

## Annual Lifeguard Services Report

This report contains statistics and information relating to Kiama Municipal Council's Beach Lifeguard Service operations across the seven patrolled beaches within the Kiama LGA for the 2022-2023 season.

This report does not contain any information or statistics from the three Surf Life Saving Clubs operating in the Kiama LGA.



### Executive summary

Kiama Council's Lifeguard Service completed a successful patrol season. Kiama's seven patrolled beaches continue to be popular with tourists and the local community. The patrol season commenced 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022 closing on 24th April 2023. Total patrol season beach usage was **260 000+**. In '21/'22 the attendance total was **304,000+** which equates to a 15.6% decrease in visitors to the beach over the current 22/23 patrol season.

### Spring shoulder

Spring shoulder beach attendance (Surf Beach) was 10,357, (200 pp/day). This was around 13% lower than the same period the previous year, attributable to communities being allowed international travel after the pandemic as well as a mild start to spring.

### Peak season

Peak season beach attendance was 205,421, equating to an average of 770 pp/day across the 7 patrolled beaches. This is 31% lower than the peak season of 2021/22. Average daily attendance over the seven beaches (adjusted to actual number of patrol days per beach) was:

Seven Mile	1,700
Easts	804
Kendalls	755
Surf	495
Jones	433
Bombo	425
Werri	355

### February weekends

February weekend beach attendance across the four non-surf club beaches was 31,500 (985pp/day) which was an increase of 48% on the previous year. Average daily attendances by beach were:

Seven Mile	1,838
Kendalls	1,085
Easts	544
Bombo	469

### Autumn shoulder

In the Autumn shoulder period (Surf beach) attendance was 9,985 (269 pp/day). This was 21% lower than the '21/'22 season due to the adverse weather conditions February/March/April Werri Beach had 3,200 people over the eight patrol days (355 pp/day).

General rescues were up on last season for 102 to 116, whereas first aid incidents were down from 182 the previous season to 111 for the 22/23 season. There was an increase in critical incidents compared to last season with most of the rescues and incidents taking place away from the flagged area especially South Bombo and in the river mouth at Gerroa. Of the 9 critical

incidents, all required ambulance service attendance. There was a significant increase in preventative actions, with decrease in general beach and reserve regulations enforcement.

The ratio of rescues to preventative actions was 1:57 which is significantly better than the target ratio of 1:20 and reflects a pro-active lifeguard service.

Council's Lifeguard Services Strategy continues to guide the beach patrol operations with a focus of patrol activity spread across the non-surf club beaches and the three-surf club patrolled beaches there were extended patrols at four of the LGA beaches where there is no surf lifesaving club patrol presence. Weekend patrols at the four non-surf club beaches during February continued. The following service changes were introduced for the 2022/23 season in accordance with the adopted strategy for the purposes of establishing consistent patrol season start dates:

1. The patrol season started one week later in 2022 with the later school holiday break, patrols commencing 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022.
2. Jones, Werri, Kendalls, Easts, Seven Mile and Bombo beaches patrol start date was the first day of the gazetted NSW government school holiday break, Mon 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022.
3. The final day of the peak summer patrol period was extended to Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023 to provide the maximum level of public beach safety for the community and the likelihood of students not returning to school before then.
4. A common beach closure time of 17:30pm was introduced across all seven beaches for the summer months (opening 10:00am) for consistency of safety messaging to the public in association with our collaborative approach with the three local surf clubs and their patrol hours. Outside the summer months, Council's service was 9:30am to 5:30pm which is suitable given the seasonal weather pattern.
5. With the introduction of the 7.5-hour patrol day, the recording of the daily statistics was altered somewhat (with a statics being recorded at 10am, 11:30, 13:30, 15:30 and 17:30) and thus would account for the decrease in attendance figures.

### Lifesaving patrols and beaches

There are three surf lifesaving clubs in our LGA, Kiama Downs, Kiama, and Gerringong.

