



Rip guidelines: Craig Riddington

Picture: Tim Hunter

# Floating a new rip message

By BRITTANY STACK

LAST summer's controversial safe-surf message "to escape a rip, swim parallel to the beach" caused a wave of anger among surfing heavyweights, who will today launch their own guidelines.

In a challenge to Surf Life Saving Australia's "dangerous" campaign, Sea Educators International, an organisation founded by former ironman champion Craig Riddington, will unveil their provocative new message: "Float, relax and save your life."

SEI, whose members include former ironman Grant Kenny, Bondi Rescue star Bruce "Hoppo" Hopkins, Sea Australia, the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association and Kids Acad-

emy of Surf, researched and developed the new rip survival guide which will be distributed in schools, airlines, councils, shop fronts, surf lifesaving clubs and swim schools.

"Surf Life Saving Australia came out with that wrong and dangerous message last year and we're trying to repair that damage, but it is also something that across the board needs to be done anyway," Mr Riddington told *The Sunday Telegraph*.

"SEI's key to survival is based on published scientific evidence that confirms that 90 per cent of rips will travel swiftly onto a sandbank and will return swimmers to the beach if they remain calm and just float. People drown because they are not strong enough to swim against a rip

and lose their ability to do the one thing that will keep them alive — float. Swimming parallel to the beach will mostly be against the current of a rip.

"It will tire the swimmer and cause fatigue and panic. That is what causes the greatest danger of drowning."

The latest National Coastal Safety Report from SLSA shows in 2009-10, 82 people drowned, 97 resuscitations were made and over 21,000 people were rescued.

According to SLSA, the second phase of their rip currents campaign will be rolled out by individual states this year.

Liah Gaul, 9, was caught in a rip on November 13 and used the guidelines Craig Riddington taught her to stay alive.

"I think it works," she said.

**"To escape a rip swim parallel to the beach"**

— Surf Life Saving Australia advises this when caught in a rip



**"Float, relax and save your life"**

— Surfing heavyweights advise this when caught in a rip