



**SURF LIFE SAVING®**  
NEW ZEALAND

# 2013/14 National Events Review

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April 2014

# 2013/14 SLSNZ National Events Review

## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide the SLSNZ Board, National Sport Committee (NSC) and the SLSNZ membership with a review of national surf sports events from the 2013/14 season. The events that this report will focus on are:

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This report has been prepared by Nick Gutzewitz, SLSNZ Acting Sport Manager who was engaged in this role from December 2013 until March 2014 and Mike Lord, the new SLSNZ Sport Manager who started in March 2014.

Information for this report was gathered from a variety of sources including:

- Entry information from the events database
- Post-event reports from Event Managers, Event Referees and Event Safety Officers
- Surveys from Officials, Team Managers and event helpers

This report will be provided to the SLSNZ Board for their April 2014 meeting and then released to the NSC and the general membership.

## Executive Summary

- The Event Management Committee structure needs updating with learnings from this season. The roles and responsibilities of these three positions need to be clarified and updated in the Event Safety Plan template to incorporate learnings from the season and reflect what is actually happening.
- Event Safety Manual requires reviewing from the learnings from this season.
- Workload on volunteers needs to be managed to ensure these people are not burnt out and continue to offer their time. These events cannot be completed without volunteer assistance.
- All post-event surveys of Officials, Team Managers and helpers were generally positive.
- The Ironman/Ironwoman exhibition event needs to be reviewed as it is not meeting the goals of showcasing the sport and inspiring Oceans competitors
- Event planning, bookings and Officials selection needs to be done well ahead of time to allow volunteers to plan and reduce workload closer to the events.
- The minimum number of medics at each event needs to be reviewed for the 2014/15 season. Visibility of medics, medic tents, briefings and reporting needs to be improved.
- Feedback received on the quality of officiating was very positive.

- After parties are a challenging area. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find venues for these due to past issues of intoxication, bad behaviour and damage to premises. It is also extremely difficult to find volunteers to help at these events as everyone is exhausted after the event, especially if it has been over four days. Staff and volunteers tend to drink at these functions and if a situation arises they may be impaired in their decision making and inflame the situation. Not providing these functions would pass the risk on to clubs to be responsible for the behaviour of their team members. The provision of these functions needs to be reviewed before next season.

# 1. Under 14 New Zealand Surf Life Saving Championships 2014

Venue: Mt Maunganui

Event Manager: Haley McMahon

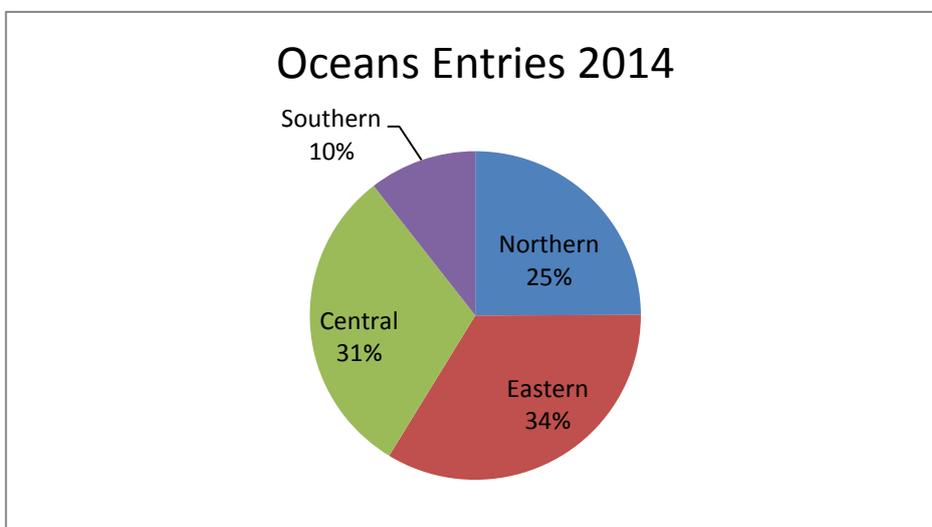
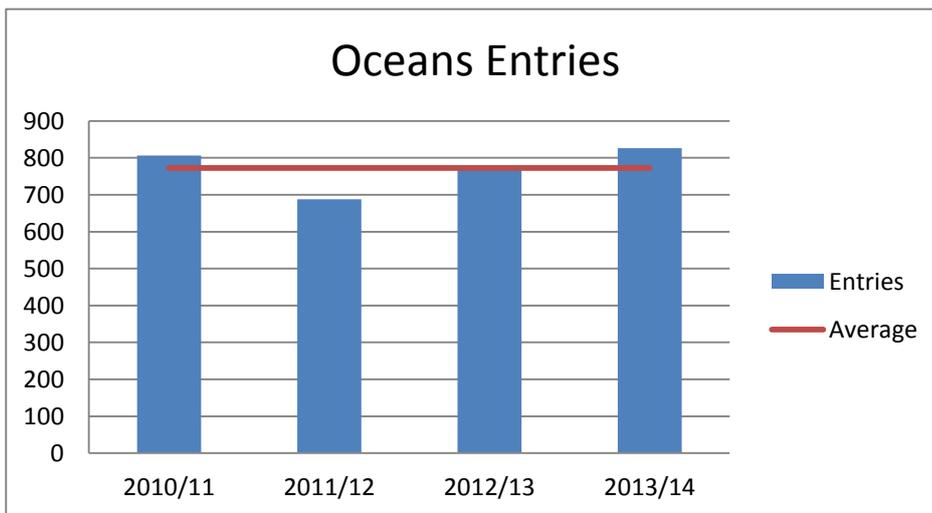
Event Referee: Mark Weatherall

