

23 July 2007



Celebrating '100 Years of Heroes'



For nearly one hundred years, Australia's trained surf lifesavers have been keeping our beaches safe. In that time, they have rescued more than 500,000 people and provided first aid to a million others. Of Surf Life Saving Australia's (SLSA) 113,000+ members, more than 34,000 actively patrol our beaches.

2007 is the 'Year of the Surf Lifesaver' to recognise the centenary of Surf Life Saving in Australia. To celebrate this honour an extensive array of celebrations and commemorative events is planned across the nation.

Dexion has been involved in Surf Life Saving for a number of years recognizing the dedication and commitment average Australians make to the well-being of others every weekend. Currently, Dexion support two surf clubs Long Reef on Sydney's Northern Beaches and this summer agreed to sponsor Mermaid Beach on the Gold Coast.

According to Andrew Angus, Dexion's Executive General Manager, Marketing the company is more than happy to be involved with the clubs.

"We understand that clubs such as

Long Reef and Mermaid Beach don't have the same appeal as the larger more glamorous competitive clubs and therefore find it hard to attract sponsorship dollars. "It is terrific to be associated with both clubs and we congratulate SLSA on its outstanding achievements over the past 100 years," he said.

Peter Lawrence works as a sales engineer for Dexion Acacia Ridge and is also the current club captain at Mermaid Beach AEME Surf Life Saving

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Peter Lawrence, Mermaid Beach AEME SLSA Club Captain

Club. Here he gives some history about the club.

"Our club was founded in 1945 when the Gold Coast was a favoured recuperation destination for soldiers returning from the war," he said. "A number of the clubs in this area were started by ex- servicemen and Mermaid Beach AEME SLSC is one of them, in fact the AEME stands for Australia Electrical Mechanical Engineers. So we have a proud tradition at our club," he said.

Like Long Reef, Mermaid SLSC is not a highly competitive club in terms of surf carnivals but is committed to a strong junior programme as well educating the local community.

"We have approximately 160 active members that patrol the beach on a regular roster basis and 240 junior members included in our Nipper movement," said Peter. "We are also committed to increasing the awareness of surf safety within the local community."

This year, included in our training schedule were 15 members from a Brisbane Junior AFL club (and some siblings) who reach award levels of either Bronze Medallion or Surf Rescue Certificate. All of these new members now participate in regular patrols. "With Dexion's help we will be able to maintain the surf rescue equipment on the beach plus support the patrolling members," said Peter. "Unlike the southern states our season goes from September to May with the beach being patrolled from 6am to 6pm in peak periods, due to the massive influx of holiday makers throughout the summer. So patrols are frequent and long and you can find the mind wonders a little and it's difficult to remain focused and diligent the whole time. So we decided to provide each patrol with food and drink compliments of Dexion, which certainly helps kept he levels of concentration high," he said. "We are all very grateful for their support".

As well as providing surf rescue services around the country, SLSA is



also a significant provider of education services. 40,000 nippers learn basic surf safety skills and trained surf lifesavers visit schools throughout Australia. It's all part of SLSA's efforts to prevent people getting into trouble before they reach the beach!

A new study has shown that 485 people would drown on our beaches each year and 313 would be permanently incapacitated as a result of accidents in the surf, if not for the efforts of Australia's surf lifesavers. SLSA CEO, Greg Nance, said that by calculating what percentage of rescues and preventative actions undertaken by SLSA members would have otherwise resulted in a death or incapacitation, it is possible to provide an estimate of the value of SLSA services.

"Australia's actual coastal drowning rate of around 58 each year is still far too high, but the fact that it would otherwise be more than eight times that amount had there not been surf lifesaving services provides a stark demonstration of the core community service provided by SLSA," he said.

"Each year, trained surf lifesavers volunteer more than 1.4 million hours keeping our beaches safe, with many more hours spent behind the scenes in development and training and it is a contribution they are all happy to make."