



# BRAVERY AWARD

# BRONZE

Presented to

## Sheldon Swartbooi

Sheldon, it gives me great pleasure to present you with this **BRAVERY BRONZE AWARD** on behalf of all of us at the NSRI, in recognition of your bravery, professionalism, and exceptional commitment during a high-risk rescue operation at Grootkrans on the evening of Thursday, 3 April 2025.

On that day, a 74-year-old woman had suffered serious injuries after a fall while hiking in a remote gorge upstream of the Elands River Mouth, between Storms River and Eersterivier.

You were among the first responders to hike into the gorge, navigating a sheer 400-metre cliff trail, alongside a fellow EMS paramedic, an NSRI crewman, and a local farmer. Upon reaching the casualty, you and your colleague worked calmly and methodically to stabilise her. The patient had suffered a fractured vertebra and was in a serious condition, lying at the base of the gorge on the Elands River, about 500-metres upstream from the river mouth. It was quickly assessed that there was no safe way out on foot, transporting the casualty.

As daylight was fading and no helicopter rescue was possible, the NSRI rescue team made a challenging decision to extract the casualty by boat through the treacherous river mouth. Recognising the urgency of the situation,

you and your colleague prepared the patient for extraction by boat, knowing full well the complexity and danger involved. When the NSRI Oyster Bay rescue craft Caltex Challenger finally reached the site after navigating 4-metre breaking swells, sandbanks, and submerged rocks, you accompanied the patient onboard, providing vital medical care.

In complete darkness, with only a spotlight to judge the wave sets, the vessel began its return journey. Swamped by waves and at times barely clearing the sandbanks, the crew fought to get out through the river mouth. You remained focused on the patient's condition, ensuring she remained stabilised throughout the ordeal. Then came a gruelling 12-nautical-mile voyage in 30-knot headwinds and 4-metre seas, where your calm presence and medical care were critical in keeping the patient stable and alive.

Once the craft reached Skuitbaai, you safely handed the patient over to the awaiting EMS team and she was transported to hospital.

Sheldon, your bravery and professionalism under immense pressure played a key role in saving a woman's life that night. You went above and beyond in the face of danger.

**We salute you.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Velloza'.

Jonathan Velloza  
Chairman: Board of Directors



15 August 2025

Date