

Volunteers saving lives on the water

SOUNDINGS



Quarterly Journal of Marine Rescue NSW | Issue 39, Winter 2019



10 YEARS 2009 - 2019

CELEBRATE

A decade of service to
our boating community

PLUS: Our history | Units grow & prosper | New developments on horizon

HOW DO I GET BACK ON BOARD?

THE SOS RECOVERY LADDER ANSWERS THE QUESTION FOR BOATERS

TWO-IN-ONE multi-function SOS Recovery/Rescue Ladder Performs 2 types of recoveries using just one product
Use rungs as ladder or use entire shape to horizontally lift victim, "Parbuckle" recovery style
2:1 Leverage with halyard or block & tackle



SOS Recovery Ladder

SOS-5656

KEY FEATURES

VALISE: The compact bag is an integral part of the ladder. The ladder is incorporated and packed into high visibility neon yellow mesh bag that unfolds instantly.

SIMPLICITY & SPEED - easy and quick to deploy in minutes

OPERATED BY SINGLE PERSON - it can be rolled out and ready for use in less than a minute.

ASSIST RESCUE - Multifunction recovery/rescue ladder - able bodied crew uses ladder, injured or disabled crew can be horizontally lifted out with your block & tackle or halyard attached to bottom end lifting eye. Horizontal posture important for hypothermic victim.

4 ATTACHING POINTS IS THE KEY TO HAVING STABILITY OF THE LADDER - secure ladder to cleat, gunwale, stanchion base, padeye, or other available strong points. This provides greater security and stability.

QUALITY CERTIFICATIONS

All materials are certified and controlled under the standard quality ISO 9001 management system.



Recovery SOCK

SOS-5678

Due to popular demand from short-handed crews and those who want to prepare well beforehand, SOS Recovery Ladder can now be enclosed in its own 'SOCK' for attachment to the toe rail, ready to be deployed at a moment's notice. Once the ladder is secured to boat, it is then concertina folded into the sock leaving the release rope protruding downwards

S.O.S
MARINE

23A Rochester Street, Botany NSW 2019 Australia
☎ +61 2 97000233 ✉ sales@sosmarine.com

www.sosmarine.com

SOUNDINGS

Quarterly Journal of Marine Rescue NSW

Cover Image

The Marine Rescue NSW logo incorporates stylised elements to represent our mission of saving lives on the water. The outer ring is based on the shape of a lifebuoy. This is enclosed in a circle of rope, or line, which is vital in marine rescue. The inner circle depicts the risks of the marine environment with a fouled anchor and the variability of the sea with small and large waves, all under the Southern Cross constellation.

Publisher

Marine Rescue NSW
202 Nicholson Parade
Cronulla NSW 2230

Contact

Kate Woods
Phone: 02 8071 4848
Email: soundings@marinerescuensw.com.au

Design and Layout

Nicole Brown

Advertising

Graham Joss
Email: graham.joss@marinerescuensw.com.au
Phone: 0419 492 836

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MARINE RESCUE NSW

Volunteers saving lives on the water

Volunteer Marine Rescue New South Wales
ABN 98 138 078 092
PO Box 579
Cronulla NSW 2230
Phone: 02 8071 4848 Fax: 02 9969 5214
Email: info@marinerescuensw.com.au

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CLARENCE HOUSE

As Patron-in-Chief, I cannot tell you how delighted I am to be able to offer my warmest congratulations and gratitude to the members of Marine Rescue New South Wales for a decade of service to the New South Wales community.

I have had the great pleasure to meet a number of you during my visits to Sydney over the years and I have been much impressed by your remarkable enthusiasm and dedication to the Australian volunteering ethos.

There can be no more honourable cause than to save the lives of others and the fact that you give your time and dedicate yourselves so wholly to the service of others brings great credit to you all.

You have worked together as a united team under the flag of Marine Rescue N.S.W. since its establishment in 2009, bringing together the three former marine rescue services that had long served the people of your State with distinction.

You have also built on the strong foundations laid by the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association and the marine fleet of the N.S.W. Volunteer Rescue Association to create a strong and modern emergency service, capable of meeting the increasing demand from a growing boating community attracted to some of the world's most beautiful waterways.

Over the past ten years, your crews have launched more than 25,000 rescue operations, including over 7,000 to save sailors caught in life-endangering emergencies. Your members have placed their own well-being at risk in challenging conditions and adverse weather to answer the call for help.

Your round-the-clock safety watch over the marine radio network has ensured a rapid response to distress calls from those in trouble on the water, with the calming assurance that help is on the way.

Over the past decade, Marine Rescue N.S.W. has embraced the challenges of advancement, delivering more than ninety new and refurbished rescue vessels, introducing new communications technology and delivering professional training to build volunteer skills. This work has enhanced the safety of both your members and the boaters you serve.

Marine Rescue N.S.W. now enters a new phase of growth and development, with a programme to continue your fleet modernisation, upgrade volunteer facilities, reinforce the marine radio network and recruit new members. This will not only build your life-saving operational capability, but also ensure your viability for the generations to come.

I can only thank each of you for your service. With your selfless commitment and tireless efforts, Marine Rescue N.S.W. can face the future with great confidence as it continues to build on the fine achievements of its first decade of volunteer service saving lives on the water.

Charlie



Photo: Alexi Lubomirski



His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

Marine Rescue NSW 10th Anniversary

Congratulations to Marine Rescue NSW for 10 years of dedication and hard work keeping our waterways safe. Achieving this milestone is testament the quality and value of the work you do.

As a community organisation, it is the 3,000 volunteers, located across 44 Rescue Units that are the strength, life and soul of the service you provide. From emergency search and rescue, the Log On and vessel tracking service, safety watch on marine radio, and education and advocacy for boating safety, you help make our coastline and inland waterways safer.

On behalf of all Australians, particularly on behalf of the boating community, I acknowledge and thank you for dedicating your time expertise and experience to our waterways. Your spirit of volunteering and giving back is admired by those you assist and the entire community.

Well done and let's look forward to the next 10 years.

Peter Cosgrove
7th May 2019



GOVERNMENT HOUSE CANBERRA ACT 2600 AUSTRALIA
TELEPHONE +61 (2) 6283 3533 FACSIMILE +61 (2) 6281 3760
WWW.GG.GOV.AU



PRIME MINISTER

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

MARINE RESCUE NSW 10TH ANNIVERSARY

It is during times of accident and tragedy that Australians show their true courage and mateship. The volunteers of Marine Rescue NSW are a magnificent example of those prepared to step up when disaster strikes, and to do all they can to prevent it.

That's why I have long been a supporter of Marine Rescue NSW and the wonderful work you do saving lives on the water. All day, every day, and in all weather and conditions, you are there – a beacon of hope and comfort, keeping our friends and loved ones safe.

Your tireless efforts are a reminder that our communities are held together by the selfless service of volunteers. As a nation, we must work to value this service, and to encourage more in our community to join the volunteer ranks.

We must also work to assist local organisations to engage and retain today's volunteers, particularly from younger generations.

Over the last ten years, Marine Rescue NSW has shown the way forward. Through your work and example, you have quietly championed a practical, hands-on approach, underpinned by a passion to make a difference in an often unforgiving and unpredictable environment.

Congratulations and thank you to everyone who has made Marine Rescue NSW the much loved and respected volunteer organisation it is today. May you enjoy fair winds and following seas as you navigate many more years of achievement in community service.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott Morrison'.

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister of Australia

6 June 2019





Message from

Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC

On behalf of the people of New South Wales, I am delighted to congratulate Marine Rescue NSW on the occasion of your tenth anniversary.

Your work to safeguard the boating community of New South Wales has made an enormous contribution to our State. Through your efforts up and down the east coast, and on our high-risk inland waterways, lives have been saved, disasters averted and safe practices promoted.

On this anniversary, I would especially like to thank Marine Rescue's volunteers. Your generosity is key to the success of the organisation's commitment to 'save lives on the water'.

Week in and week out, over 3,000 of you, based in 44 rescue units across the State, turn up, monitor the airwaves, assist those in distress and advocate for safer boating. A number of you have been members of Marine Rescue NSW for its entire life.

To each and every one of you, thank you for your sustained commitment to the cause.

Also, on this special occasion, I would like to congratulate the leadership and staff of Marine Rescue NSW. You have enabled your members to achieve maximum impact in their communities by building an effective organisation, offering professional training, and properly resourcing crews.

Congratulations to all on this special occasion, and, on behalf of the State of New South Wales, thank you for your service.

The Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC
Governor of New South Wales





Gladys Berejiklian MP
Premier of New South Wales

Marine Rescue NSW 10th Anniversary

Marine Rescue NSW performs an incredible service for the people of NSW, with more than 270,000 radio calls to Marine Rescue and over 2800 emergency rescues made last year alone.

For the last ten years the Marine Rescue volunteers have gone above and beyond to save lives, giving people the opportunity to enjoy our waterways knowing that there is someone watching out for them.

The additional \$37.6 million pledged for MRNSW over the next four years is the largest funding boost in its history and will help ensure that volunteers have the resources to keep our community safe.

I congratulate Marine Rescue and all its volunteers on a decade of service and I look forward to continuing this Government's support for MRNSW into its next decade of distinguished service to our great State.

Gladys Berejiklian MP
Premier of NSW

Marine Rescue NSW 10th Anniversary

Our state could not function to its high standards without dedicated volunteers who respond to accidents and disasters for the safety of their communities. And when those heroes are from a volunteer organisation it shows a special level of commitment to the community they live in.

I am incredibly proud to be the Minister for Police and Emergency Services during the ten-year anniversary of Marine Rescue NSW. It comes at a time when members surpass 3000 people across the state, almost 90 new and refurbished vessels and 44 units in six regions. This is a special organisation formed in July, 2009 with the support of the NSW Government, and that support continues today.

An additional \$37.6 million of funding was recently invested into MRNSW that will more than double the annual budget to help save lives on the water. The funding will deliver new purpose-built rescue vessels, upgraded operational centres and improvements to the marine radio network.

It is vital this support continues, as we can never cease our efforts to keep the coast and major waterways safe.

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian asked me to take on the Emergency Services role following the 2019 State Election, and I was eager to do so. This is a second stint in the portfolio and I am glad many familiar faces are still working in the area.

You have an incredibly well credentialed Commissioner in Stacey Tannos. I was delighted to meet him at the Headquarters in Cronulla soon after being sworn-in. Stacey and I have always shared a strong relationship, and I am certain that will continue long into the future.

I offer my sincere congratulations to the volunteers and all those who work in the organisation. I hope you feel proud to work in an area that is truly making our state a better and more safe place for generations to come.



The Hon. David Elliott MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services



Patron, partners and supporters



We're ready ... Marine Rescue NSW works closely with our emergency services partners to protect our community. We joined then Emergency Services Minister Troy Grant and members of the NSW Police Force Marine Area Command, Surf Life Saving NSW, Fire + Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service, Volunteer Rescue Association and State Emergency Service last November to launch a summer safety campaign.



Vice Regal welcome ... Regional Operations Manager Glenn Evans and MR Botany Port Hacking member Terri-Mae Fitzgerald meet Governor of NSW, General David Hurley, in February.



Patron in Chief ... His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales in conversation with Commissioner Stacey Tannos and Chair Jim Glissan at a Sydney reception for the emergency services in 2012.



Government support ... former Emergency Services Minister Troy Grant and Premier Gladys Berejiklian with volunteers Joanna Mycroft, Anna Kalisiak, Jarrod Ison and Ben Skeen and Commissioner Stacey Tannos.



On the beach ... Cook MP and now Prime Minister Scott Morrison greets MR Botany Port Hacking's Steve Massone, Ross Levinsohn, Bob Wilson and Brendan Haynes at the 2017 Cook Community Festival.

From the Commissioner

We stand ready for a second decade of service as rewarding as the first.



Commissioner
Stacey Tannos ESM

As we raise the flag on Marine Rescue NSW's 10th anniversary year, we salute all those who have contributed to our mission of saving lives on the water.

Our organisation has been built on the goodwill, enthusiasm, skill and commitment of the volunteers, Board Directors, staff and supporters who saw the vision of a brighter, more successful future and put their energy and effort into developing a modern, professional and effective emergency service. The reforms needed to deliver this vision have at times been challenging but their impact has driven us further forward in our work to assist and protect the boating community.

Of course, nothing could have been achieved without the volunteers from the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association, Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association's marine fleet who put their faith in the advantages to be gained by joining forces. The challenges of melding these distinctly different organisations into a single marine rescue service are part of our history as we move forward together to the future.

Today, our remaining resolute foundation members have been joined by an equally energetic and dedicated band of new volunteers. This new cohort is younger as a whole, it includes more women and increasingly reflects the community we serve.

Together, we have built a rescue service that is a leader in the national sector and respected as world-class. Our volunteers have a proud operational record of service, launching more than 25,000 rescue missions, including more than 7,000 in response to life-threatening emergencies, since New Year's Day 2010. Available records show our radio operators have handled 2.38 million radio calls and Logged

On almost 600,000 boats since 2011/12. This record has been underpinned by advances in our fleet, technology and training; a command and control structure that imposes rigour and accountability on our performance both on and off the water; our volunteer support teams working behind the frontline; our Board and staff; and the support of the community for our members and fundraising ventures.

Almost 100 new and upgraded vessels have delivered on our commitments to volunteer safety and building our rescue capability.

New communications technology has supported our radio operators and our education curriculum ensures our volunteers are professionally trained to perform their roles effectively and safely.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian's landmark announcement in January of \$37.6 million in extra State Government funding over the next four years was the largest financial injection in our history. This funding will enable us to make further improvements to strengthen our efforts to enhance boating safety and sets the scene for a second

their leaders who took the first steps to a new future and the Facilitation Committee of volunteers and State Government personnel who set the course for the creation of a single unified service. Our Board of Directors has provided steadfast guidance since 2009 and I thank them for their corporate governance, insight, support and commitment to our volunteers, along with the suppliers and supporters who have assisted our progress.

Our success has only been possible thanks to our volunteers and their tremendous dedication to duty and community service. We are grateful to each of them, no matter their role or tenure of service. Special thanks to those who have joined advisory committees, taken on leadership roles, used their professional skills to assist our development, completed additional training to support their peers and provided sound advice and knowledge to help chart our path.

The regional and Headquarters staff who have worked to support our mission over the past decade deserve gratitude for their untiring efforts and contribution; in particular

Our success has only been possible thanks to our volunteers and their dedication to service.

decade of service as rewarding as our first. We are grateful to the Government for this generous acknowledgement of our volunteers' valuable contribution to our community and also for the essential \$72 million in financial support we have received from the Government and NSW recreational boaters over the past decade.

While our focus is now on the horizon, this commemorative edition of *Soundings* also recognises the builders who laid the foundations for our development, starting with the members of the three former services. Tribute must be paid to

Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey, who sets the bar high in the pursuit of excellence across our organisation and has driven remarkable advances in operations, fleet and training.

Whether you have been with us since 2009 or earlier or joined the service in 2019, I hope you will take time over the coming year to reflect on our achievements and the personal satisfaction that comes from being a member of a team dedicated to the noble cause of saving lives on the water.

Stacey Tannos ESM
Commissioner

Minister returns to emergency services role

Season briefing, funding update on agenda for Headquarters visit.

Police and Emergency Services Minister David Elliott made a visit to the State Headquarters of Marine Rescue NSW an early priority after being sworn into office in early April.

Mr Elliott and the Attorney General, Cronulla MP Mark Speakman, met Commissioner Stacey Tannos and Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey at the Headquarters on Cronulla's Hungry Point Reserve.

Mr Elliott has returned to the role of Emergency Services Minister, which he previously held from April 2015 to January 2017, when he was appointed to the new Counter Terrorism portfolio, in addition to his existing responsibilities for Corrections and Veterans Affairs.

He said he had been eager to return to the emergency services sector.



Welcome back ... Commissioner Stacey Tannos and Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey at MRNSW State Headquarters with returning Emergency Services Minister David Elliott and Attorney General, Cronulla MP Mark Speakman. Photo: Brendan Trembath.

Commissioner Tannos thanked the Minister for visiting Headquarters for a briefing on operations over the boating season and the planned investment of the \$37.6 million in

additional State Government funding over the coming four years.

"The Minister expressed his gratitude to our volunteers for their efforts over the summer and was

particularly interested to learn about our plans to improve our facilities, continue our fleet modernisation and upgrade the marine radio network with the new funding," he said.

Tragedy continues to stalk northern coastline

Rock fisherman's death follows spate of summer drownings.

The tragedy that marked summer on the Mid North Coast returned to the region's waters in mid-May.

Emergency services were called to Crescent Head Lookout on May 16 after a member of the public spotted personal items unattended on the rocks. A 37-year-old man was believed to have been fishing on the rock platform.

Crews from MR Port Macquarie and Trial Bay joined NSW Police, Surf Life Saving, the Westpac Rescue Helicopter and State Emergency Service in an extensive search, which ended when the man's body was located during the afternoon of May 17.

This was the latest in a number of recent deaths in the region. Crews from five units had joined three major searches for four missing men who drowned between December and February. Only one was located.

Surf Life Saving NSW reported 35 coastal drowning deaths from July to April, with seven of these on the North Coast, including multiple fatalities at Coffs Harbour in December.

The peak season ended on April 28, after the Easter and Anzac Day holidays, with crews from MR Central Coast and Norah Head scouring the coastline for a person feared missing at Spoon Bay, north of Terrigal. The individual was located safe and well.

Over the seven months of the boating season, from the October long weekend to the end of April, MRNSW crews launched 2,034 rescue missions, with 565 of those in response to life-endangering emergencies. These included MR Port Macquarie's overnight operation on April 14 to save three men from a sinking vessel at sea between



Port Macquarie 30 crew members Scott Saunders and Yolanda Bosschieter on the search for a missing rock fisherman in May.

Crescent Head and Port Macquarie.

The crew of *Port Macquarie 30* removed the trio, who had sustained spinal and chest injuries and lacerations, from their boat, while *PM 20* transported a medical team

to the scene.

A total of 48,949 vessels Logged On over the season, including 11,019 via the *MarineRescue* app. Volunteer radio operators handled 147,963 radio calls.

From the Chair

As we reflect on our achievements, we must be ready to lead future innovation.



Chair
James Glissan AM ESM QC

In this tenth year of Marine Rescue NSW, it is worth reflecting on the achievements of the past decade; to celebrate those who were instrumental in creating one from three and consider the changes that were rung.

In short form, these included the establishment of Volunteer Marine Rescue NSW, a single legal entity with strong governance and command and control structures to support the organisation well into the future; the provision of new uniforms; the introduction of a fleet modernisation program and the development and introduction of cutting edge technology, such as Seahawk, the *MarineRescue* app and Radio over Internet Protocol technology for our marine radio communications network.

I admit my very real pride in these achievements. At this seminal point in the development of the service that we have together established as Australia's best rescue organisation, we need to continue striving for excellence.

Nonetheless, it is needful to report on the past decade. The three former organisations were inadequately funded and struggling. Members of the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association, Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and NSW Volunteer Rescue Association were fighting to raise extra funds to supplement the \$1.25 million they received in government funding. The members provided their own uniforms, boats and fit-outs, radios, fuel, meeting rooms and infrastructure.

Once the recommendation to establish a new organisation was accepted and the Facilitation Committee charged with guiding the transition to the single entity was formed, more funding flowed. Within a short time we had commitments to support vessel acquisition, a levy on recreational boating licences

and registrations was introduced and funding was directed to the establishment of a professional secretariat to manage and develop MRNSW.

The team led by Commissioner Stacey Tannos has created a new professional organisation. Some of the old guard were not initially supportive of the changes but a decade on, the benefits are now clear. We have a modern and purpose-built fleet, a much-improved radio and communications network, highly developed training systems and a staff as dedicated as the volunteers they serve. We have gone from optimistic amateurs to highly skilled and highly trained professional emergency service personnel.

Our reputation now extends far beyond the borders of NSW to the

focus on specialist offshore fast response craft essential to our role. The employment of advanced radar, FLIR and search equipment gives us greater flexibility. Our reputation with other rescue organisations, the NSW Police Force Marine Area Command and internationally has never been better or more secure.

The Board, which I have led for nine of the 10 years, has always been dedicated to ensuring that the members are considered and consulted. The Directors meet formally six times a year, to consider the strategic and logistical management of the company. In alternate months we visit regional centres to engage with volunteers face to face, to make certain that we are aware of the needs of and issues affecting our members. We support moves towards even greater

The Board has been dedicated to ensuring the members are considered and consulted.

wider world. Our Commissioner, with the support of the Board, is Chair of the NSW State Rescue Board, Deputy Chair of the National Volunteer Marine Search and Rescue Committee and represents MRNSW as a member of the International Maritime Rescue Federation. We have been honoured by an international jury for innovation in emergency services and IT development. All this has been achieved while still managing to perform about 3,000 rescues a year, bringing home safely around 7,000 mariners, with no loss of or serious injury to our personnel. This is a tribute to the courage, skill and dedication of every one of the volunteers who serve, whether at sea or on shore.

But we cannot stop now; we must not rest on our well-earned laurels.

Where to from here? Our new vessels will continue to be designed and purpose-built with a greater

standardisation in the fleet and infrastructure, to ensure the easy transition of members and ratings between units and to be confident that, if required, a coxswain's or watch officer's skills are transferrable from unit to unit with the minimum of re-skilling beyond induction.

My desire is to see the future even brighter and richer for our members. There is now generational change. We have a younger demographic and the old ways are surely passing into memory as we look to our next generation of volunteers as an emergency service and as new blood assumes the reins. We must continue to advance together, saving lives on the water and developing into a mature and vibrant emergency service. We must be ready to embrace - indeed, to lead - innovation.

Good sailing
Jim Glissan

Board thanks volunteers for commitment

Directors look forward to future challenges and continued growth.

Marine Rescue NSW has, over the past 10 years, grown from its infant stage into a professional organisation that provides a quick response to emergencies and day-to-day assistance to the boating community.

The basis of any good organisation relies upon the motivation and direction provided by those who are ultimately responsible for its success or failure.

MRNSW and its 44 units have taken on difficult challenges and evolved into a well respected and efficiently managed and run entity.

The guidance of the executive and its team members has allowed each unit to grow while providing all the necessary support, training and equipment to ensure the organisation's continued success.

The fleet now comprises state of the art vessels with highly skilled and trained crews, supported by an effective radio network to organise a quick and efficient response to any incident.

Our continuing philosophy of Saving Lives on the Water resonates with our 3,100 volunteers, who without question attend and meet their respective duty commitments, working in an integral partnership with the NSW Police Force Marine Area Command, NSW Roads and Maritime Services and those who enjoy our beautiful waterways.

As we move forward, MRNSW will no doubt continue to embrace technology, meeting the many challenges presented with the one thought in mind: Saving Lives on the Water. We are thankful for the



The 2019 Board: Glenn Felkin, Keven Marshall, Jim Glissan, Jim Wright, Pat Fayers and John Lynch. Inset: Bob Wilson and Ken Edwards.

commitment of our volunteers, who ensure that the needs of the boating communities and MRNSW are met.

The Board looks forward to

the challenges of the future and the continued growth of our membership.

The MRNSW Board of Directors

Decade of strategic leadership and vision

Twenty-nine members of MRNSW have served on the Board of Directors over the past decade, providing strategic leadership and vision to the organisation and its members.

The Foundation Board was appointed by the State Government from July 1, 2009 until the first elections in December 2010.

Chaired by independent representative, round-the-world sailor Kay Cottee, it comprised representatives of each of the former marine rescue services: Bill Carter, Sharyn Gillings, Jim Glissan, Neil McCartney, Peter Phillipson, Frank Robards, Mike Stringer, Richard Taffs and Beth Watts, who had been members of the Facilitation Committee steering the transition to the new service. Simon Deneen and Michael Seale filled casual vacancies during the year.

The elected Board comprises three General Directors and six

Regional Directors. The only Director to have served continuously from 2009 is Chair Jim Glissan.

Mr Glissan was elected Chair in 2010 and has held this position ever since.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said the Board had provided strong corporate governance and stable strategic leadership to support the organisation's ongoing advancement.

The current Board members are General Directors Jim Glissan, Pat Fayers and Bob Wilson; Mid North Coast Regional Director John Lynch; Hunter/Central Coast Regional Director Jim Wright; Greater Sydney Regional Director Ken Edwards; Illawarra Regional Director Keven Marshall and Monaro Regional Director Glenn Felkin.

Northern Rivers Regional Director Bill Wardrobe passed away in 2018, just a year after his election.

The elected Directors who have



The first elected Board of MRNSW at the 2010 Annual General Meeting: Bob Wilson, Peter Campton, Tony Drover, Jim Glissan, Howard Staples, Mike Stringer, Bill Carter and Tony Breen. Absent: Peter Phillipson.

served over the past decade are:

- General Directors: Jim Glissan, Mike Stringer, Tony Drover, Pat Fayers, Mark McKenzie and Bob Wilson.
- Northern Rivers: Peter Campton, Bernie Gabriel and Bill Wardrobe.
- Mid North Coast: Tony Breen and John Lynch.

- Hunter/Central Coast: Peter Phillipson, Tony Long, Roger Evans and Jim Wright
- Greater Sydney: Bob Wilson, David White and Ken Edwards.
- Illawarra: Bill Carter, Doug Musker and Keven Marshall.
- Monaro: Howard Staples and Glenn Felkin.

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NAIAD

National awards for distinguished service

Two members of the MRNSW Board of Directors have received national awards in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Chair Jim Glissan was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his significant service to the law in NSW and Monaro Regional Director Glenn Felkin was awarded the Emergency Services Medal, recognising his commitment to saving lives on the water, volunteer education and the corporate governance of MRNSW.

Mr Glissan is a member of MR Botany Port Hacking and Mr Felkin of MR Batemans Bay.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos congratulated the two men on the national acknowledgement of their distinguished service.

"Mr Felkin has made a valuable contribution across all levels of our organisation from the outset, including as a Marine Rescue Master, watch officer, trainer, assessor and Director," he said. "It is fitting that Mr Glissan is recognised for his contribution to the law during MRNSW's 10th anniversary year, as his legal expertise was pivotal to establishing the strong and successful corporate and legal foundations of our organisation."

Directors recognised for contribution to community.

Jim Glissan's serious, sustained contribution to the legal profession in NSW has been paralleled by his commitment to MRNSW and boating safety on our waterways.

Mr Glissan took silk as a Queen's Counsel in 1985 and has served as an Acting District Court Judge, Arbitrator of the NSW Supreme Court, director of the NSW Firearms Safety Awareness Council and an Adjunct Professor of Law at the University of Canberra. He is the author or co-author of a number of legal texts in relation to trial procedure, jury direction and personal injury litigation.

Mr Glissan joined the Botany Bay Coast Guard in 2008 and was a member of the Facilitation Committee charged with creating MRNSW as a new entity. In 2009, he was appointed as a Foundation Board Director and has since served continuously as an elected General Director and Chair of the Board. He maintains his commitment to regular operational duties as a Coxswain on the Botany Port Hacking unit's Kevlacat rescue vessels.

Batemans Bay member Glenn



Jim Glissan AM ESM QC.

Felkin has been an active volunteer since joining the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in April 2009.

Qualifying as a Marine Rescue Master in 2013, his operational activities have included managing emergency response operations as a watch officer and taking part in numerous search and rescue operations, including the response to three fatal emergencies at sea in 2011 alone.

He has contributed to the Batemans Bay unit in roles including Acting Deputy Unit Commander, Training Officer, Assessor and Crew Leader. As a Vessel Maintenance Officer and member of the unit's vessel replacement team, he has played a crucial role in the delivery



Glenn Felkin ESM.

and safety of the unit's vessels.

Mr Felkin has taken part in the training and assessment of more than 50 members since 2014. He took on the role of crew trainer, assessor and mentor for the new MR Moama unit in 2013 and was the introductory regional trainer for the roll-out of the Seahawk vessel tracking system. Mr Felkin was elected as the Monaro Regional Director in November 2015.

He has subsequently been re-elected twice and in a major commitment of time and effort, has maintained his operational rescue vessel and Watch Officer duties and training and assessment roles at the same time as meeting his corporate responsibilities as a Board Director.

Honour roll of volunteer experience and skill

The 39 MRNSW personnel awarded the Emergency Services Medal represent a store of knowledge, skill and experience.

The ESM was introduced to the Australian honours in 1999 to recognise distinguished service by members of emergency services and people involved in emergency management, training or education.

The medal features a raised equilateral triangle bordered by sprigs of wattle. The centre of the triangle features a raised impression of the Federation Star surrounded by 24 balls, representing the 24 hours a day the emergency services are

available to the community. Those awarded the ESM are:

- 2000 Michael Stringer
- 2001 Christopher Gillett
- 2002 John Nicholas
- 2004 Patricia Gillett
- 2004 David Jones
- 2006 Sharyn Gillings
- 2006 Frank Robards
- 2007 John Thompson
- 2008 John Aldridge
- 2008 Peter Phillipson
- 2009 Kenneth McManus
- 2009 Glenn McMahon
- 2009 Stacey Tannos
- 2010 Kevin Hill
- 2010 Peter Campton

- 2011 William Carter
- 2011 Bruce Mitchell
- 2012 Bernard Gabriel
- 2012 Robert Herbert
- 2012 David Lyall
- 2013 Patricia Fayers
- 2013 James Glissan
- 2013 Joan Noble
- 2014 Kenneth Fletcher
- 2014 Barry Harrison
- 2014 David White
- 2015 Doug Musker
- 2015 Norman Smith
- 2015 Richard Taffs
- 2016 Tony Drover
- 2016 John Lynch
- 2016 Les Threlfo



- 2017 Keven Marshall
- 2017 John Murray
- 2017 John Steele
- 2018 Mick Kelly
- 2018 Peter May
- 2019 Dean Storey
- 2019 Glenn Felkin



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New Governor to open Leaders Conference

Minister also to join more than 100 delegates at biennial assembly.

The new Governor of NSW, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, will officially open the 2019 MRNSW Leaders Conference on August 31.

Emergency Services Minister David Elliott also will address the assembly of more than 100 Unit Commanders, Deputy Unit Commanders, Directors and staff.

The biennial conference returns to Sydney this year after the previous event in Port Macquarie on the Mid North Coast in 2017.

It will be staged on August 31 and September 1 at the Primus Hotel on Pitt Street in the city.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said it was an honour for the organisation to have the Governor and Minister formally address the gathering of its leadership team.

"Their presence is another demonstration of the esteem in

which our volunteers are held for their life-saving service," he said.

"In our 10th anniversary year, we will take time at the conference to pay tribute to our past and celebrate our achievements while we discuss the bright future on our horizon."

Topics on the conference agenda will include the investment of the record \$37.6 million in State Government funding announced by Premier Gladys Berejiklian in January through the Facilities Development Program, Fleet Modernisation Program and marine radio network and equipment upgrades.

Her Excellency was sworn in as the State's 39th Governor on May 2, replacing General David Hurley, who is to become Governor-General.

Appointed Queen's Counsel in 1989, in 1993 she was made a judge of the Federal Court of



NSW Governor Margaret Beazley will officially open the MRNSW Leaders Conference in August.

Australia, the first woman to sit exclusively in that Court. In 1996, she was the first woman appointed to the NSW Court of Appeal and, subsequently, the first to be appointed as its President.

The Primus Hotel is located close to transport and city attractions.

A stunning revival of inter-war period architecture, the hotel is set in the former headquarters of the Sydney Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board. Its award-winning design has ensured original features have been restored to their 1930s Art Deco glory.

Building long-term benefits for members

Program to guide \$13m investment in new and upgraded facilities.

Marine Rescue NSW units are being encouraged to submit proposals for new and upgraded facilities, from Search and Rescue Coordination Centres to jetties.

The new Facilities Development Program has been introduced to guide building projects funded with the additional State Government revenue for MRNSW over the next four years. The package includes more than \$13 million for major and minor works.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said the exciting new program made possible with the extra funding would deliver long-term benefits for members and support their services to the boating community.

"For the first time, we can now embark on a building program to upgrade facilities to meet the needs of a modern emergency service and

enhance the safety, security and amenity of our volunteers' operating environments," he said.

"While it won't be possible to fix every problem overnight, we will hit the ground running from July 1, when the new funding starts.

"Some projects already have approvals in place or under way but we recognise other units may only just be starting that process."

New Property and Projects Manager Mark Cooper will assist units with project planning and management.

Guidelines for the Facilities Development Program were issued on April 29 to manage the timely, economical and sustainable delivery of funded projects.

The guidelines explain the process for units to seek Headquarters approval and funding



Building for the future ... the new MR Ballina Search and Rescue Coordination Centre, opened in 2017.

support for planned building works.

Priority will be given to facilities that are in a poor or unserviceable condition and projects that will enhance service delivery, training or volunteer recruitment and retention.

Commissioner Tannos said units needed to continue to apply for external grants for projects to ensure the benefits of the new funding could be shared as widely as possible among units.

Kiwis become our first international partners

Two rescue services share common history and strong alliance.

