



# Connecting the search and rescue sector

Link is a quarterly publication of  
New Zealand Search and Rescue



## Trial of long-range digital radio well underway

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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.

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## New Year Honours

**A number of SAR and frontline water safety people were recognised in the New Year Honours List 2022. Congratulations and thank you for your service.**

Noel Kay and Marilyn Moffatt are now Members of the New Zealand Order of Merit for their services to Surf Life Saving NZ. Lou Sanson, former member of the NZSAR Council, was appointed to the Queen’s Service Order. Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Blythen, a familiar face to many on the NZSAR Consultative Committee, was awarded the New Zealand Distinguished Service Decoration. Community volunteers Paul Wilkins and Yvonne O’Dowd were awarded the Queen’s Service Medal for their services to multiple organisations including search and rescue.

## 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/sardonyx/index.html](http://nzsar.govt.nz/sardonyx/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](http://landsar.org.nz)

Land Search & Rescue

[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

Matt Ellingham and volunteers setting up the portable mast and broadband dipole as a part of the long range digital radio demonstration. Courtesy Lindsey Ross, AREC

# Introducing the Police District SAR Assistant Coordinators

Eleven new civilian roles within Police are paving the way for increased collaboration between SAR agencies and their local Police SAR Squads.

In 2019, a Police SAR Assessment identified a need for additional administration support for the 10 Police SAR districts around New Zealand. Funding from the NZSAR Council made this a reality and the new staff – known as District SAR Assistant Coordinators, or DSARACs – were hired in late 2021.

The role of the new assistant coordinator is to support SAR activities including multi-agency readiness planning, training, exercise planning, record keeping and disseminating lessons. While many of the DSARACs have a search and rescue background, you won't find them on the ground during an operation. Instead, they're more likely to be organising accommodation for out-of-town SAR teams during major operations, attending debriefs, and entering information into SARdonyx, the sector's joint operational information database.

Each DSARAC is based in their local Police district, but reports to Dave Grace, DSARAC Team Leader, based at Police National Headquarters in Wellington.

The NZSAR Multi Agency Workshop, held in November 2021, was designed to coincide with the induction week for the new DSARACs. Each of them was able to meet with the regional representatives from Coastguard, Surf Life Saving NZ, Amateur Radio Emergency Communications and LandSAR and begin fostering connections that will pay dividends in the future.

Inspector Craig Rendel, Manager of Operations and Emergency Management at Police, says the new assistant coordinators are already making their mark on the SAR sector.

"We are incredibly fortunate and excited to have a group of people with an impressive range of diverse skills, knowledge and experience from across a wide section of the communities we serve. I was suitably impressed during a recent workshop with the value and insights offered by this group. They have already clearly demonstrated their passion for this important work along with some innovative ideas to enhance our capability across the SAR sector.

"NZ Police are grateful to the NZSAR Council for the support they have provided enabling the employment of the 10 District Assistant Coordinators, and a Team Leader based at Police National Headquarters. Our new team will support and enhance the capability of Police SAR members and enable greater collaboration with our SAR partners, which will benefit all of our communities."



## The DSARAC contact details

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#### TOP

Some of the new DSARACs visiting the *Lady Elizabeth IV* Police launch in Wellington.

#### BELOW

Eight of the new DSARACs with team leader Dave Grace and members of the NZSAR Secretariat during their November 2021 induction.



# Inaugural workshop creates opportunities for connection

**A strong working relationship has been cemented among newly appointed Police District SAR Assistant Coordinators and the many agencies working within the search and rescue sector, following a specially arranged workshop last November.**

**About 70 people** took part in the inaugural NZSAR multi-agency workshop in Wellington, which coincided with induction week for the new Police staff.

The event had a strong regional focus, with representatives from the SAR agencies in each of the 10 Police districts attending – including LandSAR, Coastguard, Surf Life Saving and Amateur Radio Emergency Communications.

They were welcomed by NZSAR Secretariat manager Duncan Ferner and Principal Adviser Andy Greig, who talked about SAR investment and responsibilities. A representative from each agency attending then gave a 20-minute presentation on who they were and what they did.

