NIPPERS HANDBOOK



PORT MACQUARIE SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

2026/27 SEASON | FLYNNS BEACH, PORT MACQUARIE



WELCOME TO NIPPERS

Welcome to the 2026/27 season at Port Macquarie Surf Life Saving Club. Whether this is your first summer on the sand or your ninth, we're really glad you're here.

Nippers is where kids learn to read the ocean, look after themselves and each other, and have a lot of fun doing it. Along the way they pick up surf awareness, rescue skills, first aid, teamwork and a confidence that stays with them for life.

The whole program runs on volunteers, and that includes you. Every age manager, water safety and BBQ helper is a parent who put their hand up. No experience needed, just a willingness to pitch in.

This handbook pulls together what you need for the season. If something isn't covered, ask your age manager or get in touch with me.

See you on the beach.
CJ Walker, Director of Junior Activities

ABOUT OUR CLUB

Formed in 1929 (and a Surf Bathers Club as far back as 1910), PMSLSC is the largest surf life saving club on the Mid North Coast, with more than 750 members, 200+ active lifesavers and 270+ Nippers aged 5 to 14. We patrol Flynns Beach, and our clubhouse sits right on it.

WHAT NIPPERS IS ABOUT

- Surf safety and awareness, so kids know how to stay safe at any beach
- Rescue skills, first aid and CPR, built up season by season
- Fitness, confidence and friendships
- A pathway to patrolling, so today's Nippers become tomorrow's lifesavers

Nippers isn't swimming lessons. Kids need to be able to swim confidently already, as the ocean can be very unpredictable. At PMSLSC we build surf skills on top of that.



WHO'S WHO



JUNIOR ACTIVITIES
CJ Walker, Director of Junior Activities, jac@pmslsc.com.au
Coaches: SMART Coaching (Ben Johnson, Belinda Johnson)

CLUB CONTACTS
Club Captain: Mel Cockshutt, clubcaptain@pmslsc.com.au
President: Paula Stone, President@pmslsc.com.au
Registrar: Terry Mawer, registrar@pmslsc.com.au
Child Safe Coordinator: Holly Hough, childsafe@pmslsc.com.au
Member Protection Information Officer: Lauren McAllister, protection@pmslsc.com.au
Education &Training: Norm Kobelke, training@pmslsc.com.au

AGE MANAGERS
Every age group has its own age managers. They run sign in and sign out, look after the program on the day, and are your first point of contact for anything to do with your Nipper. You'll meet yours on the first Sunday, and they'll add you to your age group chat.

Age managers are parents who volunteered. If you'd like to help, or step up next season, let CJ know.

AGE GROUPS 2026/27

Your Nipper's age group is set by their age at midnight on 30 September 2026.

Under 6: born 1 Oct 2020 to 30 Sep 2021
Under 7: born 1 Oct 2019 to 30 Sep 2020
Under 8: born 1 Oct 2018 to 30 Sep 2019
Under 9: born 1 Oct 2017 to 30 Sep 2018
Under 10: born 1 Oct 2016 to 30 Sep 2017
Under 11: born 1 Oct 2015 to 30 Sep 2016
Under 12: born 1 Oct 2014 to 30 Sep 2015
Under 13: born 1 Oct 2013 to 30 Sep 2014
Under 14: born 1 Oct 2012 to 30 Sep 2013

The cut-off catches a lot of families out. A child who turned 6 on 29 September 2026 is in Under 7s this season, not Under 6s.

Kids can join as soon as they turn 5, including partway through the season.



GETTING STARTED

Three steps before your first Sunday.

1. JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP
Register online at pmslsc.com.au/our-club/membership. Membership has to be in place before your Nipper can get in the water, including the pool. It keeps everything above board for insurance and accreditation.

