



**NATIONAL
SEA RESCUE
INSTITUTE**

GALLANTRY AWARD

SILVER

Presented to

Francois du Randt

At 19h05 on Monday, 29 December 2025, NSRI Witbank and NSRI Gauteng duty crews were activated following reports from police divers that four men were in imminent danger at Grootdraai Dam, Mpumalanga. While on a leisure outing, the men's ski-boat, after engine failure, was blown towards the dam wall and became trapped on the spillway edge. The men had entered the water and were clinging to the vessel's port side. The vessel, which was held in place only by its motor, and all four men were at risk of being swept over the 40-metre drop by rapidly flowing water following recent heavy rains.

NSRI Witbank responded without delay, deploying a rescue vehicle towing the craft Harvey's Fibreglass and travelling the 140 km to the scene. During the journey, the crew was made aware of the severity of the situation through videos shared with them. On arrival, multiple emergency services, including the South African Police Service, Delta 1 Search and Rescue, Police K9 Search and Rescue, Mpumalanga Fire and Rescue Services, and Government Health EMS, were already on scene but had been unable to reach the casualties. The men remained in the water in extremely hazardous conditions. Intervention by the Department of Water and Sanitation, which opened sluice gates to reduce the water flow, helped keep the vessel in place, although the danger remained significant.

Coxswain and NSRI Witbank Station Commander, Travis Clack, assumed command of the operation, assisted by Francois du Randt (Deputy Station Commander) and Jacoline Enslin (trainee crew). In darkness, with a strong wind blowing, a rapid water flow, and an unfamiliar environment, the rescue crew asked Riaan Rijsberger, a member of the public with

knowledge of the dam, to guide them to the spillway. They launched approximately four kilometres upstream of the casualties. The operation was high-risk, with the constant threat that the rescue craft would also be drawn towards the spillway.

Upon reaching the casualties, the crew worked in close coordination, initially reassessing and adapting their stern-first approach to a bow-on approach. Francois positioned himself at the bow and deployed a throw line to the four men. After an initial unsuccessful attempt, the line was secured by one of the casualties on the second throw. Although the initial plan was to use two lines, the casualty vessel's instability, balancing on the spillway, required an immediate change in strategy. A decision was made to extract all four men simultaneously using a single throw line attached to a rescue tube.

Maintaining composure under pressure, Francois managed the line while closely monitoring the casualties, who had been in the water for over four hours and whose condition was uncertain but growing more dire by the minute. Through controlled use of the rescue craft's reverse thrust, the crew successfully pulled the men clear of the spillway and into safer water. The casualties were then brought alongside and assisted onto the rescue craft. Once ashore, all four were medically assessed and found to be uninjured but hypothermic.

In recognition of his decisive actions, ability to remain calm, and unwavering commitment to the safe rescue of the casualties in high-risk conditions, Francois du Randt is awarded the NSRI Gallantry Silver Award. His actions exemplify courage, professionalism, and the very highest standards of the National Sea Rescue Institute.

Jonathan Velloza
Chairman: Board of Directors



14 August 2026

Date