The respective surf clubs provide volunteer patrols to the corresponding beaches over the patrol season on weekends and public holidays from end September to end April. A total of approximately 216 patrol days are provided by the clubs to the public. The Kiama Council lifeguard service does not operate on these beaches when the surf club patrols are in place.

With the introduction of the Lifeguard Strategy in 2019, Council’s service expanded and in season 2022/23 operated a total of 405 patrol days - 205 days at beaches where the surf clubs also provide patrol services to the public plus 200 days at the non-surf club beaches.

Council’s services are predominantly delivered Monday-Friday (80%) while surf clubs are exclusively weekend/public holiday aligned.

The Council lifeguard service operates as follows:

Beach	Number of patrol days (season)	Patrol season
Jones	26	6 weeks peak Summer (M-F)
Bombo	50	6 weeks peak Summer + w/ends February
Surf	144	September-April (M-F)
Kendalls	50	6 weeks peak Summer + w/ends February
Easts	50	6 weeks peak Summer + w/ends February
Werri	35	6 weeks peak Summer (M-F) + April School Holidays (M-F)
Seven Mile	50	6 weeks peak Summer + w/ends February

*“Peak Summer” is defined as mid-December to end January*

## Surf education awareness program

In September the normal education programs for the 5 primary schools in the LGA were undertaken. Topics covered in the education program are:

- sun safety (importance of sun protection at the beach)
- surf safety (recognition of flags, signs, lifesavers/lifeguards, and their requests)
- rescue equipment and methods (what to do, how to use them, how to assist lifesavers and lifeguards)
- first aid (blue bottles, blue ring octopus, box jellyfish etc)
- recognition of dangerous conditions (rips, large waves, river mouths, rocks)
- surf skills (surf swimming, how to catch waves, how to escape from strong currents, rips, float to survive etc)
- the onset of panic (what to do if you need help)

In 2023 the school program will again be offered including more recent surf survival techniques supported by the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguards Association (APOLA) including “float to survive”.

## Emergency Response Beacons

In 2022, Council received three Emergency Response Beacons (ERB) in conjunction with Surf Life Saving NSW. These response beacons were located at South Bombo Beach (a notorious black spot for drownings), Blowhole and Kendalls beach. The ERB at South Bombo came into its own over the peak summer season assisting 12 people being rescued, 4 of which were hospitalised for near drowning. The rapid response by members of the public using the intercom system allows for a quick response from lifeguards located at the north end of the beach as well as for the deployment of the rescue water craft from Surf Beach/Kendalls.



### Lifeguard recruitment

- Council recruited 31 casual lifeguard positions out of 46 applications
- Physical testing and interviews were held over 2 recruitment sessions
- The majority of casual lifeguards work across the summer months where all seven beaches are patrolled

### Beach usage statistics

Beach attendance data is obtained by lifeguards over five separate periods of the day at two hourly intervals between beach set up and close down. This provides the ability to determine trends in beach use during the day and is relevant for future lifeguard service planning across the seven beaches. The following graphics show the distribution of attendance across the season by beach.

