



LOWE CORPORAION  
**RESCUE  
HELICOPTER  
SERVICE**

# OFF THE LANDING PAD

**FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER 2020**

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## Whakaari / White Island - the grim reality of rescue missions



The helicopters ready at Whakatane airport

Monday 9 December 2019 started as any other for the team at our Hastings base. But as can be the case, it turned out to be a day that tested our service to the maximum and has left a lasting impression on everyone involved.

Early afternoon our base received an urgent emergency call saying there had been a volcanic eruption at Whakaari / White Island in the Bay of Plenty. From that initial call, we knew it was going to be huge mission with many casualties; one that would require our full Intensive Care Paramedic strength.

Ryan Sutherland was called in from off duty and joined fellow paramedic, Steve Lynch and Jeremy Bruce as pilot, with Ian Clarke as crewman.

Quickly the crew loaded gear, double checking supplies to ensure they could provide the specialist help needed to meet the type of injuries likely. Then the team set off for Whakatane, being the first to arrive of many other rescue helicopters from around the North Island.

What greeted them on arrival was more than could have been imagined – a hive of desperate activity with panic-stricken people and patients all around.

Steve and Ryan sprang immediately into action. Steve raced to the first boat to provide aid. His first task was to sadly confirm that the patient was already deceased. The injuries he saw on that boat were some he'd never seen before, and he hopes never to see again. The horrific burns and effects from the sulphuric acid on so many people of all ages, all suffering terribly and

needing immediate help, is not something he says he will ever forget.

One young man, who had been on the island that day with his family, had been brought in by boat and placed on the marina. He had suffered burns to over 60 percent of his body. Steve and Ryan knew that to have any chance, the young man needed immediate breathing assistance through Rapid Sequence Induction (RSI). He was sedated to unconsciousness and a breathing tube inserted to take control of his breathing.

Our crew then flew him directly to Waikato Hospital for the care he needed.

Many of the victims that day had compromised airways and this procedure was urgently repeated over and over to provide the victims with a chance to survive, not just immediately but into the long-term and ongoing recovery they would be facing.

For 12 hours straight, our team worked, helping as many people as they could and transporting them to specialist care in different hospitals around the country.

One such trip was to fly from Whakatane Hospital to Auckland City Hospital. A female patient was in critical condition with burns to over 40 percent of her body.

**(cont'd)**

## WHAKAARI / WHITE ISLAND - THE GRIM REALITY OF RESCUE MISSIONS CONTINUED...

It was a complicated flight due to the severity of her burns and tested the team's paramedics skills. She was loosely wrapped in cling-film to protect her skin and it was imperative that her vital signs were vigilantly checked to ensure she was stable for the full flight.

After delivering her to Auckland Hospital, the helicopter had nearly exceeded the 12-hour operation work limit. Although all the men wanted to do was get home to loved ones after such a traumatic and confronting day, there wasn't enough flight time left to get to home base.

Instead, the crew flew to Hamilton to our sister Rescue Helicopter base, to sleep and recover. The next morning, they flew back to Hawke's Bay to their families and friends who were all anxiously awaiting their return.

After a period of reflection, Steve says "Although it was a very difficult and sad day for everyone, and one that I will never forget, I am also very grateful and proud that my intensive care paramedic skills were able to make a difference in such an horrific tragedy.

"That is simply why I do what I do – I want to make a difference and I know that day I did."

Responses from our fellow Rescue Helicopter services.



## HELMET UPDATE:

Thank you so much to all of our amazing donors who donated so we could get more helmets and safety gear for our crew

We were blown away by the support and are proud to announce that all of our crew now have helmets which meet some of the highest safety standards as well as funds for more training so our crew can always be prepared for every eventuality. As is the case with most specialised equipment, the helmets take a little while to get ready and sent to us. Once we have them, we will make sure to show photos for you all.

Thank you again!



These are our old helmets and the crew cant wait to get the new ones – thanks for your support!

## 2019 RESCUE MISSIONS HITS 291!





## // MEET THE CREW - STEVE LYNCH

As part of our new government contract, we must have full time Intensive Care Paramedics employed for our service. We are proud to introduce you to Steve Lynch who is one of the ICPs who have joined the team. We are delighted to have such a fantastic medical professional available for the people of Hawke's Bay whenever they may need it.

### // HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A PARAMEDIC FOR?

Over twenty years now. I started my training up in Auckland at AUT where I qualified as an Intensive Care Paramedic for St John. This is the highest level of Paramedic you can become and something I always wanted to achieve. I worked in Auckland for ten years before moving to Taupo and becoming the Operations Manager for Taupo and Rotorua. I had 120 direct reports in this role and loved the challenge that came with it. As time went on, I started to really miss helping people and being on the road. I'm not made for an office job. I decided to move to Hawke's Bay with my family where I worked with St John for a few years again before coming across to the Rescue Helicopter Service.

### // WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT THE JOB?

We have a special group of people here at the Hawke's Bay Rescue Helicopter Trust. It's a great team to work with, everyone looks out for each other and you always feel safe. This is incredibly important when you are leaning out of a helicopter getting ready to winch hundreds of metres down to a patient who could be on a boat in the middle of the ocean, in the middle of the bush or down the side of a cliff!

There is always a buzz that comes with the job. You are often the first and only medical help that a patient will receive before we take them to hospital. You never know what you're flying into but you know that the patient needs your help. It's nice knowing that you have been able to positively impact that person's life.



Steve Lynch, Intensive Care Paramedic

### // WHAT IS A RESCUE MISSION YOU WON'T FORGET?

Whakaari/White Island was a mission that will never leave me. From helping people to confirming the deceased. I was really proud that I helped to save the lives that we could, even if it was incredibly sad.

All rescue missions are hard to forget because you are always helping people. I really enjoy getting people to hospital in a better condition from when I first met them. Every rescue mission is different and you are helping from all walks of life. You can truly go home after a shift and know you've made a difference.

## 2019 SNAPSHOT



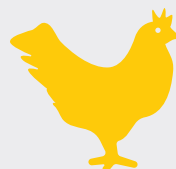
**31 BABIES & INFANTS**  
under 5 years were transported by the Rescue Helicopter in 2019.



**13 BEACH**  
people transported after accidents on the beach or in surrounding areas.



**13 BUSH**  
People transported from rivers, in the bush, or walking tracks. Many of these patients had to be winched out due to the nature of their surroundings.



**23 FARM**  
People involved in farm related accidents were transported by the Helicopter and taken to hospital.



**61 Elderly**  
Elderly patients were taken to advanced medical care.



## COMMUNITY CHEER #hawkesbayheroes



### Wairoa Pony Club

For a second year in a row, the Wairoa Pony Club has dedicated its Christmas Cracker event to fundraise for our lifesaving cause. The club knows what a lifeline our service is for the Wairoa region and has been so generous! This year donating \$2,000, which we appreciate so much!

### Open Day

Our Open day took place on the 9th of February 2020. It was an incredible day with a lot of the community coming along to see our helicopter up close and donate to our cause. We had face painting, a bouncy castle, sausage sizzle, other emergency services among the array of activities. It was a great day and thank you so much to our community for supporting us.





# PORANGAHAU COMMUNITY SUPPORTS RESCUE HELICOPTER

## Tully Family

In April of last year tragedy hit a local Hawke's Bay family. The Tully family lost one of their wonderful children. Hugh Tully was an incredible, kind and generous young man at only 22.

He went missing on the night of April 1st between 6.30 and 7.30pm. The tight knit community of Porangahau and the Tully family went searching to find Hugh.

After alerting the emergency services, the Lowe Corporation Rescue Helicopter Service was called in to complete an aerial search for Hugh. Our crew did find him but unfortunately Hugh had died. Hugh had walked over 20km from his family home at Te Paerahi, crossing the Taurekaitai River and ending at Parimahu lighthouse.

The family and Porangahau community decided to fundraise for the Rescue Helicopter Service by walking the same 20km Hugh had walked. The amazing community pulled together and raised over \$7,000 for our life saving service!

Rick and Bridget Tully says... "We were so delighted at the support we got from whānau, friends and the community of Porangahau for the Hīkoi For Hugh. In planning this event, in memory of our son Hugh, we couldn't think of a better cause to donate to than this. The crew that helped us were incredibly professional and thoughtful. We are so thankful to have this amazing service for our beautiful remote community. We encourage everyone to get behind this cause to ensure the service we have continues in the future."

*(story published with the kind permission of Bridget and Rick Tully)*





## UPCOMING EVENTS: DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Central Hawke's Bay Open Day:** We are planning a Open Day to showcase what our rescue service does. We have recently had our Hastings one which was a huge success and would like to ensure those in Central Hawke's Bay also get an opportunity to see our service first hand. We will keep our donors up to date through our facebook page when we have confirmed dates.

**Dine with... 2020!** We are in the planning stages of our Dine With event for 2020. We are so excited and cant wait to tell you more. Keep an eye out on our website or social media for when we announce more details. It will be towards the end of the year and it will be a night to remember!

Please check our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/hbrescuehelicopter](https://www.facebook.com/hbrescuehelicopter) for other events

## THANK YOU TO OUR PLATINUM, GOLD AND SILVER CORPORATE SPONSORS

Who help to keep our services free of charge and available 24/7 to everyone in our Community.

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Hawkes Bay Mountain Bike Club

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**DID YOU KNOW THAT THE HASTINGS DISTRICT COUNCIL FUNDS THE PRINTING OF THIS NEWSLETTER?**

They support us every year to ensure we can get our messages to the Hawke's Bay Community and we are so appreciative!



## KEEP IN CONTACT

**Fundraising and Administration** (06) 878 1630  
**Rescue Hangar** (06) 878 1633

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