



# 2022-2023 SAR Snapshot

## What we achieve

See page 5

**137** Lives saved



↓ down 9% from 2021-22

**744** People rescued



↑ up 3% from 2021-22

**1,130** People assisted

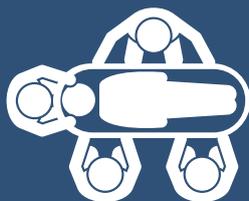


↑ up 41% from 2021-22

## What we do

See page 6

**3,469** SAR incidents



↑ up 20% from 2021-22

**54,746**

Operational people hours

↑ up 2% from 2021-22

**2,711**

Operational asset hours

↑ up 20% from 2020-21

## What it costs

See page 11

**\$1.822b**

in social costs was averted by saving 137 lives

**\$53.6m**

Government investment in SAR

**34:1**

Benefit to cost ratio

## Our people

See page 13

**11,095** People involved



↓ down 1% from 2021-22



**6,614**  
Water



**3,544**  
Land



**534**  
Air



**403**  
Coordination and support

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Land Search and Rescue alpine training course. Image courtesy Ben McEvoy.

# Chair's introduction



Audrey Sonerson  
Chair, New Zealand Search  
and Rescue Council

Welcome to the New Zealand Search and Rescue (NZSAR) Council's 2022-23 Annual Report.

**People get into serious difficulty or go missing and require help from our sector every day. The response sees ordinary people doing often extraordinary things in hazardous environments as they respond to all manner of search and rescue situations. NZ Police and the Rescue Coordination Centre oversee thousands of search and rescue incidents every year, saving lives and reuniting people with friends and family.**

In 2023 we experienced extreme weather events such as the Auckland Anniversary floods and Cyclone Gabrielle, incidents that caused a tragic loss of life and damage to property and infrastructure. The rapidly escalating nature of these events demonstrated the vital importance and value of our search and rescue sector in the subsequent response.

Indeed, these past twelve months have been the busiest on record with search and rescue incidents up 20 percent compared to the previous year. During this period more than 3,500 people were at risk, with 137 lives saved and 744 people rescued.

This remarkable result is solely due to the dedication, commitment, and courage of the more than 11,000 people who make up our sector, 89 percent of whom are volunteers – and proudly one of the highest rates of volunteer search and rescue involvement anywhere in the world.

The New Zealand search and rescue sector provide effective search and rescue services, not only for the New Zealand land area and inshore waters, but also covering our vast 30 million square kilometre search and rescue region.

Many search and rescue incidents can be resolved quickly, but complex operations can take days and require a multi-agency response, which comes at significant cost. The sector needs to be prepared for a wide range of possibilities – from a missing aircraft in Antarctica, trampers lost in the ranges due to poor weather, to a vessel in distress offshore.

The past year has seen me join as Chair of the NZSAR Council and I have been deeply impressed by the bravery and selfless

courage of people in the sector. Myself, and my fellow Council members are proud to provide strategic leadership and direction to the many organisations and people that make up the highly skilled search and rescue sector.

In May I was privileged to MC the NZ Search and Rescue Awards which acknowledge the dedication, achievements and sacrifices made by paid and volunteer professionals involved throughout the search and rescue sector in New Zealand. Behind every nomination and award presented are stories of real people responding with true courage and determination to help people in distress.

I would like to give thanks, on behalf of the NZSAR Council, to everyone involved in the sector. They tirelessly turn out for search and rescue operations, training, for joint exercises, and the many other facets of search and rescue that happen everyday.

You can be assured that they are ready, when called on, to save lives. I am very proud to be involved in this sector and I trust you will enjoy reading more of our work in this report.

Ngā mihi nui,  
Audrey

## New Zealand Search and Rescue Council as at 30 June 2023



Audrey Sonerson (Chair)  
Chief Executive  
Ministry of Transport



Andrew Coster  
Commissioner  
New Zealand Police



Keith Manch  
Chief Executive  
Civil Aviation Authority



Kirstie Hewlett  
Director  
Maritime New Zealand



Air Marshal Kevin Short  
Chief of Defence Force  
New Zealand Defence Force



Penny Nelson  
Director General  
Department of Conservation



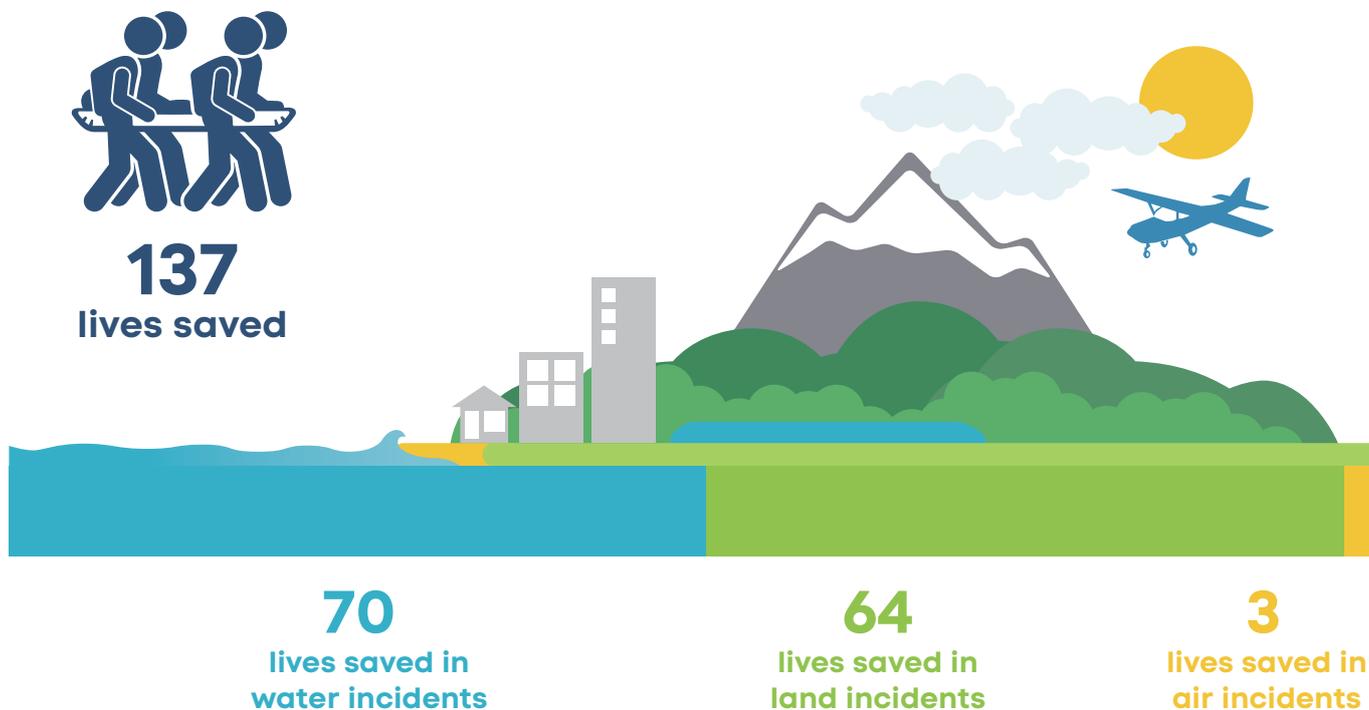
Kerry Gregory  
Chief Executive  
Fire and Emergency New Zealand



Michael Bassett-Foss  
Independent Council Member

# What we achieve

The search and rescue sector's work is measured in the most important currencies: lives saved and families reunited.



## 3,706 people at risk this year

These numbers represent the positive difference made by the people and organisations who make up New Zealand's SAR sector.

At the start of each SAR incident, it is assumed that there is a person or people at risk, and that they require assistance from SAR services. These definitions measure how these people have been assisted:

**Lives saved:** Where, if SAR agencies had not intervened, life would definitely have been lost.

**People rescued:** Where SAR agencies locate and rescue people at risk, and return them to a safe location.

**People assisted:** Where SAR agencies aid people at low risk but who, if left, would be at risk.

Sometimes we discover that people were not at risk at any stage of the SAR incident. This includes accidental distress beacon activations, possible flare sightings, and unclear trip intentions.

Other times, people are at risk, but get themselves to a safe location without needing assistance from SAR agencies. 1,601 people assisted themselves in 2022-23.

Sadly, a number of people perish before SAR services are notified, or despite our best efforts to rescue them. There were 94 fatalities in 2022-23.

# What we do

This year, New Zealand’s search and rescue sector responded to 3,469 incidents – an increase of 20 percent from 2021-22.



**1,870**

## Land incidents



up 28 percent  
from 2021-22

**1,053**

resulted in a SAR operation  
being undertaken

**801**

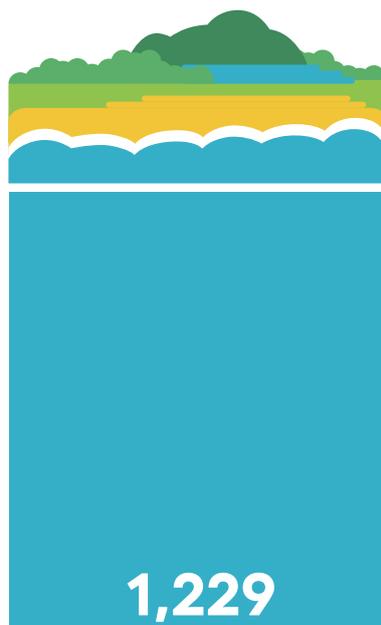
did not progress beyond  
communications or initial  
investigations

**9**

were an unresolved alert  
with no SAR action required

**7**

where New Zealand supplied  
support and resources to  
other SAR regions



**1,229**

## Water incidents



up 14 percent  
from 2021-22

**629**

resulted in a SAR operation  
being undertaken

**580**

did not progress beyond  
communications or initial  
investigations

**11**

were an unresolved alert  
with no SAR action required

**9**

where New Zealand supplied  
support and resources to  
other SAR regions



**177**

## Air incidents



down 8 percent  
from 2021-22

**27**

resulted in a SAR operation  
being undertaken

**147**

did not progress beyond  
communications or initial  
investigations

**2**

were an unresolved alert  
with no SAR action required

**1**

where New Zealand supplied  
support and resources to  
other SAR regions

There were 193 SAR incidents where the environment could not be determined.

# About our sector

Search and rescue services in New Zealand are provided by many different organisations, under the direction of either Police or Maritime New Zealand’s Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand.



Coordination of SAR incidents can be transferred between Police and RCCNZ as needed, to ensure the best possible outcome for the person needing help. Depending on the situation, Police or RCCNZ will task the nearest group able to assist. This may include:

- Surf Life Saving NZ
- Land Search and Rescue
- Amateur Radio Emergency Communications
- Coastguard
- Vessels of opportunity
- Helicopter operators
- NZ Defence Force
- Local harbourmasters
- DOC Aoraki / Mount Cook Alpine Rescue Team

Total number of people hours recorded for search and rescue incidents	
Police	20,802
Land Search and Rescue	19,104
Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand	6,199
Coastguard	3,391
Surf Life Saving NZ	1,462
Fire and Emergency New Zealand	718
Spontaneous volunteers	680
Other resources	621
Department of Conservation	488
Amateur Radio Emergency Communications	479
NZ Defence Force	337
Other land rescue groups	205
New Zealand Response Teams (NEMA)	143
Other marine rescue groups	107
Civil Defence	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>54,746</b>

Total number of asset hours recorded for search and rescue incidents	
Police	911
Rescue helicopters	746
Maritime rescue	411
Other aviation operators	346
NZ Defence Force	183
Maritime non-rescue (e.g vessels of opportunity)	114
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,711</b>



More information about how the SAR sector is organised can be found on page 39 of this report.

