

The Waimarama Surf Life Saving Club has patrolled its patch of the Hawke's Bay coastline for 65 sizzling summers. Offshore rips can be treacherous here – in the past two years, 34 people have been rescued. So the club's striking watchtower, which was officially opened last December, is crucial for keeping an eagle eye on the surf.

Kitted out with the latest technology, including wifi, two-way radios, a speaker system and a high-definition camera, it replaced the old structure built in 1973.

Chris Ainsworth, from Napier firm Paris Magdalinos Architects, came up with the cleverly cantilevered design, and a team of skilled volunteers was involved in its construction. The club and local community also swung behind the project, raising more than \$200,000 in two years.

Sturdy concrete foundations have been placed well behind the sea wall to protect it from erosion, and decorative motifs by Maori artist Phil Belcher have been sandblasted into either side of the concrete piers as symbols of protection, a gift from the local hapu.

The Waimarama club has 70 volunteer lifeguards running weekend patrols from November to March, plus extra weekday coverage during peak season in December and January. On every patrol, guards are sent out into the water to check beach conditions.

"Our aim is to try and prevent incidents happening by informing the public about rips and holes, and actively monitoring the patrolled area during the day," says club

ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER

It looks like a boutique bach, but for the lifeguards at Waimarama Beach, it's a room with a view.



VIVIANE TALDANE



VIVIENNE HALDANE

Top:

chairman Tony Pattison, who considers the tower an asset to both the club and the community.

“We deal with everything from sprained ankles, dislocated shoulders, people swimming fully clothed, swimmers who suddenly get out of their depth and struggle to swim back to shore or get blown out to sea on air mattresses. Last year, a fishing line tangled around someone’s throat as he rode his quadbike along the sand.”

Boats in distress are another factor. “It could be as simple as someone running out of petrol and having to launch an inflatable rescue boat [IRB] to bring them back in.”

Sisters Rachel and Danielle Finlayson and Pattison’s daughter, Cydney, are typical of many teenage lifeguards who’ve come up

through the country’s junior surf programmes. Rachel started training when she was 11 and is now a qualified senior lifeguard and junior lifeguard instructor. Coming from a beach-loving family, she thought it would be a cool thing to do.

“Aside from being on patrol, I love catching massive waves on my board and I enjoy the IRBs,” says the 18-year-old, who’s hoping to get her licence soon so she can compete. “I like the vibe of being on the beach with my mates and giving back to my community, too.”

Last summer, Surf Life Saving NZ lifeguards clocked a total of 223,020 hours and made 1796 rescues. To find out more about surf life saving in your area or to make a donation, visit www.slnz.org.nz. **VIVIENNE HALDANE**



ONE SHOT

At an age when most people are just finishing high school, 18-year-old photographer and music video director Connor Pritchard already has some big names on his CV, including Wellington reggae band The Black Seeds, Nike and Swedish watch company Daniel Wellington.

He began borrowing his Dad’s old camera “back when I used to sneak through abandoned buildings with my friends and take photos”, then taught himself how to film and edit by watching tutorials on YouTube.

With a year left to go at Napier Boys’ High, Pritchard began fielding offers to shoot for brands like Reebok.

“That really woke me up and made me realise I could do this as a job.”

He quit school and has been working non-stop ever since, promoting himself through social media (www.connorfilms.co). “You can’t expect the work to come to you. It’s all about getting your name out there and connecting with different artists and musicians.”

In July, he won the newly established video category in the D-Photo Sigma Amateur Photographer of the Year Awards for what the judge described as a “colourful and cheeky piece of cinematography”. Most recently, he directed a music video for The Black Seeds’ single “Back to You”. “I don’t quite see myself as a professional yet, but I hope the work speaks for itself.” **LUKE JACKSON**