

## **A near death experience in my hometown - Jayda Hulme**

Before I knew it, the thundering crash of a tonne of salt-water waves had dumped onto my head, pushing me under as I felt my legs being towed from beneath me. I could barely hear the commotion of people gathering around the shoreline as my ears were ringing with the frightening sound of whistling wind against the water. It was like holding my head up to the propeller of a plane as someone was shooting a firetruck hose through it. The taste was something I'll never forget. A horrendous salty and seaweed-like flavour that reached right into the back of my throat.

I had not long been in the water at Short Point. It was only few seconds of me yelling at my brother, who wouldn't stop surfing, before the rip had me in its grasp. In the panic I raised only one arm. My mum thought I was waving. She hollered for me to come in. That's when I realised how quickly I was being whisked away from the shore.

The waves became increasingly fierce by the second. Seconds which seemed like hours. The more I paddled, the further from the beach I was. I felt nothing at the time. No panic. All of my energies were focused on keeping my head above the crashing whitewash and barrelling left-handers.

Colours all became a blur. I couldn't tell the clouds from the water. I couldn't work out which way was up and which was down. All I could work out was that despite my swimming skills and efforts to paddle forward, I was further from the shore with each stroke. People were beginning to look like ants in the distance.

Out of the corner of my eye I noticed an object coming towards me. A large object, with fins. It was white, with a bluish-grey mark on the side. It was my friend's dad, paddling to where I had been towed. I rested on his board in between the relentless waves of the next set. For what felt like hours once more, I waited and watched as the lifeguard came out towards us and offered me a ride back to the beach.

Hundreds of people had gathered. Staring. Filming. Gasping. Pointing. I nearly died of embarrassment! What made it worse, was that when I was being chauffeured in, and when I was invited to get off the board where I could touch the bottom, suddenly a mountainous wave struck. It was like being hit by a truck. The young, new and seemingly inexperienced lifeguard lost control of his board. The momentum of the wave threw it up into the air, causing it to skim over my head from behind. Having an instant headache made facing the growing crowd even harder.

In the confusion I couldn't hear my mum's panic, or the questions the lifeguards were asking. All I could hear were squawking noises, like someone had thrown buckets of hot chips which had lured a squad of seagulls. I just wanted to go home and avoid the onlookers. The lifeguards had another idea though. They wanted to run me through a rip safety course, in front of all of the summer holiday-makers.

After being forced to listen to their safety talk, whilst draining my blocked ears of salt water, I walked as quickly as I could through the sand, crowds and carpark. I retreated to the car. Surely going home would ensure that my near-death experience would be over. I turned on some music. The beats of Pink, and her soulful singing voice, would soon fill my thoughts and make the noises of the ocean a distant memory.

That day I promised myself I'd never return to Short Point beach again.