



Connecting the search and rescue sector

Link is a quarterly publication of
New Zealand Search and Rescue



SAR steps up during state of emergency

Inside:

2022 Search and Rescue Awards
page 3

SAR steps up during state of emergency
page 8

10 questions with... Fiona Read
page 16

Contents

Issue 63 – June 2023

Duncan's desk	2	Celebrating the 90 th Anniversary of New Zealand Land Search and Rescue	14
2022 Search and Rescue Awards	3	End of one era, start of another	15
SAR steps up during state of emergency	8	King's Birthday Honours	15
Above and beyond	11	10 questions with... Fiona Read	16
Exercise Whakarauora Tangata update	11		
Member wellbeing	12		

Link is the quarterly publication of New Zealand Search and Rescue. Edited by Tania Seward and Daniel Clearwater.

Available in print and online: nzsar.govt.nz

For feedback, contributions and subscription requests please contact info@nzsar.govt.nz



Duncan's desk

Kia ora koutou

Over the last few months, there's been one phrase I've heard throughout the sector – "we're busy". It's a sentiment borne out by SARdonyx, our database of operational SAR incidents. As I write this, we're looking at around 3,400 incidents for the 2022-2023 year – an 18 percent increase on last year and the sector's busiest year on record. On top of that, there has been disastrous weather events, business planning, training, exercising, maintenance and all the other things we need to do to keep it all working.

The new financial year is just around the corner, and I'm pleased to let you know that, in addition to the usual partners, we have established a Service Level Agreement with Youth Search and Rescue (YSAR) to support them create a pipeline of young volunteers for the SAR sector. We'll have more information about YSAR in the next issue of *Link*.

Last month we celebrated the 2022 NZ Search and Rescue Awards at Parliament. Hosted by the Associate Minister of Transport, Hon Kiri Allan, it was a great night celebrating individuals and teams in the SAR sector. Congratulations again to our Award winners.

Over the last few months, our team has been travelling around the motu delivering the Rauora III exercises. Each exercise brings together a wide array of people from the local area – harbourmasters,

iwi, hospital staff, SAR volunteers and land managers, just to name a few – who collectively work through how they might respond to different nationally significant SAR scenarios. Our thanks to those who were able to attend, and we hope you found the exercise useful.

Like many organisations in the sector, the NZSAR Secretariat is working to increase our understanding of Te Ao Māori and how we might apply this to the work that we do. Rob Hewitt – himself the subject of a multi-day SAR operation – has come on board as our kaihautū Māori in this space and we are grateful for his support.

The week of 18-24 June is National Volunteer Week. Our SAR sector is 91 percent volunteers. To each of you who leave your homes, families, and workplaces at a moment's notice to assist those in need, and to those beavering away behind the scenes – thank you. The job you do is not an easy one and your contribution to our sector is highly valued.

Wishing you all the best for the winter season and some decent snow this year.

Stay safe,
Duncan Ferner
NZSAR Secretariat Director

Research volunteers wanted

Aly Curd, Team Leader – Resilience for Emergency Management Southland, is currently studying at the Joint Centre for Disaster Research. Her PhD focuses on SAR involvement during declared states of emergency. Aly is looking for individuals or groups across the sector who are willing to share stories, learnings, or data from recent and historic civil defence events. She can be contacted via aly.curd@gmail.com

COVER IMAGE

Constable Trevor Proctor from the Tāmaki Makaurau Police Maritime Unit during the Auckland Anniversary weekend floods. Supplied



2022 Search and Rescue Awards

Bravery and community service honoured at the NZ Search and Rescue Awards

We are grateful to Hon Kiri Allan, Associate Minister of Transport, who presented this year's NZ Search and Rescue Awards in the Grand Hall of Parliament, on the 16th of May.

Minister Allan welcomed the recipients and guests to the award ceremony with heartfelt thanks for the contributions the SAR sector made in the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle.

"On a personal note, thank you. Thank you for what you did for regions like ours on the East Coast, Hawke's Bay and Wairoa. We absolutely could not have gotten through that period of time without you, [and] without the organisations you represent."

The presence of Hon Kieran McAnulty, Minister for Emergency Management, demonstrated the appreciation for the contributions made by our SAR people during the recent national states of emergency. Minister Allan went on to acknowledge the tragic loss of volunteer firefighters Dr David van Zwanenberg and Craig Stevens during the Auckland Anniversary floods, and the impact on responders of the loss of life at the Newtown fire in Wellington and the tragedy at Abbey Caves in Northland.

"I also want to acknowledge your colleagues and your families, who sit behind you all to provide that wrap-around wing of aroha, that korowai, that cloak of love to be able to collect you, whilst you no doubt reflect on some of the things you have experienced on our collective behalf."

Among the recipients, we were privileged to welcome Sir Richard and Lady Carol Hayes. Also, we thank Commissioner of Police

Andrew Coster and Air Vice-Marshal Andrew Clark, Chief of Air Force, for attending and Audrey Sonerson, Chair of the NZSAR Council, who acted as master of ceremonies.

Annually, one Gold Award and up to four Certificates of Achievement are awarded in each category. Twenty-two nominations were received for 2022, with two Gold Awards and seven Certificates of Achievement being awarded at this year's ceremony.

Awards given in the Operations category recognise significant rescue operations that took place between 1 January and 31 December 2022.

Awards given in the Support category recognise the contributions of individuals to search and rescue in New Zealand.

"The quality of this year's Award winners is once again exceptional," says NZSAR Secretariat Director Duncan Ferner. "Some of these individuals have worked diligently, often for years, to ensure that people in distress have a higher probability of being found. Others have supported people to get involved in search and rescue. Others have headed out into atrocious weather conditions to rescue people at risk."

"Every one of them has sacrificed time with their family and friends to provide a vital service to New Zealand. Without their efforts, fewer families would be reunited or loved ones returned home."

Congratulations to all our Award winners for 2022!

