

INDEPENDENT SAROP REVIEW

Operation McLennan

Location: Orewa, New Zealand

Date: 16th – 22nd October 2019

**Report
version:** Final

Reviewer(s): *Joanne Holden, on behalf of NZSAR Secretariat*

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Executive Summary

The New Zealand Police is responsible for all Category I Search and Rescue Incidents.

On Wednesday October 16th Police were notified that Mike McLennan was missing from the Milton Court Rest home in Orewa.

Mr McLennan suffered from Dementia and had a history of wandering.

Due to his advancing Dementia, family decided to put him into secure Rest Home care at Milton Court in Orewa early in October. However, he often told staff and his family that he wanted to go back home.

He refused to wear any form of tracking device.

On October 16th he managed to leave Milton Court unseen and walked north along the main highway towards Waiwera. Evidence indicates that he left the highway around 5.7 kms from the Rest Home, walked up a private road, across a paddock and over a fence where he fell and was found deceased in a tract of steep bush.

Police were notified that he was missing and searched the Rest Home, general environs around the Rest Home and the Hibiscus Coast Highway between Orewa and Waiwera.

A formal Police Missing Person Investigation commenced on October 17th; trained Police investigators managed the Information/Intelligence, Family Liaison and Media Liaison components of the Operation.

The Auckland Police SAR and LandSAR personnel focussed their efforts on the Search component of the Operation. Direct lines of communication ensured all information was shared between SAR and the Investigators; evidence and intelligence gathered during the Investigation determined the areas to which searchers were deployed.

The search continued until October 22nd when a search team located him deceased in the place where he had fallen.

This Operation was a working example of an Intelligence-led, Evidence-based approach that resulted in Mr McLennan being returned to his family.

The Operation also identified the challenges for whanau and carers of vulnerable people who wander.

Mr McLennan had a history of wandering; his family tried to get him to wear a tracking device but he refused to wear it. Alternative tracking methods were either not available or not investigated. Despite the secure facilities and procedures at Milton Court, Mr McLennan managed to leave the premises.

1. Recommendations

Safer Walking Stakeholder Reference Group to consider ways to effect greater awareness of wander-related mitigation strategies, including but not restricted to:

- a) Development of systems to capture lessons learned and making that information available to interested / relevant people or groups;
- b) Carers sharing and discussing lessons learned on how best to deal with people living with Dementia at both local and national levels;
- c) Risk assessment processes of vulnerable walkers who have a potential to move out of a safe environment (e.g. a Rest Home);
- d) Intervention methods to quickly locate vulnerable walkers who do manage to wander from a safe environment without appropriate protective measures (e.g., especially those who refuse or forget to wear or carry a tracking device);
- e) Review of the Safer Walking Framework (2013) to ensure it is current for the needs of cognitively impaired people at risk of getting lost or going missing;
- f) Improved engagement of Safer Walking Framework stakeholders to address Reduction and Readiness challenges in particular.

2. Introduction

Mike McLennan was a 75 yr old male with Dementia who had become increasingly forgetful. He often wandered from his home in Manly, Whangaparoa and on one occasion, he was found by Police in the early hours of the morning in Orewa (approx. 10km from his home).

His family contacted Auckland WanderSearch in an effort to get him to wear a tracking device but he refused to wear it. The family were subsequently advised by doctors to put him into Rest Home care. They chose Milton Court Rest Home in Orewa.

Milton Court is contracted by the Waitemata District Health Board to provide care and support for elderly people who are unable to live independently. Access to the Dementia Unit is via a secure door to a garden and courtyard. The grounds are secured by a 1.6 metre fence; the only access to Milton Road is via a gate, which has a keypad for staff to enter and leave. Visitors use this gate also, but are required to contact staff via intercom.

Residents of the Dementia Unit spend time in the garden and courtyard but caregivers are required to oversee them at all times.

Mike had his own room in the secure Dementia Unit but had not settled as well as had been hoped. He regularly asked when he was going home.

On Monday October 14th family advised Milton Court and Mike that they hoped to take him home later that week.

