

ABN 96 215 276 030

**DISABLED
SURFERS
ASSOCIATION OF
AUSTRALIA Inc.**

GAB/DST 12

27 March 2021

The Inquiry Secretary
Legislative Council Government Administration Committee ' B'
Inquiry into Disability Support Services in Tasmania
Legislative Council
Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000

INQUIRY INTO DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES IN TASMANIA

Dear Secretary,

The Disabled Surfers Association of Australia Inc. was established in 1986 to fill a void in supplying anyone with a disability the opportunity for a safe and friendly surfing experience.

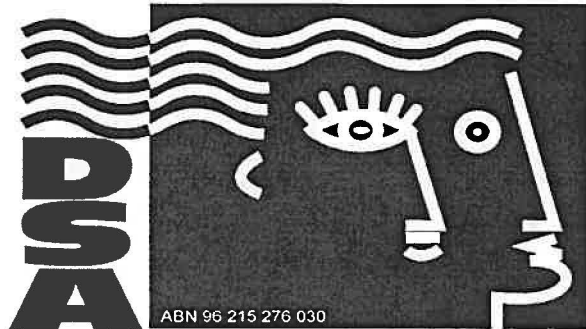
The .D.S.A.A. has nineteen fully voluntary branches throughout Australia and New Zealand and lead the world in this specialized experience. We have set Worlds Best Practice to ensure the standards are complied with, in case entrepreneurs wish to take advantage of those either with N.D.I.S. support or not.

The N.D.I.S. was established by the Productivity Commission to cater for those with profound disabilities, unfortunately many have fallen between the cracks including those with mobility and aging issues.

The ABS finds that 18.4% of Australians have a profound disability, yet anywhere up to 32% have a disability which excludes them from participating in many activities. There are some people who are competitive and wish to go onwards to higher places such as the Paralympic games or other competitive sports, yet the majority simply wish to experience something different and safe and this is where the D.S.A.A. comes to their support.

The D.S.A.A. simply gives those who fall between the cracks an opportunity not only simply to go Surfing, yet to become an intricate member of a group, build friendships, assist with mental health issues and become an intricate member of their community.

Surfers helping Surfers
www.disabledsurfers.org



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2.

BEING INCLUSIVE:

Very few support services throughout Australia are free for participants to experience. Virtually none are fully "Inclusive" and specialize in one or two disabilities. The D.S.A.A. is one that takes on all comers from Asthmatics to Autism, Downs syndrome to Spina bifida or paraplegics to ventilated Quadriplegics.

Being established and currently based in N.S.W., the D.S.A.A. supports the introduction of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014, yet this does nothing, if it is simply ticking the boxes to allow peak bodies, government departments or local governments to receive Federal funding for mostly administration purposes.

Having a tokenistic Special Nippers or very limited Adaptive Surfing programs for those wishing to compete is simply not Inclusive.

TRAINING:

The D.S.A.A. already has four levels of training...

LEVEL 1. An introduction to our procedures and understanding of the different types of disability for novice volunteers.

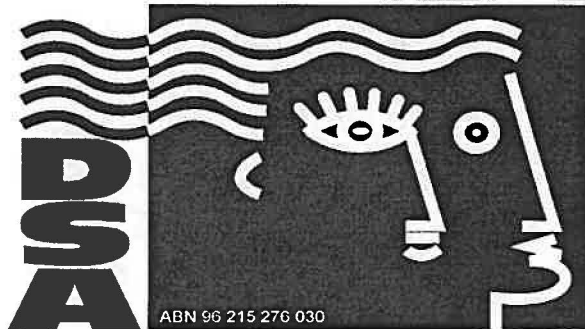
LEVEL 2. Specialised training for Team Leaders and Beach Marshalls.

Level 3. For those wishing to become branch committee members and decision makers.

LEVEL 4. National and International Trainers

NB: All events are colour co-ordinated by having Participants in yellow, Volunteers in blue, Team Leaders in red, Beach Marshalls in green and Trainers in purple.

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3.

The D.S.A.A. are advocates for "Access and Inclusion" and advise Local Governments on World Best Practice on access to Beach and Playground areas for the disabled.