TOP

Hon Kiri Allan with the Award recipients. Courtesy Mark Coote



Gold Award – Operational

Kotahi te aho ka whati; ki te kāpuia e kore e whati

One strand of flax is easy to break, but many strands together will stand strong

The NZ Search and Rescue Gold Award (Operational) honours the people, groups or organisations who have made a very significant contribution through their work on a specific search and rescue operation in 2022. The recipients of the Gold Award have performed outstanding work, going above and beyond their normal duties.

Northern Rescue Helicopters

Northland Police SAR Squad

Police National Dive Squad

Maritime NZ Rescue Coordination Centre

The crew of *Florence Nightingale*

The crew of *Pacific Invader*

Kobe O'Neill

For the rescue of 10 people from the vessel *Enchanter* near North Cape / Otou between 20-21 March 2022.

On March 20, 2022, the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) received a distress alert from the *Enchanter*, a fishing vessel with ten occupants which capsized east of North Cape / Otou. RCCNZ coordinated a massive search and rescue operation that lasted for 46 hours in strong winds, large swells, heavy rain, and thick clouds.

The Whangārei Police SAR Squad provided critical shore-based support, while the Northern Rescue Helicopter performed extremely difficult night-time winch recoveries of five people. Senior deckhand Kobe O'Neill retrieved the distress beacon and kept everyone calm at the scene.

Over the next two days, five men who did not survive were located and recovered, thanks to the crews of *Florence Nightingale* and *Pacific Invader*, as well as the Police National Dive Squad. Their actions meant that all who were on board the *Enchanter* were accounted for, and the deceased could be returned to their families.



In extreme conditions, the determined and dedicated efforts of those involved in the search and rescue operation resulted in five lives being saved.

The NZSAR Council would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the other agencies who contributed to this significant search and rescue operation, including the Auckland Rescue Helicopter Trust, the crew of *Katrina* and *Kie La*, HMNZS Taupō, No. 5 Squadron RNZAF, the fuel tanker operators, No. 40 Squadron RNZAF, Land Search and Rescue, Coastguard, Surf Life Saving NZ, and Skywork Helicopters.



Certificate of Achievement – Operational



Aoraki Mount Cook Alpine Rescue Team

Otago Rescue Helicopter

For the rescues of two climbing groups from Aoraki / Mount Cook between 11-16 September 2022.

The first operation was conducted on 11 September, to rescue two climbers who were stranded at 3,500m near the summit of Aoraki / Mount Cook.

The second was on 16 September, to rescue one injured climber from a group of three, at 3,350m on the Sheila Face of Aoraki / Mount Cook.

Both winch rescue operations were extremely difficult and technical, conducted at high altitude in very cold conditions. The rescuers drew on their combined professionalism and expertise to manage these operations in a very high-risk alpine environment. In addition, they overcame the cumulative physical and emotional fatigue of the first operation to effectively carry out the second only a few days later.



No. 5 Squadron Royal New Zealand Air Force

For the search for two missing boats near Kiribati on 23 May 2022.

On 17 May 2022 a small boat was reported overdue near Kiribati. On 22 May, a second small boat was reported missing nearby.

Following a request from the Kiribati authorities, a P-3K2 Orion of No.5 Squadron went to assist. The Orion departed Whenuapai air base at 6.00am on 23 May. The crew flew three and a half hours to Nadi, Fiji to refuel, then a further three hours to the search area.

Around 5pm, they located the first missing boat. Whilst searching the vicinity for a larger vessel to assist, the second missing boat was located. All seven occupants of the boats were saved.



Pauanui Surf Life Saving Club

Paid Lifeguard Service – Tairua

Paid Lifeguard Service – Pauanui

Pauanui / Tairua SAR Squad

Waikato District Police

Coastguard Tairua-Pauanui

For the rescue of three adults and two children from the Tairua Harbour bar on 5 January 2022.

On 5 January 2022, a boat carrying five people overturned on the Tairua Harbour bar. Lifeguards quickly responded, discovering two adults reaching under the boat, where a third adult and two children were trapped. The two children were quickly freed.

The Coastguard vessel *Pauanui Rescue* arrived, and with the lifeguards, righted the overturned boat and recovered the trapped adult.

On the beach, lifeguards worked with crew from Fire and Emergency New Zealand and Hato Hone St John to resuscitate the adult and two children. Meanwhile, responders managed a crowd of hundreds to allow three rescue helicopters to land.

The adult and two children were transported to hospital, where the adult sadly died.



Dunedin Land Search and Rescue

Fiordland Land Search and Rescue

Wakatipu Land Search and Rescue

Wanaka Land Search and Rescue Canyon / Swiftwater Team

Paul Rogers

Southern District Police

Police National Dive Squad

Southland AREC

Action Helicopters

Southern Lakes Helicopters

Milford Sound Volunteer Fire Brigade

For the search for a missing tramper near Milford Sound / Piopiotahi between 27-31 March 2022.

On 27 March 2022, an experienced solo tramper failed to return from climbing Devil's Armchair, a 1627m peak near Milford Sound.

A complex five-day search took place, in terrain varying from sub-alpine tops to near vertical Fiordland jungle and a deep river gorge.

The operation involved alpine cliff rescue, tracking dogs, boat searching, canyon rescue, subalpine field teams, plus helicopters using night vision goggles and thermal imaging. The missing person was eventually located, but sadly had not survived. He was recovered in a challenging team effort from the Giant Gate River gorge.

The operation involved exceptional teamwork, leadership, professionalism, and expertise from all those involved.



Gold Award – Support

*He kotuku rerenga tahi
A white heron flies once*

The NZ Search and Rescue Gold Award (Support) honours the individual who has made a very significant contribution through their work over a sustained period. The recipient of the Gold Award (Support) has performed outstanding work that has had a marked impact on the search and rescue sector.



John Munro
Locator Beacons New Zealand

For his service and commitment to search and rescue.

John Munro has played a significant role in making personal locator beacons accessible to New Zealanders.

He became the Chairperson of the Southland Locator Beacons Trust in 1997 and was instrumental in the initial development of New Zealand's first personal locator beacon hire agency, which now operates as Locator Beacons New Zealand.