Marine Rescue NSW and Coastguard New Zealand have sealed a partnership that will benefit boaters and volunteers on both sides of the Tasman.

MRNSW Commissioner Stacey Tannos and CGNZ President Mike Purchase signed a Memorandum of Understanding at the MRNSW Headquarters on Port Hacking on March 19.

Commissioner Tannos said that like Australia and New Zealand, the two marine rescue services shared a common history and a strong alliance.

Volunteers are at the heart of both services' tremendous efforts to save lives and commitment to safer boating.

Both are charities that rely on community and government

financial support for their operations.

CGNZ has about 2,000 volunteer members based in 62 rescue units while MRNSW has more than 3,000 volunteer members in 44 units.

"It is fitting that we have signed our first international agreement with our Kiwi cousins," Commissioner Tannos said.

"The Memorandum of Understanding provides for the two organisations to share information, knowledge and resources in the areas of rescue operations, policies and procedures, volunteer engagement and training, organisational development and safe boating education."

Mr Purchase said the partnership represented an awesome opportunity for idea-sharing between the two organisations to support



Commissioner Stacey Tannos, Coastguard New Zealand President Mike Purchase and Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey following the signing of the cross-Tasman partnership agreement. Photo: Matt Sims.

both in developing even more efficient, higher-quality services.

"It's a two-way learning opportunity. We're roughly the same size and looking to achieve the same

things in our work with volunteers and developing standard operating procedures," he said.

"This agreement will allow us to share our learnings."



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Fleet, property managers join Headquarters

Experienced pair keen to give back to the community.

Two new members of the MRNSW State Headquarters team will oversee major fleet and property projects to ensure they are carried out effectively, efficiently, safely and within budget.

Both Fleet Manager Kelvin Parkin and Property and Projects Manager Mark Cooper have extensive business experience in Australia and overseas.

Mr Parkin holds Master and Marine Engine Driver tickets and was a dive instructor for many years.

"I travelled around the world doing that and living and working on boats and then it just progressed," he said. "Most recently I've been working in the beautiful Whitsundays, I was Operations Manager up there (at Cruise Whitsundays)."

Earlier he worked as Dock Supervisor at Harbour City Ferries' Balmain Shipyards.

"We did 14 major refits in a year and managed to squeeze in a couple of quick refits in between that," he said. The work included engine, hull, propeller and propeller shaft replacement and marine surveys to determine a vessel's overall condition. The biggest were the Lady class ferries that entered service in the 1960s and 1970s.

"I worked on the last Lady class that was in the dock before the fleet was retired," he said,

Mr Parkin, who has replaced former Fleet Manager Jody Hollow, is enthusiastic about managing MRNSW's expanding fleet of purpose-built search and rescue vessels, particularly ensuring onboard technology keeps pace with new developments and meets units' different operational requirements.

His ship building experience will be an asset when dealing with the state's boat builders.

"Being able to be part of the build process is something I really enjoy," he said. Mr Parkin is originally from

New Zealand, where he sailed as a child and did a lot of diving.

He wanted to join MRNSW because he respected its mission to save lives on the water.

"Working for a volunteer organisation, giving back to the community in the marine industry that I have enjoyed working for many years," Mr Parkin said.

Mark Cooper has been appointed to the new Headquarters position of Property and Projects Manager.

As a volunteer member of MR Port Jackson for two-and-a-half years, he has a firm background in the organisation.

The new position was proposed in the MRNSW Business Plan presented to the State Government to help secure a four-year \$37.6 million funding increase.

The Government investment included funding for a range of improvements to MRNSW facilities to improve operational and volunteer workplace conditions and part of Mr Cooper's role will involve working with units to oversee these projects.

He also will be responsible for the organisation's leases and licences, including those over our land, buildings, wharves, jetties, slipways and radio sites.

His previous role was Technical Director at Oil Consultants, a British engineering firm.

"I managed a bunch of guys drilling and installing oil wells in the Asia Pacific Region," he said.

Prior to that he was an engineer and project manager with more than 25 years' oilfield experience, coordinating heavy equipment installation and construction projects offshore and on land, including remote desert camps for up to 40 people.

In Mr Cooper's first weeks in the new job he visited MRNSW units on the Hunter, Central and South coasts.

He said he had joined MR Port



New Property and Projects Manager Mark Cooper and Fleet Manager Kelvin Parkin at State Headquarters. Photo: Brendan Trembath.

Jackson because he wanted to give back to the community and enjoyed being on the water.

With science and economics qualifications, he is a Commercial

Coxswain and holds a Master of Yachts Certificate. A keen sailor, he has logged about 28,000 nautical miles.

Brendan Trembath

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Marine radio on the air and on the road

High-tech mobile command post expands communications capacity.

The new \$200,000 MRNSW Mobile Incident Command Vehicle is on the road.

Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey said the new resource would provide additional communications capacity.

It will be used to provide critical command and control during major response operations over extended periods or in remote locations, as well as providing a back-up communications system for units.

The Iveco Daily van, replacing the 26-year-old communications truck, is fitted out with marine radio communications, IT and audio-visual equipment and stand-alone power, including solar panels. It can accommodate two radio operators.

Ten days after its delivery in late May, the command vehicle



Mobile induction ... operational staff Rodney Page, Stuart Massey, Jane Shirriff, Glenn Sullivan, Sophie Galvin, Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey, Andrew Cribb, Steve Raymond and Bruce Mitchell inspect the new Incident Command Vehicle. Photo: Brendan Trembath.

headed to MR Narooma to act as a temporary radio room while new online marine radio equipment was	being installed in the unit's radio base.	on the air, providing a safety watch for its local boating community," Deputy Commissioner Storey said.
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What we've been up to



Crowd to starboard ... *Brunswick 30* amid entrants in the 10th annual Mullum to Bruns Paddle on May 26. Four MRNSW vessels and Surf Life Saving crews provided a safety watch for the paddlers on the 10km course down the Brunswick River. The event raises funds for MR Brunswick, the Brunswick Surf Club and Brunswick Heads Visitor Information Centre. *Photo: John Murray.*



Lest we forget ... MR Coffs Harbour Unit Commander Russell Shelton, Dr Alan Scott, Paul McLeod and Deputy Unit Commander Jayson Palczewski pay the unit's respects on Anzac Day.



Honoured ... Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey, joined by Commissioner Stacey Tannos, was presented with the Emergency Services Medal at NSW Government House on May 17.



Before ... MR Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens volunteers were right on hand when 18-month-old Zachary Laws fell from a jetty and his parents leapt in to save him, pulling all three from the water.



And after ... Zachary, Aaron, Noah and Amy Laws, damp but safely back on dry land. *Lake Macquarie 20's* first rescue operation took place just before it was commissioned. *Photos: Brendan Trembath.*

Volunteer foundations for a strong future

Marine Rescue NSW built on a depth of skill and experience.

Marine Rescue NSW is proud to mark the milestone of the 10th anniversary of its foundation in 2009.

Huge strides have been made over that time but this is a modern emergency service whose history stretches back much further than a decade.

MRNSW is fortunate to be able to draw on a depth of skill, knowledge and experience that has been built through the turmoil of war and the carefree times of peace; the dangers of the sea and the joy of long, lazy days on some of the world's most idyllic waterways.

The Volunteer Coastal Patrol was formed in 1937, the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association in 1961 and the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association marine fleet in

1969. The volunteers who gave their time, commitment and usually their own boats to serve their community surely could not have envisaged the world class fleet, technology and diverse membership that MRNSW enjoys today.

This edition of *Soundings* is a tribute to the volunteer foundations on which our strong, successful organisation is built. We are pausing to reflect on the contribution of our forebears, while our focus remains firmly fixed on the horizon and the bright possibilities that lie beyond it for our members and NSW boaters.

Our 44 units have provided a snapshot of their history. Time, distance and loss have naturally coloured these reflections.

People will remember the same events differently and one



Flying the flag for Marine Rescue NSW.

generation's milestones may have been overtaken by more recent benchmarks of good times and bad.

This cannot be a finely detailed history of three organisations' paths to the future but it does sketch the route taken by the men and women who, in the great Australian volunteer tradition, rolled up their sleeves to build their bases, put their

own safety at risk to save others in harm's way and forged bonds that still hold firm around our radio bases, vessels and barbecues.

These histories are our story. They are the building blocks of our achievements and the inspiration for a continuing path to improvement. Thank you to all of the volunteers who have shared their stories.





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All in formation for 10 year anniversary



Chalking up a 10 year record of achievement ... members and supporters of Marine Rescue Shoalhaven assemble to celebrate Marine Rescue NSW's milestone anniversary in front of the Pilot House at Crookhaven Heads. The riverside Pilot House has served as the unit's Search and Rescue Coordination Centre since February 1997. *Photo: Danielle Carter.*



Patrol served community in war and peace

Patriotically-minded volunteers form first sea rescue organisation in 1937.

Established in the uncertain climate in the lead-up to World War II, the Volunteer Coastal Patrol was the first voluntary sea rescue organisation in Australia.

The Patrol's founders were Captain Maurice Blackwood DSO RN, Harold Nobbs and Bill Giles, who suggested to the Director of Naval Intelligence, Commander Rupert Long OBE, that a group of trained yachtsmen form an auxiliary service to the Navy. Commander Long recommended to the Naval Board that an organisation, to be called the Volunteer Coastal Patrol, be established. The Board agreed and the VCP was chartered on March 27, 1937, with Captain Blackwood as the first Commanding Officer and Harold Nobbs and Bill Giles as the senior officers.

Members used their own boats, including a number of Halvorsen cruisers. An early recruitment poster read: "The Volunteer Coastal Patrol, Port of Sydney, needs you and your boat for important security work."

Carl and Trygve Halvorsen were among the early members and the boat building family donated the use of its Neutral Bay boatshed for use as the VCP Depot 'Seahorse'.

When war was declared in 1939, a meeting of 50 members reaffirmed their desire to serve their country as a volunteer service. The first task assigned to the VCP in 1939 was to establish a security watch on the Hawkesbury River Rail Bridge, a vital link to the state's north. In November that year, 100 members moved to a camp at The Basin in Pittwater for intensive training in signals, aircraft recognition, boat handling and security patrol duty. The VCP also helped map coastal shore defences.

By 1940, with some 500 boats and 2,000 members in three states, the VCP had begun additional duty with the Army as part of the Newcastle/Port Kembla Covering



Do you know these faces? VCP members, possibly at the Neutral Bay Headquarters in 1939 or 1940. Front row: Arthur Morgan, two unknown, Harold Nobbs, Eric Graham, two unknown. Back row: Ray Weingott, unknown, Fred Middleton, unknown, Max Small, Padre Riley and three unknown members.

Force. It was requested to provide security around large troop ships on Sydney Harbour, including the Queen Mary, in port for several weeks to be converted from a luxury liner to a troop carrier. The State Government declared VCP vessels and bases should wear the State Ensign.

The VCP continued its guard duty on the rail bridge and troop ships until 1941 when the Navy established the voluntary Naval Auxiliary Patrol, which then assumed these roles. The Port of Sydney VCP maintained its independence from the NAP and continued to patrol west of the Harbour Bridge as the Sydney Harbour Patrol, holding Maritime Services Board warrants to board ships and wharves, and as Special Police Constables of the Water Police Reserve, carrying sidearms. By the end of the war, the volunteers had given 393,600 hours to patrol 128,000nm of waterways.

With peace came a return to recreational boating and the VCP turned its focus to boater education and civilian search and rescue.

The first Patrol-owned boat was an ex-Naval cutter, *Juno*, which began service in 1947, primarily as a training vessel for new recruits.



Patrolboat Kiwi, sponsored by the New Zealand Insurance Company, with crew Ken Shrimpton, Les Clarke and Ken Lucas.

Various donated, sponsored and purchased boats were acquired, including four Maritime Services Board pilot boats and later, self-righting Waveney and Arun lifeboats imported from Britain.

Vessel and radio training progressively became more formalised and operations extended along the coastline, with 25 NSW divisions eventually providing a volunteer rescue service and marine radio watch from Cape Byron to Eden. In a tradition continued by MRNSW, its members became a visible presence for major Sydney

Harbour events, including royal visits, the opening of the Opera House, the start of the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race, the 1988 Bicentenary and the 2000 Olympic Games, during which 88 volunteers gave more than 5,000 hours' service. In 1974 the Queen granted approval for the VCP to add the prefix "Royal" to its title. Recognising its funding and recruitment limitations, the RVCP keenly supported the transition to MRNSW. Today, only a South Australian presence remains, with two boat bases and seven radio bases.

Coast Guard modelled on American auxiliary

Association grows from concerns for Victorian pleasure boaters' safety.

The Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association was established in Victoria in 1961 to enhance the safety of pleasure boating, especially in small craft.

At the time, members of Melbourne's Beaumaris Motor Yacht Club had been running a safety patrol for club members on Port Phillip Bay. The AVCGA website records that in December 1960, a club meeting attended by members including Olga Toolen, Ted Madden, W Down and J Madden discussed small boat safety.

The Association's 2003 Members' Handbook recounts that Ted Madden, who was the club's Operations Manager, was concerned about the rapid growth of boating in Victoria and the performance of newcomers proving a danger to themselves and others due to their lack of basic knowledge of the sea and often ill-equipped and unseaworthy boats.

He had read about the work of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary and wrote seeking information. An immediate reply offered assistance to form a similar organisation in Australia.

The Australian Coast Guard was formed in September 1961 with the objectives of enhancing pleasure boating safety by educating boaters in safe boating practices and promoting safety by example.

Three flotillas were set up, with businessman Walter Peterson the first National Commodore. A public education campaign was launched using manuals and materials sent from the USA. The first female, Sylvia Blogg, was admitted in May 1962 and a Ladies Flotilla was formed in Huntingdale. By early 1963, six flotillas had been formed in Victoria and four in Adelaide.

In April 1963, the organisation's name was changed to the Australian Coast Guard Auxiliary to emphasise its international kinship with the US



Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association members Bruce Bell, John England, Loma Gilmore, two unknown volunteers, Derek Ancell and David Dick, around the year 2000.

auxiliary. The Eagle Anchor emblem was designed by the art department at ABC television.

However, with no Coast Guard service in Australia, the operation was not, strictly speaking, an auxiliary to anything so in 1970 the name was changed to the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association.

The organisation expanded to NSW in 1967, Queensland in 1972, Tasmania in 1994 and the Northern Territory in 2010.

Ernest Tree was authorised to recruit members and establish a NSW Squadron in July 1967.

Although the Coastal Patrol was already operating in NSW, the AVCGA believed there were gaps it could fill, particularly to assist small craft. In 1976, a second NSW squadron was established, initially as the Illawarra Squadron but later the Southern NSW Squadron. Around a dozen flotillas eventually provided search and rescue operations and radio bases in NSW.

The Coast Guard and Coastal Patrol often worked in close proximity and some operations changed hands, such as Camden Haven, which moved from the RVCP to the Coast Guard and the



The opening of the Swansea Coast Guard base, still operating today as the MR Lake Macquarie Search and Rescue Coordination Centre.

Bermagui Coast Guard, which transferred to the Coastal Patrol.

By the early 2000s, the AVCGA had expanded to 65 flotillas in 10 squadrons from Cape York to Tasmania and on some inland lakes and waterways in Queensland, NSW and Victoria. Although in the formative years Coast Guard volunteers had supplied their own

boats, by this time the organisation had about 100 vessels capable of assisting boaters in peril, supported by 147 radio bases.

The Coast Guard agreed in 2010 that its NSW flotillas would transfer to MRNSW. The Association now has 46 flotillas in Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Blue Mountains search genesis of sea rescue

VRA coastal units farewell land colleagues to step on board new marine service.

Volunteers from 12 marine rescue units farewelled their land-based colleagues in the 40-year-old NSW Volunteer Rescue Association and stepped on board MRNSW after its formation in 2009.

The VRA was established in 1969 but its genesis was three decades earlier in a 1936 search for four young men missing in the Grose Valley in the Blue Mountains.

Search participants, including police and the camping store pioneer Frank Austin "Paddy" Pallin, identified a need for a search and rescue group using people with specialised knowledge and skills.

This group came to be known as Bush Search and Rescue NSW.

The first VRA General Land Rescue Squad was formed in 1950 to assist police with the recovery of people from the Murrumbidgee River, providing flood rescue and evacuations and ferrying food and medicines between isolated communities around Wagga Wagga in southern NSW.

Soon after, the Wagga Wagga Rescue Squad became involved in general land rescue.

In 1969, at the suggestion of NSW Police Commissioner Norman Allan, volunteer rescue squads at Albury, Dubbo, Narrandera and Wagga Wagga met and formed the Volunteer Rescue Association.

Bush Search and Rescue joined the VRA in 1970, before it became part of the NSW State Emergency Service in 2018.

A marine branch of affiliated sea rescue squads was formed. Like their counterparts in the Coastal Patrol and Coast Guard, VRA marine rescue units were accredited for their roles by the NSW Emergency Services Minister of the day through the State Rescue Board.

At one stage, the RVCP and AVCGA also were affiliated with the VRA but this arrangement ended in the 1990s.



Shoalhaven VRA vessel *TSRV Crookhaven* responds to a sinking vessel on the Crookhaven River, with firefighters placing pollution booms to prevent leaking fuel reaching oyster leases.

Each marine unit affiliated with the VRA was incorporated in its own right and had its own constitution, elected officers and management committee, reporting to the NSW VRA Committee.

There were initially twelve marine rescue units affiliated with the VRA: Point Danger, Tweed Coast, Brunswick (which also performed road crash rescue), Woolli, Woolgoolga, Camden Haven, Nambucca, Port Macquarie, Hawkesbury River, Shoalhaven, Tuross (also general land rescue) and Narooma (also road crash rescue and sharing premises with the Narooma RVCP).

Norah Head and Terrigal also affiliated with the VRA in the mid-2000s.

The chair and secretary of the VRA marine committee were delegates to the NSW Volunteer Marine Rescue Council, which comprised representatives of all the marine rescue services and NSW Water Police.

The chair of the VMRC, who also



Woolli Sea Rescue Squad President Stephen Reading (right) and current MR Woolli Deputy Unit Commander Marty Hutchings with the radio van borrowed from Port Macquarie each weekend.

was a member of the State Rescue Board, was a two-year rotating appointment. The Council became redundant with the formation of the state's single marine rescue service. Its last chair was the VRA's Bill Carter, who was appointed to the Facilitation Committee and original MRNSW Board charged with establishing the new organisation. He was subsequently elected as the Illawarra Regional Director from

2010 to 2014 and again from 2016 to 2017.

All but two of the VRA marine units made the transition to MRNSW.

From the original four squads in 1969, the VRA now consists of 42 general land rescue squads, specialist squads including alpine rescue and cave rescue and 13 support squads including communications, grief and loss support, aerial patrols and first aid.

Technology to support our mission



Crashing through ... the Arun class lifeboat Port Stephens 40 (*Danial Thain*) powers through the swell with its replacement, Steber 38 Port Stephens 31 (*John Thompson*) in June 2016, shortly before its retirement after 17 years' service. PS 40 was one of the former Royal National Lifeboat Institution vessels imported by the RVCP and PS 31 was the 66th vessel delivered by MRNSW. Photo: Geoff Clark.



Back to base ... MR Ulladulla crew member Kel Greathead on radio on board *Encounter*. The Arun served from 2006 until the unit took delivery of its first new boat, *Ulladulla 30*, in 2012.



High-tech fit out ... *Brunswick 30* crew Phil Bailey and Bill Spicer check their course as they head south on a mission to rescue a 12m yacht with engine failure, returning it to safety at Ballina.



Training is the key ... members of the Coast Guard practice their on board first aid skills. MRNSW vessels today carry advanced first aid equipment including defibrillators and oxygen kits.



A life saved ... Middle Harbour and Port Jackson volunteers reunite with Arthur and Barbara Cooley. The units' crews revived Mr Cooley with a defibrillator after he had a heart attack while boating in 2011.

New service a guarantee for the future

Three organisations join forces to ensure survival of volunteer rescue.

After operating independently on the water for decades, the State's three volunteer marine rescue services joined forces in 2007 to launch a crucial rescue mission.

The leaders of the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association, Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and NSW Volunteer Rescue Association marine fleet came together as one in a bid to secure the future of volunteer marine rescue in this State.

Facing rising costs for vessels, fuel, equipment and training and struggling to attract new recruits to their ranks, they approached the State Government for funding support. In response, the Government commissioned the former Speaker of the NSW Parliament, John Price, to conduct a review of the sector. Mr Price found that there was effective cooperation in sea rescue operations but some duplication of bases, overlapping radio services and "entrenched competition". The cost of membership, operations, training, and vessel and communications equipment replacement was overtaking each organisation's ability to recruit and adequately fundraise, with rationalisation necessary to improve operational efficiency.

Ninety-three per cent of the 800



Vessels in new Marine Rescue NSW livery join Australia Day festivities on Sydney Harbour in 2010.

would be established as Marine Rescue NSW.

A Facilitation Committee of representatives of each of the three services and government agencies was charged with planning the transition to MRNSW, with the Government committing \$3 million in seed funding, along with an ongoing core grant. This committee had responsibility for guiding the passage to a single service with a new legal structure, policies, procedures, uniforms and livery and the transfer of members and assets.

Marine Area Command Inspector Glenn Finnis served as Interim Commissioner before Commissioner Stacey Tannos' appointment in July 2011, with Heinz Mueller the original Deputy Commissioner.

A Foundation Board was appointed until the first elections were held for three General Directors and six Regional Directors in November 2010. Jim Glissan was elected as Chair, a role he has continued to hold since.

Mr Glissan said the new service had purposely been established as a company with an elected board drawn from its membership to ensure the volunteers would have control of their organisation and to maintain its independence.

After consultation with the boating community, the State Government introduced a modest levy on recreational boating licences and registrations to help fund MRNSW, in recognition of its volunteers' contribution to boating safety. MRNSW relies on the ongoing financial support of the Government and state's recreational boaters to help fund its services.

On January 27, Premier Gladys Berejiklian announced a record \$37.6 million funding boost for the organisation over four years.

Commissioner Tannos praised the constructive attitude of the former services' leadership.

"They accepted that the only realistic way to continue serving the boating community in the future was to come together as one," he said.

He said MRNSW had been on a constant trajectory of growth, introducing new vessels, training and volunteer support, refining its corporate governance with a new Constitution and establishing a dedicated State Headquarters at Cronulla. Now with 3,000 volunteers in 44 units and 28 staff, he said the service was entering a new phase of development made possible by the Government's financial injection.

"We have all worked incredibly hard to honour the legacy of the former services and fulfil the promise of the new organisation to grow, develop and prosper," he said.

"This new funding will enable us to further enhance our services to save lives on the water."

We have all worked incredibly hard to fulfil the promise to grow, develop and prosper.

submissions to the Price review supported the creation of a new service but there was resistance to any one of the existing bodies taking over the others.

Mr Price recommended a new organisation be created, with membership invited from the existing services. In November 2008, the Ministers for Emergency Services and Ports and Waterways jointly announced the new body

The State Rescue Board produced a Service Delivery Model to rationalise duplication and identify gaps in services.

MRNSW was formally established on July 1, 2009, with 2,350 members starting operations on the water under their new flag, with fresh uniforms and livery, on January 1, 2010. All but four rescue groups eventually transferred to MRNSW. NSW Police Force

Selfless courage earns first Valour Medal

Port Stephens volunteer saves two crew mates in wild conditions.

Marine Rescue Port Stephens crew member Laurie Nolan holds a special place in the annals of MRNSW as the first volunteer awarded the organisation's highest honour, the Medal for Valour.

Mr Nolan is one of the many volunteers whose bravery and skill have been recognised with a series of awards and citations both before and after the formation of MRNSW.

The Medal for Valour was awarded in recognition of Mr Nolan's outstanding courage in saving the lives of two of his crew mates on board *Port Stephens 40* during a rescue operation in January 2016.

PS 40 endured a triple knockdown in the dark while trying to rescue a disabled yacht in 50 knot winds and 5-6m seas. When

a wave swept four crew members on the back deck off their feet, Mr Nolan, without thought for his own safety, went to the rescue of Ian Drummond, who had a dislocated shoulder and Paul Sullivan, who was pinned to the deck. In all, 21 of the unit's crew members and communications officers received awards for their efforts in the wild conditions over two days.

Mr Nolan said the award was a great honour: "I humbly and very proudly accept this medal, not just for myself but for all the volunteers of Marine Rescue Port Stephens."

While the Port Stephens crews thankfully made it home alive, the names of three marine rescue volunteers - David Waddell, from the Ballina Coast Guard, Dennis Matthews, from the Lake Macquarie Coastal Patrol and Edward Bristow from the Port Stephens Coast Guard (now MR Lemon Tree Passage) - are inscribed on the Emergency Services Volunteers Memorial in Sydney, acknowledging the ultimate price they paid while on duty.

Fifty-one volunteers have received the Commissioner's Commendation for Courage for their bravery in nine hazardous operations dating from 2002. These include 14 MR Port Stephens crew members from the 2016 operations and another eight who also received the Australian



Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey and Commissioner Stacey Tannos with MR Lake Macquarie member Jim Stringfellow, who was presented with a Commendation for Brave Conduct on May 17.

Search and Rescue Award for the 2015 *Reef Dragon* operation to save two men whose yacht was forced on to rocks in Fame Cove in cyclonic force winds. Another four volunteers have been awarded Commissioner's Commendations for Service.

Eight volunteers also have been presented with national Group Bravery Citations.

A crew from the Batemans Bay Coastal Patrol, George Mercieca, Peter Paine, Gordon Patterson, Peter Rosenkranz and Michael Trick, were recognised for their mission to save sailors on board *ABN Amro Challenge* in the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race that claimed six lives and five yachts.

MR Ballina members Tony Handcock, Rodney Guest and David

Nockolds also earned the Citation for an operation to save two men on a stricken yacht after midnight on April 15, 2013, during which *Ballina 30* capsized, washing the crew and two sailors out to sea. The crew of Ballina Jet Boat Surf Rescue 40 also were awarded the Citation for rescuing the five men.

The Commendation for Brave Conduct has been awarded to MR Lake Macquarie member Jim Stringfellow, the late John Nissen and Barry Bonning for their courage in a rescue mission to save three men stranded on a boat taking on water in severe conditions near Bird Island in 2013. Mr Nissen's son Dean wore his father's MRNSW shirt and medals to receive the Commendation on May 17.



First MRNSW Medal for Valour recipient, Laurie Nolan.

Commitment of time and effort recognised

A total of 3,100 Long Service Medals have been presented to MRNSW volunteers to recognise the strength of their service to the community.

Thirteen members have received the 40 year clasp to the Medal, representing an incredible 520 years' shared service.

Member Services Manager Adrian Adam said it was important to formally recognise members'

impressive commitment of time and effort, not just over a decade but stretching back to the three former services.

The first MRNSW Long Service Medal was awarded to MR Hawkesbury member Jill McGrath in March 2011 in honour of her 26-year record of service.

Jill and her husband Barry were among the inaugural members of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol at

Hawkesbury in 1985.

The National Medal acknowledges the service of members of recognised organisations who risk their lives to assist and protect the community. Approval was granted in 2011 for the medal to be awarded to MRNSW volunteers. To date, 418 medals and clasps have been awarded to members, including four fourth clasps recognising 55 years' individual service.



Interim Commissioner Glenn Finnis and MR Hawkesbury member Jill McGrath.

World-class fleet boosts volunteer safety

\$21m investment in 91 vessels one of decade's defining achievements.



Power and might ... vessels in the MRNSW fleet are safe, reliable and purpose-built for rapid emergency response. Photo: Shaun Flaherty.

In just a decade, Marine Rescue NSW has developed the number one rescue fleet in Australasia.

Ninety-one new and refurbished vessels have been delivered to volunteer units on the coastline and inland waters at a cost of more than \$21 million.

The newest vessel officially welcomed to the fleet is *Lake Macquarie 20*, a 7.5m Sailfish catamaran, commissioned on April 27. The vessel is named in memory of the late Unit Commander Neil Grieves, whose children attended the commissioning ceremony.

Moama 10, a 4.6m Ocean Cylinder and *Crowdy 20*, a 6.8m Naiad, were launched in June.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said the delivery of almost 100 safe, modern and fit-for-purpose boats was one of the defining achievements of MRNSW's first decade.

He said the heavy investment in the Fleet Modernisation Program was essential to deliver on MRNSW's fundamental commitments to volunteer safety and continual improvement in operational capability.

"Our first priority has always been

the safety of our volunteers," he said. "Providing safe, reliable boats purpose-built for local operating conditions is the greatest investment we can make in the welfare of our crews and the boaters they assist."

He said financial support from the State Government and boating community, standardisation of the fleet and economies of scale had enabled remarkable progress to be made.

The Government's \$37.6 million funding package for MRNSW will enable the delivery of 38 new boats to be accelerated. In the coming year, \$5 million will be invested in new and upgraded vessels and Rescue Water Craft.

Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey said MRNSW had worked closely with its unit members, boat builders and suppliers to produce a world-class fleet that was the envy of others.

"Our industry partnerships have enabled us to refine and improve our vessels to meet new operational challenges and keep pace with advances in technology," he said. "The fleet development means our crews have the confidence of knowing they have



Reverend Richard Wrightson blesses *Lake Macquarie 20*, watched by Unit Commander Mal Wardrop, Deputy Unit Commander Malcolm Druce and Neil Grieves' children, Leanne Hoff and Troy Grieves.

the equipment they need to operate in a challenging and frequently hazardous environment. The delivery of larger vessels suited to open water operations, combined with smaller boats designed for shallow inland waters and agile Rescue Water Craft ideal for river and bar operations, has increased units' responsiveness and capacity."

He said MRNSW had maintained its strong commitment to the NSW boat building industry by working with three builders, Yamba Welding & Engineering, which produces Naiads and Ocean Cylinders, Sailfish

Catamarans and mono-hull builder Steber International.

"Our working relationships with these builders not only have provided us with top-class vessels but also enabled us to support regional jobs and skills development," he said. "Our preferred supplier agreements with Suzuki Marine and Raymarine ensure the fleet is equipped with reliable and fuel-efficient outboards and the latest electronic navigation and search and rescue equipment, while our partnership with SeaDoo has expanded our RWC capability."

Investment creates stronger radio safety net

Innovative communications technology supports volunteer operations.

Continuous investment in the marine radio network owned and operated by MRNSW and the introduction of innovative communications technology have created a world-class safety net for boaters on NSW waters.

MRNSW Emergency Systems Manager Andrew Cribb said boaters from Tweed Heads to Eden were safer thanks to upgrades to marine radio infrastructure and equipment and consistent training of volunteer radio operators and watch officers.

“Marine radio coverage is immensely improved, radio bases are better equipped and our people have more standardised training,” he said.

Optimal marine radio coverage is achieved by installing aerials in strategic locations to overcome

black spots created by distance or obstacles such as mountains, vegetation or terrain.

“The elimination of black spots in radio reception has been a high priority, to ensure boaters in distress can access a robust and reliable marine radio network,” Mr Cribb said. Infrastructure has been upgraded on the Far South and Mid North coasts and Hawkesbury River, with future work to include installations on the Illawarra and South coasts. Additional State Government funding includes more than \$3 million to upgrade both network infrastructure and radio base installations, including the continuing roll out of Radio over Internet Protocol technology to relay radio traffic from smaller bases to larger 24/7 communication hubs.

IT & Business Development Director Florian Glajcar said the online Seahawk vessel tracking system, developed for MRNSW and implemented in 2013, also had boosted boating safety.

“Seahawk enables our units to quickly and easily Log On boaters and to rapidly launch their search procedures if a boater doesn’t Log Off as scheduled,” he said.

The *MarineRescue* app, launched in 2015, allows boaters to Log On and Log Off with mobile devices. It also offers a live tracking safety option, which automatically updates a vessel’s position every 30 minutes, giving a starting point for a search for an overdue vessel. Over the most recent boating season, 22 per cent of boaters Logged On via the app.

In 2016, MRNSW’s integrated



MR Terrey Hills radio operator Dorothy Lee tracking vessels on the Seahawk system.

communications system was a runner-up in the International Maritime Rescue Federation’s Honouring Excellence in Rescue Operations (HERO) awards.
Brendan Trembath

Marine Rescue NSW Choose Sea-Doo Watercraft





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Professional training to the highest standard

Less paper, more flexible online learning on way in next decade.

Marine Rescue NSW volunteer training has been modernised, standardised and lifted to the highest national standard over the past decade.

Assistant Director Training and Education Chris Butler said the standard of training had previously varied considerably between units.

Mr Butler said volunteers now had access to a comprehensive suite of training courses and resources that were clear, accurate and easy to use.

“Our resources are recognised for their consistency and quality across the board,” he said.

MRNSW was approved as a Registered Training Organisation by the regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, in 2011.

“That was a great achievement in the new organisation’s early days,” Mr Butler said. “Our registration was renewed in 2016, which was testament to the strength and professionalism of our programs and of our continual improvement.”

Regional Operations Managers Glenn Sullivan and John Murray began their MRNSW careers in training roles in late 2011.

