

**Australian Leisure Management 21.01.10**  
**PROFESSIONAL LIFEGUARDS REJECT "FLAWED" SLSA RIP CAMPAIGN**  
**AQUATICS - SAFETY - BEACHES - EDUCATION - MEDIA**

The Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association Inc. (APOLA) has criticised Surf Life Saving Australia's (SLSA) Rip Campaign, stating that "despite clear advice from experienced practitioners, leading educators and ocean science experts prior to the SLSA Rip Campaign launch at the beginning of summer ... SLSA has continued to roll out an expensive mass media campaign that uses non-endorsed advice about how people should to escape from a rip."

In correspondence with Australasian Leisure Management, APOLA National Secretary/Treasurer John Andrews states "SLSA officials have ignored clear advice drop the swim parallel to the beach to escape a rip message that essentially replaces the across-industry agreed primary water safety message about what to do if caught in a rip" adding that "APOLA has repeatedly communicated to SLSA officials that the swim parallel to the beach to escape a rip message is most inappropriate and contradictory to the already industry agreed and widely adopted primary key beach safety messages."

Andrews highlights that "experienced practitioners, leading educators and ocean science experts are as one in saying that after the number one primary message of swim between the red and yellow flags, the primary message for mass media and general consumption in relation of what to do and if caught in a rip needs to remain as stay calm, float with the current and signal for help. "

APOLA and other experienced practitioners, leading educators and ocean science experts have gone on the public record to say that this primary message about rips (stay calm, float with the current and signal for help) must not be relegated nor be now seen as secondary to this new unsupported notion of swim parallel to the beach that uses outward finger pointing Monty Python hands imagery.

"The SLSA release of website and print material that states a 'primary message' is 'to escape a rip swim parallel to the beach' and 'most importantly, the message (swim parallel to the beach) gives expert advice on how someone can save their own life if caught in a rip', has not been withdrawn and so now there is to confusion in the public domain about what the best advice is on what people should do if they are caught in a rip. "

The nationally televised prime-time news programs Today Tonight (Channel 7/PRIME) and A Current Affair (Channel 9/NBN) on 26th November 2009 covered opposition to the swim parallel to the beach to escape a rip from surf lifesaving legend and prominent surf educator Craig Riddington, however the SLSA Rip Campaign continues with this non-endorsed message of swim parallel to the beach to escape a rip.

"SLSA National Officers responsible for this rip campaign have been called upon to drop the swim parallel to the beach to escape a rip along with the outward finger pointing Monty Python hands imagery despite ongoing calls for this to be dropped by industry leaders and others including numerous SLSA members."

Andrews concludes "experienced surfers, lifeguards, volunteer lifesavers and students of ocean science know that the message swim parallel to the beach to escape a rip should not replace the established first advice of stay calm, float with the current and signal for help, and so the question doing the rounds at beaches, BBQs and workplaces (of why have well-paid National SLSA Officials got this rip campaign wrong and proceeded to keep their heads firmly stuck in the sand?) continues to be asked."

<http://www.apola.asn.au>