



RESCUE OF THE MONTH



Club: Sunset Beach Lifeguard Service

Location: Sunset Beach

Date: Sunday 27th November 2022

Lifeguards Involved: James Taylor, Joanne Hobson, Laura Spinks, James Cruickshank, Emily Tusa & Malcolm Beattie

Sunset Beach Surf Lifeguards rescued five fishermen on rocks in a marathon 2-hour operation that featured incredibly challenging conditions including large swells, an incoming tide and torrential rain. Had it not been for the proactive actions of the lifeguards, it is likely that all five fishermen would have been swept into the sea.

Patrol Captain Malcolm Beattie warned the fishermen of the potentially dangerous conditions at 10.40am on the morning of Sunday 27th November 2022. All five ended up ignoring this advice and headed out on to rocks by the cove at the southern end of Sunset Beach. At 11.45am, Beattie initiated a rescue operation before the incoming high tide covered the remaining beach, cutting off any escape route for the fishermen.

The club accessway had already been washed away that week due to huge seas so the Surf Lifeguards had to manually lower an inflatable rescue boat (IRB) on to the beach, where it could be launched safely.

Lifeguards James Taylor, Laura Spinks, James Cruickshank and Joanne Hobson, travelled in the IRB out towards the rocks. Taylor was driving the IRB and had to be careful to navigate around submerged rocks and position the IRB as close as possible so Spinks could enter the water and swim to the first fisherman who was most at-risk. Spinks convinced that fisherman to move to higher ground with her to avoid the surging waves while Taylor manoeuvred the IRB towards a small shingle beach amongst the rocks.

The first two fishermen were convinced to get into the IRB and Taylor returned them to shore in separate trips where they were treated for minor injuries by other lifeguards.

On the second return trip, Emily Tusa accompanied Taylor and they went back to the shingle beach to get the other lifeguards and headed around the point to locate another two fishermen who were stuck on the rocks. Meanwhile, Hobson had climbed around rocks, timing movements with incoming swells, to reach a fifth fisherman. Hobson escorted this fisherman back to the shingle beach amongst the rocks to meet the IRB and he was returned to the beach by the club. While this was happening, it was decided that the best way to reaching the remaining two fishermen was for James T to climb up the rocks, over the hill and down to the rocks on the other side of the point to meet them. Taylor guided the fisherman up and over the hill in torrential rain to the awaiting IRB and they were returned to the patrol location one at a time. The IRB headed out a final time to pick up the lifeguards who then returned to club and then carried the IRB back off the beach.

This rescue was a two-hour operation that exhibited incredible teamwork from everyone on patrol that day to supply equipment, coordinate the rescues, maintain effective communications and provide first-aid so everyone returned safely. This was all done in horrendous conditions on and off the water. It is almost certain that five lives would have been lost that day without the intervention of the Sunset Beach Surf Lifeguards.

In it for life