

# MERITORIUS SERVICE AWARD

presented to

## Station 23 – Wilderness

for the prompt and effective action taken by Station 23 Wilderness when responding to multiple incidents over the two days of Saturday and Sunday 26th and 27th November 2022 at Wilderness Beach and nearby areas.

Between 10:07 on Saturday 26th November and 18:00 on Sunday 27th November, Station 23 Wilderness responded to 8 incidents in a non-stop flow during the 2 days, with a sea search continuing into Monday 28th November 2022.

At 10h07, Saturday, 26 November, NSRI Wilderness duty crew were alerted to reports of a drowning in progress at Leentjiesklip. While resources were responding it was reported that a swimmer who had been in difficulty in the surf was safely out of the water and no further assistance was required.

NSRI Wilderness crew were again activated at 18h13, Saturday, 26 November, to respond to Myoli Beach where a whale calf was reported to have beached. On arrival on the scene a whale calf was located in shallow water on the beach. Members of the public had attempted to return the calf back into the water but unfortunately, the new-born Bryde's whale did not survive and the carcass was recovered to above the high-water mark and SA National Parks arranged for disposal of the whale carcass.

On Sunday, 27 November, at 11h30, NSRI Wilderness were alerted to a Penguin reportedly entangled in fishing gear at Gerickes Point, Sedgefield. The Marine Animal Stranding Network were notified and the Penguin was disentangled and recovered for rehabilitation by Marine personnel.

At 12h00, the NSRI Wilderness duty crew, while conducting routine training exercises, were alerted to a female caught in a rip current at Wilderness Beach. An NSRI lifeguard, using an NSRI Pink Rescue Buoy, and an NSRI rescue swimmer deployed into the surf accompanied by a member of the public.

The member of the public reached the girl first and he was able to bring her towards the beach where the NSRI lifeguard and the NSRI rescue swimmer assisted them safely onto the beach. The girl, a local, was not injured.

At 12h55, NSRI Wilderness duty crew were again activated following reports of a paraglider accident at Swartvlei Beach Carpark. NSRI EOC (Emergency Operations Centre) and the ARCC (Air Rescue Coordination Centre) were alerted. NSRI medics responded directly to the scene, while the NSRI rescue vehicle with additional NSRI medics onboard, ER24 ambulance services and Knysna Fire and Rescue Services responded to the scene.

On arrival, a 72 year old local male, who had crashed into a vehicle in the Swartvlei Beach parking area while paragliding, was treated for suspected serious injuries and was transported to hospital by ER24 ambulance in a stable condition.

At 13h09, while treating the injured paraglider at Swartvlei carpark, NSRI Wilderness Crew were alerted by members of the public to reports of a drowning in progress at Swartvlei Beach. A female, believed to be aged in her 20's, was caught in rip currents. A man, aged in his 60's launched into the water to assist but when he reached the casualty, the Good Samaritan also got into difficulties.

That man's son, armed with an NSRI Pink Rescue Buoy, launched into the water to assist and he reached the female and rescued her to the shore. An NSRI rescue swimmer also launched into the

water and reached the 60-year-old male and together with another member of the public who had swum out to assist, rescued him safely to the beach.

As NSRI resources were returning to NSRI Wilderness rescue station at 14h03, NSRI Wilderness duty crew were alerted to another drowning in progress at Wilderness Beach. 2 local males, aged 15 and 16, were caught in rip currents. NSRI believe that there were initially 5 boys in the water but 3 got out safely prior to NSRI arriving on the scene.

The NSRI rescue craft Ann Stratford Rescuer was immediately launched while an NSRI rescue swimmer was deployed into the surf. NSRI Rescue Craft Oscar Rescue was also launched to join the search. Frontier Medics ambulance services, WC Government Health EMS ambulance and rescue squad, the SA Police Services, a Police Dive Unit and the EMS/AMS Skymed rescue helicopter also responded.

One of the youngsters (age 15) was located and recovered onto an NSRI rescue craft and was brought to shore where he was treated by paramedics for non-fatal drowning symptoms. An extensive air, sea and shoreline search, including NSRI rescue swimmers deployed into the surf to conduct free dive sweeping line search efforts, continued for the 16-year-old male who remained missing.

While this search was underway, an off-duty lifeguard, who happened to be at the beach at the time, noticed 2 people caught in rip currents nearby and ran down the beach and launched into the surf to assist. NSRI resources and the EMS/AMS Skymed rescue helicopter, that were busy searching for the missing teenager, diverted to assist in this simultaneous rescue operation.

Two male teenage casualties, were located in the surf impact zone by the EMS/AMS Skymed rescue helicopter and an NSRI rescue swimmer was deployed from the rescue helicopter into the surf where he secured one teenager who was semi-conscious in the water.

That casualty (age 16) and the NSRI rescue swimmer were taken onboard NSRI's rescue craft Oscar Rescue and brought to shore where paramedics initiated medical treatment to the casualty who was in a serious condition suffering non-fatal drowning symptoms.

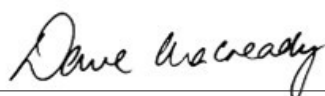
The second casualty teenager (age 15) was located and recovered onto the NSRI rescue craft Ann Stratford Rescuer and was brought to shore where he was also attended to by paramedics.

The 15 year old male was transported to hospital by EMS ambulance in a stable condition. The 16 year old male, secured into a specialised stretcher, was transported along the beach on the NSRI rescue vehicle, to the EMS/AMS Skymed rescue helicopter, and was airlifted to hospital by Skymed in a serious but stable condition.

The search for the missing 16 year old male at Wilderness Beach continued on the Monday morning.

NSRI recognises that the training, professionalism and ethos of the crew at Station 23, Wilderness resulted in the successful execution of this remarkable series of non-stop rescue operations, and must be congratulated for their meritorious service in the best traditions of NSRI.

We salute you.



Dave Macready  
Chairman of the Board of Directors



21 July 2023

Date