

It's a RAP

Edition 4

SLSQ RAP
is Launched



National
Reconciliation
Week and
NAIDOC Week
2025

RAP the
Coast
kicks off

Clontarf
Employment Forum

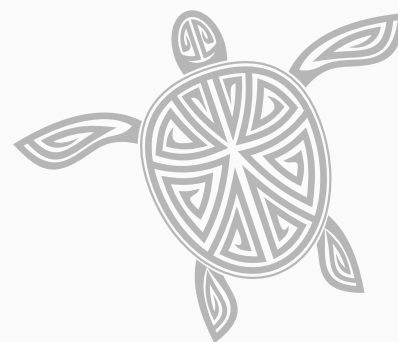


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As One.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this update may contain names and/or images of deceased persons



Acknowledgement

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, beaches, skies, and waterways where we deliver our lifesaving services. We honour their enduring connection to Country, which has sustained and inspired their culture, stories, and practices for millennia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, recognising their strength, resilience, and contributions to our shared future.



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Welcome



Welcome to our 4th edition of 'It's a RAP', Surf Life Saving Queensland's (SLSQ) quarterly update dedicated to keeping our members, stakeholders, and interested parties informed on our journey towards reconciliation. Designed to provide information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement across the organisation, It's a RAP celebrates our progress, recognises history, while highlighting upcoming opportunities for involvement and growth within ourselves, our clubs, our organisation and communities.

We celebrate a significant milestone with the launch of SLSQ's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), and what an occasion it was. We recognise that our commitment to reconciliation is only as strong as our actions and SLSQ is committed to delivering on these.

Come and Try days continue to roll out across the state and with the start of the North Queensland season. There has been lots happening with the Raising of the Flags, NQB Indigenous Round of Fastest on Sand and RAP the Coast.

In partnership with Clontarf, we recently attended their employment forum showcasing pathways in Lifesaving and skill development. We also worked with Youth Justice to deliver nationally recognised First Aid for their participants in the Transition to Success program.

In this edition, we explore National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week - delving into the history and significance of these important events, and how Surf Life Saving Queensland honours and participates in them. You'll also find opportunities to get involved in upcoming NAIDOC celebrations, where Surf Life Saving Queensland will proudly be joining the festivities.



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SLSQ Launches RAP



We have followed the journey through development, endorsement and now we celebrate the launch of Surf Life Saving Queensland's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Over 40 people gathered in the auditorium at Surf Rescue House (SRH) and via live stream on-line for the launch of Surf Life Saving Queensland's (SLSQ's) first Reflect RAP on the 27th of May 2025. Significantly, the launch took place on the first day of National Reconciliation Week. Amongst the guests were Chris Ketchup and Darius Lewin-Pearson, Forrest Beach Surf Life Saving Club members and artists of SLSQ's commissioned artworks, which are not only on display at SRH, but also featured throughout the RAP document. "We are excited to share our artistic journeys and cultural heritage through our work," Chris and Darius wrote of their contribution.

After a short introduction from Rachael Wynberg, SLSQ Consultant, those gathered were moved by the messages of Acknowledgement that were compiled in a video from Traditional Owners across the state. We recognise that we patrol and protect across many beautiful parts of Country and we respect the ongoing connections and custodianships of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that have cared for these places for tens of thousands of years.



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From our most northern club to our southern shores, we were delivered messages from:

- Marc Harbrow – Yirrganydji (North Queensland)
- Ashley Saltner – Wulgurukaba (North Barrier)
- Uncle Colin Lingwoodock– Byelee People (Wide Bay Capricornia)
- Lyndon Davis – Kabi Kabi (Sunshine Coast) and
- Uncle John Graham – a Kombumerri Man of the wider Yugambeh Language Group (Gold Coast)
- before being Welcomed onto Country by Shannon Ruska of Tribal Experiences.

Uniquely designed ottomans provided by Winya Indigenous Furniture allowed guests to sit and listen as Shannon explained the importance of Welcome to Country, the meaning behind this significant ceremony and its historical connection to traditional protocols. He then went on to explain the smoking ceremony which was reverently conducted and received by those gathered. Jimmy, who accompanied Shannon, then explained the art of, and performed with the didgeridoo; the ancient sounds reverberating through the assembly and the area of Meanjin where we had gathered.

