

# your say

Letters to the Editor

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Letters should be no more than 200 words. All letters need an address and business hours. By submitting your letter to us for publication for legal, space or other reasonable reasons, the newspaper, on our website or in other

ILLAWARRA MERCURY, Saturday February 5, 2011 51

## Those in blue received their due

Thank you Michelle Hoctor and the *Illawarra Mercury* (Saturday, January 29) for printing a more exact portrayal of how things unfolded during that fateful day at Stanwell Park beach.

What does concern me as one who has always taken a keen interest in surf-safety matters, is the always predictable and usually over-inflated reaction of Surf Life Saving (SLSA) spokespeople commenting on any tragedy, even ones they have had very little to do with.

Except in Ken Holloway's case. Thank you too, Ken.

Ken is a former Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguards Association (APOLA) beach lifeguard who worked for Wollongong City Council for many years.

Anyone reading comments put out by the SLSA after the



**The facts:** The mass rescue on Stanwell Park beach on January 21.

tragedy would be forgiven for believing that a bunch of clubbies and some public "saved the day" once again.

There was almost no mention by the SLSA spokesperson of the degree of heroism and professionalism showed by the APOLA lifeguards, who did save

nearly all of those needing rescue, without diminishing the role played by others assisting at the time.

The public at large and the various levels of decision-makers in our society still give scant regard to APOLA (the ones in blue and white - think Bondi

Rescue) and its contributions to surf safety along the East Coast of Australia, despite their providing 87 per cent of the patrol hours as against SLSA volunteers making up the remainder (using Kiama council figures as reported in the *Advertiser*, November 3, 2010).

Surf safety should not be occasions for flag waving. But there is something blatantly wrong when SLSA gives out contrary advice to that of APOLA when it comes to even something as basic as surviving rips (*Mercury*, January 22, 2011).

It is long overdue for there to be a completely independent safety, financial and cost-benefit analysis on all matters pertaining to surf safety on our Australian beaches. It has never happened in over 100 years.

Jim Bradley, Kiama.