



RESCUE OF THE MONTH



CLUB: Raglan Surf Life Saving Club
SURF LIFEGUARDS: David Galuszka, Fletcher Harnish, Cory Harvey, Brent Kennedy, Jake Koekemoer, Tyla Rose, Tara Simpson, Amber Spence, Isaac van der Vossen and Ben Wilson.

On Saturday 21st January, Surf Lifeguards from the Raglan Surf Life Saving Club were prepared for large numbers of people coming to the beach as the SoundSplash music festival was due to be held on the reserve right behind the clubhouse. With thousands of festival-goers camping on the reserve, lifeguards were expecting a full beach early in the day.

The expected number of beach-goers eventuated early with the beach filled from 10:00 am as the sky was clear and the weather was sunny and hot. Despite a large flagged area and danger signs in front of the rip on the south side of the beach, many beach users ignored these and headed into any part of the water they could find. A Rescue Water Craft (RWC) and Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB) were on the water trying to manage the numbers and move people between the flags.

As the tide changed, the rip on the south side of the patrolled area, coupled with the start of king tides, began to pull strongly. This was preventing swimmers from making their way back to shore, even though a large number were still touching the bottom. Multiple hands went up as swimmers were struggling against the rip and the change of tide.

The IRB was first on scene with both crewperson and driver pulling people into the boat, returning to shore, and then back out to pick up more swimmers in trouble. A Surf Lifeguard with a rescue tube and fins entered the water to help the move people out of the water, with lifeguards on the beach communicating to beach users to vacate the area and move between the flags, further north along the beach.

The RWC, which was helping manage the crowd in the flagged area, went to assist the IRB in picking up swimmers and returning them to shore, while helping to move other swimmers out of the area and towards the flags. However, though people were getting rescued, swimmers didn't heed the advice and the IRB and RWC were called on to rescue more people in the same area. They continued to rescue swimmers, returning them safely to shore, and moved others out of the danger area and down to the patrolled section of the beach.

In all, there were 29 people rescued in two sets of mass rescues - one lot of 16 and another of 13. Without the intervention of Surf Lifeguards that were on the water, at the beach, and in the clubhouse coordinating the rescues, it could have been a disastrous weekend for those attending SoundSplash music festival.

In it for life