

# NZSAR

New Zealand Search  
and Rescue Council



## NEW ZEALAND SEARCH AND RESCUE REGION



# Awards 2016

*The NZSAR Gold Award for Operational Activity is awarded for a very significant contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region during 2016*



### **Ray Burge from Coastguard Northern Region**

#### **For the rescue of two swimmers from Waiomanu Beach, Auckland on 11 December 2016**

While driving on Sunday afternoon, 11 December, off duty Coastguard Operations Manager Ray Burge spotted a man in the water frantically waving his arms. He also heard desperate calls for help from the beach.

Ray ran down and was met by three worried small children who told him that the man in the water, to whom they were related, needed help. After assessing the situation, Ray enlisted the help of his family waiting in the car.

He called the Coastguard Operations Centre, leaving his daughter Abbey to provide updates, while his wife Lianne and son Jack comforted the children.

By this time, the man had drifted approximately 200m offshore. To reach him, Ray battled heavy seas with challenging 25 knot winds and a 1.5 metre swell. The man was struggling to keep his head above water, so Ray calmed him and got him into a rescue hold. He was too exhausted to assist Ray, who had to

drag the man's body weight for the challenging swim back to shore.

Upon reaching shore, Ray discovered the children's mother was also missing, but had entered the water in a different location. Time was critical. Ray relayed the location information to the Coastguard Duty Officer, and in turn, Coastguard Maraetai was able to see her within one minute, pulling her to safety from the strong current and heavy seas. Ray's request for an ambulance meant that paramedic care was available on the beach before the two swimmers were taken to hospital.

Ray performed this heroic act of bravery and life-saving actions safely and effectively. His Coastguard knowledge meant that he was highly experienced in search and rescue and was able to manage the situation, performing life-saving actions. There is little doubt that Ray's actions saved two people from drowning.

*The NZSAR Gold Award for Support Activity is awarded for a very significant contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region.*



## **Ian Coard from Coastguard Riverton**

### **For his services to Coastguard and Coastguard Riverton**

Ian Coard has been a Coastguard volunteer for 29 years. He is a member of the Riverton unit and holds the Coastguard ISC Senior Master qualification.

Ian's commitment to Coastguard at all levels is immense. He has been a key player in many projects and successes for his unit, at both local and regional levels. He has served on the Coastguard New Zealand Board, including the role of National President from 2007 to 2010. In addition to his long list of qualifications, he's held numerous leadership roles for the Riverton unit: currently he's a board member, its Safety Officer, its SAR Coordinator, and a Coastguard Boating Education Tutor for Boatmaster and Marine VHF training.

He was responsible for the installation of NowCasting in Southland, using contacts to negotiate the locations for repeaters and the NowCasting computers. He has also led his unit in a number of risk management, policy, and health and safety changes.

Ian has been involved in every recent major SAR in the Foveaux Strait working as an Incident Management Team member for high pressure search and rescue operations including the 1998 Cessna aircraft tragedy, the 2010 helicopter crash (when a Coastguard volunteer was killed), and the 2012 Easy Rider tragedy.

Ian has always been a team player and is highly respected by his peers. He holds great mana within the Coastguard community and has fostered deep relationships between different Coastguard units – encouraging cooperation and joint activity. He constantly makes himself available and fully commits to the demanding challenges that Coastguard work presents. He takes pride in his unit's amazing achievements and helps to encourage and inspire the new generation of Coastguard volunteers.

On top of everything else, Ian is the local volunteer Harbourmaster, adding to the long list of commitments he makes to keeping boaters safe on the water.

**Support  
Activity**

The NZSAR Certificates of Achievement for Operational Activity are awarded for an important contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region during 2016.



## Certificate of Achievement

**Aoraki/Mt Cook Alpine Rescue Team • The Helicopter Line, Glentanner Park**

**For their efforts in five challenging operations during November and December 2016**

The Aoraki/Mt Cook Alpine Rescue Team, in partnership with The Helicopter Line search and rescue pilots, successfully saved the lives of four mountaineers plus another with a medical issue in an eight-week period.

Each of these rescues was challenging. They were at high altitude, requiring specific rescue skills and techniques, and involved exceptional flying skills to access the sites to recover the climbers.

It began with the rescue of a climber who had fallen in the Ahuriri Valley and sustained significant multiple injuries. He was packaged, put in a strop and lifted off the mountain.