John spent countless hours raising awareness of beacons by speaking to user and community groups to get the message out that beacons were finally affordable and accessible. He has been a trusted face for many who might struggle with accessing the technology.

Today, the charitable company is the largest personal locator beacon hire agency in New Zealand, with over 500 units available to rent across 89 outlets. This includes every store of outdoor retail company Macpac. More than 6000 hires have been made since this initiative began three years ago.

John is well respected by the public and members of the search and rescue sector for his dedication to making beacons accessible to all.



Certificate of Achievement – Support



Detective Senior Sergeant John Wilson
New Zealand Police
WanderSearch Rotorua
Land Search and Rescue Rotorua

For his service and commitment to search and rescue.

Detective Senior Sergeant John Wilson has spent more than 20 years serving the Bay of Plenty search and rescue community.

John has improved the region's search and rescue capabilities by supporting individuals and teams as well as innovating with equipment and resources.

He was instrumental in establishing Water Rescue Squads in Rotorua in 2005 and 2009 and introducing the WanderSearch technology to the region in 2008.

John served as the Rotorua Police search and rescue coordinator and mentored upcoming generations of search and rescue professionals as Chair of Rotorua Land Search and Rescue.

Throughout the region, John is held in high regard by local iwi and the search and rescue community for his passion, drive, and commitment.



Senior Constable Peter Cunningham
New Zealand Police

For his service and commitment to search and rescue.

For over 40 years, Peter Cunningham has been a loyal and consistent contributor to search and rescue in the Wairarapa.

Beginning as a teenage search and rescue volunteer, Peter joined the Police in the late 1990s. He quickly joined the Wairarapa Police search and rescue squad, becoming a highly dependable member. Peter is quick to volunteer for whatever needs doing, from mundane tasks to incident management roles.

Peter consistently attends Wairarapa Land Search and Rescue meetings and events whether on duty or not and volunteers his plumbing skills to help maintain the Land Search and Rescue base building.

His loyal dedication to search and rescue has earned him the respect of his colleagues and local search and rescue volunteers alike.



Rosie Musters
Coastguard New Zealand Tautiaki Moana Aotearoa

For her service and commitment to search and rescue.

Rosie's contribution to Coastguard, both locally and nationally, over more than two decades of volunteering is exceptional.

Rosie joined the Coastguard in 2002, where she established and ran the Coastguard Air Patrol for the upper South Island. In 2013, she transitioned to volunteering on rescue vessels. She is an experienced sailor and head of Coastguard Nelson's training arm, where she trains and assesses volunteers from their first visit to vessel master.

Rosie also provides public training as a tutor through Coastguard's Boating Education arm. She is an incident manager for her unit and other local SAR agencies and is highly regarded for her efforts in recruiting, training, and mentoring volunteers, especially women.



Nominations for the 2023 NZSAR Awards are open

All the information about the awards and nomination forms are available on our website nzsar.govt.nz/awards

Nominations close 31 January 2024, and early nomination is appreciated. If you are unsure about the process, or require help drafting the supporting text, assistance is available from the NZSAR Secretariat. Contact info@nzsar.govt.nz



SAR steps up during state of emergency

Together, the Auckland flooding in late January and Cyclone Gabrielle in February were a watershed period for the search and rescue sector.

An unprecedented number of people and resources from the sector were deployed, as a succession of extreme weather caused widespread damage and disruption to communities across much of the North Island. For only the third time in Aotearoa New Zealand's history, a national state of emergency was declared. These events sadly led to the loss of 11 lives, including two volunteer firefighters from Fire and Emergency NZ.

We spoke to representatives from across the SAR sector to illustrate the scale of their contributions to search and rescue operations during these states of emergency, as well as celebrate the adaptability and resilience of our people.



Michael Clulow, Manager Operations, Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ)

The National Crisis Management Centre gave coordination authority for all rotary wing tasking in the Eastern districts to RCCNZ during the response to Cyclone Gabrielle.

"Our team is highly experienced in managing SAR operations involving helicopters, but we'd never undertaken an operation of this scale before," says Michael. "For perspective, we coordinated three months' worth of SAR taskings between 14 and 17 February, with more than 250 separate missions."

Within hours, RCCNZ had three times as many staff on duty, to coordinate eight Emergency Medical Service helicopters, four NH90 helicopters from the New Zealand Defence Force and more than 15 commercial helicopters. "It was challenging, but we made use of excellent inter-agency relationships to triage and prioritise jobs received from the Hato Hone St John Air Desk, Fire and Emergency NZ, and Police," says Michael.

RCCNZ coordinated with the Fire and Emergency NZ Aviation Controllers at Bridge Pa aerodrome in Hastings, enabling over 500 people to be saved via helicopter, an unprecedented effort in New Zealand.



Mike Ambrose, Group Support Manager, New Zealand Land Search and Rescue

As well as contributing trained incident management personnel to many emergency operations centres, field teams were tasked with dozens of searches along waterways, shorelines and amongst debris.

Many were proactive, to clear an area of interest at a time where there were thousands of people listed as 'uncontactable'. Other tasks were reactive, to find a person last seen in the floodwaters.

Land Search and Rescue teams collaborated very closely with their Coastguard and Surf Life Saving NZ counterparts, especially in the Hawke's Bay, where they staged from the Coastguard base.

"It is business as usual for our teams to deploy with supplies, shelter and communications to be self-sufficient for at least 48 hours," says Mike. "That allows us to minimise any burden to already stretched resources in a situation like this."

"Although we had many volunteers from outside the region on standby to help, most of the Land Search and Rescue members involved were also dealing with the impacts of these weather events on their own lives," says Mike. "We made sure that our wellbeing support systems were available, not just for critical incidents during tasking, but general wellbeing of our volunteers and their families."

TOP

A volunteer from Hawke's Bay Land Search and Rescue on operations. Supplied



Dr. Steph Rotarangi, Deputy National Commander, Fire and Emergency New Zealand

As unprecedented heavy rain fell in Auckland on 27 January, Fire and Emergency NZ received the first of several thousand 111 calls for assistance. Urgent calls for help were prioritised, with crews responding to people trapped in their homes or vehicles by floodwaters, slips, land slips and fallen trees. Fire and Emergency NZ worked closely with Police, the Defence Force, Hato Hone St John and Auckland Emergency Management, with several fire stations acting as staging areas for those other agencies.

