



**SURF LIFE SAVING®**  
NEW ZEALAND

**Date:** 4 February 2022

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**To:** All Clubs, members & staff

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**From:** Lewis McClintock - National Sport Manager

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**Subject:** Lifesaving Sport Competitions Update

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The following memo provides detailed information regarding the status of all remaining SLSNZ competitions & carnivals in the 2022 season.

### Key Information

- The sudden change to Red in the Covid Protection Framework (CPF) due to the presence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the community and the Government's initial approach to reduce the spread required SLSNZ to quickly reassess its ability to safely deliver the remaining competitions in the 2022 season.
- The majority of competitions can still be delivered, albeit with a range of modifications.
- **Oceans 22 has been cancelled – more detailed information can be found below.**
- **TSB Nationals can still proceed, but with significant risk & uncertainty – more detailed information can be found below.**
- **bp North Island & NZ IRB competitions are still under consideration.**
- Where competitions have been cancelled, SLSNZ will work with Local and Regional Sport Committees to investigate additional or alternative options.
- Given the rapid and continual change to COVID-19 related restrictions, the level of infection in any given location and the community sentiment towards running activities, each competition will continue to be assessed as to the associated potential risk with postponements or further cancellations still a possibility.
- SLSNZ will host an online session for members to discuss and ask questions on Wednesday February 9 at 7.30pm. [Click here for meeting link](#)

SLSNZ acknowledges and thanks the membership for their patience during this time of uncertainty. Since New Zealand moved into the COVID Protection Framework (CPF) RED setting on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> of January it has been an unsettling time for everyone as we attempt to navigate our way forward.

The impact of COVID-19 on Lifesaving Sport in the last two years has been significant. The cancellation of 2020 IRB Nationals, Oceans' 21 finals day, the 2021 TSB Nationals and the 2021 National Pool Rescue Championships as well as numerous regional and club competitions has tested the motivation and resolve of our membership to continue to contribute to their communities as well as enjoy the challenge and comradery of our sport.

In recent days, we have received a lot of feedback from clubs and members on their very strong desire for events to continue, even in a modified form, despite the Covid-19 pandemic entering a new stage with the Omicron variant.

We understand and have taken these views on board.

A core part of the message to us has been for SLSNZ to let clubs and individuals decide what level of risk they are prepared to take around attending competitions, rather than make those calls on their behalf, which would have naturally erred on the side of caution and tried to provide certainty. It appears from the feedback we have received that people are much more accepting of uncertainty and we have factored that into the decisions that have been made.

We have also been asked not to assume the 'worst case scenario' in our decision making, which means the decisions we make may end up being over-ridden by Government decisions if things do get worse. As such, planning has been done based on the current Red traffic light, Stage 1 CPF protocols still being in place at the time the competitions take place.

### Existing advice & guidance

- [COVID Protection Framework](#)
- [Sport NZ Full Red Guidance](#)
- [Sport NZ Event Guidance](#)
- [SLSNZ Competition Contingency](#)
- [SLSNZ Competitions & Carnivals in the CPF](#)