We hope that this insight into the real issues for those with any disability has given this committee a greater understanding and one that they may understand to look outside the square as the D.S.A.A. has done so for over thirty five years.

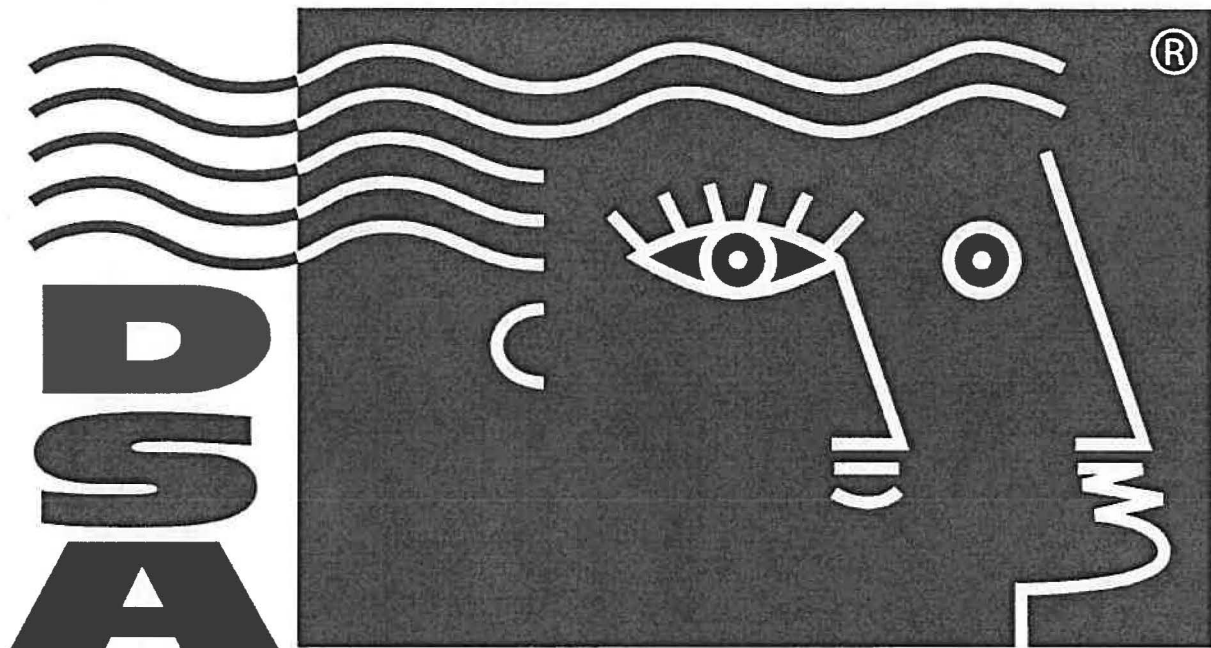
Yours sincerely,

Gary Blaschke

Gary Blaschke OAM
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THE DISABLED SURFERS ASSOC. OF AUSTRALIA INC

World Surf School Standards for Disabled Participants.

Overlaying the following advice is the question whether a Surf School is offering its services to disabled participants as a **commercial activity** or as a **pure public service**.

Additionally, there are 2 sets of standards dependent on the particular Surf School's aim regards coaching disabled participants to either 'learn to surf' or the fundamentally different aim, giving them a surfing experience.

Taking the former aim first, that is teaching the disabled participant to surf, the Disabled Surfers Association of Australia Inc (DSAA), offers the following gratuitous advice based on their 3 unbroken decades (est. 1986) of experience with the full spectrum of disabilities including respiration C2 Quadriplegics while surfing.

For more information see <www.disabledsurfers.org>.

Target Group: Commercial Activity

Provide disability coaching to participants presenting with Mild Disabilities ONLY.

These will be from the wide Disability Spectrum including those suffering some form of neurological, psychological, congenital or physical condition/injury.

But the overarching definition for potential disabled participants in this group is: participants must be “Walkers”, be willing & able to follow directions and be able to communicate either vocally or by simple sign language.

This requirement will naturally be most likely, but not limited to exclude potential participants who are in the autistic spectrum, which also embraces Tourette’s syndrome and Asperger’s syndrome.