On 13 February, during Cyclone Gabrielle, Fire and Emergency NZ supported many communities in the North Island with emergency assistance and rescue operations. Specialist Urban Rescue and Water teams supported frontline firefighters undertaking rescues and ongoing support to affected communities.

In the weeks following the devastating cyclone, Fire and Emergency NZ was a key player working with community partners assisting with the recovery efforts, particularly in Auckland and Hawke's Bay.



Allan Mundy, National Search and Rescue Manager, Surf Life Saving New Zealand

"We had organised a large Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB) competition out of the region, but as the rain began to fall, many competitors showed incredible initiative to head back to Auckland."

says Allan. They were soon tasked for a rescue operation at Wairau Road on the North Shore, where dozens were rescued from shops about to be inundated by flood waters. "If it wasn't for their forward thinking the result would have certainly been catastrophic."

Surf Life Saving NZ is partway through formalising its flood response capability, but those who had done the training were quick to share the key points with their teammates.

"After Auckland, we reached out to the Civil Defence authorities, to ensure they knew our capabilities and how to contact us," says Allan. "Then we prepared people and supplies as well as positioning equipment on higher ground as Gabrielle bore down. This proved vital when the cyclone hit."

Lifeguards were deployed to emergency operations centres and in incident management teams, as well as on IRBs. Drones deployed from these boats were used to scout for hazards up-river, as lifeguards transported Urban Search and Rescue teams to inaccessible spots to search for people amongst the devastation. "The camaraderie between the firefighters and lifeguards was incredible, and made all the difference in these operations," says Allan.



Don Robertson, CEO of Amateur Radio Emergency Communications

AREC was put on standby as the rain began to fall. They planned jointly with authorities to provide HF and VHF radio communications as well as backups to support evacuation and welfare centres across the island.

In the field, volunteers established and re-located VHF radio repeaters to support Surf Life Saving NZ and Land Search and Rescue operations. They also assisted the deployment of Starlink satellite communication systems when the cellular networks went down.

"We have a good relationship with the Hawke's Bay Civil Defence radio operators, and run joint training with them frequently," says Don. "But when bridges became impassable, we were the only radio operators able to get to some parts of the region." Kiwi ingenuity and relationships were also at the fore again. "One of the AREC volunteers was able to get access to more than 60 hand-held radios from his employer, which we re-programmed and helped deploy to reinforce the communication networks."



TOP
Fire and Emergency NZ, Police and Surf Life Saving NZ rescuing residents from flooded streets. Courtesy Surf Life Saving NZ

ABOVE
RCCNZ staff coordinating the helicopter operations. Supplied

ABOVE
Coastguard Hawke's Bay hosting teams and equipment from Land Search and Rescue plus Surf Life Saving NZ. Courtesy Coastguard



**Rear Admiral Jim Gilmour,
Commander Joint Forces
New Zealand, New Zealand
Defence Force**

The NZ Defence Force responded to the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle with nearly 1000 personnel, several ships, aircraft and numerous vehicles. NZ Defence Force personnel carried out many vital tasks in support of national and regional civil defence and emergency authorities, and in the early stages of the emergency were involved in search and rescue operations. These included Air Force personnel on NH90 helicopters winching people from the rooftops of their homes, in some cases as floodwaters had reached the top of two-storey homes, and local Army Reserve Force soldiers rescuing Esk Valley residents from rising floodwaters.

Navy personnel were involved in another dramatic search and rescue. A catamaran, with a single sailor on board, had snapped an anchor cable in extreme 80 knot winds, and was drifting away from Great Barrier Island into six to eight-metre swells. The Police Maritime Unit coordinated the rescue, initially involving volunteers from Coastguard Auckland and Great Barrier. However, the 118 metre-long Navy frigate HMNZS Te Mana was the only vessel in the area capable of rescuing the sailor in such severe conditions. With the Northland Rescue Helicopter providing overwatch, a 7.24 metre Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat (RHIB) from HMNZS Te Mana with Navy divers on board plucked the sailor from the water and took him on board to safety.



**Inspector Craig Rendel, Manager
Operations and Emergency
Management, New Zealand Police**

During the Auckland Floods and Cyclone Gabrielle, Police SAR squads collaborated with Land Search and Rescue alongside Fire and Emergency NZ on search operations,

using jet skis, drones, helicopters and on foot.

“There were a number of risky and urgent jobs during the Auckland floods. The Police Maritime Unit assisted the response to an overwhelming number of requests with their 4.5 metre rigid hull inflatable boats and the 18.5 metre Deodar III,” says Craig.

The Hawke’s Bay Police SAR Squad responded to the first Cyclone Gabrielle call out at 2am on 14 February, and deployed as soon as light made it safe enough to do so.

“This was extremely tough on the members of the squad, knowing that people needed to be rescued, but it was simply too dangerous to deploy assets in the early hours of the morning.”

“In the Esk Valley, the Police SAR Squad called on Hawke’s Bay Surf, Land Search and Rescue, and jetboats from the local club to perform rescues.”

“The NZ Defence Force provided a Unimog truck which allowed them to ferry people to a place of safety, and Hawke’s Bay Coastguard were also deployed to patrol the coastlines. The Police Eagle helicopter was also utilised throughout the relief effort.”

Since the cyclone, Police staff, including Police SAR members from around the motu, have carried out thousands of prevention activities in the Eastern District, including reassurance patrols and proactive engagements with storm-hit communities.



**Rob McCaw, Head of Operations,
Coastguard New Zealand Tautiaki
Moana Aotearoa**

Throughout Cyclone Gabrielle, Coastguard volunteers responded to numerous significant boating incidents. In Northland, units rescued people in the Bay of Islands and

assisted those with boats damaged in the harbour.

