



**UNSW**  
SYDNEY



**NEW SOUTH  
WALES**

# Making Waves

A Practical Approach to International Student Safety at  
Australian Beaches

Presented by Oliver Jackson and Mike Anderson



# Presenting Today



UNSW Water Safety Officer

Oliver Jackson



Multicultural Community & Youth Education Officer

Mike Anderson

# Student Story



Nimish Ukey (UNSW PHD Student)

2020: Arrived in Sydney with fear of water and no swimming skills.

2022: First WS Experience doing the Coogee to Bondi Walk.

2022: UNSW LTS Program

2023: UNSW BOS Program. Became a Swimming Instructor

2024: Swimming Safe Grant Participant. Aims to become a Surf Life Saver.

# SLS NSW



## Our Vision

Zero preventable deaths on the NSW coastline.



## Our Mission

Save lives, create great Australians and build better communities.



## Our Purpose

We equip, empower, develop and support our people to deliver vital aquatic rescue and safety services to save lives across the NSW coastline.

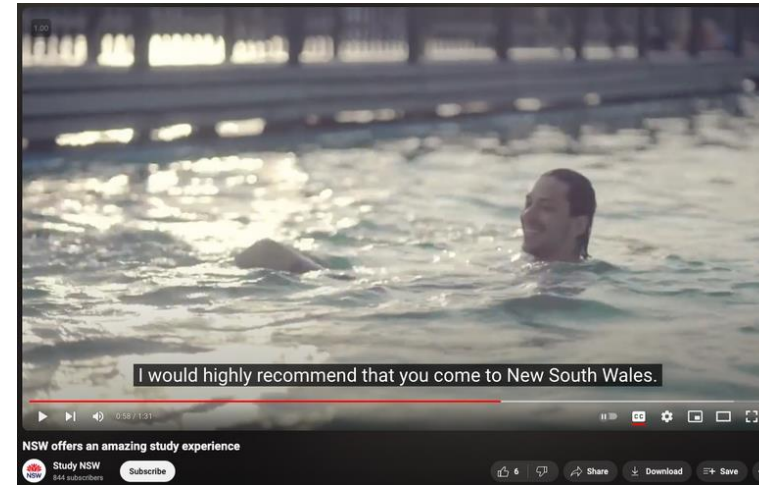
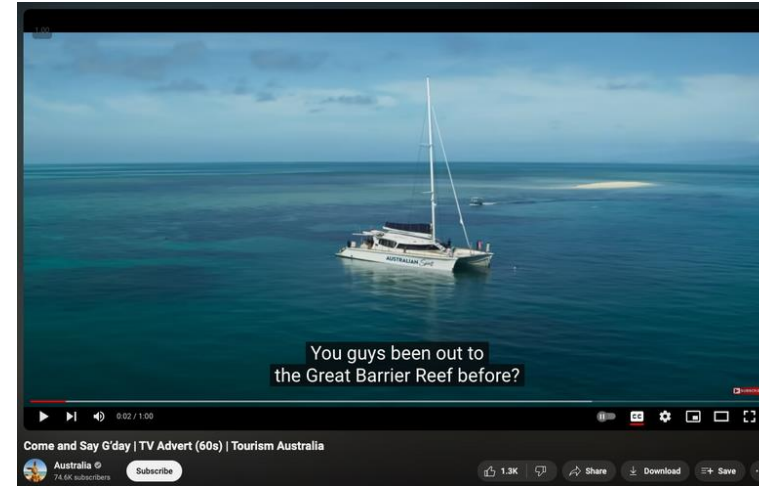
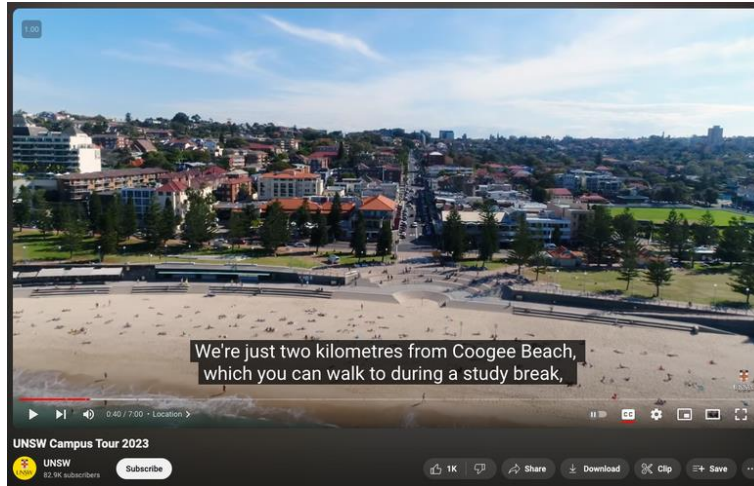
## Resources



