SOUTH MAROUBRA
SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

JUNIOR SURF SPORTS

COMPETITION TEAM INFORMATION BOOKLET

A guide for Nippers and families representing South Maroubra SLSC in Junior Surf Sports (U8–U14)

2026/27 Season

Contents

Contents 2
1. Welcome 3
2. What Is Junior Surf Sports? 3
3. Age Groups & Eligibility 3
3.1 Competition Team Levies 4
4. Getting Competition-Ready: Skills Evaluations 4
4.1 Junior Activities Preliminary Skills Evaluation (pool swim) 4
4.2 Junior Activities Competition Skills Evaluation (open-water swim) 4
5. The Competition Pathway 5
6. Events by Age Group 5
6.1 Discipline glossary 6
7. What to Expect at a Carnival 6
8. Parent & Volunteer Involvement 7
9. Training 8
10. Uniform & Equipment Checklist 8
10.1 Compulsory competition uniform 8
10.2 Sizing and ordering 8
11. Team Selection & Carnival Entry 9
11.1 Communication Protocols and Entering carnivals 9
11.2 Draws and Results 9
12. Fundraising and Support 10
13. Code of Conduct & Behaviour 10
14. How the Club Communicates 11
13. Key Contacts 11
14. Sources & Further Reading 11
Appendix 1 – Carnival Schedule 2026-27 13

1. Welcome

Welcome to South Maroubra SLSC Junior Surf Sports. This booklet is for families of our Junior Competition Team (Under 8 to Under 14) who are training and competing in Junior Surf Sports - the competitive arm of the Nippers program that sits alongside the club's core surf education and lifesaving skills program.

Junior Surf Sports gives Nippers the chance to test the skills they learn on a normal Nippers day - swimming, board paddling, running and rescue skills - against Nippers from other clubs, while building fitness, resilience and confidence. Every event in Junior Surf Sports is built on a genuine lifesaving skill, so competing is also part of a Nipper's development as a future patrolling lifesaver.

This booklet brings together information from South Maroubra SLSC, Surf Life Saving Sydney (the Branch), and Surf Life Saving NSW (SLSNSW), and reflects common practice across NSW clubs' competition team programs.

> ***Note:*** *This booklet is general guidance only. It does not replace the SLSA Surf Sports Manual, SLSNSW Regulations, or South Maroubra SLSC's own policies, which always take precedence.*

2. What Is Junior Surf Sports?

Junior Surf Sports (sometimes called “Nippers Competitions”) is the structured competition pathway within the Nippers program. It is separate from - and sits alongside - the regular Sunday Nippers program, which focuses on surf education, water safety awareness and skill development for every registered Nipper.

Key things to know:

- Competition is optional. Every Nipper takes part in the core Sunday program; only those who wish to (and who meet the proficiency requirements) go on to train for and compete in carnivals.
- Competition starts at Under 8, although limited competitions exist for this age group, and is focused on nippers getting exposure to competitions through beach and shallow water activities only.
- **Every event has a lifesaving basis.** Board races mirror a rescue board paddle-out, beach flags develop the reaction speed and drive needed to reach a casualty first, wade races and swim races build ocean confidence, and team events like Board Rescue directly simulate a rescue.
- **Competing is a privilege, not a right.** A Nipper must be a financial, proficient club member and meet the relevant skills evaluations (see Section 4) before they can be entered in any carnival.

3. Age Groups & Eligibility

Age group is based on a Nipper's age as at 30 September of the current season (not their age on the day of competition). A Nipper competes in the same age group for the whole season even if their birthday falls during it.

Example: 2026/27 season (age as at 30 September 2026)

Age Group	Date of birth range	Competes in carnivals?
U6	1 Oct 2020 – 30 Sept 2021	No
U7	1 Oct 2019 – 30 Sept 2020	No
U8	1 Oct 2018 – 30 Sept 2019	Yes – limited options
U9	1 Oct 2017 – 30 Sept 2018	Yes – Branch & State
U10	1 Oct 2016 – 30 Sept 2017	Yes – Branch & State

Age Group	Date of birth range	Competes in carnivals?
U11	1 Oct 2015 – 30 Sept 2016	Yes – Branch & State
U12	1 Oct 2014 – 30 Sept 2015	Yes – Branch & State
U13	1 Oct 2013 – 30 Sept 2014	Yes – Branch, State and Aussies
U14	1 Oct 2012 – 30 Sept 2013	Yes – Branch, State and Aussies

Under 14 is a Nipper's graduating year — many U14s also work towards their Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) during the season, which allows them to move into patrolling and Youth/SRC competition the following season.