His wife visited him on Wednesday October 16th and left around lunchtime. At around 4.30pm that afternoon, a caregiver let him into the garden. He was left unsupervised for a short period of time, during which he managed to leave the Rest Home unseen.

Staff undertook a brief search of the Rest Home and nearby streets then reported to Police that he was missing shortly after 5pm.

Local Police searched the Rest Home and the general environs; the Police helicopter (Eagle) using Forward-looking Infrared camera (FLIR) undertook a fly-over of the highway and adjacent land between Hatfields Beach and Waiwera.

A member of the public claimed to have seen a person matching Mr McLennan walking north at Hatfields Beach at around 1700hrs on October 16th. SAR searched both sides of the highway and other areas of possible attraction to him overnight.

A formal Missing Person Investigation commenced the following day; a dedicated Enquiry Team formed of CIB and enquiry staff was established at Orewa Police station. A SAR Operation involving Police, LandSAR and AREC was part of that Investigation. Direct lines of communication ensured all information was shared between both teams.

CCTV camera footage was gathered that confirmed that Mr McLennan had walked at pace from Orewa towards Waiwera on October 16th. Evidence indicated that he had not reached Waiwera, therefore search efforts were focussed into bush, farmland and swamps either side of the Hibiscus Coast Highway between Hatfields Beach and Waiwera.

On Tuesday October 22nd, 6 days after he went missing, a search team found him in a tract of bush on private land within the Search Area. Evidence indicates that he had suffered a fall and had died where he fell.

3. Terms of Reference

The agreed outcomes of this review are:

To gain an understanding of the sequence, times of events and key search decisions relating to the Search and Rescue Operation (SAROP) for Mike McLennan.

To ascertain the appropriateness of the search and rescue arrangements, capabilities, documentation and procedures utilised for this SAROP, its Incident Management Team (IMT) and SAR teams.

To identify areas of excellence, sufficiency, lack, relevance, appropriateness and those that may need improvement.

To review and consider the appropriateness and/or utility of the following specific aspects of the SAROP with a view to confirming, improving and/or refining SAR documentation, systems, processes, skills, equipment and technology:

- a. The IMT tools and arrangements including search tools, planning, investigation, intelligence, information flow and information analysis used and applied during this SAROP.
- b. The positions and sizes of areas to be searched and the capabilities, teams, skills and equipment applied to those search areas, given the information available at the time.
- c. The ability to scale, resource and support the search with appropriately trained personnel throughout the SAROP.
- d. Search conclusion and transition to the recovery phase (exclude the conduct of the recovery phase itself).
- e. Family and Iwi liaison and support arrangements.
- f. The management of family and other spontaneous volunteers.
- g. The SAR capabilities, skills and equipment of SAR personnel involved.
- h. Media relations.

To identify any skill, equipment, technology, document, process or procedure that may contribute to a significant information and / or performance improvement for this SAROP or a SAROP of this nature.

Make recommendations as appropriate to the New Zealand Search and Rescue Council relevant to improving New Zealand's SAR system, its people, equipment, documentation, skills, processes and procedures.

4. Findings

This event was a Police Missing Person Investigation, managed by a Police Enquiry Team. SAR was a component of that Investigation.

The IMT tools and arrangements used and applied during this SAROP

The initial SAR action was appropriate and aligned with the Land SAR Response Guidelines and Police Instructions. Search Urgency was assessed; appropriate Initial Action was completed based on information at hand and information received.

The Auckland Police SAR Squad has exclusive use of a Mobile Command base that is an appropriate Designated ICP and used primarily for SAR Operations. The vehicle appropriately accommodates the Incident Management Team (IMT), Comms Unit and equipment; it also serves as a Staging Area for Team assembly and briefings.

The IMT was established promptly at this facility; Police assumed Incident Control; appropriate key positions within the IMT were established. Operational handovers were undertaken via job sheet and email. Relevant information was shared and passed on.

Trained and competent Police Incident Controllers were appointed during all Operational Periods; CIMS sub-functions within the IMT were allocated as required.

