

21ST GEORGE BASS MARATHON  
29/12/2019 TO 4/1/2020

Are you up to the challenge?



**GEORGE BASS  
SURFBOAT  
MARATHON**

2020

**GBM  
2020**

[georgebassmarathon.com.au](http://georgebassmarathon.com.au) **#GeorgeBass2020**

For more info contact Sue Hunt 0401 361 822







The 2020 George Bass Marathon had been a long awaited and much talked about event.

We started promoting the GBM2020 at the end of the 2018 race and for nearly two years it was the talk around most surfboat communities in the country, and overseas. This major bucket list event for boaties and paddlers finally seemed achievable to many and was always a topic of conversation at carnivals, surf clubs and after event functions up and down the East Coast.

The countdown clock was set and our GBM2020 Committee kicked off epic task of organising our race. We worked hard to pull the event together with the number of approvals to get competitors on the water increasing each year. Gabby Smith and Wendy Law carried the weight of the approval process, and I can't begin to tell you how pleased we were to have these two incredibly diligent ladies in charge of the process.

Andrew Topp and the team at Capital Chemist Group joined us as the naming rights sponsor, giving us the financial boost that we need to run an event of this size. For us to have a local company that has moved into most States across the country was important, keeping the money in our community.

Expressions of interest started rolling in 12 months before the event and we were a little gobsmacked at the number of crews and paddlers that wanted more information on the event and expressed a desire to attend.

When entries closed at the end of September 2019, we had 35 boat crews and 25 intrepid ski paddlers. Whilst boat number were marginally short of the record number, ski numbers were 55 per cent higher than any previous entries. Very exciting news for an event that, a few short years ago was on the verge of folding.



The biggest excitement came from the inclusion in the fleet of the Muriwai Meerkats Open Ladies crew and the Yeppoon Vets boat crew from 2016, returning to do it all again.....ON SKIs!!!

We were thrilled to have the Meerkats on board and planning was underway to do everything they could to get here. We followed their fundraising and training efforts on Instagram, and cheered when they met their monetary goal.

The main item they needed was a boat, after all they weren't going far without one. Boaties are a remarkable bunch and we had offers from six clubs to lend the girls a boat, but in the end, courtesy of the NZ Airforce their boat got a free

trip across the ditch. Rolled into the back of an Airforce Hercules she touched down in Adelaide four weeks before the race start, and with the help of family and friends arrived at the starting point at Casey's Beach with plenty of time to spare.

Eight boys from Yeppoon registered for the GBM2020, but sadly Keirnan Gettinby, unexpectedly, passed away a few weeks before the trip. The remaining paddlers and their families decided they would still come and bring Kiernan with them to complete the Bass. An amazing and heart-warming tribute to a mate gone too soon.

We were also pretty stoked to have not one but two all-female crews. Bec Hamilton from South Maroubra swapped club caps to sweep the Moruya Canberra Open Women and Raylene Symons, also with an Open Womens crew, from Maroochydore. We were able to follow Raylene, and her crew's journey to the GBM2020 via social media too....another great adventure.

In the weeks leading up to the GBM2020 events beyond our control and beyond our imagining started to unfold. Bushfires on the north coast of NSW started in late October and within 4 weeks more fires started to impact on areas south and west of Nowra.



The coast to Long Beach (5 minutes north of Batemans Bay) and National Forrest west to Nelligen and Braidwood were ravaged, all roads south and heading to the coast were closed. Fires also impacted on the area from Bairnsdale north to the NSW Border, closing the Princes Highway. By mid- December fires seemed to be under control, although roads would remain closed for many weeks. Our committee were very mindful of the dangers that would face those travelling to the Far South Coast, and Andrew Holt, Director of Surf Sports (FSC Branch) and George Bass 2020 Director kept in constant contact with local Rural Fire and Roads & Maritime Services.

On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019, the Committee met and based on the information given to us by RFS and RMS we made the decision to forge ahead with the GBM 2020. Crews and paddlers from Mullaloo WA, Darwin, Townsville and Yeppoon were already on the road and the only way here was via Cooma. Nobody seemed to mind the extra kilometres and all were excited to finally get to Batemans Bay.

