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Mark Creighton rescues good swimmer from rip at Queenscliff in challenging surf

The public are being reminded not to be too embarrassed to call for help if they're tiring in the surf, following the rescue of a competent swimmer stuck in a rip.

Julie Cross

December 12, 2020 - 6:00AM [Manly Daily](#)

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Mark Creighton, an experienced volunteer lifesaver, was praised for his text book board rescue at Queenscliff. Picture: Supplied.

An experienced surf lifesaver is calling for people struggling in the water this summer not to be too embarrassed to put their hand up for help before it turns into a full-scale emergency.

It follows the recent rescue of a competent swimmer who was tiring in a rip at Queenscliff.

Mark Creighton, who was on patrol on a busy Saturday, said he clocked a man in his 70s walk briskly down to the surf, strip off to his Speedos and swim at a good pace out to the back of the flags.

“He looked about 70, was solidly built and he commenced his swim at a good pace doing freestyle with a good style,” he said.

“We are trained to observe people’s activity in the water to ascertain their competence.”



Queenscliff beach as a rip at its north end, near the rockpool. (Photo by Cameron Spencer/Getty Images)

He presumed the man was going to embark on a swim south towards Manly, but he stopped, looked around and started to swim back to shore against a rip that was taking him back out to sea.

Mr Creighton, who has been a volunteer lifesaver for more than 20 years, said he was giving his colleagues a running commentary on the man’s movements.

“I kept watching and he would swim, then stop, then swim again,” he said.

“He did that three times and his head was still above water, but he was making no progress.

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“Then he did not commence swimming again.”

While the man was not requesting help, Mr Creighton decided to go out there to see whether he needed help because it is better to step in before an incident escalates into a full blown emergency.

“I said, ‘G’day mate, are you alright?’” he said.

The man said he was fine, but was happy to accept a lift back on the board.

He was too tired to help paddle all the way into shore and just held onto the board.



SLS drones will be used this summer to monitor beach crowds as well as swimmers in the water. (AAP Image / Julian Andrews).

Despite the rough surf, Mr Creighton got the man close to shore, where other patrol members were waiting to help. He said the man appeared a little embarrassed.

He said volunteers are more than happy to help people back to shore if they are tired and they shouldn't feel embarrassed to put up their hand.

Mr Creighton won rescue of the month on the northern beaches following the incident because of his close observations of the man and the fact that it was a board rescue in challenging conditions.

Chris Smyth from NSW SLSC said Mr Creighton had also been nominated at state level for the rescue.

“It was quite a sizeable shore break,” he said.

“It was terrific observational skills by Mark and a text book board rescue.”

Mr Smyth said they also wanted to highlight boat safety this summer following the increase in boating fatalities in NSW and to make sure life jackets are worn at all times.

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