

CASE STUDY: KINDNESS IN COFFS HARBOUR

Surf School: Solitary Island Surf School

Program organiser: Darryn Quigley (Owner and operator)

Participants: Young refugees living locally

Charities: Surf for Life, North Coast Settlement Services – St Vincent de Paul Society



Overview

The Surf for Life Program has been developed by Surfing Australia to enable hard to reach children and youth to experience the joy and benefits of surfing. In this program a group of refugees aged 5 to 12 years old that live in Coffs Harbour got to experience surfing for the first time thanks to nudie. Many of the children had minimal prior exposure to the surf and beach due to their experience as displaced refugees and coming from 'land-locked' countries. This program not only involved the participants but also their families who volunteered in the water and shared the stoke with everyone involved, creating an experience that will last a lifetime. Checkout a short video of a past [Surf For Life Program](#).

Main motivators

The local Coffs area is home to many young refugees, English is their 2nd language, and they have limited ocean knowledge. Solitary Islands Surf School saw this as a chance to get the local refugee community involved with the surf school and develop their skills, enabling coaches to give back and positively contribute to the community through surfing and ocean education.

Benefits & value of the program

Delivering the program for a charity provided massive satisfaction and gave a unique buzz to all involved. It allowed coaches and locals to be present to how lucky we are to have the ocean and the joy it brings so accessible to us. Hearing stories of what some of the tough situation's children had been through in their home countries, brought a deeper appreciation of life in Australia, all that we have to be grateful for.

For the participants there was a shift that developed to a culture of not fearing the ocean, providing confidence so they could enjoy the ocean and all it had to offer. Learning about ocean awareness that can be passed on and share with others was also a big positive outcome knowing it will aid in keeping the community safer in the ocean.

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Challenges & solutions

The main challenges with this group of kids was the language barrier, almost zero swimming ability or prior experience and limited to no ocean knowledge.

These were all addressed by getting parents and staff involved and working together to help with language and communication, as well as choosing a very calm and safe venue to manage limited water skills and boost confidence of the participants.

One piece of advice to share around holding a Surf for Life program

“When organising the program don’t just rely on the charity to get participants, they are extremely busy and often have limited staff. Identify through them who the potential participants are and then take on the responsibility to provide the information and promote yourself. Nearly all kids go to school, so schools are a great place to communicate and promote your program to ensure everyone in the community has the opportunity to experience surfing and all the benefits it brings” – Darryn Quigley, 2018

Testimonials from North Coast Settlement Services

“Thank you so much for your commitment to these children and their communities through the nudie SurfGroms program, it will have ongoing positive benefits for them, their settlement and futures here in Coffs Harbour and within Australian society”

“Apart from the participation of the children and their older siblings, the involvement of the parents was another positive element to the program. It was great to see a couple of the fathers in the water volunteering who had recently arrived in Australia straight from a war-torn Syria. The parents on the beachside observing their children learning and enjoying a healthy lifestyle, while they have time to connect with other parents and enjoy the beach environment is also a positive outcome of the program”



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Interested in running your own Surf for Life Program?

If you are interested in running a Surf for Life Program, or connecting with a local charity for another program, session or simply to engage with your community in a meaningful way, go to <https://www.surfgroms.com/resources/surf-schools/> where you can find the Surf for Life application form and also a 'How to connect with local charities'

Getting your program underway

- Identify a local group or organisation suitable to work with
- Connect with the appropriate person within the organisations to set up the program
- Connected with the local school's ESL (English as a Second Language) leaders to ensure numbers were maximised
- Provided all information sheets and relevant documents to required parties
- Apply for Surf for Life funding through Surfing Australia once all information gathered