3.1 Competition Team Levies

A competition team levy is applicable for all nippers who join the competition team. Once you have joined the competition team, you will receive an invoice sent to you via email.

This levy covers all training sessions by accredited South Maroubra coaches, entries into club-endorsed carnivals throughout the season including Branch and State Championships and a South Maroubra Team Uniform, issued to nippers competing at the SLSNSW State Championships.

4. Getting Competition-Ready: Skills Evaluations

Before any Nipper can train for or enter carnivals, SLSA and SLSNSW require two levels of assessment each season (1 July – 30 June):

4.1 Junior Activities Preliminary Skills Evaluation (pool swim)

Completed by every registered Nipper, U6 to U14, usually at a club registration/proficiency day. It confirms basic in-water competence for the weekly Nippers program and is not itself a competition qualification.

Age	Swim	Survival float
U8 / U9	25m (any stroke)	1 minute
U10	25m (freestyle)	1.5 minutes
U11	50m (freestyle)	2 minutes
U12	100m (freestyle)	2 minutes
U13	150m (freestyle)	3 minutes
U14	200m (freestyle) in under 5 minutes	3 minutes

4.2 Junior Activities Competition Skills Evaluation (open-water swim)

Required only for Nippers (U9–U14) who wish to compete in inter-club, Branch or State carnivals. It is an open-water swim over the same distance used in junior competition, and confirms the Nipper is safe to compete in ocean conditions.

Age	Minimum open-water swim
U9 / U10	150m
U11 – U14	200m

A Nipper who has not completed both evaluations for the current season cannot be entered into inter-club, Branch or State events, regardless of ability.

A small number of carnivals each season accommodate **U8 competitors** – who must have completed the preliminary skills evaluation in order to enter carnivals.

There are no proficiency requirements for Competitors with a disability (CWAD).

5. The Competition Pathway

Junior Surf Sports follows the same four-tier structure as senior competition. Most Nippers compete at Club and Branch level; progression to State (and, for a small number of Youth-age athletes, national competition) depends on results, qualifying spots and the Nipper's own interest.

Level	Typical timing	What it involves
1. Intra-club / Inter-club carnivals	Throughout the season	Informal carnivals and Junior Club Championships against South Maroubra's own age groups or a handful of neighbouring clubs — the main proving ground for new competitors.
2. Sydney Branch Championships	Late Jan – early Feb	Surf Life Saving Sydney's championship carnival for all clubs in the Branch, held over several days across beach and water disciplines. Entry is via the club, using SLSNSW's LiveHeats entry system.
3. SLSNSW State Age Championships	February – March	The premier NSW event for Nippers, run over several days and attracting competitors from every branch in the state. A small number of events (e.g. Board Rescue, Ironperson, All-Age Board Relay) have restricted entry, qualified through Branch results.
4. Australian Championships ("the Aussies")	March – April	The Australian Nipper & Youth Championships is the national event; entry is state-based and features the older Youth (U13/U14/U15+) age groups rather than the full Nipper cohort.

6. Events by Age Group

The list and complexity of events grows as Nippers move up through the age groups. The table below reflects the typical Junior Surf Sports program used by South Maroubra and other Sydney Branch clubs; exact carnival programs vary by event and can change year to year.