Figure 1

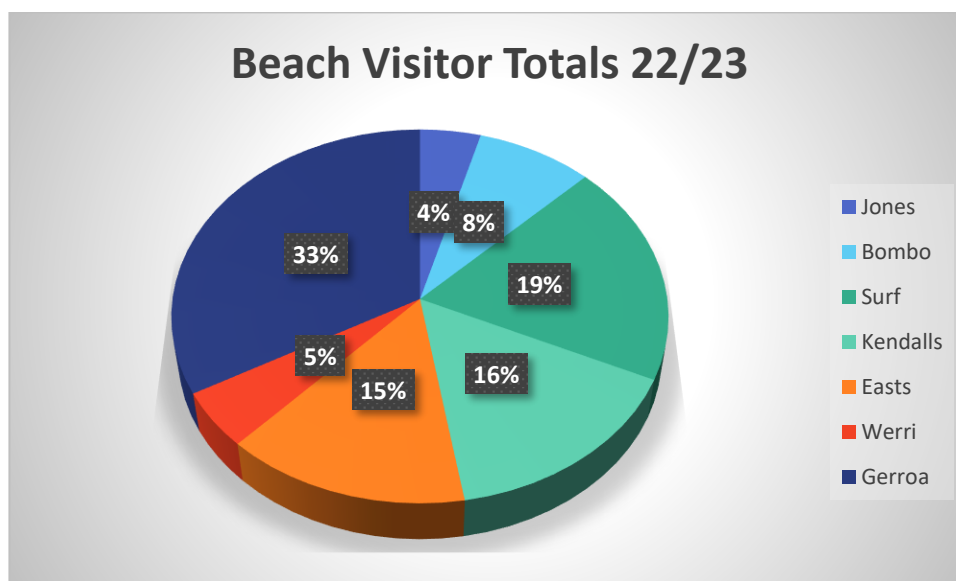
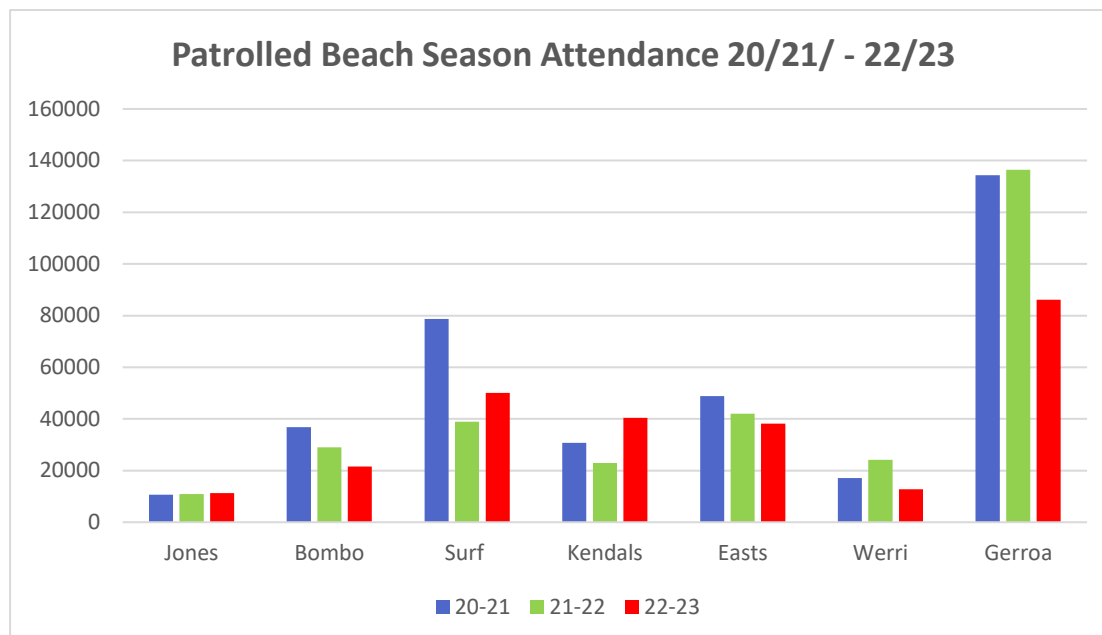


Figure 2



The data over the last three years indicates:

1. *Seven Mile Beach* is the most patronised. It is patrolled the same number of days as Bombo, Kendalls, and Easts (50 days each) being the four non-surf club patrolled beaches. *Seven Mile* can be described as a multiple attraction beach destination which influences the high beach attendance. The combined influences include the Crooked River/inlet, nearby Holiday Parks, residential catchment, and the superior conditions with the predominant summer north-easterly prevailing winds.
2. *Surf Beach* is patrolled for the whole season (144 days) and the total beach attendance numbers reflects this. *Surf Beach* lifeguard services accounts for 19% of the total KMC patrol service (patrol hours/resources). Figure 4 provides the most reliable comparative data (peak summer period) across the seven beaches with regard to comparative average beach attendance and this ranks *Surf Beach* as the third most used beach.
3. *Jones* and *Werri* beaches are the least patronised (and the lowest patrol commitment at 27 days and 37 days respectively). However, the respective surf clubs provide around 70 beach patrol days to each beach providing a much higher level of total lifeguard service to the public.

