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The Board of Surfing WA has recently examined in detail a range of evidence regarding the circumstances and events surrounding an incident of unsportsmanlike behavior which allegedly occurred during the Under 18 Girls' State final at Geraldton on 25 July 2010.

The Board and executive of SWA do not condone behaviour which is seen to be against the spirit of fair and reasonable competition.

It is also understood and generally accepted that a certain amount of aggressiveness is required by athletes in any competition in order to achieve an advantage over their rival competitors.

We want our surfers in our competitions to be tough but fair.

It is clear that the events reported from Geraldton have had a significant impact on the competitors involved; their parents; other Surfing WA members and competitors who were on the beach; spectators; and event officials. The fallout has resulted in the sport of surfing in the State being portrayed in a negative way. Surfing WA perceives its role as upholding the values of the sport and observing its duty of care to protect the rights of all competitors and the interests of stakeholders.

The Board therefore views what happened as a serious incident.

But after careful examination it was unequivocally determined that the tactics employed did not amount to a violation of the Rules of Competition as documented in the *Surfing Australia Rule Book – version 2010*. The Board confirmed the ruling of the ASC/SA accredited panel of judges who officiated on the beach during the Geraldton competition.

While it was agreed that such behaviour in the water should not be condoned, the Board cannot overturn the results under the current Surfing Australia rules.

The rules under which this competition was surfed are clear. A re-surf can only be held in regard to a *tiered* result. A re-surf of the Under 18 Girls' final will therefore not be held and the results must stand.

### **Board Action – new rules**

The Board is taking the following actions regarding possible rule changes and new controls:

1. Consult with the Department of Sport and Recreation and welcome any feedback from SWA members on possible wording of appropriate additions to the Rules in order to control or prevent similar future occurrences of what may be understood as being unacceptable behavior seen to be outside the spirit of fair competition.
2. Submit proposed new wording to the Surfing Australia technical committee and the International Surfing Association for consideration to be included in the 2011 competition rules – in order to introduce appropriate deterrents regarding unfair tactics.
3. Commencing 2011, include on the bottom of each entry form for all competitors in Surfing WA events a more rigorous Code of Conduct, more clearly specifying what is acceptable behaviour in the water.

A Code of Conduct is also to be signed by parents of competing junior members, outlining appropriate behaviour at junior surfing events.

These new provisions will also extend into the various scholarship and funding programs which support elite WA surfers.

Such rules modifications, including appropriate Codes of Conduct, will be circulated for endorsement by the main stakeholder groups of surfing in WA.

In other action taken under the direction of the Board, the CEO of Surfing WA invited the surfers involved in the incidents during the July 25 final and their parents to a special meeting. One of the affected surfers chose not attend.

The meeting was held at the Department of Sport and Recreation in Bunbury. Representatives of Surfing WA, the Department of Sport and Recreation and the South West Academy of Sport participated to discuss with the parents and surfers the implications arising from the reported behaviour, to communicate proposed changes and consider what is acceptable at future contests.

The families involved may not have been satisfied with the proceedings, or the outcomes. This was not an easy meeting for any of those involved.

A subsequent post meeting review by the Board concluded that the CEO of Surfing WA and his staff acted fairly and correctly in difficult circumstances and fully in accordance with the directions of the Board.

In conclusion, the Board thanks those members who have provided feedback on these events for their constructive input. Apart from suggestions for wording of appropriate Rule changes/additions, no further correspondence regarding this matter will be entered into.

Yours sincerely

Bob Welch  
**Surfing Western Australia President**

23 August 2010

NOTE: These events and further feedback on the incident have again been discussed in detail by the Board of Surfing WA at its monthly meeting held 24/08/10. The Board determined to continue with the course of action outlined above WITH no further correspondence being entered into on this matter. The Board looks forward to all competitors and their supporters in future sanctioned events conducting themselves in a sportsmanlike manner which allows fair competition. Any future unacceptable behaviour will be closely scrutinised and appropriate action taken.

