



WANDA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

I was delighted to attend the Wanda Surf Life Saving Club seventy-fifth anniversary celebration lunch on 13 August. Wanda Surf Life Saving Club [SLSC] was founded after the Second World War in 1946 by a group of returned servicemen. The colours of the Australian Defence Force—navy blue, army red and air force blue—were adopted as the club colours. The name Wanda came from the surrounding land, Wanda Reserve, and the Dharawal word for "rolling white sands and pearly shells". Wanda launched its first patrol in March 1947 and the original clubhouse—an old tin shed—was erected in 1948. The early Wanda clubhouse sat hidden between hills of sand where a red dirt road led down to Wanda Reserve. In the 1940s, Cronulla and its beaches were primarily a holiday spot for people to visit from the city and there were few permanent homes. Low wages, a lack of jobs and the high cost of living in the war's aftermath meant that it was a difficult start for the club and a lot of fundraising was needed to launch it. During those years, active patrols by Wanda lifesavers began each Sunday and public holiday and the patrol area stretched from Wanda to down past Elouera.

From the original 26 founding members, Wanda has grown to 1,516 members, including 295 patrolling members. In 1958 a new clubhouse opened, followed by major redevelopment projects between 2005 and 2015. In its 75 years of service, the club has boasted a strong history of racing and competition and has produced 178 Australian champions. Wanda SLSC is also the proud organiser of the annual Tradies Sutherland 2 Surf event. This event, held since 1972, is an 11-kilometre fun run from Sutherland to Wanda, that raises much-needed funds for Wanda SLSC to continue to protect and save lives. Almost 4,000 participants joined the fun run this year, the first since 2019 and a celebration of the run's fiftieth anniversary.

I commend the Wanda SLSC organising committee, Mick "Spider" Brannock, OAM; Donna Brown; Mal Dickey; Alan Kentwell; Todd Lester; and Mark Sargeant as convenor, for their contribution to the organisation and operation on the day. The event saw numerous club members enjoy not only a celebration of 75 years but also a lunch, live music and interviews. I thank club president, Nathan Spinner, for his president's welcome, club patron Ernest "Solly" Stevens, OAM, and Wanda SLSC Chaplain, Thomas Schmid, who called a minute's silence for passed members. I thank also former club captains Michael Bonnici and Nathan Smith, Wanda Surf Club coach and Australian champion, who served as masters of ceremony. I acknowledge the event's interview panellists, life member and former President Mick "Spider" Brannock, OAM; Michael Bonnici; Australian champion Elyssa Pierce; and life member from the Ladies Committee, Wendy Sandstorm.

It was fantastic to gain new insights into how the club and surf life saving has progressed over the years. I thank the performing artists, Brett Maxworthy and Bruno, for their music, which certainly enriched the event. Surf lifesaving clubs are an integral part of Australian and Sutherland Shire communities. The dedication, commitment and the passion of our club members has ensured the safety and wellbeing of local communities for the past 75 years. I wish Wanda SLSC a successful next season and thank its members for their continued commitment and service to the Sutherland Shire.

Mark Speakman
MP for Cronulla
Attorney General

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