OBSERVATION

Comment was made that appointing more support staff to the IMT may have helped managed the load.

Investigation, intelligence, information flow and information

A full Enquiry Team was established at the Orewa Police Station on Thursday October 17. An O/C was appointed and trained Police investigators were assigned to the Operation.

Direct communication was established between the Investigation Team and the SAR IMT to share all relevant information.

A purpose-built Police investigation tool was used to:

- Collate, review and assess information;
- Identify gaps in information;
- Corroborate information received (e.g. sightings from CCTV);
- Assign tasks to gather further information;
- Develop the Missing Person Profile;
- Apply timelines to develop and refine scenarios;
- Gather information from the NOK;
- Document and analyse clues (sightings);

Search Planning

Planning for the ongoing search commenced in a timely manner. MP category was determined to be Dementia; statistical information was referenced to help predict his possible behaviour.¹

SAR Incident Action Plans were developed, updated and displayed at the ICP.

¹ Robert J. Koester – Lost Person Behaviour

The Search Area was determined, adapted and refined as information and evidence was fed in by the Enquiry Team.

Consultation with LandSAR was timely. Search teams were alerted and assembled at the ICP. Taskings reflected the Objectives of the Incident Action Plan (IAP).

After a period of time, the IMT deduced that that Mr McLennan was likely to be unresponsive and immobile; this was fed back to search teams and search techniques were adapted accordingly to maximise probability of Teams detecting him.

A number of Scenarios were developed; proportion-based consensus was used to prioritise scenarios.

OBSERVATION

The scenarios did not reflect current best practice in the development of a good scenario which should include a start point, activity or purpose, direction of travel, route and destination.

There is no supporting evidence to show that each scenario fitted with the known facts, was plausible and achievable and was consistent with LPB and terrain.

The scenarios were not used to determine the Search Area.

Extended Search Planning practises (for example establishing planning regions, segments and apportioning POA) were not considered useful to determine the Search Area.

Planning meetings were undertaken and included aspects important to the ongoing search; gaps were identified and tasks assigned for investigation/follow-up.

Written taskings were completed for Field Teams for all phases of the Operation.

Taskings were linked to the Objectives of the IAP and focussed primarily on searching high probability areas.

Briefings were delivered using the GSMEACS format throughout the Operation.

Teams were given leeway to search their allocated areas thoroughly.

All searching was undertaken during daylight hours to maximise probability of detecting the subject.

Teams were debriefed at the conclusion of each task; GPX tracks were downloaded into SARTrack. Gaps in coverage were identified and revisited.

A survivability SME was consulted regarding the MP's survivability; her advice was heeded.

Search Tools used

SARTrack was used to map the Search Area, log information, decisions, actions and to track teams.

MemoryMap was used to download and display GPX tracks from each day's search activity.

Police SAR dogs were available throughout the SAROP and were tasked accordingly into high probability areas.

The Enquiry Team made comprehensive use of **Social Media** including Facebook, Grapevine, local papers, flyers etc.

The Enquiry Team undertook comprehensive canvassing to gather footage from **CCTV** including shops, buses and private residences; analysis of sightings helped determine the MP's DOT and was used to refine the search area.

Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) was used by the Police helicopter crew on the initial night of the Operation.

The Airforce Emergency Response Group (**Defence**) were called for Day 7 of the search but were stood down following the find.

An **independent review** of the SAR Operation was undertaken on Day 6. The intent of the review was to evaluate the search effort to date to support decisions around future search activities including suspension.

The positions and sizes of areas to be searched

The Initial Search Area was defined by a possible sighting of Mr McLennan on a travel corridor, and other areas of possible attraction.

Appropriate parts of the "Bike Wheel Model"² were applied to determine the search area for the next Operational Periods.

The Search Area for the extended search was determined in accordance with evidence and intel gathered by the Enquiry Team.

Mr McLennan was found within that Search Area.

OBSERVATION

Practises taught in the Extended Search Planning course (for example establishing planning regions, segments and apportioning POA) were not considered useful to determine the Search Area.