“It was quite a tumultuous time,” Mr Sullivan said.

In the early days, units continued to use existing training resources, mostly drawn from the Coastal Patrol and Coast Guard.

“We had to come up with a package that was similar to, but not exactly the same as either of them,” Mr Murray said.

He said the progress in volunteer training had been “phenomenal. It’s a 110 per cent improvement”.

New training requirements for the volunteer marine rescue sector under new federal legislation that took effect in 2016 were introduced without placing an extra burden on members and in 2018 MRNSW was the only volunteer agency named as a finalist in the Large Employer of



MR Tuggerah Lakes Unit Commander Tony Younglove and MR Hawesbury’s Jamie Abnett-Miller haul a search mannequin on board *Tuggerah Lakes 21* during a Search and Rescue Exercise in 2018.

the Year category of the 2018 NSW Training Awards.

Mr Butler said MRNSW vessel training exceeded the national standard to ensure crew members had the skills to operate safely.

He paid tribute to the team of volunteer and staff trainers and assessors who were integral to the delivery of training courses.

“We could not deliver the depth and breadth of our training without the 100 or so volunteers who have devoted a great deal of time and effort to gain training and assessment qualifications and work with our Training Managers.”

A regional training framework has also helped deliver effective and time efficient training.

“Regional training takes pressure off some units that may not have the subject matter experts or the trainers to be able to provide that service, it brings people together from different units and it gives them the ability to learn from each other,” Mr Butler said.

In addition to the regional Search and Rescue Exercises staged each year, he pointed to practical developments such as the new leadership training course and professional development days and weekends for experienced volunteers to sharpen their skills.

He foreshadowed that in its next decade MRNSW would rely less on printed training resources.

“One of the critical things is that

we have to reduce our reliance on paper,” he said. “We have already introduced blended learning in our first aid training. Members read a workbook and then undertake an online multiple choice quiz before starting their hands-on training.”

Other examples were a recent series of videos produced by Headquarters on the use of the Seahawk vessel tracking system, Axiom Pro navigation displays and AirBerth boat lifts.

“These are short, sharp, snappy little pieces of learning,” Mr Butler said. “Members can fit those into their day, which makes learning more flexible and supports their work-life-volunteering balance.”

Brendan Trembath



Commissioner Stacey Tannos addresses a professional development day for MRNSW volunteer trainers.

Crews achieve record of life-saving success

Volunteers launch more than 25,000 rescue missions in a decade.

Marine Rescue NSW has set an operational record unrivalled in the Australian sector over the past decade.

Since the start of operations under the new MRNSW banner on January 1, 2010, crews have launched more than 25,000 rescue missions, including more than 7,000 in response to life-endangering emergencies, often in unfavourable conditions, bad weather and under darkness.

Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey said the unparalleled record was testament to the commitment and skill of MRNSW members, backed with world-class assets and training.

“Boaters in trouble can be confident that when they call for help, a professionally trained and

equipped crew will be quickly under way,” he said. “Our crews have been responsible for ensuring that over 50,000 boaters have made it safely home to their families and friends.

“There can be no greater reward for a volunteer than the satisfaction of knowing you have saved a life.”

Deputy Commissioner Storey said MRNSW had invested heavily in new and upgraded vessels, search and rescue equipment, communications technology and training to expand its rescue capability.

“We have also strategically pre-positioned assets, including rapid response Rescue Water Craft, at known high-risk locations, such as coastal bars, to ensure our crews can be swiftly on the scene.

“Our rescue crews could not perform their duties without the



Rapid-response Rescue Water Craft have expanded rescue capability.

professional communications support provided by our radio base personnel,” he said.

Records since 2011/12 show radio operators have handled 2.38

million radio calls and Logged On 583,113 boats. Of these, 51,041 have Logged On via the *MarineRescue* smartphone app launched in March 2015.



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Reach out ... Marine Rescue NSW has invested heavily in world class rescue vessels, equipment and training to ensure our crews are ready to respond rapidly to boaters in trouble on the State's waterways. Skippers are urged to ensure everyone on board is wearing a lifejacket to give them the best chance of surviving until help arrives in an emergency. *Photo: Michael Guest.*



Night ops ... MR Bermagui crew member Olivia Ford studies charts en route to assist a 42 foot yacht stranded with engine failure 11.5nm south-east of Bermagui just before midnight on May 9.



Safety net ... MR Botany Port Hacking radio operator Denis Steele, on duty in the unit's Solander radio base, one of the MRNSW volunteers who have handled more than two million radio calls.



This boater, who suffered minor injuries when he hit a rocky outcrop in Coal Shaft Bay in April 2012, spent a lonely night on board after refusing an MR Port Stephens crew's appeals to leave the vessel.



Medical transfer ... MR Camden Haven's Ken Clancy assists seriously injured sailor Philip Wold, who lost two fingers in a winch accident while sailing down the coastline in July 2015.

Female membership 'a source of great pride'

Exceptional women advance through merit, hard work and perseverance.



MR Port Macquarie crew members Lauren Stewart, Trish Hallett, Erin Cox, Taighan Schroder, Erin Cox and Yolanda Bosschietter with skipper Ali Cameron-Brown (front). Photo: Port Macquarie News.



MR Middle Harbour's first all-women crew, Anna Kalisiak, Steph Mayoh and Joanna Mycroft, on duty on board *Middle Harbour 20* on May 26. Photo: Ben Crowther.

One of the most visible changes in the modern world of marine rescue is the number of women in the ranks.

A quarter of the volunteer members of MRNSW today are women.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said it was a source of great pride to have so many women serving throughout the organisation.

"The emergency services sector is heavily male-dominated but it is rewarding to see so many women playing significant roles in achieving our mission," he said.

Pat Fayers served as Central Coast Commander from 2006 to 2010 and again from 2012 to 2014.

She was the first woman elected

to the MRNSW Board, in 2014.

Mrs Fayers said marine rescue "used to be considered men's work".

"These days we think nothing of a woman on marine radio, heading out to sea or managing a unit and that's how it should be," she said.

"It's wonderful to see the growing role of women in Marine Rescue NSW, in our radio bases, on search and rescue boats and even in the Boardroom. It was a great honour to be the first woman elected to the Board of MRNSW in 2014. Having said that, I don't see myself just as a woman on the Board but as a team player judged on my ability.

"The women of MRNSW are proving their abilities every day. I am thrilled to visit units with female Unit Commanders, Deputy Unit Commanders, Skippers and Watch Officers.

"These exceptional women have moved into senior roles on merit, through hard work and perseverance."

A total of 331 women to date have attained MRNSW operational ratings: four Masters, seven Coxswains, seven Leading Crew, 76 Crew, four Rescue Water Craft Operators, one Search and Rescue Support Officer, 52 Watch Officers

and 180 Radio Operators.

In February, MR Bermagui Master Denise Page was one of seven crew members presented with a Commissioner's Commendation for Courage for the night rescue of a yacht in danger of smashing on to rocks in tough conditions south of Moruya Heads in 2017.

When she joined the RVCP 15 years ago, she was welcome on the radios but "pretty much told I couldn't go on the boat".

"I started crew training anyway. That went well and I moved up to the Skipper rank. Bermagui had a large boat, the *James T. Lees*, but no one qualified to take it out."

Determined to see off a threat to move the *Lees* to Narooma, Ms Page completed her Master course at TAFE.

"I was, I believe, the first female Master and the only one for some period of time," she said. "It is great to see many more women doing crew training and moving up through the ranks. Bermagui and some other units can now field all-female crew - not that that is an aim.

"The development of the Registered Training Organisation and structured training provides an even playing field for all forms of diversity and helps people face

the challenges of background in a structured way. We should all make the most of it."

Joanna Mycroft, Anna Kalisiak, and Steph Mayoh made history at MR Middle Harbour as the unit's first all-female crew on May 26.

MR Port Macquarie also can put an all-women crew to sea, led by the Mid North Coast Region's first female skipper and RWC operator, Ali Cameron-Brown.

"There was no question about where I would volunteer - I always knew it would be with the boat crew," Ali told the *Port Macquarie News* after qualifying as a skipper.

"At the end of the day we are all working together and it is a team effort."



MR Bermagui Master Denise Page, commended for her courage.



The first woman elected to the Board of MRNSW, General Director Pat Fayers

Teamwork the key to our success



General assembly ... MRNSW Board Directors, Unit Commanders and Deputy Unit Commanders, staff and other delegates gather for the organisation's 2017 Leadership Conference, staged at Port Macquarie. The biennial conference returns to Sydney this year, again bringing together personnel from around the state (see page 17). Photo: Brendan Trembath.



Formalities ... MRNSW Chaplain Richard Wrightson, Board Directors John Lynch, Pat Fayers and Jim Wright and MR Port Stephens Deputy Unit Commander Peter Merlino at the commissioning of LM 20 in April.



Smile! MRNSW staff members gather at the State Headquarters at Cronulla. The staff of 28 is committed to supporting the organisation's volunteers and the boating community.



No tow rope needed ... the members of MR Crowdy Harrington have taken delivery of two new four wheel drives to tow a rescue vessel and fuel supplies, thanks to a State Government Infrastructure grant.



New generation on board ... MR Cottage Point members David Hukins, Tony Gordon and Bernard Uttridge, continuing the unit's proud 50 year record of service on Sydney's northern waterways.

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PROUD TO SUPPORT MARINE RESCUE NEW SOUTH WALES

Unit crosses the line to save lives on water

Point Danger proud of its service on both sides of border over 54 years.

Having seen life from both sides over its 54-year history, MR Point Danger is comfortable operating directly across the NSW-Queensland borderline.

The Northern Rivers and Gold Coast Land, Sea and Air Rescue organisation was formed in February 1965. Although operating on both sides of the border, it was originally a Queensland service until members chose to cross the line and join the new Marine Rescue NSW in 2009.

The organisation operated from Duranbah until 1986, when its Search and Rescue Coordination Centre moved to the base of the Captain Cook Memorial Lighthouse, built over the State border. The clifftop location provided a better view of the hazardous Tweed River bar and improved radio reception.

Former Northern Rivers Regional Director Bernie Gabriel, who served on the MRNSW Board from 2013 to 2017, was a foundation member.

He recalled that following a near tragedy on the bar, he convinced the local Jaycees club to make forming a rescue unit a priority in the mid-1960s. A 16-foot Sea Tamer became the first of the unit's 13 vessels. Communications between local fishing boats and the rescue vessel were originally made via radio station 2ML, which would contact aircraft owner Cliff Latham, who would drop instructions wrapped in weights on to the decks of both the stranded boat and rescue vessel.

The unit has evolved with developing communications technology, administration and state of the art rescue vessels. Cameras now support search and rescue operations, monitoring the Duranbah Beach area and the Tweed bar and northern entrance wall.

It has the advantage of three different facilities: the SARCC, which also accommodates its fundraising gift shop and administration offices, its training and meeting rooms on



State of Origin team ... members of MR Point Danger, who operate directly across the NSW-Queensland border, outside the unit's Duranbah meeting and training centre.

Duranbah Beach and a boat shed on the Tweed River. A significant boost in volunteer numbers to the current strength of 114 can be attributed to the unit executive, members' professionalism and training programs provided by MRNSW.

Members are particularly proud of their female volunteers, including Unit Commander Glenda Ashby, who has served in the role since 2013, and others who have taken on responsible roles such as vessel skipper and crew, radio operations, training and fundraising.

With growing public awareness of the unit's services, members' fundraising efforts have returned greater financial rewards.

The unit is now facing a new stage in its evolution, with the SARCC to be redeveloped to meet future search and rescue needs and a replacement for primary rescue vessel, *Point Danger 30*, due in the near future. Still close to their grass roots, the members embrace the progress they have made over 54 years and look forward to their achievements in the years to come.



Old ... Point Danger Air Sea Rescue's Haines Hunter rescue vessel SR 33.



And new ... MRNSW Naiads, *Point Danger 20* and *Point Danger 30* on the Tweed River.

Unit's commitment means boaters feel safer

Brunswick quick to respond to emergencies on bar with treacherous history.

A popular holiday town with a treacherous coastal bar, busy boat harbour and the only easily accessible boat ramp for 40km is a town in need of an efficient marine rescue service.

In the Northern NSW hamlet of Brunswick Heads, members of MR Brunswick have been watching over the boating community for more than 40 years.

The unit was originally part of the Brunswick Valley Volunteer Rescue Association, which had been responding to emergencies on the water as well as land since 1977.

In 2010, Brunswick became the first VRA squad to transition to the new MRNSW.

The founding Unit Commander under MRNSW and driving force behind the unit's development was Owen Danvers, who served as the unit's leader from 2010 until 2013 and Deputy Unit Commander from 2016 to 2018, before passing away in March this year.

The first local marine radio operation was based in a caravan parked near Toorakina Beach on the south side of the Brunswick River, until the radio tower was built nearby on the southern river wall, where it still stands watch over boaters crossing the bar today.

The bar is renowned as one of the trickiest to cross on the Australian east coast, claiming many ships and boats stretching back to the *SS Brunswick* in 1883, the *Agnes* in 1889 and the *Endeavour* in 1892.

Constructed by a group of local builders who volunteered most of their time with materials largely donated by local businesses, the tower was opened in 2001 by Richmond MP Larry Anthony.

The tower operations have evolved since the formation of MRNSW, with upgraded radios and computers and the introduction of the Seahawk vessel tracking system



Brunswick 30 passes the unit's radio tower after crossing the difficult Brunswick River bar on its return from a major refit in 2018.

and online radio communications system.

The tower closed for two months in 2015 for significant repairs funded by a \$10,000 grant from the North Coast-based Knappick Foundation, replacing the building's steel balustrade and heavily rusted roof.

With the tower currently in operation on weekends and holiday periods, the unit is grateful to have the support of its neighbours at the MR Cape Byron base to monitor its radio communications on weekdays as it works to re-establish a seven-day operation.

The squad's first rescue boat was an open cabin jet powered vessel in the VRA's distinctive bright orange livery, housed in a small boat shed next to the boat ramp and winched in and out of the water when tasked to respond to an emergency.

In November 2012, the unit took delivery of its new \$340,000 9.5m Naiad, *Brunswick 30*, replacing the 12-year-old *Brunswick 20*.

UC Danvers described the boat, which operates between Hastings Point to the north and Lennox



Local builders volunteer their time to build the Brunswick marine radio base, which opened in 2001.

Head to the south, as a lightweight, speedy and highly manoeuvrable vessel. *BR 30* sits on an AirBerth for immediate deployment, significantly improving our response times on the river, bar and offshore waters.

The vessel's impressive array of technology is one of the obvious advances over time.

Whereas the unit's original boat was equipped with not much more than a radio, first aid kit, some basic rescue equipment and a tow rope, *BR 30* now carries radar, GPS, FLIR night vision camera, tracking

systems and on-board computers.

The unit's 63 volunteers remain committed to their mission, constantly training and updating their skills so the local boating community can feel safer on the water.

As everyone involved with MRNSW knows, it is the dedication of its volunteers that keeps any unit operating and while the number of members may vary from time to time, the commitment and drive never waivers.

David Parkinson

Cape Byron's watch moves with the times

Headland radio base takes over safety service from lighthouse keepers.

The Cape Byron lighthouse has stood watch over the hazardous coastline on the most easterly point of the Australian mainland since 1901.

While the light warned boaters away from the rocky headland, the lighthouse keepers on duty throughout much of the next century monitored a marine radio to listen for those calling for help after straying too close to the steep outcrop or facing peril on the sea.

When the lighthouse was automated in 1990, it was discovered that the light had been turning in the wrong direction, anti-clockwise, for the best part of a century. But the march of time and progress didn't merely set a new direction for Australia's most powerful lighthouse, it also meant there were no longer lighthouse staff on site to maintain the radio watch.

Byron Bay locals Ted Taylor and Kevin Jones stepped into the breach, opening the Volunteer Radio Station in 1991 as part of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol.

Four original members shared 24-hour shifts seven days a week from one of the original lighthouse keeper's cottages at the southern entrance to the clifftop site. In the Patrol's early days, a member would help control craft at The Pass, a busy and sometimes risky surf beach to the cape's north, between Clarkes Beach and Wategos.

Although the unit is now a radio base operation, it originally had a rubber duckie for rescues, later sold after the motor was stolen while in secure storage.

From 1997 to 2016, the members at Cape Byron operated 24/7 by taking home a handheld radio operated via a repeater station at Coopers Shoot for the after-hours watch.

During this time, the radio room moved at least six times among the various buildings on the clifftop



Members of MR Cape Byron maintained a 24/7 radio watch throughout six changes of location on the clifftop lighthouse site over a decade.

before settling in its current location. The constant moves required a lot of work and planning by the members, who never faltered in maintaining a round-the-clock watch.

Volunteers now operate in shifts between 6am and 5pm daily and also maintain a watch for the neighbouring MR Brunswick unit on weekdays. At 5pm each day, the watch is handed over to MR Ballina to the south, which in turn hands over to MR Terrey Hills for overnight monitoring.

The unit's radio operators have played a key role in providing communications support on VHF and HF and coordinating numerous rescue operations, as well as supporting Surf Life Saving rescue operations.

A major renovation of the radio room, including refitting and replacing its communications equipment, was completed in December 2018 at a cost of \$145,000, paid for by the members' committed fundraising activities over many years and the generous support of the Byron community.

The unit, which currently has 28 members, including two new recruits, kept up its radio watch



The unit's current radio base was upgraded in a major 2018 renovation, at a cost of \$145,000.

throughout the renovations.

Members have seen many changes since the transformation to MRNSW, with upgraded technology 333the most prominent.

The introduction of the radio over internet system, enabling MR Terrey Hills to support regional units, and the Seahawk vessel logging and tracking system have been great benefits.

MRNSW, with the support of the CYCA SOLAS Trusts, installed two VHF remote communication installations at Coopers Shoot and St Helena, accessed by MR Cape

Byron, allowing for increased 24-hour radio monitoring and improved radio coverage for local boaters. At a cost of about \$150,000, this project provided the unit with increased VHF Channel 16 coverage, Automated Identification System, DSC, private MRNSW radio communications and the computerised dispatch communications system.

MRNSW staff have also been a great support to all of us and the education and assistance have been most helpful and rewarding. The best part is it's always improving.

Terry Sandon

A tale of two towers, courage and loss

Ballina volunteers' determination delivers new local landmark.

Courage, perseverance and, sadly, tragedy have marked the 43 years since the first volunteer marine rescue service began operating in Ballina.

The darkest day in the unit's history came in 1983 when foundation member David Waddell drowned during a rescue on the Richmond River bar. The unit's rescue vessel *Ballina 30*, a 10m Naiad, is named in Mr Waddell's memory.

At the vessel's commissioning in 2014, his son Robert said his dad had loved the then Australian Volunteer Coast Guard.

"To think that 30 years down the track, they're still remembering him - we're totally and truly honoured," he told the *Northern Star*.

Mr Waddell is one of three marine rescue volunteers whose names are inscribed on the NSW Emergency Services Volunteer Memorial in Sydney, remembering the price they paid while serving the community. Ballina coxswain Tony Handcock told the *Star* the unit had great admiration for Mr Waddell and naming *BA 30* in his honour "keeps us ever mindful of the work we do and the dangers involved".

Mr Handcock was one of three Ballina crew members, along with David Nockolds and Rodney Guest, honoured with a national Group Bravery Citation for their efforts during a rescue mission to save two men on a stricken motor cruiser in dark and turbulent conditions on the bar just after midnight on April 15, 2013. As *Ballina 30* attempted to tow the cruiser off the breakwall one of the boaters was thrown overboard and the other leapt into the water. One man was retrieved but before *BA 30* could reach the second, it was swamped and capsized.

Mr Nockolds and Mr Guest fought their way out of the cabin to cling to the upturned hull. Mr Handcock and the rescued man were trapped

inside as *BA 30* washed over the bar and out to sea, before struggling free. The five were saved by the Ballina Jet rescue crew.

Another four Ballina members, Norm Lannoy, Iain McCabe, Duncan Woodhead and Roger Furnival, and police officer Sergeant Alan McKittrick were recognised in the Pride of Australia awards in 2010 for a mission to assist a vessel whose skipper had died, leaving his wife unable to control the boat. The vessel was between Tweed Heads and Southport but closer units were unable to put to sea due to a 4-5m swell and bad visibility. Reaching the boat in the hazardous conditions, two of the Ballina crew and Sgt McKittrick boarded the boat and sailed it to Southport.

The unit's history is also a tale of two towers and members' determination and perseverance in achieving a new base that has become a local landmark.

The volunteer marine rescue service first began in Ballina in 1976, with members keeping watch from a caravan and operating on board *Sundowner*, on loan from the owner of the Sundowner Motel. The group received its charter to join the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard in 1979. A watch tower was built on the bar and began operations in April 1984, under the leadership of Commander Norm Sturgeon. When the tower's foundations began moving, the building started to lean, becoming known as the Leaning Tower of Ballina.

A long campaign to raise funds for a replacement included a riverside gala day, art exhibitions, an annual Boating and Leisure Show and protracted negotiations with council and government bodies. More than 5,000 people eventually signed a petition calling for State and Federal funding for a new facility. Meanwhile, the members celebrated the 30th anniversary of



Watching over the Richmond River bar and coastal waters, the new \$2.3m Marine Rescue Ballina base officially opened in April 2017.



Commissioner Stacey Tannos, UC John Donoghue and the late David Waddell's children, Carol Youngberry, Robert Waddell and Kay Buckley with *Ballina 30* (David Waddell). Photo: *The Northern Star*.

the flotilla in 2009 before officially becoming MR Ballina on January 1, 2010 and adjusting to a new identity and new procedures and operations.

After almost a decade's campaigning, by late 2015, with the tower closed due to concerns for volunteers' welfare, \$2.3 million had been secured for a new base from Ballina Shire Council, the State and Federal governments, MRNSW and the unit's own fundraising.

Construction of the new tower

began in February 2016, with the official opening in April the next year. Commissioner Stacey Tannos declared Ballina had gone from having the worst to some of the finest MRNSW facilities in the State.

The new state of the art Search and Rescue Coordination Centre features the latest in technology and training facilities widely used for the benefit of units in the Northern Rivers region.

Joan Hurley

Evans Head living up to high standards

Dual Coast Guard efficiency awards set bar for today's members.

The first NSW Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association flotilla north of Sydney was formed in the fishing village of Evans Head at the mouth of the Evans River in 1976.

A meeting to establish the new NF8 flotilla was held at the Woodburn Evans Head RSL Club on October 16, chaired by AVCGA National Co-ordination Officer, Commodore Brian Aggio.

Flotilla Commander Ron Doyle, Vice Commander Harold de Looze, Training Officer Wally Iffland, Training Staff Officer Ken Boland and Staff Officer Boyd Collyer led 24 members. The RSL Club was a major benefactor for the new flotilla, donating the use of a shed on the waterfront and jetty to be used as a base and providing an extension line from its switchboard for emergency calls. Without a vessel of its own, the flotilla relied on local fishing trawlers or members' own vessels for its operations.

With help from local businesses and the RSL's ongoing support, the flotilla purchased and restored its first boat, a 7m Haines Hunter, which entered service in February 1983.

"The Evans Head Coast Guard has proved they work together as a team and that the training instilled in them is of the highest standard," said NSW Squadron Commodore Bill Barton, awarding NF8 the Most Efficient Flotilla for the second successive year in 1986. The unit commissioned its brand new Cougar Cat vessel on the Queen's Birthday weekend in 1990, responding to three rescues in its first month, justifying the members' hard work and commitment to training.

With the service expanding and membership increasing, it was clear that a base overlooking the river entrance was essential. After 21 years of blood, sweat and tears, on January 10, 1998, Commander Ray Thorpe opened the new base



After 21 years of blood, sweat and tears, the Evans Head radio base, overlooking the Evans River bar, opened in 1998 and continues to serve the unit today.

on Razorback Lookout. The building was financed and built largely by the volunteers' fundraising efforts and manual labour. A further 21 years after that opening celebration, three members, Ray Thorpe, Frank Skaines and Heather Stacey, remain active members, committed to the success of MR Evans Head.

In April 2001 the National Medal was awarded to foundation members Doug Duffy, Ron Doyle and Ken Boland.

Under their leadership in August 2002, Evans Head took delivery of a new 7.8m Kevlacat, which was christened *Pride of Evans* by Mrs Betty Boland. A replacement Kevlacat, still serving the unit as *Evans Head 30*, was delivered in 2006.

After building the unit with their bare hands, members had their reservations when MRNSW was formed, necessitating changes and concessions.

Now, 10 years on, we are an important part of the marine search and rescue matrix, with state of the art equipment and standardised training resources and interactive training opportunities with our



Flotilla Commander Ron Doyle presents awards to trawler skippers Gary Allen, Len Fleming and Willis Sneesby, who battled mountainous seas to answer a Mayday call from cabin cruiser *Nocturn* in 1979.

neighbouring units and in Search and Rescue Exercises. We also are members of the bigger emergency services team, along with the NSW Police Force, NSW Ambulance, Surf Life Saving and the rescue helicopter services.

With a current membership of about 40 volunteers, we continue to provide exemplary service to the community, as recognised by the nomination of three of our members, Bev Lauritzen, Heather Stacey and Neville Hamilton, for the title of 2019 Richmond Valley Council Volunteer

of the Year, which was awarded to Bev on Australia Day.

Our unit was the second to have an all-female leadership with Unit Commander Karin Brown and Deputy Kira Hartland taking the reins in 2014. The duo later returned to the leadership with Kira as Commander and Karin as Deputy.

Our unit remains firmly committed to living up to the standards set by our members in 1986, when NSW Commodore Barton declared us the most efficient on the coast!

Bill Bates

New vessels showcase latest technology

Iluka Yamba radio upgrades improve boating safety on coastline.

One of the first of the fleet of new vessels delivered under MRNSW received a baptism of fire 10 days after its arrival at Iluka Yamba in August 2011.

Iluka Yamba 30's first operation was in response to a wooden trawler on fire in the dark 4nm offshore from Broom Head. The crew arrived on scene at 1.45am, finding the trawler engulfed in thick smoke but its crew safely on board another trawler standing by. *IY 30* maintained a safety watch before later returning to port. The Steber 38 was again on the scene about 11.30am when the trawler erupted in a huge explosion. The fire burned to the waterline and the vessel sank.

Then Unit Commander Barry Storey said the new vessel had performed beautifully.

"She is powerful, fast and a brilliant platform for our work," he said.

The Steber and new 5.45m Ocean Cylinder *IY 20*, delivered early this year, showcase the benefits to units of the latest in search and rescue technology now standard on the MRNSW fleet and a great advance on the unit's first offshore vessel, the *Sunshine*, a former trawler leased for a nominal fee. When its owner sold the *Sunshine* in 1999, the unit bought a 3.8m runabout from the Evans Head Coast Guard to operate on the river before then purchasing an offshore vessel with the help of a State Government grant and interest-free loan from Maclean Shire Council. On one of its early rescue missions, the 8.2m Sailfish catamaran was rolled by a wave while towing a yacht into the river. Two trawlers came to the rescue, towing the vessels to safety and thankfully no one was injured. It was replaced in mid-2007 with an 8m Broadbill, still in service when the unit joined MRNSW in 2010, 28 years after its establishment.

The current 47 members can



A trawler erupts in flames off Broom Head on the NSW North Coast on August 30, 2011. The emergency was the first operation for the newly-delivered *Iluka Yamba 30*.

trace their unit's beginnings to a radio base first opened in Bob and Linda Carr's Yamba home in 1982, operating on the 27MHz band for weekend boaters. A meeting later that year saw 20 people form the Iluka Yamba Coast Guard, later named the Clarence Coast Guard.

A temporary base was set up in a caravan at Silvers Boat Shed, operating on weekends and public holidays, with some members also using their own radios to provide a watch at other times.

The Clarence Coast Guard received its charter in March 1984. The founding members were the Carrs, Gus Kreffer, Jack Sharman, Jock Burnett, Frank Poore, Norm Fisher, Bluey Donsworth, John Ravet, Phil Gasnier, Joe Comber, Bob Conway, Bob Fotheringham, John Collins, Silver Laibl, Alan Shepherd, Bruce Drummer, Steve Gill and John Whiteside. In 1985, a small brick radio shed was set up at the Spencer Street boat ramp in Iluka, with trawlers and private boats undertaking rescues. The unit's current building at Moriartys Wall



Iluka Yamba founding member Gus Kreffer in the newly opened radio base at Moriartys Wall, Iluka, in 1990, with the unit's current longest serving member Jean Dengate in the doorway.

was built entirely by volunteer labour with funds raised by members and opened by Natural Resources Minister Ian Causley in April 1990.

The base has a full view of the bar and out to sea, a far cry from Spencer Street, from where a member with a handheld radio had to be sent up to the tower's current location to report on bar conditions.

The base was accredited as a Search and Rescue Coordination Centre in 1990.

A \$240,000 project in late 2017

resulted in a significant upgrade of North Coast VHF radio coverage.

This included the installation of a computerised radio over internet system in the radio base and VHF remote equipment at the Yamba Reservoir and Woolli to increase 24-hour VHF coverage on the coast.

The radio base handles an average of 300-400 calls a month from day trippers and sailing and power vessels transiting our coastline.

Frank Bond & Andrew Soesan

Volunteers step up in small, isolated town

Wooli takes delivery of first new rescue boat built on Northern Rivers.

As the Deputy Unit Commander of Marine Rescue Wooli, Marty Hutchings is maintaining a family tradition that links the organisation of today directly with its foundations.

Marty was just nine-years-old when his father Turk became one of the original members of the Wooli unit, established after a fatality on the Wooli Wooli River bar in 1978.

For the Hutchings, the rescue unit was a family affair in the small, isolated North Coast fishing village.

"Dad was a foundation member. We were all involved. We all did fundraising - the kids did a bike ride around town and got sponsored - so we could buy a second-hand rubber duckie from Surf Life Saving, mainly to do bar rescues," Marty said.

"Back then we had a big fishing fleet and if anything needed to be towed from sea, a boat would go out from the fleet."

A storage/boat shed, ex-police rescue vehicle and radios were purchased as the members responded to medical emergencies, road accidents and beach bogging, as well as monitoring the radio and organising marine rescues. The group later became affiliated with the Volunteer Rescue Association.

More fundraising saw the original rubber duckie replaced in 1981 by a 3.7m rescue boat before in 2004, the unit finally obtained an offshore vessel, a 6.4m RHIB, named *JJ Ensbey* after foundation members Joe and Jean Ensbey. The late Brian Foote managed an extension to raise the height of the boat shed to accommodate the new vessel, which was still being towed by the original ex-police 1976 Toyota.

With radio coverage being provided from members' homes since the unit's inception, in 2006 a radio van, borrowed from Port Macquarie Sea Rescue, was set up each weekend on the entrance training wall. Reversing a van was a required radio operator skill.



Wooli 30, the first Naiad built by Yamba Welding & Engineering for MRNSW. Photo: Robert Watkin.

The van was the coordination centre for the *Doutless III* rescue in 2006. Two divers lost from their dive boat at Pimpnel Rock were rescued seven miles south after a four-hour multi-vessel search, before their dive boat then capsized, throwing them into the water again, on their return across the Wooli bar.

Four years later, the divers' camera was found on the beach, with the developed photos showing the pair in the water as vessels and helicopters searched for them.

Squad President Stephen Reading next set about planning, funding and building a permanent radio base, which opened in 2007.

The Wooli unit supported the proposed amalgamation of the three marine rescue services and became the second VRA squad to join MRNSW after Brunswick. Stephen had been Secretary of both VRA Marine and the state Volunteer Marine Rescue Council, while squad Vice-President Richard Taffs was appointed to the Facilitation Committee tasked with forming the new organisation. Stephen was appointed the first Northern Rivers Regional Coordinator and Richard served as an Original Director. Unit Commander since 2009 and a MRNSW Life Member, Richard has



Wooli Sea Rescue's first offshore rescue vessel, *JJ Ensbey*, named after foundation members Joe and Jean Ensbey.

performed more than 200 rescues and with his wife Jackie maintained an after-hours radio watch from home, supported regional training activities and conducted boat licence courses for over 2,000 boaters.

The creation of MRNSW opened up opportunities that had been beyond the capacity of a small unit.

Marty nominated the unit's vessel, *Wooli 30*, as the standout benefit.

"We've got a boat that keeps us nice and dry. The old boat was a centre console and you'd get as wet as a pelican's belly," he said.

Wooli was high on the priority list for a new rescue vessel and in 2012 took delivery of *WI 30 (JJ Ensbey II)*, the first of the Naiads built at

Yamba Welding & Engineering for the MRNSW fleet. With the vessel on an AirBerth, the unit could finally dispose of that 1976 Toyota!

What is it that holds Marty to his family tradition on the water? "It's just the look on people's faces when you bring them home," he said.

Today, Wooli still faces the challenges of its founding members, maintaining a volunteer emergency service from a small socio-economic base. Equipment, training and operational procedures have changed but the need is the same for volunteers willing and able to provide an emergency service to save lives on the water.