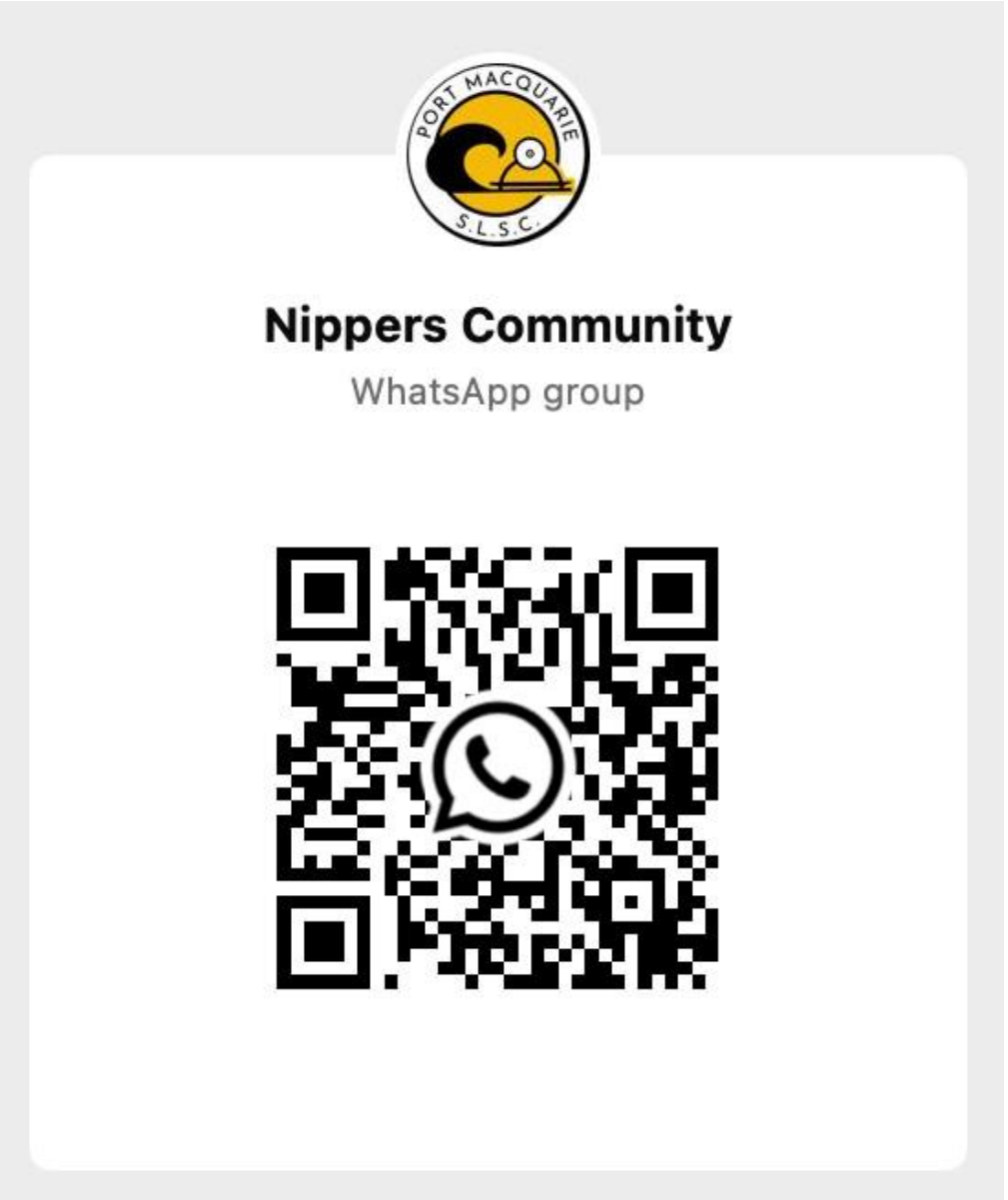
2. BOOK POOL PROFICIENCY
Book through the link in the WhatsApp community. Can't make the dates? Contact CJ directly.

3. PICK UP YOUR GEAR
New families receive a Nipper pack (cap and singlet), handed out by our uniform team at pool proficiency or on your first Sunday.

And join the PMSLSC Nippers WhatsApp community.

That's where the day-to-day updates happen.

New this season? You're in the right place. Ask any age manager any questions on the day. We've all been new.



