

**WINTER 2016: MURIWAI VLS & SLSNR**



NATIONAL WINNER



# **RESCUE OF THE MONTH**

## **RECOGNISING OUTSTANDING RESCUES**

*In it for life*

**Date: 26 November 2016**

**Location: Kaipara Bar, North Muriwia**

**Lifeguards involved: Brett Hardie, Matt Buswell, Wayne Sutton, Russell Clarke, Oliver Tyack, Tim Jago, Ashley Clarke, Mark Goodhew (Muriwai)**

**Andrew Selosse, Zane Rademaker, Leif Neilson, Mark Gordon, Duncan Buchanan, Oli Stewart, Chase Cahalane, Toto Laurenson (SLSNR/RLS)**

Just after 2pm on Saturday November 26, a recreational fishing vessel with 11 people on board capsized on the Kaipara Harbour bar, north of Muriwai Beach.

At 4.15pm lifeguards were requested to be on standby to assist multiple agencies including Police, Coastguard and rescue helicopters.

Shortly after, the Muriwai truck departed the club with four senior lifeguards, response equipment and an IRB as SurfCom relayed information of deceased persons on the beach. Shortly after, a second lifeguard support vehicle was requested.

On scene, the lifeguards were briefed before conducting an IRB search in 6-8m waves, following a debris trail. Both IRBs carried out extensive searches both around the incident site and along the shoreline.

At this stage, four bodies had been recovered and custody was given to the lifeguards. As the tide was too high to get back to Muriwai via the beach, they made the decision to travel through Defence Force land at the Northern end of the harbour.

Police stood the lifeguards down shortly before 7pm and custody of the deceased was handed to Police. It was around midnight when the lifeguards had finished their debrief and received instructions for the following day's involvement.

Further bodies were recovered by Police overnight and the search for the remaining missing persons resumed in the morning. Just after 5am two Muriwai vehicles, towing IRBs, searched the shoreline with debris found 17km north of the Muriwai tower and 8km south of the harbour entrance. The teams were stood down at 8.30am.

Throughout the operation, the lifeguards were faced with difficult conditions including 6-8m waves and gale force winds. The location made communication difficult and sometimes impossible with the crews having to liaise with on scene rescue helicopters to carry out the most practicable search patterns possible.

They demonstrated out-of-the-box thinking and sound decision making. The IRB operators showed advanced skill and a high level of consideration for the safety of all involved. A high degree of 4x4 driving ability was also demonstrated to negotiate the challenging terrain of the Defence Force land in order to safely navigate from the scene.

If the lifeguards weren't there to assist, the in-water and shoreline searching would not have been as comprehensive. Their ability to transport the deceased also meant they freed up the helicopters to continue their search and rescue operation.

While it was a challenging and emotional operation with eight lives lost, the lifeguards demonstrated exceptional search and rescue skills to assist with the best possible outcome.