The workshop's primary aim was to establish relationships between the new Police District SAR Assistant Coordinators and SAR agency personnel, and to be a platform for information sharing, producing new ideas on working together and planning for the future.

COVID-19 boundary restrictions meant 12 people, mainly from Auckland, were unable to attend in person, but were able to take part remotely in a hybrid meeting model that worked well. Attendees from Waikato were welcomed in person, having just come out of Alert Level 3 settings.

The National SAR Support Programme Coordinator, Rhett Emery, who organised the workshop, says it was the first opportunity for sector representatives to come together with the aim of establishing relationships, and to facilitate ongoing collaboration and cooperation.

Feedback from those attending proved it was successful in achieving that.

"They all went away with the clear intention to continue to connect and liaise with each other, which is really good."

Rhett says the workshop was non-operational, and rather focussed more on capability and capacity.

District-based groups had several breakout sessions on specific topics including agency risks or issues for the sector, how to stay



connected within each district, the capabilities of each agency and how to better understand them, and each person's role within their respective agency, plus any opportunities which exist for working together.

The first presentations provided an outline of what each agency does, because not everyone understands what other agencies do.

"The first group session was about getting to know each other, where are the units, what are their capabilities, what assets do they have – for instance vessels, jet skis, wander (tracking) capabilities.

"It was a chance to get to know each other. The second session was around the role of the individuals – what they do for their organisation in their district."

"It came through in the conversations and feedback that there are elements of silos that exist. Coastguard and Surf Life Saving NZ might know each other, and LandSAR and AREC often know each other, yet Coastguard and AREC don't necessarily know one another, even though they both deal with radios.

## LEFT AND RIGHT

Seventy people took part in the inaugural workshop in Wellington.

“The workshop connected people, which was what it set out to achieve,” says Rhett.

The workshop was a feat in organisation around frequently changing COVID-19 rules, and in getting so many people together in one place, at one time.

Rhett says what stood out most, and was backed by the participant feedback, was the enthusiasm among participants for ongoing collaboration.

He says planning began soon after for another workshop to be staged in late winter or early spring, building on the inaugural one, but without being a repetition.



## Less time “rattling the tins”

**For decades, volunteer SAR agencies have had to fundraise for operating costs including insurance, membership systems and finance programmes. Government funding via the NZSAR Council now means those volunteers can spend less time “rattling the tins” and more time actively involved in search and rescue and frontline water safety.**

**NZSAR Senior Advisor** Governance, Performance and Monitoring Bridget Hesketh says that the Government funding provides volunteer SAR agencies with the money to cover costs that the public sometimes forget about.

“Many members of the public are happy to chip in for a replacement boat, a building renovation, or a new stretcher,” she says. “It’s harder to convince them to contribute towards ongoing operating costs like insurance or administration, but if you don’t pay those bills then you can’t run a rescue service.”

Each volunteer SAR agency has been provided different funding based on their needs at the time of application.

Surf Life Saving NZ received funding to build organisational capacity in fundraising, including getting professional advice on how to set up and maintain regular givers, direct mail campaigns and bequests.

“The first year of funding has allowed us to reset our initiatives to make sure we are focussing on the right areas,” says Surf Life Saving NZ CEO Paul Dalton. “The second year will start to see the bar being lifted, so that the platform going forward will be able to generate significantly more revenue than we have been able to in the past.”

Amateur Radio Emergency Communications received funding to implement the cloud-based accounting system Xero and a membership management system that allows for greater reporting and communications capacity, as well as increased training and support for management and volunteers.

Coastguard’s funding has been used to pay the insurance costs that were previously shouldered by individual units. It’s one of the final steps in Project Horizon which amalgamated four Coastguard regions into one national body.

LandSAR has obtained ongoing funding for the salary of their Development and Fundraising Manager. This ensures existing relationships with commercial partners can be maintained and new relationships developed.

Development and Fundraising Manager Jon McQueen says since the inception of his position, community partnerships through sponsorship have grown significantly.

“This growth can be largely attributed to the ongoing support that we receive from NZSAR and companies like Waitomo Group, PGG Wrightson and Garmin, all of which have committed to Land Search and Rescue,” he says.