# Where we do it

SAR incidents across New Zealand



**1,870**

On land



**1,229**

In or on water

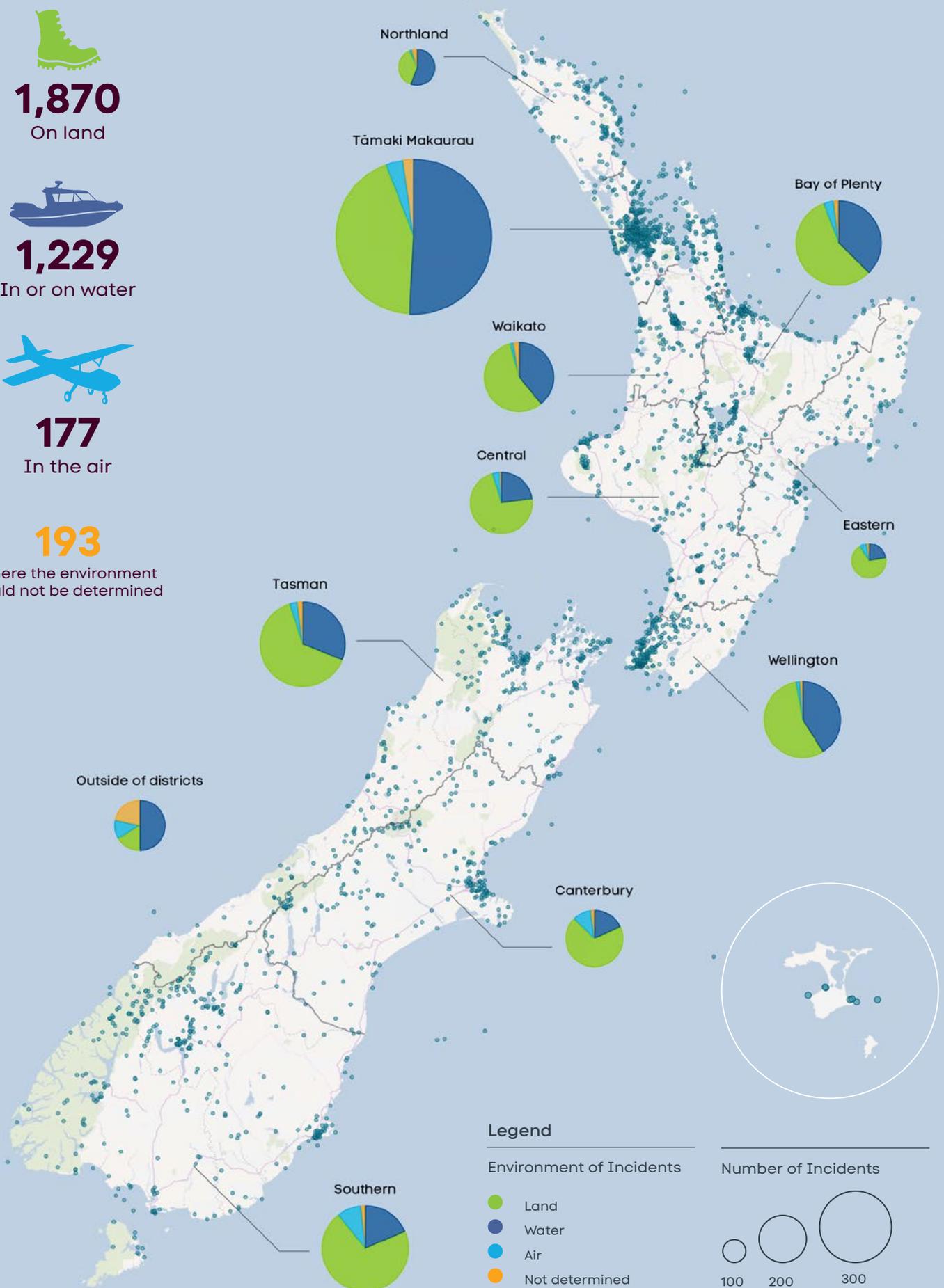


**177**

In the air

**193**

where the environment  
could not be determined

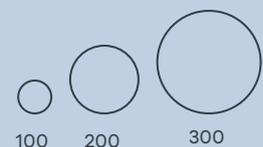


## Legend

Environment of Incidents

- Land
- Water
- Air
- Not determined

Number of Incidents



Incidents are broken down by Police district

# Our search and rescue region

New Zealand's search and rescue region is one of the largest in the world, covering over 30 million square kilometres.

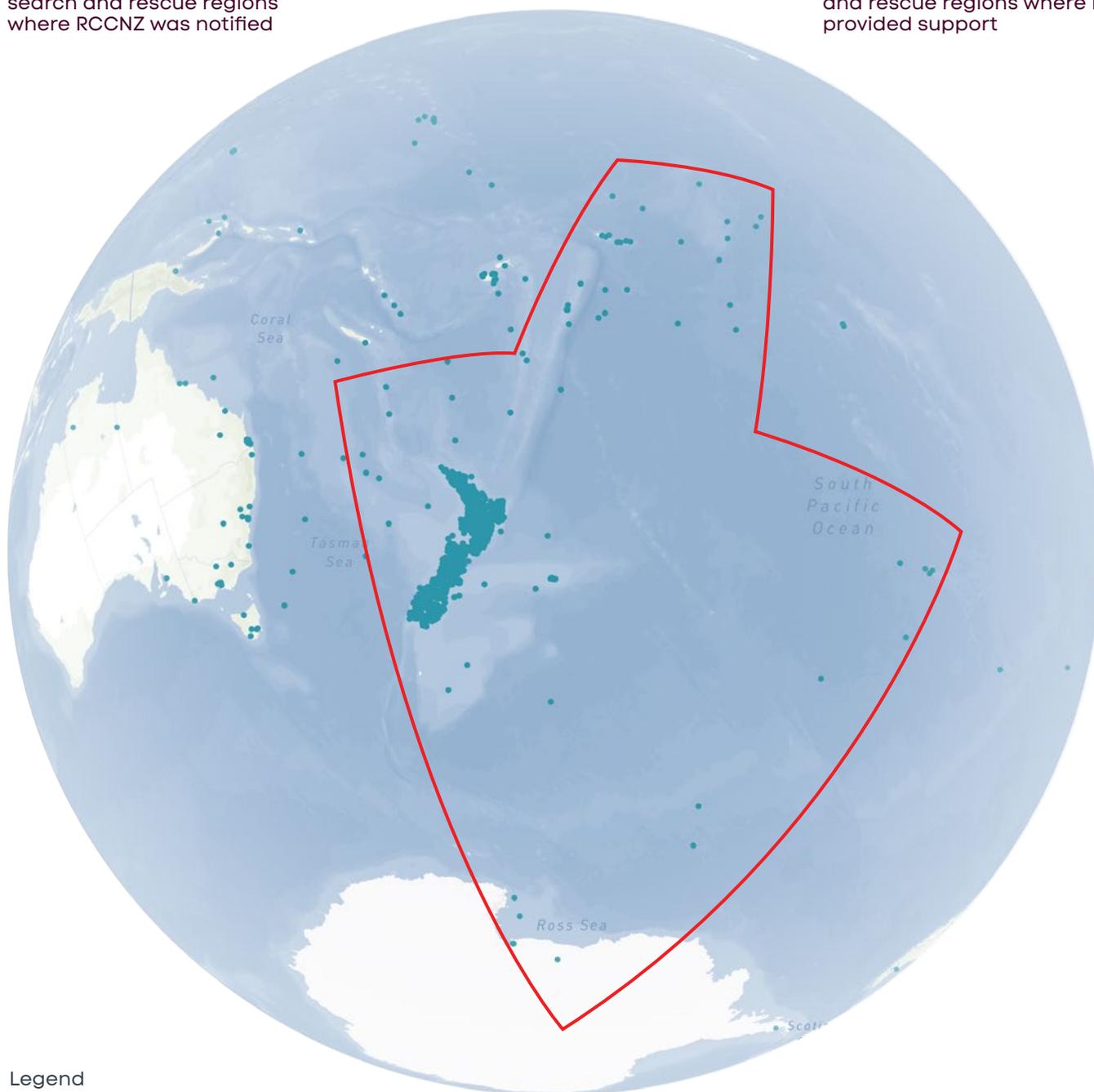
The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ), based in Lower Hutt, maintains close working relationships with the RCCs in our neighbouring search and rescue regions: Australia, Fiji, New Caledonia, Chile, French Polynesia, the Cook Islands and the United States of America.

**179**

incidents in neighbouring search and rescue regions where RCCNZ was notified

**17**

incidents in neighbouring search and rescue regions where RCCNZ provided support



## Legend

- 2022/23 Incident Locations
- △ New Zealand Search and Rescue Region Boundary

# Our strategic direction

## Outcome

NZSAR will ensure New Zealand provides effective search and rescue services for people in distress throughout New Zealand's search and rescue region in order to save lives.

## Vision

A cohesive community of capable people in sustainable organisations, finding and rescuing people in distress, operating collaboratively within a robust search and rescue system.



## NZSAR Council goals



**A robust and integrated SAR system.** We seek a collective, cross sector culture of being 'one SAR body' within an integrated SAR system. Our policies, processes, procedures and documentation will be coherent, aligned and support effective, efficient and safe SAR practice. We will undertake SAR activity cooperatively and learn from our experiences within a just culture. We will continue to improve our understanding of the SAR sector, our performance, our people, our operations and external influences so that we can improve our services, strengthen our resilience and mitigate our risks. We will also promote and support SAR innovations and showcase good practice.



**Efficient and sustainable SAR organisations.** We seek high performing, efficient and sustainable SAR organisations with adequate, secure funding. We will sustain an inclusive and collaborative environment that enables volunteerism. Our capabilities will be fit-for-purpose, appropriately located and adequate to address known SAR needs. We will make affordable, evidence-based investment decisions supported by good quality information. We will adapt our organisations and arrangements in response to changes in our operating environment and ensure we continue to deliver effective SAR services throughout the New Zealand search and rescue region.

