



Communications Policy

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1.0	12 January 2026	Amy Derksen, Secretary	Approved by board vote

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Background and Goals

This document outlines approved platforms for club communications, as well as how to select the right platform for a specific message or audience. The intent of these recommendations is three-fold:

- Unify the club on a single platform, as widespread adoption creates a more inclusive club and allows us to engage with all members regarding news and opportunities.
- Comply with the Australian social media ban for under-16s.
- Create safe spaces for members and participants under age 18 (and, ideally, beyond), based on guidance issued by SLISA and LSV and Australian best practices.

In addition, we have provided guidance around choosing the right platform and sending messages that don't inundate HLSC members with information they don't find relevant.

Youth Safety Requirements

Platform-specific recommendations appear below, but all HLSC communications require:

- **Transparency**–Club conversations should be visible to board members, parents and responsible adults.
- **Two-deep messaging**–There should be no one-on-one, private communications between adults and U18s. Any direct communications with U18s should include a parent or other adult. Ideally, communications should be in an open group.
- **Near-peer communications**–We recognise that one-to-one communications may be appropriate or necessary between people on either side of their 18th birthdays. Little guidance exists around this. However, our focus here is on preventing adult-to-child harm rather than addressing near-peer dynamics and relationships where developmental and maturity differences may be minimal.
- **Group admins**–All groups should have at least two 18+ admins, appointed or approved by the board or appropriate director. Ideally, admins will be significantly older than group members, to avoid having admins responsible for monitoring their peers. Admins are required to stay across chats to call out and delete any below-the-line behaviour, and report it to the appropriate group leader or board member. This can include disrespectful or inappropriate remarks, using offensive language, or language that diminishes or makes others uncomfortable or damages group cohesion.
- **Admin training**–Before being allowed access as an admin on any club platform, members are required to complete the following training modules and provide evidence of completion to the appropriate group leader or director:
 1. [SLSA - Child Safe Awareness Course](#) (under Leadership & Development on mt.lsv)
 2. Sport Integrity Australia [Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport Induction Course](#) (free)
- **Reporting**–Should any member feel uncomfortable with another person's communications, in any way, they are asked to speak to a board member or any adult club member that they are comfortable reaching out to. Youth who receive one-to-one communications or invitations to connect from an adult are also asked to immediately let a trusted adult know.

The adult receiving the report must escalate this information to a group manager or board member so appropriate action can be taken.

Member-Friendly Communications

To avoid overwhelming members with irrelevant messages, please consider the following before sending on any platform.

Have you:

- Selected the right, specific recipients?
- Edited to take out any extraneous info and make it easy to read on a phone (dot points, short paragraphs)?
- Provided context (and, when appropriate) contacts for any people mentioned?
- Spelled out and provided an explanation for acronyms?
- Considered whether multiple topics should be sent in separate messages?
- Scheduled for a time when people might be receptive to the message?
- Told readers clearly what to do next?
- Offered a route for them to ask questions, when necessary?

Approved Platforms and Uses

Stack Team App: News, Events, Notifications, Chat

Team App is used by more than 1,800 life saving clubs nationally, as well as many other organisations. It provides audience-segmented messaging, event planning/RSVPs, in-app chats and commenting, and payment functionality.

The board voted on 9th December 2025 to utilise Stack Team App as the primary HLSC comms platform.

Use for

- General communications to the full membership
- Communications to specific sub-groups such as nipper families, specific age groups, IRB team members, patrollers, water safety, etc.
- Updates about nippers cancellations or needs
- Events—details, RSVPs, payments
- Payment collection—carnivals, merch, events
- Chats among specific groups

Cautions

- Select recipients carefully—do not send targeted communications to the full membership.
- Once people unsubscribe, we can't get them back.

Surfguard: Emails

Use for

- Important communications to the full membership or specific subgroups

Cautions

- People cannot unsubscribe from Surfguard, but they can block the sender, so we don't want to spam.
- Many families are subscribed under one email address, so it can be difficult to reach the individual who meets the selection criteria entered.

Surfguard: SMS

Use for

- Only the most urgent, time-sensitive communications

Cautions

- Select recipients carefully to avoid alerting the whole club.

MailChimp: Enews

Newsletters are handled by the comms manager in collaboration with the secretary.

Use for

- Club newsletters
- Club-wide emails that require more imagery or design than Surfguard allows

Cautions

- If people don't find information useful or we mail too often, they will unsubscribe and we can't get them back.
- These messages only reach emails listed in Surfguard, which may be one member per family.

Social Platforms: Community Promotion Only

The Australian social media ban for U16s has changed the way we use social media. Social channels can not be used for any group that might include members under 16. In

addition, as these channels are not considered child safe, we do not use them for any group that might reach users under age 18.

To adhere to the social media ban and child safety legislation, in December 2025, board members asked page owners that most pages under their portfolios be closed. Please submit any requests for additional social profiles to the appropriate board member or group manager.

Use HLSC Facebook and Instagram for

- Parent/adult-facing, public promotion of club news, events, and invitations
- Promoting major public opportunities on local Facebook hubs—we are members of Hampton, Bayside, Glen Eira hubs

Use IRB Team Facebook (Closed Group)

- Protected photo sharing with adults

Cautions

- These channels are unreliable for communicating with members, as Meta does not prioritise the types of content we post. Information for club members should only be shared to supplement Surfguard and Team App messaging.

WhatsApp: Chat

SLSA and LSV have deemed WhatsApp not child safe, due to users' ability to access one another's contact details and send direct messages. At HLSC, WhatsApp can only be used in limited situations by groups that are unlikely to have participants under 18, such as the HLSC board.

In December 2025, appropriate board members asked that all WhatsApp groups under their portfolios be closed. Please submit any requests for additional groups to the appropriate board member or group manager.

Use for

- Limited, small-group real-time communications

Cautions

- Should a member under age 18 be elected to the board or join another group that uses WhatsApp, the group should move the chat to Team App.

Heja: In-the-Moment Dedicated Group Messaging

We are testing Heja for immediate messaging among specific groups, as the app has youth-safety guardrails in place.

Use for

- Urgent group messaging, such as within the carnival setting.

Cautions

- Team App is still to be used for planning and general communications.

Additional Platforms

The following can be used to send automated emails or texts to relevant users who have opted in. They do not allow one-to-one communication with youth or display contact information publicly, so are child-safe compliant and fit for purpose.

- Signup.com
- Signup Genius
- Monday.com
- Patrol rostering app
- Board emails