Competitors, families, support teams and officials took over the oval area at Moruya High School from 26/12/2019, and our home for the next few days took shape.

To me this is what the GBM is all about. The village atmosphere is amazing, kids, mums, dads, mates, grandparents all coming together to support each other for the next week. To get to the end of this most epic adventure. This camaraderie has never been more evident that it was this year. Surf lifesavers are a special kind of people, but boaties and paddlers are their own kind of special. They are family and I'm incredibly proud to be considered a boatie groupie and part of their family.



Move forward to **Day 1 GBM2020 - 29/12/2019**. The start had to be moved from under the traditional start, under the Batemans Bay Bridge, due to the construction of the new bridge, to Corrigan's Beach. This worked well with easy access to the beach and good opportunities to watch the start.

Smoke that had been in the air for days had dissipated and the morning was clear, but by the start of the race the smoke had dropped making visibility poor although the air at sea level was clear and not inhibiting anyone's breathing.

Times to Moruya could have been included in race records however the race start being a distance from the Bridge.

First around can at Broulee to take home the "Nick Dixon Trophy" was the Super Vets crew from North Cronulla. The old boys had a red hot crack and continued the form being the first crew to cross the line at Moruya. We were fortunate enough to have Mrs Claudia Dixon and her daughter Shelley Goddard on hand to present the trophy to John Leard from the North Cronulla crew.

Gavin Granger, life member from Pambula SLSC, was the first ski on the beach at Moruya, to take out the Dave Pheeney Sheild, which was presented to Gavin by Michael Pheeney, Dave's son and President at Moruya SLSC.



**Day 2 GBM2020** – Another cracker of a day. The weather was clear in shore with the nor-wester pushing the smoke haze to sea. With the breeze behind our competitors short work was made of the trip to Coila Beach at Tuross Head. The beach, notorious for its really rough edge, lived up to expectations, with a couple of boats and RWCs getting smashed on the shore...no injuries to report. And with the second day done the biggest concern for our safety committee with the northerly expected to continue into Day 3 was "do we launch off Coila in the morning?".

A great evening was had by all that attended the Red Faces evening at the Moruya Golf Club. The night was organised by the Broulee Open Womens crew, with funds, nearly \$600, going to the Moruya Rural Fire Service.

As we all headed home to our variety of accommodations, we looked forward to the race starting on New Years Eve at Wagonga Inlet at Narooma, after the safety team made the call over dinner. We had no idea of the catastrophic events that would unfold overnight.



**Day 3 GBM 2020** - For me, the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 started with a 2am phone call from my parents. Living out the back of Cobargo they had been evacuated. They were frightened but were ok. My sister and her family living at Wandella had been evacuated too. This was all the news I had before the phones went dead.

At 2.15am I called our Safety and Emergency Management Co-ordinator, Steve Dobson, who after growling at me for waking him up, said "leave it with me". Within 15 minutes he rang back to say that the GBM 2020 had to be cancelled and that the fire event that was evolving was like nothing that we could comprehend.

The decision made we set about notifying all of our competitors and their support teams and our Officials of the news, and to ensure that those that could get out and those that couldn't remained safe.

I don't think that any of us could get our heads around the events over following days, and many of the people on the South Coast and Far South Coast still struggle to grasp the enormity of everything that happened.



Roads were cut quickly, and communications went not long after. Our members that were not able to get out, or decided it was safer to stay put became the first point of contact for evacuees from the outlying communities.

Batemans Bay, Broulee Surfers and Bermagui SLSCs became major evacuation centres in a few short hours. Our Clubbies both Far South Coast and stranded GBM'ers stepped up to offer any support they could. Many of our people come from emergency service background and we were fortunate enough to have Police, Fire, Ambos, Paramedics, Doctors and Nurses on the ground doing what they do best.

Our communities and people are resilient, and the recovery process is slow, and for many it will take a lot of time to get back to any sort of normal.

The untimely arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has made the process even harder with most unable to access services needed to ease them through the aftermath of the fires.

There are many individuals that I could single out for their efforts, but there would be twice as many I would miss. There are no words to thank everyone that were here during this time, thank you seems grossly inadequate.

We can't run an event like the George Bass Marathon without the support of our wonderful volunteers, after all, this is an event for Clubbies by Clubbies.