In order to offer Disability Coaching, surf schools must provide:

- A Professional Surf Coach accredited by their respective country’s surf coach organization(s)
- Hold at least the minimum public liability insurance required by the country they operate in. With the specific understanding that the Insurance Company is aware of the Disability Coaching.
- Hold respective land management (council / parks) licences where coaching sessions are conducted.
- Use at least a minimum surf coach to disabled participant ratio of 1:1.
- Only conduct surf coaching activities in locales which can be deemed appropriate and safe for disabled participants. This will involve many factors before disabled participants can be taken out safely into the water.

These factors include:

- Accessibility issues such as appropriate Disability infrastructure, including good change-room facilities, ramps, etc. before they get to the water’s edge. Just how easy is it to simply get to the water’s edge in the

first place?

- Water location - sandy beaches, beaches with a minimal profile meaning low gradient, areas free from rocks, free from outgoing rips, minimal lateral current, only surf in the white water unless surf less than 1 ½ feet (½ metre), wind less than 20 kph, water depth of chest deep or less, spilling (crumbling) waves, absence of shore dump, small channel present, absence of marine stingers. Not heavily tide dependent.
- Provide and use suitable 9' soft surfboards, soft fins, and having leg-ropes attached.
- Have a full first aid kit on site, including a current EpiPen (for potential anaphylaxis). A current Senior First Aid Certificate is mandatory for Surf Coaches..
- Provide protective clothing being a minimum of wetsuit, at least a spring suit for water temps above 18°C, steamers for water temps 18°C and below. Participants to wear a distinct coloured T-shirt or rash-vest that distinguishes them from the rest of the group while in the water.
- Consideration must be given to any accompanying carer who may be with the disabled participant. As a general rule they should remain on the shore as to remove the chance they themselves could get into trouble should they enter the water.
- Participants must fill in a disability Sign On Waiver form -clearly outlining any particular challenges the participant may present. Current medications, any history of epilepsy or fainting spells, any history on anaphylaxis or hyperventilation episodes will also be listed. This will be signed-off by the participant, or, should they be unable to write, signed by participant's carer for each and every session.
- Coaches should regularly check the participant for signs of exposure, whether from wind chill or water temperatures, using a simple 'press test' on the back of the participant's wrist. If a faint pale mark appears after removing your finger then be aware exposure is starting to make itself known to you (and the participant).

Target Group: Public Service Activity

- Provide disability surfing experience to participants presenting with Mid to High Degree of Disabilities. It is not recommended unless the coach has a greater understanding of the requirements of each form of disability requesting an experience.

These also will be from the wide Disability Spectrum including those suffering some form of neurological, psychological, congenital or physical condition/injury. Or in some cases, several conditions will present at the same time.

Obviously this group will present significant to very significant challenges to any Surf Coach, no matter how many years experience they have notched up with abled participants. To have a cavalier approach to this group in tantamount to courting potential disaster.

Participants may be wheelchair dependent, be unwilling to follow directions, be visually or aurally challenged and not necessarily be able to communicate either vocally or by simple sign language.

Participants from this group will in all probability be catered for, if at all, as a result of a public service initiative. This is ironically in conflict to the pure aim of Professional Surf Coaching, that is 'fee for service', due to the much higher coach to participant ratios required and the resulting far higher wages cost incurred by the individual Surf School .

- The basic difference in care will be a ratio of coach to participant at least equal to or exceeding 3:1. This minimum would apply to a 'walker' who presents with some form of autism or intellectual disability. For those with severe or profound disabilities the ratio is set at 6:1 up to 30:1 and only if the coach has had further training.
- If wheelchair-bound, the ratio would go up to at least 6:1, since the coaches would literally have to do all the work getting out to the wave action and then supervising the ride and the end of each ride.

- In cases of quadriplegia C6 and above, the ratio will get out to at least 30:1, providing the participant wants to do the activity safely in the surf.
- Special consideration of each participant's needs and requirements must be taken into account. Do they have pressure sores, do they dislocate easily, are they able to lie on their stomachs with or without support or must they lie on their back, with or without support?
- The potential challenges are myriad but must be addressed and solutions arrived at or the experiential activity being offered to participants from this group will be fraught with potential calamity.

Bonam Fortunam

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