Event Safety Officer: Ross Merrett

Entries: 826

## Entries

The Under 14 New Zealand Surf Life Saving Championships (Oceans) were held at Mt Maunganui from 20-23 February. There were 826 competitors from 40 clubs from all over New Zealand. Entries were up 7% on 2013 and continued an upward trend over the past three years.



## Conditions

Conditions over the four days of competition were extremely challenging. The alternative venues of Shark Alley and Pilot Bay were used for most of the first three days and surf events were called off early on Saturday due to unfavourable conditions. Mt Maunganui is a great venue as it has several alternative options when there are challenging conditions. The event team did an incredible job to ensure that the entire programme was completed under very challenging conditions.

## Event Management Committee

There were some issues between the Event Manager, Event Referee and Event Safety Officer during the event, especially when they were discussing whether to suspend in-water racing on the Saturday. All three have highlighted this in their reports. However, they worked through the issues professionally and presented a united front at all times to Team Managers, competitors and others. The roles and responsibilities of these three positions need to be clarified and updated in the Event Safety Plan template to incorporate learnings from the season and reflect what is actually happening.

## Volunteers and Helpers

The Oceans event relies on a number of volunteers to organise and run successfully. Unfortunately it was challenging to source enough helpers this year to help with marshalling, judging and other tasks. There is also a huge amount of work for the Event Manager, Event Referee and Event Safety Officer to organise and run this event.

The work party provided by Papamoa SLSC was generally very good. However, the work party went home early on the Saturday which put pressure on all other volunteers and staff to complete the programme.

## Health and Safety

Different coloured vests for different age groups have been suggested by a number of different people as an improvement for future Oceans events. Different coloured vests have been used in the past but this year all competitors were supplied with a pink vest. The different coloured vests make it easier to identify competitors, especially in conditions where there is a strong drift taking competitors out of their arena. It is also easier for marshalling.

All competitors were required to wear hi-visibility vests whenever they were in the water, including warming up and in competition. This was strictly enforced.

There were two serious injuries over the course of the event. Although there were two medics on site at all times the visibility and location of the medic tent was not clear. It was lost amongst club and exhibitor tents in the 'tent village'. This needs to be addressed for future events. There was one issue where a parent thought the medics had called an ambulance and vice versa. This resulted in a 20 minute delay in an ambulance arriving. This was discussed and addressed in a debrief with the Event Safety Officer and the medics.

## Ironman/Ironwoman Exhibition Series

The Ironman/Ironwoman Exhibition Series was run on Saturday and Sunday. This is a series of races in various formats that has the goal of showcasing surf sports and inspiring Oceans competitors. Fifteen male athletes and twelve female athletes were invited to attend and there was a total of \$2,700 prize money on offer to be shared across the top three males and females in the series.

There were breaks in the Oceans programme for this series to be held. However, due to time constraints caused by delays in the programme, this series and Oceans events were held concurrently. This resulted in a number of issues that have been raised by Oceans Team Managers, Ironman/Ironwoman competitors, helpers and the Event Management Committee. With both events competing for attention, the series did not achieve its goal of inspiring the Oceans athletes. Most athletes were continuing to compete and did not see the series.