### Competition Status (as at 04.02.2022)

Date(s)	Competition	Status
<b>Jan 28-31</b>	ER Senior Champs	Full cancellation
	The Invitational	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Otago Senior Interclub	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Otago IRB Interclub	Currently able to proceed with modifications
<b>Feb 4-6</b>	NR Junior Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Gisborne Junior Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Canterbury Canoe Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Canterbury Senior Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Otago Senior Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Otago Junior Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	NI Surf Boat Champs	Full cancellation
	Hawkes Bay Senior Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
Taranaki Senior Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications	
<b>Feb 12/13</b>	Otago IRB Interclub	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	NR IRB Champs	Postponed (March 5)
	ER Junior Champs	Cancelled and replaced with modified competition
	SR Junior Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	CR Junior Champs	Cancelled and replaced
	Taranaki Junior Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Capital Coast Senior Champs	Cancelled and replaced with modified competition
<b>Feb 18-20</b>	Canterbury Canoe Twilight	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Canterbury IRB Series	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Otago IRB Interclub	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	NR Senior Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Capital Coast Whitehorse	Currently able to proceed with modifications
<b>Feb 24-27</b>	Oceans	Full Cancellation
	SR Senior Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
<b>March 5/6</b>	Canterbury IRB Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Otago IRB Champs	Currently able to proceed with modifications
<b>March 10-13</b>	TSB Masters & Senior Nationals	Currently able to proceed with modifications
<b>March 17-20</b>	Canterbury Canoe Twilight	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	SI IRB	Currently able to proceed with modifications
	Canterbury dash for cash	Currently able to proceed with modifications
<b>March 26/27</b>	NI IRB	Will be assessed in coming weeks
<b>April 2/3</b>		
<b>April 9/10</b>	NZ IRB	Will be assessed in coming weeks
<b>April 16/17</b>	Easter & end of term	

## **Situational Analysis**

- All of NZ moved to CPF Red on January 23.
- The sudden shift to Red resulted in the cancellation of ERCs by SLSNZ and the NI Surf Boat Championship by Waihi SLSC.
- There is no indication as to how long we will be in Red and when/if different areas will transition to orange.
- Regional and National Sport staff & volunteers have delivered; postponed or cancelled numerous competitions during various COVID-19 restrictions in the past two years and so have become accustomed to assessing the potential risk of delivering our competitions.
- SLSNZ can still deliver within the restrictions of CPF Red. Competitions would be limited to 100 participants when implementing proof of vaccination, however we can have multiple groups of 100 spread out across a beach (along with a number of other restrictions).
- We are now faced with a highly transmissible virus circulating throughout New Zealand and the Government has indicated their strategy is to implement restrictions that will reduce the spread to limit the impact to communities and our health system.
- The introduction of Omicron requires us to further modify our approach to delivering events within the CPF RED restrictions and assess a significantly different set of risk factors both on the beach and beyond.

## **Competition Risk Assessments**

Each of our competitions has been assessed against the perceived and known risks to all attendees in order to determine if modification, postponement, location change, cancellation and replacement or full cancellation is required to reduce the risk profile.

Not all factors relate to directly to SLSNZ's ability to mitigate risk and safely deliver competitions on the beach, but a number of additional considerations, including:

- The increased transmissibility and presence of the Omicron variant, in particular now schools have returned.
- The low level symptoms that indicate COVID-19 positivity
- The lag in reporting/identifying positive cases and close contacts
- The increasing number of COVID-19 cases and close-contact locations in the community and potential impact on event delivery.
- A positive COVID-19 case either before, during or after the event and the subsequent health and/or self-isolation implications
- The unknown vaccination status of under 11 & 12s at Oceans
- Competition size number of days, type of participants and the geographic spread of attendees (and therefore travel required)
- Uncontrollable intermingling & group activities outside the competition
- Modification reducing perceived value and event purpose.
- Our ability to manage spectators and public on a beach.
- The potential risk to lifeguarding & club operations if staff or members catch COVID-19 or are required to self-isolate as a close contact.

## **Additional considerations**

- Organisational
  - Our role and responsibility to keep staff and members safe and reduce the spread of COVID-19 and the impact on the health system.
  - The potential impact to our organisation and our ability to deliver core services if multiple staff, members and other volunteers catch COVID-19 or are close contacts and have to undertake the subsequent isolation requirements and/or the short/long term health impacts.
- Delivery
  - Our ability to resource existing/modified competitions if COVID-19 transmission in NZ increases.

