

Friday, 23 September 2022

SWIM SEASON STARTS! SURF CLUBS RAISE FLAGS AS WEEKEND PATROLS BEGIN TO KEEP BEACHES SAFE

Surf life saving clubs from Tea Gardens to Catherine Hill Bay will be raising the flags to keep people safe at the beach this summer with support from Newcastle Permanent.

The iconic red and yellow flags will be raised at local beaches to signal the start of weekend beach patrols from September 24.

Hunter Surf Life Saving president Henry Scruton said the branch's lifesavers from 13 clubs are ready to go.

"Thanks to Newcastle Permanent, we have the equipment, and our people are trained, to help keep people safe in and out of the water," Mr Scruton said.

"Newcastle Permanent also supports the recruitment, training and retention of junior surf lifesavers, to ensure we've got a pipeline of volunteers coming through."

One of those volunteers is Brendan Ryman. The 54-year-old Stockton resident has been a member of the Stockton Surf Life Saving Club for 13 years. Mr Ryman is the Hunter branch's current Lifesaver of the Year and a duty officer and rescue watercraft operator with the branch's Support Operations team. He's also a trainer and assessor for future Lifesavers and inflatable rescue boat crews and drivers.

Mr Scruton and Mr Ryman will join Newcastle Permanent's Chief Financial Officer Mark Colless at a special raising of the flags ceremony at Merewether Beach at 10 am on September 24 to mark the start of the season.

Mr Colless said because Newcastle Permanent is customer-owned, it looks to support the communities where its members live, work and play.

"Spending time at the beach is part of summer for so many people in our region, which is why we've been supporting Hunter surf clubs for more than 40 years," Mr Colless said.

"Our volunteer local lifesavers save countless lives each year – they deserve our thanks and support.

"Last year Hunter branch's 1,738 patrolling members completed almost 60,000 patrol hours. They rescued 123 people, gave 521 first-aid treatments and undertook more than 25,000 other preventative actions.

"In 105 years of our patrolling, no one has ever died while swimming between the flags at Hunter beaches."

Mr Scruton shared these tips to stay safe at the beach this summer.

- Always read and obey safety signs and lifesaver instructions

Media Release



- Swim between the red and yellow flags
- Never enter the water if you have been drinking alcohol or are under the influence of drugs
- Wear sunscreen, seek shade and stay hydrated
- Boat skippers and rockfishers - always check the local forecast, seek advice from NSW Maritime and wear a lifejacket.

Every year, Newcastle Permanent invests almost \$1.5 million into local communities through its partnerships, employee donations, volunteering and fundraising programs.

People interested in joining the surf life saving movement can find their local club at www.hsls.org.au