

LIFE'S A BEACH | Coast calls

Holiday tragedy so close

By PATRICK WILLIAMS

Man caught in rip outside the flags on Kings Beach

THE Christmas break just missed a tragic start when a man almost drowned while swimming outside the flags on Sunshine Coast beach.

The 30-year-old was caught in a rip on Kings Beach yesterday morning.

He had to be rescued by surf lifesavers from Met Caloundra Surf Life Saving Club on a jetski.

He was taken to Caloundra Hospital as a precaution.

Later in the day, three 10-

year-olds caught in a rip had to be brought back to shore at the same beach.

The Coast has been battered by large swells and powerful surf conditions this weekend brought on by ex-Tropical Cyclone Evan.

Surf Life Saving Queensland Sunshine Coast duty officer David McLean said conditions were expected to ease by Tuesday.

Extended patrols are

planned for Christmas Day and Boxing Day, traditionally one of the busiest times on the beaches.

Mr McLean said that beachgoers should put safety first and exercise some common sense in the water.

"Obviously Christmas is a time to celebrate and unwind and there's no better place to beat the heat than the beach, but I can't stress enough how important it is to put safety

first and consider the consequences of your actions," he said.

"We realise that beaches may be crowded, but I urge all beachgoers to make the effort to swim between the red-and-yellow flags, even if it means walking a short distance to get there.

"The flagged areas are not only the safest spots to swim, but they are also patrolled by qualified surf lifesavers and

lifeguards.

"At the end of the day, we want swimmers to enjoy the beach this Christmas and have a holiday they will remember for all the right reasons.

"We don't want a situation where one moment of madness results in tragedy."

Mr McLean also warned of the dangers associated with combining alcohol and swimming.

"Unfortunately each year we have incidents of people getting into trouble after taking an afternoon swim while intoxicated," he said.

"Drinking impairs your judgment and severely slows your reflexes - not a great combination when swimming in the surf.

"Please be mindful of not putting yourself in a dangerous situation and always remember that your risky behaviour can not only impact you, but can also put others' safety at risk."

The only thing for sure is that it won't snow



WHO CARES: Come rain, hail or shine Diana (left) and Denise Khorrnam are going to really enjoy their Christmas holidays.

PHOTO: JOHN MCCUTCHEON

IT TOOK more than grey skies and some rain to dampen spirits on the Coast yesterday as the Christmas holidays began in earnest.

After a hot and steamy start to the day, afternoon showers brought the temperature down, but it wasn't enough to deter beachgoers.

German exchange student

Jannina Berlinghoff sheltered from the rain with Daniel Walter under the Loo With View deck after a dip at Mooloolaba Beach.

"It didn't rain when we left the house," Ms Berlinghoff said.

"But when you're swimming, anyway, it doesn't really matter.

"The waves are still good. It's still fun."

Ms Berlinghoff will spend her second Christmas in Australia at a family barbecue, followed by some Boxing Day beach volleyball, in rain, hail or sunshine.

"It's really weird to have Christmas in hot weather. In Germany it would be freez-

ing at the moment, snowing and minus 10 degrees," she said.

A warm minimum temperature of 24 degrees overnight led into an early high of 28 degrees yesterday and relative humidity reached a muggy 80%.

The hot days, warm nights and humid conditions are

forecast to continue right through Christmas, with maximum temperatures of 29 degrees expected across the next few days, reaching 31 degrees on Christmas Day.

Showers will continue today with a few more possible for the rest of the week, and the UV index will continue to be extreme.

Brisbane holidaymaker Fran Morrison wasn't concerned the weather would spoil her Christmas.

"I don't mind the rain at the beach," she said.

"The weather is what the weather is, and the kids love it.

"It won't rain all the time."

— TESSA MAPSTONE

Barry family takes over at Christmas



ON DUTY: Samantha, Lynda, Paul, Patricia and Tony Barry will patrol Bulcock Beach on Christmas Day.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

WHILE most people will be sitting around their tree this Christmas Day, three generations of the Barry family will hang out around red-and-yellow flags instead.

In a six-year family tradition Patricia, Tony, Lynda, Paul and Samantha Barry will spend their Christmas Day as a family patrolling Bulcock Beach.

"By doing a family patrol together it is

great fun. We spend the day on the beach and have our own little packed lunch to celebrate Christmas," Patricia said.

"We actually spend a lot of time planning what we will be eating for lunch because we can't sit down and eat.

"It is always a fun day doing the Christmas Day patrol as the beach patrons are always so cheerful and fun."

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