Three weeks later, the team and helicopter crews had to wait until first light, having turned back the previous evening, to rescue a fallen climber at the head of the Stevenson Glacier on Mt Eli de Beaumont. Flying across the divide to this steep glacier location, it was a challenging rescue of a patient with significant fractures.

He was packaged and prepared for a multi strop rescue and lifted with the team off the head of the glacier.

Three days later the teams rescued a climber with a medical condition on the Linda Glacier route on Aoraki/Mt Cook. The next day, they responded at first light and executed a difficult strop rescue of a guide, who had been hit by a rock in the early hours climbing the Syme Ridge route on Mt Tasman. Both the guide and client were lifted from the high crevasse location and flown to safety – thanks to the pilot's advanced skills.

On Christmas day, cloud and poor weather made the rescue of a fallen climber with head and other injuries in the upper Copland Valley challenging. It took until late evening for the team and helicopter to locate and recover the injured climber and colleague from a steep creek bed.

This award also recognises the dedication of a number of the Aoraki/Mt Cook Alpine Rescue Team and helicopter crew that were involved in two of these demanding operations within 24 hours of each other. The crucial role of the Rescue Coordination Centre staff is also noted.

Operational  
Activity



## Certificate of Achievement

### 3 Squadron RNZAF

#### For the rescue of two people from Archway Rocks, Wharariki Beach on 17 February 2016

Two tourists were stranded on the Archway Rocks in appalling weather. Winds up to 50 knots, heavy rain, thunderstorms and a cloud base reducing to 300ft meant other helicopters were unable to respond. The onshore wind was also causing 3 metre breaking waves.

The 3 Squadron NH90, crewed by Squadron Leader Paul Aitken (Aircraft Captain), Flight Lieutenant Loic Ifrah (Co-Pilot), Warrant Officer Chris Mitchell, Corporal Aeron Mellish and Corporal Alex Taylor, responded and left Ohakea at 5.45 pm. The crew located the stranded tourists nestled on a small ledge at the base of a 200ft cliff. After assessing the location and conditions, Paul unloaded extra personnel and equipment nearby. This decision demonstrated superior airmanship, noting the pressures of the fading light, the weather and sea conditions.

Battling these conditions, and concern that the rotor wash could blow the survivors into the severely disturbed water, Paul held a very challenging hover position as winch operator Chris conducted a 200ft winch lowering Aeron down to the trapped tourists on the island. The female survivor was rescued first, using a hypothermic strop, then Aeron went down a second time to rescue the male survivor in a similar fashion.

The combination of a capable helicopter operated by a very capable crew saved the lives of the two tourists, who would not have survived due to the conditions with no other feasible means of rescue.



## *Certificate of Achievement*

Mike Hawthorne  
Ben Watson  
Mike Lydiard  
From LandSAR  
Hawke's Bay

Charles Beetham (Pilot)  
Brett How (Crewman)  
From Hawke's Bay  
Helicopter Rescue Trust

Jarrad Whittaker  
Wayne Steed  
From New Zealand  
Police SAR

### **For the rescue of two trampers from the Ruahine Ranges on 5 & 6 October 2016**

The trampers activated their personal locator beacon after they were hit by a sudden deterioration in weather while tramping in the Central Ruahine Ranges. Using intermittent cellphone coverage, the police determined the trampers were inadequately equipped for the conditions, exhausted, hypothermic and could not get themselves to a more sheltered and survivable location.

As the situation was deteriorating, with winds gusting 100-130kph on the ridge top, the rescue team opted for a river route. This meant tramping for seven hours in the dark including an hour in the chest-high Makaroro River and clambering down 480 metres of rock, shingle, tussock and leatherwood while, at times, having to support each other. The team located the couple about 3am and stabilised them, as they had done little to improve their shelter and comfort.

On daybreak it took 4-5 hours to cover 500 metres. By 10.30am one trumper, through a combination of hypothermia and lack of confidence on the steep terrain, was no longer able to move. By this stage the rescue team were also showing effects of over 24 hours of operating in severe conditions with no sleep. The Lowe rescue helicopter was deployed, but due to the severe turbulence on the lee side of the ridge, the aircraft could only take 2 people per lift. The pilot had to abort the hover twice due to the challenging conditions.

The survival of the two trampers would have been significantly compromised without the professional skills, teamwork, perseverance and courage of the rescue team. When the attempt to walk to safer ground was no longer an option, the skill and courage of the helicopter crew in challenging flying conditions facilitated a safe recovery.



