

# Club/Service

## Rescue of the Month

### Nomination Form

**SURF LIFE SAVING**  
**NEW SOUTH WALES**



Please complete this nomination form for the Rescue of the Month Award and forward to your **Branch** by the closing date. To enter, please complete the following overview of the incident and then provide specific details in the five key criteria sections.

<b>Name of Club / Service:</b>	Burning Palms SLSC		
<b>Date of Incident:</b>	October 15 2017	<b>Time of Incident:</b>	10:15am
<b>Full name of all Lifesaver(s) / Lifeguard(s) Involved:</b>	Patrol Members: Annabel Braithwaite-Young, Chris Fogwell, Paul Cooper, Eloise Cooper, Eri Shinomoto, Terry Danne, Matthew Braithwaite-Young, Letitia Cooper, Elizabeth Feletar  Assisting Members (assisted patrol): Gary Daly		
<b>Location of Incident:</b>	Near Figure 8 Rock Pools, Royal National Park		
<b>Incident Number in SurfGuard:</b>	55556		

#### Overview of the incident / rescue (Limit 500 words):

## 1. Summary – Cliff fall: Burning Palms first response, patient stabilisation and helicopter extraction.

On Saturday 15 October a man fell from a cliff while walking to the Figure 8 pools which are about 1.5km from Burning Palms SLSC.

The patient was severely injured in the fall and suffered head fractures, a broken arm and suspected leg, rib and shoulder breaks.

The alarm was raised with Burning Palms just before patrol commencement by a friend of the victim. Burning Palms provided first aid and initiated a helicopter rescue via Surfcom.

This was the first patrol as captain for Annabel Braithwaite-Young and despite the complex operation, the patrol was also able to maintain an active patrol at Burning Palms beach (including a Nippers training session).

The Figure 8 pools in Royal National Park have become popular with tourists following social media and Tourism Australia promotion. However many day-trippers' ignorance of coastal safety has created a public safety hazard over the last 6 months.

#### **Incident Outline:**

- Initial information from public to Burning palms
- One member ran to site with mobile phone to establish communications
- 3 members opened the equipment shed and followed with radios, oxygen and defibrillator
- Ambulance called via Surfcom contact with a phone relay from Terry
- Radio relay established
- Patient condition reported
- Patient care included wound management, patient was distressed, vomiting and incoherent with head, rib, arm, leg wounds
- Oxygen applied
- Condition deteriorated - relayed urgency to Ambulance via radio relay to Surfcom

- Traffic managed for drop in
- Assistance by 4 BPalms,
- Patient was intubated / anaesthetised in situ
- Stretchered and secured
- Winched direct from site after moving stretcher to suitable spot
- Traffic managed for extraction
- Captain debriefed for trauma
- 

## 2. Context: No Road Access

Burning Palms SLSC is a remote club and has no road access. Patrol members walk 2.5km down a rough bush track to access the beach and clubhouse. It is in the Royal National Park, near Sydney. The incident occurred at the Figure 8 Rock Pools - an unpatrolled rock ledge a further 1.5km south west of Burning Palms beach.



Above: The main tourist route to Figure 8 Pools showing the hiking trails used and lack of vehicle access

The Figure 8 pools hazard had been identified some 18 months prior and Burning Palms SLSC has been working with NPWS regarding signage and social media warnings.



Above: Crowds have been hiking some 4 km to reach the rock ledge. Risky behaviour is common due to a desire to take the ultimate “selfie”.

### 3. The Incident: A Man Fell From A Cliff

The patient is believed to have been taking a shortcut from the Figure 8 Pools when he fell from a height of at least 5m and up to 10m.



### 6. Assistance Provided

The patrol provided the following assistance:

- Initial response to request for help from public
- Patient care and first aid (the patient was distressed, uncooperative and vomiting)
- Communications (via radio links because of signal difficulties at the location)
- Air Ambulance liaison (via Surfcom, via radio chain from incident location to patrol)
- First aid (initial wound management, calming the patient, oxygen application)
- Patient preparation (patient moved onto stretcher, wrapped, secured, located for extraction)
- Assistance for Paramedic and Doctor during intubation process
- Crowd control for aircraft movements (drop off and winch out)







## **7. Media Coverage Delivered Safety Messages That Changed Public Awareness Of Risks**

Significant news media coverage followed the incident, including coverage in both of the largest daily newspapers in NSW. TV news stories covered the rescue. In many of these articles, important surf safety messages were relayed to the public, contributing to the mission of SLSA and SLS NSW.

Above: Media coverage was extensive and allowed SLS NSW to deliver coastal safety messages in a critical time of year





Incredible drone vision from the famed Figure Eight Pools

NSW

## Sydney's notorious Figure Eight Pools claim another victim

Chris Harris, The Daily Telegraph  
October 16, 2017 6:42am



- [Social media's deadly obsession with Sydney's Figure 8 pools](#)
- [Beautiful, but deadly NSW landmarks](#)

A 22-year-old man may have ignored rock ledge warning signs before falling near the famous Figure Eight Pools and suffering critical injuries at the 'bucket list' tourist spot.