The capabilities of teams, skills and equipment applied to the Search Area

Appropriate Field Resources were deployed. Teams were made up of either a mix of Police and LandSAR, or LandSAR only.

Maps and GPS units were provided for each tasking.

Trained and competent Police SAR Incident Controllers were appointed during all Operational Periods.

The ability to scale, resource and support the search with appropriately trained personnel throughout the SAROP.

Planning for the ongoing search commenced in a timely manner.

Sufficient and appropriately trained Police SAR Squad members were deployed to the SAROP.

Sufficient and appropriately trained LandSAR members also responded. When those numbers diminished as the SAROP continued into the following week, plans were underway to utilise Defence Emergency Response staff to undertake the taskings had been prepared for Day 7; they were not needed.

The ICP was moved to larger facility in Waiwera around 5 days into the SAROP.

Search conclusion and transition to the recovery phase

This was managed by Orewa Police.

² Robert J. Koester – Lost Person Behaviour

Family and lwi liaison and support arrangements

Family liaison was managed in accordance with Police Instructions by the Enquiry Team.

Appropriate referrals to Victim Support have been made.

Relevant lwi & cultural considerations were managed appropriately by Orewa Police.

The management of family and other spontaneous volunteers

This was managed by Orewa Police.

The SAR capabilities, skills and equipment of SAR personnel involved.

Search Team Members were selected on specific competence and capability.

Teams demonstrated Dynamic Risk Assessment.

Maps and GPS units were provided to all teams.

OBSERVATION

The Auckland Police SAR Squad callout system ensures at least 5 appropriately trained members are available for SAROPs.

LandSAR Auckland manage the training and competence of their members; a tier system ensures that new members undertake appropriate training and assessment and are mentored by experienced Team Leaders.

LandSAR Auckland have a good base of trained and competent members to respond to SAROPs

Media relations

Media was managed in accordance with Police Instructions by the Police Enquiry Team. The O/C Investigation fronted stand-ups.

The Media Centre at PNHQ were kept up to date.

5. Background

5.1 Background to the Operation

Mike McLennan was reported missing from the Milton Court Rest Home in Orewa on Wednesday October 16th 2019.

A Police Missing Person Investigation was established, based at Orewa Police Station. SAR was a significant component of that Investigation.

The search continued until Tuesday October 22nd when he was located deceased.

5.2 Dates, location, organising agency(s), key people

DATES: Wednesday October 16 to Tuesday October 22 2019

LOCATION: Orewa and Hibiscus Coast

ORGANISING AGENCY: NZ Police

5.3 Participating organisations

- NZ Police
- LandSAR
- AREC

5.4 Operation Scenario

Mike McLennan left the Milton Court Rest Home in Orewa around 1650hrs on October 16th. He walked north from Orewa along the Hibiscus Coast Highway. Approximately 6 kms north of the Rest Home, he walked up a private right of way away from the Highway.

He was located deceased in a tract of bush on private property at the end of that right of way 6 days after he went missing.

5.5 Operation Timeline

Oct 16th Mike McLennan was visited by family.

He was reported missing to Police just after 1700hrs; was last seen in the grounds at approx. 1650hrs.

Area enquiries and a search of the Rest Home were completed by local Police.

One unconfirmed sighting of him heading north on the Hibiscus Coast Highway.

Aerial search completed by Police helicopter Eagle using FLIR.

Roadsides searched between Hatfields Beach and Waiwera by Auckland Police SAR Squad

Oct 17th SAR base established in Orewa; search activity focusses on Rest Home (LKP) and surrounding areas including residential and commercial properties, parklands, and waterways.

A formal Missing Person Investigation Team was established at Orewa Police Station.

