

## DISTRICT SURFING

# Swell season for women surfers

EXCITEMENT is building amongst Bass Coast mums as the countdown begins and they approach another Swell Mamas season.

Meeting each week for the past two years, Swell Mamas is a free surfing support program for women with or without children.

The women kick off their Friday morning with a coffee and chat, before they embark on a fun session of surfing at the Inverloch Main Surf Beach.

For women with young children, a 'sister surfer' is matched to them to share both the care of the children on the beach and to take it in turns to have a surf.

"It's a very safe environment and it's encouraged that each mum cares for only two or three children on the beach at a time," says program facilitator Lucy Cousens.

Swell Mamas was initiated two years ago by two local women, Lucy Cousens and Geraldine Archibald.

"We wanted to set up a group for women to surf in a supportive and nurturing environment; an activity where women could feel comfortable to bring along their children if they wished, or go for a surf without children in tow, but with the support and friendship of other women," says Ms Archibald.

"We have been fortunate enough to receive some great community grants and business support to build our equipment base.

"Women can comfortably come along and know they can use one of our wetsuits or surfboards, at no charge."

Boogie boarding is also a great way to enjoy the

time at the beach and women are encouraged to bring a boogie board along if they prefer this to stand up surfing.

Swell Mamas is a volunteer-run program.

Each week a surf report is emailed to the participating women.

"The Swell Mamas surf report is a reminder and a motivator to the women, who for one morning each week, put the demands of motherhood aside to come for a surf with their 'sisters,'" Ms Cousens said.

The 'mamas' now take it in turns to write the report, with Swell Mamas veteran Meagan Stewart to be the fourth Swell Mama to take up the role.

Meagan has been attending Swell Mamas since 2009, when it first began, and is now not only a passionate and keen surfer, but has also inspired her husband to take up the sport!

"It's great to be able to share this time together," says Meagan.

"Surfing is now just part of our lifestyle."

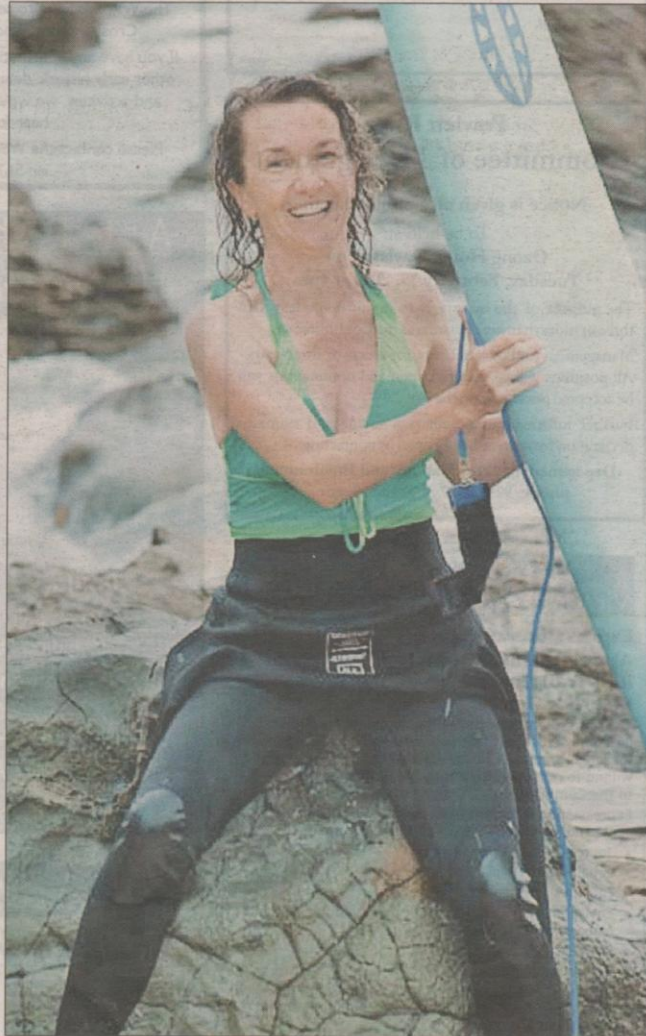
Other skills development opportunities are also linked to the program.

In 2009, 10 Swell Mamas completed their Bronze Medallion Life Saving Qualification with the Wonthaggi Life Saving Club, and then another eight women in 2010.

Several went on to complete a fully funded Level 1 Surf Coaching course with Surfing Victoria and have gone on to work with local surf schools.

Swell Mamas has built skills, social connection and lots of fun opportunities for so many women and children in the community.

"The employment spin-offs is something we're



Swell Mama Marilla Greenhalgh is looking forward to another season.

really pleased about," Ms Archibald said.

Swell Mamas will resume on Friday, February

11 at the Beach Box Café, Inverloch at 9.30am.

For more information about the Swell Mamas

contact Geraldine on 0408 667 541 or Lucy on 5674 1059 or email [swell-mamas@dcsi.net.au](mailto:swell-mamas@dcsi.net.au).