- Staff, participants, officials and other volunteers desire/ability to attend events with perceived additional risk of catching COVID-19, being a close contact and the subsequent isolation requirements as well as additional risk of cancellation and subsequent loss of time and money.
- The level of support from local communities, councils, suppliers, host clubs, accommodation providers both now and in the future
- Potential for additional changes/restrictions to the CPF if COVID-19 cases are exponential and the health system struggles.
- Medical (as supplied by SLSNZ Medical Director, Dr Gary Payinda)
  - Omicron spreads around twice as easily as Delta.
  - A person with Omicron will spread it to four others on average.
  - Omicron cases can be contagious within a day (Compared to 3-5 days for Delta).
  - Omicron causes fewer hospitalisations and deaths than Delta, but spreads much faster, leading to steeper rises in numbers hospitalised.
  - Omicron is less dangerous than Delta, but it is still not 'safe'. It is causing record levels of hospitalisations internationally as well as much higher rates of repeated infection.
  - Omicron symptoms are less obvious with infection being located more in the upper airways as opposed to the lungs. People will likely be infectious before they even know they are infected.
  - Masks, vaccination (with boosters), and ventilation are the most effective ways of limiting spread.
  - The risk of transmission at an outdoor-only event, if done perfectly, is very low. However, the risk of the associated 'indoor activity' and especially 'mask-less indoor activity' (eating, drinking, socialising) is high, with the potential to cause significant spread.

Put simply, multi-day competitions with hundreds of attendees travelling around the country to one location and the associated activities outside the competition all increase the risk profile of a competition, which in turn puts our members, their communities and our lifeguarding and club operations at higher levels of risk.

### **Risk mitigation strategies:**

- Mandatory mask wearing by everyone at all times except when competing
- Remove all unnecessary attendees
  - Exhibitors, sponsors, commentators, food & drink vendors etc.
  - Spectators & parents not allowed in defined space
  - Club support crews – coaches, managers etc.(not allowed in defined space)
  - Participants – remove specific age groups
- Change delivery models and programmes
  - Arenas effectively run as their own separate 'gathering' within the event.
  - People stay in single arenas.
  - Reduced programme
  - Reduce number of days
  - Split programmes & venues e.g. boats, small craft, age groups at different locations
- Change in logistics and resourcing
  - Online meetings/briefings
  - Each arena has designated crew of 'workers' - surf officials, water safety/event guards, First Aid, food deliverer etc.
  - No central club tents - tents within the arena
  - No sharing of craft outside arena
  - Designated toilets
  - No walled tents or walled gazebos (sunshade gazebos without walls for ventilation).
  - No centralised marshalling
  - No prize giving, finals day or social events

## Oceans

**The decision has been made to cancel Oceans for 2022.** There are multiple factors behind this decision, including:

- The Event Purpose & Objectives
  - To provide a fun, exciting and challenging event that allows junior members to test and develop their skills in a safe beach and surf environment. The event will allow junior members to socialise, work as teams, meet other members and have a great experience”
- Vaccination Status
  - Many of the younger participants will be unvaccinated or below optimum immunity at the time of the event, with under 12's only just becoming eligible for vaccination. Hosting a 'super-spreader' event for unvaccinated children would be a particularly bad outcome.
- Participant welfare
  - Oceans is a social/family experience, with high levels of involvement with parents in supporting their children. This has a very practical aspect, as with so many young children facing challenging conditions (often for the first time) there is often a need for individual support for most of the competitors during the course of the event.
  - Parents & spectators would be encouraged not to attend and if they did attend, would be significantly separated from the competition arenas and restricted to a singular defined space.
  - Similarly, coaches and managers would also be significantly separated from the competition arenas and restricted to a singular defined space, severely limiting their ability to engage with participants and help them through the experience
  - Children would be expected to self-manage their own welfare, e.g. heat/ cold management, sun protection, nutrition & fluid management, psychological issues like anxiety etc. It is unrealistic to expect 10-14 year olds to do this for themselves - this is a significant health and safety risk as the event crew does not have the capability to do this.
  - Allowing support people for competitors would further reduce the number of participants per age group and totally undermine the nature of the event.
- Modified programme
  - Entries would be limited to 100 total entries per age group and gender meaning 30% of the normal level of entrants would not be allowed to take part.
  - With defined spaces restricted to 100 participants, the event would need to either:
    - Double the number of arenas (one for every age & gender) therefore doubling required resources
    - Halve the programme
    - Halve the number of participants.
  - Mixed gender/age team events would be replaced with single age/gender team events
  - No contingency for poor conditions, delays or interruptions – no guarantees of programme being completed.
- Experience
  - There will be very limited 'fun' for the children in between races, as they will need to just stay in their arena location under tight supervision, even if eliminated in the early rounds.
  - There will be no 'atmosphere' without the tent village, exhibitors, shops, commentators.
  - Key memorable moments such as finals day and prizegivings will be missing.
  - Parents experience will be equally limited and regulated.