### *Our amazing committee.....*

Wendy Law and Gabby Smith have worked tirelessly for 18 months to get all of the paperwork and approvals completed, and Gab for picking up MC duties when we lost our announcer at the last minute.

The gorgeous Leanne Constable from See Sure Design for producing our fantastic promotional material including the selfie frames, that didn't get as much use as we would have liked.

Andrew Holt, Tony Rettke & Kiaran Harris for chipping away at presentations, water safety, camping grounds and a plethora of 'little' tasks that bring the event all together.

### *Our Referees:*

Tony Haven – Event Referee: Tony always brings a fresh perspective to any event and the GBM is no exception. He is held in high regard and his wealth of surf and surfboat knowledge and his professionalism is invaluable.

Byron Dengate – Ski Referee: Byron to comes with a wide range of surf knowledge and is a reputable Surf Sports Official.

### *Safety & Emergency Management Committee:*

Steve Dobson, Andrew Holt & our referees. We are eternally grateful for your calm under extreme pressure. Race conditions were fantastic and at the end of Day 2 the biggest decision you had to make was to take the event off the ocean for Day 3 and into the lake at Narooma. Little did we know that when we went to bed that night your focus the next day would turn to the life-threatening fire emergency that developed overnight. Thank you

### *Cast of thousands.....*

-Water safety; Kiaran Harris, Tony Vella, Philippa Lowe, Ryley Spoelder-Hanlon, Ethan Mass and Shane Mass and Tony Rettke. We can't get the competitors on the water without you.

-Mark Dickinson and the medical boat: thank you for letting me on board on Day 2. I have to say that this gave me a whole new view on the event and how things work on the ocean side.

-Thecla Haven and Bede Webster for stepping up and ensuring that the trackers worked as they should.

-Jimmy McGrath; for towing the radio trailer and getting equipment to where it needed to be

-Batemans Bay, Broulee and Moruya SLSCs for your efforts over the two days, and to the other four Clubs in the Branch for your work in anticipation of the fleet arriving at your beach.

-Far South Coast Branch – Thanks Tony Rettke (President) and your committee that entrusted us keep this epic event going.

# ***THANK YOU!!!***

In closing, on behalf of the George Bass Marathon 2020 Committee, I would like to thank everyone for your understanding in the cancellation of the GBM 2020. We would like to express our gratitude to everyone that supported our people, Surf Clubs and Communities during, and after, the 2019/20 Bushfire Crisis.

We look forward to seeing you again on the Far South Coast at the George Bass Marathon 2022, if not before.

Yours in Surf Life Saving

Sue Hunt  
Co-Ordinator  
George Bass Marathon 2020

## GEORGE BASS MARATHON 2020 – SURFBOAT CREWS

<b>OPEN MEN</b>
Bulli
Bronte
Coogee
Henley SA
Long Reef
Moruya Canberra Vikings
<b>OPEN WOMEN</b>
Broulee Surfers
Coogee
Grange SA
Maroochydore
Muriwai Meerkats
North Cronulla
Torquay
<b>VETS MEN</b>
Broulee Capitals
Bulli
Corrimal
Freshwater
Grange SA
Pambula
Tathra
Wanda
<b>VETS WOMEN</b>
Avalon Beach
Moruya Canberra Vikings
Pambula
Tathra
Torquay
<b>SUPER VETS</b>
Bulli
Darwin (W)
Long Reef
Mullaloo
Noosa
North Cronulla
North Steyne
Wanda
Warriewood

## GEORGE BASS MARATHON 2020 – SKI PADDLERS

Max	Bennett	Yeppoon
Ruth	Burgess	Bermagui
Gavin	Granger	Pambula
Carl	Greenhalgh	Currumbin
David	Griffin	Kiama
Nathan	Haythorpe	Kiama Downs
Steve	Mawby	Noosa
Dee	McWhirter	Mona Vale
Melissa	Meaker	Tathra
Mark	Murray	Yeppoon
Danny	Murrill	Austinmer
Richard	Newton	Yeppoon
Lachlan	O'Grady	Bulli
Kim	O'Halloran	Pambula
Stewart	O'Regan	North Bondi
Murray	Osborne	Yeppoon
Jack	Patison	Austinmer
Bill	Robinson	Yeppoon
Ian	Sakoff	Thirroul
Sirko	Schroeder	Darwin
Adam	Smith	Picnic Bay
Phillip	Stubbs	Yeppoon
Novak	Thompson	Noosa
Craig	Vipond	Mooloolaba
Gary	Wilkins	Yeppoon