Of the RAP, SLSQ President Gerard O'Brien said: "Surf Life Saving Queensland is proud to embark on our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan; an important step in our journey toward greater recognition, respect, and understanding with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. We acknowledge that reconciliation is more than words – it requires listening, learning, and action. Through this plan, we aim to strengthen relationships, create opportunities, and embed cultural understanding into the fabric of our organisation."



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He added, "we recognise the deep and enduring connection that First Nations peoples have with the lands, waters, and skies where we patrol, and we are committed to ensuring that their knowledge, voices, and leadership are both valued and welcomed within Surf Life Saving Queensland."

CEO and SLSQ RAP Champion Dave Whimpey addressed the group, which included SLSQ RAP Working Group members, community partners, Board, SLISA representatives and staff, as he reinforced SLSQ's commitment to walking the path of Reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. He explained, "our Reflect RAP is the foundation from which we will build stronger connections with First Nations communities, ensuring their voices and traditions are respected – both on and off the beach. As CEO of Surf Life Saving Queensland and RAP Champion, I am committed to leading this work, and the subsequent actions with integrity and purpose. We will work at creating culturally safe spaces, providing real opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, members, staff, and partners to thrive within our organisation and beyond. This RAP outlines the next steps of our journey. Together, we will shape a future of growth for our movement; one that is inclusive, equitable, and enriched by the contributions of First Nations peoples."



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SLSQ Board Member Dr Melissa Cowlshaw closed the event with a warm vote of thanks, recognising the significance of this milestone and the shared opportunities that lay ahead.

We would like to acknowledge the Queensland Government Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, and Multiculturalism for funding to assist with the launch. To those who have contributed, attended and who are committed to delivering the actions outlined in the plan as we work towards a more reconciled Australia – thank you. A copy of the Reconciliation Action Plan is available from the SLSQ Website: <https://lifesaving.com.au/app/uploads/SLSQ-Reflect-Reconciliation-Action-Plan-2025-2026.pdf>



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NQB RAP the Coast



On Saturday, April 5, Surf Life Saving Queensland hosted the first ever RAP the Coast Forum at our North Queensland Regional Office in Smithfield, marking a significant milestone in our journey toward reconciliation.

This event brought together Elders, Community Leaders, Harbrow Mentoring, Clontarf Foundation, Surf Life Saving volunteers including State Committee and Branch Board Representatives, and families, to connect and engage with SLSQ's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Over a shared lunch, we reflected on our commitment to walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as part of our As One Framework. Discussions included identifying regional priorities, sharing stories of successful programs, strengthening partnerships, and finding the best ways to encourage community engagement and participation in Surf Life Saving.



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Key themes included:

- Improving safety messaging and increasing community familiarity with SLSQ by fostering connections with communities.
- Expanding opportunities for organisational growth with First Nations membership, engagement, and employment pathways through strengthened partnerships.
- The importance of cultural awareness and shared learning across all levels of the organisation and addressing barriers to participation.
- Using RAP the Coast as a platform to continue to collaborate, connect and deliver.

At the request of the assembled gathering, a networking group will be created to continue the conversations, partner in the actionable deliverables of the RAP and to develop relationships. This was the first in a series of RAP the Coast Forums planned across the state throughout the second half of 2025. The warmest thank you to everyone who attended and contributed their voices to shape this important work. Information on upcoming events will be shared with members through Regional Offices. We look forward to welcoming you on our journey.



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Raising of the Flags

2025 Surf Life Saving Season Begins in North Queensland



On the weekend of March 5th and 6th, the North Queensland Surf Life Saving Clubs (Port Douglas SLSC, Ellis Beach SLSC, Cairns SLSC, Ettu Bay SLSC and Mission Beach SLSC), officially Raised the Flags to mark the beginning of the 2025 volunteer patrol season.

The clubs of Mission Beach, Ellis Beach and Port Douglas SLSC each held significant ceremonies that not only saw the traditional red and yellow flags passed from our Lifeguards to our volunteer patrols, but also raised the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and Australian Flags side by side. This is the second year this has been undertaken by the North Queensland Branch and saw clubs throughout the state also participate at the start of their patrol season in 2024.