Ironman/Ironwoman athletes, Oceans Team Managers and helpers were all surveyed for feedback on this series and a summary of their responses is included in Appendix 1.

## Post-Event Surveys

Team Managers, helpers and the Event Management Committee were all surveyed after Oceans. Overall feedback from everyone relating to the Oceans event was mostly positive.

Only 16 out of 40 Team Managers completed the online survey. Communication during the event was identified as an area to improve but all other feedback was extremely positive. Team Managers also indicated the different coloured vests for different age groups would be useful. Responses were reasonably evenly split as to whether Oceans events should always be held at Mt Maunganui (7) or shifted around other venues (5). As indicated above, the Ironman/Ironwoman series created some issues and this was reflected in the survey responses from Team Managers.

Seventeen helpers at Oceans completed the post-event online survey. Feedback was generally positive. They felt that different coloured vests for different age groups would help with marshalling and safety, medics need to be more visible and the arena allocations should be reviewed to have the older, and probably stronger, competitors at the left end of the beach where conditions are traditionally more challenging. Opinion was evenly split as to whether Oceans should always be held at Mt Maunganui or shifted around other venues.

## Other

The quality of the sound system was raised by several people. The NPOB SLSC sound system was used during this event as it was significantly cheaper than other options. There were challenges with having to move equipment to alternative venues and any system used needs to be portable at this event.

## 2. New Zealand Masters Surf Life Saving Championships 2014

Venue: Ohope

Event Manager: Haley McMahon

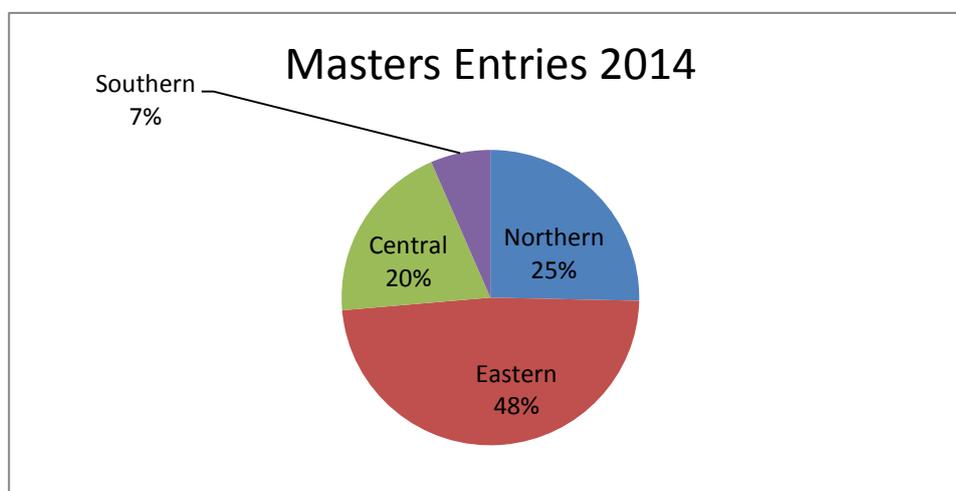
Event Referee: Ross Merrett

Event Safety Officer: Leigh Sefton

Entries: 296

### Entries

The New Zealand Masters Surf Life Saving Championships (Masters) were held at Ohope Beach on 6 March. There were 296 competitors from 33 clubs from all over New Zealand. Entries were down 2% on 2013 when there were 302 entries.



## Conditions

Conditions were extremely calm with very little wave or swell. This ensured that the event was completed according to the schedule.

## Health and Safety

There were only two serious injuries in the afternoon on the sprint track. There was one ruptured achilles tendon and a strained calf.

## Post-Event Surveys

The Masters survey was combined with the New Zealand Surf Life Saving Championships survey.

## Other

There was a delay in serving the post-event dinner. Many of the competitors departed before the dinner and didn't return. This resulted in a significant amount of wastage. The dinner timing needs to be more flexible for future Masters events so it can be served not long after the conclusion of the prize giving.

