



# Maroubra Beach

National Surfing Reserve

Dedicated on Sunday 19 March 2006

## Foreword

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The dedication of Maroubra Beach as a National Surfing Reserve is an auspicious event in Australian history. Many years in development, Maroubra is the first official Surfing Reserve in a national program which aims to declare up to 23 more sites along Australia's 37,000km coast in years to come. Today is a proud day for this Sydney beach community that boldly embodies Australian surfing culture.

Endorsed by local, state and federal governments and international bodies, the Maroubra Beach National Surfing Reserve is for all Australians; it celebrates our rich cultural, environmental and sporting status in the world.

Of Australia's 10,685 beaches, Maroubra stands as a symbolic gathering point for the best in our surfing culture. It is as iconic as the ANZAC tradition.

The National Reference Group, through the dedication of Maroubra Beach, aims to enhance the value and integrity of our natural coastal recreational resources. The beach belongs to all Australians; it connects them, through the beach environment, and helps build respect for each other.

I wish to pay tribute to my deputy chair, Professor Andrew Short, and to the members of the national and local steering committee who have dedicated themselves to achieve this exciting historic national declaration.

After 14 years of research and lobbying for this first National Surfing Reserve, it gives me great pride to share with all Australians this symbolic gift to past, present and future generations.

**Brad Farmer,**  
Chairman and Founder  
National Surfing Sites and Reserves



# A Surfing History of Maroubra

## In The Beginning

Historically, Maroubra was inhabited by the indigenous Dharwahal Nation. This aboriginal tribe was numerous, living in the area from south of the original Sydney site down to Botany Bay. They were a coastal community, drawing much of their sustenance from fishing. Their current descendants live in the La Perouse area, to the south of Maroubra Beach, around Botany Bay.

The name Maroubra probably came from the aboriginal dialect for "thunder" and "good".

As the growth of surfing accelerated, many local indigenous men have formed part of the Maroubra surfing community.

## European Settlement

After initial European settlement in 1788, Sydney expanded, with the southern region extending down through Maroubra and beyond to Botany Bay.

During the latter half of the 19th Century, Port Botany developed as a shipping terminal, and Prince Henry Hospital and Long Bay Correctional Facility were established. These are located just south of Maroubra.

Schools were also established in the local region as the local residential population grew.

## The Growing Community

During the 20th Century, this part of Sydney developed as part of the Randwick Municipality. Despite two World Wars and a severe economic depression, the population in and around Maroubra increased. It also diversified socio-economically and ethnically. Vast rolling sand dunes were developed for housing.

Infrastructure, such as roads, trams, and buses, was developed, and government services included additional hospitals, schools, a university, and churches. Light industry expanded, one example was the cigarette factory at Pagewood, to the west of Maroubra.

With its natural beauty, Maroubra Beach became a popular recreation and social destination for locals and visitors.

Since then, factors such as good transport, healthy employment opportunities, and close proximity to the city, have seen Maroubra grow and strengthen as a community.

Part of this community includes the large public housing estates close to Maroubra Beach, which continue to be a feature of the current community.



## Maroubra's Surf Life Saving Clubs

As Maroubra's popularity with beachgoers increased and with large numbers of people entering the surf, Surf Life Saving became an important part of Maroubra Beach. Maroubra and South Maroubra Surf Life Saving Clubs provide an important ongoing community service in helping to ensure the safety of the surf-loving public.

### Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club

Maroubra SLSC was established in November 1906, with many local sporting identities of the period joining. Maroubra was a founding member of the Surf Life Saving Association, and the Association's first President, Fred Thorpe, was also the President of Maroubra SLSC. The first ever surf carnival was held at Maroubra in 1907.

During World War I, club activity declined. The only real activity during this time was the construction of the first clubhouse, a 3m by 3m galvanized iron shed in the centre of the beach. Arthur Rodman was Club Captain for 18 years and the mainstay of the club throughout this period.

In 1932, a new clubhouse was erected and opened and part of that structure still remains today.

Between 1935 and the end of the Second World War, Maroubra SLSC continued to increase its membership and bring in innovations. The introduction of club costumes, new events such as board riding, and success in competitions, all helped to establish the club as we know it today.

In March 1946, the Australian Championships were held at Maroubra, and in the 1950s, Maroubra went from strength to strength. The club actively pressured Randwick Council and other bodies to prevent rutile mining on the beach. Whilst it would be unthinkable today, it was a very real possibility at that time.

