

2018 President's Report

This is my final year as President of the Rottnest Channel Swim Association (RCSA), and my last time on the RCSA committee, as I am moving into a new role based away from Perth. As I look back on the last 4 years, I am extremely proud of the Association's achievements and our continued execution of a world class safe sporting event.

I have worked closely with Natalie and Nic over the last year and have seen the tremendous passion and commitment they bring to our Association. Without you both bringing your unique skills I know we would not be able to run such as successful event.

I'd also like to thank my fellow committee members who, even with full time jobs and busy lives, have always been willing to step up when I ask for volunteers to help with the various activities that have happened this year.

My final thank you is to all of the volunteers that support the various briefings and spend long hours standing in the sun and supporting our competitors on Event Day. Without all of these groups working together we could not run a world class event in such as safe and friendly manner.

A few stats, highlights and general information...

The Association currently has a total of 1,211 members, comprising:

- 1,125 Ordinary members (committee, life and solo). This is an increase of circa 40 members in the last 12 months.
- 86 associate members

Personnel

- There were no committee changes this year.
- Our staffing during the year remained the same from 2017. Natalie Beevis is our Executive Officer and Nic Blackburn is our Event Officer. Nic has moved to a full time permanent contract.

Swims we have registered – other than swim day

We have had a significant decrease in the number of solo crossings undertaken outside of the Association's event due to the cancellation of the Port to Pub, with 40 non-event solo crossings, including double crossings by Jeremy McClure and Peter Klauz.

2018 Rottnest Channel Swim

- **Solos** – there were 394 registered; 362 started the event; 295 completed the swim. Just over a 17% increase in registrants from 2017 and an increase of 25% from 2016.
- **Duos** – there were 184 (368 swimmers) registered to race; 175 (350 swimmers) started the race; 150 (300 swimmers) completed the race.

- **Teams** – there were 436 (1,744 swimmers) registered to race; 429 (1,716 swimmers) started the event; 219 (876 swimmers) teams completed the swim.
- **Lavan Legal Charity Challenge (LLCC) Teams** – 31 (124 swimmers) registered, 31 (124 swimmers) started the race; 19 (76 swimmers) completed the swim.
- **Overall** - there were 1,045 registrations (2,630 swimmers) and 683 entrants (1,547 swimmers) who finished the race. This means that 65% of those registered completed the race. Of those solos, duos and teams who started the race, 68% finished the event. This is a significant decrease from 2017 when 92% finished the race. The decrease is largely attributed to the shark sighting evacuation.
- **FVSRG/Medivac Stats**
 - 7 swimmers were treated by on-water medical staff.
 - One swimmer was evacuated from the water and taken to hospital due to a leg injury from a propeller strike.
 - 50 swimmers received medical support at the finish line. Over 70% of these were for hypothermia and 71% of which were solo swimmers. There was also a 40% decrease in nausea & vomiting cases (6 compared to 10 in 2017).
 - Compared to the 2017 event, there was a 20% decrease in presentations to the SMA Medical tent this year.
 - 241 boats were evacuated after the confirmed sighting of a 3-4 metre white pointer shark.

Champions of the Channel (CoTC)

In the third year of our elite event, Champions of the Channel saw a change in its format to become the fastest qualifying solo wave. It attracted a significant amount of interest from national and international swimmers, particularly with the increase in prize money which was awarded through to fifth place male and female. Solos left the beach in the first wave at 5.45am with the first solo male arriving in a record time of 3 hours 59 minutes.

- **Stats**
 - Solos – 79 allocated; 73 started the event; 70 completed the swim.
 - This means that 96% of those registered and started the race, finished the event.

Cotto Swim

With the idea of providing everyone the opportunity to be involved in the excitement and challenge of the Rottneest Channel Swim, the RCSA introduced the inaugural Cotto Swim – a two distance open water swim starting off Cottesloe Beach. Leaving directly after the last wave of the Rottneest Channel Swim, swimmers were offered the opportunity to swim a 1km novice option or 3km distance around the Leeuwin icon vessel. We were delighted with the success of the first year and feedback from all of the swimmers. The Event will continue in 2019.

- **Stats**
 - 1km - 78 registered; 69 started the event; 68 completed the swim.
 - 3km – 319 registered; 279 started the event; 272 completed the swim.
 - Overall, 348 swimmers started and 340 finished the race. This means that 98% of those registered and started the race, finished the event.

