adequately address the risks associated with our beaches and other swimming locations.

7. Community education and awareness

Council will work with the community to facilitate an awareness of water safety through the provision of education programs and day to day beach operations. Staff and volunteers will endeavour to raise the profile of beach and water dangers and educate the community on how these can be mitigated.

8. Beach Management

The beaches are managed to facilitate the amenity of the beach and enjoyment of users. At patrolled beaches, monitoring is undertaken to ensure the capacity of the beach is considered at all times, this includes involvement in the assessment and management of formal event bookings.

9. Communication

Council will use a range of communication forms to ensure that water safety messages are delivered in a timely and effective manner. This may include the use of permanent and temporary signage, electronic media forums, council web pages, educational materials and advertisements.

Scope & Application

This Policy applies to all employees, agents and officers of Northern Beaches Council, along with all Councillors.

Northern Beaches Council is responsible for the safety of beaches and waterway locations and the foreshore reserves under the care, control and management of Council. Where that care, control and management of lifesaving and other non-regulatory water safety functions is not fully delegated to another organisation Council remains responsible to the extent that care, control and management is with Council.

The primary role of the lifeguard service is to provide a safe swimming environment including establishing flagged swimming areas and surf craft prohibited zones, undertaking rescues, administering first aid and providing emergency life support and resuscitation. The lifeguards also undertake beach surveillance, enforce relevant legislation, oversee beach licence operators and manage beach and foreshore reserve events, compliance issues related to animals and crowds.

Council is also involved in providing education programs and improving community awareness of water safety and related waterways issues.

The day-to-day operation of the patrolled beaches is managed through the implementation of the Lifeguard Operations Manuals. These documents outline the levels of service and staff responsibilities at each location. There is considerable detail on each beach, emergency response procedures and regulation enforcement. Council reviews these manuals annually.

The Deed of Agreement between Council and Surf Life Saving Sydney Northern Beaches articulates the roles, responsibilities and service standards of both parties. This document and the partnership between the two groups is integral to Council's management of the beaches and provision of water safety.

References and related documents

Deed of Agreement Northern Beaches Council and Surf Life Saving Sydney Northern Beaches (2019)

Department of Local Government's Practice Note No. 15 – Water Safety

Department of Local Government Practice Note 15 lists other key guidance documents Council can use to help undertake water safety functions, including:

- Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations (Royal Life Saving Society of Australia)
- Signs as Remote Supervision (2014, Statewide Mutual)
- Australian Standard AS/NZS 2416.1:2010
- Water safety signs and beach flags – Specifications for water safety signs used in workplaces and public area (2010, SAI Global)
- Australian Standard AS/NZS ISO
- 31000:2009 Risk management – Principles and Guidelines (2010, SAI Global)
- Coronial reports and recommendations

Local Government Act 1993, Office of Local Government, NSW

Northern Beaches Council Annual Beach Services Lifeguard Operations Manual

Other relevant laws that Council should consider in carrying out water safety functions include the Civil Liability Act 2002, Public Health Act 2010, Rock Fishing Act 2016, Companion Animal Act 1998 and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Definitions

Event bookings – Council receives applications to hold events on public land, including beaches and surrounding areas. Beach and beach foreshore events can range from surf lifesaving events, surfing contests, school activities, markets and large events such as the music festivals and fireworks. Each application is assessed prior to approval. Beach Safety staff are involved in the event assessment process. Applications are not required for casual beach and rock pool use by individuals.

Evidence based approach - Evidence-based practice means the conscientious use of the best practices available. An evidence-based approach constantly looks at new research, studies, and re-evaluates practice based on findings.

Surf craft prohibited zone – An area where surf craft are not able to enter. Surf craft is a general term for watercraft operated by one or more persons that can be propelled by paddling, motor, wind or water current.

Responsible Officer

Executive Manager, Parks and Recreation

Review Date

Four years from adoption.

Revision History

Revision	Date	Change	HPE CM Ref
1	5 September 2019	Amendment to References and related documents	2019/502063
2	24 September 2019	Policy adopted by Council with amendment made to references and related documents	2019/502063