



**City of
Ipswich**

- **6 Tribute - Assistance in Rescue of Tourists**
Attachment 1 Tribute3

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6. Tributes - Mayor Teresa Harding for Kaewen Blaine, Tiger Poolkerd, and Xavier Fing

I would like to pay tribute to the selflessness and courage of three young Ipswich rugby league players who assisted in the rescue of two tourists caught in dangerous surf conditions. While enjoying a trip to the beach, they did not hesitate when they were asked to help Nepalese tourists caught in a dangerous rip current.

Kaewen Blaine, 16, Tiger Poolkerd, 16 and Xavier Fing, who was 15 at the time, were with friends when they stopped in at Zenith Beach at Port Stevens in NSW on the 14th of April, during the school holidays.

Kaewen said that when they arrived at the beach a panicked Nepalese man approached him and told him his friends were drowning and could they help. They looked out and could see three 13-year-olds also struggling after heading out to try and rescue the two tourists in trouble. Without a second thought to their own safety, they ran toward the danger. Tiger was able to grab a board and the friend group all got in the water. Using the discipline, teamwork and drive they honed on the football field, they were able to pull the first swimmer and the three young teenagers to the shore. Bystanders started CPR on Bishop LeCurier when his scared friend said there was still another person in the water.

With the waves crashing well over their heads they again were able to locate the second swimmer, Raj Kumar Bahora, and get him onto the board. Tiger told me that it was very difficult to keep him on the board and others came to assist. Kaewen recounted it being the scariest when they were pushed against the rock wall as they waited between waves to get the man to the shallows. Xavier explained the people on the beach then also came to start CPR on this second man. The police came to their aid, then a lifeguard from a patrolled beach nearby arrived followed by Ambulances, Fire and Rescue and more lifeguards.

These three young Norths Tigers Juniors Rugby league footballers - teammates, friends and now heroes – proved that greatness isn't just measured on the field, but in the choices we make, when others are in need. They didn't act for glory, and they didn't ask for recognition, they acted on instinct and today a young man, Bishop LeCurier, is alive because of their extraordinary actions. Sadly, Raj Kumar Bahora died in hospital, but he was not lost at sea, thanks to these young men and their friends and I think that would be of some comfort to his family.

I was alerted to this act of bravery by Ipswich Jets CEO Richard Hughes who said the actions of the boys reflected greatly on both the club and the community. Richard said the Ipswich Jets club were incredibly proud to have young people like Kaewen, Tiger and Xavier representing the Ipswich Jets Juniors, and living out the club's values of respect to leadership, service, and compassion. I met Kaewen and Tiger from Ipswich State High School and Xavier from Bremer State High School, and their families, to presented them with Commendation Certificates.

Our community values helping others and these three young men are to be commended for their actions and they are excellent young role models for others.

Kaewen told me that if anyone needs a hand, you should just help them out. It doesn't have to be a rescue, doing something small can be as beneficial as doing something big. It is these quiet acts of courage that truly remind us of the power of having good character.

So to Kaewen, Tiger and Xavier - your quick thinking and bravery made a significant difference, exemplifying outstanding teamwork and a commitment to helping others in need. On behalf of the City of Ipswich, we are proud of you, and we wish you all the very best for your bright future.