The beach attendance data over the last season indicates:

1. A significantly increased number of people using *Seven Mile Beach*, *Gerroa*.
2. A moderately higher number of people used *Easts Beach* than the previous year.

Figure 3

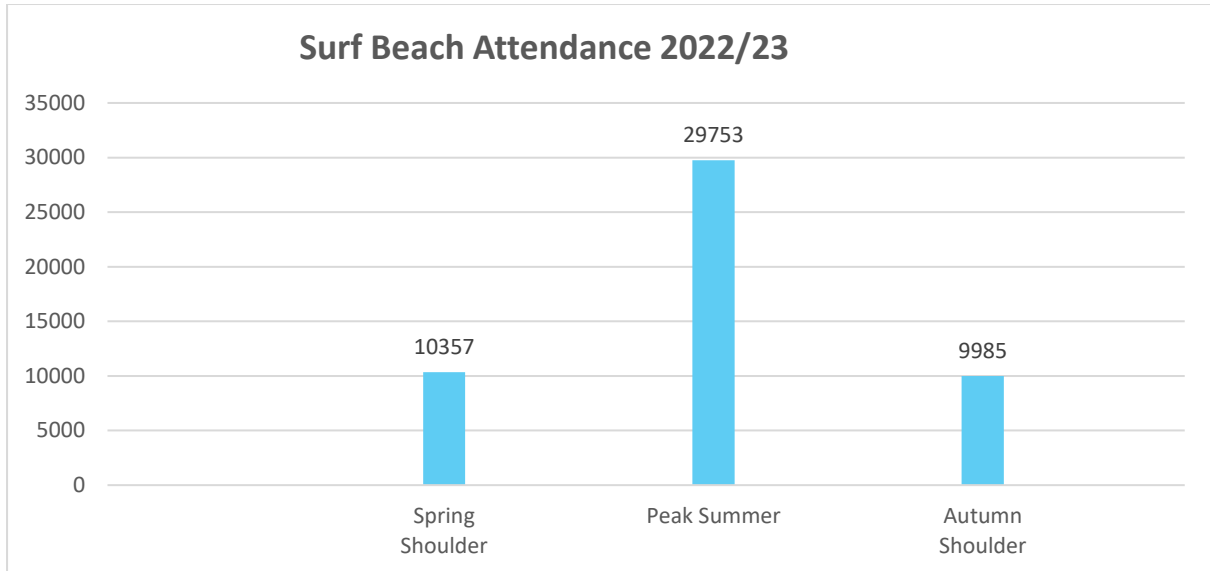
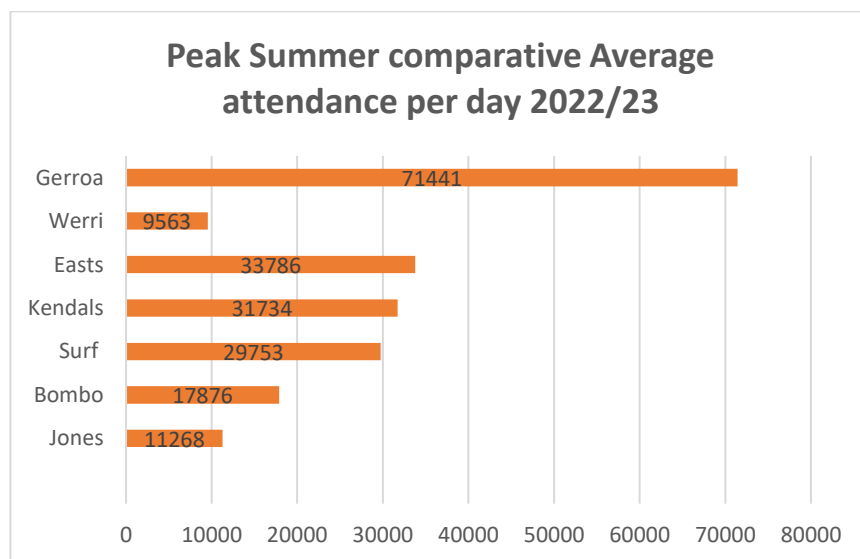