PROFICIENCY

Before Nippers can join water activities, they need to show they can handle themselves in the water. It's an SLS requirement, and it keeps everyone safe. Nippers is not a learn to swim program.

- U6 to U8: pool proficiency only
- U9 to U14: pool proficiency plus an ocean swim

Pool sessions run at the Y pool. The ocean proficiency runs on the first day of Nippers if not done prior.

WHAT'S TESTED (SUMMARY)
- U6 and U7: glide, float and recover to stand
- U8: 50m pool swim, float and retrieve an object
- U9: 200m in 7 min, plus 150m ocean swim
- U10: 200m in 6 min, plus 150m ocean swim
- U11: 200m in 6 min, plus 200m ocean swim
- U12 to U14: 200m in 5 min, plus 200m ocean swim

If your Nipper isn't proficient yet, talk to CJ. Regular pool swimming through the season makes a big difference.





A SUNDAY AT NIPPERS

Nippers runs Sunday mornings at Flynns Beach, 8:30am to 10am, through the season.

- Arrive 20 minutes early and find your age group
- Your Age Manager will sign your Nipper in
- Beach and water activities run by age group
- Sign out with the age manager before you leave, every time
- Help pack up. Many hands, and all that

At least one parent or carer stays on the beach the whole time. If you need to step away to watch a sibling, let your Age Manager know.

If the surf or weather turns, we'll change the program or cancel. Check WhatsApp before you leave home.

Please tell your age manager about any medical or other needs your Nipper has.

WHAT TO BRING

- Club cap, always on in the water
- Pink club singlet or rash vest
- Goggles
- Sunscreen, put on before you arrive
- Hat and a long-sleeve top for time on the sand
- Water bottle
- Towel and a change of clothes
- A board, if your Nipper has one (U9 and up)

Boards change as Nippers grow. U6 to U8 use bodyboards, which the club supplies. U9s and U10s use soft foam boards, U11s to U13s move to fibreglass Nipper boards, and U14s step up to long boards. Before you buy, ask the coaches about the right board and size, or try a hire board first.

Label everything. The lost property box fills up fast.

PODIUM AND PRESENTATIONS
For any podium or presentation, Nippers wear their club Training shirt, or the white club jacket and shorts. These can be purchased at the Uniform Shop on Nipper Sundays.



WATER SAFETY & HELPING OUT



Water safety is what lets the water activities happen. SLS requires at least one qualified water safety person for every five Nippers in the water (one to ten in low-risk conditions). If we're short, the water part of the day doesn't go ahead.

To do water safety you need a current Bronze Medallion or Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC). The club reimburses course fees, so it costs you nothing but your time. Talk to Norm to register.

NO BRONZE? PLENTY TO DO

- Help Age Manager sign Nippers in and out on the sand
- Set up and pack up
- Age Manager or Assistant (online training required)
- Officiating at carnivals (the club covers training)
- BBQ and club events
- Help out in the uniform shop
- Fundraising activities like selling raffle tickets on a Sunday

Parents without a water safety qualification, please stay on the sand during water activities so it's always clear who's on duty in the water.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Evacuations are rare and mostly precautionary. The water might be cleared for a shark or marine life sighting, lightning or a change in the surf, poor water quality, or a rescue that needs the patrol's full attention.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE AND HEAR

- One long siren: everyone out of the water now
- Three short blasts: a mass rescue or missing child response
- Whistle or air horn on the sand: Nippers being called in
- Red and white quartered flag: leave the water

WHAT HAPPENS

Water safety bring all Nippers in together. Each Age Manager takes their group to their age group flags and does a head count against the sign on sheet. Kids are then signed out one at a time to their own parent or carer. It's slow on purpose.