During the 1960s and 70s, Maroubra SLSC members created the Maroubra Seals Club. The Seals Club is the major sponsor of the Surf Life Saving Club today. Maroubra SLSC also became actively involved with the Wales Helicopter Rescue Service and introduced the first jet boat, equipped with a radio. The club began its community programs, which involved teaching water safety through the "Survival 76" program. In 1972, Dennis Green, a member of the club, carried the Australian flag at the Munich Olympics; an honour repeated in 1980 in Moscow by Max Metzker.

In the 1970s, Maroubra's Des Renford was conquering the English Channel, and Barry Rodgers became an Australian life saving legend by winning three successive Australian Ironman Titles. Dennis Heussner later continued the ironman tradition at Maroubra and represented Australia at the Olympics.

Maroubra SLSC continues to be an active part of the surfing community. In 1999, Maroubra introduced its community resuscitation program to teach resuscitation and surf survival techniques to members of the community free of charge. In 2002, a major refurbishment and renovation of the clubhouse commenced, after a community-based fundraising campaign. In 2004, Maroubra's Holly Doyle won the World Surf Ski Marathon title in South Africa.

This year, Maroubra Surf Club will celebrate its 100th anniversary. An anniversary committee is planning events which will commemorate this historic achievement.



## South Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club

On Sunday 31 May 1959, Mr Ric McKeon convened a public meeting to discuss the formation of a Surf Club at South Maroubra. A Committee was elected to form the club, a site was selected at the southern end of Maroubra Beach and approval was given by the Department of Lands. Randwick City Council donated \$300 as an annual subsidy and South Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club was on its way.

The original members came from Malabar SLSC, Maroubra SLSC and from the Maroubra area. The foundation Club Executive was Brian Chenhall, Ric McKeon, Kevin Quinn and Alderman Bill Lucas.

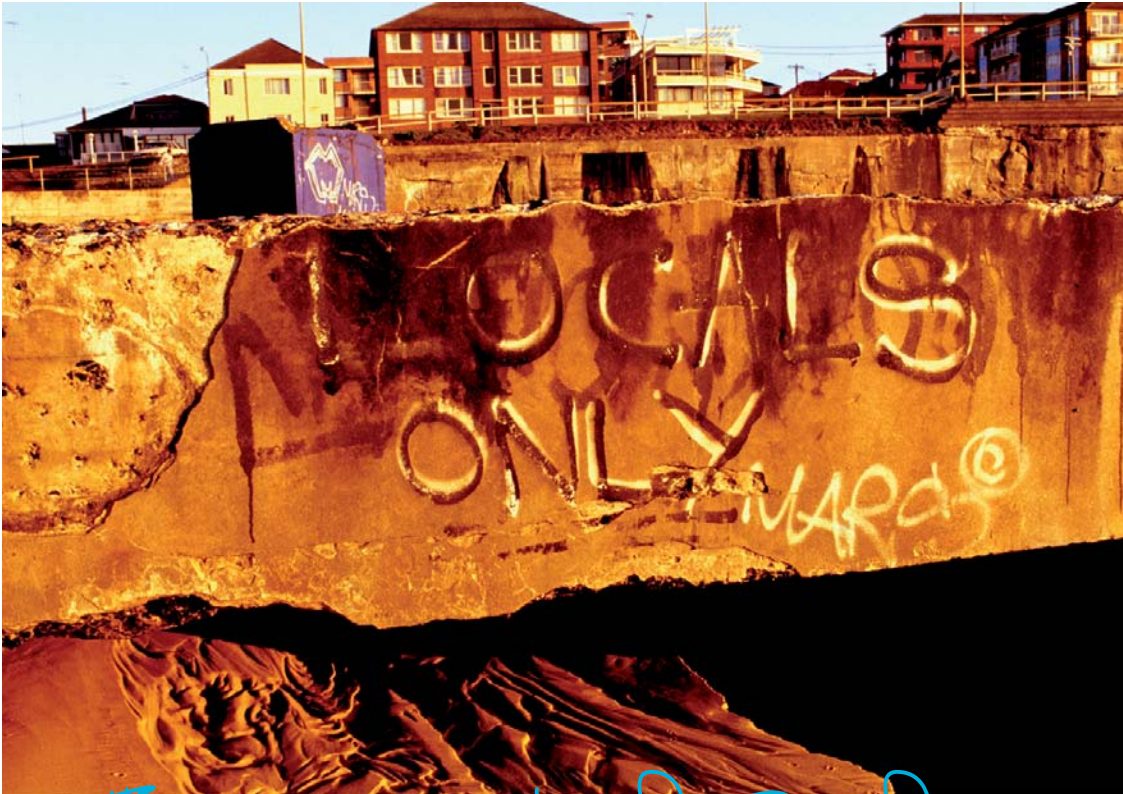
At first people were amused at the small group of men who would go down every weekend to the site, put up a tent as a changing room, and go on surf patrol. The tent was soon replaced by an old shed, donated by Prince Henry Hospital, and the timber from that shed was eventually used to lay the foundations for a fibro clubhouse.

