

## GUIDELINES FOR BEACH ACCESSIBILITY EQUIPMENT

### OVERVIEW

Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ) is committed to creating a culture of safety and promoting equity, respect and diversity. We have reflected the sentiments of this commitment in our [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2027](#) and [Disability Inclusion Action Plan](#). While we are already committed to the inclusion of people with disability, as demonstrated through existing initiatives led by volunteers, we aim to remove any barriers present in our organisation for all people with disability.

### PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The purpose of this guideline is to provide practical guidance to Clubs and volunteers on managing and handling beach access equipment when enabling people with disability to access and enjoy the beach environment through the use of accessibility equipment at Queensland Surf Life Saving Clubs (**SLSC's**).

This guideline is intended to enable SLSC's and volunteers meet obligations to identify, manage and minimise risks associated with beach accessibility equipment and manual handling involving people with disability.

The guideline covers relevant information for SLSC's that store, maintain or enable the public in the use of equipment such as beach wheelchairs and beach matting.

The advice in this guideline is not prescriptive. There may be alternate or future improvements, which will enhance provision of services that minimise the manual handling risks to both our volunteers and service users.

### INTRODUCTION/ BACKGROUND

Per SLSQ's Accessible Organisation Survey 2024, 40% of SLSC's across Queensland have a beach wheelchair and 24% have some form of beach matting that enables people with disability to access the beach. The outcomes of the survey highlighted the need for guidance to and by SLSC's on identifying, managing and minimising risks associated with beach accessibility equipment. However, it is recognised that there are some barriers in the availability of equipment due to time and volunteer restraints and in supporting people with disability due to a lack of training and resultant trepidation to assist. Further, there is an opportunity to increase the number of SLSC's to have beach matting or beach wheelchairs.



*Image from Mooloolaba SLSC*



## MANAGING BEACH ACCESSIBILITY EQUIPMENT

SLSQ encourages SLSC's to plan for better access for people with disability. It is important for SLSC's to consider the following before buying or receiving accessibility equipment:

- Marketing and managing bookings for the community ([Booking Form Template](#))
- Capacity/Plan for storage and maintenance
- Consider location of equipment and the ability to use the equipment without assistance from the SLSC while ensuring equipment is generally sheltered, dry and with minimised risk of damage/vandalism.
- Consider costs associated with having beach accessibility equipment
- Consider Training and Awareness for volunteers to build capability
- Risk Management - Consider having a risk register and a procedure. [Risk Register Template](#)

If the accessibility equipment at your club is owned by council, an agreement should be in place to clarify roles and responsibilities of each party under these guidelines. This includes:

- a. Legal ownership
- b. Risk management
- c. Insurance coverage
- d. Handling of equipment
- e. Ongoing maintenance
- f. [Risk waiver forms](#).

## OBLIGATIONS TO IDENTIFY, MANAGE AND MITIGATE RISKS

Any risks need to be considered and managed as the Club may be considered liable for any accidents. The Club should manage this in its risk register and ensure it has a risk management plan.

Specific conditions of use will need to be adhered to depending on the type of Beach wheelchair in use. Details of the specific Beach wheelchair equipment and the safe working practices should be displayed. Clubs should have clear usage of equipment information and guidelines/ processes available for hirers/users to read and understand their responsibilities. SLSQ advises having a QR Code linked to your club website or an available URL Link with information on the safety and operating procedures of the equipment to ensure this is easily accessible and visible for users. This information may be offered by beach wheelchair suppliers or by external equipment providers, by skilled professionals or in conjunction with equipment users. Clubs should provide detailed operation guidelines, which are supplied by the beach wheelchair/equipment provider. Please refer to the [SLSQ Website Information Guide for Beach Wheelchairs](#) for more information

It is recommended that current Club procedures and resources are utilised to record incidents that may occur with the beach wheelchair.

If the Club owns beach accessibility equipment, Clubs should ensure that the equipment is regularly serviced and maintained. If there is space for only one chair in storage, Clubs can consider a multi-functional chair to be appropriate.