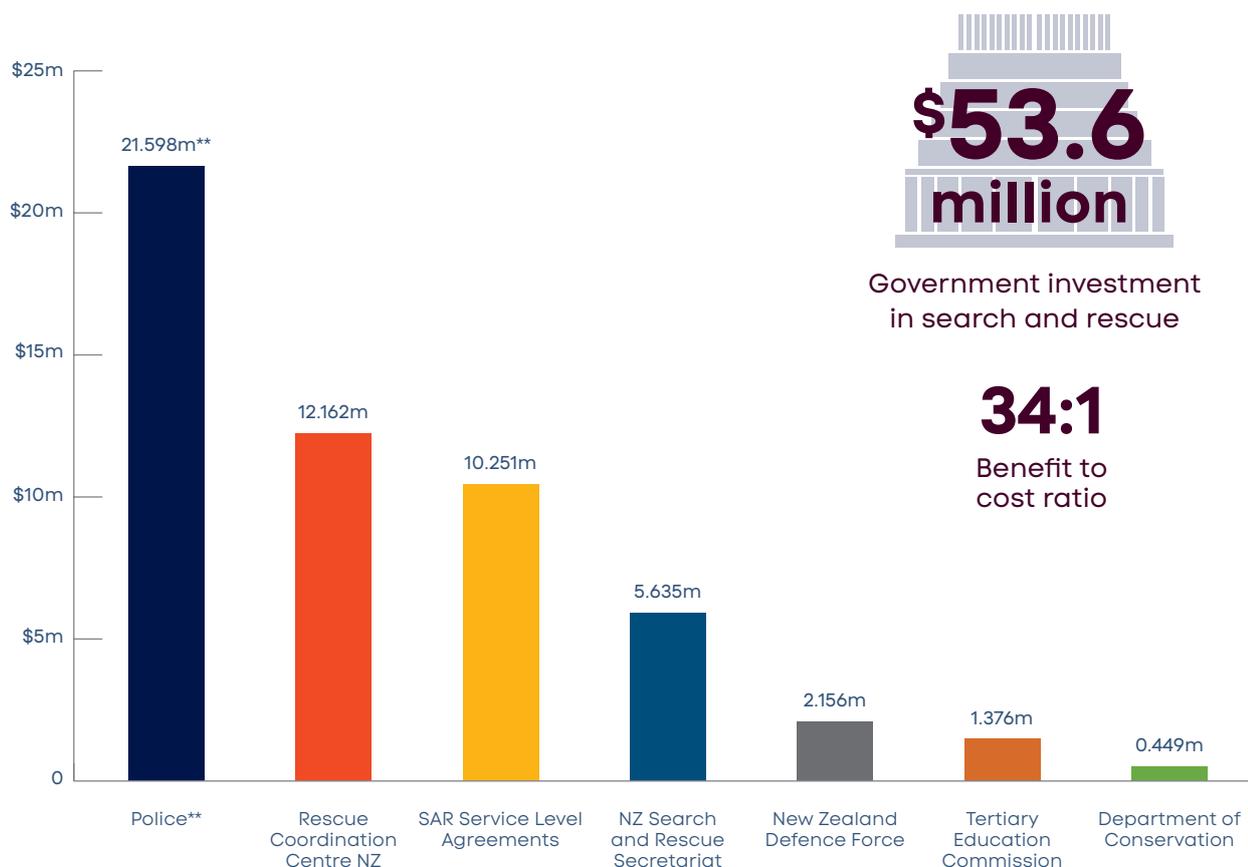


**Capable SAR people.** We seek to maximise the potential of our SAR people. We will work to ensure our people have access to appropriate training and ensure we conduct SAR activities competently and safely. We will collectively coordinate our standards, training, exercises and documentation. Knowledge will be shared without restriction and we will learn from each other and our experiences. We will also recognise and celebrate the dedication, courage and commitment of our people.



**SAR Prevention.** We seek an informed, responsible, adequately equipped and appropriately skilled public who are able to either avoid distress situations or survive them should they occur. Many organisations have a role to play with SAR prevention. Collectively, we will enhance personal responsibility through information, education, regulation, investigation and enforcement. We will collaborate with, inform, and contribute to partner organisations. When required we will enable, coordinate or lead public focused SAR preventative strategies and actions in order to reduce the number and/or the severity of SAR incidents within the New Zealand search and rescue region.

# Search and rescue funding



All figures subject to audit

\*\* The costings provided are known operational costs of SAR to Police. It is not a financial report and does not reflect total spend of NZ Police on SAR related matters. This includes Vote Police and Fuel Excise Duty funding.

## Total cost

The total cost of SAR to the Government varies each year, as operational costs change according to the number, length and type of SAR operations.

The full costs are not represented here, as it is difficult for some organisations to capture this information.

## How the sector is funded

Fuel Excise Duty paid by recreational boat users funds the NZSAR Secretariat, the five Service Level Agreements, two Memorandums of Understanding and approximately 69 percent of the Rescue Coordination Centre NZ's costs.

Other sources of funding for the sector include:

- Te Puna Tahua Lottery Grants Board
- Government Budget
- Community grants
- Donations and bequests
- Fundraising and partnerships.

## Putting a value on a life saved

The benefit of SAR activities is calculated based on the number of lives saved using the Value of Statistical Life, a monetary estimate of how much our society would be willing to pay to reduce the risk of a premature death. It captures intangible costs such as the emotional impact to family and friends resulting from the loss of a life.

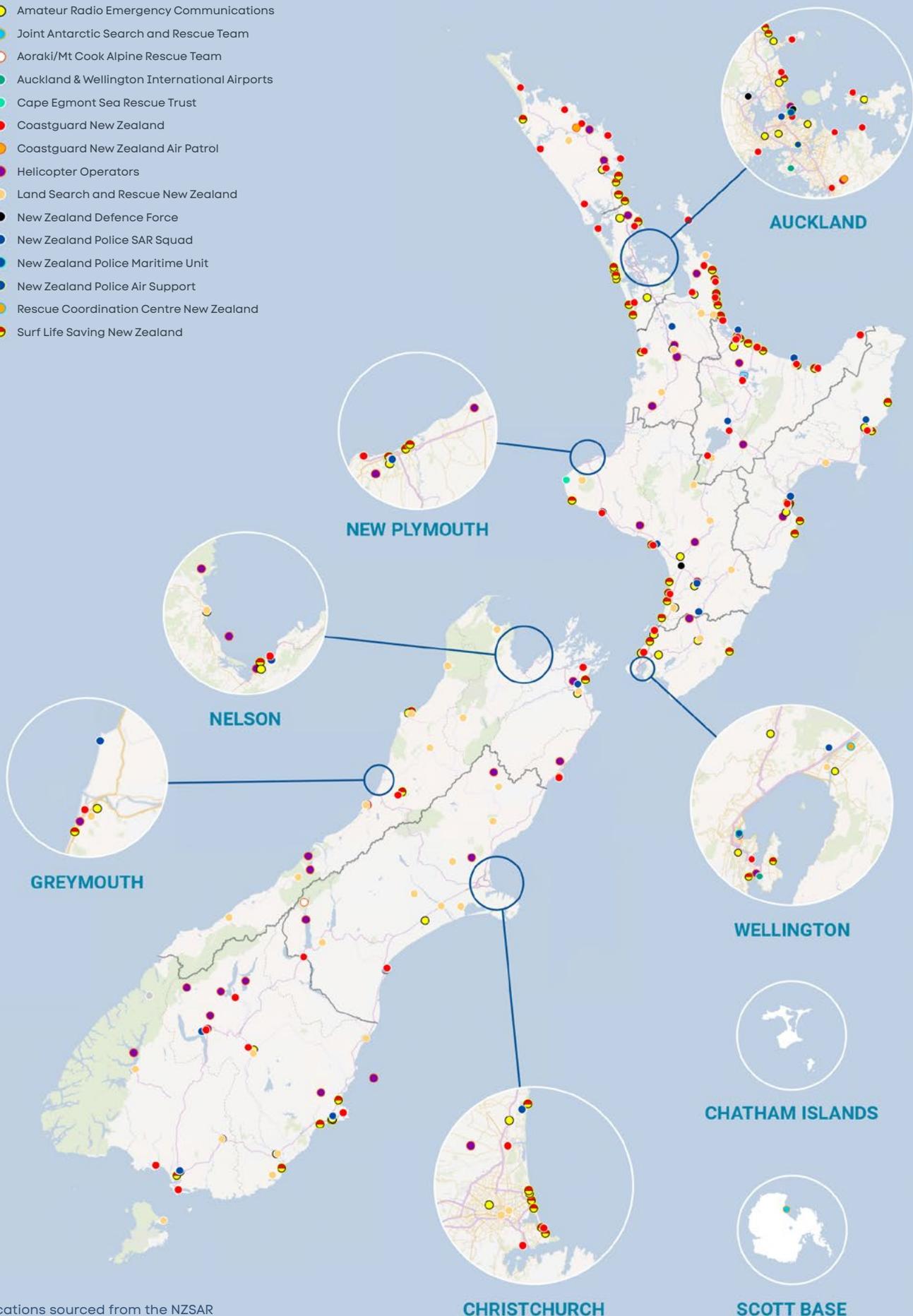
While normally used for road safety decisions, the Value of Statistical Life helps put a dollar value of the safety benefits from the operation of the SAR sector.

In 2021, the Value of Statistical Life was estimated at \$4.9 million, and we used 90 percent of this figure in our benefit to cost assessment. In late 2022, a new study was completed by the road sector and updated the value to \$13.3 million, and we now use the full figure.

We estimate the benefit to cost ratio of the SAR activities to be approximately 34:1.

# Where we are

- Amateur Radio Emergency Communications
- Joint Antarctic Search and Rescue Team
- Aoraki/Mt Cook Alpine Rescue Team
- Auckland & Wellington International Airports
- Cape Egmont Sea Rescue Trust
- Coastguard New Zealand
- Coastguard New Zealand Air Patrol
- Helicopter Operators
- Land Search and Rescue New Zealand
- New Zealand Defence Force
- New Zealand Police SAR Squad
- New Zealand Police Maritime Unit
- New Zealand Police Air Support
- Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand
- Surf Life Saving New Zealand



Locations sourced from the NZSAR Resource Database

# Our people

*Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini.*

*My success is not mine alone, but it is the strength of many.*

There are 11,095 people in New Zealand's search and rescue sector. A mix of paid and volunteer professionals, each plays a vital part in the mission.



**6,614**

Water



**3,544**

Land



**534**

Air



**403**

Coordination  
and support

**6%** paid full time • **5%** paid part time • **89%** unpaid volunteers

*“One of the best things about SAR is seeing people come together to help others in their time of need. The whole community rallies to help respond to serious operations and it creates a very special atmosphere.”*

*Surf Life Saving NZ volunteer*

*“Being involved with search and rescue means there's always something new and interesting going on, and playing my part in giving back to our communities is extremely satisfying.”*

*AREC volunteer*

*“I love the wide variety of search and rescue tasks that we get to do, and being part of a tight-knit and highly professional team.”*

*NZ Defence Force helicopter pilot*

*“There's so many different roles within search and rescue, which means there's something for just about anyone. You don't need to be an expert to start, just a positive attitude.”*

*Coastguard volunteer*

# Meet our SAR people

New Zealand's search and rescue sector is made up of highly trained, dedicated people from all walks of life. We asked some of them what they enjoy the most about search and rescue.



## **Beca Evans-Williams is in the SAR Squad for Waikuku Surf Lifesaving Club**

When I moved from Wales in 2007, I was excited to give something new a try. At first I thought the 'surf-club' was about getting lessons to be a surfer! I quickly figured out what it really meant, and got fully involved in training and competitions.

The board members at our club are always encouraging the members to upskill and look for new opportunities. When I was attending the Advanced Lifeguard School, my tutors mentioned the SAR squad as something I could aim for. I've been in the SAR squad for seven years now.

I really enjoy all the SAR training opportunities we have, as well as the chance to work alongside other volunteers from Coastguard and Land Search and Rescue. The fact that everyone is here in their own time means they are always ready to help guide you and teach you; it's a very supportive environment.

Being involved in SAR means I have the chance to help others and give back to the community. It is humbling when members of the public come up to offer help during our jobs, and being able to make a difference alongside people from the community we serve is really rewarding.



## **Blair Olsen is the president of Coastguard Dunedin**

In hindsight, it was easy to see how I ended up in Coastguard! My dad was a police dog-handler who spent some time with alpine search and rescue back in the 1980s. When I was growing up, I was always on the water, windsurfing in my own time plus sailing at school and with Sea Scouts.

When my own kids had grown up, I decided it was time to put something back into the community, and Coastguard seemed the perfect place to volunteer. I qualified as a crew member in 2020 and was lucky enough to be part of the crew that brought *Moana Rescue*, our new AC36 vessel, to Dunedin. As president, I'm also involved in project work, such as commissioning a new pontoon, so we can moor our vessel right beside our base building in the harbour.

The friends you make are a huge part of what keeps me volunteering – plus being able to access excellent operational, governance and leadership training opportunities through Coastguard. The icing on the cake is the feeling of pride you get after helping bring someone safely back to their family.



## **Nikki Fox is a Search and Rescue Officer at the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand**

After 27 years in the Navy, it was time for me to move on. I wanted a new job that used the skills I had in the maritime and aviation sectors, and it just so happened that the SAR Officer advert came up right when I started looking.

I was a Bridge and Warfare Officer in the Royal New Zealand Navy, spending time at sea and at the NZ Defence Force Strategic and Operational Headquarters. My husband worked on the P-3K2 Orion which did a lot of Category II SAR operations, and I also spent time as an aircraft controller on board our Navy frigates. All this gave me a pretty good baseline understanding of RCCNZ's role. A year into the SARO job, I'm relishing the opportunities to keep learning and adapting to the situations in the operations room. No two days are the same; we could get one alert or eight, and the variety keeps it very engaging.

