Date:

To: Club Chairs, Club Administrators, Club Lifesaving Leads, SLSNZ staff

From: Dani Shepherd, National Education Manager

Subject: Patrol Captain Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Process

Kia ora,

In July 2022, the National Life Saving Committee initiated and lead a national consultation process to review and update the Senior Lifeguard Award – Patrol Captain (PC Award). This review recognised the critical role Patrol Captains play in delivering safe beach environments, including leading patrol operations, managing incidents, and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of both the public and patrol members.

The consultation process conducted in two phases between July–September 2022 and March–June 2024 identified that existing policy and guidance did not clearly define the standards required for effective patrol leadership. This lack of consistency was considered an operational risk to SLSNZ, its clubs and members.

As a result of this feedback, a series of changes to the Patrol Captain Award and training pathway were made. These include strengthening the alignment between training and the practical responsibilities of the role, introducing a structured development pathway (including a new Vice Patrol Captain Award), and setting a minimum age of 18 years for Patrol Captain qualification from 1 October 2025.

Another change that was endorsed was that all Patrols location will require a qualified Patrol Captain to be on patrol & will change SLSNZ Policy Patrol Type, Designation of Areas & Minimum Standards to include the Patrol Captain as a minimum award.

Current State

This policy will come into effect **1 October 2026, 1 year after** the new Patrol Captain Award was released.

We have been monitoring the number of Patrol Captain awards closely over the past season, & while the Patrol Captain qualification pathway has existed within SLSNZ since 2009 (17 yrs), we recognise that delivery approaches, regional practices, and qualification recording processes have varied over time. As a result, there are experienced members currently undertaking Patrol Captain responsibilities whose previous training, operational leadership experience, or historic assessment may not be formally reflected within the SLSNZ database.
Many members have developed strong patrol leadership capability through years of operational experience, mentoring, club leadership, and regional training opportunities. To support clubs through the implementation of the updated policy requirements, SLSNZ is introducing a targeted Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process.

This process provides an opportunity for current patrol members who are already undertaking Patrol Captain responsibilities to have their previous training, operational leadership experience, and existing capability formally recognised against the Patrol Captain Award requirements.
The intent of this process is not to lower standards, but rather to appropriately recognise existing capability and experience across the movement while supporting clubs to meet national operational requirements consistently.

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Eligibility Criteria

The priority for this RPL process is members who are currently refreshed and actively patrolling. Members applying through this process must meet the same core prerequisites as those entering the current Patrol Captain pathway.
Applicants must:

- Be a current season SLSNZ member
- Hold a SLSNZ Surf Lifeguard Award
- Hold a current Surf Lifeguard or Patrol Support refresh
- Be 18 years of age or older
- Hold a current Surf First Aid Award
- Details about Patrol Captain experience and training

What is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)?

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process that allows experienced members to demonstrate their existing knowledge, leadership capability, and operational experience without needing to repeat training or assessment they may have already effectively met through previous experience.
Evidence may include:

- Previous Patrol Captain or patrol leadership experience
- Mentoring roles
- Regional or club based patrol leadership training
- Operational logbooks or patrol records
- Previous assessment or training records
- Feedback or endorsements from club leaders

Support will be available throughout the process to help members and clubs navigate the requirements.

What does this mean for clubs and members?

If you have members within your club who are currently undertaking Patrol Captain responsibilities but do not have a Patrol Captain Award recorded within the SLSNZ database, we encourage those members to apply through the RPL process.
This process is designed to support clubs in accurately recognising and recording existing patrol leadership capability within their membership, while ensuring alignment with the updated policy requirements.
Members can complete the RPL application form using the link below:

Aon Patrol Captain Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Fill Out Form

Support will be available throughout the process to help members and clubs navigate the requirements. If you have any questions regarding the process or the type of evidence required, please contact:

Dani Shepherd – National Education Manager
Claire Short – Education Development Officer

Yours sincerely

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National Education Manager

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