

SOUTH WEST ROCKS SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

NIPPERS HANDBOOK 2026/27 SEASON



WELCOME TO SOUTH WEST ROCKS NIPPERS

Welcome to South West Rocks Nippers, the junior activities group of the South West Rocks Surf Life Saving Club (SWRSLSC). We are a small, family-oriented club, with something for everyone, focusing on fun, friendships, surf sports, surf safety education and most importantly, creating the lifesavers of the future.

Established in 1919, SWRSLSC has an immensely proud history, with the junior activities commencing in 1961.

Nippers is primarily about surf lifesaving with a focus on having fun, teaching, and enhancing skills and emphasising beach and surf awareness. Our Nipper program provides education in lifesaving, competition, training, interaction with their friends, and most importantly, creating the lifesavers of the future.

Our objective is to provide organised activities on the beach and/or in the water for children 5 years of age and upwards who are club members. Each Sunday, we aim to develop a spirit of good sportsmanship and citizenship amongst our girls and boys and further the interest of the Surf Life Saving movement.

Benefits of Surf Life Saving:

- Learn how to survive in the surf environment
- Learn how to help others in the surf environment
- Promotion of physical growth, development, and health, together with social interaction
- Gain a sense of personal satisfaction from the experience of excitement and personal challenge

There is no other sport quite like Nippers. We look forward to sharing a fun season with you and your family.

See you on the beach!

Belinda Telford

Junior Activities Coordinator

OUR NIPPER PROGRAM

There are over 52,000 junior surf lifesavers (Nippers) in Australia. Teaching Nippers about surf awareness and beach safety is the primary focus of the program. Throughout the Nipper season, from October to March, children as young as 5 are taught how to respect the surf, read the surf, and use the surf to their advantage. Doing this in an environment that is fun and builds camaraderie within their club is unique to surf lifesaving.

At South West Rocks, our Nippers program incorporates surf awareness, skills coaching and competition to suit a variety of levels across our junior members. Nippers participate in age-appropriate activities and games to develop their knowledge of the surf and are also able to participate in running, wading, surf swimming and board paddling. They do not need to be super competitors or super athletes to join.

For those Nippers who are less certain about the surf, our program helps develop their confidence through support, encouragement, and education, but always the focus is on the fun.

We encourage all Nippers to undertake learn to swim, stroke correction or squad training at a local pool to help them with their confidence in the surf. Learning to swim is NOT part of the Nippers program.

Practising these skills allows children to become proficient so they can compete weekly at club level and go on to compete at Branch, Country, and State Surf Life Saving Carnivals.

How to Join

All memberships are completed online via the Surf Life Saving Australia Members Portal. For more information on how to join or renew your membership, go to the SWRSLSC website – www.swrslsc.com.au.



Registration is usually held in September, prior to the start of the season, at the SWRSLSC Clubhouse.

Birth Certificates must be produced for NEW registrations.

Details and membership fees will be advertised on the SWRSLSC website and Facebook pages.

Age Groups

The youngest age group for Nippers is the U6's. For the 2026/27 season, this includes children born between 1 October 2020 – 30 September 2021.

A slightly younger child may take part; however, they must have turned 5 years of age beforehand (eg, your child may turn 5 in November 2024; they can start Nippers after their birthday). Note that your child will 'repeat' the Under 6 age group the following year – ie: they will be in Under 6 for the 2025/26 season as well.

Age Group	Cap Colour	Date of Birth – born between the two dates
Under 6	Bright Green	1 October 2020 – 30 September 2021
Under 7	Purple	1 October 2019 – 30 September 2020
Under 8	Red	1 October 2018 – 30 September 2019
Under 9	White	1 October 2017 – 30 September 2018
Under 10	Yellow	1 October 2016 – 30 September 2017
Under 11	Teal	1 October 2015 – 30 September 2016
Under 12	Aqua	1 October 2014 – 30 September 2015
Under 13	Bronze	1 October 2013 – 30 September 2014
Under 14	Competition Cap	1 October 2012 – 30 September 2013

Safety – First and foremost

Safety is our first priority in all activities conducted by the South West Rocks Nippers. Safety extends to safety on the beach, in the water and considering the protection of all children.



