



December 20, 2019

Press release

Piha rescue of lone swimmer wins second place in Surf Life Saving award

A group of instructors who were teaching new lifeguards at Piha Beach in October have earned second place in Surf Life Saving New Zealand's BP Rescue of the Month.

The charity invites clubs to submit their rescues to be judged for the title of BP Rescue of the Month which aim to recognise operational excellence by Surf Lifeguards around the country.

The October 13 rescue featured six volunteers from Piha Surf Life Saving Club and was nominated for the winter/November period of the competition.

The incident unfolded when club Vice Captain Rhys Lloyd spotted someone who looked like they were in trouble in the water heading past Lion Rock. He grabbed the binoculars and confirmed that the person needed urgent help.

Rhys was joined by Murray Stapleton who swung into action to launch the IRB (inflatable rescue boat) while Warren Tyler, who had just qualified at patrol support the previous weekend, kept his eyes on the drifting person so that he could instruct the IRB where to go.

By the time the IRB was in the water the patient had been pulled behind Lion Rock by the current.

As the pair got closer they could see a woman face down in the water. They pulled the unresponsive 28-year-old into the IRB.

Onshore, Surf Lifeguard Vanda Karolczak had called an ambulance and was ready and prepared with fellow Surf Lifeguards Jack Doyle and Reid Clancy to give emergency first aid to the woman.

Piha Surf Life Saving Club General Manager Megan Hayward says the woman was "rescued in time and only survived due to the quick actions of the Piha team".

The rescue took place in front of Lion Rock, which meant navigating the Lion Rock rip and the hazardous sand bars which form on it. The surf was 2m high with onshore conditions.

The woman had caught an Uber from the city for a swim at Piha and had headed straight into a rip.

"She was very fortunate that our guards were out training that day and happened to spot her. A few seconds later and it would have been too late.

"She was swimming alone and came to the beach alone. Meaning that no one would have known she had gone out for a swim, let alone that she was face down in the water. If the guards didn't rescue her, she wouldn't be with us today."

Surf Life Saving NZ says the rescue highlights the importance of swimming with a buddy so someone can raise the alarm if you are in need of help, knowing the [signs of a rip](#) and following the 3Rs Rip Survival Plan.

In it for life



FINANCIAL SERVICES



RELAX and FLOAT to conserve your energy, RAISE YOUR HAND to signal for help and RIDE the rip until it stops and you can swim back to shore or help arrives.

The lifeguards will be recognised with a \$300 BP gift voucher for their club.

"The skills and dedication shown by the Surf Life Saving team in the course of this rescue is another outstanding example of these heroes in action," BP NZ Managing Director Debi Boffa says.

"It's a privilege to have partnered with Surf Life Saving New Zealand for 51 years."

Kariaotahi Surf Lifesaving Club and Mangawhai Heads Volunteer Lifeguard Service will receive \$500 and \$200 BP gift cards respectively as BP Rescue of the Month first and third place getters.

<END>

SLSNZ Beach Safety Messages

1. Choose a lifeguarded beach and swim between the flags
2. Ask a lifeguard for advice as conditions can change
3. Don't overestimate your ability
4. Keep young children within arm's reach at all times
5. Never swim or surf alone
6. If caught in a rip current, RELAX and FLOAT, RAISE your hand to signal for help and RIDE the rip until it stops and you can swim back to shore, or help arrives
7. When fishing from rocks, always wear a lifejacket
8. If in doubt, stay out!
9. If you see someone in trouble, call 111 and ask for Police
10. Be sun smart - Slip, Slop, Slap and Wrap.

For more information, please contact:

Melanie Loudon

Media and Communications Manager

Surf Life Saving NZ

021 757 433

melanie.louden@surflifesaving.org.nz