



Connecting the search and rescue sector

Link is a quarterly publication of  
New Zealand Search and Rescue



# Boating safety at the Prada and America's Cup

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Link is the quarterly publication of New Zealand Search and Rescue. If you have any feedback on this publication, please let us know.

[info@nzsar.govt.nz](mailto:info@nzsar.govt.nz) | [nzsar.govt.nz](http://nzsar.govt.nz)

## Websites

[nzsar.govt.nz](http://nzsar.govt.nz)

Search and rescue sector resources and information, including a PDF of this newsletter

[adventuresmart.nz](http://adventuresmart.nz)

Safety information and tips for people planning outdoor activities

[adventuresmart.nz/distress-beacons](http://adventuresmart.nz/distress-beacons)

Example of our latest SAR prevention work - promoting the carriage of beacons

[beacons.org.nz](http://beacons.org.nz)

Information about 406 beacons, including where to purchase, rent and register a distress beacon

[nzsar.govt.nz/sardonix/index.html](http://nzsar.govt.nz/sardonix/index.html)

Interactive dashboards using groups of records from SARdonyx, our joint search and rescue operational information system

[nzsar.govt.nz/nzs-sar-guidelines/nzs-sar-guidelines-overview](http://nzsar.govt.nz/nzs-sar-guidelines/nzs-sar-guidelines-overview)

New Zealand's Search and Rescue Guidelines

[tpp.ac.nz/study-options/search-and-rescue](http://tpp.ac.nz/study-options/search-and-rescue)

SAR multi-agency training

[landsar.org.nz/training-calendar](http://landsar.org.nz/training-calendar)

LandSAR training courses (member's log-in needed)

[mountainsafety.org.nz](http://mountainsafety.org.nz)

New Zealand Mountain Safety Council

[coastguard.nz](http://coastguard.nz)

Coastguard New Zealand

[surflifesaving.org.nz](http://surflifesaving.org.nz)

Surf Life Saving New Zealand

[maritimenz.govt.nz](http://maritimenz.govt.nz)

Maritime New Zealand

[watersafety.org.nz](http://watersafety.org.nz)

Water Safety New Zealand

[saferwalking.nz](http://saferwalking.nz)

Safer Walking NZ

Cover image: Photographer Steve Todd / Shutterstock.com

## What does the future hold for SAR in NZ?

Our latest environmental scan, called 'NZSAR in a changing world,' considers the impacts of gradual changes, exponential changes and major disruptive events on the SAR sector. It's available to view on our website: [nzsar.govt.nz/environmental-scan/overview-2/](http://nzsar.govt.nz/environmental-scan/overview-2/)

# Raising awareness of distress beacons

**A dirt bike rider fell off, breaking his leg and ankle, and was helicoptered out within hours. Later that month a tramper fell down a bank, injured his back and was found seven days later. Both incidents happened in remote areas. The difference? The dirt biker was carrying a distress beacon.**

**In October 2020**, we began our first digital marketing campaign encouraging New Zealanders to hire or buy a distress beacon, in conjunction with the Department of Conservation, the Mountain Safety Council and Maritime New Zealand.

“We know that people are increasingly using the internet to plan their trips,” says Duncan Ferner, NZSAR Secretariat Manager. “So, we thought we’d try some targeted advertising, spread across relevant websites and social media.”

Advertising agency GSL Promotus was tasked with coming up with the campaign collateral and placing the ads. After some discussion, the tagline “Make memories, not the 6PM news” was chosen to sit alongside the call to action of “Hire or buy a distress beacon”.

As well as Facebook, the ads were placed on high traffic websites including Trade Me, Metservice, TVNZ OnDemand, and outdoor retailers.

The campaign steered away from recommending specific brands of distress beacons, instead working to raise awareness of beacons more generally. The ads directed people to a website where they could find more information about the different types of beacons and where they could be bought or hired.

*“The campaign is definitely having an impact,” says GSL Promotus account director Karlene Hazlewood. “It delivered 4.2 million impressions across a variety of sites. 10 per cent of visitors to the website clicked through to ‘hire or buy’ which we’re very happy with.”*



Dirt biker Ian Reed with the distress beacon that saved his life.

*“Distress beacons take the search out of search and rescue,” adds Duncan. “Their increased use by outdoor enthusiasts is a trend we’re very keen to see continue.”*

While the campaign is running through to Easter 2021, initial statistics show an encouraging increase in the use of distress beacons over the summer period. Some highlights include:

- Beacon hire at DOC visitor centres in November and December 2020 was up 40 per cent on the year prior
- Beacon registrations with the Rescue Coordination Centre in December 2020 were up 30 per cent on the year prior
- One in three land-based SAR responses in December 2020-January 2021 were triggered by a beacon activation – a 38 per cent increase on the year prior
- The Southland Locator Beacon Trust hireage rates in December 2020 to January 2021 were up 106 per cent on the year prior.





# SAR prevention at the Prada/America's Cup

It's been an exciting few months in Auckland as the city and its visitors have turned out in huge numbers to catch a glimpse of the racing in the Prada Cup and America's Cup, amidst COVID-19 restrictions.

**The safety of** people in spectator boats has been a priority for Sergeant John Saunders and colleagues at the Auckland Police Maritime Unit, with seven Police boats out near the course at any one time. They have worked tirelessly with America's Cup organisers, the Auckland Harbourmaster and the Royal NZ Yacht Squadron to run a major safety operation throughout the event.

"It's been a real combined effort," says John. "We've delivered the final message to people in cases where they haven't known what's expected of them. While there haven't been any rescues directly related to America's Cup activity, there have been a few people going too fast, or the wrong way and the odd request for assistance nearby."

As there was no limit on the number of spectator boats allowed around the course, maintaining a sense of order when the crowds dispersed was a challenge, he says.