Preliminary and Competition Evaluation

As many of the Nipper activities are conducted in open water, Surf Life Saving Australia has a minimum standard for junior skills evaluation (proficiency) and education for all children taking part in Nippers. Evaluation details for each group are outlined on our website. All evaluations must be achieved under the supervision of

the Director of Junior Activities or a Club-endorsed Delegate.

For safety and development reasons, before a child can participate in ANY Nipper water activities, they are required to complete their Preliminary and Competition Evaluation.

If a child does not initially meet the Preliminary and Competition Evaluations, there will be other opportunities to complete these throughout the season.

To be able to compete at carnivals, Under 8's need to complete their Preliminary Evaluation and Under 9's – Under 14's need to complete their Competition Evaluation. Nippers will not be allowed to compete in ANY events, sand, or water, if they have not completed their relevant evaluations.

Preliminary Evaluation (pool proficiency) – All Nippers, Under 6's to Under 14's, need to complete an ANNUAL Preliminary Evaluation, which includes a float, pool swim or both as part of their Nippers Registration. This ensures a minimum and safe standard of both swimming and survival ability for water activities at Nippers. This will be conducted at the South West Rocks Pool, on nominated days before the season begins. Check the season calendar for exact days and times.

For Under 8's – Under 14's, if a child does not meet the Preliminary Evaluation requirements, they will not be able to take part in any water activities at Nippers. They may take part in beach activities only.

Competition Evaluation (ocean proficiency) – All Nippers, Under 9's to Under 14's, need to complete an ANNUAL Competition Evaluation, which includes an UNASSISTED ocean swim, around a competition swim course, as part of their Nippers Registration. This ensures a minimum and safe standard of swimming and survival ability for water activities at Nippers. This will be conducted on Main Beach during the first few weeks of Nippers.

For Under 9's – Under 14's, if a child does not meet the Competition Evaluation requirements, they cannot take part in any water activities at Nippers, aside from the Wade.

Water Safety

Strict guidelines are prescribed by Surf Life Saving Australia for all surf clubs in relation to water safety. These guidelines include:

- A prescribed ratio of qualified Water Safety Officers to Nippers is required for all activities to be held.
- Water Safety Officers must hold a current Bronze Medallion or Surf Rescue Certificate and be a member of SWRSLSC.
- The IRB (inflatable rescue boat) must be present during all water events.
- All Nippers must wear a pink high-vis rashie while participating in water activities (this includes Nippers Sundays and training sessions) – No Rashie, No Water, No Exceptions.

Communication

Information will be sent out via Surfguard SMS and emails, and social media. When registering, every member's details are put into a national database, which enables clubs to send emails and text messages in bulk. South West Rocks Nippers has its own Facebook page – South West Rocks SLSC Nippers (Official SLSNSW).

A season calendar is sent out at the start of each season with information on Sunday Nippers, carnivals, training camps, proficiencies and sign-on days.

MEMBER PROTECTION AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Code of Conduct: The culture of our club and the behaviour of our members is important to us. Our Code of Conduct outlines the behaviour expected of our Nippers, Nipper Parents/Carers, Administrators, Age Managers, Coaches and Officials. In keeping with SLSA guidelines, our Code of Conduct is designed to reflect our commitment to the health, safety and well-being of all our members and illustrate our dedication to providing a safe environment for those participating in surf lifesaving activities.

Parents and carers play an important role in delivering and supporting activities at South West Rocks for their own and other children. With this comes a responsibility to act in a constructive, respectful, and encouraging manner at all times. Key behaviour requirements of all individuals include:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of others.
- Be fair, considerate, and honest in all dealings with others, and be a positive role model.
- Make a commitment to providing a quality service.
- Be aware of and maintain an uncompromising adherence to SLSA's standards, rules, regulations, and policies.
- Demonstrate a high degree of individual responsibility, especially when dealing with persons under the age of 18 years.
- Contribute to the provision of a safe environment for the conduct of all activities within surf lifesaving.

If you see behaviour that is not in keeping with the Code of Conduct or our club culture, please let our Director of Junior Activities or the Member Protection Information Officer know.