“On top of NZSAR funding, these commercial partnerships bring not only fiscal growth but a wealth of reciprocal benefits, great focus on the community and fun, vibrant, forward-thinking companies for us to work with.”



## Trial of long-range digital radio well underway

**A high frequency communications system being trialled by Wakatipu Search and Rescue has potential to bolster the emergency communications network.**

**Early results from** the long-range digital radio trial show that the system has the potential to improve flexibility and reliability in SAR communications systems, especially in areas where the terrain makes communications difficult.

It was demonstrated to LandSAR and Amateur Radio Emergency Communications (AREC) members at last November's Southern Region SAREX, hosted by Wakatipu LandSAR at the Routeburn Track Shelter, about 90 minutes' drive from Queenstown.

It was an opportunity for AREC to increase its presence in Central Otago, and for its members and local Police to learn about advancements in the radio communications space, from a key member of the team shaping the project.

LandSAR's Group Support - Equipment and Technology Officer Matt Ellingham was able to demonstrate how it works by establishing a link with Westport from the group's location on the Routeburn Track.

It was a chance for LandSAR and AREC volunteers to get experience and hands-on knowledge of the equipment during the trial period.

AREC Regional Manager South Lindsey Ross says it was an excellent opportunity to foster closer relationships with LandSAR.

"During the exercise, AREC members took turns to operate the base radios and work with the management team to coordinate the exercise.

"It was also the first time that two of our volunteers had been involved in SAR, and it was a perfect opportunity for them to see things first-hand."

The long-range digital radio project is a LandSAR-run initiative, funded by NZSAR, to trial a modern high frequency (HF) radio network across New Zealand.

Matt, who looks after LandSAR's technology and equipment for its volunteer groups nationally, says what was demonstrated was an extension of a proof of concept developed by LandSAR Wakatipu a couple of years ago.

"They've been interested in this technology for a number of years. My role is to extend on the work Wakatipu has done locally, and to branch out the network, which is what we have done over 2021."

Matt says currently there are HF sites in Queenstown, a site near Westport and another being built at Whangara, north of Gisborne, which collectively provide coverage for up to 90 per cent of New Zealand.

The system works via a network of HF ground stations, which are digital high frequency radio transceivers. There are currently three portable radios, about the same size as a mobile repeater, which accompany the HF sites, and are currently assigned to the three Police districts involved in the trial.

"These portable radios are used in the field to talk to the ground stations."

Matt says the ground stations are solar and battery-powered, and are connected to the Internet via wireless modems, with further technology including satellite options being explored as a back-up.



He says it's helpful from a Police perspective because it will allow communication from an operations base to teams in the field via the Internet.

The long-range digital radio system uses technology called Automatic Link Establishment which builds a database of signal strength and conditions and chooses the best frequency on which to operate at any given time.

"It will change automatically without the user having to do anything. That's been a challenge with old style HF SAR radios in particular," Matt says.

It also uses a Near Vertical Incidence Skywave (NVIS) antennae so rather than a "really long hop" as used with traditional HF, it propagates the signal directly upwards.

Matt says a simple way to understand how this works is to imagine you're out watering the garden, and you put your finger on top of the hose and point it so that it squirts directly upwards. The signal then propagates like falling rain. Using NVIS the radios communicate over an ideal range of around 3-400 kilometres.

He says a more robust communications system is needed in areas of New Zealand where the terrain is steep and high and which limit VHF coverage.

Matt says communication is critical to saving lives and it's heartening to see efforts being made for closer collaboration among various organisations.

"One of the challenges in the SAR space is that often we head off and do our own thing. Joining up the thinking, especially in technology, is what we're striving to do with this project and working with Police, AREC and other agencies as much as we can."



TOP LEFT  
Matt Ellingham and volunteers setting up the portable mast and broadband dipole as a part of the LRDR demonstration.

TOP RIGHT  
Two portable repeaters were installed on Sugar Loaf to assist the exercise.

ABOVE  
Terry Thomas from Central Otago AREC operating the base radio with Gail Benn looking on.  
All images courtesy Lindsey Ross, AREC

# Expired beacon battery sparks multi-agency rescue

Around 5pm on Thursday 24 February, the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) received an alert from a personal locator beacon. The beacon didn't have GPS capability and the initial location data could only be narrowed down to somewhere in the ocean off Cape Brett, Northland.