"A 5-knot speed restriction applied before and after each race," says John. "When you get boats charging away from the course at 20 knots, it creates a washing machine effect in the water and the smaller boats can really struggle."

Auckland Coastguard worked with St John to deliver medical support for people watching the races.

# A new Coastguard fleet

A fleet of purpose-built boats used as support vessels and chase boats in the Prada Cup and America's Cup will become fantastic new assets for Coastguard when the racing is over.

The Rayglass Protectors were built using a \$9.8 million lottery grant – the culmination of a partnership between Coastguard, Lotto New Zealand and Emirates Team New Zealand. While they have begun their working lives supporting the racing on the water, each vessel will be re-homed and repurposed at Coastguard units as far north as Whangaruru and as far south as Dunedin.

Coastguard Head of Operations Rob McCaw says in most cases the new vessels will replace aging assets.

“They will bring a real lift in capability to our Coastguard units and the communities they serve. For some of our units this will become a second Coastguard vessel, allowing our teams to be two places at once or replacing smaller boats so they can reach people in distress faster and safer.”

Priority was given to Coastguard units that have limited capacity to fundraise for a new rescue vessel, he says.

“We’ll be able to offer so much more when it comes to working with our SAR partners,” says Rob. “For example, the Southern Lakes units will be able to increase the number of locations they serve and these larger vessels will be more capable and able to carry a greater range of equipment as well as people, enabling them to go on longer voyages to help LandSAR search teams.”

The boats will go through a refit process, funded by Coastguard, before being delivered to their respective units in winter. This allows teams time to get comfortable with the new vessels before the SAR high season in summer.

“There are some differences between what makes a good chase boat and what we need for a rescue vessel,” says Rob. “The minor changes we’re making will make a world of difference – like extra handholds, search lights, situational awareness tools and simply lowering the engines so they can tow.”

“This is a major step for Coastguard as we’re rolling it out as a fleet initiative. Commonality of class opens up opportunities for collective supplier agreements and transferable training. Our volunteers can potentially qualify with one unit and move to another, without the need to retrain and become familiar with the idiosyncrasies of a different boat.”

Each vessel currently features the letters 4UNZ on the front of its cabin or engine compartment, a nod to the letters and numbers on the sails of the racing yachts, but will also be clearly branded Coastguard during the refit.



New Coastguard Fleet

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**From backing the team to saving lives at sea this is**



This boat is one of 26 new rescue vessels that was built with funding from lotto players. First they'll be used to support the team on the

water, then they'll be distributed to Coastguard units nationwide to help save lives at sea. It's a win, win for you New Zealand.





# A Land Safety Forum in the making

**A quiet week is a good week for New Zealand's search and rescue co-ordinating authorities. We hope it means that people are heeding the advice of the outdoor safety codes and making sensible decisions when it comes to their outdoor adventures.**

**Search and rescue (SAR)** prevention work takes place right across the sector and in the outdoor recreation space too. Collectively, we seek an informed, responsible, adequately equipped and appropriately skilled public who can either avoid distress situations or survive them should they occur. In fact, SAR prevention is one of NZSAR Council's four strategic objectives – where collaboration among agencies is key.

Wellington-based Alex Hardy is keen to keep search and rescue out of the headlines. He is the new co-ordinator of what will soon be New Zealand's first Land Safety Forum. This independent role is funded by NZSAR and aims to reduce preventable SAR incidents associated with land-based outdoor activities. How? By fostering connections across the sector and helping the large number of organisations involved to work together in a more coordinated way.

The cross-sector Land Safety Forum will be modelled on Maritime New Zealand's Safer Boating Forum, which has made a real impact on New Zealand's recreational boating fatalities.

"The Safer Boating Forum has shown the value of having a whole of sector group working on preventative initiatives," says Alex. "We will bring together land managers, iwi, tourism operators, groups using the land and other organisations currently working on SAR prevention. With greater co-operation, we can share and implement worthwhile ideas and take into account specific organisational measures so there can be an agreed overall land safety sector strategy."

Alex is just three months into the new role and is currently developing an engagement plan.

"My focus right now is establishing the relationships needed to develop a meaningful forum where all stakeholders are there to provide valuable input and benefit from it."



Alex's background is in project management. He has worked on a number of high-profile Government initiatives, including the Provincial Growth Fund.

In addition to developing and co-ordinating the Land Safety Forum, Alex will work with forum members on specific preventative measures and analyse data from SARdonyx (the sector's joint operational information system) to look for emerging trends.

Department of Conservation Visitor Safety Manager Andy Roberts says DOC was willing to provide office space and support for the co-ordinator to help the sector get the Land Safety Forum up and running.

"As one of the agencies involved, DOC sees the potential of a broadly based Land Safety Forum as an exciting prospect where the outdoor land safety sector takes the opportunity to shape how we reduce incidents in the outdoors," he says.

Alex anticipates the membership to be finalised within the next six months and initial consultation on the Land Safety Sector Strategy to be underway. This strategy will guide the governance structure and operation of the forum.

If your organisation would like to get involved, please contact Alex on 027 238 0226 or [alex.hardy@landsafetyforum.nz](mailto:alex.hardy@landsafetyforum.nz)



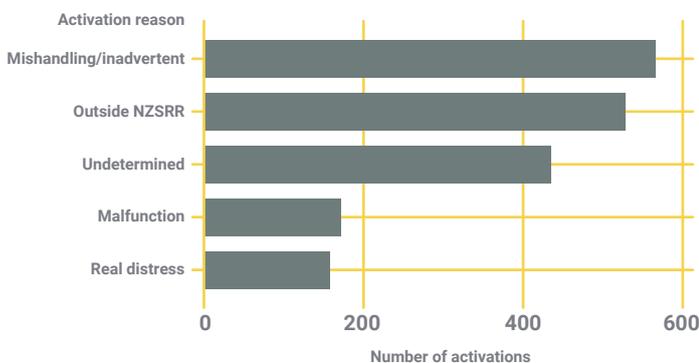
# EPIRB activations stress importance of beacon registration

**EPIRBs, or Emergency** Position Indicating Radio Beacons, are a type of distress beacon for boating and other maritime activities. When activated, they provide a direct emergency alert to the Rescue Co-ordination Centre of New Zealand (RCCNZ), launching a targeted search and rescue response for people in distress on the water.

