

# RESCUE OF THE MONTH.

SURF LIFE SAVING  
NEW SOUTH WALES



## MARCH 2021

**Club: Bondi SLSC**

**Lifesavers and Lifeguards involved: Richard Nicholas, Courtney Date**

In March 2021, the State Emergency Service commenced an evacuation of approximately 200 persons from 120 properties in the impacted area surrounding the Colo, Nepean & Hawkesbury Rivers. In order to evacuate the community, a fleet of rescue boats were dispatched, including Marine Rescue, SES and Surf Life Saving vessels.

The weather was poor with deteriorating visibility and heavy rainfall, the rivers were in full flood with the swift water running at 12 to 15 knots in places. The water contained much hazardous debris including trees, downed power poles, and other large hazardous items including cars.

At approximately 1pm, a Marine Rescue vessel and its crew of 3, were transporting 4 evacuees (including 2 small children) when it became caught on a cable which pulled the vessel over onto its side in the swift water, at which point it rapidly filled with water and capsized shortly after. Crew members were ejected into the water but managed to hold onto the hull. The remaining crew member, and the 4 evacuees were then trapped upside-down in the upturned boat.

A nearby SES Boat and a Bondi SLSC Inflatable Rescue Boat, crewed by Richard Nicholas and Courtney Date, sped to assist. The crew of the SES boat used their craft to try and prevent the Marine Rescue Vessel being washed away, with 1 crew member and Courtney Date from Bondi

IRB jumping into the water to attempt to rescue the trapped persons. The water was cold and moving quickly, visibility was low and there was much debris. To enter the water was extremely hazardous however the SES member and Courtney did so without regard for their own safety, as in doing so there was a real and present risk to their lives.

Two adult evacuees managed to exit the submerged boat and were recovered into another SES rescue boat. The SES Crew member and Courtney made numerous attempts to enter the upturned hull by ducking under the water. Visibility was zero and the boat was being washed downstream. Together they eventually managed to reach inside the hull and pulled a trapped child out by their legs. The second child was then pushed down out of the submerged hull by the other crew member whilst he himself was trapped inside. The children were recovered into rescue boats, and the crew member swam out of the hull being the last person to be recovered.

This rescue was extremely hazardous and was conducted in extremely difficult conditions. Without the swift, decisive and courageous actions of both Courtney and Richard this incident could have resulted in the fatalities of those trapped.

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 OAM**  
President  
Surf Life Saving NSW