In 1961-62 the access road from Fitzgerald Ave to the clubhouse was improved and the first kiosk was opened at South Maroubra. The new fibro shed was completed in 1969, and further extensions were undertaken in 1978 and again in 1982-83.

South Maroubra Nippers was formed in 1965-66, and in 1980-81, South Maroubra SLSC was one of the first in Australia to accept female membership.

Today, South Maroubra SLSC enjoys a progressive and diverse membership of over 800 people, ranging in age from 5 to the very mature, who all share a passion for the beach, the surf, South Maroubra, and the Surf Life Saving movement.

Thanks to the men and women patrolling at South Maroubra for decades, to date no lives have been lost in between the flags at the southern end of Maroubra Beach whilst South Maroubra SLSC members have been on patrol.



## The Community of Surfers

Amidst much social growth in and around Maroubra, a surfing network emerged, which became prominent in the 1950s. By the end of that decade, local surfers had banded together into a distinctive urban beach culture.

During the 1950s, a group of up to 40 surfers called themselves the Maroubra Surf Riders' Club (MSRC). They surfed and shared life together. At that time there were no such things as surfing competitions. Being part of this group was simply about surfing with your mates and having fun.

### The '60s

On Tuesday night, 26 May 1964, Maroubra Surfers' Association (MSA) was officially formed, comprising 50 members. For the princely sum of one Pound (approx \$2), you could become a registered member and receive a membership card, a cloth badge to sew onto your board shorts, a sticker to put on your board, and a copy of the club's constitution.

The first MSA contest was held on 1 August 1964. The entry fee was two Shillings (20 cents).

As surfing became increasingly popular over the next few years, MSA membership grew at an incredible rate. At one stage the club boasted over 400 members!

With rapid growth in the number surfers during the sixties, the Southside Surfriders' Association was formed. From 1965, this local organisation specifically administered surfing as a sport, involving the boardriders' clubs from Bondi through to Maroubra.



Maroubra surfer Blake Thornton

# The 70s and beyond

## Southside Surfriders' Association

Although the Southside region is geographically small, it has been home to many influential boardriders' clubs. Maroubra's clubs have been amongst the strongest and most enduring in the competitive arena.

During the seventies and early eighties, Peter Berry and Don Bosco ably held the Southside Surfriders' Association together. It is ironic that for a period of time in the mid 1980s, Southside was run solely by Peter Berry, who was in fact a kneeboarder not a standup surfer.

In 1985, Mark Windon was handed the reins, leading the association until 2004, when he took up responsibility as CEO of Surfing NSW.

A good crew of dedicated workers has built up over the years. In partnership with the local boardriders' clubs, the Southside Surfriders' Association demonstrates what amateur sport is all about: dedication, passion and commitment.

As a hotbed of talent, expect the Southside region to continue producing future champions, and along the way an unforgettable character or two!

By the mid-eighties, Maroubra was home to four boardriders' clubs: Maroubra Boardriders' Association, North Maroubra Boardriders, Southend Boardriders and Maroubra Christian Surfers. Relationships between these four clubs were respectfully friendly. Younger members, hungry for contest experience, competed in neighbouring clubs' contests.

All leaders were part of the Southside Surfriders' Association, which was an invaluable gathering for surfing development, communication, and strengthening the regional surfing community.



## Maroubra Surfers' Association

During the early 1970s, MSA changed its name to the Maroubra Boardriders' Association (MBA). Led by the highly talented Tony White as President, MBA enjoyed plenty of success in interclub contests, remaining undefeated from 1976 to 1980.

Returning to its earlier name, MSA has always been a very close knit group of people; a life-long lasting brotherhood, which continues to the present.