Yet statistics from Maritime New Zealand and SARdonyx (our joint operational information system) show that EPIRBs are often activated by accident rather than for any real need for assistance.

Since July 2011, there have been a total of 1,879 EPIRB activations in New Zealand’s search and rescue region. Ninety-four lives were saved as a result of some of those activations, while 573 were recorded as inadvertent activations.

## EPIRB Activations since July 2011



RCCNZ Deputy Manager Kevin Banaghan says this is primarily because EPIRBs are designed to activate when they get wet or knocked around. On less frequent occasions, an EPIRB may be activated because it is faulty.

“When we receive a notification of an active distress beacon, our first step is to check that the beacon is registered. If it is, we call the beacon owner’s emergency contact. Often, we’re told

that the owner of the beacon is safe at home, hosing the boat down. Or the kids are out playing in the boat on the driveway. This really emphasises the importance of beacon registration – not only because it will potentially save lives, but also because it gives us the ability to establish whether there is in fact an emergency before tasking resource.”

With the launch of RCCNZ’s upgraded Emergency Beacon Registration website last month, the registration of beacons has never been easier. For the first time, beacon owners can input and update their personal details and distress contacts directly into the 406 MHz Beacons Database at [beacons.org.nz](http://beacons.org.nz)

“We’ve expanded the functionality of the database to make room for the beacon owners to add practical information, which is very useful for our Search and Rescue Officers during a SAR operation,” says Kevin. “For example, there are fields for ‘vessel name’, ‘callsign’, ‘vessel colour’, ‘home port or jetty’ and ‘maximum capacity on-board.’”

When it comes to managing inadvertent EPIRB activations, Kevin says the advice from RCCNZ is to always display the RCCNZ phone number (0508 4 RCCNZ) right next to the EPIRB so the team can be notified immediately.

“This will ensure that a rescue operation is not launched needlessly,” he says. “It’s also good practice to keep the beacon switched on until instructed to turn it off, even if they are unable to make contact with us. We will continue with a SAR operation until it is determined that there is no apparent danger and the situation is resolved.”

There is no fee or charge for accidental activation.

Currently, there are 125,492 beacons registered on the database. Of these, 32,680 are EPIRBs, 87,897 are Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) and 4,915 are Emergency Locator Transmitters on aircraft (ELTs).



## Versatility of surf lifeguards crucial in New Year's rescue

It was early afternoon on 31 December 2020 when Jane Tiley of Riversdale Beach Surf Life Saving Club received the callout. She'd just returned home after a busy morning running the Nipper sessions and assisting with a medical event at the local campground. But sitting down for a cuppa wasn't an option – Junior Club Captain Liam Taylor needed a first responder to attend a quad bike accident at Uriti Beach, approximately 12 kilometres south of Riversdale.

**The rescue that** followed saw a community band together in a swift emergency response and demonstrated the value of training senior lifeguards in Pre-Hospital Emergency Care (PHEC).

Liam asked Jane to head back to the beach, pick up two Surf Lifeguards Rocco Thompson and Elliot Phillips, the four-wheel drive and the first responder's kit.

"We had to make some quick safety precautions at Riversdale first," says Jane. "By taking the two senior lifeguards with me, we were potentially leaving three newly qualified lifeguards on duty, with no experienced support. So we picked them all up, closed our South Patrol and delivered them further up the beach to North Patrol."

"After grabbing the stretcher and checking all the equipment, it took about 20 minutes to drive down the beach and over the sand dunes to the accident site," she says.

On arrival, the lifeguards found a teenage girl lying face up on the sand. She had been thrown off a quad bike and was conscious, but in severe pain. Jane, who is fully trained in Pre-Hospital Emergency Care, made a primary assessment and advised Rocco to call 111.

"We'd lost radio communication with the Club but found a spot higher on the sand dunes where we managed to get cellphone coverage."

“The patient’s left shoulder was causing her excruciating pain. As she wasn’t wearing a helmet, I decided to treat her injury as a possible spinal.”

“Elliot immobilised her neck while I did a secondary assessment and attempted to immobilise her shoulder to minimise the pain. A member of the public supported her arm, which was at too much of an awkward angle for a sling. Together, we monitored her vitals and set up the oxygen.”

Jane could not administer Methoxyflurane pain medication as the patient advised she was allergic to anaesthetic. Meanwhile, the tide was coming in.

“She was lying only two metres away from the waves, so would have been in the water before the helicopter arrived,” says Jane. “We decided to move her to higher ground, despite the suspected spinal injury. Luckily, I’d met an off-duty paramedic the previous day, who was on holiday in Riversdale. He’d tested our defibrillators at the Club. Liam was able to contact him and he came down directly, with another paramedic he knew. They borrowed a quad bike and helmets and arrived about 30 minutes after us.”

The two paramedics helped to roll the patient on to a split spinal board before carrying her further up the beach.

Meanwhile, the residents of a nearby bach came down to assist the 111 operator with GPS information. A fire crew and Police secured a landing site for the Lifeflight Trust Helicopter on the bach’s front lawn.



“The chopper arrived just as an ambulance crew came into view. They’d taken the road access to Uriti and walked down the beach to find us.”

