

Supporting our surf lifeguards on and off the water

Posted on: June 13, 2024

Omanu Beach SLSC is one of the oldest and most popular surf clubs in the Bay of Plenty and New Zealand, with 650 ‘clubbies’ last season – around 500 of which were children between the ages of five and 16. The club’s nippers surf sport and rookies lifeguard programmes are a big reason behind its impressive junior membership.

But it’s not only about the kids. Omanu Beach SLSC recently had 140 athletes compete across the Oceans, Senior and Masters National Championships in 2023/24. “Our Oceans

team finished second at the National Championships," says Club President Donal Boyle. "Seniors came an incredible 3rd (up from 12th last year) and won 37 medals and nine national titles, and our Masters regained the national title by an incredible margin of over 100 points to the next closest club."

The club also has 119 dedicated lifeguards. Last season alone, Omanu Beach SLSC lifeguards devoted 5000 hours to patrolling the beach, performing 533 rescues and 22 assists, handling 17 first aid scenarios, conducting 488 preventative actions, and participating in eight search and rescues. These efforts directly impacted over 20,600 members of the public.

Cooney Lees Morgan partner, Campbell Izzard, has now joined those lifeguards who collectively patrol Omanu Beach during weekends and public holidays between Labour Weekend and Easter, covering the roughly 6km of sand and water that stretches from Tay Street to Arataki Beach.

"The selflessness of the club and the amount they manage to achieve for the community each year makes it a really easy decision for Cooney Lees Morgan to make them our major sponsorship recipient," explains Campbell. "A huge amount of work goes on by many long-serving club members and volunteers, all with the goal of bringing the local community together, representing it competitively, and keeping people safe. It puts any support it gets from the business community to incredibly good use too."

Scott Bartlett, Omanu Beach SLSC General Manager, says the multi-year agreement with Cooney Lees Morgan means the club can make decisions on a forward-looking basis.

"The funding we receive from our sponsors goes into upgrading and purchasing new equipment like ATRs, radios, IRBs and towards the club's operating costs which are not insignificant. We had a fantastic recent summer season at the club and we are very grateful to Cooney Lees Morgan for their ongoing financial support."

Campbell says Omanu is a well-used part of the beach. "It's wide, flat and with a great break. It's a big attraction for the many people who live here and visit the area. It was a big factor in drawing my family to live in the area when we relocated from Auckland in 2020. Having recently completed the lifeguard course, I also got a first-hand sense of just how much the club relies on people with genuine expertise in surf rescue donating so much of their time to ensure the club operates to the high standards it holds itself to.

“There are some inspiring individuals at the club which make it a special place. It could not be more proactive and mindful in the way it treats its sponsors. It really is a partnership, and Cooney Lees Morgan is grateful for the opportunity to support it.”