



RESCUE OF THE MONTH NOMINATION

CLUB/SERVICE	Elouera SLSC		
DATE OF INCIDENT	17/7/2020	TIME OF INCIDENT	17:25pm
NAMES OF LIFESAVERS(S)/LIFEGUARDS(S)	Andrew Sharp and Nathan Neale		
LOCATION OF INCIDENT	Cronulla beach		
SURGUARD INCIDENT NUMBER (IRD)	N.A.		

OVERVIEW OF THE INCIDENT (LIMIT 1 PAGE)

Two Elouera members, Andrew Sharp and Nathan Neale were practising their board paddling skills in heavy seas off Cronulla Point late on the afternoon of Friday 17 July 2020. The sun was setting just after 5pm, it had been cloudy all day and raining. The waves were about 6-8ft from the ESE, with a strong southerly breeze blowing. Gust gusts up to 60kmh were recorded at nearby Kurnell.

As it was getting dark Nathan caught his last wave to head in and as Andrew was waiting for a suitable wave he thought he heard an unrecognisable sound coming from north of his location. Although unable to see anything, Andrew moved closer to where he thought he heard the sound, in the direction of the back of Cronulla's rockpools. This was an area that Andrew and Nathan had avoided on entering the water due to the treacherous conditions, and no one had been there all afternoon that they were aware of. Andrew heard the sound a second time and paddled over in the fading light to investigate further. Coming closer to the danger area he identified a bodyboarder paddling against a rip, locally known as the Voodoo Express, which is quite notorious in the Cronulla area for its danger. At that stage the bodyboarder was some 150-200m away from Andrew.

Andrew reached the body boarder at a location well inside the wave zone, but outside the rocks. The bodyboarder, Lucas, confirmed he was there by himself, had been struggling for some 20 minutes against the rip, had a "stuffed" shoulder, and was exhausted. As Lucas was observed to be distraught and panicking, Andrew calmed and reassured him before bringing him onto the racing mal and attempting to exit the danger zone before the next set waves came through.

Exiting the danger zone required paddling almost directly against the rip, with the bodyboarder being too tired to assist. Their combined weight made it was challenging to properly balance and get the board moving quickly. At this point Andrew considered alternative exit paths, including further north, and also out to sea, but none were viable due to the conditions and fading light.

After some effort they made it to deeper water and headed South to Cronulla. By this time Nathan Neale had come back out to check on Andrew. To negotiate the break and return to shore they agreed to avoid the northern end as a wedge-like wave presented danger, and continue to paddle against the northerly pull of the rip, aiming for the southern end of Cronulla.

On reaching the location they deemed safest to return to shore, they then continued paddling against the rip in order to wait for an opportunity to return to shore. The body boarder said he was not a confident swimmer and Andrew wanted to ensure he could maintain control his patient at all times.

It took some ten minutes of paddling, including two occasions where they paddled back out to avoid set waves, before they were able to take advantage of a lull and return to shore. Nathan remained nearby to assist Andrew if a wave knocked the bodyboarder off the racing mal.

As they were coming in another set wave did hit the racing mal, but Andrew had previously instructed the body boarder to hold tight and they were able to re-mount and be washed onto the beach. By this stage everyone was truly exhausted.


The successful completion of this rescue in very demanding conditions required fitness, endurance, good judgement, and an ability to adapt to changing conditions. The body board was very lucky that Andrew and Nathan, both elite board paddlers, had the skills and experience to complete a successful rescue.




PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS IN BRIEF BULLET POINT FORMAT	
<p>SKILL AND RESOURCES APPLICATION</p> <p>40%</p>	<p><i>Were the skills used correctly and appropriately as per SOP's?</i></p> <p><i>Did the rescue / incident require advanced technical skills?</i></p> <p><i>Was the equipment chosen best for the conditions and skill level of the personnel?</i></p> <p><i>Was there optimal use of skills within the available personnel?</i></p>
<p>Great skills in recognising that the sounds initially heard were not normal, and that the likely location of indicated someone could be experiencing difficulty in the big surf. Effective communication displayed on approaching and reassuring the patient. Decision making and re-assessment as the rescue progressed showed great situational awareness. Finally high-level fitness and skill were displayed to complete the rescue.</p>	
<p>PROCEDURES FOLLOWED</p> <p>30%</p>	<p><i>Were standard operating procedures followed?</i></p> <p><i>Was the safety of the rescuers involved appropriately assessed?</i></p> <p><i>Was there appropriate leadership, chain of command, good scene management, paperwork completed, follow-ups etc.?</i></p> <p><i>Was the equipment utilised appropriately?</i></p>
<p>The rescue occurred outside of patrol hours, with council lifeguards finishing at 16:00pm. The rescue was conducted by Andrew and Nathan using standard procedures and using the available rescue equipment. Nathan provided good support by re-entering the water to assist Andrew if required.</p>	
<p>ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS</p> <p>15%</p>	<p><i>Was the incident around rocks, cliffs, or other precarious situations?</i></p> <p><i>What was the size of the surf, temperature, time, visibility, weather, and other environmental conditions at land or sea?</i></p>
<p>Visibility was poor due to the strong winds and large surf on a cloudy day, compounded by low light conditions as the sun set during the rescue 17:06pm</p> <p>Sutherland Council Lifeguards recorded that the beach was closed due to a powerful swell and dangerous surf. There was a ESE swell greater than 2.5m, and southerly winds gusting to 59kmh.</p>	
<p>POTENTIAL OUTCOME</p> <p>10%</p>	<p><i>Would the outcome have been the same if the rescuers hadn't intervened?</i></p>
<p>No. It was getting dark, and no one from the shore had seen the patient struggling or heard his calls for distress. The rescue was completed with the patient being returned to shore without needing medical attention. Given the patient reported they had been struggling for some 20 minutes in the conditions, and was observed to be close to exhaustion it is extremely unlikely the patient would have returned to shore without injuring themselves as they were washed over the rocks, or worse if they could not exit the rip.</p>	
<p>MEDIA CAPTURE/ COMMUNICATION</p> <p>5%</p>	<p><i>Were opportunities maximised in terms of media exposure? If yes, please attach article or give a brief overview of media exposure</i></p>
<p>Yes. The local community newspaper, St George and Sutherland Leader, published an account on 28 July 2020. Refer - https://www.theleader.com.au/story/6849322/big-surf-rescue-for-paddlers/</p>	



PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS IN BRIEF BULLET POINT FORMAT	
Completed the nomination form correctly?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Checked that all nominees are proficient and members on SurfGuard?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Attached Incident Log or reference incident number from SurfGuard?	n.a.
Attached any/all related media clippings?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Forwarded to your Branch/State by the due date?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

CLUB ENDORSEMENT	
NAME OF CLUB: Elouera SLSC	
NAME OF CLUB REPRESENTATIVE: MR/MRS/MISS/OTHER Andrew McKellar	
CLUB REP. POSITION/TITLE: Director of Lifesaving	
CLUB REP. PHONE NO: 02 95237295	CLUB REP: EMAIL lifesaving@elouera.com
CLUB REP. SIGNATURE: 	DATE: 5 th August 2020

BRANCH	
NAME OF BRANCH: Sydney Branch	
NAME OF BRANCH REPRESENTATIVE: MR/MRS/MISS/OTHER Matt Spooner	
BRANCH REP. POSITION/TITLE: Director of Lifesaving and Education	
BRANCH REP. PHONE NO:	BRANCH REP: EMAIL dol@surflifesavingsydney.com.au
BRANCH REP. SIGNATURE: 	DATE: 11/08/2020

STATE/TERRITORY	
STATE/TERRITORY:	
NAME OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE: MR/MRS/MISS/OTHER	
STATE REP. CONTACT NO:	STATE REP: EMAIL
STATE REP. SIGNATURE:	DATE:

Once endorsed, please send all nomination forms to: lifesaving@surflifesaving.com.au

JULY 28 2020 - 12:00PM

Big surf rescue for Elouera SLSC board paddlers



John Veage

Latest News



Hard work: Elouera SLSC board paddlers Nathan Neale and Andrew Sharp on the beach after training this week.

Elouera SLSC board paddlers Andrew Sharp and Nathan Neale caught more than a few waves when training in the big waves off Cronulla beach last week.

With the Council Lifeguards off duty and the light fading, Nathan caught his last wave of the day, and headed in, Andrew was following when he heard a call for help from behind the Cronulla Rockpools.

Sharp who is an elite-level board paddler and part of the 2020 NSW bronze medal-winning team found a bodyboard rider struggling against the rip in the notorious 'Voodoo Express.'

Sharp said the bodyboarder was exhausted, the swell was a solid 6-8ft, a strong Southerly was blowing and it was getting dark.

"He was some 150-200m away from me and as I paddled over, I realised we were in the direct line of big waves," he said.

"I tried to calm him down, saying we would be OK.

"I got him on the board and tried to get out of the danger zone, paddling south before set waves washed through."

At this stage, Neale realised that something was not right and had paddled back out to help out.

"It was dark, I was getting tired and unsure of the patient's swimming ability and we had to paddle out to sea twice to avoid big sets," he said.

"We went south as far as we could and rolled over coming in but managed to get back on the board quickly and let the waves push us into the beach. Being involved in surf lifesaving for 18 years, I have never had to complete a rescue of that nature before. Fortunately, all our training and Surf Lifesaving practice kicked into gear."