The reward of helping people is what holds us all together in the operations room. It's the knowledge that we're all there when someone needs us and there's nowhere else they can turn, and I'm proud to be a part of that.



**Ashlea Farrar is an Able Seaman Combat Specialist onboard the Navy frigate HMNZS *Te Mana***

I was originally interested in joining the Army, but a friend in the Navy convinced me that the Navy would suit me better! Dad was always taking us out in the boat when we were kids, and I spent a lot of time surfing around Christchurch, so I guess I've always had a love of the ocean.

On the ship I'm involved in seamanship evolutions, such as slipping and berthing, small boat work and watchkeeping – all of which are utilised during SAR operations. During Cyclone Gabrielle I was at sea on HMNZS *Te Mana*, searching for a damaged catamaran in heavy weather. The Northern Rescue Helicopter spotted the boat, and soon I was in the big swells in a rigid-hull inflatable boat. The coxswain [boat driver] got us close, and then the Navy divers and I hauled the skipper onboard.

During a SAR operation we're allowed to accept more risk because someone else's life is on the line. Everyone on the ship was so willing to give their absolute best, no matter how small their contribution was. It was incredible to be a part of. You learn the most about yourself when you're in a high-stress situation like this. It's got to be some of the most rewarding work I've done in the Navy.



**Oliver Polson is a Field Team leader at Motueka Land Search and Rescue, and the SAR Officer for the New Zealand Canyoning Association**

I grew up in Waitomo and was into tramping, caving and rock climbing from an early age. I spent all my spare time exploring the bush out the back of our property, so when a SAR operation started up just over the fence, I was called in to assist the search teams with my local knowledge. The experience really opened my eyes to SAR; volunteering was the answer to the question of how I could give back to the outdoor communities that have given me so much. I've been a member of Cave SAR and teams in Waitomo, Marlborough, Te Aroha and Motueka for the 15 or so years since.

I began in Cave SAR and Field teams, growing my skills and experience until I became a team leader. In the last three years I've also been involved in coordination and development of Canyon SAR capability around the country.

The best thing about SAR is being able to provide a sense of closure to a family in distress, whether it is bringing home a loved one, or allowing the grieving process to begin. Plus, I enjoy being an advocate for outdoor safety, helping people do the right thing so fewer people need us in an emergency.



**Senior Constable Conrad Smith is the SAR coordinator for the Whanganui/ Ruapehu area**

I grew up in an outdoors family who fostered a love of tramping, hunting and the mountains. Dad was involved in SAR; the adventures he had and stories he told captivated me, and I knew I'd follow in his footsteps in some form or another.

After joining the Police, I cut my teeth up in Auckland and then jumped at the opportunity to transfer to National Park and be involved in SAR. Here we do quite a bit of work in the alpine environment, and I particularly enjoy the challenge of coordinating high-stakes operations with highly competent teams of volunteers.

I do enjoy the fact that SAR work is one part of policing where just about everyone is pleased to see you when you turn up! Plus working with really great people is fantastic. When it's two in the morning and you're exhausted, you just have to look across the table to see a room of willing volunteers. They're genuine folk who give up their time, day or night, in all weathers, to take calculated risks to help people they've never even met before. There's something special in that, and it's really humbling to be a part of.



# Investing to secure the sector

Since the large boost in Government Fuel Excise Duty funding in July 2020, the search and rescue sector has been able to significantly improve its resilience, infrastructure and strategies.

The ongoing Government investment in the SAR sector secures the funding of key staff positions, cross-sector engagement meetings, health and safety systems, SAR exercise costs, and the provision of core SAR services.

Many traditional community-based funding sources are at risk, due to the impacts of severe weather events. Government funding allows these SAR agencies to concentrate on delivering their critical functions, given the security of the funding.

Agency	Government investment in SAR for the year ended 30 June 2023
AREC	\$0.486m
Coastguard	\$5.607m
Department of Conservation	\$0.449m
Land Search and Rescue	\$2.661m
NZ Mountain Safety Council	\$0.389m
NZSAR Secretariat	\$5.635m
Police	\$1.100m
Surf Life Saving NZ	\$1.378m
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$17.705m</b>

## Surf Life Saving NZ

Surf Life Saving NZ has made significant progress with technology and communications projects. New phone apps for SAR squads and volunteer health and safety have begun rolling out, and additional personal locator beacons have been supplied to SAR squads. Volunteers are well supported with a new volunteer strategy launched, and online learning courses now available.

New staff have been employed to focus on the implementation of the National Digital Radio Network. A National SAR Summit has also been held, along with over 40 power craft maintenance and re-certification workshops.

## Coastguard

Coastguard continues its successful recruitment campaign for more volunteers, after a challenging summer of extreme weather events.

The operational qualification redesign process is ongoing, with recent focus on radio operator qualifications. Newly appointed staff across leadership, support, procurement and finance functions continue to enhance centralised support for Coastguard units across the country, reducing the administrative burden for volunteers.

Information technology systems and processes continue to be overhauled, with comprehensive security measures implemented and ongoing testing in place. Also, progress continues on the Integration Platform project involving the Coastguard website, customer portal, digital marketing and data advisory functions.



## Department of Conservation

The full-time Aoraki Mount Cook Alpine Rescue Team has facilitated two South Island and one North Island development workshops for other Alpine Cliff Rescue teams over the last year. They have also led a multi-agency alpine SAR exercise on Mount Ruapehu and conducted bespoke training support activities across the country.

A key SAR prevention achievement was the installation of a weather station at Empress Hut, located high in the Hooker valley. The publicly available current and historic weather data will support decision making by visitors, and along with another station for the upper Tasman Valley will inform avalanche forecasting and planning of SAR operations.

Specialist helicopter long-line equipment has also been purchased, improving flexibility and capacity for SAR operations.

The DOC-led Land Safety Forum has continued to meet regularly, enabling engagement and collaboration across more than 20 organisations with an interest in land safety.



## Land Search and Rescue

Group support staff continue to focus on easing non-operational burdens on local volunteer groups. They have continued supporting robust local governance structures that promote sustainability and performance.

Land Search and Rescue are working on programmes to secure new and expanded commercial funding streams as well as on projects to better recognise volunteer contributions. Ongoing work within the Safer Walking framework promotes safer walking strategies that can help reduce the number of people with a cognitive impairment from going missing.

Volunteer health, safety and wellbeing continue to be supported with the addition of member wellbeing safety checks and follow-ups as needed.



TOP  
Collateral from the Coastguard recruitment campaign.

MIDDLE  
Empress Hut weather station.

BELOW  
Land Search and Rescue volunteers.  
Image courtesy Brent Hollow.

## NZ Mountain Safety Council

Government investment continues to support avalanche forecasting and public communication for the New Zealand Avalanche Advisory.

Forecasts are compiled using data from human observations, as well as weather stations. This year, the Mountain Safety Council began testing the viability of deploying their own remote monitoring platform, where there is no existing hardware to leverage. Nelson Lakes was chosen as a test region, with a location that provides useful avalanche forecasting data, as well as a live video feed of conditions at Angelus Hut. This area is the site of many high-consequence incidents in recent years. The live feed is available at the visitor centre and online, enabling visitors to make better decisions prior to their trip, directly supporting SAR prevention.



## Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (AREC)

AREC are continuing their transition from a totally volunteer-run organisation to one with a small paid staff. They were a key contributor to the Police SAR radio repeaters replacement project and have continued to play a role in the technical training and introduction to service for the new equipment.

The Government investment supports the roll-out of comprehensive online member training packages and back-end IT infrastructure, as well as funding the AREC Summit and quarterly National Management meetings.

AREC have further developed their volunteer support mechanisms, through new employee assistance programmes, online member portals, improved health and safety processes, volunteer surveys and engagement roadshows across the country. Newly developed recruitment collateral and a complete website overhaul are two key enablers of an ongoing drive for more volunteers.



## Police

In late 2021, positions for 10 District SAR Assistant Coordinators and a team leader were established. The ongoing investment enables them to continue to support Police SAR Coordinators and SAR squads. Their roles include contributing to continual improvement of training delivery, better recording of data for demand planning and operational lessons management, assisting with the wellbeing of Police SAR staff, plus supporting Police engagement with the SAR sector and local iwi.



TOP  
Mountain Safety Council weather station  
at Angelus Hut. Image courtesy MSC.

MIDDLE  
AREC volunteers at a Dunedin SAR exercise.  
Image courtesy Paul Kelly.

BOTTOM  
Police coordination and support staff.

# Supporting frontline water safety

Ongoing Government investment helps to keep people safe on our coastlines, rivers, and lakes.



Coastguard and Surf Life Saving NZ provide a wide range of public safety, emergency prevention and rescue services for New Zealanders on, in and around the water. Since the significant Government funding boost three years ago, these two agencies have been able to spend less time on fundraising and devote more time to keeping the public safe.

In July 2020, \$45.368 million was allocated to frontline water safety, of which \$15.145 million was for the year ending 30 June 2023.

## Coastguard

Coastguard has used the funding for the maintenance and refurbishment of rescue vessels, land-based support vehicles, Coastguard bases and berths, plus improved personal protective equipment (PPE) for crew members. They have also been able to improve the effectiveness of their fundraising efforts through targeted marketing campaigns.

Initiative	Government investment in frontline water safety for the year ended 30 June 2023
Replace highest risk revenue	\$3.200m
National membership growth	\$0.160m
Operating funding for SAR equipment	\$2.000m
Operating funding for SAR PPE	\$0.300m
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5.660m</b>



## Surf Life Saving NZ

Surf Life Saving NZ has received funding that helps offset the cost of rescue services to local surf clubs. Funding has also been used for capital purposes, such as the upgrade and maintenance of surf club buildings. The ongoing Government investment has helped reduce their reliance on higher risk income, such as local gaming trusts.

Initiative	Government investment in frontline water safety for the year ended 30 June 2023
Club rescue service costs	\$5.000m
Operating funding for capital purposes	\$2.750m
Replacement of highest risk revenue	\$1.560m
Fundraising programme	\$0.175m
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9.485m</b>



TOP  
Coastguard in action.

MIDDLE  
Coastguard fundraising collateral.

BOTTOM  
A lifeguarded beach.



# Responding to Cyclone Gabrielle

As Cyclone Gabrielle hit the North Island between 12-16 February 2023, the search and rescue sector quickly deployed numerous people and assets to where they were needed the most. We spoke to a number of individuals from across the sector to hear about their first-hand experiences on the ground, in the air, and on the water.

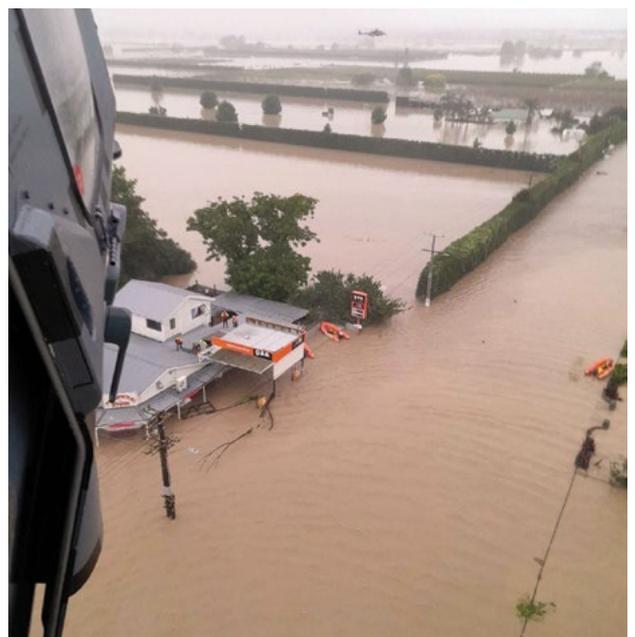
**Julian Tovey is a Senior Search and Rescue Officer at the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ).**

Early in the response to Cyclone Gabrielle, high-level discussions led to us being delegated responsibility to coordinate all rotary wing air support for those who needed immediate rescue. This meant the number of incidents grew from a handful to well over 100 in a few hours and we had to think outside the box to deal with the enormity of the event. In many cases, helicopters would identify more significant situations while on route to a task.