### 3. New Zealand Surf Life Saving Championships 2014

Venue: Ohope

Event Manager: Haley McMahon

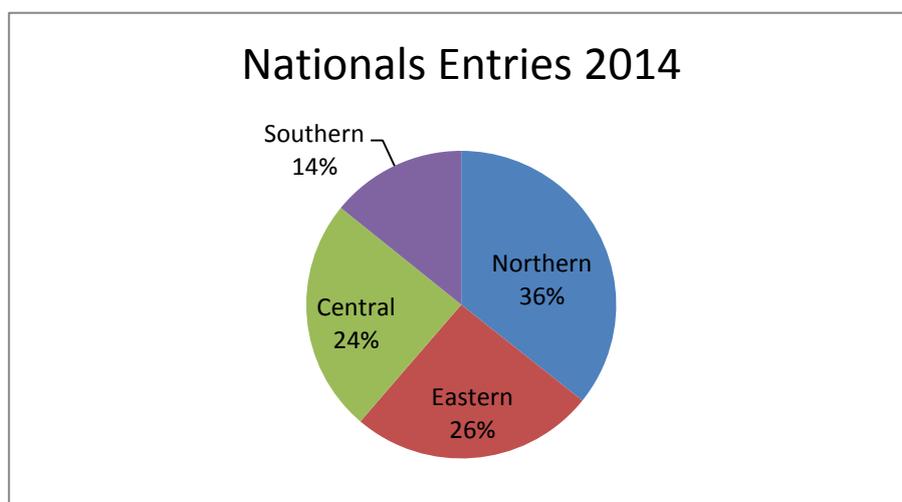
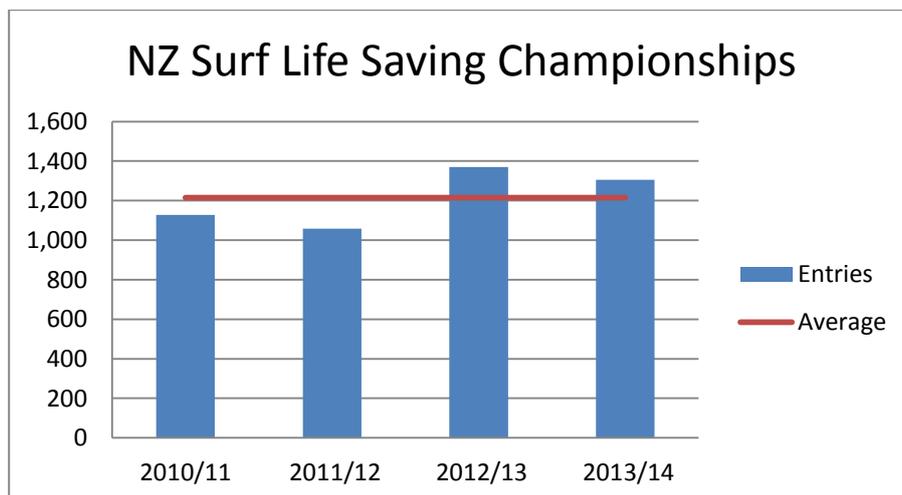
Event Referee: Alistair Thorpe

Event Safety Officer: Leigh Sefton

Entries: 1,305

#### Entries

The New Zealand Surf Life Saving Championships (Nationals) were held at Ohope Beach on 7-9 March. There were 1,305 competitors from 50 clubs from all over New Zealand. Entries were down 5% on 2013 when there were 1,370 entries.



## Conditions

Surf conditions were reasonably big on Friday but settled down over the weekend. The full programme was completed with only minor adjustments.

## Event Management Committee

The Event Management Committee generally worked well. However, as with Oceans, there were some issues with roles and responsibilities that needed to be worked through. The roles and responsibilities need to be refined with learning from this season to be clearer next season.

## Officials

The notification to officials whether they were selected to officiate was extremely late. This created a number of issues. This appears to have been missed in the handover from the past Sports Manager to the Acting Sports Manager and the Event Referee thought this had been done when in fact it hadn't. This notification needs to happen much earlier to allow officials to plan travel and accommodation and SLSNZ needs to book accommodation for the Event Management Committee and Arena Referees well ahead of the event and communicate this to all concerned.

There were two appeals lodged during Nationals. In both instances the appeal was dismissed.

## Health and Safety

There were only three serious injuries during Nationals. There was a concussion and severe bruising, a competitor with severe asthma and one competitor had a fibreglass fragment embedded in his leg. The medics dealt with all issues promptly and calmly.

