

SYNOPSIS

Manly and Freshwater Beaches in NSW are Australia's first World Surfing Reserve (WSR); rationale and process for recognising these iconic surfing locations.

Australia has a wide range of world-renowned surfing sites. They are spread around the 13,200 km long southern half of the continent from Fraser Island in the east to North West Cape in the west. This southern coast has 5700 beaches, with more than 20 well-recognised iconic surfing sites. Australians remain the foremost nation interacting recreationally with the surf zone. Australia is one big beach!

This nomination will address the *raison d'être* and processes involved in ensuring a top Australian surfing site at Manly and Freshwater beaches in NSW - was officially recognised and declared a WSR. The declaration of a WSR achieves three purposes: it formally recognises the site as an area of surfing significance and quality surf; it recognises the long and close links between surfers and the surf and it will assist in the long term preservation of the site for current and future surfers.

This nomination as well as addressing the United Nations Association of Australia selection criteria, explains the WSR model in more detail including the nature and rationale for a WSR; the selection process; the WSR's dedication and ideas for possible future dedications. The conceptual recognition was a start in protecting iconic surfing sites; however the legislative backing behind the Manly Freshwater WSR ensures protections with the backing of the NSW Parliament.

In October 2006, the NSW Department of Lands proposed that a new category of Crown Land be enacted through their Regional Reserve Strategy called a 'Surfing Reserve'. The reserves would follow the high water mark and extend 500 m seaward, thereby encompassing the actual surfing site. They would be formally gazetted as a Crown 'Surfing' Reserve and managed by a local custodian committee.

MANLY-FRESHWATER WORLD SURFING RESERVE



- **Background/Motivation – What is the background, purpose and motivation?**

World Surfing Reserves (WSR) give formal recognition to the world's most significant surfing beaches, acknowledging their outstanding surf breaks as well as the rich surfing history and culture associated with them. World Surfing Reserves is an initiative based on models established by UNESCO's World Heritage Program and Australia's National Surfing Reserves to recognize and help protect outstanding surf zones and their surrounding environments.

WSR eligibility is based on a strict set of criteria: outstanding quality and consistency of waves – a world class break; a marine environment that is protected and preserved; a long and rich surf culture and history; and broad and strong community support. Those eligible then go through four phases: nomination, selection, dedication, and management. The WSR board provides a blueprint for the local community to follow in achieving the dedication and ensuring the ongoing management of the reserve, integrating the principles of preservation and sustainability.

The background, purpose and motivation of the Manly Freshwater World Surfing Reserve (WSR) may be viewed in a presentation given by Mr Brad Farmer, Chairperson of Australia's National Surfing Reserves, please see:

<http://www.globalwaveconference.com/en/keynotes/brad-farmer-keynote/>

Manly – Freshwater WSR is blessed with many habitats that are home to rare sea life. It includes beaches, sand dunes, bushlands, kelp forests, seagrass meadows and sub-tidal reefs. This WSR boasts one of Australia’s largest resident populations of protected weedy sea dragons and a number of threatened and protected species.

Apart from the local residents, there are many wonderful visitors including a number of transient tropical fish species, bottle-nosed dolphins, Australian fur seals and the southern right and humpback whales. Seagulls and cormorants are the prominent sea-birds.

Surrounding bushland is populated by native flowering banksias, wattles, grevilleas and melaleucas including paperbark and tea trees. The WSR also includes the Cabbage Tree Bay Aquatic Reserve and closely adjoins the Sydney Harbour National Park. The Aquatic Reserve is an area of water that is fully protected (‘No-Take’) to provide a safe haven for all marine life.

- **Outcomes – Provide evidence of achievements/results.**

Manly-Freshwater was declared a National Surfing Reserve in September 2010, under the NSW *Crown Lands Act 1989*, accorded by the Crown Lands NSW. Manly-Freshwater NSR was then nominated to become the Manly-Freshwater WSR in recognition of the area’s surf quality, its long and rich surf history and culture and strong community support. The nomination was approved by the WSR Executive on 3 February 2011. The dedication ceremony has enshrined this recognition.

On Saturday 10 March 2012, legendary world surfing champion Kelly Slater accompanied the Governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir, at a beachfront ceremony at Manly Beach that formally dedicated the Manly-Freshwater World Surfing Reserve, the first such WSR in Australia.

“Australia has the world’s best beaches” said Slater, who is the current and 11-time world surfing champion, as well as a World Surfing Reserves global ambassador. “You think of a sacred as an empty beach somewhere where no one is, but then you think of the history of a place like Manly especially in the symbolic terms of surfing”. Slater posed at the ceremony with the original board that Hawaiian legend Duke Kahanamoku built and rode at Manly and Freshwater in 1914/15. For further details on the Manly Freshwater WSR dedication ceremony:

<http://www.worldsurfingreserves.org/surfing-legend-kelly-slater-launches-aus-wsr>

The dedication of the Manly Freshwater WSR is an inclusive outcome to include many of the stakeholders who interact with this site. The concept of the Manly Freshwater WSR has been enthusiastically embraced by Manly and Warringah Councils and their local surfing and other community members. Many hundreds of people have turned out to the dedication and celebration ceremonies. It is hoped that these dedications will not only add recognition to the importance of each site but also to the role and contribution of surfing in Australian life. We believe that the Manly Freshwater WSR will substantially increase this recognition.

The Manly-Freshwater NSR and WSR received wide media coverage locally, nationally and internationally over a period of time which has increased awareness of marine and coastal issues while fostering goodwill and community capacity toward the recognition and protection of the environment.

