
DR. RICHARD HARRIS

- Australian Anaesthetist
- Cave Diver Who Played A Crucial Role In The Tham Luang Cave Rescue

LONDON
SPEAKER
BUREAU



Topics

- Adventure
- Environment
- Strategy

Dr Richard “Harry” Harris has worked in anaesthesia, diving, wilderness and aeromedical medicine around the world.

His passion for cave diving goes back to the 1980’s and has taken him to the corners of the globe in search of new adventures.

Harry and his colleagues have explored caves to 245m depth, and shipwrecks to over 150m, in dives lasting over 16 hours. He is an enthusiastic UW photographer and videographer who is now also building a career in documentary films.

Harry has a professional and voluntary interest in search and rescue operations, establishing the first sump rescue training course in Australasia. By building relationships with emergency services locally he has been preparing for such an event. The 2018 Thailand cave rescue was an opportunity to put this training to work.

In 2018 he was called by British cave divers to assist with the rescue of 12 young boys and their soccer coach from deep within a flooded cave in a remote part Northern Thailand. Over three exhausting days, the 13 Thais were extricated using a very high risk, unprecedented and untested technique combining general anaesthesia with cave diving.

In his talks, Harry reveals the depths of the moral dilemmas, the physical danger to the rescuers and the ‘impossible’ decision points that finally lead to a successful outcome. His improbable combination of skills led to him being labelled a unicorn, and he now describes how we can all better prepare for the unknown challenges that inevitably lie ahead.

In 2018 he received the Star of Courage, Australia’s second highest civilian award for bravery, and the medal of the Order of Australia for his role in the Thailand cave rescue. Along with many of the other rescuers, he was also awarded the Knights Grand Cross of the Order of the Direkgunabhorn by the Thai Prime Minister.

Harry was the 2019 Australian of the Year for South Australia and the joint 2019 Australian of the Year with his dive partner Craig Challen.