“However, as we all sadly saw, Cyclone Gabrielle’s biggest impact was felt in the Hawke’s Bay and Gisborne regions,” says Rob. “Coastguard Hawke’s Bay volunteers worked incredibly hard alongside the community to help where needed and make sense of the widespread devastation, despite their own homes, loved ones and livelihoods being impacted by the storm.”

Coastguard Hawke’s Bay worked closely with other emergency services, including the Police National Dive Squad and the Navy Hydrographic Team, to search for an individual who went missing during the storm.

During the initial days of the response, Land Search and Rescue, Surf Life Saving NZ and Coastguard operated as virtually one team. They shared Incident Management Team responsibilities, and Coastguard Hawke’s Bay provided space for Surf SAR squad equipment and the Land Search and Rescue base.

Throughout, Coastguard volunteers demonstrated their dedication, selflessness and commitment to teamwork, serving their communities in a time of crisis.

The NZSAR Secretariat acknowledges the significant impact of these weather events to responders, local communities, livelihoods and whānau. The Secretariat is continuing to support the strengthening of operational relationships between the Civil Defence, Emergency Management and SAR sectors so that Aotearoa New Zealand is as prepared as it can be for any future events like these.

TOP
A RHIB from HMNZS Te Mana rescues a sailor from a catamaran.
Courtesy New Zealand Defence Force

Above and beyond

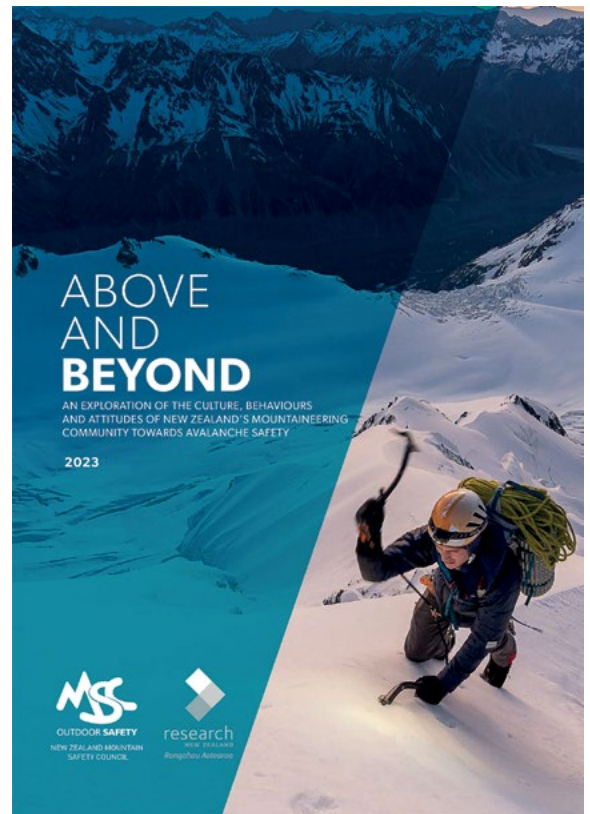
An exploration of the culture, behaviours, and attitudes of New Zealand's mountaineering community towards avalanche safety.

Between 1999 and 2018, 27 people died in an avalanche in New Zealand. Nineteen of these people (70 percent) were mountaineering. This high proportion is out of step with what is seen overseas in North America and Europe, where the percentage of mountaineering fatalities is typically much lower.

In November 2021, the NZ Mountain Safety Council (MSC) began a research project to develop a deeper understanding of the mountaineering community culture as it relates to avalanches. The report was published in January 2023, with insights forming part of the evidence base that will be used to develop and implement mountaineering specific avalanche prevention initiatives in New Zealand.

A number of key findings highlight the importance of understanding the decision to carry or not to carry avalanche equipment, the value of sharing stories about experiences, and reflecting on the role you play within the mountaineering community. The report also encourages submitting avalanche and snowpack conditions via the Public Observations tool on avalanche.net.nz, which supports New Zealand Avalanche Advisory (NZAA) forecasting. A suite of recommendations are offered to the mountaineering community, mountaineering organisations, membership bodies, avalanche educators, MSC and NZAA.

MSC hopes these findings and recommendations will provide the platform for a healthy conversation and reflection, paving the way for improved mountaineering specific avalanche safety in New Zealand, and perhaps other parts of the world.



The findings of this study are available in the publication *Above and Beyond*. See www.mountainsafety.org.nz/explore/

Exercise Whakarauora Tangata update

Planning for Exercise Whakarauora Tangata is progressing well. Our current focus is on consultation with key agencies across the SAR sector, including those who might be engaged in support roles to the SAR response, or may be engaged in the wider incident response. Recent discussions and debriefs in relation to the response to the Interislander ferry *Kaitaki* near miss and the response to Cyclone Gabrielle have provided some valuable insights that we will look to incorporate. In particular, the importance of early engagement with key SAR partners, the establishment of sound collaboration processes and effective communications plans.

The agreed scenario that will be used throughout the exercise series is an incident involving a boutique cruise ship floundering on approach to New Zealand.

We are on track to conduct the first exercise in the series. This will be a desktop Incident Management Team (IMT) exercise held in July 2023 in the Bay of Plenty. Consultations have been conducted



Nationally Significant SAR Exercise

across a range of agencies who all expressed interest in participating. In several cases, agencies have indicated that they will use the exercise to validate their own internal plans and processes, including potentially establishing and exercising their own emergency operations centre (EOC). While Exercise Whakarauora Tangata will focus on the SAR element of the response, agencies will also be free to use the exercise material to either exercise or consider wider response measures associated with the overall incident, such as environmental impact and mass casualty planning.

For more information, visit www.nzsar.govt.nz/natsigsarex or contact Lead Planner John Dyer, j.dyer@nzsar.govt.nz



Member wellbeing

People are the most valuable and important resource in the SAR sector. There has been considerable effort in the last few years to develop better systems to support the wellbeing of our members, resulting in some excellent programmes and growing cross-sector collaboration.

Andy Greig, Principal Adviser in the NZSAR Secretariat coordinates the NZSAR Strategic Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee. The Committee encourages structured discussion and collaboration across our sector, and most recently held their biannual workshop in Wellington in March 2023.