There were concerns regarding the visibility of the medics and the number of medics in attendance. This needs to be reviewed before next season. However, all medical issues were dealt with promptly.

The medics were not ready to start early in the canoe/boat arena on one morning. There was miscommunication between the Event Manager and the medics as to the start time as it was brought forward from the scheduled start time.

There was a near-miss incident involving the work party in two ATVs. The ATVs sped through an arena during a race and a competitor needed to take evasive action to miss one of the ATVs. The Event Safety Officer stopped a third ATV entering this arena during this race. After this incident, any vehicles passing through arenas needed approval from Arena Referees to enter an arena.

The beach was very crowded at times with craft, tents, competitors and spectators. This resulted in very tight margins for vehicles and a lot of obstacles for everyone to move around.

Although there were dedicated warm up/warm down areas, a number of competitors just entered the water wherever they wanted to. This was especially an issue with senior competitors entering arenas when age group events were on.

## Volunteers and helpers

The Whakatane SLSC provided a good number of people for the work party before, during and after the event.

As with Oceans, there is a reliance on volunteers in key roles to appoint officials, complete the Event Safety Plan and other key tasks. The expectations and time of these volunteers needs to be managed

carefully to ensure they do not burn out and want to remain involved in the future. There was also a very tight turn around between Oceans and Nationals and this put pressure on those involved in both events.

## After-parties

The over-18 after party was held at Legends Bar in Whakatane. The bar provided staff, security and a DJ. SLSNZ provided food during the function. It was challenging finding SLSNZ staff to be at this function to monitor behaviour and contact Team Managers if problems arose. Staff were also drinking at this function and this may impair their judgment if problems arose.

The under-18 after party was held at the community hall in Ohope. As with the over-18 party it was difficult to find volunteers for this function after four days on the beach. Only one individual was removed due to intoxication.

## Post-event surveys

Links to online surveys were sent to Officials and Team Managers.

Nineteen of the fifty Team Managers completed the online survey. In general, responses were very positive. Although the quality of officiating is sometimes raised as an issue to SLSNZ staff and Board members, there was an incredibly positive response to quality of officials at this event. Of the eighteen respondents, only one thought officiating was below average and eleven thought it was above average and three felt it was excellent. Ohope was rated as an excellent venue by eleven out of seventeen respondents.

The twenty two responses to the Officials online survey were also very positive. The number of medics and visibility of medics was one area where there were concerns expressed and the other was the quality of the catering where one third didn't feel it was sufficient.

## Other

The sound system used at Nationals was the NPOB SLSC sound system. There were some complaints about sound quality in some areas of the beach.