After the lifeguards and paramedics helped to transfer the patient carefully up the sand dunes to the helicopter, she was flown to Wellington Hospital, where she underwent surgery on her shoulder.

“This was a real community effort from the time the incident was reported, right through to its successful outcome,” says Jane. “The person who made that initial phone call to the Club had children enrolled in our Nippers programme, so knew we were well equipped to deal with it. And we were so fortunate to learn from the off-duty paramedics – they came in with a great attitude and worked with us rather than taking over. We were a really good team.”

## Welcome Bridget

**Supporting search and rescue agencies to help them achieve what they set out to with their funding agreements is a key focus for Bridget Hesketh, NZSAR’s recently appointed Senior Advisor – Governance, Performance and Monitoring.**

**Based at the** Secretariat in Wellington, Bridget is charged with developing and implementing the SAR sector governance performance system. On any given day, Bridget could be providing guidance on writing project plans so that funding can be released, giving feedback on quarterly reports, or identifying opportunities to streamline reporting information and lessen the load for people in SAR support roles.

“We’re here to help the sector work together, check in with progress and create efficiencies where we can,” says Bridget. “My challenge is how can we successfully do that to ensure the investment made of public resources is fit-for purpose, transparent and demonstrates value.”

She is currently making plans to meet face to face with those she’ll be working with across the sector and hopes to have completed these meetings by the end of the month.

“My interaction with SAR agencies so far has been great and the team here is very welcoming. Like any new job, it’s a steep learning curve, but the issues are very similar to many I’ve dealt with before.”

This is a new position at NZSAR, made possible by the Government’s increased investment in the SAR sector last year. Bridget says the role really appealed to her.

“About 12 years ago, I volunteered with Wellington Coastguard as an accountant, so my interest in SAR has melded



beautifully with my skills and experience in central government.”

Bridget joins us from New Zealand Customs, where she provided advice to the leadership team on strategy, accountability, and change management.

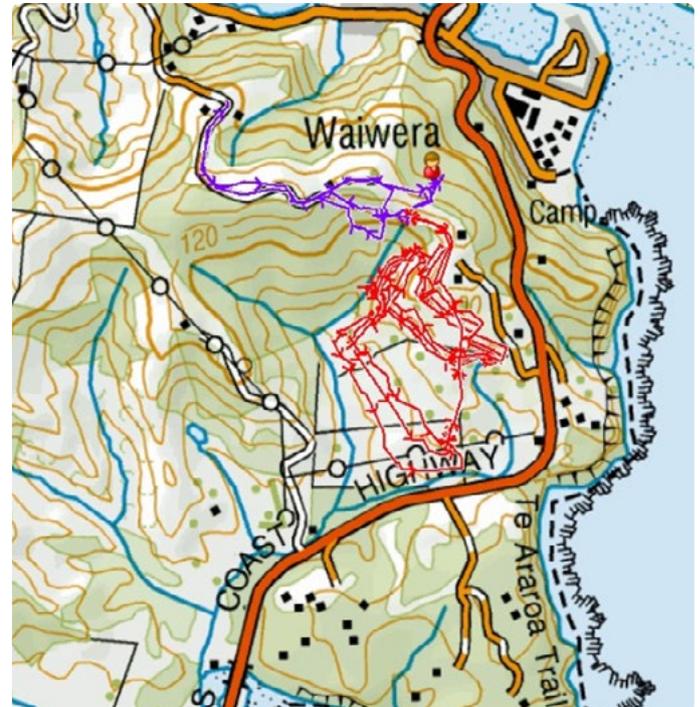
Wellington born and bred, Bridget enjoys looking after grandchildren in the weekends, walking, pilates and playing bridge.

# The search for Mike McLennan

Mike McLennan was a 75-year-old man with dementia who went missing from his rest home in Orewa in October 2019. A missing persons operation was triggered with a strong search and rescue component.



A map showing where Mike went missing and the various sightings gained from CCTV and members of the public.



The area searched on day seven. The red tracks indicate the search teams. The purple tracks indicate the Police dog team.

**Mike had a** history of wandering from his home on the Whangaparaoa Peninsula. Despite the best efforts of his family, he was unwilling to wear a WanderSearch pendant or watch. After a hospital stay, he was placed into rest home care in Orewa, in a secure dementia unit. He had not settled well into the rest home and often told both carers and family that he wanted to go home.

The Police-coordinated search took place over seven days. Auckland Police SAR and LandSAR volunteers were used initially.

Plans were made for the Defence Force to be tasked on day seven, but the search concluded before this happened.

Local and social media were utilised early, with residents being urged to report any sightings and to check their properties for any sign of Mike. Mike's historical involvement in rugby league, as a player and coach, gave the search a high profile nationwide. CCTV and dashcam footage were obtained early, which provided useful information for the incident management team.

## Search timeline

### Day 1 – Wednesday 16 October 2019

Mike was last seen in the garden area of the rest home at approximately 4.50pm, and Police were notified that he was missing shortly after 5pm.

Local Police searched the rest home and surrounding areas. The roadsides between Hatfields Beach and Waiwera were searched by the Auckland Police SAR squad, and the Police Eagle helicopter did a sweep of the area using a thermal imaging camera.

