

2019 President's Report

Following my first year as President of the Rottneest Channel Swim Association (RCSA), I am able to reflect on a successful year with a raft of changes being introduced on event day, the main focus of which were to increase participant safety.

The new and improved safety measures implement this year included:

- A dedicated Event helicopter monitoring the swim course throughout the day and assisting Race Officials when required;
- A revised shark safety protocol with clearer communicative procedures. The protocol also includes an opportunity for swimmer re-entry if deemed safe to do so; and
- A mass SMS texting system allowing simultaneous relaying of important messages directly to Swimmer/Skipper/Race Officials.

Being Race Director out on the water during the swim, I was able to witness first-hand the huge benefit of these changes, in particular the assistance of the Event Helicopter. Having an “eye in the sky” equipped me with more information with which to make decisions and, undoubtedly, was particularly reassuring for all the swimmers in the water.

With over 2600 swimmers participating in the annual swim, it is an immense task that falls upon the RCSA to ensure those swimmers are given the best opportunity to complete the journey to Rottneest safely. This year saw a 98.3% completion rate; a remarkable achievement and something we can be proud of whilst simultaneously striving to improve next year.

It would also be remiss of me to not mention the serious medical evacuation which occurred this year, the details of which were reported in the media. We at the Association were overjoyed to hear the positive outcome for the swimmer, a miraculously recovery in every sense of the word. This miracle was only possible due to the remarkable response from the medical team at the finish line including Surf Lifesavers, Sports Medicine personnel and St John Ambulance paramedics all working together. The gravity of the situation is a reminder to us all of the responsibility that rests upon us when making decisions regarding the running of our event. It is also an opportunity for us to be immensely proud of the safety procedures we have in place.

Over the past year, I have received great assistance from our little team at the RCSA, being Natalie Beevis, Nic Blackburn and Michael Hodder. Working with them, the commitment and passion they all possess for our event is evident and is borne out in the high standard of their work; something which gives me great confidence that our event is in safe hands. A special thanks to Natalie who is leaving us after 6 years of tireless dedication to the Association in order to pursue an exciting career change; one which we all wish her luck for.

Further thanks must go to our volunteer Committee who dedicate their precious time to the Association whilst leading busy lives of their own. It is very reassuring to be surrounded by people who possess such positivity and passion for our event.

Finally, a huge thank you to our amazing volunteers who help out both in the lead-up to the event and on event day itself. An event such as this would not be possible without your support.

A few stats on the Association

The Association currently has a total of 1,344 members, comprising:

- 1,279 Ordinary members (committee, life and solo). This is an increase of 72 members in the last 12 months.
- 65 associate members

Personnel

- Committee changes – Tyron Scott and Hannah Waters left the committee with Chantelle Cox and Olivia Williams coming on to fill the two casual vacancies.
- There have been a number of changes in staff during 2018/19. Natalie Beevis, the former Executive Officer, informed the Committee that she would be leaving following the 2019 event. The role was advertised publicly with the then Event Officer Nic Blackburn ultimately being offered the position. Over the period of November 2018 through to April 2019 Nic Blackburn was trained by Natalie Beevis for the position. The Event Officer role was filled in January 2019 by Michael Hodder who has come across from his former position at WAIS.

Swims we have registered – other than swim day

Since the 2018 AGM we have recoded 19 successful out of event crossings with a further 65 crossings being recorded from the Port to Pub event. Of particular note is Andrew Page who has now completed 31 successful crossings and holds the record for the most successful crossings.