The night shift crew were amazing, making sense of what had happened during the first day and putting in good systems. They helped scale up our data capture and management systems, so that when day two arrived, collectively we were far better prepared to assist.

The two greatest challenges were communications and gaining accurate intelligence of the situation over a huge area. Helicopters equipped with TracPlus satellite messaging and Starlink internet were key. We were able to share real time imagery and geospatial information, as well as collaborate on complex task schedules directly with the crew. This capability was a game-changer; significantly improving our picture of the situation, as well as our ability to coordinate air assets efficiently at scale.

*"The two greatest challenges were communications and gaining accurate intelligence of the situation over a huge area."*



TOP  
Coastguard volunteers navigating a flooded orchard.  
Image courtesy Hawke's Bay Today / NZME.

BELOW  
Flooding as seen from the NH90 helicopter.  
Image courtesy Andrew Stewart NZDF.



**Hamish Ramsay is a pilot for the Hawke's Bay Rescue Helicopter Trust.**

I'd rescued a few people from rooftops in previous floods in Gisborne, but this was on a totally different scale. On the first day we were just reacting as best we could, racing against the rising floodwaters. I remember one tasking where I'd put the helicopter's skid on the roof of a house and the crewman assisted the residents in. Three or four minutes later when we returned to look for more survivors, their roof was a metre underwater. That day we worked almost non-stop and lots of our rescues were just in the nick of time. Many people were clinging to pets and possessions, and we had to make some difficult calls to leave them behind to fit all the people in.

It was challenging flying, with a low cloud base and lots of other helicopters nearby doing the same type of work. As the days went on, the urgent rescues transitioned to more deliberate tasks, like delivering food and supplies, checking up on isolated communities and so on. The Fire and Emergency New Zealand aviation controllers at Bridge Pa aerodrome did a great job, and our contribution quickly became well-organised once the shock of the first day was over.



**Fiona Bruins is a field team member for Land Search and Rescue Hawke's Bay.**

I'd been up since 3am, watching the water begin to pool around my house at Waipawa. By 5am I'd been asked if I was available to help with evacuations and by midday I was told to evacuate my own home, which sadly flooded.

The next couple of days I had no electronic communications with the outside world and was dealing with my own losses. The community here rallied around and the support I received, including from complete strangers, was deeply humbling. But I knew there were many others far worse off than me, so by the third day, I decided to join the response.

It was amazing seeing all the agencies come together with a common purpose. Our Land Search and Rescue teams spent days peering into huge piles of log slash and debris along the coastline and up rivers. In the Esk Valley, we trudged through thick, deep mud, through buried orchards and vineyards and witnessed houses that had been completely shunted off their foundations. The damage was beyond belief and incredibly heartbreaking, but there was nowhere else I'd rather have been, than doing what I could to help the community.

**TOP LEFT**

An NH90 helicopter and crew recover people from the rooftops of their homes in Esk Valley, Napier. Image courtesy NZDF.

**TOP RIGHT**

Surf Life Saving NZ IRBs during Cyclone Gabrielle. Image courtesy Jimmy Bowden, Hawke's Bay Surf Life Saving NZ SAR Squad.



*“Only a few hours after we launched, the water had dropped more than five metres, stranding our boats on silt-laden roads and paddocks.”*

**Jimmy Bowden is a senior member of the Hawke’s Bay SAR Squad for Surf Life Saving NZ.**

The weekend before the cyclone hit, we prepared and positioned four inflatable rescue boats in Hastings and four in Napier. In the early hours of the morning, we were tasked to the Esk River valley and headed out with very little idea about how severe the situation would prove to be.

In the chaos, we began rescuing people who had clung to hedges and rooftops through the night. We knew there couldn’t be any helicopter support because of the low cloud, and communications back to base were cut off. This meant relying on the experience and judgement within our squad to make good decisions when so many lives hung in the balance. Every single person we rescued was grateful for our help, especially the woman who jumped on our IRB with a dog and eight puppies!

The immensity of the flood pulse was difficult to comprehend. Only a few hours after we launched, the water had dropped more than five metres, stranding our boats on silt-laden roads and paddocks.

Later that day we were re-deployed to Pakowhai, rescuing dozens of people from rooftops well into the evening. For many of us, this was just the first of three intense days of SAR operations in a row.

*“I’d experienced large-scale operations after the Kaikoura earthquakes, and many urgent SAR operations, but never anything this urgent at such a massive scale.”*

**Squadron Leader Andrew Stewart is a senior NH90 helicopter pilot at No. 3 Squadron, Royal New Zealand Air Force.**

After some initial work in the Esk Valley, we were tasked to the Pakowhai area. There we began rescuing countless people stranded on rooftops, alongside many responders from other emergency services on foot, in small boats, rescue helicopters and vehicles all operating in poor weather conditions. I’d experienced large-scale operations after the Kaikoura earthquakes, and many urgent SAR operations, but never anything this urgent at such a massive scale.

Teamwork on the front line was incredible. A crew happened to notice a rescue team with Surf Life Saving NZ boats waving from a rooftop, hand-signaling for a stretcher. One of our NH90’s winched one down, which they used to extract a man with an injured back through a first-floor window. They then winched the man from the roof to take him to safety.

In the days and weeks following the cyclone, we regularly had five or six of our eight NH90 helicopters deployed away from home base. In February, we surpassed our record number of monthly flying hours for the fleet. We could only do that because of the huge effort from our maintenance team working round the clock to keep our helicopters in the air.

Cyclone Gabrielle. Image courtesy Hamish Ramsay, Hawke’s Bay Rescue Helicopter Trust.



**Matt Harvey is a Skipper and an Operations Manager in the Incident Management Team for Coastguard Hawke’s Bay.**

We are trained and experienced in ocean rescues in our 11.7m rigid hull inflatable, *Celia Knowles Rescue*, but when the Tutaekuri River flash flooded and we were tasked to help, we had to do some quick thinking. Several of our volunteers are highly experienced operating jet skis, and we noticed one near our base. We did a risk analysis, considering the skills of our people, the jet ski capability and the conditions, before deciding to proceed. The owner agreed to lend it to us and off we went to Links Road, where a scene of chaos and carnage greeted us.

The river carried away cars, raged through homes and stranded their inhabitants. We began searching house to house and ferrying people to shore. Just as the conditions were deteriorating, members of the public arrived in a small Zodiac, which was more stable in the flood waters. We transitioned to a support and coordination role, relaying information to the Zodiac team, ferrying rescued people in trucks to a safe zone at a nearby café and providing them basic welfare.

We were all very grateful to be able to apply our Coastguard training, skills and experience to this extreme situation; something we will never forget.

The experiences recounted here are just a small snapshot of the incredible effort made by SAR agencies in the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle. The NZSAR Council extends its heartfelt thanks to everyone in the sector who was involved in the cyclone response.

**Cyclone Gabrielle statistics**



**3,745**

volunteer hours recorded by SAR agencies



**1,537**

people assisted by SAR people



**250+**

helicopter taskings done by RCCNZ in three days

Land Search and Rescue teams searching silt-laden areas. Image courtesy Land Search and Rescue Hawke’s Bay.



# Supporting our volunteers

Across New Zealand, from Kaitaia to Rakiura / Stewart Island, are nearly 10,000 highly trained search and rescue volunteers. They are from all walks of life but share the common goal of assisting people in need.

Volunteers make up 89 percent of the 11,095 people in New Zealand's SAR sector – one of the highest rates of volunteer SAR involvement in the world. Supporting our sector's volunteers is a high priority for the NZSAR Secretariat and is key to achieving the NZSAR Council's goal of capable SAR people.

## Managing volunteers in the SAR sector

All the volunteer managers at the four non-governmental organisations involved in SAR – Coastguard, Land Search and Rescue, Surf Life Saving NZ and Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (AREC) – meet on a monthly basis. These meetings are facilitated by the NZSAR Secretariat and provide a forum for sharing issues and developing ideas for attracting and retaining volunteers.

In September 2022, Surf Life Saving NZ hosted staff from AREC, Coastguard, and Land Search and Rescue in Tauranga for an in-person volunteer managers meeting. The Backcountry Trust, Tūao Aotearoa Volunteering New Zealand, and Hato Hone St John presented to the group about their respective volunteer management strategies. A highlight of the workshop was a tour of the local surf clubs and a demonstration of SAR resources and equipment.

## The 2023 Volunteer Study

In 2023, the NZSAR Secretariat commissioned an updated volunteer study from Tūao Aotearoa Volunteering New Zealand. The new report noted that significant progress has been made against the recommendations from the original 2019 report. It also included new information about volunteer demographics and volunteering trends sourced from Tatauranga Aotearoa Stats NZ and Tūao Aotearoa Volunteering New Zealand's State of Volunteering Reports.

The new report proposed several recommendations on how to best manage and support the SAR sector's volunteer workforce.

Some of the recommendations were:

- Continue working with the four SAR NGOs to implement their volunteer workforce strategies.
- Address barriers to access and participation for new and younger volunteers.
- Ensure that whānau are adequately recognised for their role in supporting volunteers.
- Make it easier for prospective volunteers to find information online.

The 2023 Volunteer Study is available on the NZSAR website: [nzsar.govt.nz/sar-system-support/sar-research/](https://nzsar.govt.nz/sar-system-support/sar-research/)

| The September 2022 Volunteer Managers workshop.

# A special outdoor safety video

*Beautiful wild, unpredictable: Be AdventureSmart in Aotearoa* was a collaborative effort between the NZSAR Secretariat, the Department of Conservation and Air New Zealand.



*Beautiful, wild, unpredictable: Be AdventureSmart in Aotearoa* is available on our YouTube channel: [youtube.com/@nzsar](https://youtube.com/@nzsar)

The three-minute video, released in December 2022, shows a young wāhine bringing her overseas boyfriend back home and sharing safety advice as they explore our wild places. It is part of the 'Be prepared' pou (pillar) of the Tiaki Promise tourism industry initiative.

While primarily developed for viewing on Air New Zealand's in-flight entertainment system, the video has also been shared widely within the tourism sector, including on tourism provider websites and screens at tourist attractions. Filmed in Fiordland National Park and Mt Maunganui, it features cameos from Department of Conservation staff and Surf Life Saving NZ volunteers. The video project was also profiled in the February 2023 issue of *Kia Ora* magazine.

The video was designed to inform international tourists, who often do not realise that New Zealand's outdoor environment is different from that in their home country. This lack of knowledge puts them at risk in the outdoors when they travel in Aotearoa. As a product designed for the tourist market, the video reflects a positive journey rather than dwelling on dangers.

The key messages in the video were based on the SAR sector's outdoor safety codes. Fourteen pieces of advice from the Land, Water and Boating Safety codes were distilled into six key messages for the video. The Land Safety and Safer Boating forums were consulted during the process and their feedback was invaluable.

To our knowledge, this is the first mass-market recreational safety video grounded in Te Ao Māori. We engaged a kaihautū, Rob Hewitt (Ngāti Kahungunu), who worked closely with the cultural advisors for Tiaki and the hapū in the various filming locations. His work was integral in incorporating authentic tikanga into the story – including opening with a karakia and ending with shared kai and a hongī.

As well as our flagship three-minute video, we created 15-second clips of each key message. These were optimised for social media, and to drive traffic to the AdventureSmart website. The shorter clips have been well received on social media, with over 4,200 visits to the website over the campaign period.