**Senior Search and Rescue Officer Keith Allen** called the listed cell phone number on the beacon registration, which went to voicemail. The only information held by the emergency contact was that the beacon owner had a small boat with a radio on board.

With so little location information, and no specific trip plans available, what followed was a multi-agency rescue effort including the Maritime Operations Centre, Coastguard, Police, the Northland Emergency Services Trust helicopter (NEST) and two vessels of opportunity before the stricken boat was brought safely back to shore.

## TIMELINE

### 5.04pm

First PLB alert received. Location could only be determined as being near Cape Brett.

### 5.14pm

RCCNZ staff call emergency contact to gain information about vessel and trip plans.

### 5.20pm

Maritime Operations Centre asked to broadcast for matching vessels in the Bay of Islands area.

### 5.28pm

NEST helicopter asked to fly over the Kerikeri inlet area and listen out on the 121.5Mhz frequency to narrow down the position of the beacon.

### 5.36pm

Additional information received from the emergency contact that the boat was white and had stayed at Tutukaka the previous evening, but today's trip plan was unknown.

### 5.39pm

Coastguard radio begin relays on their channels. RCCNZ request that Bay of Islands Coastguard unit be paged to contact RCCNZ for tasking.

### 5.43pm

Marine Operations Centre receives a call from a man whose sailboat capsized off Cape Brett around 4.30pm with two people on board. He reports that they have recovered the boat and are heading for Urupukapuka Island, but need assistance.

### 5.45pm

Police Communications Centre report a no-speech call from a phone number matching the one listed on the beacon registration. They use the Mobile Locate system which provides a position around five nautical miles east of Cape Brett.

### 5.57pm

RCCNZ contacts the NEST helicopter which has been diverted to another mission. Asked if the crew were able to offload that patient to medical services at Kerikeri then fly to the distress position to begin searching, pending the availability of Kerikeri airport.

### 6.01pm

Bay of Islands Coastguard unit still unconfirmed; Coastguard Northern Region try and raise the Whangaruru unit who are 12 nautical miles south.

### 6.12pm

Maritime Operations Centre are notified that the cargo ship *Rio de Janiero* is 50 minutes away and able to assist. They are tasked and head towards Cape Brett.

### 6.13pm

Coastguard confirms that the Whangaruru unit doesn't have enough volunteers available to respond. Bay of Islands unit confirmed as available and responding. Kerikeri Airport temporarily unavailable so NEST helicopter continues to Whangārei to unload patient and refuel.

### 6.20pm

Coastguard Bay of Islands departs Paihia in *Kokako Rescue*. Coastguard Air Patrol confirm availability and are tasked.

### 6.23pm

Maritime Operations Centre advised of a launch that is 40 minutes away and able to help. Vessel *Chopper* tasked and begins making its way to the scene.

### 6.39pm

Coastguard Air Patrol departs Kerikeri and is instructed to fly towards Cape Brett and start a square pattern search.

### 6.46pm

NEST helicopter departs Whangārei, prepared for an over-water winch.

### 6.58pm

Coastguard Air Patrol and NEST helicopter both on scene and searching, maintaining 200 metres separation. Vessel *Chopper* is nearby and asked to provide weather and sea condition updates to the Maritime Operations Centre.

### 7.02pm

Coastguard vessel *Kokako Rescue* and cargo ship *Rio de Janiero* arrive on scene.

### 7.07pm

Missing vessel is spotted in the distance by the *Rio de Janiero*. Located shortly afterwards by the NEST helicopter who confirm two people on board and waving.





### 7.13pm

Coastguard Air Patrol stood down. Next of kin contacted to confirm boat and people located.

### 7.16pm

Both vessels of opportunity stood down. *Kokako Rescue* and the NEST helicopter remain on scene.

### 7.29pm

*Kokako Rescue* confirmed as alongside the boat, and planning to tow it back to shore.

### 7.39pm

*Kokako Rescue* confirmed that it has the boat under tow. As neither of the rescued people needed medical assistance, the NEST helicopter is stood down.

