2022 Mountbatten Medal Citation - Kalya Kandegoda Gamage

On 27th August 2022, 13-year-old Kalya Kandegoda Gamage was spending time with his family on remote Chrystalls Beach, south of Dunedin, New Zealand. He was paddling at the shoreline with his younger brother Kithmi, aged 11, when a large wave crashed into Kithmi and caused him to lose his footing. Two more waves followed in quick succession, and Kithmi was pulled out into the water. A confident swimmer himself, Kithmi treaded water and made several attempts to get back to shore, but he was tiring and being carried further away. At this point Kalya turned to his mum and said 'OK Mum, I'm going out. I might not be back' and then he dived into the waves, which on that day were approximately 3 metres high. By now Kithmi was approximately 60 metres from the shore, and becoming very cold, as the water temperature was about 10 degrees. Kalya drew on the RLSS lifesaving training he had undertaken in his home country of Sri Lanka, and swam out and rescued his brother, and managed to get him back to shore before the emergency services arrived.

One of the local police commented afterwards that no one survives in that stretch of water, it is notoriously dangerous.

Undoubtedly, Kalya's brave response saved his brother's life that day.

For his brave and selfless actions, Kalya Kandegoda Gamage is awarded the 2022 Mountbatten Medal