

Lt Gen The Rt Hon Sir Jerry Mateparae, GNZM, QSO
Governor-General of New Zealand
New Zealand Search and Rescue Council Awards 2014
Government House, Wellington
21 April 2015

Introduction and acknowledgements

Rau rangatira mā, e kui mā, e koro mā, e huihui nei, nga mihi māhana ki a koutou. Nau mai, haere mai rā ki Te Whare Kawana o Te Whanganui-a-Tara. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, warm greetings to you all, and welcome to Government House Wellington.

I specifically acknowledge: Martin Matthews, Chair of the New Zealand Search and Rescue Council, and Council Members; Alan Lloyd, from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority; Jean Murray, from Search and Rescue Canada; and Members of the Transport and Industrial Relations Select Committee: Alastair Scott, MP, Clayton Mitchell, MP and Peeni Henare MP - tēnā koutou katoa.

It is a great pleasure for Janine and me to welcome you all to Government House this evening to celebrate the work of very highly regarded people in our communities – our search and rescue sector.

We are fortunate to live in a country blessed with an outstanding outdoors environment - our mountains,

forests, coastline and seascape. They all beckon us into the outdoors – and that’s as it should be.

But as everyone gathered here this evening is all too aware, the challenges posed by our landscape and waters; and our uncertain weather can pitch the most well-prepared person into a life-threatening situation.

So we are indeed fortunate to have one of the highest rates of volunteering for search and rescue in the world.

Business as Usual for volunteers means anything from traversing dense bush and steep cliff faces, to hanging out of helicopters to winch someone off a headland, to pulling people off rocks in stormy seas, or to searching for days on end for missing aircraft on the land, in the air and at sea.

Then there’s going above and beyond the call of duty. That’s what these awards celebrate – the people who risk their lives to save others, along with the people who dedicate hours of their time sometimes behind the scenes – enabling the front-line folks to do their jobs better or in motivating and inspiring people to volunteer.

With an average, 6 operations a day, the services are clearly in demand. And to paraphrase the words of ex-All Black captain Tana Umaga – *“this is not a game of tiddly-*

winks". You certainly have to be dedicated and resilient to be in search and rescue.

Working together across agencies is vital for a quick and effective response when people are in distress. The Rescue Coordination Centre has provided that on New Zealand's behalf for 24-hours every day for 10 years. So I'm pleased to acknowledge the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand and its people for the work they do to coordinate all category 2 SAR incidents in New Zealand's area of responsibility.

At this point, I also want to acknowledge RCCNZ's work with Pacific nations, particularly Tonga, the Cook Islands and Kiribati. And its liaison with RCC Australia, especially the work on implementing the next generation of satellite distress alerting-systems, which will provide enhanced opportunities for both countries in our region.

I commend NZSAR's constant commitment to improvement. Targeted training for volunteers and the new data-analysis tool established by the New Zealand search and rescue secretariat - enabling access to evidence-based data and informed decision-making – are positive initiatives.

It is a considerable challenge responding to the more than 2300 Category 1 and 2 SAR incidents annually in one of the largest SAR areas in the world. On behalf of all New Zealanders, I thank all SAR personal, especially the many thousands of dedicated volunteers, who generously give their time, expertise and effort in service to their communities.

In closing my comments, I would like to congratulate the 19 Award winners. Kia ora huihui tātou katoa.

I now invite the Chair of the New Zealand Search and Rescue Council, Martin Matthews, to speak.