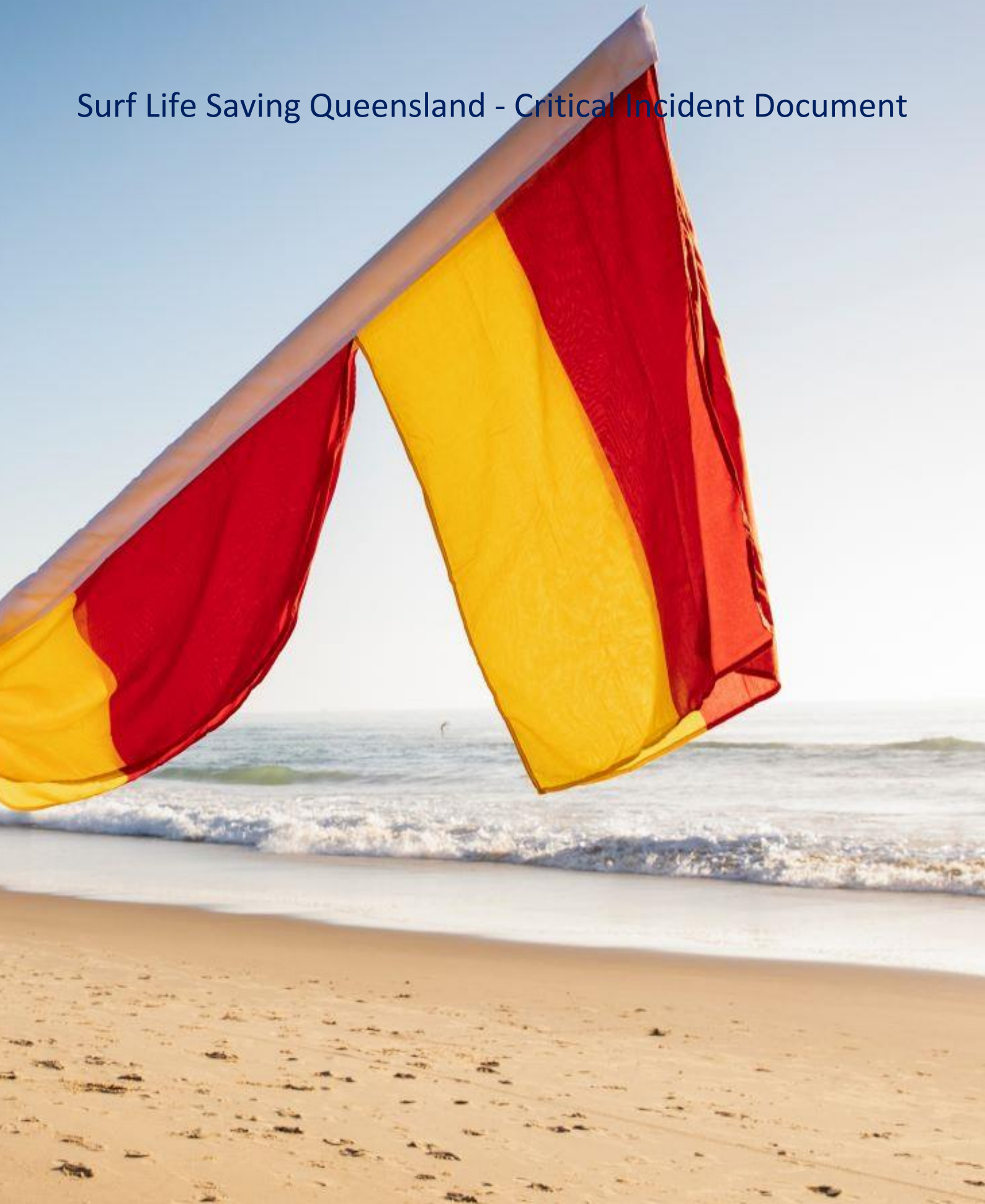


Surf Life Saving Queensland - Critical Incident Document



Overview

A critical incident can occur at any time and could have an impact on an individual's life in various ways. It is the reaction of the individual that can make it a critical incident not the size or nature of incident.

Such incidents can be sudden and stressful. A critical incident can make people feel overwhelmed and can impact and compromise one's health. Critical incidents can involve witnessing actual or threatened death, serious harm and/or injury. For the purposes of this document, these events can involve participating in or witnessing a rescue, recovery, serious first aid incident or resuscitation. These events have the potential to evoke strong emotional, physical, behavioural, and cognitive responses in those involved.

Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ) operates in an environment which has the potential for critical incidents to occur. The roles within SLSQ can be highly challenging and incidents can happen at any time as part of lifesaving duties. These incidents can include direct, cumulative, and vicarious trauma. SLSQ is committed to offering support to members should they experience a critical incident while performing lifesaving measures or other events related to their involvement. This can include but not limited to event safety, volunteer patrols, day-to-day activities, club duties, fundraising activities, training, or events and on the way to and from patrol.

This document will help outline critical incidents with SLSQ volunteers who are involved in the approved activities of Surf Life Saving Queensland. It will explore the processes, actions, and responsibilities within SLSQ.

Debrief

Peer Support Officers do not conduct debriefing after an incident occurs. If a member needs a debrief, please refer them to their Duty Officer or Patrol Captain.

A debrief is a voluntary discussion, however highly recommended. Debriefing is for those involved in the incident and will be conducted by either the Duty Officer or the Patrol Captain. Debriefs can consist of acknowledging the incident, recognise people may have physical and or mental issues, be informed of the process after an incident occurs, and highlight resources available to members.

NOTE: Only the members who were involved in or were direct witnesses of the event should be participative in the debrief (excluding the parent/guardian of minors). No other persons i.e., Club Officer Bearers or SLSQ Staff should be present for this debrief.

SLSQ Response Framework

SLSQ's critical incident response process is vital as it provides the best care available to members. The support framework is structured to help members receive the appropriate support to their circumstance.

Within SLSQ, the PSO's are there to help members understand when it is important to be referred onto a GP, Psychologist or Counsellor or may be able to provide the support to get the member back to their duties. SLSQ acknowledges that it is normal and reasonable to have reactions of physical, psychological, emotional, or behavioural when a critical incident occurs. Furthermore, it is important to understand that everyone will respond to a critical incident differently and may not need assistance. There are procedures put in place by SLSQ to ensure the safety of their members. All members involved in critical incidents are offered to be contacted by a Peer Support Officer within 24 to 48 hours of the incident occurring. Further contacting the member, a week after the incident if needed.

The aim of a debrief is to prevent health effects and provide information to those involved in the incident on how to receive help. The debrief will provide valuable feedback, information, and validation. Additionally, it is conducted to try and help reduce PTSD, alcohol use, depression and or relationship problems.

It is NOT recommended to use psychological debriefing. Debriefing is NOT Counselling!! It is about putting the stressful event into perspective. What is said in a debrief can help indicate if more training or education are needed.

Following an incident some people have a few strong reactions that can last for a few hours, days, or weeks. These could be things such as feeling apprehensive, anxious, distressed, or feeling in shock.

Psychological debriefing has been shown to potentially cause more harm. If a member has expressed this has occurred, please pass this information onto the Member Experience Manager.

Peer Support

Peer Support is a program commonly used within first responder organisations, it provides an approach to psychological health and safety. Within SLSQ we use current members who are trained to support members after a critical incident. As Peer Support Officers are fellow members, they understand and can relate to similar challenges experience by other members. Furthermore, they can provide empathetic support, encouragement, and hope after a critical incident.

A Peer Support Officer's role involves educating members on the impacts of stressful events and provide coping strategies to help them overcome a critical incident. Peer Support Officer's do not provide counselling. They are there to provide support and help identify if the member needs professional help. A Peer Support Officer provides guidance on warning signs. The support can be either via telephone or in person. All Peer Support offered is subject to confidentiality by signing an agreement. The confidentiality agreement states to not discuss with anyone what is mentioned with the member involved unless the member is a danger to themselves or others. This ensures members the peace of mind that nothing will be disclosed.

Those that have experienced a critical incident may experience some, none, or all the responses below. For most, these responses are short-lived and will subside within a few days or weeks.

- Avoiding reminders of the event, such as location it occurred, or people involved.
- Constant negative thoughts and feelings
- Trouble or irregular sleeping or issues concentrating
- Displaying anger and irritability or sweating
- Being easily startled, constantly vigilant or highly strung
- Withdrawal from friends and family or a loss of motivation Feeling low and / or tired all the time.
- Changes in appetite, sleep, weight or increased alcohol or drug use

Please see the methods below which may help you cope after a critical incident.

- Recognise what you have been through. It is normal to have an emotional reaction to the event.
- If you want to, talk about it to someone who you trust.
- Get plenty of rest, regularly exercise and eat regular, well-balanced meals.
- Try to keep a routine including normal activities.
- Don't bottle or block out feelings.
- Try and plan on an enjoyable activity each day.
- Spend time with people you care about
- Make time for relaxation.

