



Media Release

Sunday, 20th 2022

World 1st for URBNSURF and APOLA.

Leading ocean safety experts from around Australia will come together on the 5th and 6th of May 2022 at Melbourne's **URBNSURF in what is being described as the world's 1st National Lifeguard Conference to be held at a wave park.**

URBNSURF will host the 26th Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association's (APOLA) Conference *MANAGING AQUATIC RISK.*

Among those presenting will be **Bruce 'Hoppo' Hopkins**, who is the Vice President of APOLA and President of Surf Educators International (SEI).

"Ten years ago, if you told me we would be heading off to Tullamarine Airport in Melbourne for an APOLA Conference and compete in APOLA's tag team surfing challenge, I would have thought you had rocks in your head" said Hoppo.

Ian Lee who is APOLA's National Training Officer describes URBANSURF as the perfect venue to hold the conference.

"The aquatic industry is rapidly changing. Many Local Councils are looking for different options when renewing aging aquatic assets or considering ways to increase revenue by adding facilities like wave pools. This is a great opportunity to inspect the facilities at URBNSURF and network with industry leaders." Ian said.

The nexus between risk and water is constant. How risk is managed and limiting exposure to costly litigation will feature strongly at this year's conference. Having well thought out pool and beach supervision plans is essential to minimising guarded drownings and serious accidents according to Hoppo. After decades of supervising one of the world's busiest beaches, Hoppo believes there is room for improvement with specialised lifeguard training when it comes to supervision and victim recognition.

"Is all about constant surveillance and a quick response. If we can minimise the time from when somebody is in trouble to when help arrives, we maximise their chance of survival" Hoppo said.



Response times to drownings have gained attention lately with action being taken against Whitsunday Regional Council which operate the lagoon at Arlie Beach in Queensland and their former lifeguard service contractor.

Mr Zhang a Chinese tourist and his 5-year-old son drowned at the Arlie Beach lagoon while on holidays from China. It has been reported by ABC NEWS that Littles Lawyers who are representing Mr Zhang's widow have filed court documents in Mackay claiming damages of more than 20 million yuan or around \$4.5 million dollars.

It is understood that the plaintiff's legal team will argue that both the Whitsunday Regional Council and the contractor **failed in their Duty of Care.**

Statewide Mutual is Australia's largest member owned Local Government self-insurer. They have been working alongside N.S.W. Councils since its formation in 1993 to reduce their exposure to risk and ensure they get the most from the industry's leading mutual.

Representatives from Statewide Mutual will be key note speakers at the conference. They hope to give lifeguards and risk managers a better understanding of their "Duty of Care" and the process when a person takes action against a Council and or contractor arguing negligence. Talking about case law and exposure to litigation should be of interest to everybody who provides a water safety function.

The Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association Inc (APOLA Inc) is a non-profit peak ocean safety association for Local Council employed beach inspectors and ocean lifeguards. It promotes and supports best practice in ocean water safety and beach management in consultation with Councils and those working in the industry.

APOLA extends an invitation to any person or organisation to attend the 26th APOLA National Conference who have an interest in water safety. Key note speakers and conference program will be available shortly.

For further information or interview opportunities with Bruce 'Hoppe' Hopkins please contact:

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