Richard Taffs

Woolgoolga's new \$1.3m home one of finest

Members' work to protect those at sea earns community's trust and respect.

The local fishermen who established a rescue service in Woolgoolga in 1965 would no doubt applaud the progress the Mid North Coast unit has made in the intervening 45 years.

The founders of the local Volunteer Sea Rescue had used their own boats for training and rescue operations until the purchase of the service's first vessel.

In the years following, the volunteers acquired a number of other rescue vessels, including the memorable open runabout *Bonecrusher* and *WR12*, a locally built aluminium cabin cruiser.

The service operated independently until it affiliated with the Volunteer Rescue Association in 1988 and later made the transition to the new MRNSW, becoming MR Woolgoolga.

Construction of the unit's original base on the Woolgoolga beachfront began in 1981 and took several years to finish. The completion of the radio room in 1994 gave the unit a fixed radio presence, a major advance on communications in the service's early days when vessels were supplied with a handheld radio and assisted by the Civil Defence.

The unit has benefited from upgraded resources and facilities since it transferred to MRNSW.

It has a purpose-built rescue vessel, *Woolgoolga 30*, fitted out with a suite of advanced navigation and search and rescue equipment.

Commissioned in October 2012, the \$337,000 9m vessel has an Ellis hull with solid buoyant collar and Gemini fibreglass cabin, with a Yanmar diesel and Doen jet propulsion. It was constructed by Britton Marine NSW.

The unit's skilled crews have contributed to a number of large-scale emergency operations over the years, including two major missions this summer. *WO 30* joined the searches for a man swept away in



One of the finest facilities on the coastline ... members of MR Woolgoolga assemble with *Woolgoolga 30* and its launch tractor outside their new boat shed and radio base at Arrawarra.

a strong current when a group of six family members got into trouble in the surf at Moonie Beach, north of Coffs Harbour, on December 17 and for a man who disappeared in the surf at Woolgoolga Beach on February 7.

In May 2016, *WO 30* took part in an eight-hour relay operation to rescue an elderly couple who sustained injuries when their 16m cruiser was struck by large swells on the Clarence bar. MR Iluka Yamba, Woolgoolga and Coffs Harbour, the NSW Police Force Marine Area Command, Ports Authority at Iluka Yamba, NSW Ambulance and Westpac Rescue Helicopter all were activated. With Woolgoolga's former leader, then Mid North Coast Regional Controller John Murray at the helm, *WO 30* was deployed in testing conditions with two MAC officers on board to meet the vessel on the eastern side of North Solitary Island. The two officers boarded the cruiser before *Coffs 30* then escorted it to safe harbour.

After 53 years' operation at Woolgoolga, the unit's 33 volunteers relocated in December 2018 to



Woolgoolga Sea Rescue's vessel *WR 12* off the Mid North Coast.

their new \$1.3 million base on the western side of the Arrawarra Headland, providing panoramic views over the popular boating waters of Arrawarra Bay.

The redevelopment of the former University of New England Marine Science Station was made possible with a \$441,000 Crown Reserve Improvement Fund grant and Coffs Harbour City Council injecting another \$600,000 into the project.

The unit now occupies one of the finest new MRNSW facilities on the coastline. It features the most modern marine radio

communications technology, training facilities, boat and tractor storage and a workshop. The new location also provides for the safer launch and retrieval of *WO 30* in all tides, overcoming the issues created by the softer sand at Woolgoolga.

Arrawarra is more protected from the swell while beach launching during inclement weather.

By protecting those at sea, promoting boating safety and providing a cracking BBQ at its monthly markets, the Woolgoolga unit has deservedly earned the trust and respect of the community.

Guiding boaters to safe harbour for 43 years

Coffs unit survives and thrives on volunteers' time and commitment.

When the Coffs Harbour Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol division began operations in 1976, its patrol area reached over 100 nautical miles from Woolli in the north to Laurieton in the south.

Forty-three years later, the unit's 56 volunteers are still protecting boaters on the Mid North Coast, in partnership with their colleagues from MR Woolli, Woolgoolga, Nambucca, Trial Bay, Port Macquarie and Camden Haven, the NSW Police Force Marine Area Command and other emergency services.

Unit member Alan Scott published the history of the Coffs Harbour division, *Reaching Safe Harbour*, in 2013. Dr Scott reported that an application was made to the RVCP for a division to be set up in Coffs Harbour in July 1975. This was approved and the division became operational the next year.

The division's first base was in the old Coffs Harbour Stevedoring Company premises at Beacon Hill Station, with members working hard for almost a year to bring it up to scratch. The World War II raider *MV Krait* travelled north from Sydney for the base's official opening.

The division owned a 23 foot work boat but a fleet of 22 members' boats was used for rescues, training and patrols. After receiving the required training, crews patrolled the coast looking out for vessels in distress. Patrolling was important because few small boats had radios to call for assistance.

In 1976 the division was granted a radio transmission licence for search and rescue and boating safety. Later, when radios became common on small craft, skippers were able to contact the base to report their destination and expected return time.

In 1988, British American Tobacco Australia gave the division an aluminium runabout but *Winfield Rescue* proved too small for most



MR Coffs Harbour's powerful new rescue vessel, *Coffs 30*, commissioned in June 2015.

rescue operations and was sold and replaced by a 14-year-old timber boat, *Mary Jane*, which served until 1990.

In 1980, the division moved to the Coffs Harbour Yacht Club, establishing a 24-hour radio operation but with limited facilities, soon began a long search for a new home. In 1987, it approached the City Council for a site on Beacon Hill where a large water reservoir had been demolished. This began a lengthy process of planning, negotiations and approvals before the project was finally approved in 2001. The first radio transmission from the base, where the unit is still located, was made by Kurt Dusseldorp in 2003.

In 1989, the RVCP informed the division it was sending a pilot cutter, the *Goondooloo*, to Coffs Harbour. The division, still operating the *Mary Jane* as a back-up to the Water Police, reluctantly agreed to the delivery of the boat, which upon arrival was found to have numerous faults. Even with a refit and the best efforts of devoted members to transform the vessel, it could not be accredited for rescue operations and was eventually returned in 1992.



The opening of the Coffs Harbour RVCP Division's first base.

In 2003, the unit took over a former police boat, a 7.2m fibreglass Sharkcat, *Coffs Rescue One*, which operated until a new LeisureCat was bought in 2007.

The launch of MRNSW represented a fresh start for Coffs Harbour, with a new name, new uniforms and a new, purpose-built rescue vessel commissioned in June 2015. *Coffs 30* is a powerful 9.5m Naiad that can be deployed up to 30nm offshore and tasked throughout the Solitary Islands to the north and as far south as South West Rocks if needed. In a typical

year, the unit's crews launch about 90 rescue missions and its 24/7 Search and Rescue Coordination Centre Logs On and Logs Off more than 14,000 vessels.

The unit has survived and thrived on the time and commitment given by its volunteers and the community and is grateful for the generous support of its sponsors over time, including Coffs Harbour Yacht Club, the Ex-Services Club, Rotarians, Masons, Jaycettes, golfers and bowlers and small businesses such as butchers and charter boat operators.

Members stand watch for danger on bar

Nambucca embraces speed, flexibility of Rescue Water Craft.

As it marks its 25th anniversary this year, the small Nambucca unit has embraced the rapid and flexible response capability provided by Rescue Water Craft supplementing rescue vessel operations on its risky bar.

The loss of a young boy's life on the bar led to the establishment of the first local marine rescue service in 1994. The Nambucca Shire Mayor called a meeting to form a marine rescue organisation, which was launched by 10 foundation members, growing to 27 within five years. Most of these earliest members were local fishermen, initially operating on a 3m rubber duckie, carrying out a lot of rescues and saving many lives.

John Ward was the president of the squad, which was affiliated with the local Volunteer Rescue Association established in 1985.

Operating from an old Fisheries Department shed on the river, members began fundraising for a new boat but with the process taking too long, John took out a personal loan to purchase a red Stabi Craft. The marine squad gained its State Rescue Board accreditation in 1995.

With the help of then VRA Marine Chairman Ron Isaacs, funding was sourced from the VRA for a new 6.8m Naiad rigid hull inflatable suitable for operations on the bar.

In 2003, members Bill Carr and Paul Mackay were awarded for rescuing two young boys who had been washed out to sea on a strong run-out tide in terrible conditions after going for an afternoon swim near the V Wall. One ended up 400m from shore and the other more than a kilometre, being circled by a shark, before Bill and Paul, accompanied by two NSW Ambulance officers, reached the pair and returned them to safety.

With an obvious need for larger premises, after considering many



MR Nambucca members Dave Morris and Ken Brandli on X 10 and Gary Nichols and Lawson Timmouth on NH 11 during summer patrols on the Nambucca River bar.

alternatives, the squad decided to build a larger base on its existing site, taking over leases on two sites alongside its shed that had been vacated by the Sea Scouts.

The process of funding, designing and gaining approval for the new base continued, with construction of the \$435,000 facility beginning in March 2010, thanks to a State Government grant of \$110,000, members' dedicated fundraising at boat shows and markets and the generous support of the community. Melinda Pavey MLC officially opened the new base in May 2011.

After almost two decades with the VRA, the members transferred to MRNSW in late 2011.

Along with nearby MR Trial Bay, Nambucca was one of the first MRNSW units to be issued with an RWC, taking delivery of a former NSW Police Force Marine Area Command vessel in 2013. RWCs are a valuable resource to support the unit's latest 6.8m Naiad RHIB, NH 20, enabling operators to swiftly reach the shallow and hazardous bar that claimed two earlier vessels during rescue operations.

While the unit has operated a second RWC over summer seasons, it will now supplement its permanent capacity with a second RWC to be delivered in the second half of 2019.

With increased siltation on the Nambucca River, the unit can see that most of its rescues in the future will be carried out using these assets and has purchased a double trailer to reduce response times by

launching the two craft together. In its 25th year, the small unit of dedicated members continues to stand ready to save lives on the water.

Graham Horne



Members of MR Nambucca and WIRES save an exhausted kangaroo in strife at the mouth of the Nambucca River in October 2017.



The late Harold Johnson and founding president John Ward on board the Nambucca rescue squad's original 3m rubber duckie.

From little things big things grow at Trial Bay

Lone operator radio service develops into unit with state of the art resources.

Marine Rescue Trial Bay began life as Valhalla Radio, a lone operator service broadcasting on 27MHz from a van in the local caravan park in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Valhalla Radio broadcast weather reports and warnings for years until it became apparent that with a growing number of tourists and fishermen visiting the South West Rocks area, a more comprehensive radio and rescue service was needed.

A small but dedicated band of volunteers set out to achieve this aim. The group managed to acquire a small 10 x 8 foot room on the balcony of the South West Rocks Surf Life Saving Club overlooking Main Beach as its base.

The view was great but the room was very cramped after the radios and antennae were installed.

The group became a division of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in about 1990, at first only broadcasting during daylight hours. It wasn't long before this expanded to a 24-hour service, with a sub-base set up at the home of Kevin and Mary Dunkley, who handled the overnight shifts.

As the years progressed, more sub-bases were set up to share the load. At its height, five bases were alternating night shifts and providing cover during outages for required maintenance at the main base.

The small unit had only about 30 volunteers, who managed to carry out continuous 24/7 radio shifts for many years while also performing countless rescues at sea.

Operations were mostly conducted in privately-owned vessels until a generous donation from South West Rocks Country Club and the local community funded a 6-7m RIB.

This served as the primary rescue vessel for several years until the unit received one of the 44 foot Waveney



MR Trial Bay's vital rescue assets, 10m Naiad Trial Bay 30 and Rescue Water Craft TB 11, take part in a training weekend for RVC Operators in November 2017. Photo: Chris Butler.

rescue vessels imported by the RVCP from Britain's Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

After eight years of negotiations with Kempsey Shire Council, the NSW Lands Department, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and our local Aboriginal elders, the patrol moved into a new home in Headland Reserve, overlooking the beach. The division went ahead in leaps and bounds, seeing numbers increase to 50 and beyond.

MR Trial Bay has continued to grow since the amalgamation of the three previous organisations to become MRNSW and now has more than 70 members.

The unit's radio base has recently undergone a significant re-fit with the installation of state of the art computerised radios, significantly increasing its communication coverage along the coastline, overlapping Coffs Harbour in the north and Port Macquarie in the south.

The unit's rescue fleet has also grown. Trial Bay 30, a purpose-built 10m vessel equipped with leading



The Trial Bay RVCP division's Waveney rescue vessel moored on the Macleay River in 2003.

electronics and capable of speeds in excess of 30 knots and a 30nm plying range, was delivered in 2013.

The Naiad has since been joined by two Rescue Water Craft, which are a valuable resource, enabling a rapid response to emergencies on the bar when lives are at risk. As recently as Anzac Day, the crew of TB 30 and RWC TB 11 were swiftly on the scene when a 5m boat rolled on the Macleay River bar at dawn,

rescuing three people thrown into the water.

The unit has added to its facilities, completing a much-needed \$50,000 storage and training facility across the road from its vessel mooring on the river.

Marine Rescue is alive and well in South West Rocks and fulfilling the motto: Volunteers Saving Lives on the Water.

Phil Hartley

Port Macquarie members everyday heroes

Rescue record testament to training commitment and professionalism.

The founding father of MR Port Macquarie remains a member today, half a century after he first saw the need for a rescue service for boaters on the Hastings River and offshore waters.

An employee of the Maritime Services Board, Max Morgan began working towards the establishment of a local sea rescue service in 1969, seeking volunteers to join him and petitioning local businesses for support. By 1971, Max had established the Carnival of the Pines Jet Boat Committee, along with Surf Club members Norm Morgan and Ray McManus and Group Secretary Miss Christmas. A diverse group of volunteers ranged from police officers to fishing club members.

With radio back-up initially provided by local fishermen, Fred Denning assumed the role of radio officer and, operating from his bait shop and home, made the first official radio transmission in 1971.

Fred continued in this role for the next 20 years and a plaque recognising his esteemed service is still mounted at the unit's Town Beach Radio Base today.

The group bought its first rescue vessel, a Smiths jet boat, for \$4,500 in 1971. This was followed by a series of vessels, including two Mutimer jet boats, whose shallow draft and manoeuvring capabilities were particularly valuable.

In 1976, the group affiliated with the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association and by 1978 had changed its name to the Port Macquarie (Carnival of the Pines) Sea Rescue Group.

In 1986, the unit purchased its fifth vessel, a twin-hulled Kevlacat, which operated in combination with an inflatable to provide a dependable rescue service.

During a rescue on the bar in May 1999 the Kevlacat overturned, tossing the crew into the sea. They were swiftly rescued but the



Members of MR Port Macquarie celebrate the opening of their new radio base on Town Beach in February 2017. Photo: Brendan Trembath.

catamaran ended up adrift on the tidal currents and was not recovered until January 2001, 60nm south-east of Mackay in Queensland.

The Kevlacat was replaced with a 34 foot flybridge Steber, which operated for 16 years until its replacement with a new Steber 38, *Port Macquarie 30*, in 2016.

In recognition of the generous support of the Westport Club, which donated \$150,000 towards its cost, the boat was named *Westport Spirit*.

This primary response vessel is supported by 6.25m Cobia RHIB *PM 20* and two Rescue Water Craft.

The unit's crews have performed more than 800 rescues since 2010, including a perilous overnight mission in April to save three men on board a sinking boat between Port Macquarie and Crescent Head.

The boaters were extracted from the vessel and rushed to hospital with spinal and chest injuries and lacerations.

The unit's radio base, first opened in 1991, was redeveloped in a \$700,000 project funded by the Port Macquarie Hastings Council, State Government, MRNSW and the unit's own fundraising in 2016.



Port Macquarie Sea Rescue Group's boat crew in 1998 with the Kevlacat that washed up in Queensland after overturning in 1999.

It is equipped with the latest radio communications technology.

The unit is grateful for the generous support it has always received from the community and business, including Bernie Whelan, of Crown; Lake Road Esso; Birdon engineering and the Westport Club.

Since the change to MRNSW, the unit has been led by Unit Commanders Peter Ellison, Neil Yates and Greg Davies, who champions his team while leading with authority.

Along with Max, the unit's 162 members include long-standing volunteers Geoff Shelton, Wendy

Young and MRNSW Life Member Ken Fletcher, who have given 90 years' combined service and still contribute their time and expertise.

Members include 47 radio operators, 67 fundraisers and recruiters and 48 boat crew, of whom 10 are skippers. Training is a high priority. In four months last year Ray Angel, David Bigeni, Rob Breskal and Alison Cameron-Brown all qualified as coxswains. Ali is the unit's first female skipper.

Regardless of the capacity in which they serve, every member of MR Port Macquarie is an everyday hero.

Servo owners' dedication fuels unit's growth

Camden Haven grateful for spirited community support over years.

The Camden Haven unit has the unusual record of having been a member of all three of the marine rescue services that merged to form MRNSW.

The unit began its operations in 1975 as part of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, before transferring to the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association, followed by the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association and finally emerging in the new livery of MRNSW in 2010.

The team of 18 foundation members included six boat owners. The first executive was president Bob Wells, vice president John Hardy, secretary Bob Deards, treasurer Col Burley, publicity officer Bruce Porter and equipment officer Keith Powell.

With the group performing 40 rescues in its first year, the need for its services was clear.

Donations were urgently needed to purchase a rescue boat and base and by August 1977, the group, now the Camden Haven Coast Guard, took delivery of a jet boat purchased from a surf club in the Ballina district for \$4,000. Four years later, the group launched its second rescue boat, a \$10,000 20-foot twin hull SharkCat named *J&B Porter* in recognition of the work of Jan and Bruce Porter.

The Porters handled all radio calls from their service station during the day and from their home at night.

Bruce also used to tow the rescue vessels to the local boat ramps for deployment until the group obtained a Land Rover in 1984.

The current base was eventually built in the Bruce Porter Reserve on the river bank at the end of Tunis Street at Laurieton. Hastings Municipal Council contributed \$10,000 of the cost, with the remainder raised from the community. The base was officially opened by Ken Reid MLC on January 31, 1987.



Volunteers and vessels from the Mid North Coast assemble at the MR Camden Haven base, which has since been extended, for a regional Search and Rescue Exercise in May 2016. Photo: Michael Davis.

When Bruce Porter passed away in 1988, Jan carried on with the radio work on her own for a few years until she sold the garage.

The Shell garage in Laurieton then took over monitoring radio calls during the day, with the volunteers taking the night shift in the base, concentrating on weekends and public holidays until sufficient members were recruited to mount a 24/7 radio watch.

The group had now affiliated with the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association and as the Camden Haven Sea Rescue Squad, was assisting with rescue services up and down the coast as well as supporting land rescue services.

By 1989, the Camden Haven Sea Rescue Squad was a well-established organisation recognised as one of the most progressive in the area for those at sea. Early that year, with a grant from council, fundraising and later an interest-free loan, the squad acquired a new 23 foot Shark Cat, named *Spirit of Camden Haven* as a tribute to all those who supported the group.

In 2003, a new 8.2m Noosa Cat



The unit's 23-foot Shark Cat, *Spirit of Camden Haven*, about 1990.

was built for the group, at a cost of \$170,000, fitted with radar, GPS, a sounder and UHF, VHF and 27 MHz radios and powered by two oil-injected 200HP Yamaha outboards.

The launch of MRNSW saw the squad transition to become MR Camden Haven.

With a 10.3m Naiad vessel due for delivery in early 2014, the unit completed extensions to the base to accommodate the larger boat. The Naiad was delivered to the unit by sea from Yamba Welding & Engineering on February 26, 2014 and commissioned in June as *Camden Haven 30 (Spirit of Camden Haven II)*.

The unit expanded its capability last October with a second vessel, a 4.2m Zodiac RHIB, to provide a rapid response asset in the shallows of the river and two lakes. The radio room also was extended and refitted to provide extra space, improved facilities and technology and clearer sightlines up and down the river.

Over its 44 years of operation the unit, now with 56 members, has responded to hundreds of incidents on the water, representing many thousands of volunteer hours, in addition to countless time spent fundraising to keep the unit operational.

Ken Rutledge

Unit operates at maximum sea horsepower

Crowdy Harrington gains first rescue vessels, new facilities under MRNSW.

The first marine rescue service in the Crowdy Harrington district began in 1972 when local resident Bob Lauder started a private radio base from the appropriately-named Sea Horse Motel in Old Bar.

The following year Geoff Humziker took over the service from Bob, catering mainly for local fishermen, followed by Ron and Alison Quint, who ran a radio base from their home from 1974. The Crowdy Old Bar Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol was established in 1982, with the Quints continuing to run the radio service until they hung up the microphone in 2000. In 1993, Ron was awarded an OAM for his service to the RVCP.

After the Quints' retirement, the Patrol operated from Pat Carberry's home at the Oxley Anchorage Caravan Park, with aerials on the roof of Vince Leotta's Mobil service station at Harrington.

Members' fundraising efforts received a welcome boost in 2000 when visiting rocker Angry Anderson drew the winners in the division's raffle. Generous donations by the Harrington Bowling Club and Lions Club enabled the division to buy a 15 foot caravan for its radio operations in 2001. After funding was received from the Federal and State governments and Greater Taree City Council, work began on the division's first building at the mouth of the Manning River in 2004, with radio operations beginning the next year.

With the transition to MR Crowdy Harrington in 2010, the unit's resources have been significantly expanded and upgraded. Its first rescue vessel, *Crowdy 20*, a 6m Naiad, was delivered in 2010, followed by offshore rescue vessel, *Crowdy 30*, a 9.5m Naiad, in 2014. A replacement for *CB 20* is imminent.

CB 20 was originally stored under a large tree in the local council



Two new Naiad rescue vessels have joined the MR Crowdy Harrington fleet since the launch of MRNSW. *Crowdy 20* welcomes *Crowdy 30* on the Manning River bar as it arrives on its delivery journey after appearing in the 2014 Sydney International Boat Show.

compound, making the construction of a boat shed a priority in order to prevent the asset deteriorating in the weather. Emergency Services Minister David Elliott joined Port Macquarie MP Leslie Williams, the unit's first female Unit Commander Karen Farrell, Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey and volunteers to open a new \$215,000 boat shed and training facility in November 2016.

The installation of an online radio system and network upgrades at Middle Brother have recently boosted radio operations, improving VHF reception and removing coastal blackspots. Two Emergency Volunteer Support Scheme grants in 2018 are now enabling resources to be further augmented with the installation of a solar power system at the training facility and the purchase of two 4WDs to tow the unit's boat and fuel supplies.

Over all this time, the unit's members have maintained a committed and effective rescue service for the area's many local and visiting boaters. Early in the morning of April 11, 2013, three fishermen were lucky to make it safely to shore after their 18m trawler struck rocks off the breakwall and sank with a hole in its hull. The Westpac Rescue



Angry Anderson joins Crowdy Harrington RVCP members Terri Wood and Noelene Twentyman at the draw of their 2000 fundraising raffle.

Helicopter was activated but the crew had managed to reach safety using a life raft and surfboard.

CB 20 removed bait drums and other debris from the water before larger vessels retrieved the trawler.

One of the unit's more unusual operations saw *CB 20* assist a victim with real horsepower in September 2011. After losing its rider near Manning Point, a retired racehorse ended up in the Manning River near the unit's base on the Harrington Breakwall. Members at the radio base contacted police after noticing the horse had a saddle but no rider in sight. Keith Richardson and Kevin Nicholls set out on *CB*

20, while John Peers headed to the boat ramp to get assistance from a private vessel to help search for the missing rider and assist the distressed horse. Police boarded the private vessel to assist in the search.

The confused horse kept heading for the breakwall, which was covered in oyster shells, until a local fisherman jumped into the water to guide it safely to a sandbank. After the rider was located and given medical attention for his diabetes, he was able to assist a local vet to calm the horse enough to hoist it on board an oyster punt and transport it safely back to dry land.

Mary Thomas

Watchful eye on thriving boating community

Forster-Tuncurry pair's quick action to save fisherman earns lasting gratitude.

Marine Rescue Forster-Tuncurry is located at the heart of a thriving boating and fishing community that takes every advantage of its coastal location.

As the sleepy twin fishing villages of the 1950s developed into a large urban centre, the unit also has gone from strength to strength.

Today, a high proportion of the Great Lakes community either owns a boat or has access to one, thousands of tourists flock to the region's pristine beaches and magnificent waterways every year and the local fishing clubs stage regular deep sea competitions. All of this activity takes place under the watchful eye of the unit, which operates from Seal Rocks north to Crowdy Head and boasts 110 volunteers with two modern rescue vessels and superior facilities.

The unit's origins lie with Michael Waldock, a visually-impaired amateur radio enthusiast who operated from home to monitor local fishing club members while they were offshore.

With increased boating activity and the towns' strategic coastal position, in 1987 the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol proposed the establishment of a local rescue base. Mark Smith became the first Division Commander.

The RVCP, consisting of 50 men and women, operated from a small room in the Forster Surf Life Saving Club, covering both offshore waters and the vast lake system. Its first boat was an 18 foot Hydrofield catamaran, purchased with the \$10,000 proceeds of a fundraising concert staged by radio station 2RE at Taree and donations from the community, local council and Graham Barclay Marine. The vessel was commissioned by TV and radio star Sandy Scott in December 1989.

As Division Commander from 1999 to 2005, John Lynch worked with a dedicated team to develop



Members of MR Forster-Tuncurry celebrate their 25th anniversary in 2014 in front of their Search and Rescue Coordination Centre on the Forster breakwall.

the Search and Rescue Coordination Centre on the Forster breakwall. The volunteers' tenacity was rewarded when on May 9, 2005, about 500 locals, members and dignitaries attended the tower's gala opening.

"After 16 years in operation, the Patrol has finally achieved its own purpose-built centre to operate our marine radio network, with sufficient space in which to store our equipment and train our volunteers for the benefit of the whole community," Commander Lynch said.

Now the MRNSW Mid North Coast Regional Director, Mr Lynch said the establishment of a single marine rescue service had created benefits for members that had not previously been achievable, including greater recognition for its skilled and experienced volunteers and the provision of high quality rescue vessels, professional training and leading communications technology.

The unit has been committed to raising awareness of water safety among local residents and visitors, staging a regular summer Water Expo. The inaugural expo earned the unit the Most Outstanding



Paterson MP Bob Baldwin and then Forster-Tuncurry RVCP Division Commander John Lynch at the centre's official opening in 2005.

Contribution to Water Safety by an Organisation award at the 2014 NSW Water Safety Awards.

Among countless operations over 32 years, one of the most rewarding saved the life of fisherman Henry Perram, who suffered a cardiac arrest out at sea while fishing with his son Hal in July, 2013.

Hal rushed his father back to the harbour, where MRNSW volunteer and 20-year ACT Ambulance Service veteran Milton Shaw was on board his boat on the ramp and

quickly rushed to begin CPR. Radio operator Grant Maxwell, who had received a garbled radio message from Hal, hurried to the scene with a defibrillator, which was put to use for the first time to revive Henry. Henry has since passed away but his wife, Pam and their family are so grateful to MRNSW that they established the annual Healthy Heart Walk in Henry's memory as a fundraiser for the unit. One hundred people joined the 2019 Walk.

Wendy Borchers

Rescue mission brings commando ship home

Two decades after covert raid, *MV Krait* returns to service on NSW waters.

One of the Volunteer Coastal Patrol's most notable search and rescue missions was the recovery of the *MV Krait*, a former Japanese fishing trawler used by Australian and British commandos in a daring attack on enemy shipping in Singapore Harbour in 1943.

Twenty years later, the Coastal Patrol was instrumental in returning the famous little ship to Australia.

The 68 ton boat, originally the *Kofuku Maru*, had been seized by British authorities in Singapore after Japan entered the war and was later renamed the *Krait* after a deadly species of snake.

In September 1943, disguised as a Japanese fishing boat, she set out from Western Australia carrying 14 Australian and British army and naval personnel from the Z Special

Unit on Operation Jaywick, a covert raid on Japanese shipping.

Deployed in small canoes under the cover of darkness, the commandos stealthily attached limpet mines to the hulls of Japanese merchant vessels in the harbour, sinking or severely damaging seven ships.

The *Krait* returned to Australia with no casualties and spent the remainder of the war operating from Darwin to provide intelligence support and a coastwatch in Indonesia. Commissioned in 1944, the vessel was present at the Japanese surrender in Ambon in 1945 before later being sold.

In the late 1950s, two Australian businessmen recognised the *Krait* operating as a barge in the Borneo timber trade and a public appeal



Still serving ... *MV Krait*, in RVCP livery, at Sydney's Church Point in 1982. Photo: Graeme Andrews Working Harbour Collection (City of Sydney Archives).

was launched to bring the plucky boat home. The Coastal Patrol recovery mission began in 1963 at a mess meeting at the Metropole Hotel near Sydney's Circular Quay.

After recounting the *Krait's* exploits, Officer Commanding Harold Nobbs explained that P&O had agreed to ship the vessel to Brisbane as deck cargo and VCP volunteers were required to sail it to Sydney to arrive on Anzac Day 1964.

"I drew the short straw which gave me the job of organising all aspects of the voyage," RVCP Life Member Doug Beard recalled in the Patrol's 2000 Yearbook.

"The Master Harold Nobbs, went to Borneo to find, and buy this famous little ship."

A month or so later, CO Nobbs wrote to Mr Beard saying he had found and purchased the *Krait* but she was in poor shape and certainly not seaworthy. The vessel was dirty with rotten planks and an engine in need of a complete overhaul.

P&O delivered the boat to a slipway in Brisbane. CO Nobbs thought it most unlikely it could be refitted in time for an Anzac Day arrival but once in Brisbane, with help from Army personnel, the *Krait* received an extensive makeover.

"At one stage there were over 100 working at the same time," Mr Beard wrote.

A sea trial on the Brisbane River showed the boat was very "tender", rolling incessantly and sitting high in the water, resulting in about three tons of concrete blocks being placed in the hull as ballast.

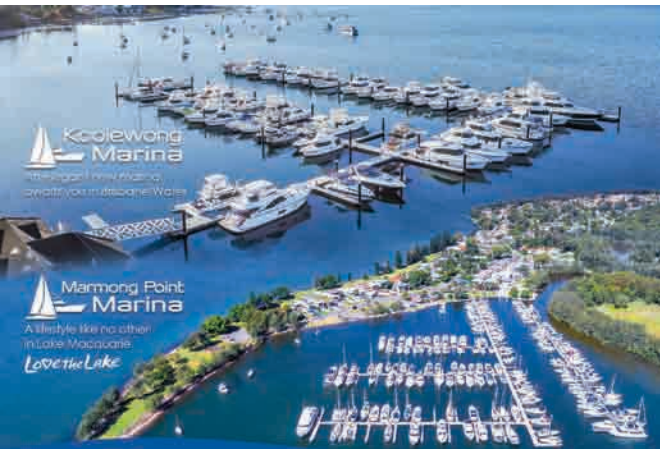
The first attempt to sail to Sydney was abandoned when the boat took on too much water, necessitating overnight repairs to rotten timbers.

"The trip south is another story. There were many problems," Mr Beard said, without elaborating.

On Anzac Day a huge crowd gathered at Farm Cove on Sydney Harbour, where the *Krait* was designated as a war memorial in the presence of the NSW Governor, Lieutenant-General Sir Eric Woodward.

The VCP subsequently used the boat for patrols, search and rescue operations, boating courses and public visits. Operating out of Broken Bay, it headed north for the opening of the Coffs Harbour RVCP base in the mid-1970s.


In 1985 it was transferred to the Australian War Memorial and has been on loan to the Australian National Maritime Museum at Darling Harbour since 1987.



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All in a day's work for volunteers



Another day of service ends ... Marine Rescue NSW personnel enjoy some of the most spectacular workplaces in the state. Nature paints a glorious watercolour as the sun sets over rescue vessel *Merimbula 30*, tied up for the night at its Spencer Park mooring on May 26. Photo: Jason Hoyland, www.fishfindersaustralia.com.au



Their own red and blue lights show ... thanking the crew of *Middle Harbour 30*, Tracey Mardon said the kids hadn't stopped talking about how much fun it was being towed during the Vivid festival.



Catch ... Paul Haslam throws a line with pinpoint accuracy from *Jervis Bay 20* to the crew of a yacht with engine trouble and a jammed headsail close to Bowen Island. Photo: Brendan Trembath.



Fundraising team ... MR Forster-Tuncurry's Ngaire McLeod, Lorraine James, Jill Nash, Anna Micallef, Carmel Moore and Judy Mangan at the Tuncurry markets, helping to finance the unit's life-saving work.



Thumbs up ... *Point Danger 30* crew member Todd Stoll with two relieved water enthusiasts rescued after their jet ski broke down off Fingal Beach on May 25.

Members honoured for courage and skill

Port Stephens continues founders' fine tradition of community service.

The Port Stephens division of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol was established in November 1982 with 20 foundation members under the leadership of inaugural Division Commander Kevin Clark.

The first radio base was in a donated caravan located in the carpark of the Inner Light Cottage at Nelson Head, with power supplied by an extension lead from the cottage.