SLSQ takes the welfare of its members seriously, however we have finite resources. As such, any incidents involving members using their lifesaving skills external to the SLSQ environment will require the members to seek out their personal GP to arrange necessary support. Should these incidents effect a member's ability to carry out lifesaving duties – they can apply directly to their clubs for a leave of absence.

Roles and Responsibilities

Peer Support Officer (PSO)

A Peer Support Officer is a person who shares the same or similar work environment and provides first contact support to members, referring on anyone who requires and is desirous of professional assistance. It should be noted that peer support is not a form of counselling. The Peer Support process assists people to set realistic expectations and develop effective coping strategies to manage the impact of exposure to stressful events.

- Have the option to be rostered on-call throughout the week at designated times as per roster for the region.
- Available to assist outside the rostered times if required, (e.g., when there is a critical incident).
- Provide support via telephone or in person to SLSQ members. Help members understand when it is important to be referred to a GP, Psychologist or Counsellor or be able to provide the support to get the member back to their duties.
- Assist members to understand the potential impact of stressful events.
- Educate members on the impacts of stressful events and provide coping strategies.
- Helping members to identify when professional treatment may be required.
- Provide educational material pertaining to possible impact of critical incidents to members.
- Offering a follow up call 14 days after the incident
- Providing confidentiality to all those who receive Peer Support, this includes any information communicated via phone or email.

For more information, please read the [MSP01 - SLSQ Peer Support Procedure June 2023](#)

State Operations and Communication Centre (SOCC) Personnel

SOCC personnel will collect from the DO or PC information about the incident and relevant member details including names, contact and involvement in the incident.

SOCC personnel will then contact the rostered Peer Support Officer, inform them of the incident, and provide the contact details of all members involved who require support.

Critical Incident Support Process

Patrol Captain (PC)

Following an incident, the Patrol Captain (PC) will ensure appropriate documentation is completed. Including all contact details of the members involved in the incident. If any minors are involved, they will also collect their parents or guardians contact details. Their role is to assess the level of the incident, including their immediate safety and to ensure they or their patrol team members are in a suitable condition to drive home.

PC needs to ensure the following is collected.

- Name
- Mobile number
- E-mail address
- Date of Birth (Members Under 18 are required to have parent/guardian present for any PSO session)

The Patrol Captain/Club Captain, with the assistance of the Duty Officer where available, will report incident particulars and members' details to the State Operations and Communications Centre (SOCC).

1. Record all details of those involved in the incident.
2. Notify the SOCC of initial actions.
3. Compile list of members directly and indirectly exposed to the incident.
4. Ensure collection of:
 - a. Name
 - b. Mobile number
 - c. E-mail address
 - d. Date of Birth
5. Advise members they will be contacted by a Peer Support Officer.
6. Advise of the process to ensure members are aware of the support available to them.
7. Collate and send report to the State Operations Centre (SOCC)

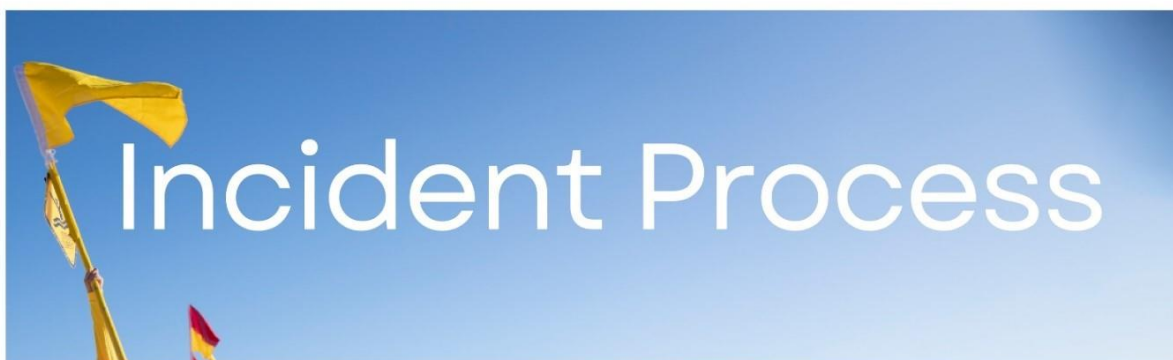
Duty Officer (DO) (Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast)

The Duty Officer (DO) (where applicable) will work with the Patrol Captain / Club Captain to provide incident particulars and will have the responsibility to make the referral for Peer Support through the State Operations and Communications Centre (SOCC).