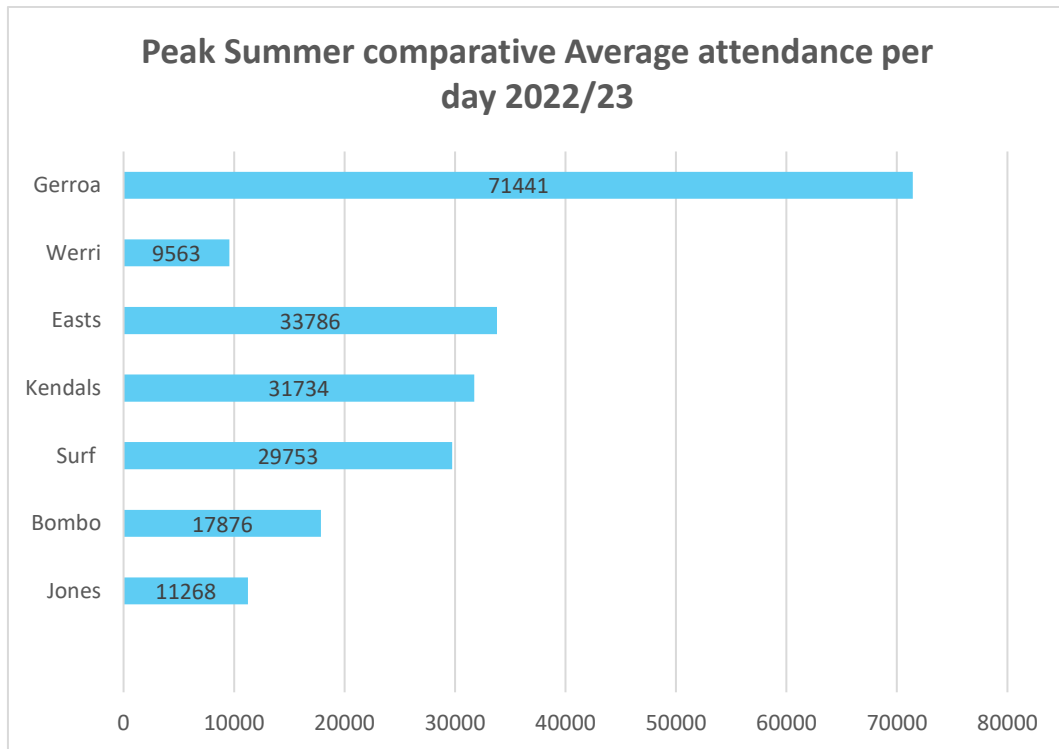
Figure 3 provides Surf Beach attendance data over the three separate periods of the 7-month patrol season: Spring shoulder, peak Summer and Autumn shoulder, being the only continuous patrolled beach during the patrol season. Surf Beach is the main patrolled beach for the Kiama lifeguard service. It is geographically located within the major population catchment of Kiama. Surf Beach is the smallest beach in the LGA (200m length) however is regarded as potentially the most dangerous over the patrol season. It also has the main supporting infrastructure for the lifeguard service to operate on a full seasonal (7 month) basis.





**Figure 4**

Figure 4 shows the adjusted peak Summer beach usage across the seven patrolled beaches. This provides the most accurate representation of comparative beach usage by the public, with Seven Mile clearly the most used beach with Easts and Surf experiencing similar numbers and the next most used. This is important data in the consideration of future beach patrol planning and resourcing commitments.