Emergency services rushed to the Royal National Park just south of Sydney after reports of the fall about 10.30am yesterday.

The man suffered a laceration to his chest in the fall, a NSW Ambulance spokesman said.

A NSW Ambulance Helicopter went to the site to rescue the man and worked on him for two hours before he was winched to safety.



Run for your lives... Beachgoers hit by a huge wave at the Figure 8 Pools. Picture: Instagram



Danger... A huge wave smashes the Figure 8 Pools. Picture: Instagram

He was taken to St George Hospital, where he remained in a critical condition early on Monday morning.

There were reports the injured man was an overseas tourist.

Burning Palms Surf Life Saving Club Secretary Peter Pearce couldn't say whether the man was a tourist, but said it wasn't uncommon for visitors to set their sights on the iconic location against better advice and judgment.

"There is so much signage everywhere about where to walk and when not to visit the pools," Mr Pearce said.



"People will often ask us whether it's safe to go and we'll say no. But we'll see them heading along anyway.

"People are always wandering off the tracks, and that's really dangerous," Mr Pearce says since the pools had gained prominence on social media, people were taking more risks to visit the 'bucket list' location.

**MORE:** [Subscribe to The Daily Telegraph website for just go a day](#)

The incident is a the latest in a string of injuries at the site, which is increasingly popular due to the unique figure of eight pool and its social media appeal.



The Sydney Morning Herald NSW

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OCTOBER 15 2017

SAVE PRINT LICENSE ARTICLE

## Man in critical condition after fall at Figure Eight Pools

Sarah Muller

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A man is in a critical condition in hospital after falling from a rock ledge near the Figure Eight Pools in the Royal National Park on the weekend.

Emergency services were called to the remote site about 10.30am on Sunday, and found a man believed to be in his mid-20s with cuts to his chest and head injuries.



Tourists at the Figure Eight Pools in the Royal National Park. Photo: Wolter Peeters

Paramedics first arrived on foot to treat the man, before an ambulance helicopter winched him aboard and flew him to St George Hospital, where he remained in a critical condition on Sunday afternoon.

It is understood the man diverted off a main track and was trying to walk along a cliff rock ledge in a cove close to the Figure Eight Pools, when he fell onto rocks.

Peter Pearce, the secretary of the nearby Burning Palms Surf Lifesaving Club, said visitors sometimes used the cliff as a shortcut during the four-hour hike to get to the rock pools.

"You have to walk around the cove to get to the figure eight pools. Some people use the rock ledge as a shortcut ... but they shouldn't use it - it's very dangerous," Mr Pearce said.

Mr Pearce said the man was in a "pretty bad condition" when emergency services arrived.

Just an hour before the man fell, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service put out an alert warning visitors that it was "unsafe" to visit the Figure Eight Pools on Sunday, as "waves are likely to wash across the platforms".

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The warning, declaring there was a "moderate risk" of visiting the park on Sunday, stated it was "difficult to see the pools in these conditions".

FUMOROUS ON SOCIAL MEDIA, THE POOLS ARE DANGEROUS BUT BEING dangerous, as waves are known to crash over the site unexpectedly, even in good conditions.

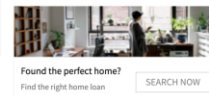
In 2016, 70 people were injured by a freak wave on a single day, with three having to be flown to safety due to the severity of their injuries. There were also a number of other accidents at the site last year, including two men who had to be flown out in July.

Mr Pearce said injuries at the popular natural formation remain common. The remote location added to the danger.

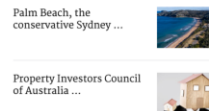
"They have put up signs along the track [to the rock pools], but

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Section 1	APPLICATION OF SKILLS AND RESOURCE UTILISATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were the skills used correctly and appropriately as per SOP's?</li> <li>• Did the rescue / incident require advanced technical skills?</li> <li>• Was there optimal use of skills within the available personnel?</li> <li>• Was the correct equipment utilised appropriately?</li> </ul>
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## A Full Range of Lifesaving Skills and Resources Were Used

Skills and resources were applied appropriately in a complex, remote environment and a patient clearly in critical condition. This was the first patrol as captain for by patrol captain on the day.

This was a complex incident requiring a remote roving patrol response (1.5km from BPSLSC). In addition, there were unusual crowd issues to deal with in order to land helicopters and prevent further injury.

Skills were used correctly and appropriately under complex conditions.

- Priorities were clearly identified and changes in priority were clearly communicated. For example as the patient health deteriorated this was relayed clearly to the Air Ambulance via a radio relay and Surfcom.
- Clear roles were allocated amongst all lifesavers and overall leadership and beach patrol were maintained by the patrol captain and senior team members. The beach remained patrolled while the incident took place.