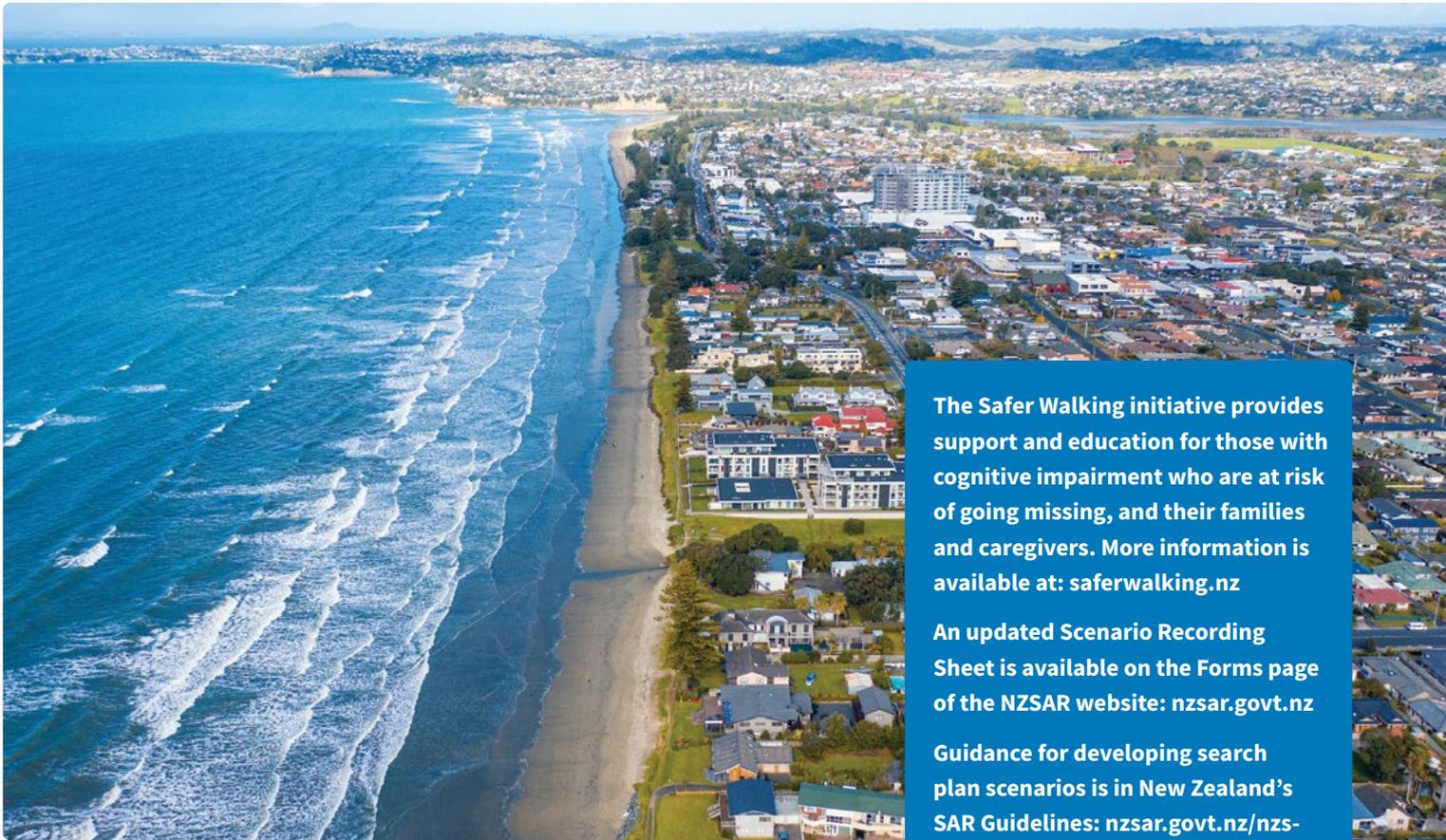
An unconfirmed sighting placed Mike walking north on the Hibiscus Coast highway, wearing a red and black jacket.

However, this sighting was questioned after a red and black jacket was found in Mike's room at the rest home.

### Day 2 – Thursday 17 October 2019

A SAR base was established in Orewa and the search activity focused on the areas immediately surrounding the rest home. This included residential and commercial property, parks, and waterways.

Mike's next of kin advised that he had no interest in camping or tramping and was unlikely to go bush. He was fit for his age and always wore a red and black jacket. Further investigation revealed that he had two red and black jackets, confirming the sighting from the previous evening.



Orewa, north of Auckland, where Mike McLennan went missing in October 2019.

The Safer Walking initiative provides support and education for those with cognitive impairment who are at risk of going missing, and their families and caregivers. More information is available at: [saferwalking.nz](https://saferwalking.nz)

An updated Scenario Recording Sheet is available on the Forms page of the NZSAR website: [nzsar.govt.nz](https://nzsar.govt.nz)

Guidance for developing search plan scenarios is in New Zealand's SAR Guidelines: [nzsar.govt.nz/nzsar/planning/considering-possible-scenarios/](https://nzsar.govt.nz/nzsar/planning/considering-possible-scenarios/)

## Insights

“Search managers and next of kin can underestimate how far and how fast people with dementia are capable of walking, especially along natural corridors such as a highway,” says Jo Holden, who conducted a review of the search for Mike. “Lost person behaviour models indicate that 50% of wanderers with dementia are found within 800m of where they were last seen.”

“In Mike’s case, he had walked nearly 6km along the Hibiscus Coast Highway before heading up a private road,” she says. “He then crossed a paddock and climbed over a fence into the area of dense bush where he was found. This was not one of the scenarios considered during the search planning phase.”

### Day 3 – Friday 18 October 2019

The search activity was extended to include lineal features, decision points and areas of possible misadventure beyond the rest home. CCTV footage was obtained from the Hibiscus Coast Dairy and from buses travelling the highway between Orewa and Waiwera. These indicated that Mike had walked north along the highway from Orewa on Wednesday 16 October.

### Days 4 to 6 – Saturday 19 to Monday 21 October 2019

Analysis of CCTV footage and sightings indicated that Mike had walked north from Hatfields Beach on the day he disappeared, but did not travel as far as Waiwera.