## GEORGE BASS MARATHON 2020 – OVERALL RESULTS

<b>OPEN MEN</b>	PLACE	DAY 1	PLACE	DAY 2	PLACE	OVERALL
Bulli	1	2:14:12	1	1:16:45	1	3:30:57
Moruya Canberra Vikings	2	2:17:37	4	1:17:00	2	3:34:37
Henley SA	3	2:17:44	3	1:17:46	3	3:35:30
Coogee	4	2:17:48	2	1:18:35	4	3:36:23
Long Reef	5	2:21:08	5	1:19:25	5	3:40:33
Bronte	6	2:20:17	6	1:20:25	6	3:40:42
<b>OPEN WOMEN</b>	PLACE	DAY 1	PLACE	DAY 2	PLACE	OVERALL
Torquay	1	2:25:16	1	1:23:31	1	3:48:47
North Cronulla	2	2:29:21	2	1:24:21	2	3:53:42
Broulee Surfers	3	2:32:45	3	1:26:06	3	3:58:51
Muriwai Meerkats - NZ	4	2:32:58	4	1:26:34	4	3:59:32
Coogee	5	2:40:03	5	1:29:07	5	4:09:10
Grange SA	6	2:45:00	6	1:32:50	6	4:17:50
Maroochydore	7	2:46:00	7	1:34:09	7	4:20:09
<b>VETS WOMEN</b>	PLACE	DAY 1	PLACE	DAY 2	PLACE	OVERALL
Moruya Canberra Vikings	2	2:35:48	1	1:28:34	1	4:04:22
Tathra	1	2:35:35	2	1:29:49	2	4:05:24
Pambula	3	2:42:26	3	1:31:14	3	4:13:40
Darwin	4	2:48:01	4	1:36:46	4	4:24:47
Avalon Beach	5	2:54:11	5	1:38:43	5	4:32:54
Torquay	6	3:02:17	6	1:42:48	6	4:45:05
<b>VETS MEN</b>	PLACE	DAY 1	PLACE	DAY 2	PLACE	OVERALL
Wanda Vets	1	2:21:50	1	1:19:49	1	3:41:39
Bulli	2	2:21:52	2	1:20:59	2	3:42:51
Corrimal	4	2:23:37	3	1:22:10	3	3:45:47
Tathra	3	2:23:08	4	1:22:47	4	3:45:55
Broulee Capitals	6	2:24:35	5	1:23:58	5	3:48:33
Pambula	5	2:23:37	8	1:33:49	6	3:57:26
Freshwater	7	2:34:11	6	1:28:00	7	4:02:11
<b>SUPER VETS</b>	PLACE	DAY 1	PLACE	DAY 2	PLACE	OVERALL
North Cronulla	1	2:25:01	1	1:19:23	1	3:44:24
Grange SA	2	2:25:13	3	1:22:57	2	3:48:10
Long Reef	3	2:26:24	6	1:23:21	3	3:49:45
Bulli	4	2:29:08	2	1:25:16	4	3:54:24
Noosa	5	2:29:55	6	1:33:43	5	4:03:38
Wanda	6	2:39:41	5	1:29:21	6	4:09:02
North Steyne	7	2:44:43	3	1:26:52	7	4:11:35
Mullaloo	8	2:47:12	7	1:30:45	8	4:17:57

<b>SPEC</b>	PLACE	DAY 1	PLACE	DAY 2	PLACE	OVERALL
Lachlan O'Grady	1	2:08:27	1	1:16:52	1	3:25:19
Jack Patison	2	2:12:22	2	1:20:05	2	3:32:27
Craig Vipond	3	2:20:31	3	1:25:23	3	3:45:54
Steve Mawby	4	2:22:28	4	1:26:10	4	3:48:38
Carl Greenhalgh	5	2:26:32	5	1:26:35	5	3:53:07
Sirko Schroeder	6	2:27:16	6	1:29:21	6	3:56:37
Gavin Granger	7	2:26:21	8	1:40:40	7	4:07:01
Danny Murrill	8	2:51:34	11	1:35:15	8	4:26:49
Phillip Stubbs	9	2:39:27	9	1:48:39	9	4:28:06
Bill Robertson	10	2:46:10	10	1:49:14	10	4:35:24
Ian Sakoff	11	3:35:25	7	1:33:23	11	5:08:48
Murray Osborne	12	3:37:36		DNS	12	3:37:36

