

**NZSAR**



**NEW ZEALAND SEARCH AND  
RESCUE COUNCIL**

**COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

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## **Environmental Scan**

NZSAR's strategic plan<sup>1</sup> identifies the need to develop a national public relations strategy. Responsibility for this currently lies with the Chairman and Secretariat, who have to shift their focus from their core responsibilities to personally managing all media and public relations communications.

There is a lack of media, public and stakeholder understanding of how the Search and Rescue Council fits in with the government departments, and search and rescue organisations and agencies. This lack of understanding is also evident amongst volunteers whose organisations make up NZSAR. The message about what the NZSAR council, the secretariat and the consultative committee do at a practical level is not adequately filtering down to the member organisations and their volunteers.

Communication with NZSAR members is a priority if the council's 2<sup>nd</sup> strategic goal "*Achieve a culture of "One SAR body"*" is to be achieved. NZSAR should be communicating its role, as well as operating a supportive and facilitative communications programme, that will enable a free flow of information between all areas of Search and Rescue in New Zealand.

Day to day operational communication is the responsibility of the two co-ordinating agencies, Maritime NZ and the Police. NZSAR's role is to continue to develop open communication lines between the council, the secretariat the consultative committee and the people who conduct SAR operations.

## **Background**

The national Search and Rescue Council was established to provide strategic governance of the New Zealand Search and Rescue (SAR) sector following Cabinet approval in February 2003. The Council consists of the chief executives or senior officials from the Ministry of Transport, Maritime NZ, Civil Aviation Authority, NZ Police and the NZ Defence Force.

The NZSAR Consultative Committee was also established in 2003 to provide expert advice to the NZSAR Council on relevant SAR issues. The NZSAR Secretariat provides support to the Council and leads the NZSAR Consultative Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> NZSAR Strategic Plan 2004- 2014

## **NZSAR Council Objectives**

- To provide strategic search and rescue policy advice to government.
- To provide strong strategic co-ordination and leadership for all search and rescue strategies(sea, land and air) within New Zealand's search and rescue region.
- To provide a centralised public voice for strategic SAR issues.
- To monitor New Zealand international SAR obligations and provide strategic advice to the Government when needed.
- To establish and maintain New Zealand's Search and Rescue:
  - Vision
  - Mission
  - Goals
  - Plan

and monitor performance agreements and goals within the plan.

## **Communications Objectives**

- Raise the existing awareness level about the NZSAR Council within the wider NZSAR Community.
- Establish NZSAR as a lead agency within the search and rescue sector, leading 'a culture of one SAR body'.
- Create a collaborative and cohesive response to common issues affecting the sector, by bringing together member organisations and using their networks and experiences.
- Enable a free-flow of information from NZSAR to members and other stakeholders by developing and maintaining two way communication channels.
- Ensure background information about NZSAR is readily available to internal and external audiences.
- Promote the positive work the sector does on both a national and local level.
- Assist the smaller NZSAR organisations with public relations activities.

## **Key Messages**

### **The Search and Rescue Council:**

- Has senior and credible members providing high level strategic governance to all search and rescue agencies.
- Is supported by a Secretariat.
- Provides leadership and advocacy for the search and rescue sector.
- Represents a respected and credible sector with a clear focus and goals.
- Provides strong strategic co-ordination for all search and rescue operations in the New Zealand SAR region.
- Develops and maintains the New Zealand search and rescue strategy.
- Ensures all search and rescue organisations and agencies are strategically and operationally aligned.
- Is responsible for providing strategic policy advice to Government.
- Ensures that the membership's collective experience and knowledge is central to formulating effective Government policy.
- Identifies/analyses strategic risks and addresses them to avoid operational failure.
- Understands how crucial it is for New Zealand to have a search and rescue sector that is cohesive with effective communication flows between all agencies.
- Promotes and makes visible the enormous contribution of the search and rescue sector to our society.

## **Key Stakeholders**

### **The NZSAR Council**

Chief executives or senior officials from:

- Ministry of Transport,
- Maritime NZ,
- Civil Aviation Authority,
- NZ Police
- NZ Defence Force.

