



# RESCUE OF THE MONTH



## **CLUB: Sumner SLSC**

**SURF LIFEGUARDS: W. Simmons, H. Taylor, L. Elliot, K. Mote, K. Suter, L. Austin, N. Manning, E. Cotter, B. Foster, B. Cummins, J. Larson, P. Tonascia, A. Ashcroft, W. Simmons, C. Doogue, J. Simmons, H. Lord, J. Greig, L. Van Berlo, B. Hickford, T. Wyllie, C. Baker, L. Ellison, G. Lohrey**

Sumner SLSC Surf Lifeguards knew they were in for a busy day on December 19, 2020. Temperatures in Christchurch were predicted to hit 30 degrees, heavy surf crashed along the beach, and the tide was set to be outgoing for most of the day. The beach had also become increasingly dangerous recently, with large rips, holes, currents and surf creating a problems for keen beachgoers even on quieter days.

With this in mind, Surf Lifeguards were well prepared. No less than 26 members were on site, either on patrol or taking part in a club training day. Patrol Captain Harry Taylor and Vice-Patrol Captain William Simmons established a rotational system for everyone and briefed them on the day ahead.

Surf Lifeguards were out in the water from the start, forming an area around the swimmers and keeping them safe throughout the day.

This turned out to be a lifesaving decision of epic proportions.

At 3pm, a flash rip opened up near the flags. Six swimmers, who seconds before had been happily on their feet, were swept into the rip. Surf Lifeguard Per Tonascia, who was already in the water on a board, immediately responded and secured all six within seconds of them being pulled out. William Simmons and Charlotte Doogue, who had tubes, also assisted, while the IRB (driven by Kate Suter and Keke Mote), was launched to retrieve the swimmers and return them to shore.

By the time the first six swimmers were back on shore, a further 21 members of public had been sucked out by the rip. Every single person was secured and kept safe by the lifeguards within seconds.

A great deal of teamwork was needed to coordinate the mammoth response. Due to the proactive work of the Surf Lifeguards, there was not a single moment where a member of public in trouble was left by themselves without a lifeguard's assistance.

This was one of the most seamless, well-coordinated mass rescues Sumner Beach has seen in living memory.

*In it for life*