Festival

Looking to build on the 2016 and 2017 on island festival, we worked with various stakeholders to build on the previous year's success. Unfortunately the proposed site was not approved in time and was therefore deferred. We will continue to work with the Rottnest Island Authority and other stakeholders to make these options available in future years.

GC2018 Commonwealth Games Queens Baton Relay

This year, the RCS was honoured to be a chosen host for the GC2018 Commonwealth Games Queens Baton Relay, with the baton taking off from Cottesloe Beach at 5.45am and making its way across to Rottnest Island via batonbearers – Olympian, Eamon Sullivan, 2016 female solo crossing champion Jaime Bowler, current female solo record holder Tamara Bruce and current duo record holder Simon Huitegena.

Sponsorship

- During the year, The Sunday Times, hit92.9 and Rottnest Express continued their sponsorship for a further three years.
- Unfortunately a Naming Rights Sponsor (NRS) was not secured in 2018 despite almost a year of following up leads. The RCSA still continues to search for an NRS and have engaged a broker to help with the project.
- The Leeuwin signed on as the Official Cotto Swim Partnership sponsor for one year. This will be reviewed in 2019.

Other things we've done this year based on feedback from swimmers and stakeholders...

- **Combined Briefings:** following on from last year's move to hold the Metro Safety Briefing on a Saturday, the RCSA decided to combine the Volunteer Briefing, Metro Safety Briefing and Support Crew Info Session to the same day to create a more efficient experience. Going forward, the Support Crew Info Session will remain on the same day as the Metro Safety Briefing, and the Volunteer Briefing will be moved back to January.
- **Cut off times:** due to poor conditions and a strong current, a significant number of swimmers, particularly solos, did not make the cut off times. Cut off times were reviewed and all cut offs beyond the 18km mark were increased by 15 minutes.
- **Ocean Current Forecast Information** - following strong currents in the 2017 Event, a current prediction was provided to swimmers ahead of event day which was created for the Rottnest Channel Swim by Charitha Pattiaratchi, Professor of Coastal Oceanography at UWA.
- **New post event massage provider** – in 2018, we welcomed Stoke Physio onboard as our finish line massage provider, offering free massages to all participants.
- **Volunteers:** At the main briefing, we had ~40 people who volunteered their time to help with the briefing. On event day, we had ~40 volunteers at the start line, ~15 volunteers on-water and ~60 volunteers at the finish line. There are also volunteer organisations involved with the event, such as Fremantle Volunteer Sea Group and a number of Surf Lifesaving Clubs. We are grateful for the ongoing support of our event!
- **Committee and Staff Involvement:** Committee and staff also work very hard to ensure a safe and successful event. During the 2018 year, we had 11 committee meetings and a half-day planning session. In addition, meetings were held with various stakeholder organisations. To give you some

indication, we have around ~40 stakeholder organisations—many of whom we have almost daily contact, others confined to a three month window (event time), and some are somewhere in-between. Further, committee members take on various tasks and projects – various sub-committees, drafting discussion papers, ongoing liaison with particular stakeholders, dealing with the association’s financials, sourcing sponsors, drafting and reviewing correspondence and external communications.

- **Event Management** - You may have also read in the press that one of our key suppliers, TriEvents, ceased trading in July. We have already commenced discussions with new providers on how we can secure a new event partner.

It would be remiss of me not to provide an update to members on the events associated with the shark evacuation. I did provide a full summary to all members in the week after the event and I have provided a brief summary below and what we have in train to address some of the lessons learnt.

By way of a recap, this year was the first year we’ve had to invoke the Risk Management Plan (RMP) and remove some swimmers due to a large white pointer shark (in excess of 3 meters). It is not uncommon to see sharks during the event, although they have not previously been a high risk species. We have a RMP that has been developed over many years with input from the Department of Fisheries and Fremantle Volunteer Sea Rescue (FVSR) that pre-plans the Association's responses to many possible incidents. During a critical incident on race day, we will always follow the plans agreed with other key organisations who review the RMP annually and attend many meetings during the year.

The RCSA has already run a lessons learnt session with all key stakeholders, immediately following the event, to review options to improve how we handle this type of event and competitor feedback.

We have set up the following five sub-committees with representation from a range of stakeholders to provide recommendations to the full committee. The committees are:

- Shark Protocol Review
- On water structure
- Champions of the Channel
- PR and Media Management
- Sponsorship

I leave the RCSA knowing that the team and Committee we have in place will continue to build on the last 28 years of successful execution of all the activities that the Association completes.