



Media Release: Wednesday, November 2, 2016

**Exclusive one-hour documentary explores the Australian surfing boom of the 1950s and 60s**

## **MEN OF WOOD & FOAM**

**“Pioneers of Australian Surfing”**

**Narrated by Dan Wyllie**

Includes interviews with **Patricia ‘Little Pattie’ Amphlett, Layne Beachley, Mark Richards, Nat Young** and the late **Midget Farrelly**

**Australian Premiere  
Wednesday December 14 at 7.30pm AEDT  
Only on HISTORY**

On Wednesday, December 14 at 7.30pm, the HISTORY Channel explores the fascinating story of the birth of the Australian surfing boom with the premiere of *Men of Wood & Foam*.

This exclusive one-hour documentary uncovers a golden decade in surfing, starting in 1956, when surfing was transformed into a sport and culture with its very own music, movies, fashion and heroes.

Underpinning this exciting transformation was a small group of artisans who started out in the 1950s making wooden surfboards in their backyards along Sydney’s eastern beaches, before eventually moving to Brookvale where they experimented with “blowing foam” to make lighter and more responsive surfboards from plastics.

These pioneering artisans, **Barry Bennett, Scott Dillon, Denny Keogh, Greg McDonagh, Bill Wallace** and **Gordon Woods** became known as ‘The Brookvale Six’.

The transition from long wooden paddle boards, known as “tooth picks”, to the modern “Malibu Chip” surfboard first began in 1956, when American lifeguards arrived in Australia for an international surf carnival being held in conjunction with the Melbourne Olympics at Torquay in Victoria.

As soon as the Brookvale board builders saw the surfboards the Americans had brought with them, and the manoeuvres they could perform, the race was on to secure one of them to use as a prototype. Gordon Woods jumped in his car and drove 600 miles to make an offer.

By 1958, Bennett had formed the core of The Brookvale Six, building Malibu Chip boards from balsa wood – and by the start of the 1960s, surfboard riding really began to take off when the Brookvale pioneers produced the first lightweight foam boards, kicking off a huge Australian surfing boom.

Soon, Australia had its own surf champion in Midget Farrelly, its own stomp craze with Little Pattie, The Delltones and The Atlantics, its own surfing movies (*Midget Goes Hawaiian*, *Surfing The Southern Cross*) and its own surf magazines.

The Brookvale Six had not only supplied the entire country with surfboards, but also made design breakthroughs that put Australia at the forefront of the sport for decades to come - inspiring a never-before-seen evolution in Australian surf culture.

“Surfing is integral to the fabric of Australian lifestyle,” said Brian Walsh, Foxtel’s Executive Director of Television. “This fascinating documentary captures the heart and soul of a colourful chapter from our past”.

“We tend to associate surfing with the contemporary stars of today’s competitive pro circuit, but this unique perspective demonstrates what a rich history we have in one of Australia’s favourite past times. *Men of Wood & Foam* takes viewers on a sentimental journey through the changing years of the sport and brilliantly tells the story of the pioneers who shaped it. I am delighted that the HISTORY Channel continues to tell our stories, Australian stories and this is a very special one,” he said.

Featuring in-depth interviews with all members of The Brookvale Six: Gordon Woods, Bill Wallace, Scott Dillon, Danny Keogh, Greg McDonagh and Barry Bennett, leading surfers including Layne Beachley, Nat Young and the late Midget Farrelly, famous faces from the time including Patricia ‘Little Pattie’ Amphlett; as well as rare archival surfing footage spanning seven decades, *Men of Wood & Foam* explores a truly iconic time in Australian sporting and cultural history.

*Men of Wood & Foam* is produced by Backbeach Pictures and Panga Productions and will premiere exclusively on Foxtel’s HISTORY Channel Wednesday December 14 at 7.30pm AEDT.

Following *Men of Wood & Foam* the HISTORY Channel will also premiere the 1971 classic surf film *Morning of the Earth* at 8.30pm AEDT.

#### **About Foxtel**

Foxtel is one of Australia’s most progressive and dynamic media companies, directly employing around 2,800 people and delivering a diverse subscription television service over cable, satellite and broadband distribution. We offer a better entertainment experience every day to each one of our 2.8 million subscribing homes through delivery of new and inspiring programming across all genres, the world’s most popular channel brands, and investment in high quality local content. As constant champions of innovation we have brought customers the iQ personal digital recorder, Australia’s largest HD offering, the Foxtel Go App for tablets and mobile devices, internet TV service, Foxtel Play, subscription on demand (SVOD) entertainment service, Presto and television, broadband and home phone bundles with Foxtel internet and voice services delivered over Australia’s largest telecommunications network. Foxtel is owned by Telstra Corporation Limited ACN 051 775 556 (50%) and News Corporation (50%). foxtel.com.au

**For further information and interview opportunities:**

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The logo for Foxtel, featuring the word "FOXTEL" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are primarily red, with a yellow-to-orange gradient on the left side of the 'F' and 'O'.