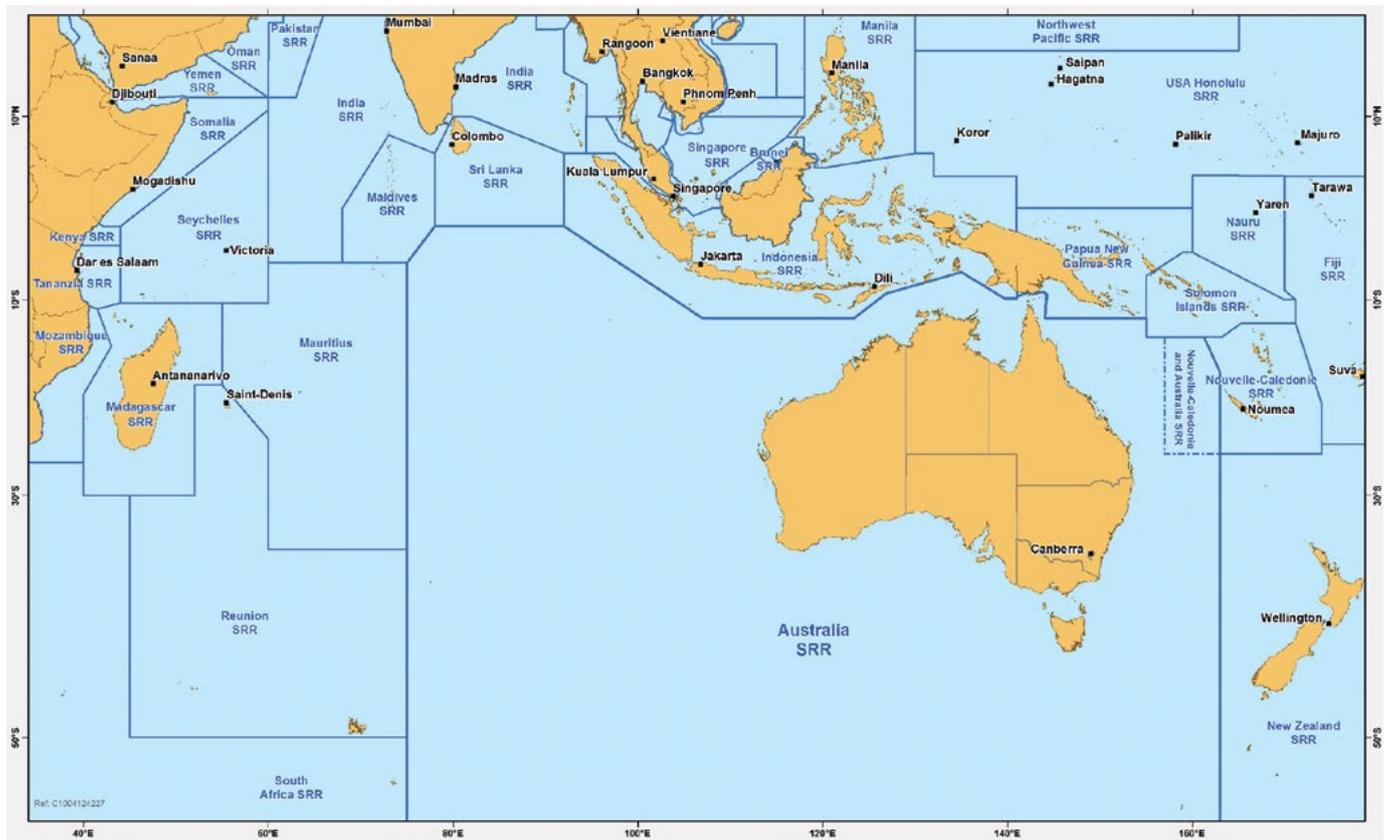
Search activity was refocused on the farmland, scrub and swamp either side of the highway between Hatfields Beach and Waiwera.

### Day 7 – Tuesday 22 October 2019

Teams were searching an area of mixed scrub to the west of the highway, with the assistance of a Police SAR dog. The dog was picking up scent from the search teams, resulting in the handler moving away to search a tract of steep bush on the other side of the hill. This is where Mike was located shortly afterwards, deceased.

# Search and rescue in Australia

In this guest editorial, the National SAR Council of Australia introduce us to how our Australian neighbours manage search and rescue.



The Australian Search and Rescue Region

**Search and rescue** is no easy feat in Australia, with the world's largest search and rescue area at nearly 53 million square kilometres (one tenth of the Earth's surface).

To put this in perspective, the islands of New Zealand are approximately 268,000 square kilometres. Which means, when searching for a person, vessel or aircraft in distress, Australia's SAR teams have an area 197 times the size of New Zealand's landmass to look after!

Sharing a border with ten different countries' SAR regions, including New Zealand, Australia works with New Zealand when they request our assistance in their own massive 30 million square kilometers region of SAR responsibility.

## NatSAR Council

Australia's system for SAR is guided by the National SAR (NatSAR) Council: a governing body who help ensure all the different SAR players are coordinated, so all pieces fit together to form a coordinated response when they need to.

Senior Officer National SAR Governance Ben Flight says that the system sounds complicated on the surface, but it works very effectively.

"In Australia, it's a whole team approach to how we conduct SAR," he says.

"At the NatSAR Council, we are responsible for response arrangements in Australia. Our council members are from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), the Australian Defence Force as well as State, Territory and Federal Police, who all signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement confirming the Council as the national coordinating body."

"Due to Australia's size, its sparse population, our active lifestyles and reliance on sea and air transport; having a robust search and rescue framework across all our different state bodies is very important to help fellow Australians and those in distress when they need us."

"The system has lots of players, but it works. For example, in the past three years, nearly 2100 lives were saved in Australia's SAR region."

The Australian NatSAR Council meets annually and consults out of session when necessary to discuss relevant issues within the SAR community.

One of the primary roles of each member is to bring issues to the Council for their representative organisation, state, or territory. This ensures there is a clear channel for the SAR community to feed information through to the national governance body for discussion and decision as required.