**Figure 5**

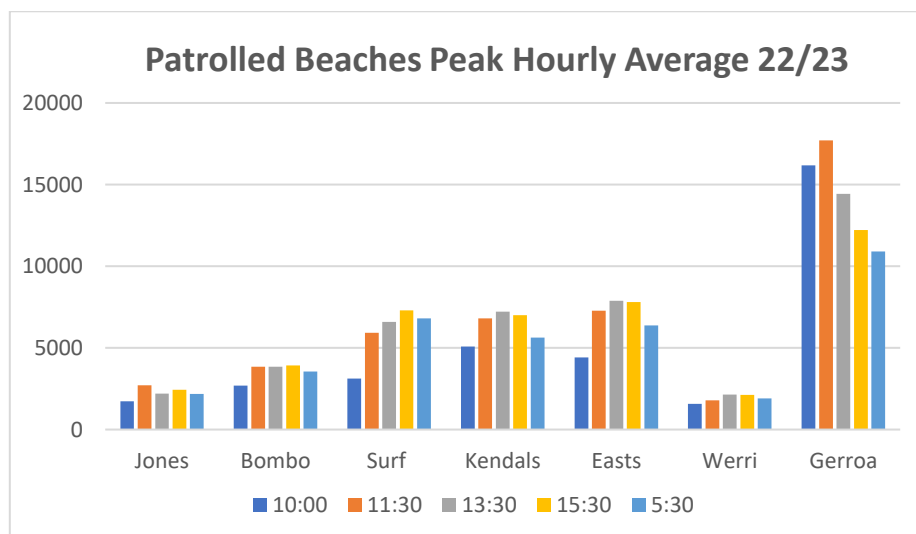


Figure 5 shows hourly average beach use during the peak summer season. This provides relevant information regarding most frequently used periods during the patrol day. The data indicates that.

1. The 11:30am to 3:30pm period is generally the most popular time for beach users,
2. 5:30pm (beach closure) is generally more popular than the 9:30am patrol start time. This provides an indication that a later beach closure time could be considered in the future. This season, the beaches closed at the common time of 5:30pm for consistency and public safety messaging purposes. If budget permits, it would be justified to trial a 6:00pm beach closure in the future across all seven beaches in the summer months and rely on usage data on public use behaviour to assess ongoing sustainability of the service (closure time).

### **Summary of Lifeguard Interventions 2022/23 patrol season**

#### 1. Incidents (*unplanned events requiring lifeguard intervention and any event involving an ambulance or other emergency service*)

There were **9 incidents** this season across the LGA beaches (increase from 2021/22).

Over the season there were 4 injury related incidents in the LGA, where lifeguards provided primary care first aid whilst waiting for ambulance to arrive. These are complex situations for the lifeguards to deal with and the lifeguards on duty were effective in their response and handled these critical incidents extremely well.

There was a separate incident at The Rock Pool just after Lifeguards had closed for the day (not being a patrolled beach but part of the patrolling lifeguard response area) where a gentleman entered the pool on a day when a hazardous surf warning issued by the Bureau of meteorology. Unfortunately the patient was deceased in the water and was returned to the shore by two surfers.

#### 2. Rescues (*retrieval of a person in distress delivery to a safe place by either using watercraft, PWC's or rescue tubes*)

There were 116 rescues this season across the LGA beaches (increase from 2021/22).

South Bombo is still proving to be a popular destination for people and is close to the highway exit. South Bombo continues to be a concern from a safety perspective and although further signage and an emergency response beacon have been installed, visitors continue to swim at that location. Twelve rescue's were conducted there this season of which four were treated for near drowning and taken to hospital by ambulance.

#### 3. Preventative Actions (*directive from a lifeguard on duty to a member of public highlighting dangers and risks associated with water activities - public announcements, carrying out*

*active water surveillance utilising PWC's or rescue boards, conducting roving patrols using all-terrain vehicles, erecting appropriate risk warning signs highlighting dangers)*

There were 6658 incidents of preventative action taken by lifeguards over the season which is a positive response by the lifeguard service to protect the public.