### 8.34pm

*Kokako Rescue* reports slow going due to sea conditions, but all is well on board

### 1.27am

*Kokako Rescue* returns to Paihia and is stood down.

#### TOP

The red triangle shows the approximate location the vessel was found, off Cape Brett.

## Insights

Subsequent conversations with the beacon owner revealed that the beacon battery was expired. As it was also an older model without in-built GPS, this meant that the distress signal received by RCCNZ yielded little useful information, necessitating multiple assets being needed for the search.

While the owner had tested the beacon and thought it was okay, he should have replaced either the battery or the unit once the battery reached its expiry date. Sending up to date trip details to the beacon's emergency contacts would have also yielded useful information about the boat's likely position and narrowed down the search area.

While both men on board had entered the water when the boat first capsized, they were able to right the vessel and begin bailing. Had they not been able to get back into the boat, it is unlikely they would have been found as quickly as they were.

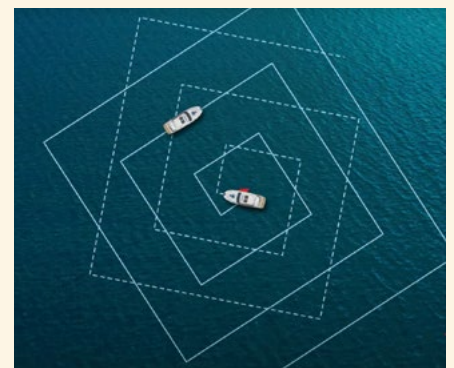
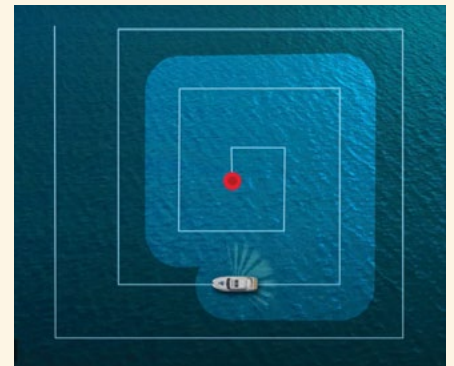
## Square or box search

The square or box search is used when the area of probability is relatively small. It doesn't give as high a probability of detection as a sector search, and is more complicated to carry out, however it's not limited in the area it can cover.

The first leg is usually orientated in the probable direction of the target's drift. The searching asset then turns 90 degrees and completes a second leg, then repeats this pattern in an ever-expanding square shape.

A square or box search can also be carried out by multiple assets at the same time. The second search asset commences the same pattern but orientated 45 degrees. The same speed is used for both assets. The first asset must be allowed to complete at least three search legs before the second commences, to avoid risk of collision.

For more information about the square search and other search patterns, see <https://nzsar.govt.nz/training-resources/start/marine-search-area-coverage-sac/types-of-search-patterns/>



#### TOP

Models of the square search pattern.



LEFT  
Nikki Lundie of the Ōtāki Surf Life Saving Club spearheaded the initiative.  
RIGHT The bilingual club logo.

# Bilingual website better represents local community

With a desire to be more representative and inclusive of the community they serve, the Ōtāki Surf Life Saving Club in Kāpiti has made their website bilingual, with content on their homepage now in both English and te reo Māori.

"We've been serving the Ōtāki community forever, and I just felt like we needed to be a bit more representative of the town that we represent," club committee member and publicity officer Nikki Lundie said.

When the club's committee was asked to come up with innovative ideas aimed at improving their service to the public and how best to guide the club, Nikki saw an opportunity for the club to be more representative of the community they serve.

"With this project we have the ability to connect and communicate more effectively by including te reo Māori on our website and other marketing material.

"We have an amazing mix of members within our club with a number of te reo-speaking members."

Wanting to find the right person to do the translating, local translator Hēni Jacob was recommended.

"While we had a budget to use for this project she didn't want to charge because she wanted it to be her contribution towards the club which has been amazing – it's a reflection of the amazing community that we serve."

The first part of the project involved translating the name of the club into te reo because there was no direct translation for "surf life saving".

With three main recommendations from Hēni, the club chose Te Puni Kaumarū o Ōtāki.

"We ran it past a couple of our Māori-speaking club members and agreed that this translation really rolled off the tongue compared to the other options," Nikki said.

