

**Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association  
(APOLA)  
News Release 10 am Wednesday 27 December 2017**

## **Professional Lifeguards say think safety at our beaches**

The Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association (APOLA) says everyone needs to to play it safe at beaches so loved ones and friends can take home memories of enjoyment rather than an unwanted memory of witnessing or being involved in a beach drowning tragedy.

Twenty five year plus professional beach lifeguard veteran and **APOLA National President Greg Hackfath**, who oversees beach safety on the NSW Coffs Coast, said that both regular and seasonal and occasional beach goers, be they swimmers, rock fishers, small boaters or surfers need to maintain respect for the ocean and always think safety first when out and about at beaches and at other open water locations.

“If people **think safety first** then a day at the beach or out on the lake or lagoon can be great fun,” said Coffs Harbour City Council Lifeguard Coordinator, Greg Hackfath.

Mr Hackfath said the recent north coast NSW tragedies are sending shock waves across the community and with summer temperatures expected to remain above average, people going to the beach over the December-January holiday period particularly must remember to always play it safe – always check actual beach and water conditions that are ever-changing throughout the day before even thinking about going in.

“For every beach visit people should always think carefully about where they should swim, surf, fish or paddle,” said Mr Hackfath.

“Always be guided by the on-duty lifeguards, read the beach signs and take time to check it out where best to go in before you go out,” said Mr Hackfath who also has spent decades surfing and working as a professional ocean lifeguard.

NSW APOLA Vice-President and BONDI RESCUE star, **Bruce ‘Hoppo’ Hopkins** says the best summer swimming locations are at **supervised locations known as that area between the red and yellow flags**. Going to an unsupervised beach is not a good idea unless you are an experienced surfer and even the experienced need to be careful not to exceed their limitations.

Mr Hopkins, who regularly runs surf safety clinics with **lifesaving legend Craig Riddington**, when he is not at work in charge of Australia’s busiest beach, Bondi, says everyone should learn how to read the conditions, learn about rips in well supervised practical in-water programs and never go in alone.

**Further information contact the APOLA Office on 0408 855 267**

### **APOLA's TOP 6 BEACH SWIM TIPS**

1. Bathe and swim between the red and yellow flags which indicate the supervised swimming area:  
No flags = No Swim
  2. Look for, read and obey water safety signs
  3. Check water conditions and the water depth before bathing or swimming - never dive head first
  4. Bathe and swim under supervision or swim with a mate - never go in alone
  5. Never bathe and swim directly after eating or under the influence of drugs including alcohol
  6. Learn how to recognise rips and keep clear of these areas - if caught in difficulty stay calm, float with the current and call out HELP and wave an arm if help is nearby
- AND REMEMBER when out in the sun always SLIP, SLOP, SLAP, SLURP and WRAP  
(slip on a shirt or rashie, slop on sunscreen, slap on a hat, drink water, and wear sunglasses)

### **Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association Incorporated. (APOLA Inc.)**

APOLA Inc is a non-profit professional association that is recognised as the peak professional association for Australian professional beach inspector ocean lifeguards. It promotes best practice in ocean water safety and beach management and coordinates professional ocean lifeguard activity in lifeguard training, community education, tourism support, public relations, regulation and risk management in consultation with Councils and their professional lifeguards and other water safety agencies.