



GALLANTRY AWARD

SILVER

Presented to

Pieter van Heerden

For his courage and determination during a challenging rescue operation launched at 14h04 on Thursday, 13 June 2024, following reports of a fishing vessel capsized between Saunders' Rock and Queen's Beach, Bantry Bay.

Eyewitnesses had seen an open ski-boat capsize just beyond the surf zone. At this stage, the number of people on board was unknown.

NSRI Table Bay, NSRI Bakoven, and the City of Cape Town's water rescue network were activated. Dirk Coetzee from NSRI Bakoven was first on the scene, followed shortly by Russell Goodman, Jannes le Roux, Tiaan de Kock, and Pieter van Heerden also from NSRI Bakoven. Under Dirk's direction, the rescue swimmers entered the surf to begin a coordinated search.

Jannes swam out and reached a young man in his 20s and provided him with buoyancy support. Jannes was quickly joined by Pieter who had entered from the Saunders' Rock tidal pool area, Tiaan, and Russell, who assisted the casualty while Jannes continued the search for other casualties. Pieter started swimming the young man back to shore, using his own helmet to protect the casualty and a yellow torpedo buoy to keep him afloat. On shore, the young man was treated for hypothermia and non-fatal drowning symptoms by paramedics before being transported to hospital and was later confirmed as the only survivor of the tragedy.

While Pieter was attending to the first casualty, the other three NSRI rescue swimmers had located a second man, believed to be in his 60s, in the water off Queen's Beach and had started CPR. They recovered him onto the NSRI rescue vessel Spirit of Day (Rescue 3A), and they

initiated and continued CPR en route to the slipway at Three Anchor Bay. Despite all efforts, the man was sadly declared deceased by paramedics.

It was later confirmed that three men had been on board when the boat capsized. With two recovered, the search for the third continued. Paula Leech (Station 3) and Grant Back (Station 2) arrived and took charge of coordinating the air and sea operation, supported by the Spirit of Day and the EMS/AMS Skymed rescue helicopter.

The capsized vessel washed ashore near Queen's Beach and SAPS confirmed no one remained trapped. The Spirit of Day and Skymed continued the search, with NSRI swimmers in the water and other emergency services conducting a shoreline sweep.

The third casualty was located in the surf zone by Skymed. An EMS Metro rescue diver deployed from the helicopter, recovered the unresponsive man, and extracted him ashore. Paramedics commenced CPR, but after all efforts were exhausted, he too was sadly declared deceased.

At 14h55, all three casualties had been accounted for, and NSRI crews were stood down.

Pieter van Heerden's physical endurance and selfless bravery ensure that the lone survivor of this tragic event was recovered to shore. He demonstrated exceptional presence of mind to mitigate further injury to the casualty. Pieter's exemplary performance reflects the highest standards of the National Sea Rescue Institute.

We are proud to recognise his actions with the **Gallantry Award – Silver**.

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

Jonathan Velloza
Chairman: Board of Directors



15 August 2025

Date