

## **INCIDENT REPORT FOR GRADE 2 ASSESSMENT MOOLOOLABA BEACH 13/2/2016**

I (Tony) posted a Grade two Assessment day to be held at Mooloolaba Beach on the 13 February 2016. Prior to the day I sent two emails to all participants on what they would be tested on and the required skills.

On the days prior and the day in question I checked the Bureau of Meteorology forecast which indicated a Strong Wind Warning of 25 Knots from the South to South East. Knowing the area well I knew it was well protected from this particular wind and with a documented Risk Assessment Document was happy to proceed.

On the morning of the 13th I arrived on site to find a Swim carnival was being held in the exact place of planned assessment. I then surveyed the beach 500 metres to the northwest and had a consultation with my fellow **Sea Instructor** Mark Hessling who was to take half of the 8 participants. I then decided we were Ok to proceed with the assessment as long as we stayed within set Parameters which I discussed with the entire group.

On the beach I held a group briefing explaining to the group our restriction on the water and the need for a tight group. I also discussed and checked that all participants had the required equipment and went through what events would be covered on the water. I also asked at this stage was anybody unhappy with participating.

The groups then split in two with Mark taking his group out first and proceeding to the designated place for the assessment. I then took my group out through the surf and proceeded to the same location.

Once there the first task was a tow. I took my group 200 metres to the northwest and then turned to return to our original position to proceed to the next stage. At this point we were well within the designated area.

The next task was for the 4 participants to wet exit their boats; swim 25 meters to JS (a Seaguide assisting me in the exercise) and return to their boats; then perform a paddle float rescue into their boats.

In a very short period I could see that D and G **had poorly fitted lifejackets and were having some difficulties**. I asked JS to come closer and also SW who was holding D's boat and moved it closer for D to get to his boat.

At this stage G was attempting her paddle float re-entry and was having difficulties I proceeded to help her re-enter her boat as I could see she was getting tired. At this point I was called by SW and J, who was also assisting to say that D was in trouble and could not get back in his boat. Stephen informed me that D had performed a paddle float re-entry but had then fallen back into the water. I then proceeded to get D back in his boat with the help of J and S. D was complaining of shortness of breath and was very concerned about his condition. I then used J's VHF radio to call for help from Mooloolaba Coast Guard on channel 16. They received my call but were having difficulty hearing me; we proceeded to channel 73 but after several attempts were unsuccessful in getting our situation across. I then attempted to use my mobile but soon realised with everything being wet this was useless.

At this point, which I think may have been up to 10 minutes, we had drifted out of our designated zone. I requested JS to check on the other 2 participants while I proceeded to hook D up to tow him with J holding him, back to safe water. At one point I tried a V tow but with a 2 Skeg boat in this sea that was not successful. I then took back control with a single tow because I was the stronger paddler. I sent S to get help from the support boats at the nearby Swimming Event. He was successful and very shortly we had a jetski with a lifeguard on board who helped us to transfer D on to his craft and he took him away for attention.

While this was happening I had asked Mark Hessling from the second group to go out to check on my other participants but he was already responding to a paddle signal from J to the fact they were having problems.

As soon as D was taken care of I turned to see where J and M were but could not see them at first. On a second survey I realised they had drifted with the wind quite a distance west and also slightly further north.

I immediately informed MP (enclosed-Sea Guide) to take all the remaining participants back to the beach. This could be done as they were all well within the protected water.

I then turned and signalled to another person on a jetski who was part of the swimming competition and asked them for assistance for the paddlers who had drifted some distance by this stage. She saw where they were and proceeded to get help from a rescue boat. While this was happening I proceeded to paddle to them to assist in any way I could.

The rescue boat passed me and reached the group before me. They took HN on board and proceeded back to shore. I then caught up with the rest of the group and all of them were capable of the return paddle. JS towed the empty boat back to shore.

Once back on shore we enquired after D who had had the ambulance attend and offered to take him to Nambour Hospital for attention. D declined and said his wife would drive him down to St Andrew's in Brisbane. Since then I have spoken to D he is still getting some check-ups in Hospital but feels fine and was very appreciative of our efforts on his behalf. H was fine but was shaken due to not coping with the conditions.

I proceeded then to give the whole group a debriefing of the events that had occurred on the water and the reasons I believe they occurred. These were **that their equipment i.e. D and G's life jackets incorrectly fitted, and various Tow ropes were tangled.**

I also mentioned the fact that people had overestimated their readiness for this assessment and in doing so created certain problems.

My self-assessment points on the day were numerous.

1. The vetting of participants was not stringent enough and too many anecdotal stories were accepted on peoples paddling abilities.
2. Once the swimming competition was found to be at our location I should have erred on the side of caution and gone in closer to the rock wall in calmer conditions. ( but this would have negated the point of the whole grading process)

3. **Once I saw the participants had ill-fitting lifejackets I should have told them they had failed already and got them back in their boats hence terminating the problem before it began.**
4. Communication- my personal VHF malfunctioned again. I have just received it back from the manufacturer with a clean bill of health I should have tested before the event.

Tony Hirst  
AC Sea Instructor