As testament to the dedication of those early volunteers, the Royal Australian Navy awarded the division 'Coastal Patrol Base of the Year' in 1988.

Since joining MRNSW, MR Port Stephens has continued the fine tradition of service set by our founding members. Over the past 10 years, we have provided a high level of service to the boating community, with more than 38,100 calls to and from our radio base and more than 1,570 vessels needing our help.

After 17 years' service, *Port Stephens 40 (Danial Thain)* was retired in 2016 and replaced by *Port Stephens 31 (John Thompson)*.

PS 40 was well loved as a safe and dependable vessel well capable of handling the atrocious conditions often encountered off the Port Stephens coast. The Arun class lifeboat was involved in all the major operations conducted by the unit.

PS 31 was named after one of the unit's founders, John Thompson, who joined the RVCP in 1968 and remained an active member until he crossed the bar in 2012.

An 11.4m Steber, *PS 31* is capable of covering Port Stephens and areas along the coast, including Broughton Island, Seal Rocks and 30nm out to sea or further if tasked. The unit's second rescue vessel is *PS 30 (Codi-K 11)*, a Gemini WR-850 Rigid Hull Inflatable.

Our rescue vessel crews have been presented with 22 Commissioner's Commendations for



Safely home after enduring a triple knockdown on board *Port Stephens 40* ... crew members Ron Lighton, Laurie Nolan, Mike Smith, Richard Pizzuto, Paul Sullivan, Ian Drummond and Paul Miller. Mr Nolan was awarded the first MRNSW Medal for Valour for saving the lives of two of his crew mates.

Courage for their efforts in the 2015 *Reef Dragon* and 2016 Mayday operations. The inaugural Medal for Valour was presented to Laurie Nolan for saving the lives of two of his fellow crew members on board *PS 40* in severe conditions in the Mayday operation to try to reach a stricken racing yacht. The 2015 National Search and Rescue Award was presented to the crew in the *Reef Dragon* operation.

Our communications centre was redeveloped in a \$200,000 project in 2013. The radio room crews are trained to the highest possible standard with Commissioner's Citations being presented to 10 members for their efforts in handling a number of emergency operations.

Member Eryl Thomas was named the MRNSW Volunteer of the Year in the 2015 NSW Rotary Emergency Services Community Awards, recognising his service since 1999.

The unit's 200 members have many opportunities to volunteer their time, including in our fundraising gift shop. The unit also administers the Nelson Head Lighthouse Reserve grounds where we are based,



Port Stephens 40 and *Port Stephens 30* pass the unit's base on the Nelson Head Lighthouse Reserve.

with volunteers acting as guides to provide visitors with information about the site. A maintenance team keeps the reserve looking magnificent.

MR Port Stephens also provides an after-hours communications service to the local Rural Fire Service. Working directly with an RFS Duty Officer, our radio room handles the callout and radio services for incidents tasked to the Lower Hunter and Hunter Valley RFS districts. In keeping with our commitment to serve and support our local community, we work

with a number of groups, such as assisting with the annual Marine Parks Association dolphin count, providing safety boat services to local outrigger and kayak paddling events and hosting kindergarten and preschool events at the base.

Over the years, a number of benefactors have generously donated significant amounts to enable the unit to purchase much needed equipment.

MR Port Stephens is dedicated to our mission as Volunteers Saving Lives on the Water.

Iain Blackadder

What's in a name on Hunter waterways?

Lemon Tree Passage unit emerges in services' amalgamation.

The establishment of MRNSW heralded a double change of identity for volunteers in a well-established marine rescue service on the Hunter coastline.

The Port Stephens flotilla of the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association had been operating on Nelson Bay, the Karuah River and offshore waters for almost 30 years, not far upstream from the Port Stephens division of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol.

With the merger into the new organisation in 2010, the Coast Guard flotilla was renamed MR Port Stephens West. This understandably caused some confusion, especially on radio, so the unit subsequently changed again to emerge as MR Lemon Tree Passage.

Moves to establish the Coast Guard flotilla, NF11, began in January 1980. A State Government land grant was made on April 8 and eight days later, volunteers were sworn in under the leadership of Commander Arthur Montgomery and deputy Bernie Henderson.

A Charter of Operations was granted to NF11 Port Stephens in November 1982. Following fundraising efforts, the flotilla's new base was ready to transmit in June 1984, after RAAF Iriquois helicopters helped install the radio aerial on the building. Transport Minister Peter Morris officially opened the building in November 1984 and a plaque of appreciation for their invaluable help in building the base was presented to members Maree Tweedy, John Le Blanc and Charlie Casey. The unit's present radio room is named after Charlie, who retired in 1990.

After the flotilla's first rescue boat, *Hornet*, was holed during a rescue attempt in March 1989, it was replaced with *Sabre*. A night shift was introduced after a 1992 rescue operation to save three boaters in difficulties on Tilligerry Creek exposed a service limitation



Members of the Port Stephens flotilla of the Coast Guard - now MR Lemon Tree Passage - with AVCGA office holders in 2005.

as no one was on duty after midnight. The following year, NF11 was among the emergency services and private boats that responded when a 36 foot fishing cruiser, *N'Gluka*, capsized and sank in Nelson Bay. Five children on board died and another 44 people were rescued. The flotilla cooperated with Police and Customs during activities such as Operation Cyclops in 1997, in which the Australian Federal Police and Customs raided a fishing trawler and seized 11 tons of cannabis resin.

In January 2004 the flotilla's new vessel *Dealquip* was commissioned. This was the same year fundraising officer Ted Bristow suffered a cardiac arrest and sadly died while selling raffle tickets at Jesmond. He is remembered on the NSW Emergency Services Volunteers Memorial.

After a challenging transition to the new MRNSW, members now describe the new service as well organised, professional and with excellent training. The unit's vessel *Lemon Tree 30*, an 8.5m Gemini RHIB previously based in Narooma,



MR Lemon Tree Passage's vessel *Lemon Tree 30* on its AirBerth at the local boat ramp redeveloped in a \$1.3m project in 2016.

was delivered in 2013. Over the past decade, the unit has conducted long-distance rescues from Myall Lakes to the north, with former Unit Commander Joe Blakiston recalling one marathon operation to return a 35 foot cabin cruiser from Violet Hill.

"We brought it all the way back to Lemon Tree Passage; quite a long way through Two Mile and the Broadwater and through Tea Gardens to Lemon Tree Passage," he said.

The unit also supported the Rural Fire Service in responding to a boat alight on the Tilligerry Creek.

Unit Commander Rick Tyler said funding had long been an issue but the extra investment from the State Government would facilitate ongoing projects that would benefit MRNSW as a whole in the future.

"We will go ahead as we have been going. Looking into the future, I don't see any major changes with the role MR will play, saving lives on the water," he said. "We're always going to be there and we're always going to be well-trained. That's why MR was formed in the first place".

Peter J. Brown &
Leslie Stephens

Newcastle beaten but not bowed by storm

Volunteers maintain commitment as they look towards new home base.

When a vicious East Coast Low storm swept across the NSW coastline in April 2015, Marine Rescue Newcastle was not spared its wrath.

The storm marked a distressing waypoint in the history of the unit, which was left homeless when the wild winds tore off a large section of the roof of its heritage-listed base at Shepherds Hill.

Located just to the north of Barr Beach, overlooking the approaches to Newcastle Harbour and the coastline, the base was ideally sited for our radio operators to watch recreational and commercial vessels around the port and Hunter River.

Newcastle City Council quickly declared the building unsafe to occupy. The unit remains grateful to the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group for stepping in to allow us to relocate to one of its buildings.

The unit then relocated again to temporary accommodation inland in the Warabrook Community Centre but there is now light on the horizon.

We are preparing to move to the Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club, where our rescue vessel is berthed, while a new base is developed on the waterfront at Stockton.

The State Government has awarded MRNSW a lease on a former Girl Guides hall beside the



Aftermath of the East Coast Low storm of April 2015 ... MR Newcastle was forced to evacuate its heritage-listed base at Shepherds Hill. Photo: Bill Johnston.

Hunter River. Development consent will be needed before work can begin on a new radio base with training, meeting and storage facilities.

It is testament to our 30 to 40 members' commitment that despite the challenge of being without a permanent home, they have remained dedicated to serving the community and supporting the unit's radio and rescue vessel operations and fundraising activities.

The local Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol division established in 1950 originally incorporated both Newcastle and Lake Macquarie before the two operations later separated to operate as two divisions. Early stalwarts included

former Division Commanders Bevan Needham, Harry Taylor, Margaret Teal, Frank Jarvie and Di Sargent. After Di stood down due to ill health in 2012, our current Unit Commander Ron Calman transferred from Lake Macquarie to lead the Newcastle unit. With four decades' experience in the NSW Police Force, Ron has vast offshore experience and knowledge of local waterways, which he is eager to share.

Our crews have operated on board two vessels over the years: the original 7m catamaran *Newcastle 20* and its 2011 replacement, 8m Kevlacat *NC 30*.

The unit's large area of operations stretches from the town of Morpeth upstream on the Hunter River

through one of Australia's busiest commercial harbours and 30nm out to sea. More unusual operations have seen our catamarans towing tugs, seaplanes and a large house boat.

Operating among limited mooring/berthing areas within the harbour, the unit handles both large and small vessels. Almost all disabled vessels that have not been launched from a boat ramp are returned to the Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club, requiring delicate handling by our crews. Our radio operation is overseen by former Army colonel and helicopter pilot Rick Neville, with training managed by Deputy UC Lynette Van Homrigh.

Terry Reynolds



Still off limits ... members of MR Newcastle, including UC Ron Calman (third from right) outside their former base.



It's a big job but someone's gotta do it: *Newcastle 20* takes a massive tug under tow on the Port of Newcastle.

Handshake seals merger in boating paradise

Large Lake Macquarie team busy, efficient and proud to serve.

A firm handshake between commanders in 2011 sealed the merger of two dedicated rescue services that had operated independently for decades on and around the boating paradise of Lake Macquarie.

Established in 1950, the Lake Macquarie division of the Volunteer Coastal Patrol also included Newcastle in its area of operations. Its inaugural Commander, Marcus Miller, served in the role for 22 years.

The Swansea flotilla of the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association began operations in 1976, with current MR Newcastle Unit Commander Ron Calman its founding commander.

In the lead-up to the establishment of MRNSW, Neil Grieves was the Swansea commander and Frank Jarvie his counterpart at Lake Macquarie before he fell ill and Margaret Teal stepped into the role. The RVCP transferred to MRNSW as MR Lake Macquarie under Margaret's leadership until Jim Wright was elected Unit Commander.

With Neil's appointment as MRNSW Hunter/Central Coast Regional Coordinator, John Hatton took the Swansea leadership.

The Coast Guard did not immediately join the new service but over the next six months, the two units negotiated an amalgamation.

Now the Hunter/Central Coast Regional Director on the MRNSW Board, Jim Wright recalled a lot of discussion before common sense prevailed and he and John Hatton shook hands on an agreement to join forces as a new MR Lake Macquarie in January 2011.

The new unit had the benefit of two facilities, the former Coast Guard radio tower at Swansea Head and the RVCP base at Pelican, where the unit's vessels are moored. John Hatton was elected



Time on parade ... members of the current MR Lake Macquarie, including Unit Commander Mal Wardrop (centre) turn out in the apparel of their Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association predecessors and the MRNSW uniform of today.

Unit Commander of the new unit, followed by Jim Wright and Chris Parkinson before Neil Grieves returned to volunteer service and was elected Commander in 2018, just four months before his death. Mal Wardrop is now at the helm, with Malcolm Druce Deputy.

The sad loss of RVCP member Dennis Matthews during an operation to rescue a houseboat aground near Belmont Bay in 2002 is remembered on the NSW Emergency Services Volunteers Memorial.

The unit's 150 members include mother and daughter team, Audrey and Kay Burgess, whose combined service record is 55 years. Audrey joined the Coast Guard in 1990 and Kay was Swansea's first cadet, joining at age 17 in 1993 to help her mum on early radio shifts. Both hold Watch Officer ratings.

With the benefit of a committed cohort of radio operators and rescue vessel crew, Lake Macquarie is an efficient seven-day operation.

It is routinely one of the busiest units in MRNSW, responding to 120



Unit Commander of the new MR Lake Macquarie Jim Wright and Swansea Coast Guard Commander John Hatton shake hands on an agreement to merge their operations in 2011.

emergencies and handling about 3,500 calls over the most recent summer alone. Its radio operations have been modernised with the installation of the computerised Reditalk system in the radio base in 2018. Planning is well under way for a redevelopment of the ageing base to enhance service delivery and the members' working environment.

The unit has a fleet of three vessels: 10m Naiad *Lake Macquarie 30*, delivered in 2013, Rescue Water Craft *LM 13* and 7.8m Sailfish *LM*

20, commissioned in April this year and named in Neil Grieves' memory.

In addition to its emergency response, the unit's commitment to boating safety extends to its education program for local boaters, staging 165 boat and Personal Water Craft licence courses over the past three years.

The MR Lake Macquarie team proudly stands ready to serve the boating public and other water users in our beautiful region.

Mal Wardrop

Club's local boat log aided search operations

New vessel, communications expand Norah Head's capability.

The picturesque Cabbage Tree Harbour has long been a drawcard for commercial fishing and recreational boating on the Central Coast, with a corresponding demand for safety services to watch over those on the water.

The Norah Head Anglers Club was granted a lease on the harbour foreshore in 1961 to facilitate the development of a boat ramp and winches to remove boats from the water, along with fishing boat storage on the beachfront.

The club members operated 27MHz radios from their homes to communicate with local fishers and boaters. In 1973, with a pressing need for a more established facility, the club was granted a Department of Communications radio licence.

It was assigned the radio call sign VH2ATH, the second oldest call sign granted in Australia to a Limited Coast Station, after the Newcastle Blue Water Club.

By the 1980s, the club had become the Norah Head Search and Rescue Boat Club Inc. It became affiliated with the Swansea Coast Guard in 1991 and was accredited as a marine radio base and rescue unit in 1992.

In 2007, the club affiliated with the Volunteer Rescue Association. Members worked continuously to clear and landscape a neglected gully, design and build a clubhouse and provide launching ramps and retrieval winches for trailer boats.

The clubhouse overlooking Cabbage Tree Bay accommodated a more modern radio operation with 27MHz, VHF and High Frequency radios, a Radio Direction Finder, a weather facsimile unit for continual receipt of weather information, plotting tables and safety gear.

The radio coverage and rescue coordination services were provided free of charge to any boat operator in the area but the club also provided additional services to



MR Norah Head Deputy Unit Commander Mal Fletcher, tractor driver Adrian Greenfield and Unit Commander Bill Hignett farewell the ageing *Len Hurley* in autumn 2017. Photos: Lee Deacon.

members. In a forerunner to the Radio Clubs and Logging On service MRNSW operates today, a "Boat Log" was instituted for local boaters, who could fill in a form with all their essential information to aid any search and rescue operation should they get into difficulties.

The rescue service separated from the boat club when it transitioned to the new MRNSW in 2010. While MR Norah Head still shares premises with the club, many changes have taken place since it joined MRNSW, including increased membership, vastly expanded radio communications and technology and the delivery of a new rescue vessel, *Norah Head 20*, a 6.8m Ocean Cylinder, in 2018.

This \$272,000 vessel is a modern, safe replacement for the unit's previous vessel, the *Len Hurley*, which performed numerous rescue operations over a decade until time and effort took their toll and it was retired from service.

The unit is keenly anticipating the construction of a new boat shed to provide protection from the weather for *NR 20* and the tractor needed to launch and retrieve the vessel across the beach.



The unit's new 6.8m Ocean Cylinder, *Norah Head 20*, delivered in June 2018.

At the time of the merger, the unit was under the leadership of Unit Commander Peter Murrell, who served six years until handing over to Trevor Burkett in 2014. Under the leadership of Unit Commander Bill Hignett, the unit currently has 50 members, including 12 rescue vessel crew and 28 radio operators, and is always keen for more recruits. The unit's radio facility and services have expanded, with multiple VHF, 27MHz, DCN and Surfcom radios and Chart Plotter Navigation system.

Over time, communications have been bolstered with a \$5,800

donation from the Doyalson-Wyee RSL Club for radio room renovations and a \$10,000 grant from Wyong Shire Council to help install a remote channel changer to enhance the VHF radio signal at the unit's radio base and eliminate a blackspot south-east of Norah Head lighthouse.

The single organisation also has delivered benefits in providing units with access to greater resources, as units can work together to provide operational support when needed, along with volunteer support and essential training.

Lee Deacon

New service the catalyst for transformation

Tuggerah Lakes watches over boaters on major Central Coast waterways.

The launch of the new MRNSW was more than just a name change for the two rescue services that had been operating just 12 minutes apart on the Tuggerah Lakes system, the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol at The Entrance and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard at Toukley.

It was also the catalyst for a transformation that eventually led to the two operations' amalgamation in 2014 to form the new MR Tuggerah Lakes, which supports the boating community on Tuggerah and Budgewoi lakes, Lake Munmorah and the Wyong River and Ourimbah and Wallarah creeks, which cover more than 80sq/km.

The unit has maintained both the former services' bases at North Entrance (originally the home of the Tuggerah Lakes RVCP) and Toukley (home to the Toukley Coast Guard flotilla).

The Toukley base has undergone a major facelift, with members working to repaint the building, renovate the commercial kitchen, refurbish the hall's dance floor, install new LED lighting and re-wire and re-equip the radio room, creating a better working environment. The other base was converted into the unit's permanent training centre.

The unit operates two 6.25m Cobia RHIBs, *Tuggerah Lakes 20*, commissioned in 2012 and its twin *TL 21*, welcomed in 2014.

Over the past decade, the unit has been heavily engaged in rescue operations, including searches that have ended in tragedy: the crash of ultra-light aircraft, a vehicle in the Wyong River and the deaths of a canoeist, three prawners and two jet ski riders. Thankfully, six women were rescued from the freezing waters after their dragon boat overturned in 2011 and six boys who drifted on to Tuggerah Lake on inflatables and unseaworthy boats in



Crew members from MR Tuggerah Lakes on a training exercise on board *Tuggerah Lakes 20*, commissioned in 2012 and its twin *TL 21*, welcomed in 2014.

2018 were returned safely to shore.

Other rescues on the lake have involved a variety of watercraft, from stand up paddle boards to house boats, as well as swimmers and fishers, requiring rapid responses from the volunteers and vessels standing at constant readiness.

The region's tourism industry leads to an influx of people on the water over peak holiday periods and organised sporting events, such as the Wyong canoe races.

Support from its volunteers and Headquarters has seen the unit develop professionally, with up to date equipment and a high commitment to recruitment and training. Members regularly build their skills in Search and Rescue Exercises as well as joint night training on the lakes.

The unit is active in the local community, representing MRNSW at Anzac Day ceremonies, the annual Merchant Mariners memorial service at Norah Head and Christmas, New Year and Australia Day activities.

Volunteer organisations cannot run without committed fundraisers and Tuggerah Lakes is fortunate to receive strong support from the local community and visitors, particularly



Six female dragon boat racers were rescued from the freezing water when their boat overturned on Tuggerah Lake in 2011.

at the popular daily pelican feeding at The Entrance. The unit provides a commentary on the event and its history, a feeder to hand the fish to the pelicans and a donation collector.

Speaking in the NSW Parliament in 2104, then Member for Dobell Karen McNamara recognised the unit for providing safety protection and education for the Central Coast community.

Members have continued to provide boat licensing courses and safety advice to boaters.

The start of MRNSW moved the unit to a more professional operation, requiring cultural and

educational change and ongoing capital injections from our dedicated fundraisers, led by Deputy Unit Commander Ken Lawry and Lorraine Lawry. The transformation has been led by original MRNSW Unit Commander Stewart Masters and his successor Tony Younglove. Over the past four years, UC Younglove has overseen the improvements in the bases, vessels and, most importantly, the training and development of our members to reach the required qualifications for their various roles, assisted by Training Officer Jim Davidson, the unit executive and all members.

Bob Sutton

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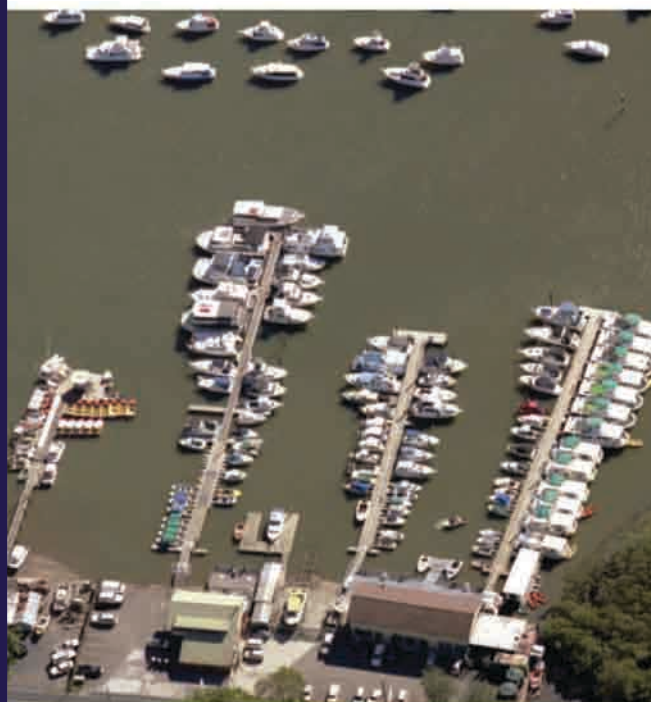


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MAKING HISTORY Hunter/Central Coast

Terrigal neighbours now a single team



Deane Scadding (left) and members of Terrigal Sea Rescue on the balcony of their base at The Haven.

Two neighbouring marine rescue services that served the Terrigal boating community are now part of a single, strong MRNSW unit.

The MR Central Coast and Terrigal units merged in 2017.

A Terrigal marine radio service was first operated by Eddie Felton, supported by the Broken Bay Coastal Patrol, in a base at The Haven. In the mid-1970s, the Central Coast RVCP took over the lease and after refurbishing the base, started operations in January 1977. About 3am on July 26, 1996, the facility was severely damaged by a fire. Gosford Mayor Chris Holstein opened the rebuilt base in January 1998.

While the RVCP was providing a marine radio watch over local boaters, rescue services were operated by Terrigal Sea Rescue, established by Col Trounce, Kenn Borgesson, Phil Christie and Graeme Legge in the early 1990s. The Sea Rescue operated next door to the RVCP.

Former MR Terrigal Unit Commander Deane Scadding, who joined TSR in 1996, said the organisation had originally been affiliated with the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association.

"We remained affiliated with the Coast Guard right up until they started pressuring us to become a Coast Guard flotilla," Mr Scadding

said. "Then we heard our friends at Norah Head Search and Rescue were becoming affiliated with the VRA so we changed course and became affiliated with the VRA around 2007.

"We were right next to the RVCP. The deal was they ran the radios and we ran the boats. It worked well for a number of years."

TSR initially operated with an inflatable rubber boat and an 8.4m Hydrofield multi-hull, *Sea Lion*, followed by an 8.9m Hydrofield, *Mary George*. The boat was named after member George Robertson and his wife Mary. When George was given weeks to live, Mary collapsed. Although she recovered, George subsequently passed away. Their family attended the launch of the vessel named after the couple.

"What we didn't know was that George was there, too," Mr Scadding said. After the service, TSR members took the Robertson family on board the new vessel to farewell the former police officer by scattering his ashes at sea.

After both the Central Coast and Terrigal operations joined MRNSW, the Central Coast unit continued to monitor radio traffic to MR Terrigal.

Following the unit merger, *Central Coast 30* is now berthed at The Haven. Last year, the unit won a \$161,000 grant for an amphibious tender to access the vessel.

Proud record of Central Coast improvement

Former Commander first woman elected to MRNSW Board of Directors.

An advertisement in the *Central Coast Advocate* on June 14, 1971 invited potential members to join a new division of the Volunteer Coastal Patrol to be established on the busy Central Coast waterways.

On August 8, VCP Field Officer Commanding Harold Nobbs swore in 19 new members under the leadership of Division Commander Ted Hayes, with Vic McCutcheon appointed as Senior Skipper. With help from the Broken Bay Coastal Patrol, within three months most members had obtained their boat and radio licences.

Today, the unit boasts 120 members, including the first woman elected to the MRNSW Board, Pat Fayes, who has served as a General Director since 2014. The unit's first female leader, Pat was appointed Division Commander from 2006 to 2010 and again took on the leadership role from 2012 to 2014.

The forerunner to today's modern marine radio operation was an old caravan in a builder's shed in Caroline Bay, which served as the division's radio base for three months before Vic McCutcheon donated a caravan affectionately known as the Road Runner due to a painting of the cartoon character on its rear. Two operators monitored an HF radio nearly as big as the van itself on Saturday afternoons and all day Sundays on Gosford Wharf.

The search for a permanent base soon began and involved lengthy negotiations with council and various government bodies. Although no site had yet been secured, in 1974 the Federal Government provided a grant of almost \$28,000 under the Red Scheme to build a base.

The unit's application to occupy a vacant block to the west of the Rip Bridge, then under construction, was refused by council. With only two weeks left to start using the Red Scheme grant before the funding

would be lost, Vic headed to the council offices on a Friday afternoon, where Mayor Malcolm Brooks advised council would agree to any site approved by the Department of Lands. A site at Point Clare was suggested and once confirmed as suitable, the Department advised the required documentation would be ready on Monday. Vic, who had a pilot's licence, and Peter Stollery flew to Rutherford airfield on the Monday and took a taxi to the Lands Office to pick up the signed contract. Council approved the project the next Friday.

The base opened in 1975. Vic had been the driving force of both the division and the construction, donating equipment and his own time, effort and money, employing a staff member for a year on the building project. By the time he ceased his active membership, the division had 70 members.

"The members' support assured the Patrol went on and helped make the division what it is today. In my time all running cost of vessels was paid for by the boat owners and with about seven patrol vessels on the water on a weekend, we gave a good service to the public," he said.

From 1997, the division also operated a radio base at Terrigal.

Central Coast facilities have continued to improve, with a jetty, slipway, ramp and extra car parking added over the years. In a major rebuild in 2003, the radio room was expanded and re-equipped before in 2017, a Reditalk online radio system was installed in a \$60,000 project.

Members had operated on their own boats until 1988, when the division acquired a second hand 6.1m De Havilland Trojan. Members put in many hours' work to modify, repaint and install electronics on *Centaco 1*, later renamed *Hi Torque Rescue*, which served until 2001.

Former Division Commander Norm Smith said the "old girl was



The new Central Coast 30 is greeted by RWC CC 11 and X Ray 21 off Lion Island on its delivery voyage. Photo: Brendan Trembath.



The opening of the extended Central Coast RVCP division base in 1994.

a great workhorse who never once let us down. She handled well in good conditions as far out as 15nm and even in 3m seas and high winds towing a trawler through Box Head. I was sorry to see her go, she represents a huge input from our members," he said.

The division also formed a crew led by Squadron Skipper Les Clarke dedicated to operating the RVCP's former World War II vessel, the *Krait*, during its visits to the Central Coast.

Other vessels included a jetboat, *Spirit of Federation*; a 5.95m Seatamer, *Brisbane Water Lifeboat*; a 4.3m Quintrex punt; and jetboat *Central Coast 21*, which was refurbished in 2015 and eventually sold last year.

Since the transition to MRNSW,

MR Central Coast has taken delivery of a new 10m Naiad, *Central Coast 30*, a 7.5m Naiad to replace *CC 21*, a 6.8m Ocean Cylinder, *CC 22*, and a Rescue Water Craft, *CC 11*.

In a new chapter in 2017, the Central Coast and Terrigal units merged to form a new, larger Central Coast unit.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said bringing the two units together had created a stronger operation, providing more efficient use of resources and volunteer effort and even greater coordination of the emergency response.

The new Central Coast unit is one of the busiest in the organisation, launching 68 rescue missions over the most recent summer.

Ron Cole

Praise for unsung heroes' community support

Hawkesbury unit safeguards boaters and riverside residents.

When a rescue service was established on the Hawkesbury River in the late 1980s, its founding members could already draw on years of experience in safeguarding the boating community.

The Hawkesbury operation was originally founded as a sub-base of the Broken Bay division of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, with a group of members transferring upstream, including Mark Hurdell, Bob Lott, John McCloskey, Terry and Judy Lyons, Lindsay Fleming and Barry and Jill McGrath.

A radio service had been operating from a private home at Bar Point but this proved an unsatisfactory location and in 1986 the Hawkesbury sub-base began operating from a tin shed on the grounds of the Mooney Mooney Club, where the unit's base remains today.

A weekend watch for Hawkesbury volunteers has always meant packing a bag for 48 hours on duty from Friday to Sunday night. With only two bunks originally, most watchkeepers slept in their boats or cars. Over time, the division expanded with members, training and funding and by 1998 its facilities consisted of the original shed, a caravan donated by a member and a site office, with accommodation for eight members in three rooms.

One of the division's busiest periods was in early 1999, when it took part in two simultaneous major emergency response operations. Members joined other personnel in the Public Information Inquiries Centre at the Goulburn Street police centre for the first time in response to the Sydney hailstorm in April. At the same time, its vessels and crews staged a two-month operation providing 24/7 checkpoints to control boat movements on Mangrove Creek during the outbreak



Valuable assets for boaters and isolated residents on the Hawkesbury River, the upgraded Marlin Broadbill *Hawkesbury 21* and new Ocean Cylinder, *Hawkesbury 22*. Photo: Jamie Abnett-Miller.

of Newcastle Disease among poultry.

Since transferring to MRNSW, Hawkesbury has more than doubled its complement to more than 40 members, who include a Master, six Coxswains, nine Leading Crew, 17 Crew and numerous trainees. Former Unit Commander Ken Edwards was elected as the Greater Sydney Regional Director in 2018.

The unit now has two upgraded vessels. A Marlin Broadbill catamaran, *Hawkesbury 21*, named in memory of former Unit Commander Merv Collins, underwent a total refit in 2014. New 7.5m Ocean Cylinder, *HW 22*, named after Jill McGrath in recognition of her 26-year contribution, was commissioned in 2014, replacing *HW 10*, swamped off Long Reef on Boxing Day 2013.

As well as responding to incidents on the water, Hawkesbury plays a key role in major river events, providing checkpoints and safety vessels for the annual Bridge to Bridge water ski race and Hawkesbury Canoe Classic. The crew of *HW 22* was quickly on the scene when a competitor was fatally injured in the 2013 ski race and vessels patrol the overnight canoe event to locate and redirect off-course entrants. The unit also



The first RVCP Hawkesbury vessel that was not a member's personal boat, a De Havilland Hercules donated by the Broken Bay RVCP.

joined the response to the seaplane crash in Jerusalem Bay that claimed six lives on New Year's Eve in 2017. Two unit members on board their yacht raised the alarm with a Mayday call to MR Terrey Hills.

In 2018, the unit received an Unsung Heroes award from the Sydney Kings basketball team.

Congratulating the unit in the NSW Parliament, its Patron, Hornsby MP Matt Kean, praised "this wonderful group of people" for providing a vital service for river residents with no road access to their homes, as well as assisting boaters on the river.

The unit's work to support the community along the river includes transporting patients whose homes

are only accessible by water to the nearest access point to meet waiting NSW Ambulance crews for medical treatment. Members recently completed the Find Me on River project, which assists emergency responders to locate homes and nearby wharves and other access points in the Bar Point area. A member of the Hornsby-Warringah Local Emergency Management Committee, the unit works closely with its emergency services partners.

Its committed volunteers also give their time to attend regular training to build and hone their skills for their lifesaving work and to fundraise to support the unit's operations.

Jamie Abnett-Miller

Two vessels 'superbly appointed' for service

Cottage Point volunteers save lives on Sydney's pristine northern waterways.

Located on the pristine inland waterways of Cowan Creek just 38km north of Sydney, the sleepy village of Cottage Point is home to only 98 people. It is said that you can anchor in a different bay in these waters every weekend for 10 years without repeating your location.

Perhaps in recognition of the deep connection the area has to the water, Cottage Point has also been home to an active marine rescue service for more than 50 years.

Since 1968, Cottage Point and the local area have been continuously served by a dedicated team of volunteers committed to saving lives on the water. For almost all that time the Cottage Point unit has been located within the grounds of the Ku-ring-Gai Motor Yacht Club. We are extremely grateful for the club's ongoing support.

Founded as a flotilla of the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association, the Cottage Point volunteers carved away from the Sydney squadron to serve the ever-increasing amount of marine traffic to Sydney's north. At the time, marine rescue services were only available by using members' own vessels and the safety equipment and member training was rudimentary at best. As the service matured (and as more fundraising dollars and donations were squirrelled away) the unit gradually acquired a series of second hand vessels from a variety of sources.

In 1989, Cottage Point added a second patrol vessel to improve response times, provide greater flexibility and enhance its training capability. The unit maintains a two-vessel operation to this day.