## Nationals

**The decision has been made to continue with plans to run Nationals.** However, this comes with some significant risks, which fall on SLSNZ, clubs and individuals that everyone needs to fully understand.

SLSNZ has heard the call – clubs and individuals want the chance to compete at Nationals this year. We will do everything we can to make this happen, with whatever circumstances exist over the coming five weeks. This does however pass some key decisions on the risks of taking part back to the clubs and individuals, which we have also heard is what you want.

As such, this will not be a 'normal' Nationals experience, and expectations will need to be lowered. We will do the best we can but we can't sugar coat this. If the Covid-19 situation does deteriorate, then further constraints may be added to meet any new CPF protocols.

Assuming the 'best case' scenario that the Covid-19 situation does not deteriorate any further from what it is today, the event will need to be significantly modified to meet the current CPF Red Light protocols, specifically:

- Restricted Entries
  - Entries would be limited to 100 total entries per age group and gender meaning some entrants would not be allowed to take part.
  - In CPF RED arenas effectively run as their own separate 'gathering' of 100 within the event.
  - With defined spaces restricted to 100 participants, the event will need to either:
    - Double the number of arenas (one for every age & gender) therefore doubling required resources
    - Halve the programme (AM/PM or 2 days/2 days)
    - Halve the number of participants
    - Remove some traditional team events
  - People must stay in the same arena for all days they were competing.
  - No ability to wander around the site and mix with others outside the your arena
- Tightly manage the event site
  - Remove all un-necessary attendees from competition areas/ arenas:
  - No exhibitors, sponsors, shops, merchandise, commentators etc.
  - Spectators & parents encouraged not to attend, and if they do they would not be allowed in defined competition spaces. Instead they would be restricted to their own spaces of 100.
  - Athletes would be asked to arrive only for their events and leave immediately afterwards.
  - Club support crews – coaches, managers etc also not allowed in competition defined spaces and would be restricted to their own spaces of 100.
  - Each arena has designated crew of 'workers' - surf officials, water safety/event guards, First Aid, food deliverer etc.
  - No central 'village' of club tents.
  - No walled tents or walled gazebos (sunshade gazebos without walls for ventilation).
  - No centralised marshalling.
- Change in logistics and resourcing:
  - Online meetings/briefings.
  - No sharing of craft.
  - Designated toilets per arena.
  - Increased signage, fencing & security
  - No prize giving, finals day or social events

## Event Programme

The exact event programme is a 'chicken and egg' situation – as it will depend very much on the level of entries, the number of available officials/volunteers and the Covid-19 protocols that exist at the time of the event. As this point in time, we cannot provide any certainty on this, and it will remain fluid right up to the event.

However, we can give assurance that multiple scenarios have been developed as part of this decision making process, and that all efforts will go into delivering as much of a 'normal' programme as possible within the constraints at the time. We will be working on these over the coming weeks, and will be able to give a much clearer indication of what is possible after entries close.

