

SLS Canterbury Awards of Excellence 2021 Rescue of the Year

Citation

The winner of this year's Rescue of the Year goes to a team that displayed tremendous lifesaving skills to ensure beachgoers made it home to their families that night.

On the day of the rescue, conditions were very challenging, with large surf and constant flash rips. The patrol captain made an early decision to keep plenty of lifeguards on the water's edge and extra lifeguards in the water on the south side of the flats due to the proximity of the rip.

Whilst undertaking a water patrol, the patrol captain noticed two people outside of the flags heading towards the rip. He swam over to find one of them in a critical condition, with the other man trying to assist but also showing signs of fatigue.

An immediate signal to shore, sprung further lifeguards into action to come and assist with more resources. The patrol captain showed extreme skill to keep the critical patient afloat without any equipment while waiting for backup. The surf conditions made this task extremely challenging to keep the person afloat, let alone making progress towards shore.



After a number of heavy waves, the patient was losing consciousness and having to be pulled up to the surface between waves. One larger wave ripped the patients out of the hands of the lifeguard and disappeared under white water. The patient eventually came to the surface face down and lifeless. The lifeguard swam over, lifted the patients head out of the water where he gasped a breath of air, but remained unconscious.

At this point, two lifeguards reached him and placed a rescue tube around him to keep him afloat until the IRB made it. Once loaded on the IRB, the patient was pale and going in and out of consciousness. The IRB returned to shore radioing for ambulance assistance.

The patient was assisted to the first aid room where he was monitored for signs of secondary drowning and administered oxygen. Whilst under observation, any time an attempt was made to remove oxygen, his stats rapidly dropped proving how critical his condition was.

After 40 minutes, the ambulance arrived, drove him to hospital where he was observed until midnight for secondary drowning.

The skill, teamwork and exceptional lifesaving talent was displayed by all members of this patrol team, who prevented what could have been a very likely drowning.

Congratulations to all lifeguards on duty at Taylors Mistake on 17 January 2021.

Patrol team involved: Fraser Bickley (PC), Agatha Weston, Carmel Gunn, James Craib, Julian Richards, Sarah Cook, William Jamieson, Lydia O'Loughlin, Kayden Grant and Alex Gunn.