SLSA Safeguarding Children and Young People

Safety is our priority in all activities conducted by SWRSLSC. Safety extends to safety on the beach, in the water and considers the protection of all children. Families **MUST** always stay on the beach; your child is your responsibility, and any medications, trips to the toilet, and the individual welfare of each child on the beach is the responsibility of the parent/carers. For more information, please visit the SLSA website.

If there are any concerns, please follow the reporting guidelines by contacting our Club Member Protection Information Officer.

SLSA Member Protection Policy 6.05

SLSA is committed to the health, safety, and well-being of all its members and provides a safe environment for those participating in Surf Life Saving activities and events. SLSA wants Surf Life Saving to be fun, enjoyable, and safe for all. For more information, please visit the SLSA website.

Working with Children Check (WWCC)

Every assistant of the club over the age of 18 who is in direct contact with children is required to complete a Voluntary WWCC through Service NSW. We pride ourselves on family involvement and the active role our families take. To ensure that, as a club, we align ourselves with the legislation and uphold the safety of all children in our care, we ask that all parents/carers with children who are members attain a WWCC for volunteers, which is free of charge.

SWRSLSC has a designated Member Protection Officer. Should any of our club members have a concern or questions in this area, please contact memberprotection@swrslsc.com.au

Medical Conditions

Any Nipper who suffers from a medical condition that may affect their participation in Nipper activities, including Asthma, MUST inform the Age Manager.

Sun Safety

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that adequate sun cream is applied whilst on the beach. SWRSLSC supplies sun cream for its members to use and can be found in the Age Manager tubs or in the First Aid Room.

Workplace Health and Safety (WHS)

The clubhouse and surrounds are considered a 'workplace' which falls under WHS legislation. If you see a hazard around the clubhouse or surrounding areas, please inform a member of the Board of Directors or the Patrol Captain on duty.

A TYPICAL NIPPERS MORNING

Sunday Nippers starts with an important briefing from the Director of Junior Activities at 9.00am on the grassed area in front of the surf club, with children assembling in their age groups. Ensure sun cream has been applied and coloured caps and pink rashies are on, ready for Nippers.

Safety measures are to be undertaken to ensure your children's safety. These include:

- All children are required to have their guardian sign the attendance record with the Age Manager prior to joining the morning's activities and at the end of the age group's session. Children must not leave unless they have advised their Age Manager and had their guardian sign them out with the Age Manager.
- All children must have a guardian present on the beach within the Nippers area, and all Under 6's and 7s must have a guardian remain with their group at all times.
- No child is to enter the water unless authorised by the Age Manager.
- Coloured caps and pink rashies are to be worn at all times by children whilst participating in Nipper events and activities. Coloured caps are to be removed at the completion of Nippers after the child's guardian has signed them out.



What to Bring

- **Age Group Cap:** For the safety of our junior members, South West Rocks age group caps are to be worn during Nippers. They should only be removed once you have had your name marked off the role by the Age Manager.
- **Pink Hi-Vis Rashie:** All Nippers must wear a pink high-vis rashie while participating in the Nippers program. This is a Surf Life Saving Australia requirement – no rashie, no participation, no exception. Your Nipper may also wish to bring goggles, a swim cap, and their own Nipper board with them each Sunday.
- **Other items:** Please bring a towel (or two), water bottle, sunscreen, and a SMILE. Please label items with your child's name.

PARENTS RUN NIPPERS!

All Surf Life Saving Clubs are not-for-profit organisations that are run by volunteers. We rely heavily on donations and the assistance of our Club members and families. These members give up a lot of their time to train our members and provide instruction to help them achieve their awards.

All of our Age Managers come from our families at Nippers. They provide their time voluntarily to teach and train your children, so please assist them by helping out both on and off the beach, as there are many roles that are required to be filled to facilitate the smooth running of Nippers.

Each family is required to support Nippers by taking a role within the Nippers program.

Director of Junior Activities – This role oversees the operation of the Nippers program for the season. The Director of Junior Activities sits on the SWRSLSC Board of Directors. This is a very important role, and without this Nippers would not go ahead.

