

MARCH 2013: KARIAOTAHİ SLS



NORTHERN WINNER



RESCUE OF THE MONTH

RECOGNISING OUTSTANDING RESCUES

In it for life

Date/time: Friday 29 March 2013 at 8pm
Location: Kariaotahi Beach
Lifeguards involved: Ben Coers, Lee Lawrence, Guy Hornblow, Alex van Tilburg, Cameron Burrows, Eoin Elliott, Zach Butters, Sarah Butters, Alex Fisher, Sam Larson and Jess Larson

After a full day of patrolling the 7 surf lifeguards at Kariaotahi decided to go for a low tide body surf.

After half an hour, Guy Hornblow and Alex Van Tilburg noticed an unmanned boogie board being thrown over the waves roughly 200m away. Catching the other lifeguards' attention, the group used the next swell for elevation to search and they noticed three heads about 150m offshore struggling to stay afloat, the lifeguards swam over to the group who were in grave difficulty.

Cameron Burrows arrived first and saw that one male patient was supporting a young female child above the water. He was also trying to support a third patient, also a young female, who was beginning to submerge. Cameron quickly grabbed the one who had gone under and began a no-equipment rescue.

Guy was the next lifeguard to arrive on scene; the young girl previously supported by the older male was now holding him under the water in an attempt to stay afloat. Guy managed to separate the pair and undertook a rescue of the female patient, again with no-equipment.

The male patient also began showing signs of 'climbing the ladder' and Alex, now realising the size of the adult male, requested assistance of lifeguard Zach Butters in an effort to get him back to shore.

Meanwhile the other lifeguards Ben

Coers, Lee Lawrence and Eoin Elliot, noticed another group of three young children were stuck in the same rip closer to shore. They swam inshore and managed to safely return their three young patients to shore, in the process collecting two young male patients also in difficulty, thus saving a total of five patients between them.

Because of the strong rip, Alex and Zach realised that they would need to proceed further out to sea in order for them to return safely to shore with their patient. At the same time, Guy and Cameron, with their respective patients, were stuck in the middle of the rip, making slow progress towards shore, having to constantly brace and support their young female patients against the crushing swell. Both female patients were terrified and would not let go of both Guy and Cameron's arms and legs, making it difficult and dangerous to swim.

Eoin returned to the water to help Alex and Zach with the single adult patient. Slowly, Guy and Cameron made progress towards shore, taking roughly 25 minutes to swim against the rips with their patients, who had begun to hyperventilate. At one point, Guy, in waist deep water and still supporting his young patient, was faced with a double overhead wave which broke on top of them both. Cameron was also struggling with his patient becoming too scared to face the waves, instead

turning to hug his body, therefore, only allowing him to use his legs to swim.

Alex, Zach and Eoin arrived back at shore moments later, resulting in a total of eight patients rescued by the seven lifeguards.

Meanwhile, the lifeguards sat the patients down and it was discovered that there were no additional swimmers and that their parents had gone for a walk up the hill. Ben and Zach raced up the hill in an attempt to find them and notify them of the situation.

Back at the clubhouse, Alex and Lee began first aid on the five patients who required the most assistance, with the remaining three patients considered stable. Cameron, Eoin and Sarah, using the rescue vehicle, returned to the hill to pick up Ben and Zach, along with the parents and caregivers of the children.

Surf Com advised Kariaotahi of a 30 minute delay in ambulance response, so Westpac was requested to attend the scene, due to the patient's rapid decline in condition.

Upon arrival of the rescue helicopter and ambulance crews, it was decided by the advanced paramedics that all patients were stable enough and didn't require hospitalisation.

A debrief amongst the lifeguards was then the conclusion to an evening that could have easily ended tragically with the loss of eight lives.