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This powerful gesture symbolised more than the start of a patrol season. It was a meaningful acknowledgment that the beaches we serve and protect have been cared for under the custodianship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for millennia - and that connection remains strong today. Clubs were welcomed onto Country in good spirits, with wishes for a safe season ahead for all who visit our shores.

We acknowledge Linc Walker - Kuku Yalanji, Marc Harbrow - Yirrganydji, Lily Hart Djiru Elder, Councillor Trudy Tschui - Cassowary Coast Regional Council, Jennine Tax SLSQ Board, and our clubs, patrolling members, volunteers and community members who participated in the occasion; thank you.



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Transition to Success Program, Delivers Life Saving Skills



On April 2nd and 3rd, a group of young people engaged with the Transition to Success (T2S) program through Queensland Youth Justice successfully completed their HLTAID011 First Aid and CPR qualifications as part of the Skills for Life Program. Designed specifically to engage and up-skill First Nations participants, the program provided these young individuals with critical lifesaving knowledge while exploring pathways into community participation, further award acquisition, and future employment. Delivered over two consecutive days, the program was once again facilitated by Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ) Education and supported by SLSQ as part of their commitment to inclusion.

The Skills for Life Program successfully combined education, practical training, and community connection, leaving participants with both confidence and credentials for life.



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Clontarf Test the Waters - 2025 Come and Try Day



Despite an early morning downpour, spirits were high and the sand was alive with energy as more than 80 students from five FNQ Clontarf Academies (Cairns, Trinity Bay, Woree, Bentley Park and Gordonvale) gathered at Yorkey's Knob Beach on Friday, May 2nd for the 2nd North Queensland Branch (NQB) Come and Try Day.

Participants were greeted with an Acknowledgement of Country overlooking the coastline. The moment set a respectful and heartfelt tone for what was to become a morning filled with laughter, learning, and athletic discovery. In what many described as their first real taste of Surf Life Saving and surf sports, the young men rotated through three action-packed stations in a round robin format. From diving into the sand in the Flags event, displaying natural speed in Beach Sprints, and working as a team in Beach Relays, there was no shortage of competition - or camaraderie.



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Groups, colourfully named Jellyfish, Turtles, Rays, Crocodiles, Barras, and Dugongs, tackled the structured activities with determination and enthusiasm. Under the guidance of Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ) volunteers and staff, the boys received expert coaching and encouragement at every turn; ensuring that every participant had the opportunity to engage, learn, and enjoy - with a strong focus on fun, safety, and teamwork.

For many, this event marked the beginning of what could be a longer journey in Surf Life Saving. Natural talent was on display, and there's no doubt that a few new contenders emerged ahead of the Indigenous Round of Fastest on Sand, which was held on May 10th.

The day wouldn't have been possible without the collaborative effort between SLSQ and the Clontarf Foundation, and the invaluable support of Sport and Recreation Queensland through the Indigenous Surf Sports Development Program. This initiative continues to create inclusive and culturally safe pathways for First Nations youth to engage in beach safety, sport, and community connection.

As the waves rolled in and the sun finally peeked through the clouds, it was clear that the 2nd NQB Come and Try Day achieved exactly what it set out to do: inspire, engage, and build a stronger future - one sprint, one dive, and one smile at a time.



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NQB Indigenous Round Fastest on Sand



Yorkey's Knob, 10 March 2025 - the skies may have opened, but it was the spirit of the North that shone brightest at the 2nd annual North Queensland Branch (NQB) Fastest on Sand. Held on the golden sands of Yorkey's Knob, this Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ) event defied the weather, bringing together a powerful mix of athleticism, culture, community spirit, and connection.

Despite the rain, the energy on the beach was high and the connections that were forged were genuine. From Mission Beach to Port Douglas, surf club members and local community groups stood side by side in a celebration of sport, identity and inclusivity. In partnership with Harbrow Mentoring, Clontarf Academies, and local First Nations communities, the day was a shining example of how Surf Life Saving can bridge cultures and bring people together through shared purpose and fun.



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The event commenced with a Welcome to Country by Marc Harbrow, followed by an address from Cr Trevor Tim, Division 4 Councillor and Cairns Regional Council's first Indigenous Councillor. He praised the strong collaboration between SLSQ and First Nations organisations, commending the positive outcomes of the Indigenous Surf Sports Development Program (ISSDP) and its impact across North Queensland. The Buri Guman Dance Group gave a beautiful performance as part of the official welcome, including their 'Rainbow Dance', which acknowledged their connection to Country and called for blue skies - a wish embraced with open hearts, laughter and umbrellas.