Maroubra has produced many outstanding surfers, including Colin 'Muscles' Hammond, Mark Smith, Ron Goddard, Wayne 'Worm' Cowper, Wayne Burton, Richard Fatcher, Tony White, Ernie Thackeray, Peter Emmerson, Greg Day, Mark Scott, Kevin Davidson, Jay Brown, Larry Blair, Steve 'Blackie' Wilson, Paul Moffat, Sunny Abberton, Tony Seddon, Matt Howard, Luke Dennett, Jai Abberton, Koby Abberton, Mark Matthews, Matt Phillips, Blake Thornton, Evan Faulks and Richie Vaculik.

MSA is now over 40 years old and is seeing the first fruits of its second generation members. With the keen participation of parents and the local surfing community, MSA runs divisions that aim to nurture the local grommets in the best that surfing can offer.

## **Bay Surfers' Association**

During 1975 and '76, an alternative boardriders' club existed. Its President was Willow, owner of Willow's Surf Shop, next to the Seals Club. As his name suggests, Willow was a soul surfer in the mould of "Morning of the Earth" – a successful movie that artistically portrayed surfing as an art form.

Ironically, he started a short-lived local club that ran surfing competitions. Gary Sheppard was the standout performer. The club did have a good vibe - everyone knew that Sheppo was going to win, so the rest simply cruised and didn't get too stressed. Bay Surfers' Association folded after Willow left the 'Bra.

## **Southend Boardriders**

In 1985, the owners of Sea Level Surf Shop (now Marine Cafe) suggested there was a need for a boardriders' club at South Maroubra. Pat and Jeff Manning were true to their word as Sea Level became the first sponsor of Southend Boardriders.

The club started at a meeting in a garage in Truscott Ave, with numerous beers and plenty of potential members. The original committee was Mark Windon, Ross McKeon, Brad Stevens, Steve Farkas, Roy Buchan, Kev Clifford and Wormer.

A handful of members have continued with Southend since its inception, including Max DeLuca, Tom North, Louie Buchan, Craig Mashman, Peter Hollington, Paul Ross, Kyle Stevens and Mark Windon. Steve 'Fish' Buchan would have been on this list had he not perished in the Bali Bombing.

Southend Boardriders is about having fun – pure and simple. Have a surf, have a beer and have a laugh!

## **Maroubra Christian Surfers**

In the early 1970s, a group of Christian surfers regularly met together in what was the forerunner of Maroubra Christian Surfers (CS). After several surf film productions, and being active in setting up local drop-in centres, they formed a low key group called Christian Surfing Fellowship (CSF).

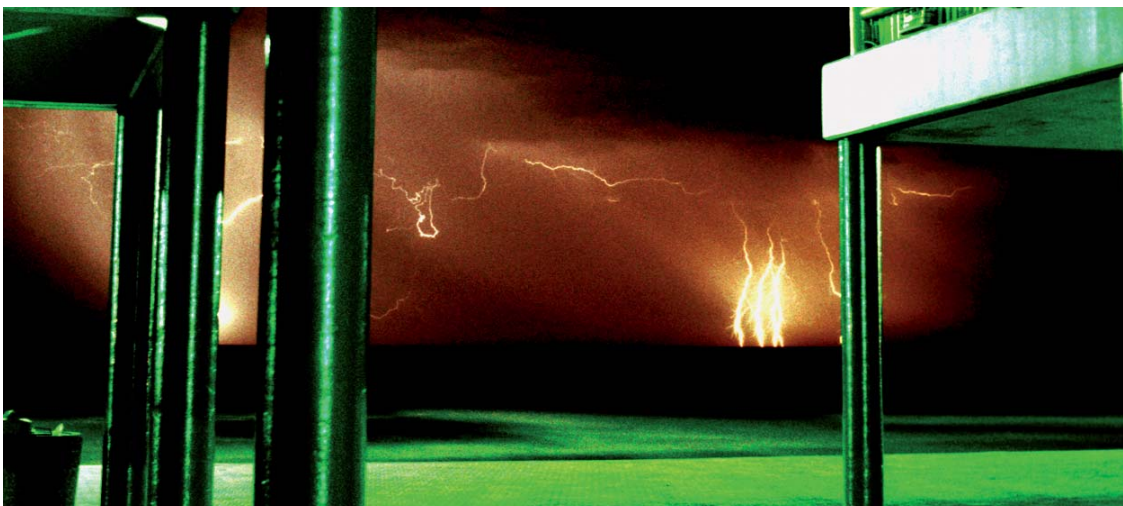
From a series of contests in the late 70s and early 80s, strong links were forged between the three major Christian surfing communities in Sydney - Southside, Northern Beaches, and Cronulla. Nationally, things grew solidly and in 1983 Christian Surfers Australia was born.