U8	U9 & U10	U11 – U14
Beach Sprint Beach Flags Sprint Relay Wade Race Wade Relay	Beach Sprint Beach Flags Sprint Relay Surf Swim Board Race Swim Teams Board Relay	Beach Sprint Beach Flags Sprint Relay Surf Swim Board Race Swim Teams Board Relay

U8	U9 & U10	U11 – U14
		Board Rescue Cameron Relay Ironperson Surfboard riding (U13+) March Past R&R

6.1 Discipline glossary

- Beach Sprint — straight sand sprint over a set distance (course length increases with age).
- Beach Flags — competitors lie face-down, sprint on the whistle and dive for a baton; sudden-death eliminator.
- Wade Race (U8 only) — shallow-water wade course, the entry point to ocean racing.
- Surf Race / Surf Swim — open-water swim around or through a marked course, from U9 up.
- Swim Teams — team swim relay/points event contested in the surf.
- Board Race / Board Relay — paddling a rescue-style nipper board around a marked ocean course.
- Board Rescue (U11+) — a two-person team event simulating a board rescue of a swimmer in difficulty.
- Cameron Relay (U11+) — three-person mixed relay: one swim leg, one board leg, one runner (who runs twice).
- Ironperson (U11+) — individual multi-discipline race combining swim, board and run legs.
- R&R (Rescue & Resuscitation) — a team event simulating a full rescue and resuscitation sequence on the sand.
- March Past — a judged marching and drill display in club uniform, one of the sport's oldest traditions.

7. What to Expect at a Carnival

Every surf sports carnival – whether it's a small interclub event, a Branch carnival, or State/National Championship – follows the same basic format and useful to understand even in summary, so families know what to expect on the day.

- Entries are lodged by the club (via the LiveHeats platform) before a published closing date — the club prefers to enter the competitors, rather than parents entering themselves, so that we can keep track of numbers and officials/water safety quotas.
- Competitors must be financial, proficient, and have met patrol/award requirements recorded before entries close.
- Each competitor is issued a liveheats wristband/tag used for marshalling and results at the carnival. These are required at every carnival; if forgotten they must be replaced (at a cost to the nipper family).
- A pink high-visibility rash vest/singlet is compulsory for all Nipper water events — the South Maroubra nipper rash vest must be worn, unless a carnival specific one is issued.
- Some events (e.g. Board Rescue, Ironperson, All-Age Board Relay) have a capped number of qualifying spots per club, allocated on results at the prior level of competition.
- Clubs are required to supply a minimum ratio of accredited officials, water safety personnel and first aid relative to the number of competitors entered — if a club cannot meet its roster, **its athletes may be stood down from competition**. This is why **parent volunteering (Section 9) is essential.**

Branch, State and Australian Championships run to the same basic rules above, but add a few extra layers because of their scale:

- **Multi-day programs** – championships typically run over several days at different beaches, with Age (Nipper) water and beach events usually held on separate days from Opens, Masters and Boats – rather than a single-day club or interclub carnival.
- **Detailed published event guides** – due to the scale, a full program is published in advance (start times, event order, marshalling points) – worth a read before the day so families know what to expect.
- **Capped qualifying spots** – some events (e.g. Board Rescue, Ironperson, all-age-board relay) have a limited number of entries per club, allocated based on results.
- **Minimum volunteer ratios** – this extends past accredited officials, water safety and first aid for major championships carnivals – including IRB crew and driver for State and Aussie carnivals. Accredited water safety and patrolling members, should also consider attaining IRB crew and driver accreditation.

8. Parent & Volunteer Involvement

Parent involvement is a crucial part of a competitors ability to compete at surf sports competitions – this is a **non-negotiable component** of being part of the competition team.

Junior Surf Sports is all volunteer run. SLSNSW and Surf Life Saving Sydney required strict minimum ratios for officials, water safety and first aid personnel based on competitor numbers — **if a club can't meet its roster on the day, its Nippers can be stood down from competing.**

Every family is required to contribute in at least one of the following ways:

- Water Safety — Bronze Medallion (or Surf Rescue Certificate) holders accompanying Nippers in the water during training and carnivals (a set Water-Safety ratio applies)
- Accredited Official — a short SLSA course qualifies parents to judge, marshal and run events at carnivals; clubs must supply a minimum number of officials relative to entries (a common benchmark is roughly one official per ten competitors)
- IRB Crew/Driver — accredited powercraft (IRB) crew and drivers supporting water safety cover at carnivals; clubs are rostered by the Branch to supply powercraft personnel, and this becomes especially important at Branch, State and Australian Championships, where a club's failure to meet its powercraft roster can see its own athletes stood down from competing.

For U9’s and new families to competition, it is expected that a parent is enrolled, as soon as possible, to complete their Bronze, SRC or Officials accreditation.