As the unit grew through the 1990s, two all-weather, purpose built vessels in full Coast Guard livery graced the dock at Cottage Point. With these new vessels came vastly improved on-board

technologies and competency-based training for all crew members. Still desperately short of funding, the unit scraped along through fundraising, donations and the generosity of the members.

Since joining the new MRNSW in 2010, however, the unit has gone from strength to strength.

A steady increase in membership now sees the unit with about 65 active members and arguably two of the fleet's best equipped rescue boats, 11m Sailfish *Cottage Point 30* and its sister Sailfish, the 9m *CP 31*. Both vessels are superbly appointed to serve our boating community and respond to any level of incident. Along with the vessels from MR Hawkesbury and Broken Bay, our boats play an integral role in the provision of marine rescue services in northern Sydney.

MRNSW has been instrumental in the development of the Cottage Point unit, not only through increased (and much appreciated) funding but also, importantly, through the provision of improved training and safety programs, consistent state protocols and policies and robust organisational governance and leadership.

The Cottage Point unit has always maintained a close link to our parent organisations, with several of our members being involved in broader state roles. In the early days of the Coast Guard, eight Cottage Point members were elected NSW Squadron Commodore, while many others acted in various executive roles, including Deputy Squadron Commodore, Squadron Training Commodore and Staff Captain.

At the national level, two of our members have held the position of National Commodore and another National Training Commodore. Two more served as National Stores Officers and yet another as National Public Relations Officer.

Since the formation of MRNSW,



Powering to the rescue on Sydney's northern waters, sister vessels *Cottage Point 30* and *Cottage Point 31*.



Coast Guard members on a man overboard training exercise at Cottage Point.

Cottage Point has had two Board members and a Regional Controller appointed from within its ranks.

For the past 50 years, the Cottage Point unit has served an operational area that covers Brisbane Water and Ku-ring-Gai Chase National Parks and Mudgamarra Nature Reserve, encompassing Broken Bay, Pittwater, Brisbane Water, Hawkesbury River, Cowan Creek and environs – over

150km of sheltered navigable foreshore.

This operational area also extends 30nm seawards, covering the dozens of offshore reefs that are popular with anglers. As part of MRNSW, the mighty Cottage Point unit is looking forward to continuing to serve the local boating community for 50 more years!

Tim Pike

Cottage Point crew makes cinema debut

Volunteers perform familiar role in new tale of friendship, life and secrets.

Volunteers from MR Cottage Point have been given five stars for their cinema debut in a new Australian dramatic comedy set in their own back yard.

A group of three members, Paul Millar, Mike Evans and John Aitken, have a cameo role in *Palm Beach*, which had its world premiere on the opening night of the Sydney Film Festival on June 5.

The film, set amid the natural beauty of Sydney's northern beaches and waterways, stars an acclaimed cast including Bryan Brown, Greta Scacchi, Oscar nominee Richard E Grant, Jacqueline McKenzie, Sam Neil and Heather Mitchell.

Directed by Rachel Ward, the movie tells the story of a group of lifelong friends who reunite for a party at the eponymous Palm Beach.

Tension mounts when deeply-held secrets emerge.

The Cottage Point members and rescue vessel *Cottage Point 31* joined the production last September to film a scene that would be familiar to most MRNSW crews in their everyday duties.

When the son of two of the main characters, played by Bryan Brown and Greta Scacchi, is injured in an accident on the water at The Basin on Pittwater, the rescue crew is on the scene to transport the patient to a waiting ambulance at the jetty.

Mr Millar said the Cottage Point team had enjoyed their experience on set and interactions with the cast.

"It was a good day to see how these actors live: minders looking after them, make-up chasing them about," he said. At one point, when



Three members of MR Cottage Point feature in *Palm Beach*, which stars Bryan Brown and an acclaimed ensemble.

Bryan Brown's "son" had not been in place during a run-through, the actor had turned to the crew and asked deadpan "what have you done with my son? Thrown him overboard?"

The "very handsome Marine

Rescue crew" remembered their first aid training, using the correct lifting procedures to transfer the patient to a trolley and keeping his neck still while rolling up the pontoon.

Palm Beach opens in cinemas in August.

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Broken Bay's origins in strategic defence

Unit's proud record of service to military and community over 80 years.

Marine Rescue Broken Bay can claim an unbroken record of service to the community for more than 80 years, tracing its origins to the strategic wartime defence of the coastline in the earliest days of voluntary marine rescue in the nation.

The unit continues its proud service to this day, with almost 90 experienced and dedicated volunteers, professional training and safe, purpose-built state of the art vessels.

In 1937, the Royal Australian Navy's Director of Naval Intelligence, Commander Rupert Long OBE, recommended to the Naval Board that a group of trained yachtsmen be formed as a Naval auxiliary service and the Volunteer Coastal Patrol was subsequently chartered.

The volunteers were to be given detailed training in observation, search and rescue, seamanship, signals, aircraft recognition, boat handling and security patrol, all while being unarmed.

Broken Bay was pivotal to the effort. In 1939, a group of 100 volunteers gathered at a training camp on Pittwater/Broken Bay. This area was critical to the defence of Sydney's north as Pittwater had a safe, deep water anchorage within striking distance of Sydney for invading forces.

The volunteers established a security watch on the Hawkesbury River Rail Bridge which formed a vital link to the north. They worked closely with the military, helping establish accurate maps of the coastline, giving close attention to water access beach defences, and providing waterside assistance when the Army established two waterside gun bunkers and an observation bunker at West Head near Barrenjoey Lighthouse.

They also patrolled the anti-submarine net across Pittwater from Barrenjoey to West Head and



During World War II, Broken Bay volunteers diverted boats from Refuge Bay where Z Special Unit commandos were training for a daring raid on board the *Krait*. Photo: ABC News.

another further upstream protecting the rail bridge.

In 1941 the Navy formed the voluntary Naval Auxiliary Patrol, which was charged with patrolling and safeguarding Australia's inner harbours, ports, rivers and estuaries against enemy sabotage or attack.

Six volunteer vessels, *Allambie*, *Marina*, *Burundi*, *Hoona*, *Kazembo* and *Winbah*, privately owned but seconded into service, operated on Broken Bay.

Winbah, a 62 foot Halvorsen cruiser, was continuously used to transport service personnel to and from the battery at West Head to Newport, Bayview and Palm Beach.

The last three months of 1942 were nerve-racking for the crews due to reports of submarines in the area following the midget sub attacks on Sydney Harbour.

The volunteer vessels were required to redirect all boats away from Refuge Bay, a remote part of Broken Bay where the Z Special Unit Commandos were training for a covert attack on Japanese shipping in Singapore Harbour on board the *MV Krait*. The commandos' daring raid in 1943 sank more than 58,000 tons of shipping. The *Krait* later became a VCP vessel operating from Broken Bay and the unit still has a model of the little boat in its base.



Ready for duty ... Broken Bay 20 and Broken Bay 30, the first boat in the fleet to wear the new red and white MRNSW livery.

In 1947, the Broken Bay division of the Volunteer Coastal Patrol was formally established, with Ray Weingott as commander, to assist the civilian boating community, whose numbers continued to grow with post-war prosperity.

Six decades on, the Broken Bay unit was at the forefront of the transition to MRNSW in 2009.

The unit's newly delivered Steber, *Broken Bay 30*, was the first vessel in the new fleet to wear the red and white MRNSW livery and former member Michael Seale was appointed as a Foundation Board Director for a period in 2010.

The Broken Bay area is home to the largest number of recreational boat registrations in NSW, with a correspondingly high demand for marine rescue services.

Unit Commander Jimmy Arteaga said MRNSW was able to provide a world class rescue service delivering a consistent level of service and technical expertise.

"As a unified organisation, it has also helped promote the feeling of camaraderie across the organisation and membership," he said.

The Broken Bay unit continues to attract new members, ensuring it can continue its record of service.

Technology expands Terrey Hills' footprint

Central hub's marine radio safety net now covers most of the coastline.

From the hissing static of a bank of marine radios mounted on the wall to the latest online communications technology, MR Terrey Hills has bridged very different eras on the airwaves.

The unit, known to boaters by its MR Sydney call sign, began life in the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, the oldest voluntary sea rescue organisation in Australia.

The Volunteer Coastal Patrol was approved by the Naval Board and established on March 27, 1937.

The RVCP's headquarters was housed in the Warringah Council Emergency Services Centre at Beacon Hill for some time until about 1982. It is not clear if radio communications were carried out from this site during this period. When the centre was closed and the site sold, the Headquarters moved to a new Emergency Services Centre at Terrey Hills, before relocating back to The Spit to meet the requirements of its licence to provide a seven-day radio coverage.

On July 1, 1989, the Terrey Hills radio centre was formed, with about 40 members under the leadership of Division Commander Brian Kelly. The three Sydney RVCP divisions, Broken Bay, Sydney and Botany Bay and the Central Coast (Gosford) division assisted with finances, equipment and personnel.

The radio base was located in a small room in the Emergency Services Centre at Terrey Hills. Warringah Council extended the centre in 2009, providing more space for the radio room, which was relocated to its current site, with a separate room for training and a kitchen sink, providing running water for the first time.

After MRNSW's formation in 2009, MR Terrey Hills became a pivotal 24/7 communications centre in its marine radio network, providing radio coverage for the Greater Sydney metropolitan area.



MR Terrey Hills radio operators employ the latest communications technology to provide a marine radio safety net for boaters in Sydney and further north and south along the coastline.

It now shares this role with MR Botany Port Hacking, whose radio base covers the region's southern waterways during daylight hours.

A \$200,000, two-year project to upgrade the Terrey Hills base with the installation of a suite of new-generation communications and IT equipment, including radio over internet, was completed in 2014.

Then Speaker of the Australian Parliament, Mackellar MP Bronwyn Bishop, opened the modernised operation.

The advances in communications technology greatly expanded Terrey Hills' operations beyond its Sydney footprint.

The unit now plays an important role as the overnight point of contact for 23 Search and Rescue Coordination Centres and radio bases, providing coverage over the majority of the NSW coastline.

Between 5pm and 6am daily, its radio operators monitor 30 radios, Logging On and Off vessels, tracking their journeys and responding to radio calls as if boaters were still talking to their local units.

In recognition of the members' willingness to adopt this extra responsibility and commitment to boating safety, Terrey Hills was



Volunteer Alan Robinson operates radios in the Sydney RVCP division's first radio room.

awarded a Commissioner's Citation in 2017 and an Unsung Heroes award from the Sydney Kings basketball team in 2016.

The essential safety net the unit provides is demonstrated by its workload: over the recent peak season, it handled 6,634 radio and telephone calls, responded to 869 calls for assistance, including 13 Mayday and 27 Pan Pan calls, Logged On 1,766 vessels and conducted 876 radio checks.

The unit's commitment to recruiting and training provides new members with the skills to contribute to a highly professional operation. It has introduced a series of training initiatives for provisional

members, radio operators and watch officers, along with radio courses for boaters. All trainees receive thorough practical and theoretical training, with a focus on role plays, a collegiate approach, mentoring and coaching by qualified personnel and performance assessments.

A program to foster greater community understanding of the unit's role in the marine environment includes a monthly information desk at Bunnings, online inquiries, an Open Day and an information pack explaining the unit's roles and responsibilities that was developed by its Marketing, Fundraising and Membership Committee.

John Gabbott & Denis Comber

Middle Harbour base watches over history

Volunteer 'shrine' hosts sleepovers for snorers and two Headquarters.

Middle Harbour's two-storey weatherboard base is neither grand nor luxurious. Truthfully, it's seen better days. But it's witnessed so much history over decades of operations by MRNSW and the rescue organisations that came before, that it's treasured as something of a shrine by the current volunteers who call it their base.

It has a colourful, sometimes peculiar history. For instance, if you'd wandered in from the street on a Friday night 40 years ago, you'd have found a darkened room, not an inch of space on the floor and been deafened by the thunder of snoring crew, some in pyjamas, competing for floor space and oxygen until duty called at dawn.

Typically, a watch comprised a dozen men, members of the then Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, sleeping over as they did every weekend. The tightly-knit fraternity shared a passion for the sea, their vessels and their role of rescuing those in peril. They shared their meals and countless stories of huge waves and daring escapades.

In those days, they supplied their own boats to go on patrol. The biggest was 80 feet and the smallest of this unusual fleet was just a fraction of that size but all were pressed into service appropriate to their capability. Members also bought their own fuel and uniforms (they needed four sets: two orange overalls, a khaki "uniform" and a formal dinner suit for mess dinners and ceremonies), supplied their own gear, including charts and lifejackets and apparently had quite a legendary social life. The base even had its own bar.

The knowledge put to use on their boats was old-school seamanship, involving charts, dividers and pencils and a lot of splicing and knots. It remains vital today should technology fail. Crews' detailed knowledge of every metre of their



Everything changed ... new vessels *Middle Harbour 30* and *MH 20* tied up in front of the unit's base at The Spit, home to the headquarters of two marine rescue services over time.

foreshore, of every buoy and mark, sandbank and reef by day or night wasn't just useful, it was essential because they had no modern electronic marvels to guide them. The arrival of 27MHz radio was the start of a revolution.

Middle Harbour acquired a *Waveney* from Britain's Royal National Lifeboat Institution in 1999. This rugged 44 foot, 16 ton steel beauty served us well until 2011. Self-righting, she introduced another level of technology, radar, and was the vessel of choice when the weather offshore turned nasty.

Several areas of operations were sometimes criticised. Training was often ad hoc and there was little uniformity from unit to unit or even from watch to watch.

In the late 1960s, the Volunteer Coastal Patrol moved its Headquarters into the base. 'Royal' was added to the organisation's name in 1974 but the RVCP still suffered from a lack of funding and equipment.

But then, the most significant event changed everything. The creation of MRNSW brought greater efficiency and a vastly improved service. For a time, the new MRNSW Headquarters was also located in the Middle Harbour base, making it a hive of activity seven days a week. Headquarters has since relocated



Middle Harbour's *Waveney*, the vessel of choice in nasty offshore conditions.

to Cronulla but numerous regional meetings and training courses are still conducted on the top floor of that old weatherboard building.

And how times have changed in 10 years under MRNSW. Now Middle Harbour boasts modern vessels with an array of radios, RDF, radar, thermal imaging cameras, GPS touchscreen chart-plotters, EPIRBs, sat-phones, iPads and even EFTPOS machines. Training is uniformly comprehensive and consistent, ensuring crew can switch from one watch to another with a given set of mandated skills and qualifications not just recognised within the unit but applicable throughout the state.

Extra funding ensures vessels and equipment are maintained and replaced when necessary. Even

uniforms are provided but thankfully we don't need four of them. New trainees are increasingly younger, better qualified and experienced upon entry than ever before, although anyone who wishes is encouraged to join up and progress, whatever their initial capability. An increasing number of women also are coming aboard.

So how would those marvellous volunteers of 40 years ago have reacted to these changes? Well, some in Middle Harbour's ranks can still remember the good old days but acknowledge the vast improvements that have come about. And they don't have to jostle for sleeping space on the floor on a Saturday night anymore. They just have to keep their mobile phone handy.

Howard Gipps

Front and centre at nation's biggest events

New vessel expands Port Jackson's capability on Sydney Harbour.

Operating for 52 years on the nation's busiest and most variable shipping and boating harbour, crews from Port Jackson are prepared for any eventuality, whether towing a stranded runabout or maintaining crowd control at some of the biggest public events in the nation.

The Sydney Harbour theatre of operations requires navigational skill and constant situational awareness amid the ever-increasing marine traffic on the prime waterway.

The Port Jackson unit, originally established as the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association N1 flotilla in July 1967, today can draw on the lengthy experience of many of its 60 members both on the frontline and in radio operations.

Under its first commander Donald Pickering and staff officer Graham Salisbury, by 1969 the flotilla had 13 members and six of their private vessels at its disposal. In the 1970s, Commander Ernest White was known to show a steely disposition as his 24 foot cruiser was used for training.

The flotilla was originally situated at Roseville Marina before berthing its new 6.1m Marlin Broadbill in the Birkenhead Point Marina in 1986. The unit's current vessels, *Port Jackson 30* and *PJ 20* are still tied up alongside the Iron Cove Bridge. Commissioned in February, *PJ 20* is a 7.5m Naiad. *PJ 30*, an 8m Kevlcat commissioned in 2012, is currently being refurbished.

The flotilla originally met at Philip Lodge in Ashfield, later moving between several premises before now assembling at the Gladesville Sporties Club.

Its radio base moved from Beacon Hill to Birkenhead Point in 1987 before relocating to the historic South Head signal station from 1992 until 2011.

A new unit base has been built as part of the refurbishment of

the Birkenhead Point Marina and associated infrastructure. During the renovations, the unit operated from a purpose-equipped shipping container described as "cosy", ahead of the move into its new office, which opened in February.

Sharing responsibility for the harbour with the neighbouring MR Middle Harbour, Port Jackson operates up to 30nm offshore from Sydney Heads as far south as Wedding Cake Island at Coogee and north to Long Reef. Crews must navigate the narrow congested channels of the Parramatta and Lane Cove rivers, swells on the deep harbour waters, reefs, outcrops and navigation restrictions. The biggest challenge, however, is the volume of recreational and commercial traffic, including boaters cruising, fishing, sailing and paddling and frequent sailing events and races. With the harbour hosting more than 20 per cent of the state's commercial vessels, crews share the water with passenger ferries, charter boats, water taxis, naval ships, overseas passenger shipping, fishing trawlers and industrial vessels.

Members have long recognised the need to be prepared for medical emergencies. In early 1974, the flotilla's first vessel, a 7m Swiftcraft, was commissioned. *Eileen Dickie*, better known as the Crown Water Ambulance, supported NSW Ambulance crews throughout its years of operation.

In 2010, then Unit Commander Michael Carew introduced training in advanced resuscitation using defibrillators and oxygen therapy.

In October 2011, *PJ 22* and *Middle Harbour 40* were training on the harbour when a large cruiser waved them down. A passenger had suffered a suspected heart attack. Senior first aid officers on board the rescue vessels used *PJ 22*'s defibrillator to administer a life-saving shock to the patient.



Members of MR Port Jackson with Commissioner Stacey Tannos and their vessels, *PJ 30* and *PJ 20*, at the unit's Birkenhead Point base.



Making a splash ... a Port Jackson Coast Guard catamaran.

In March this year, a Port Jackson crew assisted paramedics to stabilise and transport a patient with a suspected drug overdose from a large vessel.

Port Jackson's capabilities were heavily drawn upon to support harbour events for the 1988 Bicentenary and the 2000 Sydney Olympics and the unit continues to be a safety resource for the famous large Sydney events: the start of the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race, New Years' Eve fireworks and Australia Day festivities. Over the past 12 years, it also has taken part in multi-agency exercises, including the international Trial Kondari over 10 days in 2009. Vessel *CG 012*, fitted with underwater imaging equipment, was deployed as a fast-

response vessel for the exercise, which assessed technologies used for protecting maritime and naval assets in the harbour. Similarly, *PJ 30* took part in the 2016 disaster exercise, Sydney CBD, and the unit supports other emergency services' disaster response operations.

The delivery of *PJ 20* has enabled the unit to increase its on-water presence: crews were rostered for 10 additional weekdays during January and a weekday group is now being set up. The extra capacity has also fostered greater expansion, with a new cohort of trainees adding to those who joined a year ago.

As always, the Port Jackson unit stands ready to respond when the community calls for help.

Tom Crvenkovic

Signal station keeps solitary watch over sea

No one is on duty but historic radio base remains a vital communications link.

Time has stood still at the Marine Rescue NSW radio base at Sydney's historic South Head Signal Station - the last entries in its radio logs were several years ago.

"In the heyday it was very busy," said MR Port Jackson member Rob James, who fondly recalled the era after the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard moved into the building in 1992.

"It would not be uncommon to fill three radio log sheets on a Saturday and sometimes four on a Sunday," he said.

The radio traffic included weather reports, Log Ons, Log Offs and boaters requesting assistance.

"Sometimes you'd see a flare go off or a V sheet and you knew straight away there was trouble so we would call the police and let them know what we'd just sighted and call our boat out and away they'd go," Mr James said.

After the formation of MRNSW in 2009, the base was operated by MR Port Jackson.

But the writing was on the wall for this remarkable workplace.

The tower's steep spiral staircase, low and corroded balcony railing, cramped working conditions and electromagnetic emissions made it an Occupational Health and Safety minefield for MRNSW and Sydney Ports Corporation, which had radar and radio equipment on the site.

Mr James said the radar took a direct hit during a fierce electrical storm about five years ago.

"All of our area and all out on the street was covered in pieces of fibreglass and orange foam and bits of electronic tubing," he said.

In 2011, then Deputy Commissioner Heinz Mueller recommended that operations be suspended.

The South Head Signal Station became a remotely operated radio base, with radio communications relayed over the internet to the



Watching time pass, MR Port Jackson members Kel Ratcliff and Rob James at the South Head Signal Station. Photo: Brendan Trembath.

statewide network controlled by MR Terrey Hills.

MRNSW Emergency Systems Manager Andrew Cribb said it was a successful transition.

"It's all about increasing our marine radio coverage and making it a more sustainable system to monitor 24/7," he said.

While volunteers no longer report for radio duty at South Head it remains an important marine communications facility.

Its height and uninterrupted "line of sight" to vessels off the coast make it an ideal radio and radar platform.

When the Signal Station was established in 1790 there was no radio or radar.

A flagstaff and timber huts were placed on site for crew members, whose duty was to look out for arriving vessels.


The crew would raise colour coded signal flags to notify the colony of the imminent arrival of the long awaited ships.

From the 1870s until World War II, South Head played a role in the defence of Sydney Harbour. Heavy guns were mounted in gun pits and bunkers and tunnels were carved into the sandstone below.

One access point was via the Signal Station basement but Rob James said it had been bricked up

years ago by the Maritime Services Board.

Brendan Trembath




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Services worked side by side to share load

Southern Sydney volunteers merge to form strong new unit.

Marine Rescue Botany Port Hacking has brought together volunteers who originally operated side by side, sharing rescue duties on southern Sydney's busiest waterways under two separate flags.

The Port Hacking unit was established as an Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association flotilla in 1973, with the Botany Bay unit originally part of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol.

Both transferred to the new MRNSW before amalgamating in 2013 after moving into a shared unit base - the first for each - on the Headquarters site in Cronulla. The radio base, known to boaters by its Solander call sign, is also on site.

The new unit's members include MRNSW Chair Jim Glissan and General Director Bob Wilson.

"We had to pay to join, we had to buy our own uniforms," said MRNSW Life Member Ian Baker, who joined the Port Hacking Coast Guard in 1975. The flotilla had a radio base in a boat shed on Yowie Bay and an expanding fleet of privately owned boats.

"At one stage we had over 100 boats in the unit," Mr Baker said.

Initially, members rescued boaters on inshore waters.

"As we got bigger boats and people got more adventurous, we started to go offshore a lot more."

In 1986, the Maritime Services Board gave the flotilla an obsolete 21 foot half cabin cruiser. After extensive repairs, it was fitted out and repainted in AVCGA colours.

The Solander division was formed in 1979, joining the Port Hacking flotilla with the Botany Bay flotilla that had first formed in the early 1970s.

Current Unit Commander Lewis Stockbridge joined the Port Hacking flotilla in 1988.

"In my second year there I was elected Deputy Unit Commander," he said. "It was a full khaki uniform,



Port Hacking Coast Guard members at the Fisho's Club at Kyeemagh in 1997, Padre Bob Elmore, Ken Luker, George Pratt, Hope Guy, Martin Borg, Paul Harrison, Alan Russel, Ted Sarnicki and Brian Burrell.

nearly exactly the same as the work rig for the American Coast Guard. We had gold bars, silver bars, oak leaves, anchors."

By the time Noel Parkinson came on board in 2001, the uniform was white shirts and navy pants.

"You'd only be on the boat five minutes and your shirt would be dirty," he said. Crews were permitted to wear a Coast Guard T-shirt but members paid for their uniforms and there was little money for boats or bases.

"We certainly didn't have anything like what we've got now," Mr Parkinson said. "We had no base. We worked out of Dolans Bay Marina and we just had a swing mooring there and you had to paddle out each day and get the boat and then same thing of an afternoon. You'd come back and you'd have to shut down, put the boat back out on the mooring and paddle back into the marina."

Mr Parkinson said the formation of MRNSW in 2009 had brought better vessels.

"It wasn't until the amalgamation took place that we actually had a boat that was purpose built or specific to the purpose," he said.

The RVCP's Botany Bay division was established in 1962.



Botany Bay Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol vessel *Cape Banks* crosses Botany Bay off Brighton-le-Sands.

Sue Tate joined in October 1998 after she met volunteers at a boat show and showed an interest in a radio course.

"One day one of them said 'do you want to come out on a boat? Bring your lunch to this place on Saturday'," she said. The RCVP Botany Bay boat *Cape Banks* was based at St George Motor Boat Club and Ms Tate recalls it was well used. "We'd do six to eight rescues out of Botany Bay. It was go, go, go with very little down time in the beginning."

On her first visit to the Patrol's Solander radio base, she was made to feel at home. "It was just like one big family," she said.

Michael Brogan, who joined in 2003, recalled the 44-foot Waveney class vessel *P&O Stratheden*.

"It was a much sturdier, heavier duty vessel, good for offshore work and the Coast Guard had the smaller vessel which was better for up river," he said.

He said the two organisations had shared the rescue workload.

"We might pull in a vessel from offshore and then swap over. They had to take it up river under the bridge that we couldn't get under."

Mr Brogan said RVCP volunteers also had paid for their own uniforms and a lot of the training was also at their own expense.

Brendan Trembath

A shared ancestry for Port Kembla unit

Heartache and parochialism put aside to shape rescue future.

The DNA ancestry of MR Port Kembla is predominantly Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association, with a few genes from the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol.

While the Coastal Patrol had a small presence in Wollongong dating back to the 1950s, by the early 1970s the Coast Guard in Sydney looked to expand coverage for the recreational boating public on the Illawarra coast from Stanwell Park to Gerringong, including Lake Illawarra.

Coast Guard Wollongong was launched as the inaugural flotilla of the planned AVCGA Southern NSW Squadron and an art union held to raise funds for the purchase of a former police vessel, *Wakeful*, which was launched in April 1975. A radio base was set up in a member's home. Under the leadership of Commodore Paddy McLoughlin, the Squadron eventually formed flotillas at Bellambi, Lake Illawarra, Kiama and Bermagui. By 1979, there was an obvious need for a site to provide improved radio coverage over the Illawarra coastline. Vice Commodore Don Oyston suggested using one of the derelict heritage listed constructions left over from the World War II Illowra Coastal Defence Gun Battery, located on an exposed headland 70m above sea level at Hill 60, Red Point, Port Kembla.

Wollongong City Council eventually approved the plan and over the next three years, with an enormous contribution from local industry and the voluntary labour of members and others, a second storey was added to a crumbling observation tower to accommodate a radio room, kitchen, toilet and observation deck, with a small meeting room in the cellar. The Hill 60 Search and Rescue Coordination Centre opened on April 16, 1983.

The Kiama Flotilla folded in the early 1990s, with its remaining members reforming as Coast Guard Shellharbour.

Bellambi members constructed a small room on top of an amenities block but as Bellambi Harbour was prone to unsuitable weather conditions, their vessel was moored in Port Kembla. Lake Illawarra operated from a mobile base driven to the Windang ramp at the lake's entrance, with a vessel kept on a trailer at a member's home.

The flotillas operated a variety of vessels, including Bellambi's *Bluefin 1*, a SharkCat that sank at its mooring in suspicious circumstances in 1994. It was salvaged and recommissioned, first for Kiama and then Shellharbour. It was followed by 23 foot SharkCat *Toohey's Rescue* and a 7m Marlin Broadbill before *Bellambi Rescue*, a 7m aluminium monohull, was built by Wollongong's Sea Wolf Boats for about \$40,000 in time to serve at the 2000 Olympics. It was followed in 2006 by a SharkCat that was replaced in 2011 with MR Port Kembla's current 8m Kevlcat, *Port Kembla 30*, as part of the new MRNSW fleet. CG Lake Illawarra made do with a number of small vessels including a 5.99 m Hirondele Excalibur, *Lake Illawarra*, that served from 2009 until replaced with a 5m Cobia, *PK 20*, in 2013.

In 2006, the RVCP was still operating out of a small base in Wollongong, with little operational need for the *J.T. Lees*, a large, costly former police vessel. With the Bermagui flotilla located some 280km south as a lone AVCGA operation in an area largely served by the RVCP, then Squadron Commodore Bruce Mitchell - now Illawarra Regional Operations Manager - proposed a swap: the RVCP should take over Bermagui, with the *J.T. Lees* moved south where a large vessel was needed and RVCP Wollongong should merge with CG Bellambi to form a Wollongong flotilla and acquire Bermagui's SharkCat. With some



Port Kembla 30, delivered as part of the new MRNSW fleet in 2011, joins a regional Search and Rescue Exercise in August 2017.



A World War II gun battery at Hill 60, before work to add a second storey to accommodate a Coast Guard radio room in the 1980s.

heartache and overcoming a fair degree of latent parochialism, the deal was accepted.

With the inception of MRNSW, the Wollongong, Lake Illawarra and Hill 60 flotillas amalgamated as MR Port Kembla, with Peter Purnell as its inaugural Unit Commander. Shellharbour joined MRNSW but remained an independent unit.

Today, MR Port Kembla has two vessels, with crews rostered on duty from 7am to 4pm on weekends and public holidays and on call around the clock. Since moving to a 24/7 operation in 1995, the Hill 60 radio base has handled all Illawarra marine radio traffic and monitors after hours calls to MR Shoalhaven and MR Jervis Bay to the south.

MR Port Kembla has reduced the response time for its offshore vessel, *PK 30*, building a ready room for crews at Port Kembla Harbour, with the vessel kept on an AirBerth in the adjacent small-boat harbour for immediate deployment.

A former water ski club building at the Oak Flats Ramp is a base for crews and *PK 20* on Lake Illawarra. Hill 60 has recently been upgraded with a new Reditalk Digital Radio System and work is under way on external building repairs.

With about 80 operational members, the unit Logs On about 4,500 vessels a year and responds to about eight incidents on our waterways a month.

John Aldridge

Courage at sea earns commendation for trio

Shellharbour volunteers build operation from remnants of closed flotilla.

The Marine Rescue Shellharbour unit of today had its genesis further south on the Illawarra coastline as part of the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association.

The Coast Guard had established a Wollongong flotilla in the 1970s as the first in a Southern NSW Squadron that gradually grew to include operations at Bellambi, Lake Illawarra, Kiama and Bermagui.

By the early 1990s, however, the Kiama flotilla had folded, with its remaining members forming the nucleus of a new Coast Guard Shellharbour, NF7, north on the coastline. Set up as a 'flotilla in formation' ahead of its official commissioning in 1999, it had 10 members, which has grown to 34 active volunteers today.

The Shellharbour flotilla was based in Town Street on the hill above the boat harbour, where it is still located. Its first accommodation was a caravan until in the 1990s it progressed to a rudimentary site shed that had no windows, bathroom or operating systems. The members spent years transforming the shed to increase its functionality. After tireless fundraising and long walks to the bathroom, the unit was able to build its current base, which was commissioned in 2014.

The first Commander was John Griffith, who served until 1993 before returning to the leadership in 1994. Peter May has held senior roles on the Squadron Board and on the local unit executive for the past 24 years, including more than 10 years as Unit Commander. He is now Deputy to Unit Commander Richard O'Connor.

DUC May said the early volunteer operations had struggled for funds.

"There were times when other members and I paid for fuel out of our own pockets," he said.

With crews frequently operating on second-hand boats not built for rescue, he recalled a hair-raising



Shellharbour 30, a 10m Naiad, returns to harbour from another successful rescue mission.

journey to Sydney on a boat prone to broaching, when a southerly blew up.

"It was so bad, when we made it back, there were people who never set foot on a boat again," he said.

Coast Guard Shellharbour's first vessel was a five-eighth model of a cruiser donated by a member of the public in late 1991. Far too small to meet the demands of a rescue service, it was sold a short time later and replaced by 7m open cabin SharkCat *Blue Fin 1*. After sinking on its mooring at CG Bellambi, the boat had been recommissioned and deployed to Kiama and then passed to Shellharbour, remaining in operation until 1998, when the flotilla built its first new vessel.

The 8m Excalibur vessel, named *Shelly's Rescue* in recognition of its sponsorship from the Shellharbour Club, was commissioned in 1998.

In 2000, Shellharbour joined other flotillas deployed to support the Sydney Olympic Games.

DUC May said vessels, including *Shelley's Rescue*, had maintained exclusion zones on Sydney Harbour for the sailing competition and fireworks for the opening and closing ceremonies and carried out security patrols at Ryde to prevent private craft travelling upstream to the Games' Olympic Park location.



Coast Guard Shellharbour vessel *Shelley's Rescue* in 2005.

In 2005, the unit upgraded to a former police vessel, an 8m Noosa Cat, also named *Shelly's Rescue*, which served until its current vessel, a 10m Naiad, *Shellharbour 30*, was commissioned in 2014.