## Coastal Safety Ambassador Program

Are you between the ages of 18 and 39 and interested in learning new skills, making new friends and supporting your community to be beachsafe?

# Why study in Australia?



# What is in the news?

**Two international students have drowned in NSW**

**Search for University of Wollongong student, 28, missing off Illawarra coast to resume tomorrow**

**Two women drown after being swept off rocks by 'freak wave' in southern Sydney**

The deaths of two women swept out to sea from a rock shelf have prompted authorities to look at working more closely with multicultural communities.

**Search for 'perfect photo' blamed for rise in adult drowning**

**National plan needed to tackle overseas student drownings, NSW representatives say**

# 92%

had received no beach safety information prior to leaving for Australia

# 85%

arrived with no knowledge of the Australian beach safety flag system

# 24%

were able to correctly describe hazardous rip currents



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA

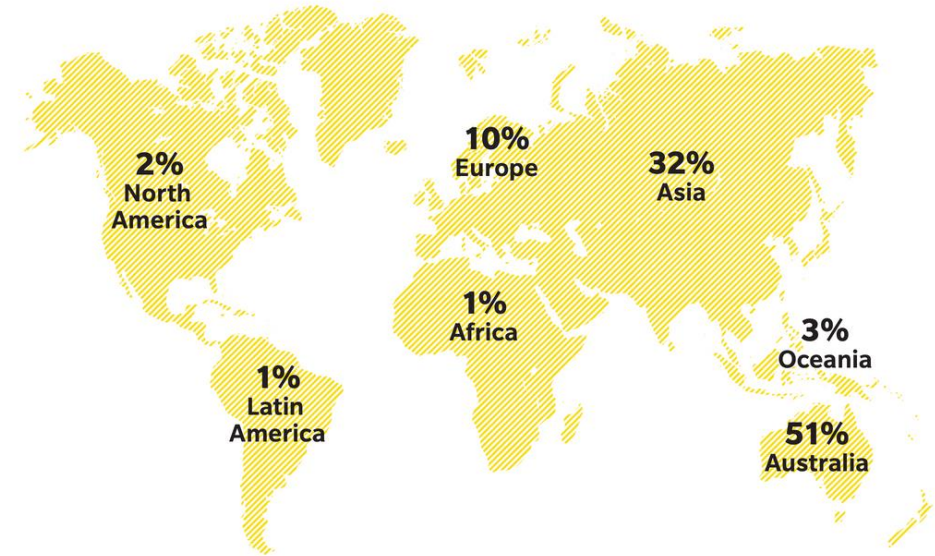
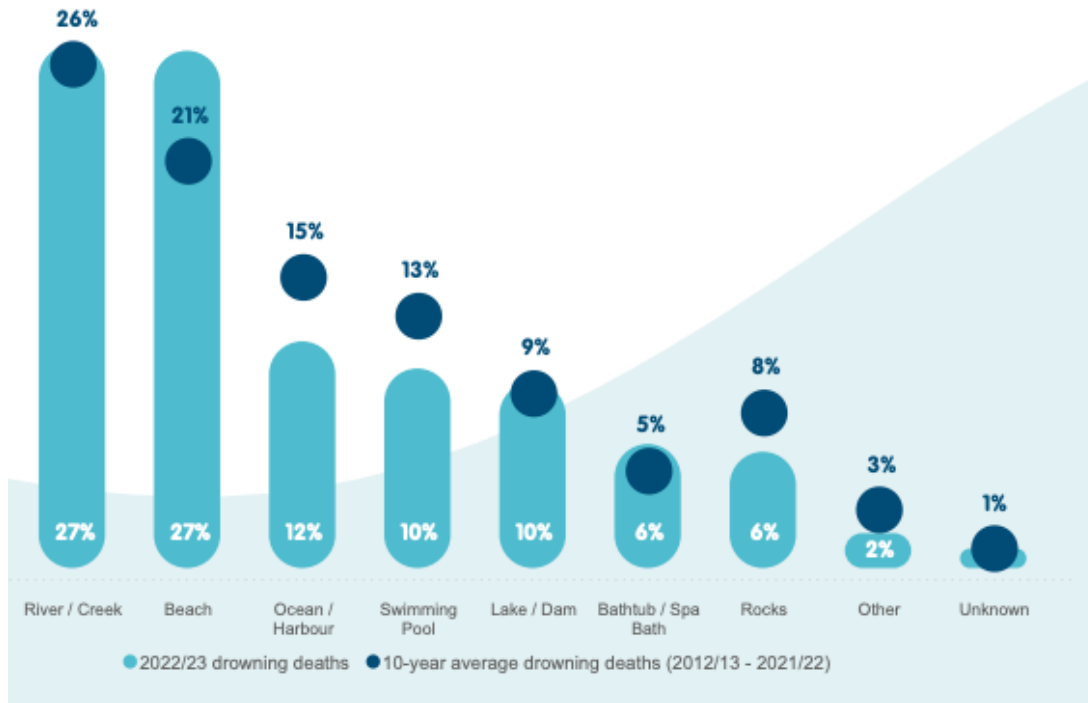
# 687,840<sup>1</sup>

1. AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (2024)

2. JEFF WILKS: WATER SAFETY FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS STUDYING IN AUSTRALIA (2018)

# Water Safety Stats

Percent of 2022/23 drowning deaths by location compared to the 10-year average



Birth continent is known for 84% of coastal drowning deaths (n=365), of these 51% of decedents were Australian-born (n=185), 32% born in Asia (n=116), and 10% born in Europe (n=38). Diagram and statistics taken from 2022 Surf Life Saving NSW Coastal Safety Report.

# 21%

## 18-34 Years

2023 National Drowning Report



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# What is currently being done?

## Students swap classroom for sands of Bondi to learn life-saving lessons of water safety



It's a long way from Bankstown to Bondi, but as Australia is projected to experience one of its worst summers for drownings in recent years Western Sydney University is tackling the water safety challenge head-on – helping international students learn life-saving beach safety skills so they can not only survive, but thrive, in the Aussie surf.



Monash University

<https://www.monash.edu> › sport › aquatics › learn-to-s... ⋮

## Learn to Swim and Water Safety Program - Sport

Thanks to SSAF funding, our Water Wise Program, teaching beginner Adult Learn to Swim classes is FREE to all Monash University Students. Enrol today!



Macquarie University Sport and Aquatic Centre

<https://sport.mq.edu.au> › programs › learn-to-swim › swi... ⋮

## Swim Safe program | Sport & Aquatic Centre | Macquarie Uni

The Swim Safe program is free for International students. It covers basic water safety and swimming skills that are essential around Australia's waterways.

## University of Wollongong's international students taught beach safety



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# Beach Ocean Safe Program



# Participant Feedback

“The best about this program is being able to do something I've never done before while feeling safe that lifesavers are next to me!”

“I feel like I have learnt enough to swim between the flags now, as well enough of the essentials to be able help others.”

“It's the best program for international students to get to experience the Australia's beaches.”

“Staying near the beaches, I always wanted to have fun on the beach and be safe and I believe so many other international students feel the same. So this program helps to develop the skill to have fun, be safe and be able to help others as well.”

“It's a perfectly designed program at a very negligible price.”