## Reach of the Tiaki video collateral



**1,800**

views on Air New Zealand



**40,000**

views on DOC digital channels

**1,900**

views on NZSAR digital channels

**3.3 million**

impressions across Facebook and Instagram

TOP  
Edvin Qvist-Weghagen and Lucy Williams (Waikato-Tainui) during filming at the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre.

BELOW  
The video project was featured in Air New Zealand's *Kia Ora* magazine.



# Training our people

Training supports the NZSAR Council’s goal of a capable search and rescue sector. The NZSAR Secretariat funds the delivery of more than 100 courses annually, strengthening our culture of collective training, knowledge sharing and learning from one another.

## Sector training providers

In 2022, training courses were delivered by two providers: Tai Poutini Polytechnic and Land Search and Rescue Training. Tai Poutini delivered the multi-agency management and coordination courses, while Land Search and Rescue Training delivered courses focused on the skills and competencies relevant to land operational roles.

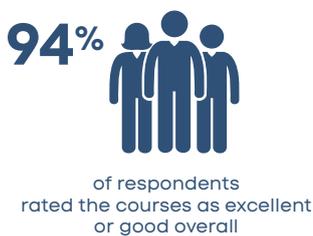
With the establishment of Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology, the NZSAR Secretariat undertook a procurement process in late 2022 to select the training provider to deliver training from 1 January 2023.

All courses from 1 January 2023 were delivered by Land Search and Rescue Training.

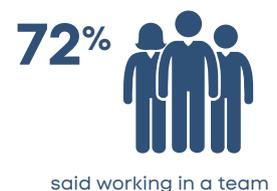
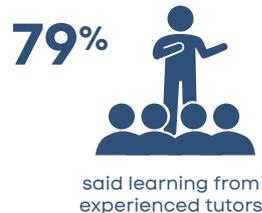
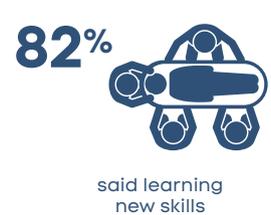
## Measuring the effectiveness of training

Every year the NZSAR Secretariat commissions an independent survey to gather feedback from course participants. The most recent survey, conducted between 22 February and 1 April 2023, asked participants about their experience with courses attended in the 2022 calendar year. Survey response numbers were impacted by the Auckland Anniversary weekend floods and Cyclone Gabrielle.

### We asked participants to rate various aspects of the training courses.



### We asked participants what the best thing was about SAR training.



| Search teams at the Tasman District SAREX. Image courtesy Dwayne Lohmann.

# Operating together effectively

The Northland District search and rescue exercise provided an excellent opportunity for multiple agencies to work together to respond to a complex scenario on land and water.

It was a cold, grey day when disaster struck the vessel *Moontide* while returning to Whangārei Harbour. A fire on board led to a gas bottle exploding, causing the 16-metre boat to sink and her 10 passengers to end up adrift in the surrounding waters. Two who made it to shore at Peach Cove Hut were able to call for help via a broken cellphone conversation – and at that point, the Northland District SAREX was underway on a Friday afternoon in late September.

Designed to test interoperability in a range of environments and taskings, the activity involved 85 people from eight different agencies.

The initial response began with coastal searches conducted on foot and by boat with members from Land Search and Rescue, Police, Surf Life Saving NZ and Fire and Emergency NZ. The first survivors were evacuated via a stretcher carry over a difficult route, which continued well into the night.

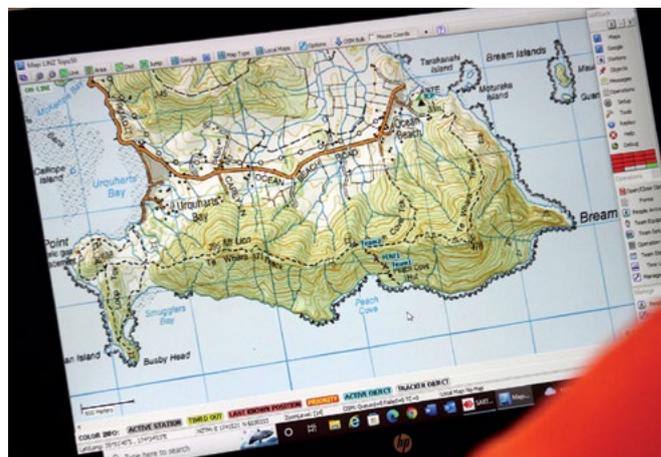
“During the debrief the participants reiterated how important it is to have regular training involving different agencies, so everyone understands each other’s capabilities and limitations,” says Sergeant Shane Turner, the exercise planner.

Contributing organisations were encouraged to assign less-experienced people to leadership roles, and mentors were assigned to maximise the training benefit and to provide a safety net for learners.

The Rescue Coordination Centre NZ conducted drift modelling to help narrow down the search area. Combined with intelligence gained from the first survivors recovered, the Incident Management Team created search taskings to look for the remaining passengers. A thorough marine search was conducted by two Coastguard vessels, while inflatable rescue boats crewed by Surf Life Saving NZ and NZ Customs personnel covered the inshore and coastal search areas. Meanwhile, Land Search and Rescue teams scoured the dense bush nearby.

Expecting an influx of injured people, Hato Hone St John deployed a Major Incident Support Team, which received the survivors in their new inflatable triage tent.

The Police Duty Inspector for Northland also contributed to the exercise, receiving briefings and offering advice to the Incident Management Team ahead of a simulated media interview session.



As the SAREX continued through Saturday, inclement weather prevented the Northland Rescue Helicopter and Coastguard Air Patrol aircraft from assisting with the operations. The weather was also taking a toll on search teams. “We had real-time considerations of managing the cumulative fatigue and additional risks caused by the tough conditions,” says Shane. “They say it’s not training unless it’s raining, but the wellbeing of our people was at the forefront of our minds. So when the weather hadn’t improved by midday Saturday, we decided that our people had spent enough time practising operating in dismal conditions.”

Also cancelled due to poor weather were Sunday’s workshops. Scheduled to be run by Surf Life Saving NZ, topics included operating with inflatable rescue boats, recovering people from difficult, rocky shorelines and learning how to read rips. However, the time was spent on a more thorough debrief and lessons management process.

Despite the difficulties presented by the weather, the diverse range of agencies, personnel and capabilities were able to operate effectively in a complex environment, responding to a challenging scenario.

On 18 November, just a few weeks after the SAREX, many of the participating agencies conducted two separate SAR operations in the same area. In the first, a missing free-diver was successfully found at Peach Cove Hut, and in the second, a tramper was rescued from a waterfall after getting lost en route to the same hut.

Both operations ran seamlessly and were a perfect opportunity to cement the learnings and relationships made during the recent SAREX.



# Farewell to the P-3K2 Orion

In January 2023, the Orion fleet retired after diligently contributing to New Zealand’s long-range maritime search and rescue capability for more than 55 years.

The six Orions of the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) No. 5 Squadron collectively flew 147,978 hours in support of airborne surveillance, reconnaissance, SAR, disaster relief, security and stability operations around the globe.

Although New Zealand’s areas of economic interest, exclusive economic zone, the South Pacific and the Southern Ocean were their primary operating areas, the P-3 Orion fleet operated over every continent, covering missions from Antarctica to the Arctic, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and through Europe and North America.

The Orion was able to conduct SAR operations across New Zealand’s 30 million square kilometre SAR Region, with an 1,850-kilometre radius of action that included four hours on station. To conserve fuel, the crew of 12 could shut down up to two engines during flight and remain airborne for up to 15 hours.

The last SAR mission performed by the Orion was on 17 January 2023, finding two Kiribati fishermen missing for six days. The Orion fleet has been replaced by four P-8A Poseidon aircraft, located at RNZAF Base Ohakea in the Manawatu.

From 1 July 2018 to their retirement on 31 January 2023, the P-3K2 Orion was used for SAR for

**555**

flying hours over a total 72 days, and 50 SAR operations.

 A photograph of a P-3K2 Orion aircraft on a runway. The aircraft is viewed from the front, with its four propellers visible. A ground crew member in an orange safety vest is standing near the front landing gear. The background shows a clear sky and a flat horizon.

| The P-3K2 Orion in action. Images courtesy NZDF.

# Measuring our sector's carbon footprint

In 2023 the search and rescue sector's carbon emissions were measured for the first time. The data, covering the period between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022, will be used as a baseline for future reporting.

SAR operations are time-critical and often involve saving lives, and there is no intent to prioritise or reduce SAR responses because of carbon emissions. The environmental impact of the sector must be balanced against the life-saving impact of the services we provide.

Engineering consulting firm Lumen was engaged to measure the sector's carbon emissions and provide recommendations on how carbon emissions could be managed and reduced in the future.

Data was collected from Maritime NZ, Police, the NZ Defence Force, Coastguard, Surf Life Saving NZ, Land Search and Rescue, Amateur Radio Emergency Communications and the NZSAR Secretariat.

Collectively, the SAR sector is estimated to have emitted 4,686 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>-e) in the year ended 30 June 2022. This figure will be used as a baseline for future reporting years.

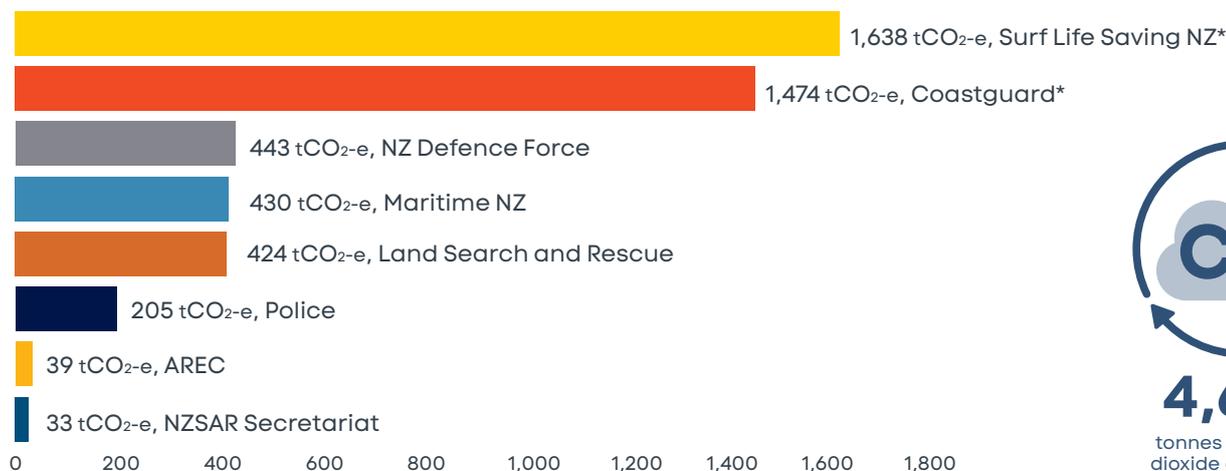


Nearly two-thirds of the SAR sector's carbon emissions relate to the use of petrol and diesel fuels in vehicles and boats. Aviation fuel used in helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft accounts for just under one-third of emissions. The remainder of the sector's emissions relate to electricity used for powering buildings, and gas used for heating.

Several options to reduce emissions were identified, however the importance of helicopters, boats and other vehicles in SAR operations means that there is little room to reduce emissions with existing technologies. Feasible options for the near future include reducing non-essential travel and using lower-emissions vehicles for non-operational transport.

The NZSAR Secretariat will continue to measure the sector's emissions annually. We have also committed to supporting Coastguard, Surf Life Saving NZ, Land Search and Rescue and Amateur Radio Emergency Communications to implement their sustainability strategies.

## Carbon emissions by agency for the year ended 30 June 2022



\* includes frontline water safety services

Maritime NZ, Police and the NZ Defence Force are required to report their carbon emissions through the Carbon Neutral Government Programme (CNGP). The information reported here does not add to, or double up on, the information these organisations have reported to the CNGP.

| SAR assets at an exercise in Milford Sound. Image courtesy Otago Surf Life Saving SAR Squad.