"It was the most easily pronounced translation of surf life saving."

Broken down, puni has been used for club as it is a term for a band of people who work together for a kaupapa/cause and kaumarū is the term chosen for surf lifesaver as a contraction of kau and haumarū and the fuller term te kaukau i runga i te haumarū, meaning to swim safely/swim in safety.

Also decided upon was the term toa kaumarū for surf lifesaver.

So far just the homepage has been completed, with the goal being to make the whole site bilingual.

"We have a lot of families who are bilingual, many that speak English at the club but who would speak Māori at home.

"We're doing this to be more inclusive to include the Māori population of Ōtāki that don't know what we do as a surf lifesaving club and feel extremely lucky to be working with Hēni and would like to acknowledge her generous support for this very worthy project."

Ōtāki volunteer lifeguard Josh Housiaux, a Māori speaker said, "I'm proud to be part of a club that is progressive, it's a very positive step for our club and the community we serve.

"Hopefully, this leads to more members for our club and contributes to better water safety outcomes.

"It would be great to see many more clubs and community groups following suit."

Surf Life Saving NZ chief executive Paul Dalton said Ōtāki Surf Life Saving Club's actions in creating a bilingual site are aspirational.

"While I am aware some clubs have looked at making aspects of their online material bilingual, I don't think any other club has gone as far as their entire website.

"We think it's great the club is taking the initiative, and Surf Life Saving NZ fully supports it."

He said while it was unlikely Surf Life Saving NZ could follow suit right now because of the sheer amount of information on its website, its focus is on reaching as many people as possible with water safety messaging.

"As we go forward I suspect the 80/20 rule will be more effective for us, with a focus on the public-facing aspects, such as safety messaging."

Making the surf life saving messages available for everyone has never been more important after a summer full of water incidents.

Ōtāki alone has had one of its busiest seasons already, despite weekend patrols still set to continue until March 6.

This season they've had four rescues and 614 assists involving 1020 people.

Members of the club also helped out as part of the call-out squad for search and rescue with the Manawatū River drownings on January 2.

"We've had a really bad summer countrywide for statistics and are very focused as a club on those preventative actions - constantly scanning the beach, moving the flags away from where the rips and holes are, and education - people often underestimate the power of the ocean," Nikki said.

You can check out their new website at [otakisurfclub.co.nz](http://otakisurfclub.co.nz)

*This article was written by Rosalie Willis for Kāpiti News / NZ Herald and is republished with permission.*

# 10 questions with ...

## Joe Hunter, LandSAR Christchurch

Keen trumper and new mum Joe Hunter has been involved in search and rescue for 10 years.



### How long have you been involved in search and rescue?

I joined the Christchurch LandSAR group in 2011. I was already into the outdoors, so I thought I'd try volunteering for LandSAR and 10 years later I'm still here.

### What's your current role within SAR?

I've previously volunteered as the group secretary and treasurer, but I'm currently a general committee member. I also represent the Christchurch group at the Canterbury region meetings.

### What's your day job?

I'm currently on parental leave, but before that I was a detective working in the Child Protection Unit. I'm also a member of the Canterbury Police SAR Squad, which includes some disaster victim identification work.

### Can you tell us about a memorable SAR operation you've been involved in?

There have been so many memorable searches but the one that's jumping out at me is a search for a despondent male on Mount Grey in Canterbury. His car was found in the Mount Grey car park so we started tracking from there. His track took us miles from his car. Towards the end of the first day of searching I found him. The reason it's so memorable is because it was the first time I'd found someone, and also because I was by myself at the time I found him.

It's such a sense of accomplishment to find or rescue someone. It makes all those hours of searching in adverse conditions worth it.

### How do you find being a member of both Police and LandSAR?

I'm in the unique position of having an insight into both worlds. If I'm running a search as a member of the Police SAR Squad, I'm always thinking about how the LandSAR volunteers are feeling because I've walked in their shoes. LandSAR is my hobby, I love what we do, and I also love the people I've met along the way. We all share a love for the outdoors but we've also been through a lot together, so there are some strong bonds there.