A variety of presentations from across the sector provided programme updates and formed the basis of workshop discussions. From outside the core SAR sector, Adele Saunders from Hato Hone St John presented on welfare issues after high trauma events, with specific experience regarding their staff members who responded to the Christchurch terror attack.

The workshop highlighted opportunities to collaborate more, including sharing research findings, and potentially standardising member self-assessment tools. Several agencies identified similar challenges with their member wellbeing support programs. Members often misunderstood how to use the systems, and more work is planned to address this situation. Collectively, the workshop agreed no one size fits all. "Each person deals with health and wellbeing issues differently, requiring a range of tools and support mechanisms to cater for everyone," says Andy. A specific example is ensuring the counsellor fits the personality and wellbeing needs of the SAR member being supported. Collaborative work is ongoing in these areas.

Carl McOnie, CEO of Land Search and Rescue reflects on how the sector came together to address one of the key operational wellbeing risks. "The collective willingness in the sector to better manage fatigue and driving is worthy of praise," he says. The NZSAR Secretariat commissioned a Fatigue Guidance Note for Search and Rescue in 2019 and from that general advice, Land Search and Rescue created operational guidelines. "It is not uncommon for a volunteer to turn up after a hard day at work for a task that continues long into a stormy night," says Carl. "After consulting with volunteers and across the sector, we were able to create a fatigue management and driving standard to put lines in the sand to assist searchers and management teams during operations."

Nicky Hansen is the National Health, Safety & Wellbeing Advisor for Land Search and Rescue. "There's a variety of tools and wellbeing support processes for our members, which we're working hard to refine and improve," she says. Following a critical incident, groups can contact a Group Support Officer (a paid staff member) to initiate Wellbeing Safety Checks. These are provided by a professional counselling service, and form a safety net to detect changes in wellbeing which might indicate the need for further action such as dedicated counselling sessions.

TOP
Peer supporter at work. Courtesy Surf Life Saving New Zealand

BOTTOM RIGHT
Land Search and Rescue Self Wellbeing Check-in Tool

As well as post-incident services, Land Search and Rescue has proactive tools to keep volunteers on top of things on a routine basis. The Land Search and Rescue Self Wellbeing Check-in Tool provides word pictures for a person's sleep, physical wellbeing, moods, plus physical and mental performance on operations, to help them realise whether they are thriving, surviving, distressed or unwell. "We know that people react over time to the cumulative effects of stress. This tool is aimed at helping people be more self-aware, and encouraging them to seek support early," says Nicky. If needed, members can get access to proactive counselling services for free.

Ari Peach is the National Wellbeing Lead for Surf Life Saving NZ (SLSNZ), a role which began in September 2021. The initial key aim of this role was to establish a nationwide Peer Support programme and ensure that counselling services met the needs of the membership. The recent evolution of wellbeing support for lifeguards has had a strong proactive focus to ensure that lifeguards are prepared to deal with the challenges that they may face.

"We have tried to make it really clear that counselling support is something we want our people to use proactively," says Ari. "It could be for anything; whether it is personal issues, challenges within Surf Clubs or after exposure to critical incidents." Immediate families of members are also eligible for the free service. "Many of our members are younger, so it is critical that we involve whānau to ensure everyone is properly supported."

Because surf lifeguards can encounter significant traumatic incidents, particularly within the SAR space, the support systems that are available need to be robust. SLSNZ use their peer supporters to provide

initial support after a traumatic incident, and then everyone involved gets a follow up check from a counsellor two days after the incident, then again at two weeks. "Some people prefer to talk to someone they know, whilst others want it to be totally anonymous. By using a combination of peer support and counsellors, we cover both bases so our members can get the support that suits them best," says Ari.

SLSNZ has selected and trained 178 volunteers as peer supporters. Peer supporters also receive annual training, plus ongoing supervision from peer support facilitators across the network. At present, Land Search and Rescue is developing its own peer supporter system.

The NZSAR Secretariat continues to work on international connections in the wellbeing space, to ensure we remain aware of global developments. Andy Greig is a member of the International Marine Rescue Federation #SARyouOK? wellbeing working group. "A particular area of interest has been 'psychological first aid,'" says Andy. SOS Mediterannaea, a non-government maritime rescue service in Europe, provides psychological first aid training to all its members so they can provide initial support to one another during and after stressful events. The aim is reducing the immediate mental health impacts to individuals, so that any peer support or professional counselling followup can start from a better place.

Within many organisations, wellbeing systems have come a long way in a short time. Across the sector, the benefits of collaboration are clear. "Particularly when it comes to mental wellbeing, the agencies can learn a lot from each other," says Andy. "NZSAR welcomes the opportunity to facilitate that collaboration. Our aim is to support the sector experts so they can better contribute to supporting our members."



LandSAR Self Wellbeing Check-in Tool



This tool has been designed to assist you to reflect on your own mental health status, identify what affects your wellbeing and guide your support planning