<b>OCEAN</b>	PLACE	DAY 1	PLACE	DAY 2	PLACE	OVERALL
Stewart O'Regan	1	2:06:16	2	1:18:07	1	3:24:23
Will Hardman	3	2:12:06	1	1:16:51	2	3:28:57
Novak Thompson	2	2:11:00	3	1:19:08	3	3:30:08
Gary Wilkins	4	2:24:31	5	1:30:34	4	3:55:05
Adam Smith	5	2:30:50	4	1:29:51	5	4:00:41
Mark Murray	6	2:42:31	6	1:36:37	6	4:19:08

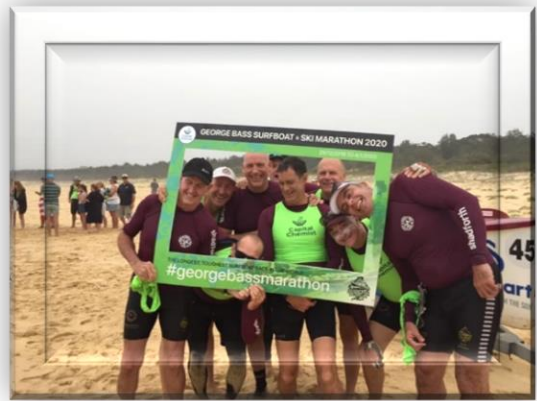
<b>FEMALE</b>	PLACE	DAY 1	PLACE	DAY 2	PLACE	OVERALL
Kym O'Halloran	1	2:33:03	1	1:32:01	1	4:05:04
Ruth Burgess	2	2:44:21	2	1:35:15	2	4:19:36
Dee McWhirter	3	2:44:38	4	1:45:13	3	4:29:51
Melissa Meaker	4	2:45:21	3	1:44:53	4	4:30:14

<b>DOUBLE</b>	PLACE	DAY 1	PLACE	DAY 2	PLACE	OVERALL
David Griffin/ Nathan Haythorpe	1	1:59:50	1	1:12:53	1	3:12:43
Max Bennett/ Richard Newton	2	2:21:23	2	1:27:06	2	3:48:29













## BULLI SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Dear Sue,

Thank you for inviting me to submit a Report on behalf of Bulli SLSC about our experiences during the recent George Bass Marathon.

As you and the committee are aware, Bulli SLSC has an affinity with the George Bass Marathon. It is something that we hold in high regard. We always have been, and always will be, prepared to provide the event organisers with whatever assistance and support it needs.

Firstly, I would like to confirm that we 100% support the decision to go ahead with the event, despite the threat of bushfire in the region. Though hindsight is a wonderful thing, in our view, cancelling the event before it even began may have driven another nail into this great sport's coffin.

This George Bass Marathon was a first for Bulli SLSC as we entered 3 crews. This presented a logistical challenge. When you add in that one-half of the North Cronulla Open Women's crew was also in camp with us, we had to cater for 54 adults and 32. This is particularly relevant given the events which unfolded.

The first two days were largely uneventful from our perspective, just good quality conditions and good quality racing. At the end of the second day, we were advised that there was an option available to move to Bermagui. It is our favourite destination of the trip. We love the town, the people, and the camping location.

We secured our usual spot, set up camp and went about settling in for the stay. We had the children playing cricket on the oval and there was nothing to forewarn us about what was to happen within the next 12 hours.



We awoke to the evacuation text messages. Some of our members commenced directing traffic onto the oval. We were immediately advised that the event was not only postponed that day but had been cancelled. I cannot stress highly enough how beneficial it was to have a clear decisive decision at that time. It immediately took away any uncertainty and allowed us to focus on the situation at hand.