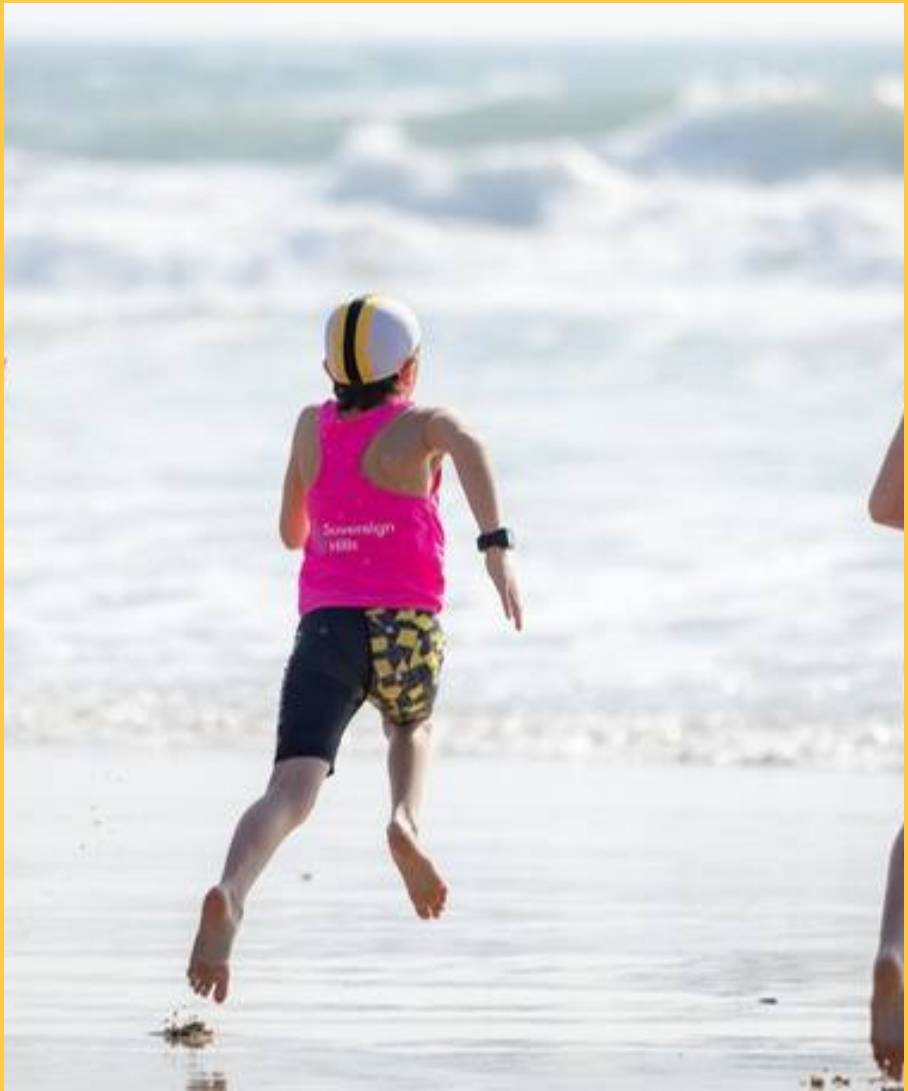
WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

- Go to your child's age group and wait where the Age Manager can see you
- Please don't go into the water or take your child before they're counted
- Sign your child out, even if you're standing right next to them

Nobody goes back in until the Patrol Captain gives the all clear. Depending on conditions, the session might carry on with sand activities or be called off.



DRONES AT NIPPERS



This season you may see a drone over the water during Nippers. It's there to keep watch for sharks and other marine life, so anything in the area is spotted early and the kids can be brought in well before it gets close.

WHO FLIES IT
Qualified UAV pilots including patrolling members and parents who have the correct SLS qualifiications

IT WATCHES THE WATER, NOT THE KIDS
The drone is there for safety surveillance only. Footage isn't kept, shared or used for club photos or social media.

IF SOMETHING IS SPOTTED
The water is cleared the same way as any evacuation (see the previous page). Kids are brought in and counted, and the Patrol Captain decides when it's safe to go back in.

PLEASE LEAVE YOUR OWN DRONE AT HOME
Private drones aren't to be flown over Nippers. They can get in the way of the surveillance drone, and they can capture images of Nippers without consent.

Questions? Ask your Age Manager or email CJ at jac@pmslsc.com.au.

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

Each season builds on the last through the SLS Surf Education program. Nippers work through their age group award with their age manager across the season.

