

RESCUE OF THE MONTH.

JULY 2020

Club: Elouera SLSC

Lifesavers and Lifeguards involved: Andrew Sharp, Nathan Neal

Two Elouera members, Andrew Sharp and Nathan Neale were practising their board paddling skills in heavy seas off Cronulla Point late on the afternoon of 17 July 2020. It was just after 5pm, the sun was setting, cloudy, raining, and the waves were 6-8ft from the ESE, with a strong southerly breeze blowing.

As it was getting dark Nathan caught his last wave, when Andrew heard an unrecognisable sound coming from north of his location. Although unable to see anything, Andrew moved closer to where he thought he heard the sound, in the direction of the back of Cronulla's rockpools. This was an area that Andrew and Nathan had avoided entering the water, due to the treacherous conditions. Andrew heard the sound a second time and paddled over in the fading light to investigate further. Coming closer to the danger area he identified a bodyboarder, paddling against a rip. At that stage the bodyboarder was some 150+ metres away from Andrew.

Andrew reached the rider at a location well inside the wave zone, but outside the rocks. The bodyboarder, Lucas, had been struggling for some 20 minutes against the rip, and was injured and exhausted. Andrew calmed and reassured him before bringing him onto his board and attempted to exit the danger zone before the next set waves came through.

Exiting the danger zone required paddling almost directly against the rip, with the bodyboarder being too tired to assist. Their combined weight made it was challenging to properly balance and get the board moving quickly. After some effort they made it to deeper water and headed South to Cronulla. By this time Nathan had come back to check on Andrew.

It took some ten minutes of paddling, including two occasions where they paddled back out to avoid a set of waves, before they were able to take advantage of a lull and return to shore. Nathan remained nearby to assist Andrew if a wave knocked the bodyboarder off.

As they were coming in another set wave did hit their board, but Andrew had previously instructed the body boarder to hold tight and they were able to re-mount and be washed onto the beach. By this stage everyone was truly exhausted.

The successful completion of this rescue in very demanding conditions required fitness, endurance, good judgement, and an ability to adapt to changing conditions. The body boarder was very lucky that Andrew and Nathan, both elite board paddlers, had the skills and experience to complete a successful rescue.



SURF LIFE SAVING
NEW SOUTH WALES

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Joel Wiseman'.

Joel Wiseman
Director of Lifesaving
Surf Life Saving NSW

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'George Shales'.

George Shales
President
Surf Life Saving NSW