Adding to the day's cultural richness was the presence of Bumma Bippera Media 98.7FM, Gimuy/Cairns' first and only Indigenous radio station, who had been promoting the event and captured the energy of the day to share across the region. Festivities kicked off with traditional games led by Harbrow Mentoring's Future Mentors. The games warmed up competitors and helped forge new friendships, with laughter and high fives echoing across the wet sand.

The formal competition began with a long-distance run for ages 7 and up, testing endurance and setting the tone for the day's athletic events. This was followed by the traditional surf lifesaving flags event, where a quick introduction and demonstration gave first timers the chance to shine - and they did, with natural ability and sportsmanship on full display.



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The sprints ramped up the pace, giving participants a taste of the headline event - the Fastest on Sand. The action was intense but fun, with the all-age relay and a friendly race-off between Clontarf's Trinity Bay and Woree Academies and students from St Monica's College drawing loud cheers and waves of encouragement from spectators. After all that action, it was time for a well-earned break. Black Pearl Catering served up delicious chicken and rice, giving everyone a chance to rest, yarn, and refuel before the main event.

Then the time came - the Fastest on Sand final. Age group winners lined up in a staggered start to crown the overall champions. Jim Kaigana of Clontarf, claimed the male title, showcasing grit and speed. For the female title, Charlize Gee of Mission Beach SLSC made a remarkable return to competition following injury, proving she's still a force to be reckoned with on the sand. With energy still high, a tug of war closed out the sporting program, bringing competitors, volunteers, and spectators together in one last display of camaraderie.



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The day concluded with presentations, recognising age champions and standout efforts. Among the most touching moments was the presentation of the Spirit of the Carnival award, given to a Clontarf Academy member, Kenlock Savo, who showed enthusiasm in every event, helped younger children, and shared smiles and handshakes that left a lasting impression.

Feedback from the crowd was overwhelmingly positive. The Smith family from Mission Beach SLSC summed it up: "This is an incredible event. Why aren't there more people here? We're going to tell everyone about it." For others, like a young first-time participant, the day sparked something new, "this is the best fun I've ever had at the beach. I'm coming back."

None of this would have been possible without the Queensland Government's Active Industry Project Fund supporting SLSQ's Indigenous Surf Sports Development Program, and the tireless effort of North Queensland Branch volunteers, officials, staff, and community leaders. Throughout the event - and during lead-up "come and try" sessions - selectors were also keeping a keen eye out for emerging talent to take part in future ISSDP development opportunities.

This event is another beginning. Indigenous Round Fastest on Sand carnivals will continue in Townsville, Mackay, and Yeppoon throughout 2025, opening doors for further sport, training and club pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and opportunities for clubs to connect. Fastest on Sand may be about speed - but what we saw at Yorkey's Knob was about something deeper: connection, culture, courage - and a vision for the future of Surf Life Saving where everyone belongs.



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Did you Know?



SLSQ launched their RAP in National Reconciliation Week and in July our attention turns to NAIDOC week, so we thought it was a great idea to understand a little more about these significant events and why they are important.

National Reconciliation Week



National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is held every year from 27 May to 3 June, marking two significant events in Australia's reconciliation journey: the 1967 Referendum and the 1992 Mabo Decision. These dates remind us of the progress made - and the work still ahead - in building respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community.

The 2025 Theme: Bridging Now to Next

The theme for NRW 2025, Bridging Now to Next, highlights the importance of connecting our past with our future. It calls on all Australians to reflect, learn, and act - guided by the lessons of history and committed to the journey ahead.



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NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK 2025

Bridging Now to *Next*



Why Reconciliation Matters

Reconciliation is not a straight path. It includes moments of progress and moments of challenge. Reconciliation lives in our hearts, minds, and actions. It's about truth-telling, building trust, and strengthening relationships - at home, at work, in our organisation and communities.

A Brief History of National Reconciliation Week

- 1993: Began as the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation, supported by major faith communities.
- 1996: The first National Reconciliation Week was launched by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.
- 2001: Reconciliation Australia was established to lead and promote national efforts. Over 300,000 people walked across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in a powerful show of support for reconciliation, with similar bridge walks taking place across the country.



