

→ Out of their depth...

158 rescues keep Coast lifesavers on the hop

MORE than 150 people were yesterday rescued from ferocious surf across the Sunshine Coast's main beaches with at least four people going to hospital.

Lifesavers were the busiest they have been this season with more than 100 rescues at Mooloolaba, with the rest of the 158 at Caloundra and Noosa.

The solid two-metre swells had surfers behaving like starving dogs fighting over thrown-out food but the less experienced found themselves out of their depth.

The day even came with freak events with a teen impaled on a catfish after being dumped by a wave while bodyboarding on Mooloolaba Spit.

Surf Lifesaving Queensland Sunshine Coast duty officer Graham Sharry said three people were taken to hospital with suspected spinal injuries from the Met Caloundra lifesaving station at Kings Beach.

He said another young man was taken to hospital with a suspected broken ankle and a 14-year-old had to seek treatment at a local medical centre when a sea urchin embedded in his heel.

Mr Sharry said there was a dislocated shoulder at Noosa as well as other rescues.

He said there were 64 rescues in the Mooloolaba swell before lunch with that number almost doubling during the afternoon, including

another broken ankle.

"It was down to the runout tide. The low tide was at 12 and the two hours either side had us run off our feet," he said. "It's that low pressure off New Caledonia causing chaos."

"There is some big swell coming through. It is expected to increase (today) before easing late tomorrow or early Tuesday. A lot of beaches were closed because of the conditions we've got today so holidaymakers went to the closest beaches which were Kings, Noosa and Mooloolaba.

"With these conditions, members of the public need to adhere to the advice of lifesavers and lifeguards.

"As always swim between the flags because if we can't see you we can't save you."

Sunshine Coast Council lifeguard service's Trent Robinson said in his 10 years on

the beaches he had never seen anything like the catfish incident.

"He walked up and said I think I've got a fish in my back and I said 'give us a look'," he said.

"It was flapping around still connected to his back.

"He got dumped by a wave and hit the sandbank and felt something in his back.

"We called an ambulance. I cut the catfish off because it was flapping around causing pain.

"We put disinfectant on it to try to kill germs.

"The paramedics couldn't get it out either so they took him to hospital.

"It's unbelievable he landed on a fish, let alone got embedded by it.

"They're usually freshwater but probably got flushed out in the dirty floodwater."

— RAE WILSON



DIVING DIRECTIONS: Lifesavers were kept busy on Sunshine Coast beaches with big seas and plenty of rips making swimming a dangerous business for some. PHOTO: GARY BRADY/ABC



ON THE JOB: Lifesavers at Mooloolaba rescue people caught in a strong rip yesterday.

WATCHFUL EYES: Volunteer lifesavers keep watch on swimmers in yesterday's difficult conditions while Jaega Desainis, below, prepares to lend a helping hand.



HOLY CATFISH! A swimmer at the Spit at Mooloolaba felt something stuck in his back after being dumped by a wave yesterday. When he turned around to show the lifeguard, this is what he saw. PHOTO: TRENT ROBINSON