U6: Surf Play 1
U7: Surf Play 2
U8: Surf Aware 1
U9: Surf Aware 2
U10: Surf Safe 1
U11: Surf Safe 2
U12: Surf Smart 1
U13: Surf Smart 2
U14: Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC)

Topics include sun and surf safety, rips and hazards, signals, first aid and CPR, board skills, rescue techniques and looking out for others.

The SRC is the first real lifesaving qualification. From 15, Nippers can go on to their Bronze Medallion and join a patrol.



MORE THAN SUNDAYS



NIPPERS & SIPPERS (U6 AND U7)
Friday afternoons on weekends when the older age groups are away at a Sunday carnival. Arrive 3:45pm for 4pm sign on, sign out by 5pm, then drinks upstairs at the club. A great way to get to know other families.

JUNIOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
Weekday afternoon and early Sunday training with our coaching team. See Training & Squads a few pages on.

ALL AGES BOARD CAMP, HAT HEAD
Saturday 14 November. Training through the day, a Talent Show run by the U14s, and most familiesi camp the night. Book your own campsite. Full details on WhatsApp closer to the date.

BOARD HIRE AND CARE
Hire boards are available for U9 and up. Ask your Age Manager. Hired or your own, look after it:

- Rinse it with fresh water after every session
- Carry it, don't drag it through the sand
- Use a board cover and proper straps in the car, never ockies, and never leave it in a hot car
- Got a ding? Keep it dry and tell your Age Manager. Should a hire board or club board be damaged, the user is liable to pay for repairs

All dates are on the Nippers calendar on the club website.

CARNIVALS

Carnivals are a chance to race other clubs and represent PMSLSC. We're part of the Mid North Coast Branch, with branch carnivals through the season, plus the World Ocean Series and Country and State Championships for those keen to go further.

• Nippers need both pool and ocean proficiency to compete
• Nippers need to have paid the competition fee levy for Branch and Country Championships
• Competing is optional. Plenty of Nippers never race and get just as much out of the season. We encourage all nippers to have a go at competing in at least one carnival. Whether your Nipper comes first or last, we are proud of their courage to have a go
• Team selections are coordinated by the Director of Junior Activities in consultation with our Competition Managers (see Team Selections)

Carnival dates are on the Nippers calendar. For competition questions, talk to CJ. If you wish to compete in a carnival outside out branch, chat to CJ. He can confirm if it clashes with any branch carnival obligations.

Carnivals also need officials. If you'd like to give it a go, the club covers your training. Talk to Mel.



TRAINING & SQUADS

Alongside Sunday Nippers, we offer the Junior Development Program, run by SMART Coaching (Ben and Belinda Johnson). The philosophy is simple: develop the person first and the athlete second.

TWO SQUADS, ONE CLUB

- Development Squad: skills, ocean confidence and fitness, working towards Country Championships
- Performance Squad: advanced technique and race preparation for athletes aiming for State and Australian Championships

Both squads often train side by side. Athletes can move between them during the season based on attendance, commitment, skill development, confidence, physical readiness, their own goals and coach recommendations.

The season is planned in phases, from foundation work in August and September through to peak performance in March and April. Some weeks will feel bigger than others. That's by design, so trust the process.

Parents with a current SRC or Bronze Medallion are encouraged to help with water safety at training. It means more time in the water for the kids.



WEEKLY TRAINING



THE WEEK
Mon 4:15pm: Ocean swim, location advised weekly
Tue 4:15pm: River board, Marine Rescue carpark
Wed 5:45am: Long boards for u14s and Cadets only
Wed 4:15pm: Beach run, Flynns Beach (Performance Squad only)
Thu 4:15pm: River board, Marine Rescue carpark
Fri 4:15pm: Nipper board / long board, Flynns Beach
Sun 7:15am to 8:30am: Long board, Flynns Beach, before Nippers (u14s and Cadets only)

Weekday sessions finish at 5:15 or 5:30pm. Register through the Ocean Training form on the club website.

WHAT TO BRING
Board, goggles, drink bottle, running shoes, training clothes, something warm and a towel, plus any medication (asthma puffer, EpiPen). Label everything.