# Research insights informing our work

The NZSAR Secretariat’s research programme provides valuable data and insights that are used across a range of workstreams, including technology, prevention and communications.

## 2022 Environmental Scan

The 2022 Environmental Scan considered the trends and developments that affect the supply and demand of SAR services in New Zealand. Some of the key findings were:

- Improved mobility and accessibility to the outdoors is driving increased participation.
- Economic pressures may contribute to poor preparation and decision-making.
- Behaviour change campaigns need to be highly targeted towards the most at-risk groups.
- The impacts of climate change are creating a more complex and challenging SAR operational environment.
- Emerging technology is leading to less time spent in the search phase of SAR operations.

18%



of people who have done a day hike in the last 12 months carried a distress beacon

## Distress beacons baseline research

In October 2022, before our summer marketing campaign started, we surveyed nearly 4,000 people about distress beacons. We wanted to find out why people carried beacons – and why they didn’t – during certain activities.

The survey results revealed that people undertaking high-risk activities like packrafting, backcountry skiing, alpine climbing and hunting regularly carried distress beacons. However, day hikers rarely carried distress beacons, despite day hiking being the most popular activity among those surveyed.

As a result, the 2022-23 distress beacons behaviour change campaign was targeted towards day hikers and focused on hiring rather than buying.

37%



of people who have been on an overnight tramp in the last 12 months carried a distress beacon

## Land based recreation survey

In March 2023, the NZSAR Secretariat launched a quarterly survey that tracks New Zealanders' participation, attitudes and behaviours when doing land-based recreational activities. Based on the Recreational Boating Monitor run by Maritime New Zealand, the survey will allow us to track trends in participation and preparedness over time. The Kantar-run survey also asks respondents about their interactions with SAR services.

The first survey covered the period March to May 2023 and had 841 respondents, with the following trends identified:

- Day hikers, mountain bikers and trail runners are the most at-risk groups, as they go into the outdoors often, frequently go alone, and carry fewer emergency supplies than other outdoor recreators.
- Foraging is increasing in popularity, and foragers often carry little, if any, emergency supplies.
- Overnight hikers and canyoneers are more likely to check the weather across multiple platforms.
- Most outdoor recreators leave their intentions verbally with friends or family.
- Outdoor recreators who have been exposed to SAR incidents – either themselves or via friends and family – tend to be better prepared afterwards.

The survey will be repeated each quarter and adjusted for seasonal trends.



10% of survey respondents know someone who has been the subject of a SAR incident



16% of trail runners surveyed didn't take any communications device with them on their runs

## Distress beacons campaign evaluation

Several different methods were used to evaluate the reach of the 2022-23 distress beacons behaviour change campaign, including the Land Based Recreation Survey and website metrics.

This year's behaviour change campaign focused on getting day hikers and hunters to hire a distress beacon for their trip. The ads were filmed on the South Coast of Wellington and depicted a rescue in progress, featuring volunteers from Land Search and Rescue Wellington and the NZ Deerstalkers Association.

17%

of survey respondents said they have seen at least one ad from the campaign

59%

of survey respondents said the ads would encourage them to take a distress beacon



### LEFT

Day hikers were identified as a high-risk group in our research.

### RIGHT

An ad from the distress beacons digital marketing campaign.



## Honouring bravery and community service

"On a personal note, thank you. Thank you for what you did for regions like ours on the East Coast, Hawke's Bay and Wairoa. We absolutely could not have gotten through that period without you, and without the organisations you represent."

With these heartfelt words, the Hon Kiri Allan, Associate Minister for Transport, welcomed recipients and guests to the 2022 NZ Search and Rescue Awards. Two Gold Awards and seven Certificates of Achievement were presented during the ceremony, which was held in the Grand Hall at Parliament on 16 May 2023.

As well as the sector's response to Cyclone Gabrielle, Minister Allan acknowledged the psychological toll of SAR, which was especially poignant with the tragic loss of Fire and Emergency NZ volunteer firefighters Dr Dave Van Zwanenberg and Craig Stevens during the Auckland Anniversary floods.

"I want to acknowledge your colleagues and your families, who sit behind you all to provide that wrap-around wing of aroha, that korowai, that cloak of love to be able to collect you, whilst you no doubt reflect on some of the things you have experienced on our collective behalf."

*Congratulations to all our Award winners for 2022!*



## Gold Award – Operational

*Kotahi te aho ka whati; ki te kāpuia e kore e whati*

*One strand of flax is easy to break, but many strands together will stand strong*

The NZ Search and Rescue Gold Award (Operational) honours the people, groups or organisations who have made a very significant contribution through their work on a specific search and rescue operation in 2022. The recipients of the Gold Award have performed outstanding work, going above and beyond their normal duties.



**Northern Rescue Helicopters**

**Northland Police SAR Squad**

**Police National Dive Squad**

**Maritime NZ Rescue Coordination Centre**

**The crew of Florence Nightingale**

**The crew of Pacific Invader**

**Kobe O'Neill**

For the rescue of 10 people from the vessel *Enchanter* near North Cape / Otou between 20-21 March 2022.

On 20 March, 2022, the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) received a distress alert from the *Enchanter*, a fishing vessel with ten occupants which capsized east of North Cape / Otou. RCCNZ coordinated a massive search and rescue operation that lasted for 46 hours in strong winds, large swells, heavy rain, and thick clouds.

The Whangārei Police SAR Squad provided critical shore-based support, while the Northern Rescue Helicopters performed extremely difficult night-time winch recoveries of five people. Senior deckhand Kobe O'Neill retrieved the distress beacon and kept everyone calm at the scene.

Over the next two days, five men who did not survive were located and recovered, thanks to the crews of *Florence Nightingale* and *Pacific Invader*, as well as the Police National Dive Squad. Their actions meant that all who were on board the *Enchanter* were accounted for, and the deceased could be returned to their families.

In extreme conditions, the determined and dedicated efforts of those involved in the search and rescue operation resulted in five lives being saved.

The NZSAR Council would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the other agencies who contributed to this significant search and rescue operation, including the Auckland Rescue Helicopter Trust, the crew of *Katrina* and *Kie La*, HMNZS *Taupō*, No. 5 Squadron RNZAF, the fuel tanker operators, No. 40 Squadron RNZAF, Land Search and Rescue, Coastguard, Surf Life Saving NZ, and Skywork Helicopters.



## Gold Award – Support

*He kotuku rerenga tahi  
A white heron flies once*

The NZ Search and Rescue Gold Award (Support) honours the individual who has made a very significant contribution through their work over a sustained period. The recipient of the Gold Award (Support) has performed outstanding work that has had a marked impact on the search and rescue sector.



### **John Munro**

#### **Locator Beacons New Zealand**

**For his service and commitment to search and rescue.**

John Munro has played a significant role in making personal locator beacons accessible to New Zealanders.

He became the Chairperson of the Southland Locator Beacons Trust in 1997 and was instrumental in the initial development of New Zealand's first personal locator beacon hire agency, which now operates as Locator Beacons New Zealand.

John spent countless hours raising awareness of beacons by speaking to user and community groups to get the message out that beacons were finally affordable and accessible. He has been a trusted face for many who might struggle with accessing the technology.

Today, the charitable company is the largest personal locator beacon hire agency in New Zealand, with over 500 units available to rent across 89 outlets. This includes every store of outdoor retail company Macpac. More than 6,000 hires have been made since this initiative began three years ago.

John is well respected by the public and members of the search and rescue sector for his dedication to making beacons accessible to all.



## Certificate of Achievement – Operational



### **Aoraki Mount Cook Alpine Rescue Team**

#### **Otago Rescue Helicopter**

For the rescues of two climbing groups from Aoraki / Mount Cook between 11-16 September 2022.

The first operation, on 11 September, was the rescue of two climbers who were stranded at 3,500m near the summit of Aoraki / Mount Cook.

The second, on 16 September, was for the rescue of an injured climber – part of a group of three – from 3,350m on the Sheila Face of Aoraki / Mount Cook.

Both winch rescue operations were extremely difficult and technical, and conducted at high altitude in very cold conditions. The rescuers drew on their combined professionalism and expertise to manage these operations in a high-risk alpine environment.



### **No. 5 Squadron Royal New Zealand Air Force**

For the search for two missing boats near Kiribati on 23 May 2022.

On 17 May 2022 a small boat was reported overdue near Kiribati. On 22 May, a second small boat was reported missing nearby.

A P-3K2 Orion of No. 5 Squadron was tasked on 23 May. After a full day's searching, they located the first missing boat. While searching the vicinity for a larger vessel to assist, they located the second missing boat. All seven occupants of the boats were saved.



### **Pauanui Surf Life Saving Club**

**Paid Lifeguard Service – Tairua**

**Paid Lifeguard Service – Pauanui**

### **Pauanui / Tairua SAR Squad**

**Waikato District Police**

**Coastguard Tairua-Pauanui**

For the rescue of three adults and two children from the Tairua Harbour bar on 5 January 2022.

On 5 January 2022 a boat carrying five people overturned on the Tairua Harbour bar. Lifeguards quickly responded and discovered two adults attempting to rescue a third adult and two children, who were trapped. The two children were freed quickly.

The Coastguard vessel *Pauanui Rescue* arrived and with the lifeguards, righted the overturned boat and recovered the trapped adult.

Three helicopters transported the adult and two children to hospital, where the adult sadly died.



### **Dunedin Land Search and Rescue**

**Fiordland Land Search and Rescue**

**Wakatipu Land Search and Rescue**

**Southern Lakes Helicopters**

**Wanaka Land Search and Rescue**

**Canyon / Swiftwater Team**

### **Southern District Police**

**Police National Dive Squad**

**Southland AREC**

**Milford Sound Volunteer Fire Brigade**

**Paul Rogers**

For the search for a missing tramper near Milford Sound / Piopiotahi between 27-31 March 2022.

On 27 March 2022 an experienced solo tramper failed to return from climbing Devil's Armchair, a 1627m peak near Milford Sound.

A complex five-day search took place in terrain ranging from sub-alpine tops to near-vertical Fiordland bush and a deep river gorge.

The operation involved alpine cliff rescue, tracking dogs, boat searching, canyon rescue, subalpine field teams, plus helicopters using night-vision goggles and thermal imaging. The missing person was eventually located, but sadly had not survived. He was recovered in a challenging team effort from the Giant Gate River gorge.



## Certificate of Achievement – Support



**Detective Senior Sergeant John Wilson**  
**New Zealand Police**  
**WanderSearch Rotorua**  
**Rotorua Land Search and Rescue**

For his service and commitment to search and rescue.

Detective Senior Sergeant John Wilson has spent more than 20 years serving the Bay of Plenty search and rescue community.

John has improved the region's search and rescue capabilities by supporting individuals and teams as well as innovating with equipment and resources.

He was instrumental in establishing Water Rescue Squads in Rotorua in 2005 and 2009 and introducing the WanderSearch technology to the region in 2008.

John served as the Rotorua Police search and rescue coordinator and mentored upcoming generations of search and rescue professionals as Chair of Rotorua Land Search and Rescue.

Throughout the region, John is held in high regard by local iwi and the search and rescue community for his passion, drive, and commitment.



**Senior Constable Peter Cunningham**  
**New Zealand Police**

For his service and commitment to search and rescue.

For over 40 years, Peter Cunningham has been a loyal and consistent contributor to search and rescue in the Wairarapa.

Beginning as a teenage search and rescue volunteer, Peter joined the Police in the late 1990s. He quickly joined the Wairarapa Police search and rescue squad, becoming a highly dependable member. Peter is quick to volunteer for whatever needs doing, from mundane tasks to incident management roles.

Peter consistently attends Wairarapa Land Search and Rescue meetings and events whether on duty or not and volunteers his plumbing skills to help maintain the Land Search and Rescue base building.