# BOS PROGRAM STATS

9.6

Average Program Rating

58%

swam at an Australian Beach for the first time

100%

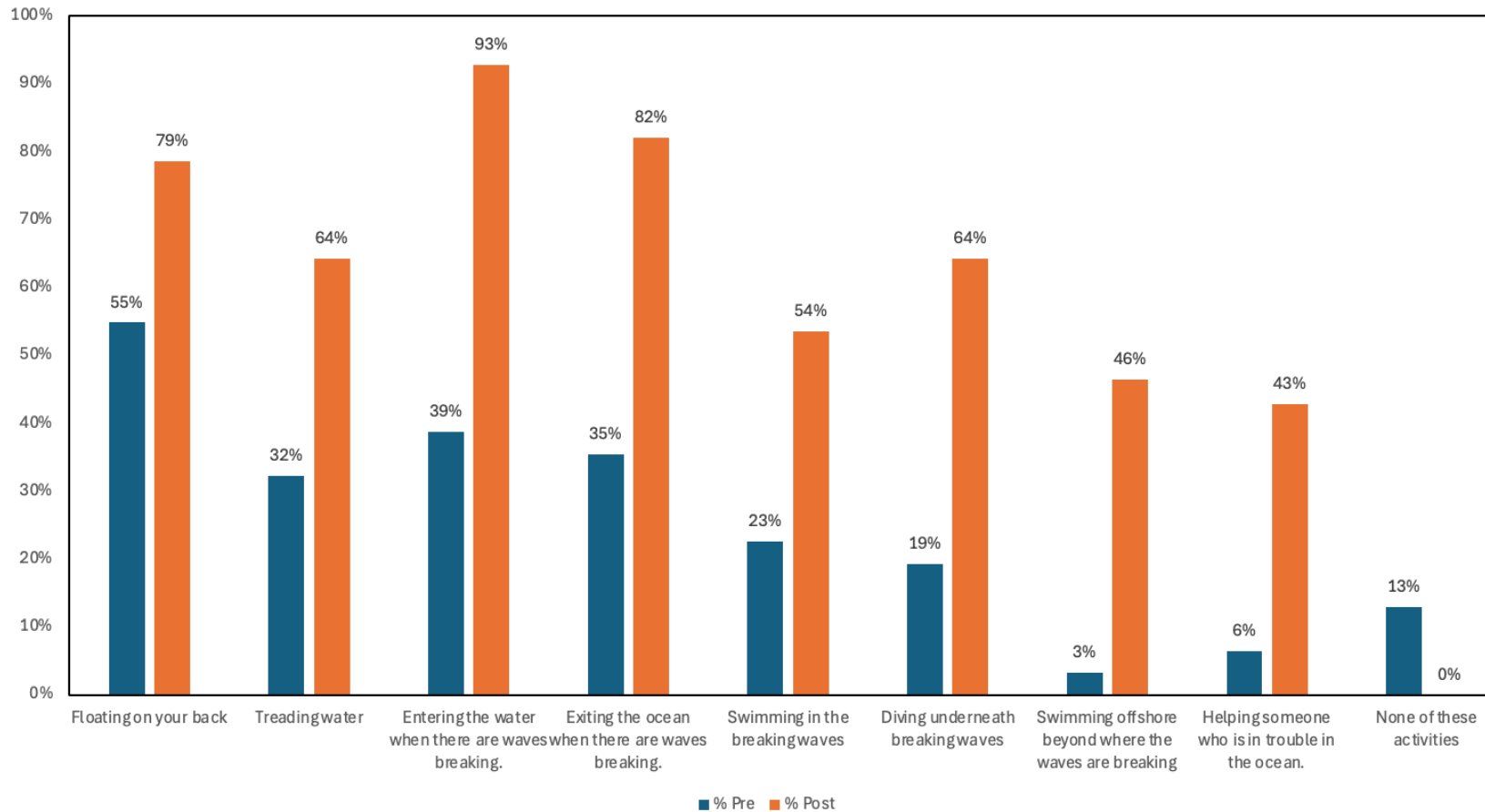
of students felt the program equalled or exceeded their expectations.