Several of our members reported to the Bermagui SLSC Club House to offer assistance whilst others attended the briefing at the Pambula SLSC camp site. As we were the first camp site upon entry to the oval we saw a steady flow of locals looking for a cup of tea and a friendly face. The stories we were told were harrowing. Some people had lost everything. Some had been chased by the fire

from multiple evacuation spots and others had been separated from their loved ones and feared the worst.

It was not just our club helping, it was clear that all the clubs who were camping at Bermagui were involved. Even our friends from North Cronulla, still at camp in Moruya, flooded us with messages and phone calls wishing us all the best.

All who were there will never forget the pitch-black sky and the bright glow on the horizon. Our kids still talk about it. It was amazing how calm everybody was.



I must commend the efforts of the Pambula Beach Surf Club member Andrew Holt who was providing the ongoing briefings. He answered our questions and concerns and eventually would work with us on the plan for the evacuation. The Police and the RFS showed amazing calmness and leadership. We felt safe at all times.



The following morning, we were presented with an opportunity to head to Tathra and out through Bega. We arrived at the Tathra Beach Country Club and the Manager there was amazingly helpful. We were short on diesel and he arranged for his greenkeeper to siphon diesel out of their storage tank to assist those who were short. This was a tremendously generous act as at least 5 families would not have made it to Bega without the diesel. This would have left them on the side of the road and presented all sorts of logistical challenges.

We all made it home in one piece, fully aware that many of the south coast locals were not as lucky. On behalf of the Club, I would like to express our gratitude to the community of Bermagui, they made us feel welcome in their darkest hour.

Our Club President Keith Caldwell was also present during the event & at our stay in Bermagui, he would like to add "Our surf club has & will always have a proud history in the George Bass Surf Boat Marathon. I was extremely proud of our members, when it was released that the event would be cancelled, how they clicked into lifesaving mode & assisted in any way possible. Very proud to be a surf life saver in these times".

For the record our Open Men's crew won the first 2 days & were looking strong. Our young & old vets crews were looking forward to the challenges as well. Lachlan O'Grady our club ski rep has also won his category for the first 2 days.

We are looking forward to the next George Bass Marathon.

Adam Barlow  
(Boat Captain – Bulli SLSC)

Keith Caldwell  
(President – Bulli SLSC)















## **NORTH CRONULLA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB – Barry Schuetrumpf**

The 2020 George Bass Marathon commenced on Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup> December 2019 with two North Cronulla Crews lining up to face the starter's gun.

The defending Champions from 2018 in the Open Women's Division and the defending Champions from 2018 in the Men's Veteran Division.

The Open Women Crew had three changes from 2018 with Hally Chapman, Paris Austin and Tara Lal joining forces with original crew members Cass McDonald, Georgia Kennedy, Kylie Roodenrys, Nicola Barlow and Stephanie Roberts. This crew was once again swept by Mark "Bluey" Lea.

The Men's Super Vets Crew consisted of original members from 2018, John Leard, Mick Crutcher, Andrew Smalley and Michael Bofinger, with Bof's great mate, Matt Barrington, from the '94 Open Aussie Gold Crew and the remaining members of Bof's legendary Vets Crew, Vaughn Meldrum, Wayne Turner and David Gregson, all attempting the 'The Bass' for the first time. This crew was swept by the irrepressible 'Big Wave Dave' Young.



The 1<sup>st</sup> leg of this seven day surfboat marathon was raced from Batemans Bay to Moruya and both North Cronulla Crews performed brilliantly with the Open Women taking a valiant second place behind a very impressive Moruya Crew and the Super Vet Men crushing their opposition to record a first place and also were the first boat from all divisions to reach Moruya, along the way taking out the "Nick Dixon Trophy" for being the first boat to pass Broulee.

Day two, the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2019, saw the Crews race from Moruya to Tuross Heads and again the dominance of the Super Vets was evident with them again taking out first place while the girl's continued their brave tussle against the much younger and very fit Moruya Crew to once again record a second place with a noticeable decrease in the winning margin, the North Cronulla Crews were getting stronger by the day. Bring on New Year's Eve and the third leg!!