Historically, even competitors who are participating in beach events only, contribute to the ratios required for water safety at carnivals. If your child is competing in any discipline, please still consider supporting the team by attaining the water safety qualifications (Bronze Medallion, SRC or IRB certifications).

Additionally – parents are asked to support the other tasks that make carnivals happen, including:

- Team Manager — a nominated club contact at a carnival for the team (or age groups depending on the size of the carnival).
- Tent transport – the club takes a number of tents to carnivals to allow competitors and supporters shaded and weather protection during carnivals
- Tent setup and pack down – arriving at carnivals early to support the tent transporters to set up the tents, and remain until the end of the carnival to assist in the pack-up.

9. Training

Club-run training complements the Sunday Nippers program and is where competitors build the fitness and technique needed for carnivals. Typical training streams include:

Sand training

Sprint and beach flag technique, and general running fitness, usually run as a weekday afternoon and/or pre-Nippers Sunday session.

Surf/swim training

Ocean confidence, body surfing, wave negotiation and swim fitness. Nippers are expected to also be attending a swim squad separately — **club ocean training is not a substitute for learning to swim** and training sessions alone **won't build the swim fitness needed for competitive ocean racing**. Regular squad swimming (**minimum 2 times per week**) outside the club is how competitors build that base fitness; surf training then sharpens it into surf-specific skill.

Board training

Usually split into a beginner and an advanced/competition stream (for more experienced and competing regularly at carnivals). **Nippers need their own board to train and compete on.**

Age Group	Board Type Required
U9-U10	Foam board
U11-U13	Fibreglass nipper board
U14	Fibreglass racing mal

- **A parent/carer must be present for the duration of any training session their child attends.**
- High-visibility swim caps and singlets are compulsory for water training, in line with SLSA guidelines — **no singlet, no training**.
- Water training only proceeds if the required ratio of qualified water safety personnel is met (a common rule of thumb is roughly 1 water safety adult per 5 children)

10. Uniform & Equipment Checklist

10.1 Compulsory competition uniform

- Club swimwear/costume in South Maroubra colours (**required to represent the club at any carnival**).
- South Maroubra competition cap (often the reverse side of the age-coloured Nipper cap or can be purchased separately from the club).
- Pink high-visibility rash vest for all water events – with South Maroubra branded rashie when competing (except where the carnival requires sponsored ones which will be provided

10.2 Sizing and ordering

Club apparel and caps are available to purchase at the Club office Monday to Friday – 9am to 5pm and are usually available for purchase at nippers proficiency and the first day of nippers.

For nippers competitors competing at the State Championships and Australian Titles, a team uniform will be provided (prior to the competition).

11. Team Selection & Carnival Entry

Every proficient Nipper who has completed the Competition Skills Evaluation and **paid the competition levy** is welcome to train and to nominate for club-endorsed carnivals — competing is actively encouraged, not just for the strongest swimmers and paddlers.

To help keep our Nippers safe and confident in the ocean, we strongly encourage regular attendance at club training — especially where nippers are wanting to compete in water events. Consistent participation from the beginning of the season allows coaches to understand each child's ability, support their development, and prepare them appropriately for competition.

For major events such as Branch Championships, coaches need adequate time to work with athletes who have been training throughout the season. **It's not realistic or safe for coaches to teach core skills, like board paddling, only a few weeks before championship events.**

While all Nippers are welcome at training, those who have not been attending consistently may not be ready for higher-level competition, and coaches will make selection decisions based on safety, ability, and season-long commitment.

For carnivals with limited team-event places or representative State/Branch touring teams, clubs typically apply a selection process. Common selection considerations include:

- Completion of preliminary and competition skills evaluations for the season
- Attendance at club training sessions relevant to the event
- Attendance/participation record through the season
- Results at intra-club, inter-club and Branch carnivals feeding into State/representative selection
- Coach and Age Manager recommendation
- For team events: fit with other nominated team members (e.g. gender-mix rules for mixed relays)