### **NZSAR Consultative Committee**

- NZSAR Secretariat
- Maritime NZ
- Civil Aviation Authority
- NZ Police
- NZ Defence Force
- Ministry of Transport
- Land Search and Rescue Inc
- Royal New Zealand Coastguard Federation
- Aviation Industry Association
- Amateur Radio Emergency Communications
- National Rescue Coordination Centre
- Department of Conservation
- Ambulance New Zealand
- The NZ Mountain Safety Council
- The NZ Fire Service
- Maritime Operations Centre
- Surf Life Saving NZ.

### **SAR Sector**

- Search and rescue organisations and agencies
- Search and rescue volunteers.

### **Central Government**

- Ministers
- Government MPs
- Opposition MPs.

### **Local/Regional Government**

- Politicians
- Managers
- Local Government NZ (LGNZ).

**Other Interested parties**

- Federation of Commercial Fishermen
- Recreational Clubs
- Trampers
- Fisherpersons – commercial and recreational
- Skiers and Snowboarders
- Mountain Climbers
- Surfers
- Rock Climbers
- Amateur pilots
- Skifield operators
- Tourists
- Educators
- At risk members of the public eg dementia patients.

**Sponsors**

- Sponsors of member organisations.

**Media**

- National newspapers
- Regional newspapers
- Radio networks
- Maori and Pacific radio stations
- Television NZ
- TV3
- Maori TV
- Prime Television

**Specialist magazines**

- Boating New Zealand
- Fish and Game New Zealand
- New Zealand Wilderness
- New Zealand Surfing
- Sailing New Zealand
- New Zealand Snowboarder
- New Zealand Bike
- New Zealand Fisherman
- New Zealand Fishing News
- New Zealand Shipping Gazette

**General Public**

## Tactics

- Employ a contractor for 5/6 hours a week to implement a communications strategy and initiate communication plans.
- Build on communication tools already in place and initiate new ones.
- Build relationships that result in organisations and agencies understanding the value of NZSAR.
- Establish NZSAR as leading 'a culture of one SAR body' by becoming a conduit of easily accessible information from across the SAR sector.
- Encourage dialogue amongst committee members.
- Communications contractor to act as a media facilitator for smaller organisations with no communication support.
- Communications contractor to attend Council and committee meetings, when appropriate, to brief members on planned communication initiatives and explain how they fit in with the wider responsibilities of the Council and search and rescue sector.
- Determine a process that allows NZSAR to provide credible/ practical information to its stakeholders.
- Build awareness amongst key sector audiences by NZSAR Council, Consultative Committee members and the secretariat attending sector events.
- Seek speaking opportunities to highlight search and rescue operations or related issues.

## Specific Outputs

- Publish a quarterly NZSAR newsletter – this would be provided to key stakeholders in an electronic and hard copy versions. It would contain news and information about NZSAR work, profiles from the Consultative Committee members, as well as any relevant material from the wider sector.
- Produce an annual report highlighting the NZSAR's achievements and its intentions for the year ahead.
- Reorganise the website – promote the website as a repository for information about NZSAR and member organisations.
- Widely promote and encourage entries to existing SARS Awards.
- Initiate a meeting of communication staff within the sector to investigate whether there should be a project team set up to co-ordinate ongoing collaboration.

- Pre-prepare articles about the SAR Council that can be sent to SAR publications and newsletters e.g. the NRCC quarterly newsletter. The articles should provide information about what the SAR Council is working on and its latest achievements.
- Collect/compile information which is readily available to provide to members, media and other stakeholders on request. This should include fact sheets about NZSAR and the sector, relevant research, sector profiles etc.
- Compile a “good news file” filled with stories of the diverse sector at work, for newsletters and specialist publications.
- Target specific individual journalists for briefings and set up regular meetings with strategic media outlets.
- Monitor the media and hold a file of stories relating to the SAR sector.
- Encourage use of the NZSAR logo where appropriate, ensuring members are aware it can only be used with the authorisation of NZSAR.

## **Evaluation**

- Survey member organisations about the usefulness of the newsletter/fact sheets and other communication material.
- Identify whether there is increased knowledge within the sector about the work NZSAR is doing.
- Monitor media coverage – are SAR messages getting a fair and balanced hearing?
- Monitor and record increased engagement of common issues within the sector.
- Monitor and record increased engagement from other stakeholders.