# Certificate of Achievement

Amalgamated Helicopters NZ Ltd

For the rescue of a tramper from the  
Tararua Ranges on 25 April 2016

A tramper, who had fallen and sustained a compound broken leg, activated his personal locator beacon near Girdlestone Peak in the Tararua Ranges. An initially tasked helicopter located the tramper, but was unable to land or winch down to him due to weather conditions. Wairarapa Police and LandSAR were asked to respond. With little daylight remaining, and a moderate westerly wind, Amalgamated Helicopters were asked to fly in a team as close as possible. Pilot Jason Diedrichs believed that access to the injured tramper may be possible in the conditions so, while waiting for a field team to assemble, he and crew member Jamie Hansen flew to the scene. With cloud cover coming and going and daylight fading, they had only a small window of opportunity to reach the tramper. Their knowledge of the area enabled them to stay under the cloud and locate the tramper,

with the assistance of phone calls to police from the tramper himself. Impending darkness meant there were only minutes left before flying would become unsafe. The tramper was down a steep, rocky face and he had two bones poking through his leg, but he preferred the option of enduring some pain to being left there until ground teams could walk in. Jason landed as close as he could to the injured man, while Jamie was able to make his way down to the injured tramper and drag him up to the helicopter. He was flown back to Amalgamated's base where he was met by an ambulance.

Jason's attention to risk, as well as both his and Jamie's deep, extensive working knowledge of this area, provided the only option of getting the injured tramper out of the area in a timely manner.

Operational  
Activity



**Aspiring Helicopters • Otago Rescue Helicopter Trust**  
**• Wanaka Alpine Cliff Rescue**

**For the rescue of two climbers from Mt Aspiring on 21 December 2016**

On 21 December, the International Response Emergency Coordination Centre in the USA called RCCNZ saying they had received a spot beacon activation in the Mt Aspiring area. Other than the location and the beacon owner's name, no other information was available.

Aspiring Helicopters and the Wanaka Alpine Cliff Rescue (ACR) team were deployed to locate the beacon and establish the situation. The helicopter quickly located two badly injured climbers who had fallen approximately 800 metres, sustaining multiple broken bones and lacerations, as well as possible spinal and other internal injuries from a fall some hours earlier.

The ACR team quickly established that additional medical support was required so RCCNZ requested the assistance of the Otago Rescue Helicopter Trust in Dunedin, which had an advanced paramedic on board.

As the ACR team stabilised the scene, and upon further conversations with the Otago Rescue Helicopter paramedic, a second helicopter picked up an

ICU doctor from Dunedin Hospital and flew to Wanaka.

Both the Aspiring and Otago helicopters then evacuated the two injured climbers to the Wanaka Medical Centre, where they were met by the ICU doctor. Both patients were further stabilised and then flown back to Dunedin Hospital, with the doctor looking after the more severely injured climber.

The Aspiring helicopter then flew back to the scene to assist the group of climbers who had first come across the accident (and activated their spot beacon) back to the hut where they had been staying.

This award recognises the exceptional skill levels of everyone involved, the required multiple hours of training needed to learn and maintain these skills, the excellent communication, sound decision-making and outstanding coordination between the teams involved, which resulted in a text book search and rescue operation of these severely injured trampers.



5 Squadron RNZAF • Captain Shashi Prakash, MV Southern Lily

**For the rescue of three people from the yacht *Platino* on 13 and 14 June 2016**

On the morning of 13 June, a crew member on board the *Platino* was killed after being hit by the yacht's boom, which had been damaged in heavy seas. Another crew member was lost overboard in the harsh weather conditions. The three-remaining crew could not attend to their friend on the deck or attempt a search for the man overboard as the boom was swinging violently back and forth across the deck. They activated their distress beacon, approximately 300 nautical miles northwest of New Zealand.

An RNZAF Orion aircraft was in the region and arrived on scene within 90 minutes of the distress alert. After providing communications and reassurance to the *Platino* crew, it searched for the man overboard.

In the hostile conditions overnight the yacht had been dismasted, with the rigging hanging in the water compromising the hull's integrity. With the combination of intense weather and damage sustained, she began slowly taking on water. At this point the crew decided that they needed to abandon the yacht.