## 4. BP Surf Rescue National Championships 2014

Venue: Whangamata

Event Manager: Haley McMahon

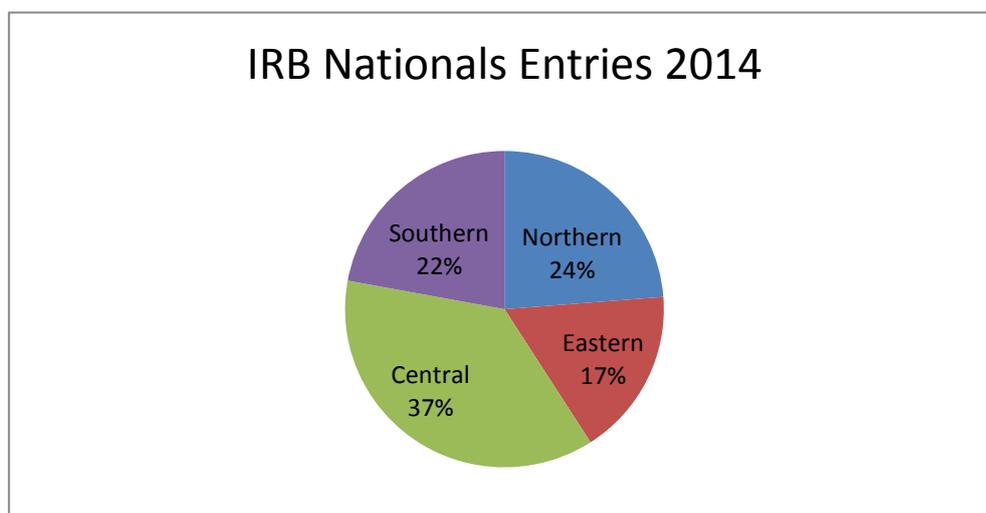
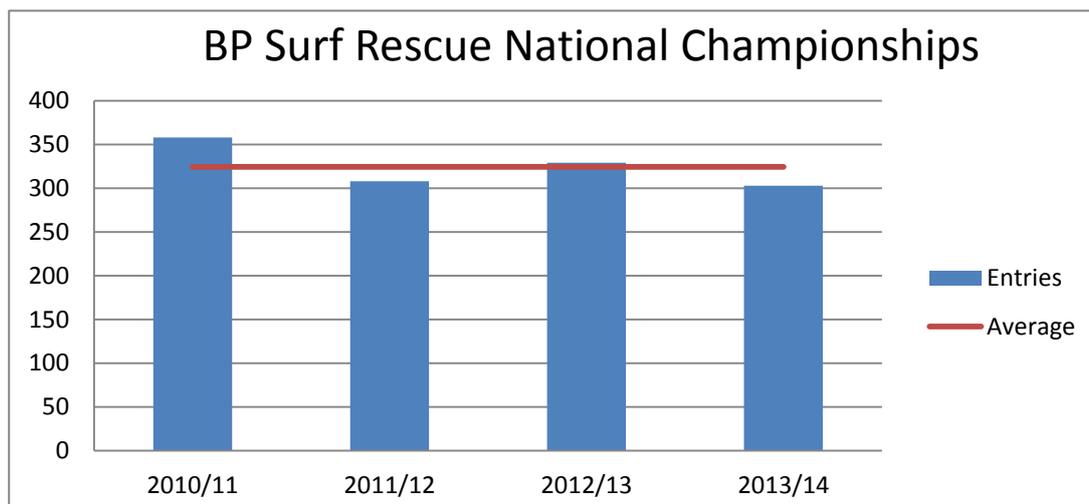
Event Referee: Bernie Limbrick

Event Safety Officer: Mike Lord

Entries: 303

### Entries

The BP Surf Rescue National Championships (IRB Nationals) were held at Whangamata on 21-23 March. There were 303 competitors from 27 clubs from all over New Zealand. Entries were down 8% on 2013 when there were 329 entries.



## Conditions

Surf conditions were predicted to be massive and that is what happened. Conditions in front of the Whangamata SLSC were to big to race at any stage through the 3 days of competition. Fridays events were moved south down the beach to shelter under the island. Most of the programme for Friday was completed but eventually was called off due to the increasing swell size. Saturday and Sundays events were run south around the corner which was our backup venue. Although the wave size was not as big or heavy at in front of the club it did cause further issues with closeness of the waves and crews ability to set themselves for waves. The programme was completed but injuries were high.

## Event Management Committee

The Event Management Committee worked well together making sure that all major discussions were discussed and were delivered to TM's as a united front. The roles and responsibilities can still be refined with learning from this season to be clearer next season.

## Officials

The notification to officials whether they were selected to officiate was extremely late. The Event Referee dropped out at short notice but was filled quickly and the new ER was well supported in the position. The officials had a very hard job running the programme with conditions and tides working against them throughout the championships. It was evident that a key role is the starter in IRB racing and this can change the satisfaction and farness of racing considerably. Andrew Cronin offered to support the starter on the final day of racing which allowed for considerable improvement and satisfaction of crews competing. There were a number of appeals lodged during the Championships by TM. In all instances the appeal was dismissed.

## Health and Safety

### Injuries:

All injured members were phoned and asked for diagnosis, how it happened and their thoughts on the safety of the event. Overall they don't want to see this events injuries to change the safety and rules of racing in the future. Most athletes did comment on the closeness of the waves and having time to keep setting yourself up for the wave impact which would be the lead contributor to the injuries. Some injuries were what we thought and others were less serious. There was a noticeable decline in injuries after the team managers were told to settle their crew down on Sunday

### ESO Observations Each day

#### Friday

Conditions: Light E. wind, 1.5m Wave which built to 2.5m, Slight Chop

Races: approx. 33 races

Events: Tube Rescue, Teams, Mass

Serious Injuries: 0, Moderate Injuries 1

#### Saturday

Conditions: Moderate SE. wind, 1.5m Wave, Choppy

Races: approx. 43 races

Events: Mass, Teams, Assembly

Serious Injuries: 2, Moderate Injuries 2

#### Sunday

Conditions: Moderate SE. wind, 1.5m Wave, Choppy  
Races: approx. 30 races  
Events: Assembly, Single, Teams  
Serious Injuries: 4, Moderate Injuries 1

Moving forward we need to review the Event Safety Manual and capture past experiences to make better decisions for future IRB events.