Please review manual instructions for further inspection and maintenance provided by the equipment provider. You can also refer to [SLSQ's General Inspection and Maintenance Checklist](#).



Clubs may also provide resources/training to volunteers to help them access the appropriate information on operating and supporting people with disability.

For more information refer to the below resources;

- [SLSA People-with-Disability Understanding-Disability.pdf](#)
- [SLSA People-with-Disability Communication.pdf](#)
- [SLSA People-with-Disability Language-Guide.pdf](#)

### INSURANCE

The value of any beach wheelchairs should be included when calculating the value of contents to be insured under a Club's insurance coverage. It is highly unlikely that the wheelchair will be covered by insurance if it breaks during use. As such, Clubs should ensure an appropriate Waiver of Liability and Assumption of Risk Form is in place and signed at the time of booking or access.

### OBLIGATIONS OF VOLUNTEERS & LIFESAVERS

SLSQ welcomes people of all abilities and is committed to the inclusion of people with disability. It is essential for our volunteers to note that the [Civil Liability Act 2003 \(QLD\)](#) sets out special protection for volunteers against personal liability for civil liability which arises as a result of an act or omission they have done, provided:

- they have acted in good faith.
- without recklessness; and
- while doing community work that has been organised by our organisation.

**The absolute priority of all Lifesavers is water safety of the general public within their area of responsibility. At no time, should Lifesavers compromise this responsibility to provide access assistance to people with a disability seeking to utilise accessibility equipment. Assuming the primary responsibility is met, all Lifesavers are encouraged to provide accessibility assistance, but only where they feel comfortable to do so.**

For Volunteers and Lifesavers, please ensure pre-use checks are completed before equipment is utilised by a member of the public. According to the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(QLD\)](#) a person must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and take reasonable care to not adversely affect others' health and safety. If not comfortable to support directly, volunteers are encouraged to show the person using the beach wheelchair and or their support worker/carer the location and instructions on how to operate the equipment safely.

Please note, the transfer and utilisation of a beach wheelchair must be carried out or supervised by the care giver and not by volunteers where volunteers are not trained or comfortable to support. Volunteers can assist pushing/stabilising the wheelchair, but it should be up to the user and/or carer to operate the wheelchair.

It is recommended that Clubs include information on their booking forms or online booking systems on volunteers not being trained in transferring to wheelchairs so people with disability can make their own arrangements if they would like support from a carer/trained professional.

### LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION



### 1. Inclusive Communication:

Wherever possible, Volunteers and Lifesavers in providing assistance should always defer to the instructions of the primary carer or support worker. It is important to note that not all wheelchair users transfer the same; just like everyone there will be different techniques, preferences and requirements. You should always ask and not assume.

Questions that may support you include:

*"What is the best way for me to assist you?"*

*"Are there any areas that I should avoid that may be painful or delicate?"*

*"Is there anything specific I can do to make you more comfortable?"*

*"Would you like me to explain the equipment features to you?"*

Please note we recommend using the principle of **person-first language**: refer to "people with disability" rather than "disabled people" throughout your interactions.

### 2. Cultural Sensitivity:

We encourage all to acknowledge intersectionality and encourage cultural sensitivity when assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability or people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

### Training and Awareness resources and important links:

Example of Instruction Manuals: [Accessible Beaches Resource- Mobi-Chair Beach Wheelchair Instruction Manual](#)

[Accessible Beaches Resource - How to roll out and set up beach matting](#)

[Accessible Beaches Resource -Mobi-Mat Information Flyer](#)

[Resources — Accessible Beaches Australia](#)

[Disability Inclusion - Surf Life Saving Queensland](#)

### Reference:

[Beach-Wheelchair-Guidelines-.pdf \(surflifesaving.com.au\)](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(legislation.qld.gov.au\)](#)

[Civil Liability Act 2003 \(QLD\)](#)

[Resources — Accessible Beaches Australia](#)

[Beach Accessibility – Push Mobility](#)

[Beach Equipment Maintenance. – Push Mobility](#)