100%

of students would recommend the program to their friends/peers.

# BOS PROGRAM STATS

Which of the following activities in the OCEAN do you think you are capable of?



39% average increase in practical beach safety skills



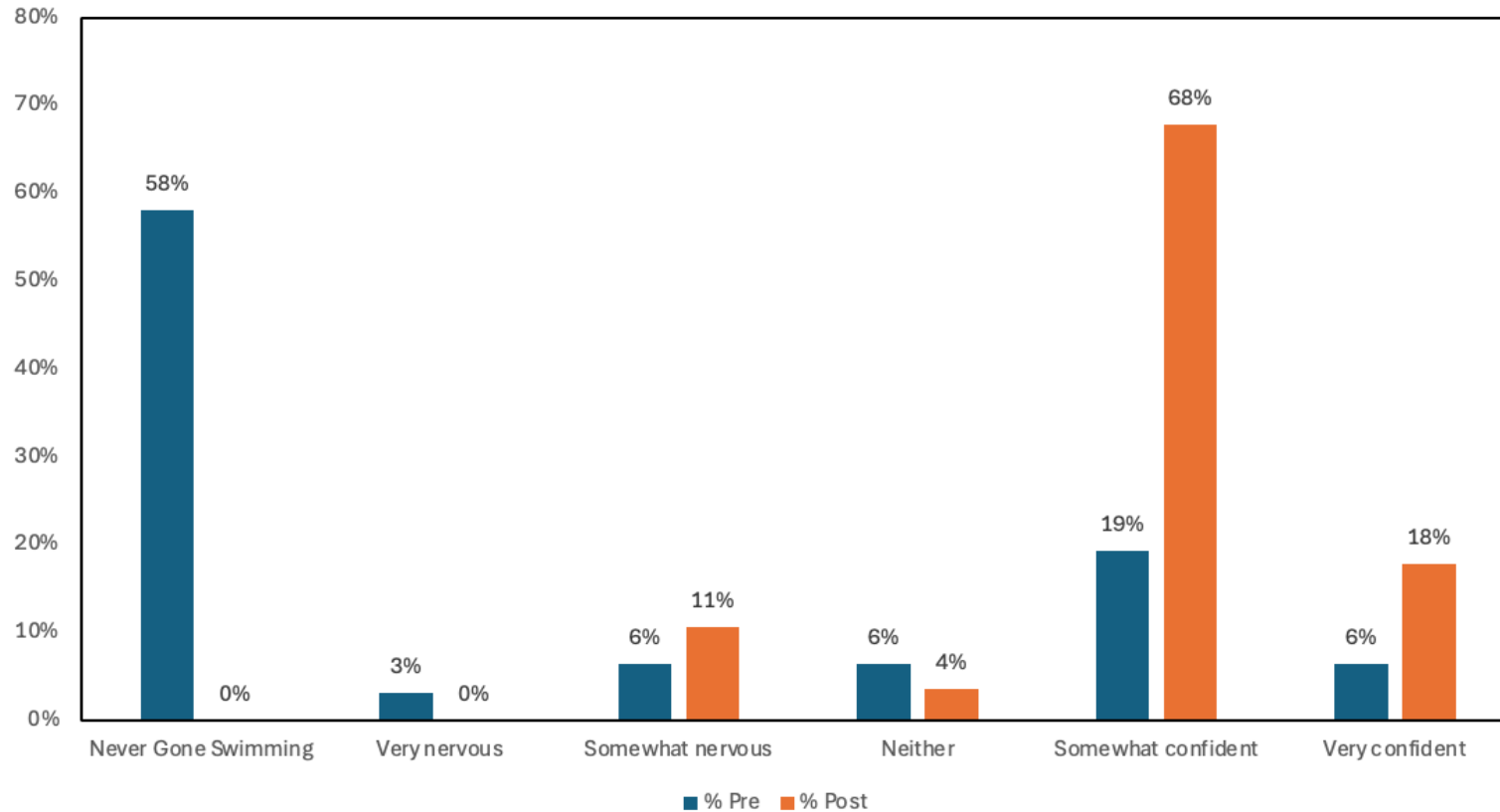
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# BOS PROGRAM STATS

How do you feel about swimming at an Australian Beach?