AMS vessel Coral Knight



Fremantle Volunteer Sea Rescue on a training exercise in Western Australia. Photographer Ian Geraint Jones / Shutterstock.com



Whitfords Volunteer Sea Rescue practising helicopter winching in Western Australia. Photographer Ian Geraint Jones / Shutterstock.com

## Joint Response Coordination Centre

Many rescues are coordinated out of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority Response Centre (also known as the Joint Response Coordination Centre or JRCC) in Canberra.

The Response Centre operates 24 hours 7 days a week, staffed by personnel with backgrounds in naval, merchant marine, air force, civil aviation and police services.

AMSAR Response Centre Duty Manager Joseph Zeller says his team is very busy utilising their expertise to provide assistance at all hours of the day.

“We only have a small team here in the AMSAR Response Centre – about 35 people – doing incredibly important work.”

“On average, we respond to about 7000 incidents a year. These incidents can consist of anything from beacon activations, hikers in distress, aviation incidents and missing vessels or maritime incidents.”

“Our role is to coordinate the initial response when something happens. We work with or task assets such as other aircraft or vessels to help when required, as well as coordinating

medical evacuations, broadcasting maritime safety information and other search and rescue related functions.”

“For example, at the end of last year we had two gentlemen whose yacht was damaged, and they activated a distress beacon. We then sent out our AMSAR Challenger Jet to locate the men and drop a life-raft into the water, which they climbed into to wait until a ship was able to arrive and pick them up.

“That coordination function, to line up all those efforts, is the kind of work our SAR Officers perform very regularly.”

**For further information on Australia’s Search and Rescue functions, visit [natsar.amsa.gov.au](https://natsar.amsa.gov.au)**

# SARdonyx tips

Thanks to your ongoing feedback, we've made a number of small updates and changes to SARdonyx over the past year. Please keep the suggestions coming – this is a shared information tool, so we welcome your thoughts on how we can make it work best for you.

## Save regularly, save often

In recent months, we've heard that SARdonyx tends to time-out while people are part way through completing a report. The easiest way to ensure that you don't lose your work is to save as often as possible.

SARdonyx was designed to time-out after a few minutes of inactivity. This is an important security feature. If you are interacting with the page by moving a mouse cursor, or typing, the system shouldn't just crash. But if you've started your data entry then walk away without clicking the save button, there is a good chance you'll lose that work.

If you click "Save + Close" you'll save the work you've just entered and can come back to it later. If you click "Save + Continue" you'll save your work and move to the next page of the report.

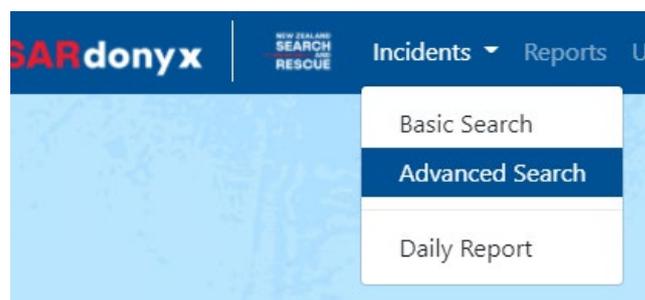
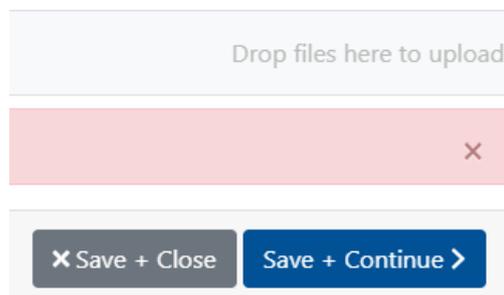
## Advanced search

There are two ways to search for records on SARdonyx - Basic Search or Advanced Search. Just click the Incidents item on the main menu to select the option you want. The Basic Search has a limited number of columns that can't be changed, while the Advanced Search gives you more search criteria and you can select as many columns as you like.

The Advanced Search also allows you to export all matching records to an Excel workbook.

### Here's a couple of important tips to get the best out of an Advanced Search:

- If you click on the Filter icon in the date column you'll be presented with a range of options including "Is equal to", "Is after", "Is after or equal to", etc. Since the dates in SARdonyx are recorded down to the minute, you will need to select an option like "Is after or equal to" so you can specify a range of dates.
- SARdonyx records all the agencies that were involved in an incident in a single column entitled "SLA partner" (as shown). A search for incidents that involve a specific SLA partner, e.g. LandSAR, using "Is equal to" will not return any of the entries shown. The "Is equal to" parameters only return values that are exactly equal to the selection. Use "Contains" to search this column instead. This way you can search for any records where the SLA Partner entry "Contains" the term LandSAR.



SLA Partner
Surf Life Saving, LandSAR
Surf Life Saving, Coastguard, LandSAR

Feedback on SARdonyx is welcome and can be sent to: [info@nzsar.govt.nz](mailto:info@nzsar.govt.nz)

## Retirement of SAR-NET

SAR-NET, a web-based collaboration tool that helped to connect people across the search and rescue sector, has been shut down. Traffic on SAR-NET had reduced to zero as people opted for social media and other platforms instead.

# 10 questions with ...

Lisa Cooper, Tasman Swift Water Rescue

It was almost seven years ago that Lisa Cooper found herself in the right place at the right time, casting aside her travel plans to pitch in with a two-hour rescue after a truck plunged 30-metres into the Buller River. And she hasn't looked back since.



A midnight rescue from a truck that got washed downstream

**Today, 39-year-old** Lisa is a Team Leader of Tasman Swift Water Rescue, based in Nelson. Her team is one of four specialist Swift Water Rescue groups in New Zealand, who operate through Land Search and Rescue in locations where their skills are needed most.