The past and present members are very proud of the unit's achievements since its foundation, particularly its operations to save lives on the busy Illawarra coastline.

Three of its long-serving members, Peter Keft, Shane Gallaty and Geoff Troth, were awarded the Commissioner's Commendation for Courage for an operation in 2014 to save three people, including a young boy, on board a tinnie that had run out of fuel 1km east of Gerringong Harbour in rough conditions. The crew of *SH 30* headed out at 6pm, pushing into wind gusts of 60 knots

and short steep seas up to 4m.

Just after sunset a sea fog rolled in, reducing visibility to 2nm. Even with its navigation lights on, the rescue crew could only sight the tinnie once *SH 30* was within 100m. A line was attached with difficulty and all three passengers taken aboard *SH 30* for the return to shore.

The members of Shellharbour continue their commitment to fundraising, last year staging a golf day as an innovative way to boost finances and thank the community for its ongoing support. The event attracted a field of 48 players, including unit members, local businesses, community leaders, supporters and a team from MRNSW Headquarters for an enjoyable day on the greens.

Alana Heywood

Shoalhaven enjoys boaters' strong support

Unit evolves from fishing radio club to rescue service on Illawarra waterways.

The strength of MR Shoalhaven's support in the large local boating and fishing community can be traced to its origin as the Shoalhaven Anglers Club, formed in July 1974 as a radio club supporting the area's fishermen.

The original members were allocated "SA" call signs, a practice that continues for the unit's 750 radio club members, who support its 90 volunteers and their operations.

Ten people attended the club's original meeting in the home of Alan and Margaret McGilvray. Matt McKillop was elected as president, a position he held for five years. In its first year, membership stood at 130, with an annual subscription of \$2.

The Greenwell Point radio base, operating from the McGilvrays' home, was officially opened in September 15, 1975, with the call sign VJ2MZ. In the 1980s, the Shoalhaven Anglers Club became the Shoalhaven Marine Rescue Association Inc (SMRA).

In 1991, SMRA was accredited as a Search and Rescue Coordination Centre and around this time affiliated with the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association, a relationship that continued until it became part of MRNSW in 2010.

The SMRA gained its first facilities in 1992 when it leased a crew shed in South Greenwell Point previously occupied by the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol. The premises are still used for crew facilities, meetings and training.

The radio base was transferred from the McGilvrays' home to the Pilot House at Crookhaven Heads, officially opening on February 2, 1997 as a Search and Rescue Coordination Centre.

The SARCC had live-in managers until 2011, when the building was renovated and the living rooms converted to office spaces for personnel and a roster system introduced for volunteers on duty in



New vessels delivered since the transition to MRNSW, *Shoalhaven 30 (A.M. McGilvray II)* and *Shoalhaven 20 (Crookhaven II)*, on the Crookhaven River. Photo: Danielle Carter.

the radio room.

Shoalhaven's area of operations stretches from Kiama to Jervis Bay, including the Crookhaven and Shoalhaven river systems. The entrance to the Crookhaven River can be dangerous in a run out tide and north-easterly wind, resulting in numerous rescue operations but also, sadly, many deaths over the years.

Shoalhaven volunteers have contributed to the organisation of marine rescue beyond their local waterways, with members on the State Rescue Board and Volunteer Marine Rescue Council.

The last chair of the VMRC was current Shoalhaven Unit Commander Bill Carter, who also represented the VRA on the Facilitation Committee charged with establishing the new MRNSW and subsequently was appointed to the Foundation Board by the State Government. He was elected as the Illawarra Regional Director on the Board from 2010 to 2014 and again from 2016 to 2017.

Since the inception of MRNSW, Shoalhaven has had access to well managed, nationally accredited training, far more capable, safer vessels and support through a professionally managed Headquarters, something that was not possible before 2009.



The crew of *TSRV Crookhaven* assists a stranded vessel.

The unit has taken delivery of two new, purpose-built rescue vessels. A Steber 38, *Shoalhaven 30 (A.M. McGilvray II)* was commissioned in August 2011, followed in 2017 by a 7.5m Ocean Cylinder, *SA 20*.

These modern vessels are a far cry from the first volunteer rescue boat on Shoalhaven waters, *Westgate 11*, a 32 foot wooden Army vessel bought for \$300 in the mid 1970s after it was stolen in Sydney and abandoned on the rocks at Plantation Point, Jervis Bay.

It was deployed by both the RVCP and Anglers Cub for five years before it developed a serious leak and was disposed of by fire at Greenwell Point after being stripped of its saleable parts. A second-hand

vessel purchased from the Army, *SA 24*, was officially christened in 1981.

Owned by SMRA, it was initially crewed by members of the RVCP and available SMRA members and helpers. It served until 2002 when it was replaced by *TSRV Crookhaven*, a new 9.2m aluminium Seatamer. Later renamed *SA 31*, the boat was written off following a grounding in February 2016.

In 1994, an ex-Navy 12m workboat was acquired. Named the *A.M. McGilvray (SA 8)* in honour of Alan and Margaret McGilvray, it carried out many hundreds of rescues, searches and assists until sold ahead of the delivery of *SA 30*.

Bill Carter

Saving lives on the water in Jervis Bay's DNA

Rescue fleet's largest vessel safeguards boating community for 28 years.

The ancestor of the largest rescue vessel operating in the MRNSW fleet today was a small 15 foot runabout deployed as the first volunteer rescue boat on the large, busy and hazardous Jervis Bay.

Forty-seven years later, that runabout would be dwarfed by the 40 foot Steber *Jervis Bay 40 (Colin Woods)* safeguarding the bay's boaters in company with the agile *JB 20*.

The Shoalhaven division of the Volunteer Coastal Patrol was established in 1972, operating from the Hyams Beach shop on Jervis Bay. About 20 people joined up, including local personality Dick Young, Alf Settree, who became search master and Des Jarrold, the inaugural Commander. Their first boat was that small runabout, *Aquarius 1*.

The base moved to Vincentia until in the late 1970s, Alan McGilvray, whose home at Greenwell Point already accommodated the Shoalhaven Anglers Club's radio base, became the Commander. Alan moved the RVCP base to Greenwell Point and the two services worked in conjunction with each other on radio duties and vessel operations.

In 1991, a separate Jervis Bay RVCP division was established under Commander Ian Bates, with an annual budget of about \$3,500 and 10 to 20 members. A radio base was set up in a donated caravan at Tapalla Point. An 18 foot half cabin Savage, *JB Alpha*, was acquired in 1993 and replaced by a Broadbill, *Tony Onorato*, in 1995.

Founding member Wayne Walker became Commander in 1999, the same year the Australian Federal Police withdrew from marine rescue. After a campaign to ensure the police boat *Colin Woods* stayed on the bay, the division became the proud owner of the eight-year-old 12.5m Steber, valued at about \$300,000. A period of expansion



The largest rescue vessel in the MRNSW fleet, *Jervis Bay 40 (Colin Woods)*, powers past Point Perpendicular. Photo: Brendan Trembath.

began, with the division now able to provide extended rescue services up to 15nm outside the bay. Wayne, who maintained an after hours radio watch from his home for more than a decade, gained Shoalhaven Council and Federal Government support for the construction of the division's two-storey radio base at Huskisson, which opened in 2001. A second vessel, the 6m *Ian E Bates*, was purchased in 2005.

The shift to MRNSW was a major milestone in the unit's development.

In 2012, *JB 40 (Colin Woods)* underwent a \$410,000 total refit, returning home with Wayne at the helm, and two secondary vessels have since been delivered. *JB 20 (Wayne Walker II)* was delivered in 2016 to replace the original *Wayne Walker*, which had been commissioned just nine weeks before the inspirational former leader's passing in 2014. The 7.5m Ocean Cylinder specialises on the narrow creeks and shallower areas of the bay that *JB 40* is unable to navigate.

Unit training officer Tony Drover served as a General Director on the Board of the new MRNSW for five



MR Jervis Bay's annual Australia Day Duck Derby at Huskisson draws large crowds of locals and visitors, vying for coveted prizes.

years from 2010, contributing to training programs and governance.

With the creed of Volunteers Saving Lives on the Water in their DNA, the unit's 86 members are committed to assisting the boating public, with crews taking part in numerous search and rescue missions. Last August, *JB 40* rescued three crew members who issued a Mayday when their 20m trawler struck a submerged object and began sinking in 600m of water. On April 2, both vessels joined the air and sea search for a fisherman washed off rocks south of the bay.

With *JB 40* berthed at HMAS

Creswell, the unit works closely with the armed services. Crews help develop national rescue capability, taking part in several air drop training exercises with the Royal Australian Air Force each year.

The unit is well known for its annual Australia Day Duck Derby at Huskisson. Excited children, parents and grandparents cheer on 500 ducks to the finish line of each race for the coveted \$500 prize money. This annual fundraiser is supported by other activities managed by the unit's fundraising team, ably led by Leona Curran.

Ron Walsh

Volunteers beef up safety on Sussex Inlet

Unit founded in butcher shop eagerly awaiting modern new boat.

Marine rescue services in Sussex Inlet began from volunteer stalwart John Nicholas' butcher shop in 1974.

A local resident in the isolated coastal village, John established a marine radio base in his store for the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol base at Greenwell Point, of which he was a member.

As more Sussex Inlet residents joined the RVCP, it was decided in 1982 to apply for a separate division to be established to serve the growing boating community of Sussex Inlet and St Georges Basin. The new division was formally established with John as the first Divisional Commander.

Members used their own boats to meet the needs of the boating community until in

1984, after successful fundraising and loans from four members, the division purchased its first vessel, *Patrol Rescue*.

The new vessel, still supported by the members' private boats, provided an efficient rescue service for the local inland waters as well as the adjacent coastal waters of Wreck Bay. The unit began an active fundraising campaign to acquire a new boat, opening a shop in the main street in 1986. Retiring volunteer Kate Jones recalled that the members would make 320 dozen lamingtons a month to sell in the shop, raising the \$40,000 cost of the new vessel, purpose-built in South Australia, within a year.

Drawing on the volunteers' experience and operational needs on the bar at the entrance to the inlet, a jet propulsion vessel powered by a 210hp turbocharged diesel engine was ordered to meet the demands of crossing the bar at any time except at very low tides. This proved an excellent choice with the new vessel, also named *Patrol Rescue* after the original boat's sale, performing to all expectations.

A rigid hull inflatable boat also was acquired for inshore work where shallow waters required a vessel with very little draft. In 2006, an 8.5m jet boat, *Community Spirit*, was constructed for offshore work. At the same time the inshore RHIB was replaced by a 5.9m Stabicraft named *Community Spirit II*.

After the advent of MRNSW, the \$356,000 10.9m jetboat *Sussex Inlet 30* was commissioned under wet skies in 2014, along with the unit's redeveloped wharf, made possible with a \$36,420 Veolia Mulwaree Trust grant and members' fundraising.

The division's original base was a former private boatshed built around 1940 and given to the Shoalhaven City Council in 1981 for the RVCP's use. By 2006, this building was not only too small for the increased membership and necessary facilities and equipment but was also slowly sinking into the inlet and contained extensive asbestos. It was time to plan a new base.

With the generous assistance of council, a Federal Government grant and overwhelming support from the local community, a new base was designed and constructed to meet the needs of both the local and visiting boating communities. It was opened on December 2, 2009, by Shoalhaven Mayor Cr Paul Green.

Over 45 years members have provided an essential emergency service on their busy waterways. In 2012, the NSW Police Force Marine Area Command presented the unit with a Certificate of Appreciation for its work in the search for three men who drowned on a night fishing expedition on St Georges Basin. The crews dedicated 156 volunteer hours over nine days to the operation, eventually locating one of the deceased men.

Members also have contributed to the safety of the community, helping develop a Strategic Action Plan to



The rain-soaked commissioning of *Sussex Inlet 30* in February 2014.



The Sussex Inlet Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol vessel *Patrol Rescue*.

improve the village's resilience and ability to respond to and recover from natural hazards and disasters. The plan was commended in the 2017 Resilient Australia Awards.

As well as their roles in local operations, members also have contributed at a wider level.

David Jones, who joined the division in 1979, rose to the position of Divisional Commander and later became Chairman and Company Secretary of the RVCP. He was awarded the Emergency Services Medal in 2004 and is a Life Member of MRNSW. Kate Jones became the MRNSW Maritime Liaison Officer.

As well as Divisional Commander, John Nicholas also held positions including Captain, Southern Region Captain and RVCP Officer Commanding for four years. He was

presented the Emergency Services Medal in 2002. A Life Member of MRNSW, John was recognised for his commitment to marine rescue when Governor of NSW, Major David Hurley, presented him with a South Coast Community Award in 2015.

In 2009, John Lang was appointed Divisional Commander, overseeing the transition to MRNSW. He was followed by Ron Ford, who was elected Unit Commander in 2014 and Ellen Dodd in 2017.

A successful recruitment campaign has seen the unit boost its operational capability to continue its mission of saving lives on the water.

Members are now eagerly awaiting the delivery of the unit's new vessel *Sussex Inlet 20*, a 7.5m Ocean Cylinder, later this year.

Les Pataky

Ulladulla rises from ashes of its lost history

Inaugural Commander's ambitious vision realised over 45 years.

When a huge fire tore through the harbourfront base of MR Ulladulla in early October 2013, it destroyed everything in its path, including the historical memorabilia amassed over more than four decades since the unit's simple beginnings in 1974.

With its original members and resources drawn from the local game fishing club, the operation became a fully-fledged division of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in 1979, largely due to the efforts of Commander Fred Edmunds.

Starting with very little but an ambitious vision, Commander Edmunds' achievements were many and influential. Our first vessel, *Kyli*, a half-cabin runabout bought from the Navy, was commissioned and our radio base - previously operating from Fred's home - was funded and built in 1984, thanks to his financial and administrative skills.

The unit has been served by 10 rescue vessels throughout its history, including those for rapid response and others with the capacity to operate under heavier conditions. The members' refurbishment of *Warden*, a timber boat bought in poor condition from the NSW Police in 1989, earned the NSW Water Police's Annual Proficiency Award "for excellence in boat restoration".

With a proud history of at least 102 missions over a decade, *Warden* remains a favourite with several longer-standing members. It is particularly remembered for its role in rescuing competitors in the 1993 Sydney to Hobart yacht race and leading the flotilla in the Sydney Harbour sail past for the 1994 visit of RVCP Patron, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales.

In 1999, it was replaced by *Strathallan*, one of six Waveney class rescue vessels the RVCP imported from the RNLI in Britain. Steel hulled and useful in heavy seas, in



Total destruction firefighters battle the blaze in the Ulladulla unit's base on the October long weekend in 2013. Photo: Lisa Hardwick.

truth it was slow, uncomfortable and expensive to maintain. Its 2005 operation to rescue the *San Giuseppe Star* trawler in extreme winter weather conditions and seas of up to 11m saw the division awarded the inaugural NSW Maritime Medal and Meritorious Service awards presented to crew members John Kennedy, Doug Musker, Peter Owen and George McFarland, search master John Lipman and Kioloa radio operator Fred Noble.

It was succeeded in 2006 by another RNLI vessel, *Encounter*, an Arun class vessel that could manage almost any sea conditions. In 2007 the division received its third Water Police Award "for the most improved lifeboat during the year". *Encounter* did a sterling job, firstly in orange RVCP livery and then in MRSW red and white, before making way for our first brand new vessel, *Ulladulla 30 (Warden II)*, which serves us well to this day, along with *UL 10*, a Zodiac Milpro delivered in 2018.

Members were shocked by the destruction of our base six years ago only months after major extensions. The fire destroyed our radio, administration, training and garage facilities but the loss of all the awards and memorabilia that



The Ulladulla unit's first radio room around 1986, after it was relocated from founding Division Commander Fred Edmunds' home.

had accumulated over the years was particularly disappointing. As our vessels were not touched, we maintained our services to the boating public seamlessly. The following year was difficult as we operated out of a site shed with minimal facilities and equipment. With great effort from then Unit Commander Ken Lambert and much help from our local community, Shoalhaven Council and Parliamentary representatives, MRNSW Headquarters and our members, we were able to move into our new base only 18 months later. While we were shocked to see the old base go, we are delighted with the amazing facility that emerged from the ashes.

Over the years we have been led by 10 commanders, including Doug

Musker, whose major contribution was to support our transition from the RVCP to MRNSW, working tirelessly to make it happen. Doug served as the Illawarra Regional Director from 2012 to 2014, with the unit's Operations Officer Kevin Marshall elected to the same role in 2017. In 2019, the unit has grown into a modern, well equipped and competent operation. From the *Kyli* and the radio room in the commander's home we have developed a state of the art base, the latest in communications, IT and search and rescue equipment, a fully equipped training room and three vessels crewed by the most highly trained personnel in our history. We feel we have indeed arrived.

Jeff Peterson

Small unit provides a professional service

Kioloa's message to South Coast boaters: we've got you covered.

Unlike most MRNSW units that are based in larger towns and cities, MR Kioloa is located on a quiet, isolated stretch of coastline, watching over boaters in Kioloa and Bawley Point, mid-way between Ulladulla and Batemans Bay.

The Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol Kioloa division was first established in 1992 to support the local boating community and increasing number of people with boats holidaying in the area. Kioloa's association with boating, however, stretches much further back in time.

With the rise of the timber industry on the South Coast in the 19th century, a timber mill was established in 1884 on the site where the MR Kioloa base now stands. The site was chosen because of Kioloa's sheltered waters and safe anchorage, the same features that have made it popular with boaters over the decades.

The mill operated until 1893 when it was destroyed by fire. Its replacement operated from 1912 until it, too, was destroyed by a fire in 1926.

Local resident Bill Rowley was integral to the development of marine rescue services at Kioloa.

Bill joined the RVCP's Ulladulla division in 1985 but soon saw the need to establish a base at Kioloa, as the rescue response time to incidents in the area was around 90 minutes from either Ulladulla or Batemans Bay.

His dream was achieved on September 26, 1992, when the Kioloa RVCP division was officially founded with a radio communications room operating from a garage at the rear of his home and his vessel, *Dylan II*, leased as the first "rescue" vessel.

Bill's other great achievement occurred during his appointment as the first Division Commander: the construction of a permanent base next to the Kioloa boat ramp,



The MR Kioloa base stands watch over the sheltered waters that have attracted boaters for decades.

which was officially opened almost exactly three years to the day after the division's establishment, on September 25, 1995.

Although the division operated a number of small boats in its early years, its first purpose-built vessel, a Naiad, *Kioloa Rescue*, was acquired in 2003.

The size and type of boat deployed by the unit has been constrained by the need to launch and recover the vessel not only at a boat ramp open to the sea but also across the beach. For this reason, a 4x4 tractor has always been an essential part of the unit's equipment.

Kioloa Rescue was lost during a search for a missing person near Depot Beach in 2009, when it overturned in heavy seas and was washed on to the coastal rock platform. Skipper Keiran Cruise and crewman Peter Lee were rescued by helicopter but the vessel was destroyed.

In 2010, a number of significant changes occurred at Kioloa. On January 1, the unit joined the new MRNSW.

While not much changed for the local boating community, this had an enormous impact on the unit, which became part of a larger, coordinated and professional volunteer organisation well supported



Kioloa Rescue in 2003 with Unit Commander Fred Noble (second from left), MP Joanna Gash and crew Adam Rowley, Richard Hardwick, David Rawcroft, John Ross, Scott McGregor and Stan Ball.

by a properly structured State organisation. This meant greater support for training, administration and the operation of its vessels.

Through the tireless work of Fred Noble, who had been Commander since 2000, funds were raised for an extension to the base, meaning the unit's vessel and launch tractor could be garaged in one place, significantly reducing emergency response times.

The unit also purchased a new vessel to replace the lost *Kioloa Rescue*, the 6.25m Cobia, *Kioloa 20*.

Designed to be launched and recovered across the beach and permanently "moored" on its trailer, the vessel is a versatile asset that also can be quickly deployed by road to assist in coastal and inland

waterway emergencies.

Although MR Kioloa is a small unit, its dedicated volunteers operate a professional radio base and rescue service for the boating community.

The unit receives generous back-up from the neighbouring MR Ulladulla whenever needed.

The members' message to the boating public is "we've got you covered".

It doesn't matter if this base is not open, due to MRNSW's investment in an excellent communications network, someone in Marine Rescue is always listening and someone will come to help.

Kioloa members work hard to make sure that 'someone' is them.

Peter White

Volunteers' professionalism, bravery lauded

Batemans Bay keeps pace with changing technology on and off the water.

Just after 1.30pm on October 1, 2011, the MR Batemans Bay radio base received an urgent call from a radio club member who had spotted a boat upside down in the water near Yellow Rock at the entrance to the bay. The seas were rough, with winds at 20 knots from the south.

So began one of the most difficult days in the unit's 37 years.

The 4.9m Shark Cat had overturned on a treacherous sandbar off Maloneys Beach. An off duty lifesaver on his jet ski had found an 11-year-old girl clinging to the hull. Her grandparents and young sister were pulled from the water but could not be revived.

The unit's rescue crews were swiftly deployed to the extensive search for the girl's missing uncle, 47, spending coming days scouring the waterways for any sign before the search was officially suspended in poor visibility and rough seas.

This is what we volunteers do and this is our history.

The development of the Batemans Bay unit into the modern and effective operation of 2019 started with a radio club, known as Bay Marine, operated by two people from Beach Road in 1982. By the following year, negotiations were under way to form a division of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol. The seven members on the first committee came together in 1984, forming the nucleus of the operation that would eventually become MR Batemans Bay.

The division's first vessel, *Shell Rescue*, was purchased in 1988.

In 1990, the Patrol acquired a radio communications van, which operated until 1995, when a base was set up in the local marina manager's office. Equipment was stored in a shipping container. The local fleet expanded with a 3.8m Zodiac and a 48 foot steel Solent class lifeboat, *Community Spirit*.



The MR Batemans Bay fleet, *Batemans 21*, *Batemans 20* and *Batemans 30*, is crammed with technology that boosts the unit's ability to save lives on the water. Photo: Richard Blundell.

Community Spirit was the vessel deployed on the night of December 26, 1998, to rescue 12 sailors stranded on board *ABN Amro Challenge* in that year's fatal Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. George Mercieca, Peter Paine, Gordon Patterson, Peter Rosenkranz and Michael Trick set out at 11.35pm using GPS and radar to track the yacht, which was taking on water and had steering problems. The crew attached a 100m tow line on the first attempt in the pitch black, in north east winds up to 40 knots and with swells up to 4m, arriving back to port some six hours later. The five volunteers were deservedly awarded a Group Citation for Bravery.

Negotiations had begun with council in 1997 for a building to accommodate the expanding operation, which by then had 54 members supporting a boating community of almost 1,000 that was growing fast. Construction began in September 2003, employing only local tradespeople and the base opened in 2004.

The unit has had 11 Commanders over the years: Tony Onorato, Rod Baldwin, John Gillow, Peter Dewar,



The MR Batemans Bay base, opened in November 2004.

Gordon Patterson, Rodney Plumb, Robert Bowmaker, Howard Staples, Carl Stewart, Mick Syrek and Richard Blundell.

A Waveney Class lifeboat from the United Kingdom became the division's primary rescue vessel in 1999. Our fleet now comprises three safe, reliable vessels: 11.5m Steber *Batemans 30*, 7.5m Ocean Cylinder *BM 20* and 6.25m Cobia *BM 21*, all crammed full of technology that has boosted our ability to save lives.

The introduction of the Seahawk vessel monitoring system, mobile Logging On via the *MarineRescue* app, electronic risk assessment,

touch screen chart plotters, radars and new vessels have meant ongoing training to keep pace with the technological changes. New touch screen radios will be the next significant change for our operators when installed later this year.

Among these developments, the one constant has been our volunteers, who turn out day in and day out with the sole aim of saving lives on the water. Our members can be relied upon to respond with professionalism and dedication because that is what is required and what volunteers do.

Richard Blundell

Tuross expands capability on turbulent bars

Unit ready to respond to boating emergencies on two river crossings.



The Tuross unit safeguards boaters on the hazardous Tuross and Moruya bars, with new resources including Rescue Water Craft *Tuross 13* and *Naiad*, *Tuross 20*.

The Tuross River bar is a notoriously perilous stretch of water with shifting sandbanks, cross currents and, at times, extremely turbulent waters.

Over the years, boats have capsized and sunk and lives have been lost and saved.

Up until the late 1980s, rescues were performed by experienced local residents living or working close by.

In 1988, a group of concerned residents felt these few willing volunteers should no longer be asked to put their lives, health and property at risk without protection, insurance and purpose-built rescue vessels.

A proposal to establish a sea rescue service was unanimously supported at a public meeting on June 22, 1988 and the Tuross Sea Rescue Service was subsequently formed.

On August 14, Royal Australian Navy Vice Admiral Sir James Willis was appointed Patron.

Sir James lived in Tuross for some years and was often seen out training with the boat crews.

The original office bearers were: President John Price, Vice President Michael Taylor, Secretary Peter Turner, Treasurer Margaret Watkins, Boat Captain Tony Mackenzie and Deputy Boat Captain Peter Taylor.

On September 17, 1988, the service affiliated with the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association as the Tuross Rescue Squad.

By 1990, the squad had 58 members, of whom 12 were qualified as boat crew, and a 24-hour emergency radio watch was being maintained.

The squad's first boat was a 3.8m Zodiac loaned by Canberra's St Edmunds College, which had a hostel in Tuross.

A 4m inflatable rubber boat was bought in 1990, followed by a 4.5m RHIB in 1991.

Two dilapidated sheds were leased on the riverfront and demolished to make way for the construction of a new base, with the first meeting held on site in January 1994.

Sir James officially opened the base, which remains in use today, in November 1994.

The facility was initially equipped with second hand and borrowed radio equipment, with new 27MHz and UHF radios gradually acquired.

The squad completed a garage in 1997 to accommodate a 1973 Land Cruiser used to tow its rescue boats.

As well as marine rescue, the squad at this time also operated as a general VRA squad, responding to land incidents and surf rescues.

When the Thredbo landslide

occurred in July 1997, five Tuross members left the coastline and headed into the high country to join the rescue response. The five, who were qualified VRA land search operators, were recognised by the State Government for their contribution to the operation.

In 2005, the squad affiliated with the Coast Guard to access formalised training of its boat crews.

In 2010, after joining MRNSW and acquiring a new identity as MR Tuross, the unit took delivery of a single jet *Naiad*, *Tuross 20*.

Unit Commander Blaise Madden, who joined the same year, said the transition had had little impact at first but the unit had since enjoyed significantly upgraded resources, including the nimble new Rescue Water Craft, *Tuross 13*.

A new 4.8m *Naiad*, *Tuross 12*,

was delivered in late 2018 and is a valuable asset to deploy on Tuross Lake and the Moruya River.

The unit was dealt a blow in 2015 when an airberth handed over by Roads and Maritime Services was swept out to sea and destroyed in severe storms. It was subsequently replaced by a new AirBerth. The unit was able to replace its wharf decking with the assistance of an IMB grant.

The unit has expanded its operational capability to protect boaters on the risky Moruya bar. A two-year project came to fruition in 2018 with a new finger wharf and AirBerth added to Preddys Wharf in the river to provide a permanent mooring for *TU 20* just five minutes from the bar, ensuring a rapid response to assist boaters in trouble.

Blaise Madden



Tuross Rescue Squad members Graham Mills, Peter Taylor, Harry Watkins, Tony McKenzie, Tim Kilborn and Tony Brown in 1998.

Narooma members' commitment unwavering

Amalgamation created highly-respected world class organisation: Commander.

The members of MR Narooma have embraced continual change and weathered numerous relocations over 37 years but the volunteers' passion for keeping boaters safe and the community's support for their services have remained constant throughout.

Local realtor Henry Ramage spearheaded the establishment of the Narooma division of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in 1982. The district's senior police officer, Sergeant Harry George, approved the new body and Neville Gough was appointed as the first Divisional Commander, with Bob Ingleton as Second in Command, Henry Ramage as Search Master and Barry Naismith as Radio Officer, signaling the start of marine rescue operations.

A patrol base was set up at the Riverside Caravan Park, managed by Barry Naismith and his wife Pat, who monitored 27 MHz radio around the clock seven days a week from their home. The Naismiths' dedication enabled the patrol to become firmly established in Narooma.

With the later acquisition of VHF radio equipment, Narooma implemented a regular link up with the Coast Guard at Lakes Entrance on the Victorian coastline and Greenwell Point further north, resulting in timely exchanges of weather observations on the Far South Coast.

The unit initially depended on the use of its members' boats for routine duties and several successful major rescues were performed with the support of local boaters. With insurance issues surrounding the use of private craft and crew training non-existent without its own vessel, Narooma set out with \$7,000 in hand to purchase a secondhand SharkCat in 1987.

After searching as far north as Sydney and finding no suitable boat available within the budget,

the members approached the local Westpac Bank for finance to purchase a new vessel.

A \$33,000 Kevlcat arrived by road from Queensland in July that year and following some fitting out and shaking down, *Patrol Rescue* served the boating community for the next nine years, wearing out three sets of motors in the process.

A replacement 9.6m Randall flybridge cruiser was commissioned in 1996, working hard until mid-1999, when the RVCP allocated Narooma one of six 44 foot Waveney Class lifeboats brought to Australia from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution in the UK. The Waveney was welcomed for its ability to withstand Narooma's characteristic heavy weather and rough seas.

Following the transition to MRNSW, the unit in March 2014 acquired a Naiad RHIB, *Narooma 30 (John Young)*, resulting in a remarkable improvement in incident response times. *NA 30* is still in operation today with two Rescue Water Craft working alongside.

The Narooma base relocated six times before finally settling in the old Pilot Station, regarded as its true home, with sweeping views of the entrance to the Wagonga inlet through to the Narooma bar, the northern coastline and Montague Island. None of these moves would have been possible without the members overcoming the many logistical difficulties in shifting equipment. Structural and internal improvements have equipped the base as a Search and Rescue Coordination Centre and recent grants have funded improved storage facilities and technology, with a radio update under way.

MR Narooma is a lively community organisation with a healthy cohort of 42 volunteers who regularly demonstrate their commitment to and passion for keeping the boating public safe,



Narooma 30 (John Young) has produced a remarkable improvement in incident response times. Photo: Brian Gunter.



A Waveney Class lifeboat from the UK was welcomed for its ability to withstand Narooma's characteristic heavy weather and rough seas.

particularly through regular training to hone skills and efficiency.

The unit is justifiably proud of its achievements and recognition: a 1989 RVCP Staff Officers Award for the most outstanding rescue effort of the year; the 1991 Sieglinde Trophy for the most efficient Australian volunteer sea rescue service boat and crew; and a Commissioner's Commendation for its role in a night rescue of a stricken yacht in 2017.

What hasn't changed over the years is the support of locals and tourists alike, who appreciate the unit's commitment and service in an area vulnerable to rough seas and difficult bar conditions.

Unit Commander Paul Houseman said that looking back over the past 10 years, the benefits of amalgamation were obvious.

"Our radio network now covers the length of the NSW coast with black spots all but eliminated," he said. "All units now operate modern, highly efficient and built for purpose vessels and the training which members receive is universally recognised."

"This is now a highly respected world class organisation and the leadership and professionalism of the staff and volunteers is to be applauded. The next 10 years will build on these solid foundations."

Megan Fraser

A decade of remarkable transformation

Bermagui volunteers take pride and satisfaction in their achievements.

Where did 10 years go? Surely it was only yesterday that Bermagui had a 40-year-old ex-police boat, radios in our homes, uniformity of dress but no uniforms as such and no training to speak of. Members assisted local and visiting boaties when possible and spent a lot of time at the barbecue raising whatever money we could.

We had 15 members, of whom only 10 were truly functional and only one was female.

Initially part of the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard before joining the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, the service grew out of the historical need for local recreational fishermen to go and help their friends and visiting boaties who had broken down. The dedicated few members maintained a listening watch 24/7 with radios installed in their homes. It was not at all unusual to be woken in the very early morning by an interstate tourist phoning to ask what the weather was like and whether it was worth travelling to Bermagui to go fishing.

Our longest-serving member, Jochen Adams, who joined in 1999, said a lack of funding in the early days meant the unit's ageing rescue boat, *Rosslyn*, sometimes wouldn't start and once or twice broke down on a rescue mission.

"Money wasn't available in those days and with becoming Marine Rescue, it certainly has become a more efficient and professional operation," he said.

Former RVCP Divisional Commander David Gelme, who became the first Unit Commander under MRNSW, said it was curious that members had had to pay to be RVCP volunteers.

"No uniform was provided. The division was a 24/7 operation with radios in members' homes. There was only one female member, who was probably the best radio operator on the South Coast. Her husband

was a whiz at fixing radios. They and a lot of original members have resigned but have been replaced by a good crew and we are a happy unit."

The division originally occupied a small wooden hut in the Fishermen's Co-operative grounds, which made way for the construction of the new Co-op building. Through the good graces of the Jubbs, who owned the Bermagui Slipway, a home was found above the slipway workshops: a wonderful rent-free gesture but it became difficult to hear the radios when the workshop was operating its electric welding equipment.