2019 Rottneest Channel Swim

- **Solos** – there were 365 registered; 323 started the event; 311 completed the swim with 4 disqualifications. Just under an 8% decrease in registrants from 2018 and an increase of 8% from 2017.
- **Duos** – there were 196 (392 swimmers) registered to race; 195 (390 swimmers) started the race; 194 (388 swimmers) completed the race.
- **Teams** – there were 449 (1,796 swimmers) registered to race; 447 (1,788 swimmers) started the event; 443 (1772 swimmers) teams completed the swim.
- **Lavan Legal Charity Challenge (LLCC) Teams** – 36 (140 swimmers) registered, 34 (132 swimmers) started the race; 34 (132 swimmers) completed the swim.
- **Overall** - there were 1,046 registrations (2,693 swimmers) and 982 entrants (1,547 swimmers) who finished the race. This means that 93.9% of those registered completed the race. Of those solos, duos and teams who started the race, 98.3% finished the event.
- **FVSRG/Medivac Stats**
 - 2 swimmers were treated by on-water medical staff for sea sickness.
 - 7 sharks were identified by the Event helicopter.
 - 26 swimmers received medical support at the finish line. 70% of these were for hypothermia and 42% of which were solo swimmers.

- 4 patients were brought in to the finish line by IRB with three unable to walk to the medial tent. This is the first time that any IRB rescues have occurred at the finish line.
- 2 patients were transferred via ambulance to the Nursing Post with 1 requiring emergency evacuation to a mainland hospital.
- Compared to the 2018 event, there was a 48% decrease in presentations to the SMA Medical tent this year.

Champions of the Channel (CoTC)

Champions of the Channel saw a change in its format to become an invited group of up to 20 Male and Female swimmers. A number of swimmers were invited to compete prior to registrations opening and provided a complementary entry. There were 11 male and 9 female swimmers in the 2019 event with the top three swimmer being invited back and provided complementary entry for 2020.

	Male	Female
First	Sam Sheppard	Jamie Bowler
Second	Solomon Wright	Rebekah Weller
Third	Kyle Lee	Josie Page

Sponsorship

- During the year, Lavan continued their sponsorship for a further three years and the Rottnest Island Authority signed a one year agreement.
- Unfortunately a Naming Rights Sponsor (NRS) was not secured in 2019 despite almost two years of actively pursuing one. The RCSA still continues to search for an NRS and is investigating “presenting rights” as an alternative.

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

- **Split International, Interstate and Regional Briefings:** Following a number of years searching for alternative venues the decision was taken to maintain Cottesloe SLSC and provide both 9am and 11am briefing times.
- **Friday timing chip collection:** An optional Friday timing chip collection has been brought in to reduce the stress for swimmers on race morning.
- **Dedicated Event helicopter:** Following the 2018 Event the decision was made to source our own helicopter to assist on with on water management. This proved to be invaluable and will be replicated in 2020.
- **Swimmer recovery area:** The recovery area for swimmers at the finish line was expanded to include live results screens, a beautification station and increased food offerings.
- **Solo medal:** The individual presentation by volunteers of soloists with their engraved solo medal as they crossed the finish line was introduced with great success.
- **Live streaming:** Both the start and finish line were live streamed by Clip Media to the Rottnest Channel Swim Facebook page. Network 10 (Sponsor) also provided support for this with the addition of their link van ensuring the coverage flowed through till the last swimmer.
- **Volunteers:** We introduced a morning and afternoon shift for Rottnest Island volunteers to improve the experience for those who start at 4.30am at Cottesloe beach. This was well

received by the volunteers and was noticeable at the finish line where energy levels were high all day.

- **Committee and Staff Involvement:** Committee and staff also work very hard to ensure a safe and successful event. During the 2019 year, we had 12 committee meetings and a weekend 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 with, others confined to a three month window (around event time), and the rest 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** - With our previous event management company being dissolved we undertook a tender process to source a new provider. After receiving three submissions The Event Team was awarded a 2 year contract with a further 2 year option.
- **Public Relations** – A tender process was undertaken to source a new PR company for the swim. Four companies were invited to tender with Hunter Communications being awarded a 2 year contract.
- **We’ve Moved:** The RSCA was forced to move out of Seven West Media following the dissolving of Tri Event. We have since moved into shared office space in Subiaco.

As we wrap up on our 2018/19 year, preparations are already well underway for our 2020 event which will take place on Saturday, 22 February 2020.

I would like to thank our Members for their continued support and can assure them that we will continue in our constant efforts to uphold the objectives of the RSCA as outlined in the Constitution.

Iain McCarrey