Before the program, 58% of students had never gone swimming at an Australian Beach in comparison to 86% who were somewhat or very confident about swimming at the beach by the conclusion of the program.



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# BOS PROGRAM TOOLKIT



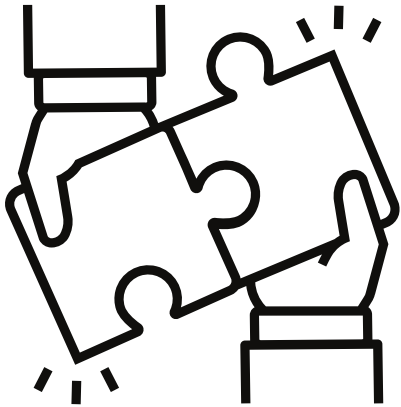
# BOS PROGRAM TOOLKIT



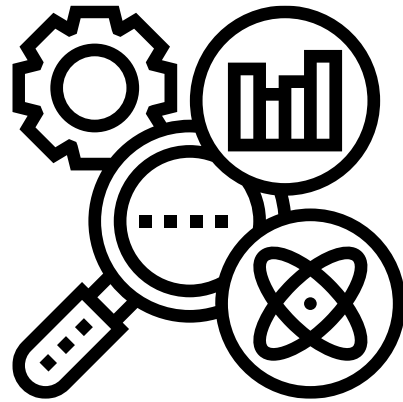
- ✓ Theory Presentations
- ✓ Promotional material including logos, shirt, towel designs
- ✓ Evaluation Surveys
- ✓ Registration Forms
- ✓ Graduation Certificates
- ✓ Example Emails to Participants
- ✓ Attendance Sheets



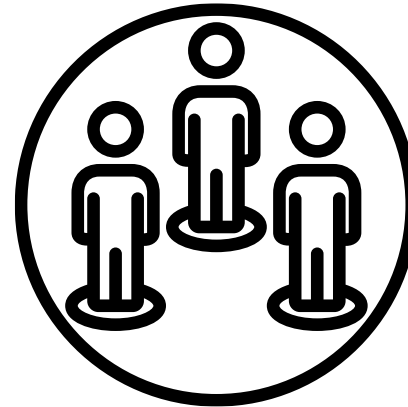
# Current Challenges



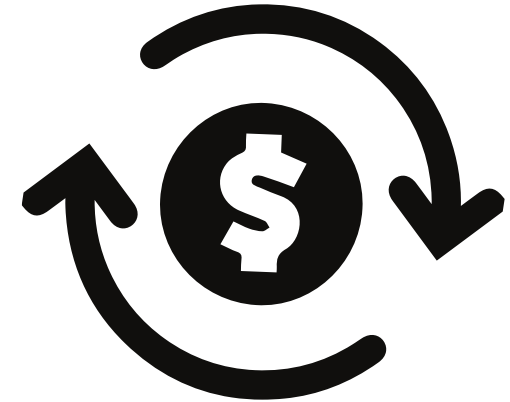
Collaboration



Evaluation and Research  
of Existing Programs



Capacity



Funding

# What's Next?

## WATER SAFETY FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS (WSIS) COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP)

### OUR OBJECTIVES



Educational  
Initiatives



Foster Cross-Sector  
Partnerships



Policy  
Advocacy



Monitoring and  
Evaluation

To join or get in touch, please email Oliver Jackson at [healthy@unsw.edu.au](mailto:healthy@unsw.edu.au)



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# Joint BOS Program



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# Conclusion



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# Acknowledgements

This program would not be possible without the support of  
UNSW BSRG, Coogee SLSC, SLS NSW, UNSW FAC, UNSW HPU, Medibank.



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# SLS NSW

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# WSIS + UNSW Water Safety

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[@unswhealth](https://www.instagram.com/unswhealth)

Thank You



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