WEATHER AND ABSENCES
Training goes ahead in most weather, rain included. Sessions only change for dangerous surf, lightning or similar, and you'll hear via WhatsApp. Can't make it? Let the coaches know on WhatsApp.

TEAM SELECTIONS

Not every carnival has the same purpose. The coaches rank them so athletes peak when it matters.

A EVENTS: Shaw & Partners World Ocean Series Bonny Hills, NSW State Championships, Australian Championships

B EVENTS: Coolangatta Gold, Country Championships, Branch Championships

C EVENTS: Branch Carnivals, for learning, practice and confidence
NSW Interbranch Championships (November) is by selection.

HOW SELECTIONS ARE MADE
Selectors (Director of Junior Actitivies, Age Managers and Competition Managers) look at attendance at PMSLSC Nipper Training Days, commitment, teamwork, ocean competency, skill development, physical readiness, safety and their own observations. Decisions are always made with the athlete's best interests and long-term development in mind.

THE CLUB BY-LAWS
- The Director of Junior Activities coordinates selection of junior teams
- Junior carnival entries are submitted through the club via Live Heats, with the exception of Shaw & Partners World Ocean Series events which are enterend individually through Live Heats
- Each year the Board decides which carnivals the competition levy covers. Others are at the member's own cost
- Nippers must be proficient to compete





POINTS & AWARDS

NIPPER CHAMPIONSHIPS
Under the club By-Laws, club championships are run to SLSA and SLS NSW competition rules, over three rounds. Points are awarded in each event:

1st: 6 points 2nd: 5 points 3rd: 4 points 4th: 3 points 5th: 2 points 6th: 1 point

TO BE ELIGIBLE
- Be Nipper Proficient
- Attend at least 75% of Nipper training days

Special circumstances for absences can be considered case by case.

END OF SEASON AWARDS
Awards are decided by the Nippers Sub-committee and Age Managers, and presented at the Club Presentation. The club also nominates members for the Branch and SLS NSW Awards of Excellence.

Full details on points and championships are in the club By-Laws on our website: pmslsc.com.au/our-club/governance

PHOTOGRAPHY & SOCIAL MEDIA

We love seeing Nippers having a great time, and photos and video are a big part of celebrating our club. At the same time, we have a responsibility to respect every member's privacy, support their consent choices and help keep the beach a safe place for kids.

Our approach follows Surf Life Saving NSW's Imagery Consent guide for clubs, introduced this season. It's built around two simple levels of consent:

- Consent to have images taken (being photographed or filmed)
- Consent to have images published (for example in the newsletter or on social media)

You can change your Nipper's consent, or opt out, at any time. No reason needed. We'll take all reasonable steps to avoid photographing anyone who has opted out, and to edit or obscure them in group shots before anything is published.

We're all human. If a mistake happens, we'll work with you to put it right quickly.

Think privacy.
Think safety.
Think before you share.

PHOTO GUIDELINES

- **Take photos of your own family** wherever possible, and keep every image respectful and appropriate.

- **Official club photos are taken by our club photographer**, on a club device wherever possible, and shared through a closed club channel.

- **Check before you share.** Some members haven't consented to images being taken or published. If other Nippers are in your photo, check with an Age Manager or club leader first.

- **Don't name children** or identify age groups, and don't share or publish images without consent.

- **Photos and filming are strictly prohibited in or near bathrooms and change rooms.**

- **Think before you share.** Don't take or share images that may embarrass, upset or negatively portray a child. When in doubt, don't take it or share it.

- **Kids have a say**. People should ask before taking a photo, and Nippers are encouraged to speak up if someone is taking their photo and they don't want them to.



CONSENT & IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG



YOUR CHOICE, ANY TIME
You can opt your Nipper out of having photos taken, published, or both, at any time. No reason needed. Email Holly Hough, our Child Safe Coordinator, at childsafe@pmslsc.com.au or tell your age manager, and we'll quietly inform the people who need to know.

IF A PHOTO HAS BEEN SHARED WITHOUT CONSENT
Contact the club and we'll remove it as quickly as possible, and let you know what we've done.