We later moved into the new Co-op building with an upgraded radio room and space for a training room.

Treasurer John Catterall, who joined in 2006, said the main difference under MRNSW was that the training was better.

"Everyone has a more responsible outlook and this is reflected in the standard of service we provide to the community," he said.

In 2008, a well-meaning, but under-resourced member endeavoured to train three new members as qualified crew. When the only qualified skipper resigned under the pressure of being on call 24/7, there was a threat to relocate the rescue vessel to Narooma.

With incredible commitment, two of the three trainees undertook a TAFE course, working 12 hour days and living in a motel or driving the two-hour trip home when they could, achieving their Master 5 qualifications within three months and securing the rescue vessel for Bermagui. By 2013, three members had gained their qualifications as trainers.

With the advent of MRNSW, things started to change. Uniforms were issued and we no longer looked like pirates in a stolen police boat. A new vessel arrived in 2013, with the three stalwarts and an



The well loved and trusted *Bermagui 30* leaves the marina, passing the Bermagui unit's former vessel, *James T. Lee* (far right).



The Bermagui RVCP's original accommodation on the Fishermen's Co-operative grounds.

experienced master from Batemans Bay undertaking the delivery voyage from Forster on the Mid North Coast. Now more than six years old, *Bermagui 30* has more than earned its reputation as a well-loved and trusted vessel, taking its crews through some interesting rescues and exercises. Thanks to constantly improving training resources, there is today a pride and satisfaction quite unknown before, as members achieve their worthwhile goals in every facet of our operations.

Our improved operations have engendered such an "esprit de corps" that recruitment and retention are not an issue. There is a feeling of pride in what we achieve in the community and in being a

part of a rescue service with a "can do" attitude. From a membership of 15 in 2008, we have made a marvellous transition to a modern and equal operation. Of our 33 members, almost 30 per cent are female. Some 40 per cent of the qualified crew, half of the Masters/Coxswains and 35 per cent of the watch officers are women.

What a remarkable difference from 10 years ago. The transition from a helpful but amateurish organisation, with a firmly male dominated culture to a professional, well respected operation with a good gender balance is remarkable as we continue to improve and contribute to a dynamic regional operation.

Alec Percival & Denise Page

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MAKING HISTORY

Praise for our people

Volunteers celebrated during national week

Nominations open for annual awards.

National Volunteer Week is staged each year to thank the volunteers who make a world of difference to our community.

MRNSW volunteers, who give their time and energy every day to save lives on the water, were among those feted during the week from May 20 to 26.

MR Merimbula Unit Commander Bill Blakeman was recognised for the difference he has made to the Far South Coast region when he was awarded the Bega Valley Shire Community Service Medallion as part of the Shire Council's Volunteer Week celebrations.

Mr Blakeman has held the role of Unit Commander since 2014 and also serves as the unit training officer and assessor.

Monaro Regional Operations Manager Glenn Sullivan said Mr Blakeman had been tireless in his commitment to the professional development of unit members in emergency search and rescue response.

"He draws on his extensive maritime experience and knowledge to elevate volunteers to a high standard," Mr Sullivan said.

"Bill's steadfast commitment and the vast amount of personal time he dedicates to training others has been instrumental in ensuring crews operate cohesively and safely.

"There is no doubt his high standard of training has ensured these volunteers not only return safely from sea but also have saved countless lives on the water."

Further north, members of MR Newcastle joined their fellow community volunteers at the Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club's annual Volunteers Week dinner.

Qantas announced that MR Botany Port Hacking member and company trainer Steve Massone had secured a grant to support the unit's



Recognised during National Volunteer Week ... MR Merimbula Unit Commander Bill Blakeman.

training under the airline's Side by Side program, which enables its employees to nominate charities for corporate grant funding.

Nominations are now open for the 2019 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards, one of the largest celebrations of volunteering across the country.

More than 112,000 people from 470 organisations were recognised with awards and certificates last year, with special messages of support received from the NSW Governor, the Prime Minister and the NSW Premier.

Awards are presented in seven categories, including young, adult and senior volunteer of the year, volunteer team and excellence in volunteer management. Nominations close on July 12. Visit the Centre for Volunteering website at volunteering.com.au for details.



Kudos for Sapphire Coast 'angels in blue'

Merimbula boasts highly skilled membership to protect southern boaters.

Research on the history of the Merimbula unit has highlighted that like all things, we continue to evolve and grow.

From its humble beginnings in a radio room in a local caravan park, the unit has grown to its current strength of 66 highly skilled and talented members drawn from the relatively small permanent population on the Sapphire Coast.

The unit covers an extensive area, stretching from the border to the north of Tathra, with the constantly moving sands on the shallow Merimbula Bar creating a particular hazard that catches many boaters unawares.

Our crews' challenging rescues have included a medical evacuation from a cruise ship and most notably, a mission to rescue two fishermen whose 5m runabout was drifting dangerously close to rocks in turbulent conditions off Haycock Point in October 2011.

Thanking the crew, one of the fishermen said "the angels were looking over us today and they wore blue".

The Commissioner's Commendation for Courage was awarded for this operation to Unit Commander Bill Blakeman, Guy Illy and the late Robert Bayliss.

During 2018, the unit Logged On 997 vessels with 2,573 people on board, while fielding 5,108 calls.

Our crews were deployed on 20 operations, ranging from simple tows for mechanical failure to a search for a missing swimmer.

Our members' dedication to remaining current and engaged is a source of pride to the unit, while we also are looking forward to the publication of the history of MR Merimbula and its forerunner, the Merimbula Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, by Rosie Young, whose husband Ted is a long-term member.

Rosie is ensuring our long history is proudly remembered from our



Commissioner Stacey Tannos presents the Commissioner's Commendation for Courage to MR Merimbula Unit Commander Bill Blakeman, Guy Illy and the family of the late Robert Bayliss for the rescue of two fishermen at risk of smashing on to rocks in 2011. Photo: Merimbula News Weekly.

foundations in 1968, after recently arrived keen fisherman Stan delle Vergin noticed there was no fishing club or sea rescue organisation in town. Stan promptly set up a marine radio base in the South Haven Caravan Park operating on 27MHz and with a small group of friends started an embryonic rescue service. These members, including Tim Brown, Harold Bartell and Jack Hope, used their own boats until the group acquired its first vessel, a rubber inflatable boat. Throughout the 1970s the small group grew steadily in expertise and commitment. Jock Fawdon-Gibson provided lectures in seamanship and a radio roster was maintained from members' homes. While the rubber duck was useful in surf and white-water rescues, it was limited in range so members continued to use their own vessels at their own expense for deep water emergencies.

The expansion of the RVCP saw the Merimbula division gain its official charter in October 1982.

Coast Cat, an ex-abalone diving vessel, was acquired in 1983 and replaced in 1997 by the larger and faster *Sapphire Rescue*.

By now, the division boasted 40



The Merimbula unit's rescue vessel, *Sapphire Rescue II*, which served the boating community from 2002 to 2010.

highly trained radio operators and boat crew.

In 1987 it established a permanent radio base in the Big Game & Lakes Angling Club building at Spencer Park. With membership growing throughout the 1990s to match the rapid expansion of recreational boating, consistent training took a high priority. In 2002 *Sapphire Rescue II* was launched.

Unit Commander Barry Harrison, who held the leadership from 2005 through the transition to MRNSW until his retirement in 2014, left a legacy of upgraded facilities and the new vessel, *Merimbula 30*, the first Naiad in the MRNSW fleet.

A \$145,000 renovation of the Spencer Park base was completed in 2014, providing a purpose-built radio operations room and dedicated training and storage facilities and a major redevelopment of the radio equipment, including two 27 MHz and four VHF antennas, a new radio console and seven radios, with provision for expansion.

The unit is heavily engaged in its community, resulting in high public awareness of its life-saving services and ongoing support for its fundraising activities from local residents, businesses and service clubs and visitors.

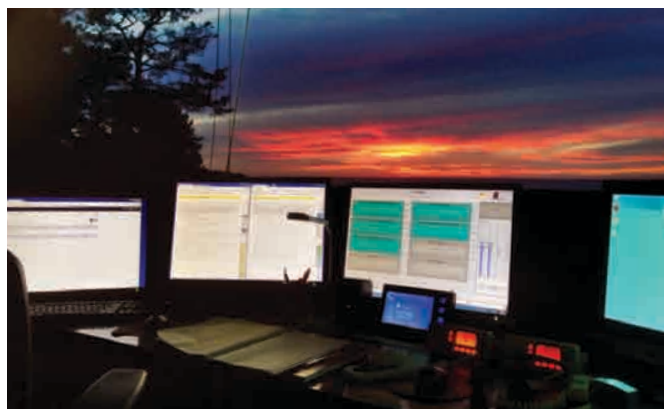
Sonia Teston & Rosie Young

Radio developments strengthen safety chain

Eden volunteers keep watch over boaters, fishers and yacht race sailors.



Then and now ... foundation member Jean Whiter with the bank of marine radios in the MR Eden base and the new computerised communications system in the base today as dawn breaks over Twofold Bay.



Marine Rescue Eden has been an important link in the boating safety chain stretching from Queensland to the Victorian border and beyond for almost 40 years.

Advancing technology has ensured that link is now stronger than ever, with the unit benefiting from a series of major upgrades to its radio base and the region's marine radio infrastructure since the advent of MRNSW.

Eden has been blessed with a strong group of volunteers who have provided a service second to none for boaters, fishers and sailors, including the fleet in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race, on the Far South Coast. The unit's communications coverage of the prestigious annual yacht race makes an important contribution to the safety of the event.

The base assisted in the rescue coordination for the disastrous 1998 race that claimed six crew members and five yachts and saw 55 sailors rescued in severe conditions.

Then Eden Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol Divisional Commander Barry Griffiths told the ABC he had worked a 32-hour shift to coordinate rescues on radios.

"There was a terrible lot of screaming. You could hear the desperation in some of the voices," he said. "Sometimes their radios went dead, and there could have

been a multitude of reasons; [they] were dismayed, some lost power or had too much moisture getting into the radio. It was mountainous seas."

The unit can trace its origins to the late 1970s, when it became apparent there was a need for a radio monitoring service to provide coverage of the coastline between existing stations at Bermagui and Mallacoota in Victoria. The RVCP operation was subsequently formed in 1982. Initially operating with five 27MHz radio sets, the heavily-used service was run from various sites, including the back veranda of founding member Jean Whiter's home. A search began for a location for a permanent station. The site of the recently demolished Harbour Master's cottage on Lookout Point was chosen and after three years of planning and approvals, construction began in 1985, with a grant from the NSW Government and generous donations of money, materials and time from the local community.

Monaro MP and Corrective Services Minister John Akister opened the building overlooking Twofold Bay in April 1986. The initial roster of 45 volunteers operated 24/7. Resources were boosted over time with an enhanced radio suite featuring HF and VHF, as well as a Seaphone service (which later became the VHF Channel 81 repeater).



Past and present members of MR Eden celebrate the 30th anniversary of their radio base in 2016. Photo: Eden Magnet.

Since joining MRNSW, the unit has benefited from significant upgrades, including the computerisation of our radios and installation of Radio over Internet Protocol technology, enabling our communications to be monitored remotely. The unit is grateful to MR Terrey Hills for its support in managing our radios overnight.

Our radio coverage has been vastly improved over the years with the addition of a 24m stand-alone radio tower, built in 2012 with a valuable contribution of \$27,000 from the CYCA SOLAS Trusts, and crucial remote installations on Mt Imlay (Channel 16, Ch 67 and repeater Ch 81) and Timbillica Hill (Ch 16). This work enables the unit to maintain communications

with vessels down into Bass Strait, providing coverage over a notoriously fickle part of the Tasman Sea, and at least as far to the north.

The value of the Mt Imlay work was proven less than a fortnight after it was completed when a 42 foot racing yacht called for help after running aground on a sand bar off Lady Barron on the southern tip of Flinders Island in Bass Strait.

The skipper's VHF Ch 16 call travelled more than 200nm and was received at MR Eden before being relayed to MR Terrey Hills, which then alerted Tasmanian authorities.

The Eden members look forward to many more years of providing our important safety coverage to the boating community.

John McKinnon

Firepower to handle Alpine Lakes' worst

One phone call leads to the development of first unit on inland waters.

As well as being the first MRNSW unit on an inland waterway, MR Alpine Lakes was also the first established under the new unified service, without any previous affiliation with any of the three original marine rescue services.

The birth of the unit was in August 2009, when Inspector Tony Hill from the NSW Police Force Marine Area Command rang me at home in Jindabyne to inquire whether I would be interested in establishing a unit in the Alpine area. This would require me to find enough brave souls in the Monaro district willing to volunteer some of their precious time to assist.

In most country towns, everyone is already involved in one or more of the Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service, Fire & Rescue NSW, NSW Ambulance, Rotary, Lions, fishing clubs and Country Women's Association. At the time, I was the Controller of the Snowy River State Emergency Service in Jindabyne and a member of the Rural Fire Service.

On March 14, 2010, 79 locals attended a meeting at the Berridale pub for all those interested in providing a marine rescue service on Lake Eucumbene and Lake Jindabyne. Over the next three weeks 52 joined up, although this later dropped back to 34.

Monaro Regional Coordinator Bob Herbert, Training Officer Glenn Sullivan and experienced members of MR Batemans Bay invested a great deal of time travelling inland to put us through our training paces. Members took to this enthusiastically as the unit's first vessels were delivered - a 7m Sailfish catamaran for Lake Eucumbene and a 6.8m rigid hull inflatable for Lake Jindabyne - along with two second-hand Land Cruisers. The unit received its official State Rescue Board accreditation on May 15, 2011, signalling the formal



MR Alpine Lakes members celebrate the commissioning of the new *Alpine Lakes 21 (Les Threlfo)* and the opening of the unit's base on the shore of Lake Jindabyne in March 2018.

start of our on-water operations.

The two lakes on which the unit operates are fed from alpine rivers running off the snow fields and were man-made as part of the Snowy Hydro Scheme. At an elevation of 1,017m above sea level, 145sq/km in area and on average 107m deep, Eucumbene is nine times the size of Sydney Harbour. Jindabyne, at 1,000m above sea level, is 40sq/km in area and on average 35m deep. Both waterways, which are 80km apart, average 14 degrees Celsius below the surface, dropping to eight degrees in winter.

We are here to provide a vital emergency service to the boating community, including the large numbers of tourists visiting to enjoy trout and salmon fishing, whose safety can be jeopardised in the harsh climate. It can snow on any given day and gale force winds at 120km/h-plus are not uncommon. Due to the unpredictable nature of the alpine weather and the high risk of hypothermia for anyone overboard, even in summer, the law



MR Alpine Lakes' first two vessels during a multi-agency search and rescue exercise on Lake Jindabyne in February 2013.

requires all boaters to wear a life jacket on the lakes at all times.

Our fleet has been modernised with new motors for the Sailfish and the delivery of a new 6.8m Naiad in November 2017, giving us adequate 'fire power' to handle the worst conditions both lakes can muster. A new 4WD was delivered in April.

In 2016, after lengthy negotiations with council and Snowy Hydro, we secured a site next to the boat ramp at Lake Jindabyne

for a unit boat shed and base.

The \$140,000 facility, built with the assistance of a \$40,000 State Government grant, was opened in March 2018. Roadworks and landscaping have since been completed. Our 39 members patrol the lakes regularly and stand ready to respond to emergencies, fulfilling our promise to provide the Alpine Lakes with a fully equipped and modern marine rescue service.

Les Threlfo

Most remote unit navigates Murray with skill

Moama the first dedicated rescue service on beautiful but high risk river.

The most remote unit in the MRNSW network, MR Moama is the first dedicated rescue service on a heavily used stretch of the Murray River on the NSW-Victorian border.

The unit was established in 2013 with 11 foundation members, gaining its State Rescue Board accreditation to begin operations in 2014.

It was the second unit to be established off the coastline, after MR Alpine Lakes.

A State Rescue Board risk analysis identified the need for a rescue unit at Moama due to the Murray's heavy use. Narrow and winding in many places, the river is a popular destination for NSW and Victorian motor boats, waterskiers, canoeists, fishers and swimmers.

A 10-year review by Royal Life Saving Australia named the Murray as Australia's worst river for drownings from 2002 to 2012, with 43 deaths.

It is the site of the high-profile Southern 80 water ski races held over an 80km course each February.

The Moama unit's foundation Unit Commander was Glenn Carr and Deputy Roy Maiden, who have now swapped positions in the unit leadership.

In 2016, then Unit Commander Ken Bambling acknowledged the assistance of Monaro Regional Coordinator Bob Herbert and Training Manager South Glenn Sullivan in the unit's establishment. He also paid tribute to the members of MR Batemans Bay for supplying vessels, crew and resources to Moama for training and support during large events such as the Southern 80 and inland water Search and Rescue Exercises.

"This is an excellent example of inter-unit cooperation and the whole organisation working towards a common goal," he said.

The unit took delivery of its first vessel, 6.8m Ocean Cylinder *Moama*



Double the celebration ... members of the most remote MRNSW unit, MR Moama, gather for the opening of their riverside base and commissioning of rescue vessel *Moama 20* in 2017.

20 in 2014. The robust vessel is well suited to the operating conditions on the Murray, with the confident handling and speed of a traditional RHIB, combined with the durability of puncture-proof sponsons that can stand up to the rigours of the river environment.

The unit quickly moved to establish a base at the Five Mile boat ramp, built and fitted out at a cost of \$76,000 on land and a concrete slab donated by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, providing members with a safe working environment and protection for their equipment.

The unit thanked the Moama Bowling Club for a \$10,000 grant towards the base fit-out and Britax Australia for donating an array of emergency lighting and personal protective equipment.

The official opening of the base and commissioning of *MO 20* in 2017 underlined a \$300,000 investment in boating safety on the busy stretch of the Murray.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said the volunteers were well trained and experienced in operating on "this



The crew of *Moama 20* located a deceased 25-year-old man who fell overboard from this houseboat on the Murray River in January 2016.

beautiful but high risk waterway".
"Navigating this stretch of the Murray River takes considerable skill, care and local knowledge. It is narrow and shallow in parts, often has submerged obstacles and is used by vessels both large and small, slow and speedy," he said.
"There are locals and visitors alike on board everything from the iconic paddle wheelers and house boats through to power boats and fishing runabouts."
The river's tragic history was

reinforced by a fatality in 2016 when a 25-year-old Irish man was reported missing from a houseboat.
Joining the emergency response, the crew of *MO 20* proved the value of their service and the contemporary technology fitted on the MRNSW fleet. Using the Side Scan and Down Vision equipment on board, the crew located the deceased man about 30m downstream from where he had entered the water, later returning his body to shore.

What we've been up to



Crystal clear Marine Rescue Narooma's home waters on the NSW Far South Coast are a drawcard for boaters. The crew of *Narooma 30* pulls into the sheltered Bar Beach to bring this stranded 4.5m Quintrex runabout with two people on board alongside before returning it to the safety of Narooma Harbour. Photo: Rick Carlson.



Friends of MRNSW ... MR Botany Port Hacking member John Sherry meets Marty and Mel Fields at the Rosehill Trailer Boat Show. Mr Field was rescued when his boat capsized in 2018.



New wheels ... MR Alpine Lakes Unit Commander Les Threlfo visits Headquarters to take delivery of the unit's new 4WD from Deputy Commissioner Dean Storey and Commissioner Stacey Tannos.



Skill and courage ... MR Bermagui radio operator Peter Ford, skipper Denise Page and crew Raymond McLeod and Alec Percival received Commissioner's awards for their role in a hazardous 2017 rescue.



Easter tradition ... the crew of *Ulladulla 30* ferries Father Michael Dyer around the commercial fishing boats on Ulladulla Harbour for the annual Blessing of the Fleet ceremony on Easter Sunday.

Share your Marine Rescue experience

Ahead of our 10th anniversary, *Soundings* asked volunteers, staff and a leading supplier about their experience with MRNSW.

Deneice Gilliland, from MR Port Stephens, was awarded one of the first 10 membership numbers in the new MRNSW, which were drawn out a hat in 2009:

I was very surprised to receive

No. 000009 in the new Marine Rescue organisation and I think I was the envy of a few folks who had been around for a lot longer than I had! I had been with Coastal Patrol for only three years and my time had been busy with understanding the organisation and learning.

I had recently achieved the rank of Marine Radio Operator and was looking forward to going on

to become a Watch Officer. I also edited our *Port Chatter* newsletter.

I have been fortunate to work with the unit in organising some special events: the announcement of the uniting of Coastal Patrol, Coast Guard and VRA into Marine Rescue, the launch of the new Port Stephens boat, the celebration of our 35th anniversary and the presentation of bravery awards to unit members. I



have now been with MRNSW for 13 years and as a Watch Officer I still enjoy being in an organisation that is always improving and progressing.

Matt Sims, MRNSW IT Specialist since 2014, after 26 years with the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence:

Among other projects, I wrote the program for the online status boards that show at a glance which bases and boats are operational. I help keep our IT systems up to date and

provide staff and volunteers with technical advice.

It's good fun. I assist a variety of people and they always like to stop and have a chat. I've had the occasional road trip to carry out IT work at our units. It's fantastic. I've been down as far as Eden and up to Newcastle. I put photographs

on Facebook and get all my family and friends very jealous of where I'm working now. The Ministry of Defence job took me all around the UK and Europe, including living in Germany for five years. I finished off in IT project and network management on a high profile aerospace project that involved



regular visits to the Middle East.

Paul Sturgess, one of our newest members, joined MR Botany Port Hacking in early May:

I joined Marine Rescue after seeing an item in the local newspaper calling for new volunteers to be trained as Marine Radio Operators.

The opportunity to learn a range of new skills as a member of an emergency service organisation appealed to me as a great way to keep active and involved in the community.

Since retiring I have become involved in other volunteer roles and

find I get as much from them as I put in and am sure volunteering with Marine Rescue Botany Port Hacking will be the same.

At this stage I am concentrating on the Radio Operator role but will probably also consider boat duty at some time in the near future.



Bill Collingburn, Managing Director of Yamba Welding & Engineering, builder of Naiad and Ocean Cylinder vessels in the MRNSW fleet:

Marine Rescue has gone from strength to strength, particularly the training and the expertise of the

volunteers. Talking to other states we build vessels for, MRNSW is the envy of them all.

The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner run a really good ship. I know the volunteers wholeheartedly respect what's going on and appreciate the

funding coming through. The State Government support is fantastic.

We've built 35 vessels for Marine Rescue. The thing is, this is keeping regional boat building in NSW and that's bloody fantastic. We've increased our staff to 35 and of those, 11 are young apprentices.





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Brunswick members farewell former leader

Owen remembered for his devotion to volunteering and the love of his life.

People from the many walks of Owen Danvers' life gathered to farewell the former Unit Commander of MR Brunswick in March.

The church was close to overflowing as unit members joined Owen's family and many friends along with Commissioner Stacey Tannos, representatives of the Volunteer Rescue Association, State Emergency Service, RSL Club and Masonic Lodge, along with his former Royal Australian Navy colleagues.

Owen joined the Navy at the age of 15 as an apprentice at its training establishment in Western Sydney. He left the Navy in 1961, continuing to study and working as an engineer in mechanical industries before eventually starting his own business supplying compliance plates to the car industry.

It was around this time that two major changes were to happen.

Owen was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, which in true style didn't dampen his enthusiasm. He became a volunteer with the MS Society and spent 16 years as its director. He also met the love of his life, Andrea, with the couple marrying in Dubbo in 1987 before retiring to Mullumbimby in 1997.

Owen joined the then Brunswick Valley Volunteer Rescue Association in 2003 and became a radio operator, invigilator and trainer and assessor.

Upon the formation of MRNSW, Owen was a driving force for change as MR Brunswick's first Unit Commander. He served in this role until 2013 and later as Deputy Unit Commander from 2016 to 2018. He oversaw major changes to the unit, including the purchase of our current vessel and AirBerth and the introduction of online vessel tracking to our radio operations.



Former MR Brunswick Unit Commander Owen Danvers.

But it was the small things that Owen did that impressed the most; he was always at our fundraisers, working as cashier, selling sandwiches, filling eskies and then helping pack it all away, despite being in a wheelchair. Of all of Owen's fine attributes - his commitment, leadership, kindness,

friendship and willingness to help others - it was his devotion that stood out; not just his devotion to volunteering, to his community and to the members of MRNSW but to Andrea, indeed "the love of his life". He was a true gentleman who will remain so in our thoughts.

David Parkinson

No one surprised by Di's life of achievement

Di Manning joined MR Bermagui in 2015.

Often with modest people, we learn more about them after they pass away than we did while they were with us. However, having known Di, none at her memorial service was surprised to learn of her life of achievement. A well liked and

respected member of the unit, Di was recognised by other radio bases along the coast for her manner as a radio operator. She had attained her Watch Officer qualification and was pursuing her Crew rating.

One of her many talents was as a photographer. She was always generous in providing her beautiful

photos for various fundraising events. We will particularly remember Di every time we walk by the poster she produced for the "Together ... We've got you covered" campaign undertaken by MR Bermagui and the Bermagui

Surf Life Saving Club.

Di set an example for us by facing her illness with bravery and a lack of self pity. She is and will be missed. Our sympathies to her family and friends.

Denise Page



Talented photograprer and MR Bermagui member Di Manning.

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IT'S ALL IN THE CLUES
MRNSW crossword

Compiled by Marine Rescue
Brunswick Unit Commander David
Parkinson, this second MRNSW
crossword will test your knowledge
of our organisation and safe boating
practices.

DOWN

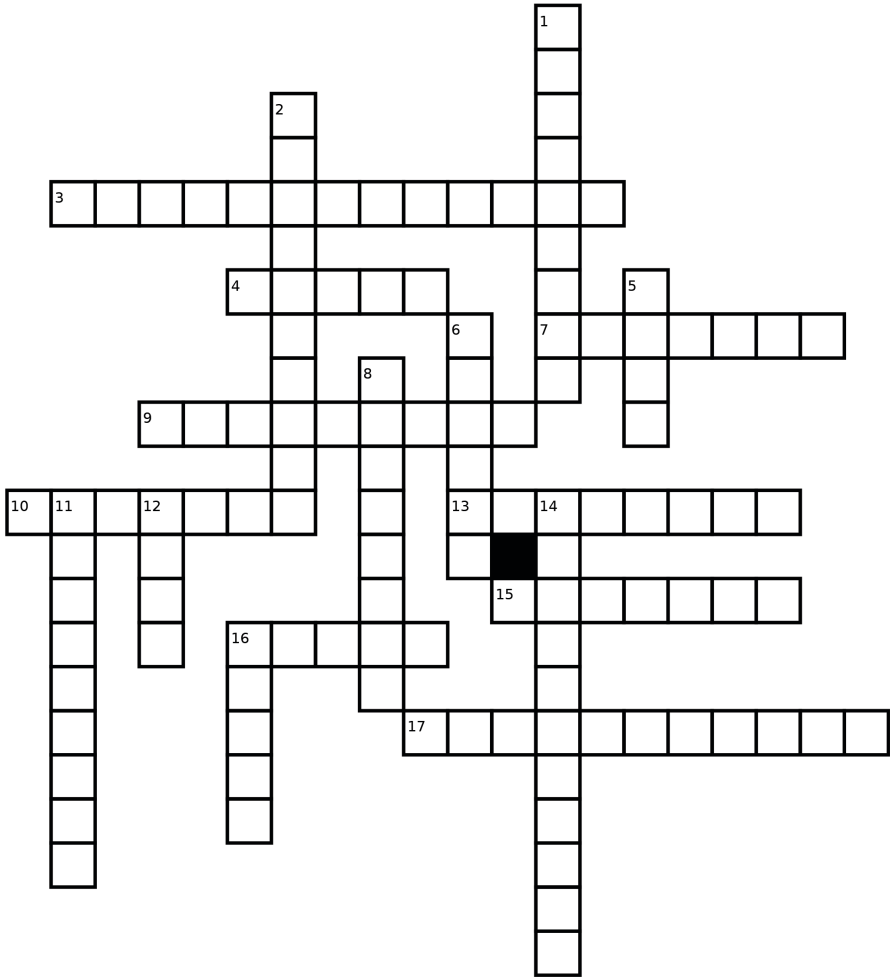
- 1. Pan Pan comes from the French word panne, meaning what? (9)
- 2. What kind of flashes do you see on a North cardinal mark? (10)
- 5. How many dots and dashes in Morse code for SOS? (4)
- 6. Mayday is derived from which language? (6)
- 8. Scale used to measure wind. (8)
- 11. On which side of a channel should you drive a boat? (9)
- 12. A vessel's width at the midsection. (4)
- 14. This can contribute to a capsize. (11)
- 16. The distance in metres a moving boat should keep from someone in the water. (5)

ACROSS

- 3. These indicate deeper water away from danger. (13)
- 4. Type of pump on a boat. (5)
- 7. Phonetic alphabet for W. (7)
- 9. What measures air pressure? (9)
- 10. The bars you find on a weather map. (7)
- 13. Where is MRNSW Headquarters located? (8)
- 15. PWCs are often called this. (7)
- 16. The rear of a boat. (5)
- 17. The loss of core body heat. (11)

- 17. Hypothermia.
- 15. Jetskis. 16. Stern.
- 10. Isobars. 13. Cronulla.
- 7. Whiskey. 9. Barometer.
- Across: 3. Cardinalmarks. 4. Bilge.
- 16. Sixty.
- 12. Beam. 14. Overloading.
- 8. Beaufort. 11. Starboard.
- Continuous. 5. Nine. 6. French.
- Down: 1. Breakdown. 2.

IT'S ALL IN THE CLUES



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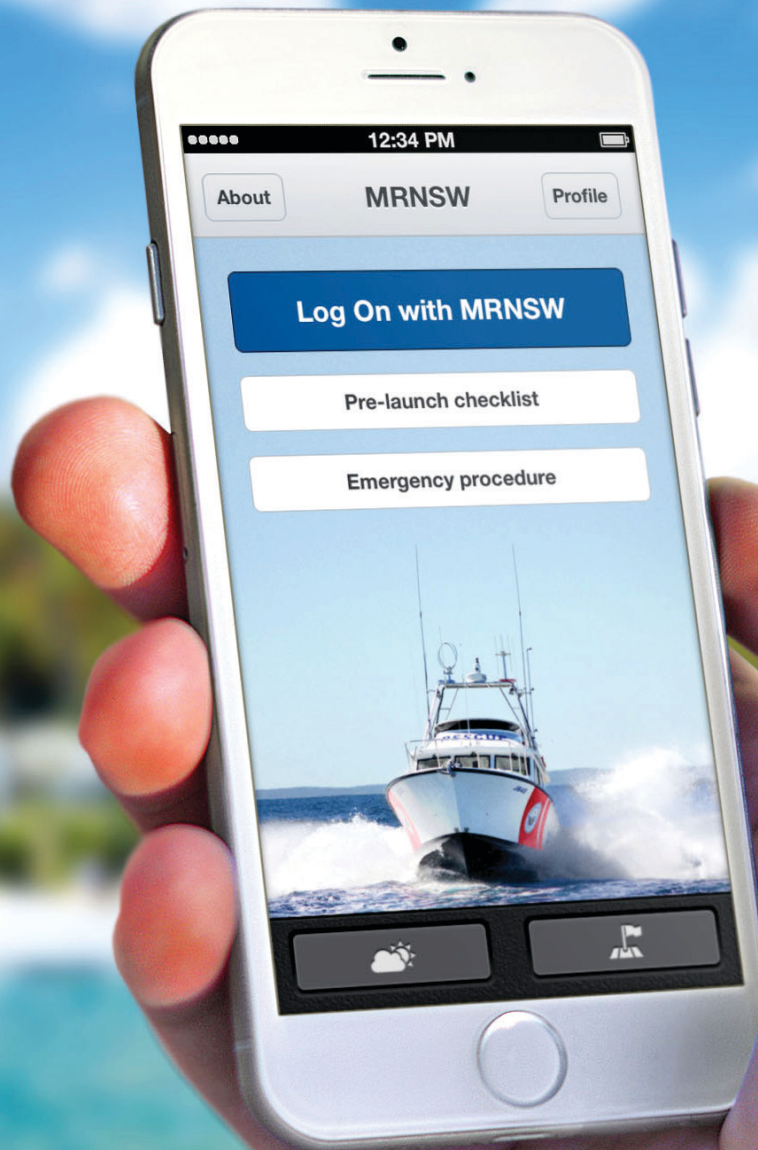
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WITH ELEMENT™ AND HYPERVISION™ LIFELIKE SONAR IMAGING

Element's 1.2 megahertz HyperVision™ takes sonar to a new level of precision. DownVision, SideVision, or stunning RealVision 3D, Element's HyperVision™ mode lets you see structure and target fish with lifelike clarity. And with quad-core performance and the intuitive LightHouse Sport operating system, Element will put you on the spot fast, helping you to see and catch what other anglers can't.



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