The rescue / incident required advanced technical skills. A range of technical skills was required, including:

- Aviation management
- Treatment of catastrophic injuries from a fall (multiple head wounds and bone breaks)
- Communication with multiple parties including 2 roving patrols, surfcom, ambulance,
- Persuasion (crowd control, managing movements from the accident site, prevention of interference with aircraft movements)
- Spine, head and neck management
- Oxygen therapy administration
- Assistance with and preparation for airlift
- Assistance with ventilation (post intubation)
- Assistance with fluids
- Post incident review and offer of counseling for responding patrol members
- Identification of opportunities to improve equipment access and availability for the remote location
- There were 3 radio operators required to handle the complexity of the incident (location, relay to patrol, relay to Surfcom)

The skills available within the team were used to full effect:

- 2 new patrolling members fully participated in the incident and in fact were vital to the delivery of effective first aid including fluids application and ventilation under the supervision of the attending
- Senior team members provided guidance and reassurance to new BM and SRC lifesavers to maximise the effectiveness of the patrol overall
- Assistance was sought and attained in advance from non-rostered members so the small patrol was complemented with other experienced lifesavers

Correct equipment was used appropriately.

- Roving patrols took lifesaving equipment and PPE to the accident scene
- All personnel were used within their training and capacity and equipment was used correctly (for instance: Oxygen therapy, 4-person stretcher lift up steep incline, etc.)
- The patrol used resources including the Air Ambulance

Note: Keeping PPE gloves on at all times was a challenge due to the spiky plants and rocks in the patient area (ripping the gloves). This has been identified for consideration by the club.

Section 2	ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the incident around rocks, cliffs, or other precarious situations?</li> <li>What was the size of the surf, temperature, time, visibility, weather, and other environmental conditions at land or sea?</li> </ul>
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## The rescue was half-way up a cliff 1.5km from Burning Palms and 4km from road access.

- Time: 10:15am – 3:00pm
- Conditions: Rocky ledge
- No visibility of incident location from patrol

The rescue environment was extreme and located some 4km by foot from nearest road access.

- Club location has no road access - 2.5km from the nearest road access point
- Rescue located a further 1.5km away from Burning Palms (access over rocks, zero visibility from Burning Palms and requiring a radio relay to get clear communication to the patrol location)
- Rocks and cliffs
- Large crowds attracted to the area following social media “viral” promotion
- Ethnic groups were present, with many non-English speaking beachgoers showing a lack of common sense (for example, needing to be prevented from crossing under a working helicopter)
- Air rescuers relying on Burning Palms lifesavers for local knowledge and to manage large crowds during air movements



Section 3	PROCEDURES FOLLOWED	1. Was the safety of the rescuers involved appropriately assessed? 2. Was there appropriate leadership, chain of command, good scenemanagement, paperwork completed, follow-ups etc?
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## Complexity Was Managed Without Compromising SLSA Procedure

Safety procedures were followed and shifting risks constantly assessed by the Patrol Captain.

Incident chain of command was established early and with centralized management point and site management at figure 8 pool, cliff accident site and clubhouse

4 patrol members were sent around the rocks with appropriate PPE and equipment such as first kits, defib, oxygen, radios

Procedures were followed through the entire rescue and leadership, chain of command, good scene management and paperwork were maintained. For instance:

- The patrol was fully prepared and all equipment was available and ready to access
- The rescue patrol was calm and clear about roles and responsibility
- Scene management was despite the complexity of managing remote areas, large crowds and aircraft movements
- Incident paperwork was completed
- Senior lifesavers gave clear instructions and 2 new BM members performed exceptionally in first aid roles
- The patrol captain was able to stay with the patrol tent and the boatshed and ensure that resources were allocated effectively
- Counseling was offered for all patrol members
- Safety was a clear priority at all times, and PPE was worn as much as possible given the extreme circumstances\*
- A clubhouse debrief was conducted after the rescue for patrol members to reflect on performance and learnings

Section 4	POTENTIAL OUTCOME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would the outcome have been the same if the rescuers <u>hadn't intervened</u>?</li> </ul>
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## The Rescue Was Critical

- The patient would probably have died without intervention. He was airlifted and last reported as being in a critical condition. We all hope he survived.
- Given the difficulties with crowds and lack of local knowledge, the medical evacuation without the assistance of the patrol would have been difficult and time-consuming, placing the people at unacceptable risk.
- Ambulance attendees who arrived on foot at the incident towards the end of the rescue told the past president of BPSLC that they were very impressed with the conduct and training of the patrol.

Section 5	MEDIA CAPTURE/ COMMUNICATION	• Were opportunities maximised in terms of media exposure? If yes, please attach article or give a brief overview of media exposure.
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## The Rescue Led To Mass Media Publicity & Which Became A Platform Important Public Service Messages About Coastal Safety

- This rescue resulted in an enormous volume of media coverage, including, but not limited to all major commercial networks and press agencies.

TV: CHANNEL 7 and CHANNEL 9 TV news bulletins

PRESS AND ONLINE:

Fairfax: Sydney Morning Herald

Newscorp: News.com, The Daily Telegraph

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/sydneys-notorious-figure-eight-pools-claim-another-victim/news-story/bc646e61bc208a18f1411926ee2e6816?nk=38b540028cc520471d113cf268fd83df-1509323239>

<https://www.pedestrian.tv/news/man-critically-injured-after-falling-off-cliff-near-figure-eight-pools/>

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/man-in-critical-condition-after-fall-at-figure-eight-pools-20171015-gz1cgv.html>

