

RESCUE OF THE MONTH.

SURF LIFE SAVING
NEW SOUTH WALES



FEBRUARY 2020

Club: Bronte SLSC

Lifesavers and Lifeguards involved: James McLennan, Kirsty McLennan, Eric Kammerer, Marcos Puga, Ivan Power, Matthew Johnston, Waverley Council Lifeguards and members Bronte SLSC.

On the evening of 1 February, James McLennan, Club Captain, Bronte Surf Club, and his wife were relaxing at their home at Bronte Beach, when James noticed a large group of people caught in the notorious Bronte Beach rip. They were in considerable distress and were being swept out to sea.

Thinking quickly, James ran to Bronte Surf Club to grab a rescue board, and sent a brief message, to the "Board & Surf Skills" What's App Group requesting assistance. James asked two bystanders to call Triple-Zero and request Ambulance assistance, and dived straight in. He paddled out through the rip to rescue the swimmers who were now more than 250 metres from the beach. "The conditions were pretty nasty. It was choppy and there was a lot of moving water around. There was a strong north-east wind blowing which made paddling out more difficult," James said.

James' wife Kirsty, who had followed James to the beach, also grabbed a rescue board from the club and dived into the rip, along with several off-duty surf lifesavers and two off-duty Waverley Council lifeguards who had seen James' request for assistance. On call Duty Officer, Matt Evans, arrived at Bronte Beach after being tasked by Police. He quickly realised the scale of the incident and requested the Toll Ambulance Rescue Helicopter to assist with the search and rescue in the fading light.

After James reached the swimmers, he realised there were nine people in the group. He began co-ordinating Kirsty and the other lifesavers to return the swimmers, one at a time,

back to the beach. "One guy was in a particularly bad way. He had ingested a lot of water and was drifting in and out of consciousness. He was frothing at the mouth and I had to clear his airway several times while I was paddling him back to the beach on my board," James said.

The 20-year-old man was returned to the beach and given first-aid oxygen treatment by James and a team of Bronte lifesavers. NSW Ambulance paramedics arrived a short time later and he was taken to hospital for observation. Another man was treated for shock at the scene. All nine of the swimmers were brought back safely to Bronte beach for assessment and treatment.

Matt Spooner, Support Operations Manager, Surf Life Saving Sydney Branch, said "It was the most incredible rescue I've ever heard of. It was full-on heroic. James' efforts that day saved the lives of nine people – without doubt. Those guys are just so lucky James was on the beach that night. He deserves a bravery award."

Matt Spooner said the rescue was incredibly well coordinated between the multiple emergency service organisations that responded. He also said that the rescue highlighted the dangers of swimming outside patrol hours and at night. James says that the successful rescue was a team effort and gives credit to all Bronte Surf Life Saving Club members and Waverley Council Lifeguards who assisted on the day. He also credits the focused rescue board training provided by the club.


Joel Wiseman

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