## First Aid

They had two contracted First Aiders with additional trainee staff on also. First Aid managed the injuries ok but were sometimes under pressure with some injuries happening in a few races. Administration of pain relief is essential for events like this of high speed and impact nature.

Setup of the first aid space needs to be clear, appropriate and well resources. Event requirements need to be agreed prior to contract being signed and appropriate venue briefings to be delivered from Event Management Team.

There was a lot of comments and feedback around first aid and how they should respond and what they respond with for incidents e.g. first aid pack and should be running. This is not always the best way to react to an incident and majority of incidents didn't require a first aid pack and as always with SLS events we are all competent in First Aid and members respond as reflex tasking in most cases which is not going to change as that's how everyone is trained.

First Aid contractors also need accurate and consistent reports being completed for each member. This will assist SLSNZ to assess our first aid requirements for future events.

## Other Safety

Tractors where an issue with loading more than two boats on trailers and having crews sit on them. There is a risk of falling 2-3m and this was addressed on Saturday with tractor drivers and crews that where doing this.

Wearing of vests while in the water sometimes was missing on some occasions when warming up but was quickly managed.

Fuel – on a number of occasions the fuel refilling station was left unsupervised and kids are attracted to the fuel paddling pool. Crews are very casual when refilling and spill a lot of fuel on the ground. An incident occurred with the wrong type of fuel being distributed to crews causing engine's to stop working. The event was put on hold until the fuel problem was contained, engines had been repaired and new fuel distributed and tested. Fuel distribution is an area that needs reviewing and better management of allocations and handling.

## Volunteers and helpers

The Whangamata SLSC provided a small crew to assist with the logistics of the event. At times this crew was under pressure and stretched to complete the jobs in hand. The leadership of the work party also requires improving and more needs to be done after each day to prepare for the next.

## After-party

Following the issues that were caused by previous after-parties held at Whangamata no venues were open to hosting a party and SLSNZ would not have an involvement in running an after-party. It was left up to the Team Management for each club to organise what they wanted to do as a team.

Most clubs held in house parties and only one incident that we know about occurred. Feedback from the TM suggests that it's 50/50 if SLSNZ should organise something or not. Having no after-party was a huge improvement conduct wise compared to last time when one was held in Whangamata and also didn't put added pressure on SLSNZ staff to be involved in this area.

## Post-event surveys

Links to online surveys were sent to Officials and Team Managers.

Overall the Team Management feedback was positive and 7 out of 20 Team Managers completed the event survey on line. Team Managers were 50/50 on the beach layout working well and this was mainly down to the surf conditions but though Whangamata as a whole was good place to hold the event. Communication, briefings and discussion making on the beach was mostly positive. Officials were rated mainly average and a lot of this was directed at the position of starter.