	Thriving	Surviving	Distressed/Stressed	Unwell
Physical Wellbeing	Physically well & feeling full of energy	Low energy & motivation Muscle tension, headaches Tired & lethargic at times Minor physical ailments – but responding anyway	Low energy & feeling tired/fatigue Frequent muscle tension, headaches, aches & pains Significant loss/gain in appetite/weight Use of alcohol to forget or feel numb	Physically unwell or physical illness Significant weight loss or gain Decreased personal care Use of drugs or excessive alcohol
Emotional Wellbeing	Usual fluctuations in mood with frequent positive emotions Able to manage usual frustrations & stressors	Some nervousness, irritability, or sadness evident Cranky with others	Frequent anxiety, nervousness, anger, sadness, hopelessness or irritability Feeling numb and disconnected Family and friends have detected change	Intense & persistent displays of emotions – agitation, anger, anxiety, low mood Irritability, hopelessness, overwhelmed Frequent worry or concern
Sleep	Able to achieve quality rest & sleep; presents as well rested	Difficulties achieving adequate rest or sleep	Difficulties achieving adequate rest or sleep Restless or disturbed sleep	Difficulties falling or staying asleep Sleep disturbed by dreaming, worry or excessive thinking Sleeping too much or too little Insomnia
Activity	Psyched to receive a call out Eager to help out with any extra volunteer work that's not operationally focused Have a sense of purpose & confidence Socially active with strong connections with others Engaged at home & work	Questioning if the call out is worth responding to Cutting corners Loss of situational awareness Decreased interest in social activity & engagement with the team Decreased involvement in usual activities	Having the 'Oh No' moment when called Reduced motivation & not meeting expectations Easily frustrated and not interested in training with group Avoiding normal recreational activities Social avoidance, withdrawal or detachment from others – peers, family & friends	Hate or fear getting a call out & finding ways or excuses to avoid responding Don't want to respond to group meetings or trainings Difficulties making decisions or completing tasks Isolation from others, and avoiding social activities
Thinking	Good focus & attention Open to new ideas, change is exciting/not threatening Concerns or worries can be dismissed or managed	Others aren't pulling their weight; stupid ideas Procrastination Reduced concentration & forgetfulness Difficulties making timely decisions	Regular thoughts & worries about issues/ incidents Negative outlook, thinking or attitude Increased forgetfulness	Going through motions without emotion Frequent thoughts/dreams/memories of issues Unusual/disturbing thoughts Chronic negative & critical thinking Difficulties with memory & concentration
Actions	MAINTAIN AND OPTIMISE YOUR MENTAL WELLBEING Actively engage in coping strategies and support options to optimise wellbeing Promote positive wellbeing & mental health literacy within the group, and normalise support and help seeking Maintain and nurture relationships Practice gratitude and self-compassion Maintain an optimistic outlook	STRENGTHEN WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE Explore opportunities to increase use of coping strategies including the use of new strategies Amplify healthy lifestyle habits; exercise, nutrition, sleep, social activities	MOBILISE SUPPORT & DEVELOP A WELLBEING PLAN Reach out to social supports, friends, family, social networks. Proactively schedule social activities and pleasant events Connect with LandSAR Support Services; Member Assistance Programme (MAP) - 0800 284 678 Where necessary consult with your GP	SEEK PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE & DEVELOP A SUPPORT ACTION PLAN Establish a strong network of support including a mental health professional Assistance available through LandSAR MAP 0800 284 678 or your GP

New Zealand Land Search and Rescue

Celebrating 90 years of helping the lost, the missing and injured.



The NZSAR Council congratulates New Zealand Land Search and Rescue on their 90th anniversary, which was celebrated on 1 May 2023.

The organisation's beginnings are attributed to 'The Sutch search' of April 1933. A party of four were out for nearly two weeks before being found, traversing almost the entire length of the Waiohine valley in the Tararua Ranges. The search included days of effort by up to 200 people from multiple groups, supported by radio operators and aircraft. The scale and successful result made the operation headline news. This sparked vigorous public debate about the responsibilities of adventurers and those who might search for them if they didn't return.

In 1934, New Zealand Land Search and Rescue began operating. Local Search and Rescue Groups were established, with advisers appointed by Police. Funding was made available from a government grant, which was administered through the Police.

New Zealand Land Search and Rescue operated under this structure for 70 years until becoming an Incorporated Society in 1994. A national committee oversaw the organisation; a chairperson, treasurer, five standing sub-committee chairs plus representatives from the seven volunteer regions, Police, Federated Mountain Clubs and the Department of Conservation.

Individuals from these organisations, plus from the Mountain Safety Council and New Zealand Speleological Society comprised the member base. "The dedication and selflessness of Land Search and Rescue volunteers never fails to impress me," says Chief Executive Carl McOnie. "They willingly put themselves in challenging and extreme situations to help others, often sacrificing their time and comfort without expecting anything in return."

From its beginnings in the hills behind Wellington, the organisation has grown to cover our entire nation. Just as the popularity and capability of outdoor adventure spread and grew, so did the volunteers, capabilities, funding and staff support of Land Search and Rescue.

Candice Tovey is a current staff member, as well as a volunteer for Wakatipu Land Search and Rescue. "When I joined as a field volunteer 11 years ago, I did so to give back to my community. I underestimated the huge privilege it is to volunteer alongside others; there is no greater feeling of purpose than bringing a person home to their family and friends. Our volunteers are truly humble and amazing people who I am very proud to support as a staff member, as well as volunteer."

These days, there are 62 Land Search and Rescue groups, and 11 specialist teams around Aotearoa New Zealand. In nine decades, just about everything has changed; from equipment, methodologies and management techniques, to training, funding and governance.

But as Graham Pomeroy, Chair of Land Search and Rescue says, the ethos across the organisation hasn't changed at all. "It is to support our dedicated teams of volunteers with the very best training and equipment. To be at the forefront and to embrace the latest technology and innovation. And to never forget that everything we do is driven to achieving the best outcome for the lost, missing and injured."

LEFT

The missing party in the 'Sutch Search' – From Evening Post, 1 May 1933. Courtesy of New Zealand Free Lance Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library

RIGHT

Land Search and Rescue volunteers today. Courtesy Brent Hollow

End of one era, start of another

Canterbury Mountain Radio Service ending

After 55 years of continuous operation, the Canterbury Mountain Radio Service has regretfully made the decision to close on 30 June 2023.

Volunteers have made over 50,000 broadcasts, providing weather reports, passing messages and supporting SAR operations.

"The current usage pattern, low revenue/funding and lack of volunteers has led to this decision," says Ian Gardiner, secretary of the service. "Hunters have traditionally been our main customers during the roar in Fiordland. This patronage has dropped off markedly in recent years."

Satellite connectivity for mobile phones coming soon

In April, One NZ (formerly Vodafone NZ) announced a deal with Starlink, to provide '100% cell phone coverage across New Zealand'. From late 2024, text messages will be able to be sent via satellite, with data services likely to follow. The NZSAR Secretariat is aware of other companies with similar intentions.

NZSAR is monitoring the rollout of this technology, the implications for SAR operations, public prevention messaging, and the impact on current technologies such as distress beacons and satellite messenger devices.

