



To the rescue

**By Brad Lester
and Matt Dunn**

THE summer saving season is in full swing, with lifesavers across the region rescuing stricken beachgoers and hapless fishermen.

Inverloch lifesavers alone have performed 13 rescues since Boxing Day, with "most of those occurring in the two days before New Year's Eve".

Speaking yesterday, Inverloch Lifesaving president Phillippe du Plessis, said he believed more rescues would need to be performed in the coming days with the weather again hotting up.

"It's definitely higher than normal. It's a product of the amount of people and the weather. We certainly had some trouble with the crowds over that warm period," he said.

Mr du Plessis said most of the rescues are for children who have been lost and those who have strayed outside the flags that designate patrolled waters.

"We had 10 lost children and 16 first aid incidents. There hasn't been any huge incidents where we've had to call an ambulance," Mr du Plessis said.

Venus Bay has been less busy than Inverloch, with a natural phenomenon making life a little easier for the lifesavers there.

"It's been very quiet. The way the beach has developed, we've got a trough, with a sandbar about 200m out. We've got this sort of protected area right near the beach," Venus Bay publicity officer Julian Seri said.

At Waratah Bay there was more action, with lifesavers returning a stricken vessel to shore on the evening of Sunday, December 27.

A boat with two on board broke down three kilometres directly south of the Shallow Inlet entrance.

Four members of the Waratah Beach Surf Life Saving club responded in a Rigid Inflatable Boat, towing the six metre boat inside the inlet by 8.30pm.

Rescuer and club past president Tim Barbour said the inlet entrance was fortunately calm, allowing the rescue to be finished before darkness fell.

"The inlet is a trap. It's easy to find your way out but it's hard to pick the entrance mouth because it's on such a long beach," he said.

"It's nearly impossible to identify the inlet unless you are experienced. You really need to know your landmarks."

Mr Barbour has known boaters to direct their vessels into the surf, mistakenly believing they were approaching the inlet bar.

"With the wrong type of boat, you can be trapped by the breakers and you're in all sorts of trouble," he said.

Three young lifesavers joined Mr Barbour on board the rescue boat: daughter Courtney, Jack Alexander and Tim Halkier.

"Luckily the boat owner was aware of his position and we were able to spot him on the horizon exactly where he said he was," he said.

"There has been a lot of activity on the beach and so far, so good. We have not had any other rescues. The weather has been beautiful and there's lots of boating, sailing and water skiing on the inlet."



Sea patrol: the Waratah Beach Surf Lifesaving Club's inflatable boat has been a handy acquisition.