11.1 Communication Protocols and Entering carnivals

- Competition information and entry details will be circulated by the club via TeamApp- **please ensure at least one parent** (preferably any guardian taking nippers to carnivals/training) is using TeamApp and has added the **South Maroubra Youth** team
- Entries will be centralised via the club through LiveHeats. A google form will be sent out via TeamApp and **must be completed for each carnival (if attending) by the nominated closure date.**
- The Club has endorsed a number of competitions, where entry is covered by the Competition Team Levy, otherwise entry fees will need to be paid to the club prior to entering.
- Late entries are **usually the competitor/family's own cost**, and families are typically asked to **reimburse the club if an entry it has paid for is not used without notice**.
- Please notify via email **jr_carnivals@southmaroubrasurfclub.com.au** if you have previously nominated to attend a carnival and then cannot make it as cancellations in advance may allow money to be recovered, but more importantly if notified early a better chance of lowering our officials and water safety ratio.
- For State/representative teams, families are usually responsible for their own travel and accommodation, and a team uniform levy may apply (often partly offset by club fundraising).

11.2 Draws and Results

LiveHeats is the online platform used by Surf Life Saving to run carnival entries, heat draws, live scoring and results. The club will generally enter all competitors centrally (you will be advised if this is not the case) – however it is an important tool during competitions to see heat lineups and results.

LiveHeats can be access from any phone, tablet or laptop browser – www.livheats.com – and search for the carnival or branch / club hosting the carnival. This link will also be provided by the team manger – use this to see heat draws and live results as they come in.

Each competitor is issued a liveheats wristband at their first carnival (this is then kept by the competitor for future carnivals) and used for marshalling and recording results – without it, a nipper can't be marshalled into their event or have their result recorded so it must be worn for the whole day. These are individually assigned and cannot be shared (strictly against the code of conduct). If a wristband is lost or forgotten it can be replaced at a cost to the nipper.

12. Fundraising and Support

Our Junior Competition team relies on a key fundraising events each season to help cover costs such as carnival equipment, team uniforms, and major-event logistics. These activities not only support the team financially but also strengthen our club community – and they simply can't run without volunteers.

Across the season, these include:

- Sunday BBQ's – each Sunday during Nippers, the club runs a BBQ to raise funds for the whole Competition team. This is an important and consistent fundraising stream. We ask families to volunteer when required for BBQ shifts – cooking, serving or helping with setup/pack-up. Many hands make light work, and everything sold directly supports our athletes
- Trivia night – our annual fundraiser is the trivia night and is a highlight of the season. Again all money raised supports team uniforms, carnival entries and equipment. To make this event a success, we need volunteer for planning, setup, raffle coordination, prize donations and clean-up. And if nothing else – buying a ticket and inviting your friends! It's a fund night (adults-only) that bring the whole club together while supporting our young competitors
- South Maroubra U8's Carnival – the U8's carnival is one of our biggest-run club events – and a significant fundraiser for the Competition Team. Running this carnival requires a large volunteer crew: water safety, officials, tent setup, marshalling, BBQ and general support. Even if your child is not in U8 and participating, helping at this carnival is necessary and directly benefit the entire competition team.

Every dollar raised foes straight back into supporting our competition team. These events allow us to keep costs manageable for families, invest in better equipment, and provide a high-quality training and competition environment.

To keep these opportunities available for all Nippers, we ask every competition team family to contribute to at least one fundraising activity each season. Your support – whether on the BBQ, at Trivia Night or heling run the U8's carnival – ensures our team remains strong, well-resources, and proudly represented at Branch, State and beyond.

Sponsorship opportunities are also available and can be discussed with the club's Sponsorship coordinator – Andrew McCabe at sponsorship@southmaroubrasurfclub.com.au

13. Code of Conduct & Behaviour

Junior Surf Sports is bound by the SLSA Code of Behaviour and SLSNSW's Member Protection Policy. All competitors, families, coaches and officials are expected to:

- Treat competitors, officials, coaches and volunteers from every club with respect and good sportsmanship, win or lose
- Follow the direction of Age Managers, coaches, officials and referees at all times

- **Never assist a competitor during an event once it has started** (parent, officials and water safety are not permitted to intervene mid-race, unless there is a safety issue)
- **Model the standard of behaviour expected of a future lifesaver** — on the beach, at training, and travelling to and from carnivals
- Raise any concerns, complaints or incidents with the club's Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO) or the Youth Development Committee

14. How the Club Communicates

- TeamApp — primary channel for training updates, carnival details and social events
- Club website and social media — general season information, calendars and results
- Email - urgent updates such as activity cancellations due to weather or surf conditions
- Competition Team Manager — first point of contact for carnival entries, selection and touring team logistics

Keep your contact details and emergency information up to date in the club's membership system (SLS Hub) — this is also how proficiency and evaluation records are tracked for competition eligibility.

