

Date: 15/10/2025

To: All Members

National or Region: National

Section: Search & Rescue

Description: SAR Members Update

Action Requested: Read & Distribute

SLSNZ Search and Rescue Update



It's been a busy but exciting few months across our Search & Rescue community - with significant progress nationally and strong connection locally as we move from *design to delivery* of the SLSNZ SAR Framework. Thank you to everyone who's contributed your time, knowledge, and commitment over winter to bring this to life.

SAR Framework – Our Compass

Endorsed by the SLSNZ Board in August, the Framework is a compass, not a manual. It provides national direction and a shared language for how Surf Life Saving delivers one of our core functions – Search and Rescue. It doesn't prescribe every step, but it gives us clear direction and shared understanding of how we will develop SAR.

<https://www.surflifesaving.org.nz/media/java0rou/sar-framework-final-1aug2025-online.pdf>

It's built on a simple principle - national support and local execution. SLSNZ provides the systems, standards, and backing, but it's local squads and club leaders who bring it to life in your communities.

The Framework has five core components: Our Role, Operations, Capability, Support, and Partnerships. They connect what we do on the ground with SLSNZ's wider strategy, and with the national SAR system led by NZ Police, RCCNZ (our coordinating authorities), and the NZSAR Council.

We're now moving from establishing a shared direction to making it real for all of us.

The focus is taking the Framework off the page and putting it into action. As we do, we're keeping things practical and focused. A question we always come back to is:

“Will this make it easier and/or safer for our lifeguards?”

That's the lens we're applying as we move into delivery. We've set up eight priority workstreams, each with a Committee Sponsor from the National SAR Committee to mentor and champion the mahi, and a Staff Lead who's accountable for day-to-day progress.

The Eight Workstreams



1. Framework Management

Committee Sponsor: David Bentley | Staff Lead: Matt Cairns

Keeping the Framework alive - not sitting on the shelf - making sure it stays current, visible, and useful.

Will deliver:

- A clear governance and reporting structure to track progress and decisions.
- Regular national updates and dashboards to show where we're at.

2. Operations Guide

Committee Sponsor: Immy Doyle | Staff Lead: Laura Beanland-Stephens

Bringing consistency to how we run operations so everyone's clear and confident when the alert goes out.

Will deliver:

- A SAR Operations Guide pulling policies, NSOPs, role descriptions and activation processes into one place.
- Improved templates for post-incident debriefs and operational reporting.

3. Accreditation & Capability

Committee Sponsor: Kath Manning | Staff Lead: Nick Wagstaff

Building a clear accreditation process that helps squads show they're trained, ready, and safe to respond.

Will deliver:

- A national accreditation model for SAR squads.
- Tools to help squads assess readiness and plan development.

4. Education & Training

Committee Sponsor: Nathan Snell | Staff Lead: Seth McPhee

Making SAR training consistent, practical, and easy to access.

Will deliver:

- SAR Education and Training Framework (endorsed October meeting)
- The new SAR Induction and Wellbeing modules (added to minimum standards).

5. Asset Management

Committee Sponsor: Justin Martin | Staff Lead: Max Corboy

Making sure squads have safe, reliable, and sustainable gear.

Will deliver:

- Asset Management System for PPE and SAR equipment.
- Standardised gear lists and specs by capability type.

6. Squad Support

Committee Sponsor: Chris Morley | Staff Lead: Saige Falaniko

Making life easier for volunteers by reducing admin, improving wellbeing, and strengthening National support for every squad.

Will deliver:

- New Wellbeing, and Cultural Support Guides to give squads simple, practical info.
- A platform where squads can get regular updates and share ideas or resources with each other

7. Squad Partnerships & Finance

Committee Sponsor: Brent Warner | Staff Lead: Chris Jeffery

Strengthening club relationships and funding models to keep SAR sustainable.

Will deliver:

- Clearer ownership and funding models for SAR squads and assets.
- Refreshed Club Partnership Agreements

8. Severe Weather Role

Committee Sponsor: Ben Flynn | Staff Lead: Matt Cairns

Exploring how SLSNZ contributes safely and sustainably to flood and severe weather response.

Will deliver:

- A national position paper on SLSNZ's potential role.
- Recommendations to guide safe training, resourcing, and partnerships.

SAR Leaders Forum

A few weeks ago we hosted the SAR Leaders Forum, bringing together leaders and representatives from 43 SAR squads, alongside Police, RCCNZ and our friends from over the ditch SLS Tasmania. Together we worked through the Framework and discussed the priorities to bring it to life.

That approach reflects the spirit of what we as a committee and staff want to achieve in the coming months – being open, collaborative, and practical.

[Surf Lifesaving NZ - New national Search and Rescue Framework launched at SAR Leaders Forum](#)

Next steps

Over the next few months, squad members can expect to see real progress as the Framework comes to life. A few highlights include:

- **Start of PPE and Equipment Rollout:** Distribution will begin soon, along with details on ownership, maintenance, and where the gear can be used.
- **Education and Training:** The new SAR Education and Training Framework will roll out, offering opportunities for you and your squad to engage in updated training and learning pathways.
- **Squad Support:** Your SAR Support Officer will continue to help ensure you and your squad are refreshed and meeting minimum standards.
- **Accreditation:** More details will be shared on the upcoming accreditation process for specific SAR capabilities.

We plan to provide an update every two months as we get this important work underway, so our members can follow progress. We encourage you to share ideas, feedback, and stay connected with what's happening with the National SAR Committee.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment and support as we continue building SAR capability nationwide.

Ngā mihi nui,
David Bentley – Chair, National SAR Committee



Matt Cairns – National SAR & Paid Lifeguard Service Manager

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