- **Scope – What is the scope/ongoing significance? Is it replicable?**

‘Surfing Reserves’ is an Australian idea which is spreading rapidly across the world with 4 WSR and 15 NSR in Australia. World Surfing Reserves is an international program based on models established by UNESCO’s World Heritage Program and National Surfing Reserves Australia. WSR’s proactively identifies, designates and preserves outstanding waves, surf zones and their surrounding environments around the world. The WSR program now serves as a global model for preserving wave breaks and their surrounding areas by recognising the positive environmental, cultural, economic and community benefits of surfing areas.

The four-kilometre (2.5 mile) Manly-Freshwater World Surfing Reserve is the birthplace of Australian surfing and has led the way in Australian as well as world surfing. Manly and Freshwater beaches and their surrounding surf breaks encapsulate all that is required for a World Surfing Reserve – consistent quality surf, rich surfing history, strong community support and a magnificent coastal environment. This local environment, which is in part, protected by an aquatic reserve and national park attracts visitors from around the world.

The on-going stewardship of the Manly-Freshwater WSR will be provided by the Manly Council’s Harbour Foreshores & Coastline Management Committee in consultation with Warringah Council. This committee manages the beach through the plans set out in the Coastal Zone Management Plan for Manly Ocean Beach. The Manly Freshwater WSR empowered and galvanised many members of the local communities surrounding it in a synergistic manner.

This model is demonstrated to be replicable by the already existing 3 other World Surfing Reserves across the Globe. It is hoped that the Manly Freshwater WSR dedication will not only add recognition to the site but also to the role of surfing in Australian life. For further details concerning the implementation of the Manly Freshwater WSR, please see: <http://www.worldsurfingreserves.org/implementation>

- **Innovation – How is it unique? How is it innovative?**

The Manly Freshwater Beaches World Surfing Reserve is the only one of its kind in Australia. It is the first WSR dedicated in Australia and third in the world, after Malibu (USA 2010) and Ericeira (Portugal 2011). It is an ‘idea whose time has come’.

The popularity of surfing has boomed and more and more sites are surfed and sites in general are becoming increasingly crowded and in some places put at risk or destroyed by coastal development. Prior to the dedication of Manly Freshwater as a NSR and subsequently as a WSR – little, and in most cases nothing, has been done to protect and preserve surfing sites. Until recent years, only a handful of Australia’s 10,000 plus beaches had been reserved for surfing.

In Australia, with respect to recognising, protecting and preserving surfing sites, there has been a void of leadership from the Australian-based multimillion dollar surf industry, from representative surfer groups and from surfing environmental groups. This is now fortunately changing for the better with increasing awareness both locally and internationally of the value of surfing reserves.

"I'm very stoked to be working alongside WSR to lend a voice and help ensure we honour and recognize the beaches that have brought all of us the lifestyle we love so much." Kelly Slater

- **Partnerships/Collaboration – How have you engaged key stakeholders?**

WSR’s board of international experts forges partnerships with local surfers and Environmentalists to select, enshrine, and help protect valuable and historic surf spots. The Manly Freshwater WSR engaged with the traditional owners of the site – the Guringai people who are considered to be saltwater people. Their representative “Uncle Max” performed a smoking ceremony at the dedication ceremony.

The Manly Freshwater WSR dedication and celebration ceremonies brought together all forms of beach users from life savers to beach surfing identities, e.g. Kelly Slater and Duke Kahanamoku’s famous 1914/15 surfboard, and past Australian World Surfing Champions etc. with the local community and their local councils to recognise, dedicate and preserve their iconic surfing site.

Manly Mayor Jean Hay was the chairperson of the Manly-Freshwater World Surfing Reserve Local Steering Committee – which comprised local community representatives, local surfers, lifesaving club directors, environmentalists, NSW Lands and Environmental Ministry staff, local NSW Parliamentarian and local Councils’ staff.

World Surfing Reserves board of international experts forges partnerships with local communities to select, enshrine and help protect globally significant surf spots of universal value. The Manly Freshwater WSR marked 100 years of board surfing in Australia with Manly-Freshwater beaches the birthplace of Australian surfing.

The dedication of the Manly Freshwater WSR will ensure that its place as one of Australia’s top surfing spots is recognised as site sacred to surfers and the surfing community and that

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the local surfing community works towards the ongoing preservation and enhancement of this WSR site.

MANLY-FRESHWATER WORLD SURFING RESERVE – A BRIEF HISTORY



- The Manly and Freshwater areas of Sydney, Australia are the home of the Guringai Aboriginal people who are the traditional owners of this slice of surfing paradise. The scalloped beaches found here were home to the coastal clans of the Guringai people for at least 20,000 years before the arrival of Europeans.
- The water skills and ability in the surf of the Guringai people, underscores the Northern Beaches of Sydney as the beacon of Australian beach culture, where beach bathing, body surfing, surf life saving and board-riding all began in this country.
- As well as protecting this fabulous surf area in perpetuity, this Manly Freshwater WSR will also help capture a Community's collective state of mind. When people think of this WSR – we hope it epitomises a beach lifestyle and everything a seaside paradise stands for.
- Surfing and beach culture are now Australia's most popular national pastime and have merged seamlessly into our mainstream life. Since the summer of 1914/15, Freshwater Beach has been Australia's own small slice of Hawaii - with its wonderful "Aloha Spirit".

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- The water men and women of Manly and Freshwater are a who's who of Australian Surfing's history and its development. Manly and Freshwater Beach's local residents have a strong sense of this spirit of place with their beaches and a desire to honour and forever protect them.