A handful of Maroubra surfers teamed up to form the original leadership of Maroubra CS. Growing into the mid 1980s, a wide mix of local people were involved - guys and girls, hardcore surfers and even non surfers, spanning a broad cross section of ages.

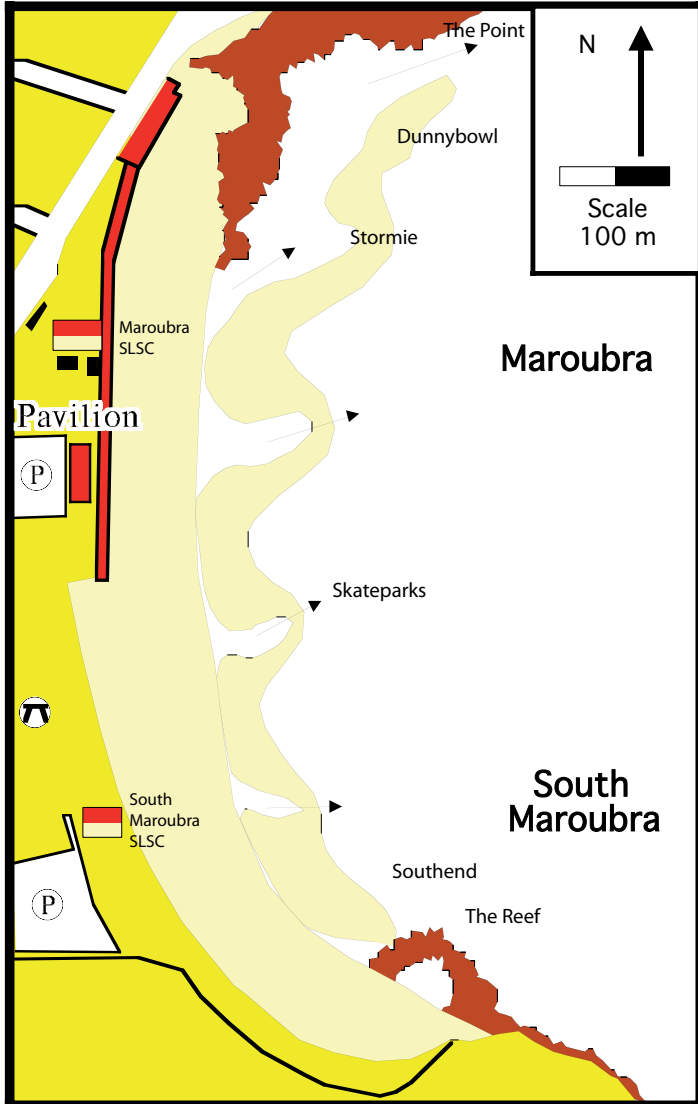
Female surfers formed an important part of Maroubra CS, including rising stars Lynette McKenzie and Pauline Menzcer. In the eighties and nineties, many local grommets received a great introduction to competitive surfing through CS, and many of these are now the tribal elders of the Maroubra surfing scene.

Monthly surfing contests were held at Maroubra rain, hail or shine. An unusual characteristic was providing divisions for all surf craft -shortboards (longboards competed in the shortboarders heats), kneeboards, bodyboards, and wave skis.

In the context of a diversity of beliefs, CS still enjoys a close relationship with the surfing community in Maroubra.



# Maroubra's Surfing Environment



# Messages from Local Leaders

## **Cr Ted Seng, Mayor of Randwick**

“Randwick City Council has a long history of supporting our local Surf Life Saving Clubs and our surfing community. We have strong relationships with local surfing organisations, including Surfing NSW, which has its home at Maroubra.

“The dedication of Maroubra Beach as a National Surfing Reserve signifies the cultural and historical importance of Maroubra Beach to surfing. It will be Australia’s second Surfing Reserve and the first in NSW.

“To complement the Surfing Reserve, Randwick Council has initiated the Maroubra Beach Surfing Walk of Fame. Each year bronze plaques will be laid in the Promenade to recognise the outstanding achievements of Australia’s leading surfers and surf lifesavers.

“The Maroubra Beach Surfing Walk of Fame is the first of its kind in Australia and we are proud to be able to pay tribute to Australia’s world class surfers at Maroubra Beach.”