His loyal dedication to search and rescue has earned him the respect of his colleagues and local search and rescue volunteers alike.



**Rosie Musters**  
**Coastguard New Zealand Tautiaki Moana Aotearoa**

For her service and commitment to search and rescue.

Rosie's contribution to Coastguard, both locally and nationally, over more than two decades of volunteering is exceptional.

Rosie joined the Coastguard in 2002, where she established and ran the Coastguard Air Patrol for the upper South Island. In 2013, she transitioned to volunteering on rescue vessels. She is an experienced sailor and head of Coastguard Nelson's training arm, where she trains and assesses volunteers from their first visit to vessel master.

Rosie also provides public training as a tutor through Coastguard's Boating Education arm. She is an incident manager for her unit and other local SAR agencies and is highly regarded for her efforts in recruiting, training, and mentoring volunteers, especially women.

# Secretariat Director's report



Duncan Ferner  
Director  
NZSAR Secretariat

Recently I came across the whakataukī 'He toka tū moana', meaning 'a rock standing steadfast in the ocean'. The events of the last year have felt like a storm at times – devastating weather events and a substantial increase in SAR operations – however it seems to me the SAR sector has stood firm like a rock against these challenges.

## **The increased Government investment into SAR organisations has enabled us to become a more capable and resilient sector.**

We now have better systems across the board for wellbeing, volunteer recognition, equipment, and training. Cross-agency collaboration and cooperation is increasingly embedded as our way of working. The recent extension of this investment to 30 June 2025 means that many of the initiatives started in the last three years will continue for some time to come.

Training has been a large focus area for the last 12 months, including the planning of Exercise Whakarauora Tangata, our nationally significant SAR exercise series. We also co-funded many Police District SAR exercises, and conducted eight Rauora III exercises where significant SAR risks were exercised to test our readiness. These exercises are very effective at bringing SAR people together to test their skills in a complex setting, create relationships, practice plans and provide assurance that we have the requisite capabilities to deliver SAR services for a wide range of scenarios. We also moved to a single skill acquisition training provider during the year. After a robust procurement process, Land Search and Rescue Training Ltd was selected as our preferred provider.

We have also hosted various workshops on topics ranging from SAR aviation to health and safety to youth involvement in SAR. These workshops are an important conduit for us to share ideas but also to test with the sector what's working well and what can be improved. As a non-operational team, its important we clearly understand the lived experience of SAR people as they undertake their roles in order to design projects and solutions to their many challenges.

The significant weather events of the year, including the Auckland, West Coast and Nelson floods as well as Cyclone Gabrielle led to significant operational deployments by SAR people in support of their local communities. I've been humbled by the stories from SAR people on the frontline that have come to light over the last few months, a small selection of which are shared on pages 20-23. I also recognise the devastating impacts these weather events have had on many of our people and organisations. Over the last year we have been working on improving the processes and relationships to support SAR capabilities being tasked during civil emergencies.

Our core role is to support the NZSAR Council and the achievement of its strategic goals. Over the past year I believe we have made significant improvements in our ability to support the Council with information that supports their decision making, understanding and treating the identified risks, and providing sector level assurance around the capabilities and robustness of the SAR sector.

Considerable effort has also been put in across the sector to support the Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport led review of the recreational safety and SAR sectors. As always, our small team could not do what we do without the support and goodwill of the sector. To each of you who have attended a workshop, a meeting (or two), given us advice or challenged our thinking – especially the members of the NZSAR Consultative Committee and the NZSAR Council – thank you.

Ngā manaakitanga  
Duncan

# Governance

## NZSAR Council

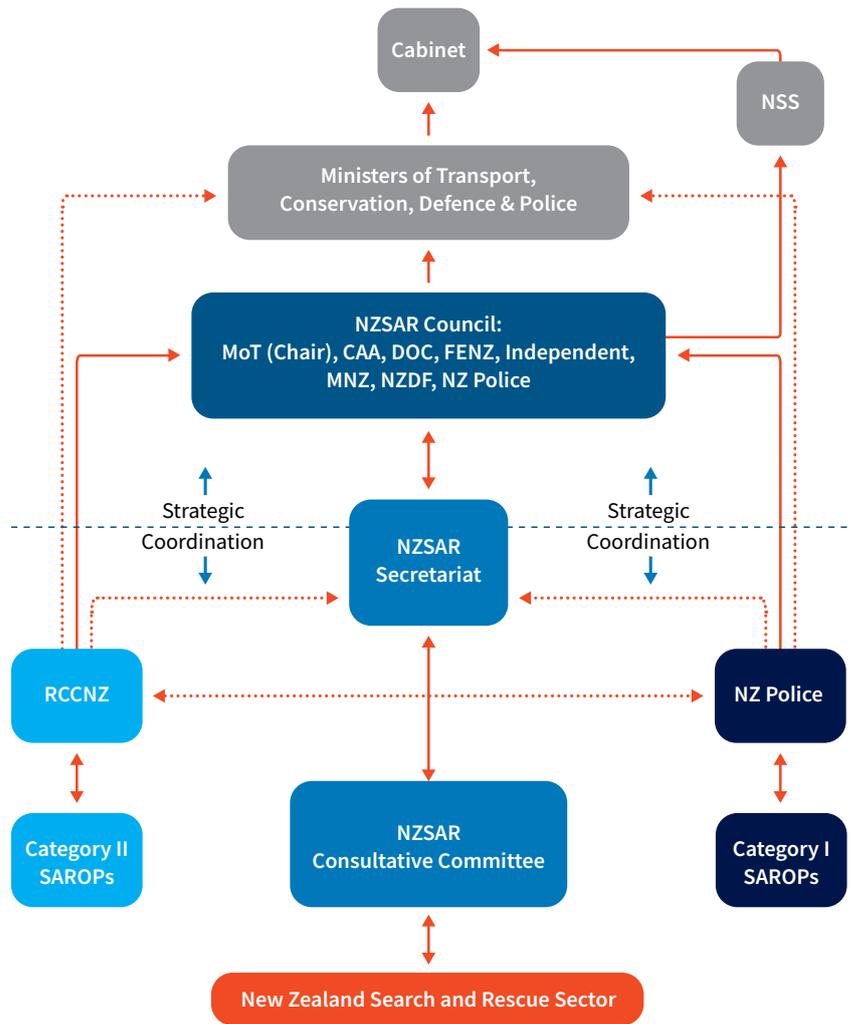
Provides national strategic governance and leadership to New Zealand’s search and rescue sector. In keeping with the Council’s high-level strategic function, its membership is drawn from the chief executives (or delegated to a senior executive) of:

- Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport (MoT)
- New Zealand Police
- New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF)
- Department of Conservation (DOC)
- Maritime New Zealand (MNZ)
- Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)
- Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ)

There is also an Independent Member who represents the interests of the non-Government organisations involved in search and rescue.

## NZSAR Secretariat

Provides the NZSAR Council with information, support services and advice. It also provides sector leadership and implements measures to effect strong strategic coordination of New Zealand’s search and rescue sector.



NSS: National Security System SAROPs: Search and Rescue Operations

## NZSAR Consultative Committee

Provides a national forum for all New Zealand SAR stakeholders, including voluntary groups.

Consultative Committee members include:

- Amateur Radio Emergency Communications
- Ambulance New Zealand
- Antarctica New Zealand
- Aviation New Zealand
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Coastguard
- Department of Conservation
- Fire and Emergency New Zealand
- Hato Hone St John
- Land Search and Rescue
- Maritime New Zealand
- Maritime Operations Centre
- National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
- New Zealand Defence Force
- New Zealand Mountain Safety Council
- New Zealand Police
- NZSAR Secretariat (Chair)
- Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ)
- Surf Life Saving NZ
- Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport
- Ambulance Team
- Water Safety New Zealand
- Te Whatu Ora Health NZ
- Youth Search and Rescue

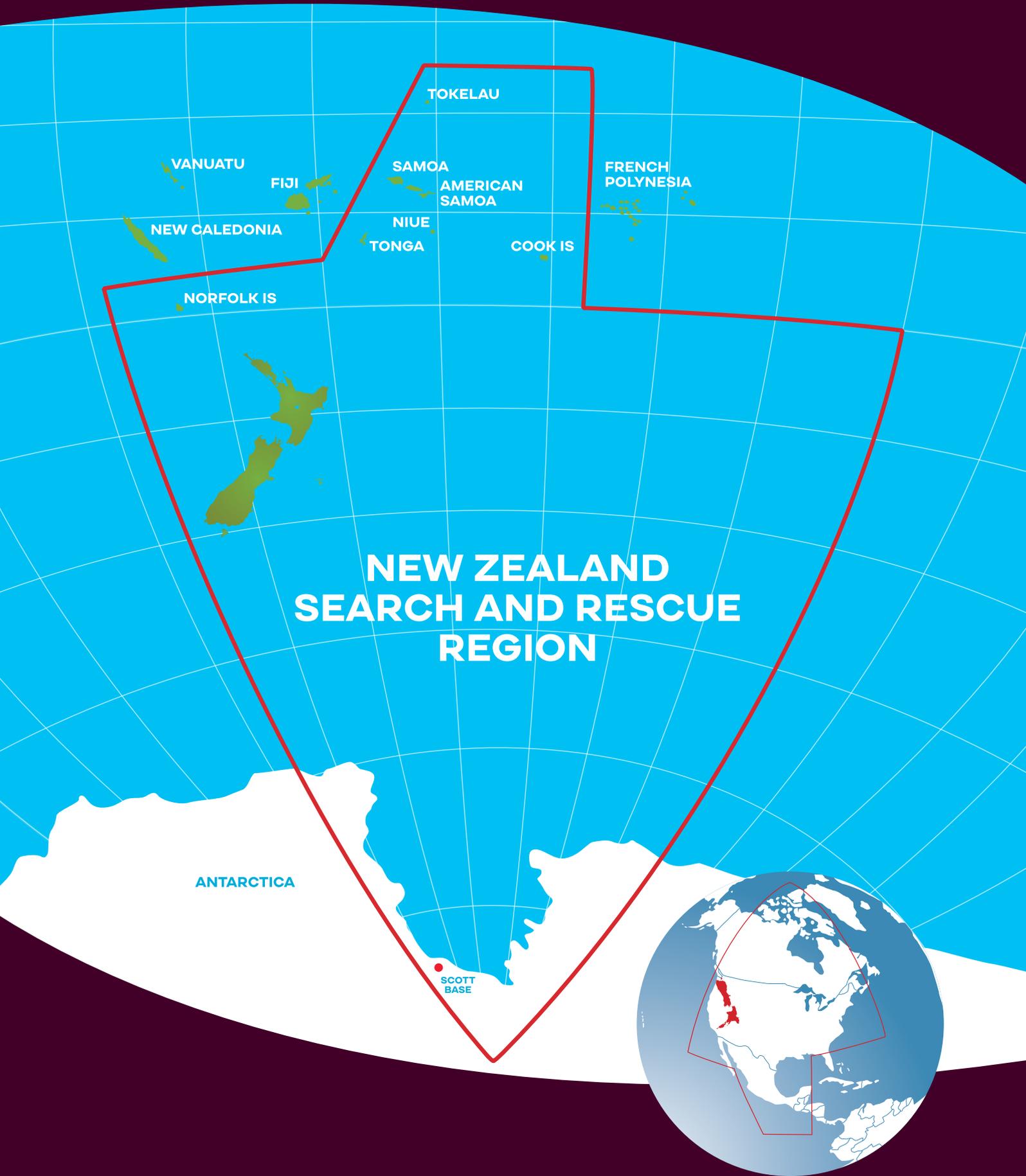
The Council, Secretariat and Consultative Committee operate cohesively to ensure their objectives are successfully delivered.



# NEW ZEALAND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Rapu Whakarauora Aotearoa

New Zealand Search  
and Rescue Council  
nzsar.govt.nz



A projection of New Zealand's search and  
rescue region over North America