IF YOU'RE WORRIED AN IMAGE HAS BEEN MISUSED
- Don't share or forward it, even to report it
- Write down where you saw it, links and usernames
- Contact police (000 in an emergency)
- Report to eSafety at esafety.gov.au/report
- Report child exploitation to the ACCCE: accce.gov.au/report
- Let our MPIO know (protection@pmslsc.com.au)
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

CODES OF CONDUCT

Surf Life Saving is a child safe organisation. Everyone working with Nippers holds a current Working With Children Check and completes SLS child safe training.

PARENTS, CARERS AND SPECTATORS

- Nippers is for the kids' enjoyment. Effort matters more than results
- Cheer for every child, not just your own
- Respect officials and age managers. They're all volunteers
- No yelling at kids, officials or coaches
- Know where your child is at all times
- Parents getting into the water need to hold a Bronze Medallion or SRC

NIPPERS

- Listen to your Age Manager
- Play fair and look out for each other
- Speak up if something doesn't feel right

CLUB GEAR

- Use all club gear for what it's made for, not just boards
- Only take it out when your Age Manager or coach says so
- Carry it, don't drag it, and help put it back where it lives
- Broken or damaged? Tell your Age Manager straight away
- Accidents happen, but damage from misuse is paid for by the user

Any concern about a child's safety can go to our MPIO at protection@pmslsc.com.au, or directly to Surf Life Saving NSW.



STAYING IN THE LOOP

The club website is the one source of truth for Nippers: pmslsc.com.au

- WhatsApp community: day-to-day updates, cancellations and reminders. Your age manager will also post what matters for your Nipper in your age group chat

- Nippers Google calendar: sync it from the website so carnivals and events land in your own calendar

- Facebook: club news and celebrations

- Email: for anything that needs a proper record

Keep your details up to date in the member portal so nothing slips through.

Weather looking iffy on a Sunday? Check WhatsApp before you leave home.



FLAGS & SURF SPEAK



BEACH FLAGS
Red and yellow: the patrolled area. Swim between them.
Red: beach closed, don't swim.
Yellow: potential hazards, take care.
Black and white quartered: area for surfcraft, not swimmers.

RIPS
A strong current running out to sea. If you're caught: stay calm, float, and raise an arm for help.

SURF SPEAK
Age manager: the volunteer running your Nipper's group
Water safety: qualified adults in the water keeping watch
Proficiency: the swim test needed for water activities
Bronze: the Bronze Medallion, the core lifesaving award
Beach flags: sprint and dive for a baton in the sand
Board, swim, run: the classic Nippers events
Carnival: competition day against other clubs
March past: the traditional marching display

REFERENCES

CLUB DOCUMENTS
• PMSLSC By-Laws (4 August 2026) and Social Media Policy: pmslsc.com.au/our-club/governance
• PMSLSC Junior Development Program Guide 2026/27, from our coaching team

SURF LIFE SAVING
• SLS NSW, Imagery Consent: A Guide for Clubs (August 2026)
• SLSA Policies: 6.21 Photography, Digital Recording & Images; 6.20 Social Media; 6.05 Member Protection
• SLSA Surf Education awards and Water Safety for Junior Activities factsheet

CHILD SAFETY AND AI
• Play by the Rules (Sport Integrity Australia), AI is rapidly changing the risks of sharing photos of children and young people in sport, October 2026 e-news, written with the eSafety Commissioner. Shared with our Management Committee, October 2026
• Play by the Rules, Taking and Sharing Images in Sport: playbytherules.net.au
• Australian Sports Commission and CSIRO, Guide for Responsible AI in Sport (March 2026)
• eSafety Commissioner, deepfake and image-based abuse guidance: esafety.gov.au
• ACCCE, online sharing and photo safety for parents: accce.gov.au

WITH THANKS
• Tacking Point SLSC, Nippers Handbook 2025/26, and other clubs who share their handbooks online including Freshwater, Ocean Beach, Cronulla, Fremantle and Sorrento.
• Photo credits: Lindsay Moller Productions

Questions about anything in this handbook?

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