## **Mr Peter Garrett MP, Member for Kingsford Smith, Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Reconciliation and the Arts**

“Most Australians live within spitting distance of the coast. Many surf, often from an early age, in the glorious blue of the ocean. Our close relationship with the sea makes up a part of our Australian character but it is only now that we are realising the significance of our beach experiences. It is at the beach that we encounter nature with all its beauty and moods. It is at the beach that we gather as a community.

“We surely need to commemorate and conserve this very special environment which is a huge part of our country. And as one of the foundation surf cultures in the country, it is fitting that Maroubra beach – its history, beauty, and living tradition of connection with surfing – now be recognised.”

### **Cr Michael Daley MP, Member for Maroubra**

"People have been surfing at Maroubra for more than a century. Surfing and surf life saving is an integral part of life at Maroubra; it's in our blood.

"Maroubra Beach is as good a beach as you will find anywhere in the world, but it's been mostly a well-kept local secret. It's great to see Maroubra Beach get the recognition it deserves through this dedication as a National Surfing Reserve."

### **Senator The Hon. Ian Campbell, Federal Minister for the Environment**

"Surfing Sites and Reserves are a worthy initiative that gives acknowledgement to Australia's long history of association with surfing, raising awareness of our surfing culture and the coastal environment."

### **National Surfing Reserves Committee**

Mr Peter Garrett MP, Member for Kingsford Smith and Patron,  
National Surfing Reserves  
Brad Farmer, Chair & Founder, National Surfing Reserves  
Prof. Andrew Short, Coastal Studies Unit, University of Sydney  
Craig Andrews, Surf Life Saving NSW  
Tim Woolnough, Surf Life Saving NSW  
Jess Ponting

### **Maroubra Beach Surfing Reserve Committee**

Mark Windon, Surfing NSW  
Rev. Stephen Bligh, Maroubra Surfers' Church  
Paul Moffatt  
Barry Watterson  
Andrew Pitt

# Messages from Surfing Champions

## **Tom Carroll, two-time World Surfing Champion**

"Surfing is vibrant and steadily growing and Maroubra has strong surfing roots set into its colourful past. It makes sense to officially recognise a bay that offers surfers such a place of sanctuary. It's about time."

## **Mark Richards, Australia's greatest ever surfer, and four times World Champion**

"In this country we may not have the great, ancient, man-made castles and cathedrals of Europe, the pyramids of Egypt, or temples of India, but at our great surf spots we have natural places of worship as magnificent as anything made by man's hand.

"Australia has the best surfing beaches, breaking in the most scenic and beautiful places, like Angourie, and unique places to the surfing culture, like Maroubra.

"Waves are Australia's biggest tourist attraction. Millions of people come from all over the world to see and ride them.

"Surfing Reserves will enshrine these beaches as they deserve to be – jewels in the crown."

## **Kelly Slater, seven-time World Surfing Champion**

"It's great to see that the importance of Maroubra in the surfing and beach communities is getting its due. There is a strong surfing heritage there and it will be nice to have it commemorated as such. We've come a long way."

The Point • Dumbyowl • Stormie

Skateparks • Southend • The Reef

# MAROUBRA BEACH

Surfing is a fundamental part of Australia's identity. Our coast is where people meet the sea and surfers face the might of the oceans.

Maroubra Beach, traditional home of the Bidjigal people, is integral to the historical, environmental, spiritual and cultural heritage of Australian surfing. People began surfing here in the early 1900s, formed one of the first Surf Life Saving Clubs in 1907, and the first Australian surfboard riding club in 1963. Since then, many thousands of Australians have ridden millions of waves at Maroubra Beach.

National Surfing Reserves recognise sites of cultural and historical significance in Australian surf culture. They acknowledge the surfing way of life and link past, present and future generations with our oceans, waves and beaches. In 1973, Bells Beach, Victoria was declared a Surfing Reserve, Maroubra Beach in New South Wales' second Surfing Reserve and the first in New South Wales.

Maroubra Beach National Surfing Reserve  
dedicated on 19 March 2006

Peter Garrett  
Member for Kingsford Smith  
Patron, National Surfing Reserves

The Maroubra  
Surfing Community

Councillor Ted Seng  
Mayor of Randwick



# NATIONAL SURFING RESERVE

**The dedication of the  
Maroubra Beach National Surfing Reserve  
is proudly sponsored by**



Maroubra Seals Sports &  
Community Club



**Photos by Glenn Duffus Photography**