### You received a LandSAR scholarship to attend a SAR conference in Iceland in 2018. How did that come about?

I heard about the scholarships and thought I'd give it a crack. I love a bit of travel and I love search and rescue so why not combine the two. The reason I picked the ICE-SAR (Iceland Search and Rescue) conference is because it has a reputation of being one of the best in the world.

### While you and your partner were the only Kiwis at the conference, you soon discovered another New Zealand connection at ICE-SAR – tell us about that.

It was completely out of the blue. I was standing in line to pick up my registration pack and right next to me was Robert Koester, who wrote *Lost Person Behaviour*, which we refer to a lot in search and rescue. He was wearing a LandSAR t-shirt that he'd picked up on a trip to New Zealand.

What are the odds of that? He's very well known in SAR circles and I was pretty stoked to get to spend some time with him.

### How does SAR in Iceland compare to New Zealand?

The level of commitment to SAR in Iceland is incredible. They've got a population about the same as Christchurch – around 370,000 people – but 3,500 of them volunteer for search and rescue across 100 teams. In New Zealand, there are about 3,500 LandSAR volunteers across the whole country.

### What's the most unexpected thing that's happened to you in SAR?

I met my partner through LandSAR – that was definitely unexpected! We're both still very much involved and my partner is now chairman of Christchurch LandSAR.

### What do you like to do in your spare time?

My partner and I are both into the outdoors. We spend a lot of time tramping and hunting around the South Island. I'm also looking forward to taking our son on some of the amazing walks our country has to offer.



# Duncan's desk

## Kia ora koutou

**As I write this**, we are coming into the last days of summer – a summer that we will remember with a great deal of concern as it featured a very large number of people drowning across the country. For good reason, each drowning became a news headline, pushing aside COVID-19 and other pressing issues of the day. While analysis to date indicates there was no obvious trend or reason for these unnecessary deaths, the vast majority of those who perished were middle- to older-aged men. As a sector we are well positioned to support prevention agencies understand these fatalities and try to prevent such a summer drowning toll from happening again.

COVID-19 has continued to complicate all our work and has forced us at the NZSAR Secretariat to make multiple changes of direction, reverses, advances, and other adaptations in line with changing lockdowns, traffic lights and phases. Like many of you, we have shifted our way of working to include a lot of hybrid meetings with some present and some online. The inaugural Multi-Agency Workshop held in November, where we helped to induct the new District SAR Assistant Coordinators, is a good example where most were in Wellington, but some joined remotely and participated fully thanks to high-speed internet connections and online breakout rooms.

Over the last few months, the NZSAR Secretariat has been developing a survey to better understand what the public actually expects of search and rescue, and also to test the effectiveness of our distress beacons advertising campaign. Technology such as helicopters, night vision goggles and distress beacons has helped make SAR much faster and more effective than 50 years ago, but it's helpful to occasionally ask and understand what the public expects of us. The SAR Expectations and Distress Beacons survey will occur shortly, and I look forward to sharing the results with you in an upcoming issue of *Link*.

Another survey about to begin is the 2022 Volunteer Engagement Survey. The 2019 Volunteer Study yielded valuable information about the diversity and motivations of volunteers in the SAR sector. Its results directly contributed to a significant increase in investment into the sector and, among other things, led to the establishment of paid volunteer manager roles across the sector.



The 2022 survey has been developed by and for Coastguard, Surf Life Saving, Amateur Radio Emergency Communications, LandSAR and the New Zealand Response Teams (part of NEMA). Ours has been a supporting and enabling role. Collectively, our intent is that the survey will give us all insights to enable better support to our most valuable resource – our people. Your own agency will be in touch directly regarding this survey, but I encourage you to take the time to complete it when it reaches you as the information it produces will be of huge value as we strive to enhance the sector.

We were very pleased to be able to support a January start to SAR training in 2022. I understand several courses were able to be completed in person before the Omicron impacts took hold. Together with our partner agencies we will be refreshing and rewriting the sector's training framework.

These are challenging times and things are moving at pace. Please take the time to look after yourselves, your families, your friends, colleagues, and communities.

Stay safe / Kia noho haumarū

Duncan Ferner

Secretariat Director | Pou Whakahaere Hēkeretari

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Hybrid meetings in action.