4. First Aids (*assessments and interventions to a person whether using medical supplies and equipment or not*)

There were 111 first aid situations performed by lifeguards. 43% of these were associated with Surf Beach, attributable to the longer season at this location.

5. Beach & Reserve Regulations breaches (*lifeguard issuing a warning to a surf craft rider who surfs within the patrolled swimming area, a dog owner who encroaches on a sections of beach where dogs are prohibited, litter, personal watercraft that encroach within the patrolled area*)

There were 755 breaches under the Local Government Act 1993 which are mostly attributed to dog owners flouting the bylaws at beaches where dogs are not permitted.

## Summary of Lifeguard interventions

Spring Shoulder:

In the Spring shoulder, the ratio of rescues to preventative actions was 1:54 (target ratio 1:20) reflecting a pro-active lifeguard service.

First aids (minor) administered = 9

Rescues = 6

Beach and reserve regulations undertaken = 90.

During the spring shoulder there were seven beach closures (over 59 patrol days) due to:

- dangerous surf (3) – full day
- storm/lightning zero
- marine creatures - zero
- pollution - zero

Peak Summer:

In the summer peak season, the ratio of rescues to preventative actions was 1:55 (target ratio 1:20) reflecting a pro-active lifeguard service.

First aids (minor) administered = 97.

Beach and reserve regulations undertaken = 466.

During the peak summer there were 19 beach closures (total of 280 patrol days). Reasons for closure:

- dangerous surf (16) – full day
- storm/lightning (2) – 4 hours

- shark sighting (1) – 1 hour
- tsunami warning (0)
- pollution - zero

February weekends:

In the summer peak season, the ratio of rescues to preventative actions was 1:504 (target ratio 1:20) reflecting a pro-active lifeguard service.

First aids (minor) administered = 1

Beach and reserve regulations undertaken = 67.

- dangerous surf - zero
- storm/lightning - zero
- shark sighting - zero
- tsunami warning - zero
- pollution – zero

Autumn Shoulder:

In the summer peak season, the ratio of rescues to preventative actions was 1:54 (target ratio 1:20) reflecting a pro-active lifeguard service.

First aids (minor) administered = 10.

Beach and reserve regulations undertaken = 85

- dangerous surf (7)
- storm/lightning (0)
- shark sighting (0)
- tsunami warning (0)
- pollution – (4)

**Total lifeguard interventions across the patrolled beaches**

The table below shows total interventions by beach across the whole season. However, when analysing total lifeguard interventions relative to number of patrol days over the 2022/23 patrol season.

	Jones	Bombo	Surf	Kendalls	Easts	Werri	7 Mile	Total
<b>Incidents</b>	0	4	1	<u>4</u>	0	0	0	<b>9</b>
<b>Rescues</b>	8	<u>24</u>	12	13	2	15	<u>42</u>	<b>116</b>
<b>Preventative Actions</b>	568	944	1589	1070	822	675	<u>990</u>	<b>6658</b>
<b>First Aids</b>	3	3	39	<u>17</u>	15	15	19	<b>111</b>
<b>Beach &amp; Reserve Regulations</b>	56	108	224	137	<u>69</u>	54	107	<b>1030</b>
<b>Beach Closures</b>	3	4	12	2	<u>1</u>	0	2	<b>24</b>
<b>Total Lifeguard interventions by beach</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>1087</b>	<b>1877</b>	<b>1243</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>1160</b>	<b>-</b>

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*Surf Beach* saw the most preventative actions,  
*Seven Mile* saw the most rescues  
*Bombo and Kendall's* had the most incidents,  
*Surf Beach* had the most first aids administered,  
*Surf Beach* experienced the most beach and reserve regulation breaches

Overall, the beaches with the highest numbers of total lifeguard interventions relative to number of patrol days were *Seven Mile, Kendalls and Bombo*.