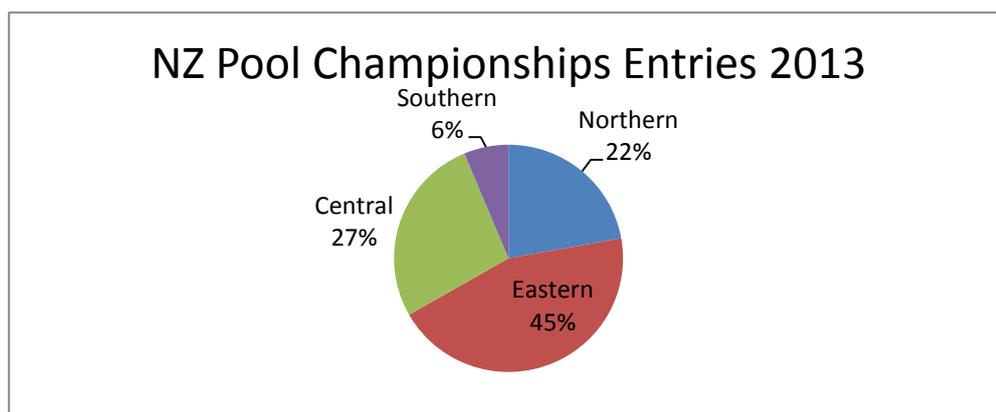
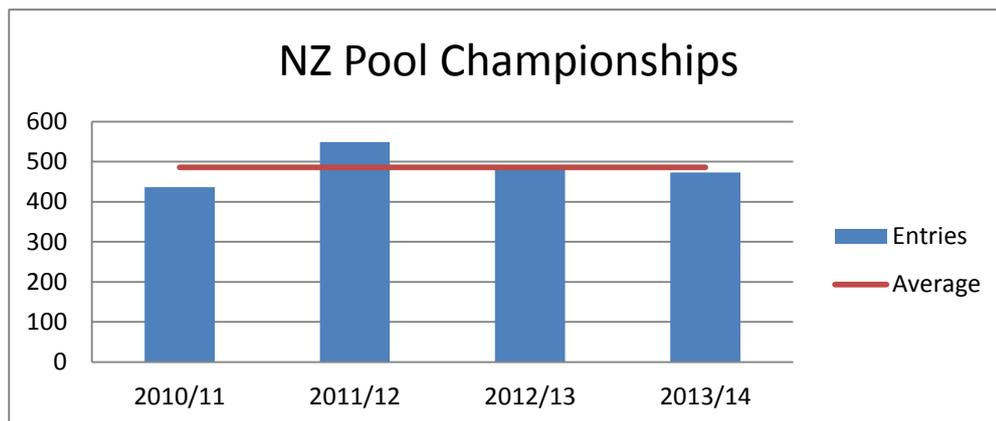
Only 5 out of 20 officials completed the survey and overall the results were average. A lot of negative feedback around communication prior and during the event with programme changes and the suitability of the arenas and safety.

## 5. New Zealand Pool Championships 2013

This is only a brief summary of the entries to this event.

### Entries

The New Zealand Pool Championships were held in Hamilton on 11-13 October 2013. There were 473 competitors from 29 clubs from all over New Zealand. Entries were down 2% on 2012 when there were 485 entries.



### Post-event surveys

Links to online surveys were sent to Officials and Team Managers.

Overall the Team Management feedback was positive and 18 out of 29 Team Managers completed the event survey on line. Officials were rated high and had positive feedback from this event. Programme, Event Management, communication, times were all rated well and not issues to report from Team Managers.

Only 13 out of 36 officials completed the survey and overall the results were great. The only negative feedback was around the amount of DQ's they had to give out. All up the communication and position allocation were good and officials felt well looked after.

# Appendix 1

## Ironman/Woman Exhibition Series Feedback

After Oceans SLSNZ surveyed the athletes, Oceans team managers and Oceans helpers. The general feeling is that although it's a great concept, is Oceans the right place for it? The fact both events were run concurrently was highlighted as an issue too. A summary of feedback is included below

### Ironman/woman athlete feedback

- Love the overall concept
- Saturday race was too long
- Saturday race had issues with swimmers and craft in the water at the same time
- Hold at a different time to allow Oceans competitors to watch
- Have a signing session or questions/answers or meet and greet or something else to enable senior athletes and kids to mix better
- Short, sharp race format on the Sunday were great. Shorter races good for kids and spectators.
- Use overall budget as prize money rather than paying for some athletes to come back from Australia (eg \$1,200; \$800; \$400). This makes it worthwhile for good athletes to travel back and aim to win.
- Give more notice of when the series will be held to give some competitors time to plan and book flights.
- Don't run concurrently with Oceans as some Ironman/Ironwoman athletes are also Oceans club coaches.

### Oceans helpers feedback

- Concept is good but is Oceans the best place for it?
- Did not achieve the goals of inspiring Oceans athletes as most of them didn't see it as they were still racing themselves.
- Saturday format was too long
- Hard decision to run concurrently with Oceans and something that diverted attention away from Oceans. Shorter format may avoid this.
- Most athletes didn't show up to help at Oceans.
- SLSNZ to promote the series better.
- Confusion with Ironman/Ironwoman commentary at the same time as marshalling.
- Needs to be run when no Oceans events are on so kids and parents can watch.

### Team Managers feedback

- This event got in the way of Oceans.
- Terrible clash running both events at the same time.
- Commentary made it hard to hear marshalling.
- The event may have been lost on finals day.
- Parents would love to watch this too but couldn't as they were watching their kids.