



18 August 2025
Amber Wylie
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
Southbank VIC 3006

Dear Ms Amber Wylie,

RE: Investigation into the death of Remy Da Silva (COR 2023 001630)

Thank you for the opportunity to respond on behalf of Surf Life Saving Australia (**SLSA**). Please accept our apologies for the delay in responding.

We acknowledge the loss of life and the impact that this has had, including on the family and friends of the deceased, those who assisted on the day and those who have been involved after the event, and extend our sympathies and condolences to all.

Please find below SLSA's response to the recommendations directed to us in Deputy State Coroner Spanos' Finding without inquest into the death of Remy Da Silva (Court Reference: COR 2023 001630).

Recommendation:

Under section 72(2) of the *Coroners Act 2008 (Vic)* (**Act**), Deputy State Coroner Spanos made the following recommendations, that:

1. Life Saving Victoria (**LSV**) conduct a site-specific risk assessment at Gunnamatta Beach to explore the most effective drowning mitigation strategies for that particular location.
2. LSV, Parks Victoria (**PV**), and SLSA continue to promote the BeachSafe app and website, including by installing infrastructure to support QR code access to information on site at Victorian beaches.
3. PV explore the feasibility of interactive signage with up-to-date safety information at Gunnamatta and other high risk Victorian beaches.

Response:

SLSA acknowledges the work undertaken by LSV and supports the statements provided by LSV. We have provided SLSA's response to the second recommendation below, with some additional context that may further assist with the other recommendations as well.

SLSA and LSV have and continue to proactively promote the BeachSafe App and website (<http://www.beachsafe.org.au>), with the website able to be viewed in over



100 languages via a translator. The BeachSafe system also provides a wide range of safety information as extra content, as well as key details for beach visitors including whether a location has a patrol service available or not. Additionally, BeachSafe has descriptive videos on beach safety and rip currents which are also provided with seven (7) different language captions.

The site report and beach safety modal rating for Gunnamatta Beach through ABSAMP (Australian Beach Safety and Management Program, and as presented on <http://beachsafe.org.au>) identifies the beach as a General Hazard Rating of level 8 out of 10 (Highly Hazardous). As this is a modal rating, this does not account for differences relating to diel environmental conditions, nor individual water safety and swimming skills, experiences and abilities which also vary and as such the location could be even more hazardous at times.

Signage can identify key hazards and subject to access and location may vary with several items identified in a car park sign and more specific signs provided on an access way to reinforce the key hazard at or near that location. In some situations, a change to access points can reduce the likelihood of incidents through directing visitors away from key features and hazards i.e. submerged reefs, river/creek outlets which may influence the beach geomorphology and therefor the level of risk in those areas.

Hazard and warning signage, while an important risk management component, their efficacy for building community awareness and hazard warning is limited. Previous research has highlighted that many beachgoers do not notice beach safety signs, despite some being quite large and prominent¹. Similar results have been shown in research conducted in Victoria by LSV who reported that 45 % of respondents did not notice any beach safety sign and that the shape and how the sign is organized has no impact on people's recognition and recall ability of warning signage². Moreover, the messaging can be easily misinterpreted by some high risk demographics³.

For interest, in South Australia the Coroner requested some additional wording to signage at a couple of high-risk locations to emphasise the risk at these locations. This was "WARNING Drowning Deaths have occurred at this location". Similar signage has also been adopted at high-risk rock platforms within the Randwick LGA in NSW. However, these signs and associated wording have not been tested through research, so their impact has not been determined.

1. [Characteristics and beach safety knowledge of beachgoers on unpatrolled surf beaches in Australia. NHES.](#)
2. [Warning signs at beaches: Do they work?. Safety Science.](#)
3. [What is a shore dump?: Exploring Australian university students' beach safety knowledge and their perceptions of Australian beach safety signage. Safety Science.](#)



Community education and awareness are also critical components to safety and elements may be linked back to key warnings provided in signage. The general foundations of drowning prevention are based around education, prevention and then rescue as a last resort. SLSA has been supporting innovative community education programs that promote normative behaviour change, where beachgoers learn about beach safety at a patrolled beach and take these skills help assess safety at unpatrolled locations⁴. Some of these safety engagements were conducted and supported by LSV also with the majority of participants really enjoying learning about beach safety in-situ from beach lifesaving personnel^{5,6}. These programs are proving to be effective but come with significant costs to ensure personnel are able to measure impacts and promote at larger scales and over longer periods.

SLSA has supported LSV to undertake research trials to improve signage and approaches to alert visitors to hazards at high-risk locations, through SLSA's Beach Drowning Blackspot Reduction Program supported by the Australian Government's Water and Snow Safety funding program. However, the research involving this trial required further time due to zoning and planning-related barriers that restricted installation. These barriers have been navigated using interim solutions but are certain to have impeded their potential community impact. Another trial to assess targeted warning signage is occurring at high-risk beaches by LSV, with results expected in June 2026.

While subject to available resourcing, we would support the Coroner's Office with recommendations that assist in drowning prevention, in particular those which relate to education, prevention and rescues including but not limited to:

- school and community education and awareness programs
- signage, including developments of signage that may assist in promoting safe choices and highlighting high risk locations or conditions
- use of the free BeachSafe App and website for the planning of visits to the coast and for safety information
- use of [Beach Passport](#), a free virtual water safety education tool to help the general public stay safe at the beach
- promotion of public service announcements (TV/Radio/Print/Social/Digital) that encourage greater awareness around aquatic safety and risk mitigation
- provision of lifesaving services and equipment (education/training/equipment/personnel/rescue)
- provision of emergency response systems (beacons/cameras).

4. [Normative learning generates behaviour change: The case of drowning prevention. IJDRR.](#)

5. [Engaging beachgoers for drowning prevention: the spillover effects on non-participants. Environmental Hazards.](#)

6. [Evaluating the impact of skill development for drowning prevention: a relationship-building approach to community engagement. Injury Prevention.](#)



Thank you for the opportunity to comment and provide feedback in addition to the support provided with the objective of reducing injury and loss of life. If you or any of your team have any questions in relation to the above, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Lawes", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr Jasmin Lawes
National Research Manager
Surf Life Saving Australia