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NAIDOC Week is held in the first week of July each year to celebrate the history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It's a time for all Australians to learn about First Nations histories and cultures and to join in celebrating the world's oldest continuous living cultures through local events and activities.

In 2025, NAIDOC Week marks 50 years of recognising and uplifting Indigenous voices, culture and resilience. This year's theme, "The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy," honours the contributions of Elders and communities while celebrating young leaders who will carry the movement forward.

NAIDOC began as a call for justice and recognition and has grown into a powerful national movement. As the National NAIDOC Committee takes steps toward greater self-determination, this milestone year looks to the future - with strength drawn from the past and hope carried by the next generation. Together, we celebrate a legacy built on unity, respect, and cultural pride.

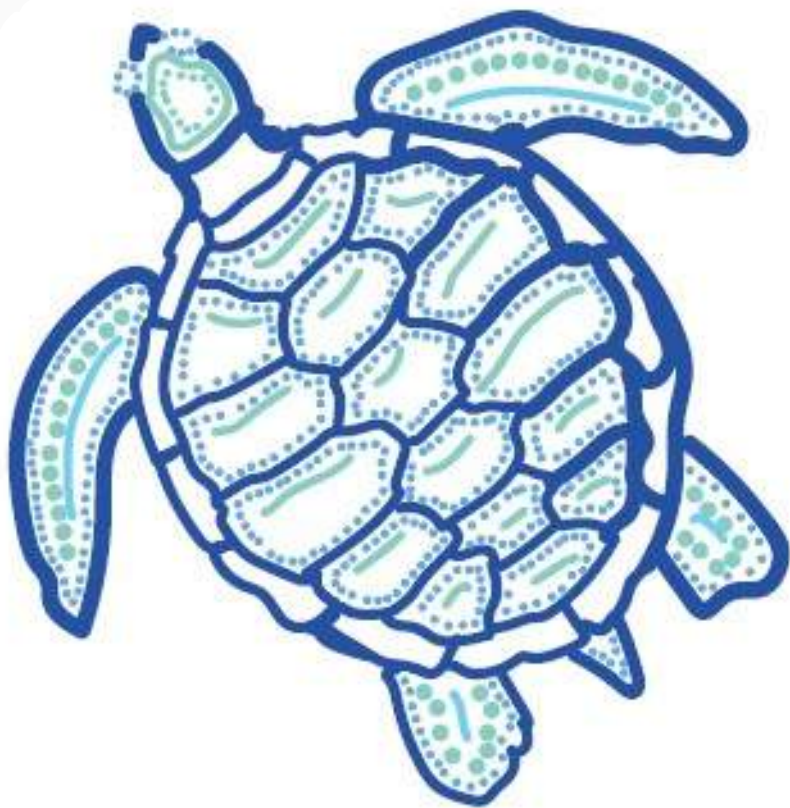


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Share Your Story



If your club or branch are hosting events and activities that are building on connections and recognising contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we would love to celebrate you in It's a RAP, so please share your stories with r.wynberg@firstwavetraining.com.au for inclusion.



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Join the Journey



What's Coming Up? Pass the message stick around about the awesome events that are coming up that you can be a part of:

6 - 13 July: NAIDOC Week

4 July: NAIDOC in the Park Cairns/Gimuy – SLSQ and RAP Working Group members will be there to connect community with Surf Life Saving.

11 July: Musgrave Park Family Fun Day Brisbane/Meanjin – SLSQ and RAP Working Group members will be there to connect community with Surf Life Saving.

12 July: SLSQ State Pool Rescue Championship – Welcome to Country and RAP Working Group members in attendance to engage and guide if you have questions.

20 July: Townsville Come and Try Day/Sign On – North Barrier Branch

10 Aug: North Barrier Branch Townsville Indigenous Round Beach Event

15 Aug: RAP the Coast Wide Bay Cap

16 Aug: Wide Bay Cap Yeppoon Indigenous Round Beach Event

17 Aug: North Barrier Branch Mackay Indigenous Round Beach Event

22-24 Aug: SLSQ Conference – Session

RAP the Coast dates for North Barrier, Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast branches will be released through the Regional Offices.



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