Age Manager – These volunteers take care of their age group on a Sunday morning and at carnivals. They are responsible for the ‘Surf Education’ of your children, both in the water and on the beach. Age Managers are not required to have obtained a Bronze Medallion, but must have patience, a positive attitude and the ability to organise a group of Nippers. Initial training and ongoing support throughout the season are provided to Age Managers.



Water Safety Team - The club must meet the water safety requirements listed by SLSA. It is therefore essential that as many families as possible obtain their Bronze Medallion and assist with water safety. If we do not have the required number of water safety, then smaller Nipper numbers will be arranged to reflect the water safety ratio. The SWRSLSC Patrol Captain and Water Safety Supervisor will conduct a risk assessment prior to the commencement of any water events. The Patrol Captain or Water Safety Supervisor may cease activities if conditions become unsafe. Their decision shall be final. The guidelines for water safety are laid down by Surf Life Saving Australia and must be adhered to by all. No race or activity will commence without the correct number of water safety personnel, it is imperative that as many

qualified water safety personnel as possible are in the water to accompany children in water activities. Water safety personnel must be suitably qualified (Bronze Medallion or Surf Rescue Certificate), and a minimum ratio of water safety personnel to Nippers applies. Water safety personnel must wear the required high visibility vests and caps whilst performing water safety. Family members providing water safety must hold a valid BM or SRC and complete the annual proficiency test. We also must provide water safety at competitions and carnivals.

Many family members complete their BM and, in doing so, enjoy the learning experience and gain a greater understanding of Surf Life Saving.

Family help – It is the experience that the more you get involved, the more your child/ren will enjoy Nippers. The club operates entirely with volunteer help. There are many positions to be filled to ensure that Nippers runs smoothly and that the workload is shared amongst all. You do not need to have had Surf Life Saving experience to contribute; each family joining Nippers is required to support the program by assisting with the many roles and tasks that need to be completed.

There are also more informal positions that are required to be filled as well, such as setting up and packing away the beach, BBQs, fundraising activities, assisting Age Managers with events and activities, First Aid, uniforms, and registration, the list is endless. If every family contributes to the running of the Nippers program, we will have an organised, well-run, positive environment for the children to learn and grow in. Many hands, as they say, make light work.

Our club also needs financial support from individuals and companies to upgrade our existing equipment. The funds go towards the purchase of teaching aids for your children to use so they can further enhance the surf lifesaving skills our Age Managers teach them. If you can or if you know of any business that is interested in making a donation or sponsorship, please contact the Director of Marketing. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Fundraising

We rely on fundraising to fund our Nippers; this is one way that those families who do not have Surf Club experience can support the Nippers. There is the Sunday BBQ after Nippers, BBQs at the Beachside Markets at SWR and Chocolate Wheels at the Surf Club. We are always looking for other fundraising options, so please do not hesitate to make a suggestion to the Director of Junior Activities.

NIPPER EVENTS

Beach Events

Beach races – running over a set distance on the sand

Flags – lying flat on the sand, then getting up and running a short distance to grasp flags in the sand.

Beach relays – teams of 4 run a relay over similar distances to the beach races

Water Events

Wade – from beach run to first marker located behind the shore break, wading, dolphin diving, grabbing the sand under waves and return to the beach. **Wade relay** requires 4 to a team (only Under 8s participate in this event at carnivals)

Surf Swim - swimming from the beach, around cans in the water, back to the beach again. Surf swim team requires an age group, 2 per team and 4 at Country Titles. Approximately 200 metres swim. (only U9s to U14s participate in these events at carnivals)

Board - similar to the swim race, but paddling boards around the course. Approximately 300 meters. You **MUST** complete the swim race before doing the board and any iron person races. **Board relay** requires age groups 4 to a team. (only U9s to U14s participate in these events at carnivals)



Point Score

Point score days will be noted on the season calendar for U8's to U14's only. U6's and U7's focus on education, not competition.

Points will be recorded on the point score sheets provided to the Age Managers; these will then be collated at the end of the session.

Points are awarded as follows, with water events doubled because of their importance in Surf Life Saving. Points for the first three placings are allocated at both club and carnival days.

Points are also awarded for participation and attendance.

