



# RESCUE OF THE MONTH



**CLUB: Kariaotahi Surf Life Saving Club**

**SURF LIFEGUARDS: Shannon Benterman, Bradley Walters, Nick Hornblow, Shannon Swann, Maddison Hare, Leanni Browne, Josh Watkins, James Burton, Chris Parker, Mike Lawrence, Guy Hornblow and Tara Coe**

Three fatalities were avoided on May 25, 2019 due to the “efficient and effective response” of Kariaotahi Surf Life Saving Club’s Emergency Call Out Squad and partnering agencies, after a boat capsized on the Waikato River Bar.

The squad was called out at 5.50pm and members were sent to the Waikato River Mouth with an IRB in tow, and a full Night Operations Kit.

Volunteers from Sunset Beach Lifeguard Service also responded to the southern banks of the river so they could set up on the south side of the river and be ready to assist if required. Westpac Rescue Helicopter and Police Helicopter Eagle were also tasked with searching for the boat.

At 6.51pm, crew members from Eagle located three people in the water using their infrared camera. They were all wearing lifejackets and were approximately half a mile out to sea.

After a thorough risk assessment had been completed the IRB crew were put on standby while Westpac attempted to winch the people from the water. However, the conditions were deemed unsafe.

The Kariaotahi Lifeguards confirmed they were okay to launch the IRB and used Westpac’s spotlight for guidance (given the complete lack of any moon or ambient light at the scene).

The IRB launched at 7.16pm with Nick Hornblow as driver and Bradley Walters as crewman. Two minutes later the IRB had reached the patients and were pulling them into the boat. By 7.20pm the IRB was back on shore with all three people – two of whom, a 7-year-old boy and a woman, had very little signs of life, requiring urgent medical assistance.

They were carried to the Westpac Rescue helicopter and CPR was administered to the woman a number of times as she was transported to hospital. Surf Lifeguards and police transported the man back to the Surf Club to meet St John Ambulance paramedics.

Bradley Walters, head of lifesaving at Kariaotahi Surf Life Saving Club, says without the well-executed rescue plan, years of prior training, sound processes and risk assessments in place by all agencies involved and the fast, efficient patient pick up performed by the IRB under difficult conditions, it would be almost certain that three lives would have been lost that night.

“A fantastic, well-coordinated, multi-agency response which had a positive outcome for all involved.”



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