## Can you tell us more about that first rescue?

I was heading out of Murchison on the highway, on my way to catch a flight to Canada, when I heard the fire siren. It wasn't long before I saw the broken fence and the lights of the Police car. A logging truck had veered off the motorway at speed, crossed a paddock and dropped down the riverbank, head-first. At the time, I was a commercial rafting guide for Ultimate Descents. I had all my gear in the car, so I just chucked it on. I swam out to the driver, who was trapped in the cab, took him some pain relief and just kept up the communication.

I called my colleague who came to help with his raft and kit. We were able to use the raft to ferry fire officers out to the truck and – eventually – as a platform to get the driver out.

## What is your day job?

I teach adventure tourism at Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology [NMIT]. The students learn to be guides and instructors in adventure activities like rafting, kayaking, and snowboarding. There's a huge practical component to the course, which I love.

## What experience do you have on the water?

Before joining NMIT, I was a commercial rafting guide for 17-odd years.

## How many people make up the Tasman Swift Water Rescue team?

There's 15 of us. All volunteers who do lots of kayaking and rafting. We train regularly as a team on all the local Tasman rivers so we can work efficiently together.

## Under what circumstances are you called out?

A huge percentage of our work involves submerged cars. Some people get themselves into trouble when trying to cross rivers in 4WDs, only to be swept away by the current. Flooding also causes a few washouts – when there's a rapidly rising river, the riverbanks can become unstable pretty quick.

If there's any need for SAR resource in moving water situations, we have the skills and the gear to help. We can get to those people faster than land-based teams. We can also search riverbanks and see into the trees from a different angle, which can be really valuable.

## How busy are you?

Our callouts are pretty sporadic. There hasn't been many over the past year or so, but at one point there were 10 or 12 callouts in a six-month period.

## What are the safety considerations for you as rescuers?

When we arrive at the scene, one of the first things we do is to check for downstream dangers. If it's a car we're dealing with, we need to consider what will happen if it keeps floating. Where are we going to end up as rescuers? Securing the vehicle to shore is key.

## What equipment do you use?

Kayaks, lifejackets, dry suits, helmets, throwbags, fliplines, ropes and pulleys. We recently secured funding to purchase a dedicated raft and trailer, which is deployed from Motueka Police Station. The Fire and Emergency New Zealand [FENZ] guys also hold a raft and have brought it straight out to operations for us a few times. In our trailer kit, we have harnesses and a bunch of other canyoning gear, so we can crossover into CanyonSAR if needed.

## How does swift water rescue differ from CanyonSAR?

With CanyonSAR, you need to be quick on your feet – either walking into remote locations or getting dropped in by helicopter. The CanyonSAR teams are often involved a lot more with the searching side of SAR, whereas the swift water teams are usually brought in at the rescue end of an operation.

## Is collaboration among SAR agencies evident in what you do?

Yes – we have great relationships with local Police SAR and FENZ. The rescue pictured, for example, happened at midnight when a truck got washed downstream after trying to cross the river. When the Swift water rescue team arrived, FENZ had already lit the scene, pumped up the raft, and had downstream cover in place. We paddled the raft across to the car, used the bowline to secure the raft while we put life jackets on the water-logged people, then paddled them to shore. It was awesome to see the rescue units come together for an easy and smooth outcome.

We join up for training exercises too. A couple of years ago, we were part of a combined SAREX with Surf Lifesaving NZ, Coastguard, recreational kayakers and the NZ Jet Boat Association – everybody was sharing ideas.



## Duncan's desk

### Kia ora koutou,

**As I write** this, I've just finished tramping the Tongariro Northern Circuit with family. Coming out of the bush to news of a COVID-19 resurgence wasn't ideal, but the proactive work done by the sector late last year, in preparation for such an event, is paying dividends now.

There have been a couple of changes to the NZSAR Secretariat, with data analyst Jeff Lean and project coordinator Alannah Taylor moving on to new opportunities. Both Jeff and Alannah made significant contributions to the NZSAR Secretariat in their time here and I wish them all the best for the future. Recruitment for their roles is underway and I hope to be able to introduce our new team members to you soon.

New Zealand's seas and waterways were significantly busier than usual this year, as Kiwis took advantage of the warm weather and closed borders to holiday a bit closer to home. Sadly, several avoidable drownings occurred – a tangible reminder to all of us that there is still so much work to be done in the water safety space.

We have recently invested in a series of Air Operators' Workshops being run by the Rescue Coordination Centre. These one-day workshops, held at rescue helicopter bases around the country, are a valuable opportunity for our aviation colleagues to understand where they fit within the wider SAR sector. They're also a great chance for the RCC team to meet the pilots, crew members and paramedics who are often tasked to respond to a beacon activation.

Speaking of beacon activations, new data from SARdonyx revealed a marked change in how land-based rescues are initiated. Five years ago, one in six SAR

responses on land was a beacon activation. This summer just gone, that proportion rose to one in three. The number of SAR responses year-on-year has remained static, but it seems outdoor users are getting the message that distress beacons take the search out of search and rescue. You can read more about our work in this area on page 3.

2021 also marks the introduction of the Land Safety Forum. Based on the Safer Boating Forum, the forum intends to provide a space for land managers, user groups and SAR agencies to come together and collectively work towards a future where outdoor users are well informed and well equipped. Forum coordinator Alex Hardy is now established in the role and you can read more about his work to date on page 6.

Lastly, as summer winds down I'm reminded that the SAR training season is just beginning. The Government's investment in SAR training is bearing fruit with a number of courses being organised over the next few months. If you have the opportunity to attend a course, please do. They're a fantastic way to keep abreast of new developments and make connections across the sector.

Stay safe,  
Duncan Ferner  
NZSAR Secretariat Manager