Event	First Place	Second Place	Third Place
Water	8 points	6 points	4 points
Sand	4 points	3 points	2 point
Participation	1 point per event		
Attendance	1 point per Nippers morning or Carnival Day		

Equipment

Our club supplies all of the equipment needed for Sunday activities and Carnivals, which includes nipper boards. We ALL need to look after our equipment. If you use it, then it is your responsibility to take it back to the clubhouse, all sand and salt water washed off it and returned to the board room. Damaged equipment must be reported IMMEDIATELY to an Age Manager or a member of the Board of Directors. If the damage is not due to general wear and tear or not accidental, families may be asked to contribute to the cost of repairs or replacement. Nippers are welcome to use their own boards.

Age group boards to be used:

- Foam boards for U9's and U10's.
- Fibreglass boards for U11's to U14's.

The U6's to U8's under the instruction of their Age Manager may use the club body boards or the red and yellow foam boards.

Further board care is discussed with the Nippers at the commencement of the season. It is important that families support the Age Managers and Board Captain in teaching the Nippers how to care for our equipment, especially boards, as they are very expensive to replace.

CARNIVALS

Throughout the season, various carnivals are conducted, which enable the children to represent our club. Children from the U8's and up are encouraged to compete in the carnivals as this experience develops their competition skills, reading and navigating other beach and surf conditions, as well as developing their social skills, teamwork and resilience. Children are required to wear their competition navy and white caps as well as their pink rashies. We encourage all Nippers to represent our club at carnivals, and those who attend comment on the camaraderie that exists within our club and note the improvements their child/ren make in their Life Saving Skills.

The club pays entry fees to the majority of carnivals; you will be asked to reimburse the club if you enter and subsequently do not take part. The club will not enter you in future carnivals until outstanding entry fees are paid. Nominations for carnivals are called for in the weeks preceding a carnival via Facebook, and an announcement is also made on club days leading up to a carnival.

There are additional events that children can enter at carnivals, including team events. We endeavour to enter as many teams as possible in events. Team events include Buchanan Relay, Cameron Relay, Age Board Relay, Age Swim Relay, Age Beach Sprint, and All Age Beach Sprint Relay.

SLSMNC Branch Carnivals

These carnivals are held at one of the beaches in our Branch from Camden Haven in the south to Scotts Head in the north. All children from U8's to U14's are asked to make a big effort to attend these carnivals.

SLSNSW Interbranch

Children are selected for this carnival based on their performance at the last carnival of the season and the first carnival of next season. It includes ages U11's and up. One beach and two water events are selected from all the children in the Branch. Mid North Coast Teams compete against other NSW Branches for places in the State Team.

SLSNSW Country Championships

All children U8's and up are eligible to enter. This carnival is a highlight of the Nipper season.

SLSNSW State Championships

These are usually held in a metropolitan area and run over a few weeks. It provides competition opportunities for Metro and County competitors.

AWARDS + MEMBER RECOGNITION

Attendance and Participation

To be eligible for point score awards/trophies, children must meet the 70% attendance criteria for the season. These days include all club days and Branch carnivals and other official carnivals and events.

To be eligible for 100% attendance children must attend all club days.

Surf Education Awards

All Nippers are able to gain their respective SLSA Surf Education Awards for their age group during the season. For Nippers to be able to complete the lessons required to gain their award they need to attend 75% of all Nipper days for the season.

More information on Surf Education Awards can be found at <https://www.surflifesaving.com.au/resources/junior-nipper-activities>

Junior Life Saver of the Year

Those members in the U14's who are interested will be asked to present themselves before an independent committee for selection. A boy and a girl is selected to represent our club at Branch level. If successful, they then proceed on to State level. Some qualities they look for include enthusiasm and ongoing commitment to the Surf Life Saving Movement and community involvement. It is a great opportunity to showcase our amazing children from our club.

Club Encouragement Awards

These awards are chosen by the respective Age Manager to acknowledge those children who display the characteristics of sportsmanship, enthusiasm, positive attitude or who have made the most improvement during the season.

Nippers Presentation

An annual Nippers Presentation will be held at the end of the season. The dates will be notified via the Nippers calendar.



"AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE MOST OVERWHELMING KEY TO A CHILD'S SUCCESS IS THE POSITIVE INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS"

- JANE D. HULL