## What are the other risks for clubs and individuals?

By SLSNZ taking the approach of 'we're doing it', this does inherently create risks for clubs and individuals, specifically:

- **The event could still be cancelled**
  - Right up to the last minute and during the event. If the Covid-19 situation deteriorates in the country, the Government or the Council may put in place new rules that mean the event cannot take place.
  - Equally, if the level of entries is such that the event is no longer viable or if we do not have the resources to safely deliver the event.
  - The financial risk associated with this (loss of travel and accommodation payments) will be for the clubs/individuals to bear.
- **Anyone travelling by air or further away than a one day drive has to be prepared to self-isolate in Christchurch**
  - If you catch Covid-19 or are considered a close contact for whatever period is deemed necessary at the time, currently 14 and 10 days respectively. This is a cost and inconvenience everyone attending has to be willing to accept.
- **Club activities associated with the event could still be a 'super-spreader'**
  - While defined spaces of 100 can be maintained on the beach, it will immediately change when people leave the beach e.g. a bubble of 70 U19 Boys will go back to their 30+ club groups/ families at the end of each day, cross contaminating over the course of 2-3 days.
  - The primary risk of infection is not at the beach, it will be back in crowded indoor accommodation and social settings. It will be up to clubs to manage this risk.
  - The consequences of catching Covid-19 can be serious and even just the inconvenience of self-isolating has impacts on team-mates, family members, friends, workplaces etc, that need to be carefully considered. There is also a risk to club capability to patrol for the rest of the season that clubs need to take into account.
- **Rapidly changing situation.**
  - As we have seen previously, the Government can quickly change its mind. The possibility of local lockdowns and travel bans can't be ruled out, especially if Christchurch became a hot spot and the hospital system over-run.

## Next Steps

Acknowledging the risks and uncertainty, each individual and club has to determine if they want to attend the 2022 TSB Nationals.

- **Clubs will now have until 5.00pm Thursday February 10 to complete their entries**, thus giving SLSNZ an indication of what modifications are required and what programme will be able to be run (remembering competitors will be limited to one age/gender arena for all individual & team events for the entire competition).
- SLSNZ will liaise with event volunteers to determine what human resources are available to deliver the event.
- SLSNZ will then produce a DRAFT programme to give clubs and individuals further opportunity to assess their attendance.

## **High Performance**

2022 is a Lifesaving World Championships year and a number of competitions that act as selection events have either been cancelled or modified which has reduced the performance and selection opportunities for athletes.

SLSNZ is committed to supporting our HP teams and management with the best possible preparation given the constraints of operating in COVID-19 and so will work with HP Management to investigate additional or alternative competition options should 2022 TSB Nationals not go ahead in its entirety.

## **Member Wellbeing**

SLSNZ acknowledges that cancelling Oceans and the uncertainty around other competitions will have a significant impact on clubs, coaches, officials, competitors, volunteers and supporters. All of these groups will have already committed significant time, training and financial resource into preparing for these competitions, especially after the disappointment of similar cancellations.

We understand that this and the unpredictability of COVID can have a direct impact on member wellbeing. SLSNZ promotes the proactive use of its wellbeing services so we encourage people to reach out for a chat if things are more stressful now. You can get support about anything; it does not have to be SLS/Sport related.

### Free, confidential counselling

- Benestar is the counselling and wellbeing provider for SLSNZ members.
- All active and current members and their immediate families have access to fully funded counselling and wellbeing resources through Benestar
- Benestar have counsellors throughout New Zealand who can be selected and booked online by the user. They also can be booked by phone.
- To access visit [www.surflifesaving.org.nz/wellbeing](http://www.surflifesaving.org.nz/wellbeing) or call 0800 360364

### Peer Support

- SLSNZ now have trained Peer Supporters in all regions nationwide.
- Peer Supporters are clubbies that are able to provide confidential support on a range of issues including mental health concerns.
- If you or another member needs some extra support or a chat, do not hesitate to get in touch with a Peer Supporter.
- For any questions about wellbeing support for your team, you are welcome to get in touch with Ari Peach, the National Wellbeing Lead for SLSNZ (021 040 6313)

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For more information contact:

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