Early morning, 4am, on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 and the Moruya High School Campsite was surrounded by a red glow, eerily etched in the pre-dawn sky, there would be no racing today, the many amazing Officials, Organisers and Support Staff of this great event were Locals of this beautiful area and their livelihood's and Properties were under threat, a threat on a scale that had never been experienced.

Ultimately, the decision to continue or cancel the event was taken out of the Committee's hands. The safety of the Far South Coast Communities, all competitors, Officials, Supporters and families was of grave concern.

The 2020 George Bass Marathon would not continue.

With the many months of organising by Officials, the gut-wrenching early morning training sessions and the large fundraising efforts by the competitors and their support people, the disappointment for all was palpable. But none the less, being Lifesavers first and foremost that disappointment soon turned to compassion and a want to help.



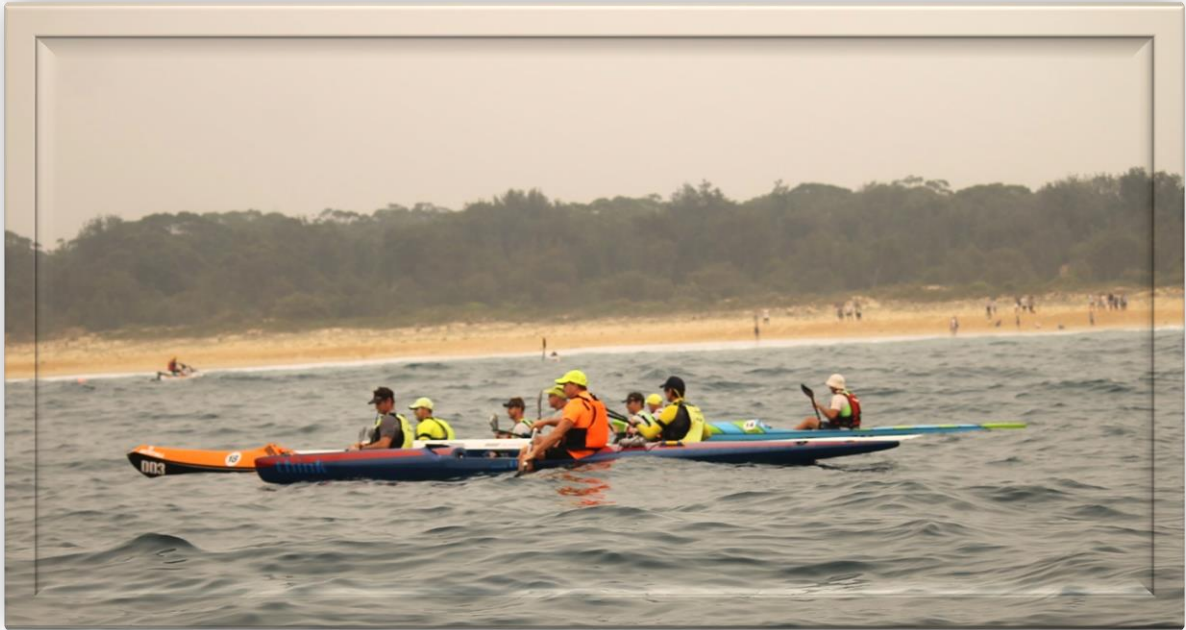


The catastrophic New Year's Eve bushfires affected and impacted so many communities across Australia. The commitment in those early hours of New Year's Eve 2019 and the days that followed, by all those involved with the 2020 George Bass Marathon, has left a lasting impact on all those that were helped, the North Cronulla Boat Section were humbled and honoured to be able to assist during this momentous time.











The President  
Coogee Surf Lifesaving Club  
Carr and Beach Streets  
Coogee NSW 2034

20 January 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

On 31 December 2019 a devastating bushfire raged through the coastal hinterland of the far south coast of NSW. This bushfire caused enormous destruction and displaced many hundreds of people.

A few days after this event there was an emergency relief centre set up at the SLSC in Bermagui and it was at this relief centre that I met several members of the Coogee SLSC who were in residence having had the passage of their participation in the George Bass classic interrupted by the calamity on the southern coastline.

At the relief centre your club members volunteered to man the barbecue, to cook breakfast for displaced bushfire victims and it was here that I met several Coogee SLSC members.