King's Birthday Honours

Several members of the wider search and rescue community were recognised in this year's King's Birthday Honours.

Jo Brosnahan, QSO, is to be a Dame Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, for services to governance and business.

Jo is the current chair of Maritime New Zealand and has steered a wide range of organisations and projects to successful outcomes serving the wider community, in education, research, local government and infrastructure.

Rodney Bracefield is to be a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to search and rescue and aviation.

Rodney has been contributing to New Zealand search and rescue and aviation for more than 60 years.

Rodney was integral in New Zealand's membership of Cospas-Sarsat. He was instrumental in the building and commissioning of New Zealand's satellite ground station for the detection of these beacons across New Zealand's search and rescue region, and helped establish the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand.

Squadron Leader George McInnes is awarded the New Zealand Distinguished Service Medal for services to the New Zealand Defence Force.

George was the aircraft captain of a Royal New Zealand Air Force NH90 helicopter that was dispatched on 30 May 2021 to assist during widespread flooding of the Canterbury plains. Battling against the extreme conditions, he lowered his winch crewperson to successfully rescue a trapped motorist and carried him and the winch crewperson underslung to the water's edge, to meet waiting emergency services.

Sergeant Walter (Wally) Kopae is to be a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to the New Zealand Police and the community.

Wally is the Supervisor of the Invercargill/Southland Police Dog Section. He is one of six certifiers who evaluate dogs and handlers for deployment around the country and is on the National Working Group for the New Zealand Police Dog Section, setting policy and training initiatives. Beyond Police, he has trained dogs and handlers in specialist areas such as search and rescue and noxious weed detection.

Ronald (Ron) Smith is awarded the Queen's Service Medal for services to the community and search and rescue.

Ron joined Methven Land Search and Rescue in 1989 and served in various positions including as Vice Chairman and Regional Representative. He served on the Management Committee between 2003 and 2020 and was nominated to serve as the National Board Member of Land Search and Rescue, holding the position for the maximum allowable amount of six years and serving as Director.

Peter Housiaux is awarded the Queen's Service Medal for services to surf lifesaving and canoe polo.

Peter joined the Ōtaki Lifesaving Club as a lifeguard in 1972 and has been on its committee for more than 40 years. As a lifesaving coach and mentor, he has coached many of Ōtaki Beach's young potential lifeguards to win regional and national awards. He has been Patrol Captain for more than 20 years and has been part of numerous lifesaving rescues at Ōtaki Beach.

Citations sourced from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, abridged and reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

10 questions with ...

Fiona Read

New Zealand Police

Senior Constable Fiona Read has served more than 13 years with the Manawatu Police SAR Squad. Based in Levin, she is a youth services officer, and a founder of the Wāhine Toa program for women affected by family harm.

What sparked your interest in the outdoors?

At high school, a teacher I respected encouraged me to sign up for the tramping option during 'activities week.' We tramped in the Tongariro National Park and I just loved it. Later on at school we had the opportunity to do more tramping in the Nelson Lakes region, which cemented my love for the outdoors.

How did you get involved with search and rescue?

I saw a Police recruiting ad on TV, which showed a lost trumper being stretchered out down a river valley and it really struck a chord with me. I joined the Police in 1993 and got on the SAR Squad in 1995. I moved away from Levin in 1998 but came back on the squad in 2010 when I returned.

Did you notice much change when you returned to SAR?

Absolutely! There was a major improvement in structures to support SAR, both in Police and Land Search and Rescue. Training and procedures were more formalised, with much better documentation to refer to. Plus there were clear progression pathways to allow volunteers to develop their skills.

How did you become an SAR incident controller?

I began working in the incident management team, just to fill gaps. I'd never had the aspiration to become an incident controller. I didn't think I was capable to be honest! But with the right people being supportive, you get to recognise the skills you have and build up your own confidence. They nudged me to get on the right courses, and I was able to grow into the role from there.

Can you tell us about a memorable operation?

They're all memorable, but for different reasons! There's always something you'll learn which you can apply to future jobs. Responding to Cyclone Gabrielle in the Hawke's Bay was an eye-opener! We were one of the first Police SAR squads to be deployed in the Pakowhai Road area, helping people off rooftops into helicopters and boats. It was a pleasant surprise to end up working with friends from the Horowhenua Surf Club, some of whom were also Land Search and Rescue volunteers. The foundation of trust and confidence in each other was extremely helpful during that difficult operation.

What other aspects of Policing are you involved in?

My main role is with the Horowhenua Youth Aid team, both prosecuting young offenders and working to support the community to prevent youth crime. I have a strong interest in the family harm space, and founded a program called Wāhine Toa to help out the women affected.



Can you tell us more about Wāhine Toa?

With my colleague Liz Woodley, we founded the program in 2016. It is a full weekend where 10-12 women participate in indoor workshops, and outdoor education sessions. I've been able to use skills learnt through SAR and the outdoors to challenge and empower these women to rise above the negative experiences they've had. There's a fantastic team of volunteer women who instruct alongside us on the courses. I'm really grateful for the time and passion they bring to the program. Likewise, we're humbled to have funding support from the Horowhenua New Zealand Trust.

What do you do in your time off?

Something active! I enjoy trail running, indoor netball, and getting out tramping with my friends. With family, there's always the 'mum-taxi' to sports activities, but I really enjoy taking them away camping on the weekends. We've got a favourite little spot on the eastern side of the Tararua Range, with great camping, good walks, and a safe swimming spot in the river. It's the perfect way to wind down from everything else going on in life.

What's one of the best things about SAR?

Seeing people come together to help others in their time of need. The whole community rallies to help respond to serious operations and it creates a very special atmosphere. It is very humbling work.

What would you say to other women aspiring to develop their involvement in SAR?

First put the right support people around you, and then back yourself to do it! I feel it's really important to put yourself out of your comfort zone if you want to develop. I've recently applied for a SAR Managers course in Australia; being surrounded by experts from overseas will be a little intimidating, but that just means I've got so many opportunities to learn and grow.