The 145 metre container ship *Southern Lily*, under the command of Captain Shashi Prakash,

was 175 nautical miles from the *Platino* and diverted to assist. It took the ship 14 hours to reach the stricken yacht. Upon arrival, it tried to go alongside the yacht and provide a lee, allowing the *Platino* crew to climb rope ladders. In the extreme weather conditions, and with the yacht thrashing against the ship and sustaining further damage, the attempted rescue was abandoned.

As the *Platino* began taking on more water and it became evident that immediate evacuation was vital. The ship's crew, employing superior seamanship skills, again attempted to come alongside the yacht and effect a rescue, knowing that this time they had to succeed. All three surviving crew members safely clambered aboard the ship, where they were assessed and cared for by the ship's crew and transported back to New Zealand.

In extremely difficult circumstances this rescue relied on communication, planning and commitment by all those involved in the rescue.

Operational  
Activity



# Certificate of Achievement

**Jeremy Johnston  
Michael Johns  
From Taranaki Alpine  
Cliff Rescue**

**Vaughan Smith  
Peter Lawn  
From New Zealand  
Police SAR**

**Grant Smith  
Andy Cronin  
From the Taranaki  
Rescue Helicopter Trust**

**For the rescue of three  
people from Mt Taranaki  
on 11 September 2016**

Initial concerns were raised about a group of three overseas visitors making very slow progress in steep terrain climbing the eastern side of Mt Taranaki. After assessment of their dangerous predicament, a pre-emptive SAR operation was established – an unusual occurrence. While the Taranaki Rescue Helicopter with two Taranaki Alpine Cliff Rescue (TACR) members on board was en route to the mountain, a 111 call was received from the party. The caller reported being hit by an avalanche, saying one of their team had a broken arm. The mission changed to a rescue operation.

Initially two rescuers were lowered by winch onto the mountain side, followed by the third rescuer after collecting him from lower down the mountain. In order to reach the three tourists, the rescuers had to cross two avalanche courses as debris fell and came down on them. The first course had a continuous stream of predominantly ice flowing at ankle height, it was about two

metres across, and there were some big chunks coming down intermittently.

Once they reached the three trampers, the team dug a snow and ice wall around them until they could be extracted from the mountain. During the incident, Senior Constable Vaughan Smith was hit in the head by a large slab of ice when he threw his body over one of the trampers to protect him. Michael was also slightly injured by falling ice. All three climbers were eventually flown from the scene. The rescue of the three climbers was a high risk and dynamic rescue. The team work and expertise of all the rescuers involved ensured the rescue was carried out quickly and as safely as possible in dangerous circumstances.

The Taranaki Rescue Helicopter pilot and crewman also played an integral role. They carried out one of their most challenging jobs and longest winch, in failing light with the risk of dislodging debris on the rescue team.

*The NZSAR Certificates of Achievement for Support Activity are awarded for an important contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region.*



**Ray Bellringer from Aoraki/Mt Cook Alpine Rescue Team**

**For his commitment and services to search and rescue**

Ray Bellringer has been involved in search and rescue for 45 years, beginning as a front-line searcher in Taranaki in 1971. His involvement today focuses on active roles with the Incident Management Team at Aoraki/Mt Cook and, on occasion, as a first responder – a rescue-qualified paramedic.

Ray uses and shares his wealth of experience gained out in the field in planning and directing many significant search and rescue operations across the wider Aoraki/ Mt Cook region. He provides medical training to DOC and volunteer

searchers, contributing to the development and training of the team personnel. He's been the programme manager for the Aoraki/Mt Cook rescue team and has been involved with SAR recruitment.

Ray served two terms on the LandSAR NZ Board, which required a fair amount of personal time and effort. Alongside his search and rescue work, he's qualified as a St John paramedic and supports the rescue team with patient management when injured parties are brought in off the mountain.

**Support  
Activity**



## *Certificate of Achievement*

**Nicola Hockley from Coastguard Canterbury**

**For her dedication to Coastguard and search and rescue**

Since joining Coastguard Canterbury in 2009, Nicola Hockley has been involved in nearly every area of the organisation. She has a number of qualifications and is a Master on her Coastguard vessel and a regular Skipper on weekend patrol and training exercises. She is also an instructor for the Regional Coastguard and NZSAR SAR Leadership courses.

Nicola is on several Coastguard boards including the National Board, Southern Region Board and Coastguard Canterbury Board, where she has been President since 2015. To say she has been highly influential towards the governance of Coastguard would be an understatement.