- Oct 18th** Extensive Search activity continued; Search activity focused on lineal features, decision points and areas of possible misadventure.
Investigation also continued.
- Oct 19th** Search activity and Investigation continued for several days; analysis of CCTV camera footage and sightings by members of the public indicated that Mr McLennan had walked north from Hatfields Beach the day he went missing from the Rest Home but did not reach Waiwera. Search activity was therefore refocused on farmland, scrub and swamp either side of the highway between Hatfields Beach and Waiwera.
- Oct 22nd** Mike McLennan was located deceased by a search team within the Search Area.

6. Evaluation Methodology

6.1 The agreed outcomes of the Review

To make recommendations as appropriate to the New Zealand Search and Rescue Council relevant to improving New Zealand's SAR system, its people, equipment, documentation, skills, processes and procedures.

To develop a 20 – 30 minute case study presentation of the SAROP including recommendations.

6.2 Review scope

Ascertain the appropriateness of the search and rescue arrangements, capabilities, documentation and procedures utilised for this SAROP, its Incident Management Team (IMT) and SAR teams.

Identify areas of excellence, sufficiency, lack, relevance, appropriateness and those that may need improvement.

6.3 Information collection

Electronic and hard copies of Search documentation;

Interviews of key personnel;

Debrief notes.

6.4 The process followed in preparing and submitting the report

This SAROP was reviewed against

- Police Master Standard Operating Procedures (MSOPs)
- Police District Mobilisation Plans (DMPs)
- The Land Search and Rescue Guidelines
- Police Instructions
- Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS)

Free access was provided to both the SAR file and the Investigation File.

The reviewer obtained a number of electronic files relating to the SAR Operation, and was provided with debrief notes.

The reviewer spoke with the Auckland Police SAR Coordinator, Investigation Team 2 I/C, the Auckland WanderSearch coordinator and the manager of Milton Court Rest Home.

7. Conclusions

This event was a Police Missing Person Investigation, managed by a Police Enquiry Team. SAR was a component of that Investigation.

The Operation was a classic mystery that was solved by thorough investigation which drove the Search effort.

Trained Investigators with access to appropriate Information Management tools managed the Investigation component of the Operation.

The complex environment presented challenges in that it ranged from suburban residences and streets to farmland, swamp, bushland and waterways. Sea was also considered.

Trained resources were used in the right order and used appropriate search techniques based on an accurate assessment of the Missing Person's responsiveness and mobility.

The dedication of all personnel involved to achieve an outcome and return Mr McLennan to his family.

Findings relating to the SAR component have been summarised into Areas of Excellence and Lessons identified.

Areas of Excellence – what went well

- Comprehensive support from Rodney District Police;
- Establishment of a competent team of trained Police investigators which enabled SAR personnel to concentrate on the physical search.
- Good information flow between the Enquiry Team and the SAR IMT to ensure taskings were written to match incoming intelligence.

Lessons identified

- Search managers can underestimate what Dementia sufferers are capable of, especially with respect to how far they can travel. Weight should be given to Theoretical Distance figures when identifying corridors of travel in particular.
- Corroborate information from NOK as to what the MP might be capable of doing, or what they might/might not like to do. In this instance the family did not think Mike was capable of travelling the distance that he did as quickly as he did.
- Maintain a good balance between going back to search gaps from completed taskings as opposed to continuing to search high POAs that have not been searched.

8. Appendix

SIGHTINGS, PRIVATE ROAD AND FIND LOCATION





HIBISCUS DAIRY



OREWA LOOKOUT (LOOKING SOUTH)



