



RESCUE OF THE MONTH



CLUB: Waihi Beach LS

SURF LIFEGUARDS: Ella Higgins, Michiel Cumming, Gabriella de Latour

In the early hours of Waihi Beach Lifeguard Service's Christmas Day patrol at Bowentown, Patrol captain Ella Higgins received a call regarding a patient with a suspected hip fracture "on the rocks" somewhere nearby.

The precise location was unknown, so Higgins and fellow Surf Lifeguards Michiel Cumming and Gabriella de Latour drove the all-terrain vehicle (ATV) to scan the rocks and nearby Anzac Bay to no avail. As they were heading back to base, they met with police who provided Cave Bay as the location. Travel by foot was deemed ineffective and time-consuming, so Cumming and Higgins launched the inflatable rescue boat (IRB) and headed to the remote location while de Latour maintained the Bowentown patrol base.

Cumming and Higgins found the patient's distressed son frantically waving his arms 400 meters along the rocks towards the point from Cave Bay. On arrival, it was deemed unsafe to leave the IRB due to surf conditions, so Cumming swam from the IRB to the patient to provide immediate assistance. He then gave a full handover to the paramedics when they arrived, while Higgins transported the rescue team and equipment to the location via IRB.

The patient's condition was deteriorating, however, so members of the public held the boat while Higgins assisted Cumming. As the rescue helicopter arrived, two Flight Medics were winched down 50 meters from the patient's location. A plan was made to administer the patient pain relief and transport him to a location where he could be winched out. The team had to be extremely careful while transferring him. Cumming and Higgins assisted in a body-roll onto the spinal board with the help of the Fire Rescue team and the paramedic.

The team then decided to move the patient to a more appropriate winch site 50 meters from the initial incident. Cumming and Higgins assisted in the carry, dodging submerged rocks, and the incoming tide. The patient was then lifted onto a rock where he was secured by the Flight Medics and winched out. Cumming, along with fire and rescue personnel, surrounded the rock in case the patient was blown into the water with the downward pressure from the helicopter. The patient was airlifted at 12.35 pm.

This was a fantastic effort involving all emergency services working cohesively together.

In it for life