When an incident occurs, the Patrol Captain or Duty Officer to initiate the State Operations Communication Centre (SOCC). Once SOCC has been in contact with the Peer Support Officer, the Peer Support Officer will contact the member via telephone within 24 to 48 hours of the incident.

The Peer Support Officer will actively listen to the member to understand the member’s reaction towards the critical incident. The Peer Support Officer will provide information and a traumatic flyer for members involved in a critical incident. The Peer Support Officer will ask if the member feels like they need a follow up in 7 or 14 days depending on the member.

If the member is still distressed at the two-week mark, the Peer Support Officer will suggest referral for a GP mental health care plan, or Work Cover Queensland claim.



Incident Process

Step 1	An incident occurs – State Operations Communication Centre (SOCC/Surfcom) shift supervisor creates the incident in LIMSOC
Step 2	SOCC/Surfcom notify Peer Support Coordinator (PSC) of incident in progress. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SOCC/DO to obtain member names and each members contact details and record in IRL notes ● DO's report to shift supervisor ● SOCC/Surfcom to contact rostered on Peer Support Officers (PSO) ● SOCC/Surfcom to provide roster on PSO's member details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring all members under the age of 18 have the parents or guardian's permission before talking to the member
Step 3	Operational Debrief conducted at scene by Duty Officer/Patrol Captain. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Please use the form here ● Advise of the Peer Support Program but focus on the Operational Debrief ● SOCC/Surfcom to record in IRL notes that the Operational Debrief has occurred and by whom
Step 4	PSO to contact Members involved within 24-48 hours after the incident occurred. PSO provide Members with traumatic flyer and Service referral flyer after chat with member
Step 5	PSO/s conduct any member follow ups over phone as required and provide support to members involved in incident.
Step 6	PSO's complete the Peer Support Form, within 7 days of talking to the member. <p>#Please note this form is confidential and only the Member Welfare Officer and Peer Support Officer assigned to the incident can see this</p>

SOCC personnel will then contact the rostered PSO, inform them of the incident, and provide the contact details of all members involved, including an email contact utilizing Surfguard if necessary.

If in doubt, contact SOCC.

SOCC personnel must keep PSO phone numbers confidential and should not share these contact details with any other party.

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HOW TO ACCESS THE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

- 1** Incident occurs
- 2** Once incident is resolved, PC / DO requests a PSO via SOCC
Phone: 07 3631 7400
- 3** SOCC collates incident details including all contact information of patrolling members requiring Peer Support.
Phone and email, including Parental/Caragiver contact details for minors
- 4** SOCC will contact SLSQ PSO and pass on referral details
- 5** PSO will initiate contact with all members

KEY

- * State Operations Communications Centre (SOCC)
- * Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ)
- * Peer Support Officer (PSO)
- * Duty Officer (DO)
- * Patrol Captain (PC)

Referral for Peer Support not through SOCC

Referrals during patrolling hours will be made by SOCC personnel as per the above role descriptions.

Other referrals are to be directed to the Member Experience Manager via peersupport@lifesaving.com.au

If a President asks you to provide Peer Support to a member in your club without going following the above procedure, please contact Alex via 0484 828 373.

Supporting Children and Young People

Peer support is provided to all members who are involved in a critical incident. However, when the member is under 18 there are requirements that must be adhered to. It is important to understand that parental consent is needed before talking to a member under the age of 18. It is the responsibility of the PSO to contact the parents first and discuss the matter before speaking to the minor. At least one parent or guardian must consent to the support. This consent must be recorded by the PSO and should state the parent/guardian they spoke to and the date.

Confidentiality is provided for all members therefore, anything said to the PSO should not be repeated to the parent or guardian. The minor's parent or guardian should be advised of this, before they provide their consent, unless the minor is a danger to themselves or others.

If there is believed risk of harm to anyone or the member, this information can be disclosed to the relevant parties. This includes to the parent or guardian and health services and or relevant authorities. If information is being released, the member must be advised, unless further harm can be foreseen.

Reporting, Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The Peer Support program is a confidential process. The members have an expectation of privacy as it relates to matters involving Peer Support, the

Records will be kept ensuring.

- Record history of what has happened and discussed to date.
- Ensure consistency and continuity of support.
- Protect the organisation as there is a record and evidence to show support was provided.

Records will be done via [PSO - Incident Report Form](#) or via phone with member welfare officer.

No one has access to this information other than the Member Welfare Officer.

Further Resources

You can find more information on the [SLSQ App](#).

- [Peer Support](#)
- [How to Access Peer Support](#)
- [Extra Support Services](#)