HATFIELDS BEACH & BRIDGE



PRIVATE ROAD FROM HBC HIGHWAY



PRIVATE ROAD OFF HBC HIGHWAY

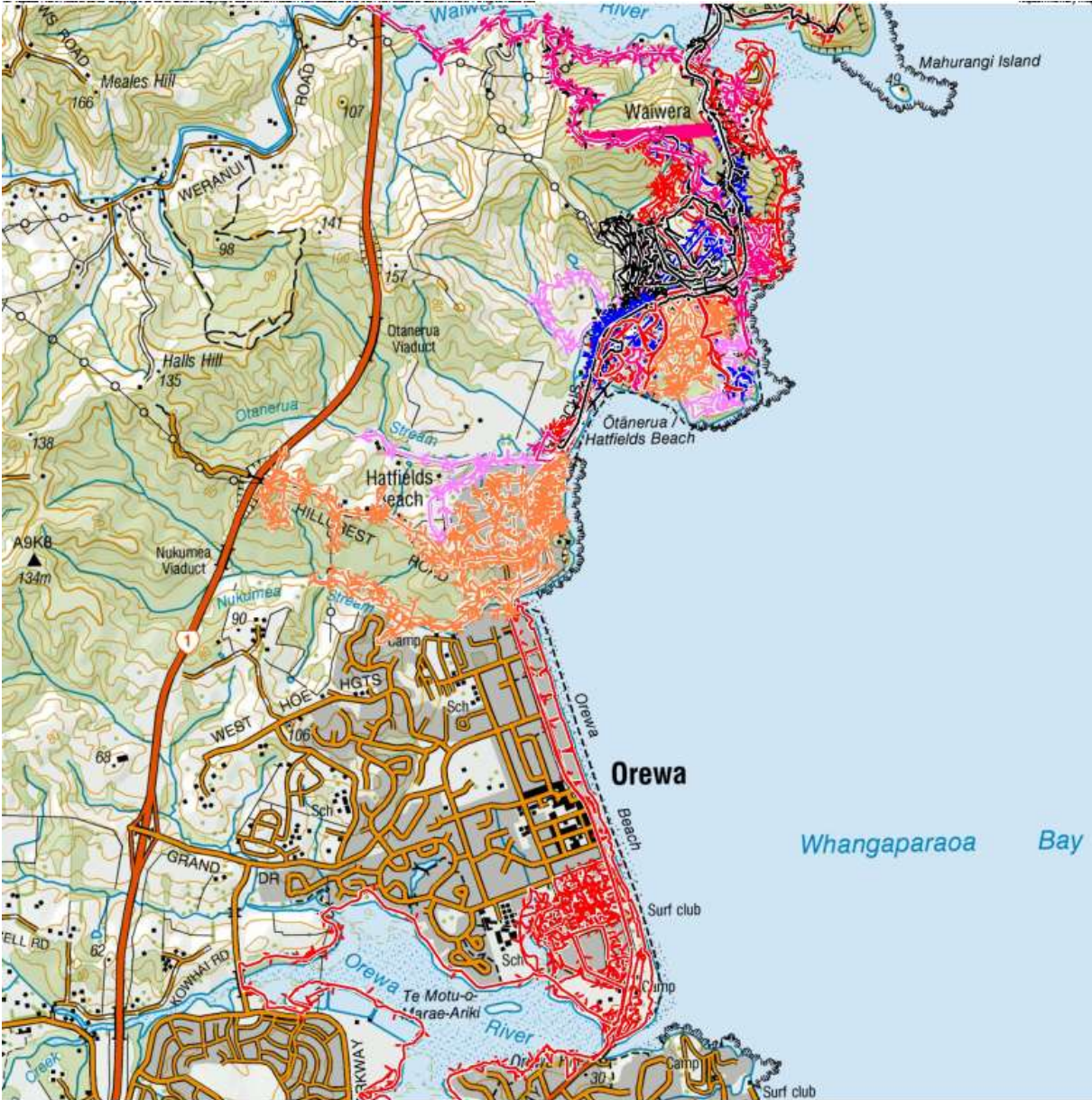


JUNCTION ON PRIVATE ROAD



FENCE AT END OF PADDOCK

SAR TRACKS OCTOBER 17 - 22



WANDERSEARCH EQUIPMENTⁱ



The tracking devices come in various designs. Each device works on a radio band and a three-digit frequency which is separated by five megahertz. The pulse from the tracking device can be picked up from a high point using the directional or roof mount aerial to give the initial direction of travel.



The tracking unit is a New Zealand manufactured product and uses simplex radio frequencies on bands 310 and 311 which are public frequencies

ⁱ WanderSearch Auckland - <https://wandersearch.org.nz/equipment/>