

LEADERS OF THE FUTURE

For immediate release – Monday 19 April 2010

Nobbys surf lifesaver Dilan Houston is one of Surf Life Saving's leaders of the future after taking part in the Youth Opportunity Makers Workshop in Sydney last week.

Twenty-four of the best and brightest young surf lifesavers from throughout the state were chosen to attend the four-day intensive program, aimed at developing abilities and opportunities for members aged between 15 and 17.

The 16 year-old has been involved since he was six and was the club's Junior Captain at 14. He competes in Sprint and Flags events, with his team winning the Hunter Branch U17 Sprint Relay this year along with making it to the finals at the State Championships. Along with his Bronze Medallion, Dilan also holds Advanced Resuscitation and Defibrillation qualifications and is an IRB crewman.

Dilan says he was excited to be selected to take part in the program, which focused on developing abilities through seminars, presentations and challenges such as initiative activities and boat building.

With aspirations of one day becoming a helicopter crewman, a highlight of the workshop was a visit by the Westpac Rescue Helicopter.

"It gave me a really thorough understanding of what I need to do if I decide to head down that path," said Dilan.

One of the major aims of the workshop is to engage talented young people to remain involved in surf life saving and become positive role models in their local communities. Like most clubs, Nobbys loses many of its young people during their teenage years and there is often a major gap between the junior and senior ranks.

Dilan now thinks this trend could be turned around if young people knew about the wide range of activities they could become involved in and the huge opportunities there are for further training and development.

"It was great to see the pathways available, such as lifesaving exchanges or overseas lifeguarding opportunities," he said.

"If you want to, you can make your passion your job."

The workshop also gave the teens a chance to swap ideas and see how clubs compared in terms of resources or strategies.

"There were different people from many different backgrounds, but we all have the same goals and are trying to achieve the same outcome, which is really to save lives," he said.

"In the Hunter our resources are well placed and there are many opportunities, particularly in support operations."