13. Key Contacts

To be completed with current office-bearers each season.

Role	Name	Contact
Director of Youth Development	Ashleigh Philp	doy@southmaroubrasurfclub.com.au
Assistant Director of Youth/Competition Team Manager	Emma Maley	Jr_carnivals@southmaroubrasurfclub.com.au
Junior Coaches	Liam Maley – Water Tim Jeffries – Water Andy Newrick – Sand	
Officials Coordinator	Andrew McCabe	officials@southmaroubrasurfclub.com.au
Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO)	Belynda Bradstreet Samantha Saunders	mpio@southmaroubrasurfclub.com.au
Child Safety Coordinators	Phillipa Stanley Jen Forde	

14. Sources & Further Reading

This booklet was compiled using information published by South Maroubra SLSC, Surf Life Saving Sydney (the Branch), Surf Life Saving NSW and Surf Life Saving Australia, together with common practice observed across other NSW surf clubs' own junior competition materials. Key official references to check each season:

- South Maroubra SLSC — southmaroubrasurfclub.com.au (Nippers / Nipper Information Booklet / Nipper Calendar)
- 2026/27 Junior Competition Calendars – southmaroubrasurfclub.com.au (Nippers / Nippers Competition Information

- Surf Life Saving Sydney — surflifesavingsydney.com.au (Branch Championships Event Guide, carnival calendar)
- Surf Life Saving NSW — surflifesaving.com.au (State Age Championships, Join Nippers, membership resources)
- Surf Life Saving Australia — sls.com.au (Surf Sports Manual, current edition)
- LiveHeats — liveheats.com/slsnsw (carnival entries and results)

Appendix 1 – Carnival Schedule 2026-27

This schedule is correct as at 12 August 2026 and is subject to change.

Date	Carnival	Location
3-4 October 2026	Forster Weekend of Surf	Forster
10 October 2026	Infront Board Bash (U9-U13) (Water only)	Eleoura
11 October 2026	Sydney Branch Interbranch Selection Trials (U11+)	TBC
18 October 2026	Coolangatta Gold – Youth Ironperson (U11+)	Coolangatta
24 October 2026	Tradies Wanda One	Wanda Beach
31 October 2026	Beach Stormers Round 1 U13+ (Beach Only)	South Maroubra
1 November 2026	Junior Beach Carnival (Beach Only)	North Curl Curl
7 November 2026	Sydney Water Surf Series Round 1	Fairy Meadow
8 November 2026	Sydney Water Surf Series Round 2	Fairy Meadow
8 November 2026	Randwick Shield – Carnival Clinic	Maroubra
14 November 2026	Under 8's Carnival	South Maroubra
14 November	Beach Stormers Round 2 U13+ (Beach only)	North Steyne
15 November 2026	Kracka Challenge (Water only)	Swansea-Belmont
21 November 2026	Sydney Water Surf Series Round 3	Warilla Barrack Point
28-29 November 2026	SLSNSW Interbranch Championships	Caves Beach
5 December 2026	Sydney Water Surf Series Round 4	Gerringong
12 December 2026	Beach Stormers Round 3 U13+ (Beach only)	Avoca
12 December 2026	Cronulla Short Course	Cronulla
13 December 2026	Junior Beach Carnival (Beach only)	Narrabeen
10 January 2027	Manly Nipper Nats	Manly
15-16 January 2027	Beach Stormers Round 4 U13+ (Beach only)	Manly
16 January 2027	R&R Carnival (R&R)	TBC
26 January 2027	Australia Day Ironperson	North Cronulla
30-31 January 2027	Sydney Branch Championships (Beach U9-U10)	TBC
6-7 February 2027	Sydney Branch Championships (Beach U11+ and Water events)	Wanda/Elouera
4-7 March 2027	SLSNSW State Championships	Swansea-Belmont
10-11 April 2027	Australian Championships (U13/U14)	Sunshine Coast