Nicola was instrumental in Coastguard Canterbury's project to obtain new headquarters after the 2011 earthquakes. She played a key part in negotiating

with the local Naval Point Club and has committed many hours of her time helping to raise upward of \$5 million.

She has also been a driving force behind the training development team that rewrote the Coastguard SAR modules, incorporating current thinking and training practices. The team has also written the MOSS training drill manual for Southern Region and developed training packages for NZSAR and LandSAR.

Nicola gives countless hours of support to other units throughout the country, passing on her knowledge and skills to assist with projects and planning. She is known for being a team player and ensures she meets with volunteers to listen to their concerns and suggestions, while also celebrating and encouraging their successes.

*Support  
Activity*



## *Certificate of Achievement*

**Elton Ngawhika from Coastguard Rotorua Lakes**

**For his commitment to Coastguard and search and rescue**

Elton Ngawhika is a Master at Coastguard Rotorua Lakes. In the past 12 months alone he has dedicated 574 hours to training and 700 hours to operational activities. In addition to being a Master, Elton is also the Unit Training Officer, often acting as a mentor to his crew.

Every volunteer trained by Elton gets their own personal and tailor-made experience, whether they are in Elton's boat or their own. He is well respected by all the volunteers, and for good reason: he is incredibly patient with his crew and emanates a positive attitude.

He spends a large number of his weekends at Eastern Region training programmes in Maketu,

while other weekends are dedicated to teaching the volunteer crew what he has learned during his Unit Training Officer sessions.

It was due to his professional training that Coastguard Rotorua Lakes stood out at the 2015 Taupo SAREX.

Overall, Elton is an invaluable asset to Coastguard Rotorua Lakes, dedicating 100% of his energy into his unit – something he has done consistently for the past nine years.



**John Taylor from LandSAR Wanaka**

**For his commitment to LandSAR training and search and rescue**

John Taylor has been a key contributor to LandSAR Wanaka since he joined in 1982.

Alongside senior operational roles, John has served as Wanaka Committee Chairman, Group Secretary, Southern Regional Chairman, and was LandSAR NZ's Southern Region Delegate for five years.

John is a key point of contact and sounding board for the Police SAR Coordinator, contributing to an excellent Police-LandSAR relationship which manifests itself in efficient and effective SAR responses. His experience has been invaluable in making key search decisions on operational searches.

But it is as the group's Training Officer where John's commitment stands out. Over a quarter

of the Southern Region's LandSAR core training courses have been hosted in Wanaka in the last four years. This is because of his understanding of local members' training needs as well as the need to make sure that training is available to other groups in the region. His meticulous preparation means less than 5% of the courses are cancelled. Moreover, he often hosts and actively gathers registrations for courses that are cancelled in other areas.

Without a doubt, Southern LandSAR members would not have the level of access to SAR training that they have enjoyed in recent times if it were not for John's personal commitment.

*Support  
Activity*



## *Certificate of Achievement*

**Pete Woodward from Coastguard Kapiti**

**For his dedication and fundraising for Coastguard Kapiti**

Pete Woodward is the Radio Operator and Fundraising Officer at Coastguard Kapiti, where he has been a member since 2006.

He is extremely dedicated to fundraising for his unit: in the last four years he has raised over \$150,000 towards a new vessel. He takes an incredibly creative and innovative approach in organising many events, including the Spring Ball – a highly successful event which raised \$30,000 in one night.

As an experienced Radio Operator, Pete is the main point of contact on shore during incidents and is always there for training

and callouts – no matter what time of day or night it is. He attended a five-day Incident Management Training course to further his skills and experience, which has been key in his work with Coastguard as he is always available to run the communications for any incident and during training nights.

Pete is a dedicated, passionate and resourceful member of his team. He has helped to significantly raise the profile of his unit within the local community and remains a crucial member of his Coastguard family.

*Support  
Activity*



*The NZSAR Council and Secretariat congratulates all our 2016 winners.*

Do you know an organisation, a group, or an individual who you think should be acknowledged for their contribution to search and rescue? There are two categories – operational activity and support activity.

More information about these two categories, the NZSAR Awards and the simple nomination process can be found on our website at [www.nzsar.govt.nz/awards](http://www.nzsar.govt.nz/awards).

The 2017 Award nominations close 31 January 2018.