



Friday 31 October 2008

### **SUMMER SHARK PATROLS GEAR UP TO GUARD OUR SHORES**

Aerial patrols along South Australia's coast will take off this weekend as part of Surf Life Saving SA and the State Government's commitment to ensuring our beaches stay safe this summer.

Emergency Services Minister Michael Wright will join SLSSA State President, Bill Jamieson, at Somerton to officially launch the summer patrol season.

"We are proud and keen to support the magnificent job the State's 6,500 surf life savers do and I'm pleased to announce that the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter will be on standby along with other emergency vessels at 10am tomorrow.

"The Rann Government has pledged \$140,000 to Surf Life Saving SA, taking the Government's total contribution to aerial patrols to \$320,000 for the summer.

"The helicopter patrols will be supported by volunteer beach patrols, two jet rescue boats and four rescue jet skis."

Minister Wright says the helicopter patrols keep a watchful eye over the thousands of beachgoers that head to the coast each summer from North Haven to the Murray Mouth.

"Last year the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter clocked up 336 operational hours performing routine beach patrols, shark warnings, preventative actions and rescues and assisting other patrol services in the water and on the beach."

"The Government's contribution matches that of last summer, funding around 94 hours of patrols including 10 hours for community water based activities such as the Henley to Grange Long Swim."

Mr Jamieson said, drowning incidents claims the lives of 250-300 Australians each year and last summer surf life-savers were kept busy.

"Our volunteers put in more than 56,000 patrol hours, rescued 394 people, administered first aid to 1,243 beachgoers and provided assistance to another 13,974.

"No doubt we will be kept busy again this summer," says Mr Jamieson.

Minister Wright said that while the beaches will be patrolled from the air and on the ground by nearly 3000 surf life savers each weekend, beachgoers also need to be responsible for their own behaviour.

“Beachgoers should always swim at patrolled beaches and between the flags, they should leave the water immediately if a shark is sighted, and should avoid swimming at dawn, dusk or night.

Minister Wright says that, since coming to office, the Government has provided over \$7.6 million to assist Surf Life Saving SA (SLSSA).

This includes \$3.8 million to redevelop clubs at Christies Beach, Somerton, North Haven and Brighton, and \$40,000 towards the “On the Same Wave” program, aimed at breaking down the cultural barriers to deliver water safety education.