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SURFING THE SPECTRUM'S FIRST COFFS COAST SPLASH A SUCCESS

Not-for-profit surf therapy initiative Surfing the Spectrum made its first ever splash on the Coffs Coast last Saturday, 24 September, with over 35 young locals with autism attending the free, family-friendly event at Jetty Beach for a morning filled with surf, sand and smiles.

Funded by a \$14,000 donation from the employees of Newcastle Permanent from its CommunityAssist Program, participants took part in board-riding lessons facilitated by experienced local surfers. Siblings were welcome, as part of a specially designed surf therapy program aimed at promoting ocean awareness, social inclusion and water safety for kids with autism.

Newcastle Permanent Coffs Harbour Branch Manager Erica Farag said that the community-owned organisation is committed to supporting local charities and community groups.

"It's so wonderful that Surfing the Spectrum is advocating for autism in the Coffs Coast community," said Ms Farag.

"It is estimated that [one in 70 Australians are on the spectrum](#), so this is such an important event and we love to be able to offer a helping hand in spreading the message that the ocean is for everyone!

"Our CommunityAssist Employee Donation Program sees employees donate around \$60,000 each year, which go to four deserving charities – just like Surfing the Spectrum."

Surfing the Spectrum co-founder and director Aimee Blacker said the charity's first event on the Coffs Coast was a huge success.

"After a few days of rain we lucked out for some perfect weather for the event and great waves for the participants. For some it was their first time surfing and they were supported by some great community volunteers and volunteers from Naru Surf Gatherings to get in the water and even stand up," Ms Blacker said.

"There were plenty of smiles from participants with parents reporting to me they had not seen their child smile like this in a long time.

"We loved sharing the day with the Coffs community and look forward to coming back."

The \$14,000 donation to Surfing the Spectrum was made possible under Newcastle Permanent's CommunityAssist Employee Donation Program, which donates almost \$60,000 each year to local charities. Through this program, employees nominate and vote for their two favourite charities bi-annually to receive the donated funds.

Media Release



About Surfing the Spectrum

Surfing the Spectrum was founded by occupational therapist Aimee Blacker and certified surf coach and disability support worker Tahliah Anderson in 2017, and provides free therapeutic surfing lessons aimed at positively impacting the lives of children with autism, and their families, along the coast of NSW.