Unfortunately, my wife and I had suffered the total loss of our home and property situated at Wandella, inland from the devastated town of Cobargo.

We were at the relief centre trying to gather ourselves and come to terms with the events of New Year's Eve and were both in a highly vulnerable emotional state, traumatised and I suspect to some degree in shock. Along with many others, I stood in line for a cooked breakfast and began to chat with one of your members who was preparing my "brekky" on the "Barbie". I guess this fellow could see the devastation on the faces of those he was serving and asked me what my experience of the fire event had been and when I explained to him that we had lost everything except the clothes we stood in and had left our beloved property in a state of panic, his reaction is something I shall, not only never forget, but will always cherish.

Being "male" I along with many, if not most of my gender, have been through entrenched social cultures, discouraged to express my emotions and feelings openly and fully, though on this occasion I desperately needed to do so.

The Coogee SLSC member not only reached forward and clasped both my hands tightly, but I witnessed a very beautiful moment in my life as his face totally collapsed and he cried openly and unashamedly in the most public of settings.

Now this bloke was no diminutive presence but a big hulking "Alpha" male built like the proverbial, you might say, with an exterior demeanour as tough, resilient and rugged as you could get and he was in full public view essentially holding onto me and we both cried our eyes out.

In the end he told me he was so very sorry for the loss wife and I had experienced.

I gathered myself as did he and moved off to consume my fare feeling like as someone knew what turmoil there was going on inside me and at an incredibly vulnerable time took great comfort in that. I never knew this gentleman's name. I only remember him being dressed in a brown open zipped hoodie with the words "everlast" in white lettering across his "more than ample" chest.

I think this man's act of open compassion and kindness said a great many things to me in the moment not the least being that indeed we are not alone on this life journey as we are want to

sometimes feel and that men could and should try and reach out more to one another in a vulnerable state.

My gratitude and my eternal love go out to your SLSC member for helping me through a most difficult time in my life.

As well I reflected on what a great ambassador this guy was for your surf club, what a wonderful public face of your organisation. I can see now as perhaps I have glimpsed before in my life the innate value institutions such as yours which draw all manner of people together to share common goals and importantly to serve the community.

My congratulations go to you for fostering a culture that celebrates life, that teaches those within to serve selflessly without the lure of material reward, but indeed only the opportunity to serve their fellow human beings, often I guess, in a moment of personal peril and struggle.

My heartfelt thanks to Coogee SLSC to the gentleman (and a big one at that) concerned and his club mates who put themselves forward in a time of need.

Thanks guys and thank your institution.

Bless you all and all the best for 2020 and beyond into the future.

My very best wishes.

Howard Emanuel  
(Still standing, still strong and still awed by the gift of life.)



## PAMBULA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB – Chris Briggs

Yesterday I have never been so proud to be a member of surf lifesaving.

While camping at Bermagui, near the grounds of the Surf Life Saving Club for the George Bass Surf Boat Marathon everything changed. We woke at 5.15am to the ping of an emergency text informing all persons in the area to evacuate to the Bermagui Surf Life Saving Club. Our club, and several others were already there so we moved from surf boat competitors and campers to emergency evacuation helpers.

Thousands of people moved into the small town in just a few hours with their families, pets and very few personal belongings.

Surf lifesaving members manned the first aid centre, continually treating people while others manned computers and note pads trying to account for everyone arriving. Others went off to supermarkets to get supplies to cook for the masses, cooking thousands of sausages and making sandwiches continuously all day

We had cars bringing pallets of bottled water, toilet paper, dog food, toothbrushes, baby formula and personal hygiene items over to the evacuees and others distributing everything. Our call out teams prepared IRB's and Jet Ski's ready for any beach evacuations.

Surf lifesavers worked tirelessly with other emergency organisations, continuously for hours to make sure all the evacuees were looked after with little thought for their own needs. I think every surf lifesaver should be so proud to be a member of this awesome organisation and give themselves a massive pat on the back for stepping up to the plate in such a catastrophic situation.

Well done everyone involved.

Signed

A very proud Surf Life Saver















# 22ND GEORGE BASS MARATHON

2/1/2022 TO 8/1/2022



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MORUYA

TUROSSHEADS

NAROOMA

BERMAGUI

TATHRA

PAMBULA

EDEN

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