

Volunteers saving lives on the water

SOUNDINGS



Quarterly Journal of Marine Rescue NSW | Issue 46, Autumn 2021



SUMMER SURGE

Rescue records smashed
as boaters flock to coast

TRAGIC SHORE

LIVES LOST ON ROCKS

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Cover Image

An assessment exercise took a realistic turn for Marine Rescue Woolli's Matthew McLennan and Marty Hutchings when they were called to rescue an 11m motor/sailer stranded 4nm offshore with a failed engine. Unit Commander Richard Taffs was on the deck of *Woolli 30*. See Page 25.

Photo: Kath Farrar.

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Commissioner
Stacey Tannos ESM

From the Commissioner

Spike in boating traffic drives record rescue workload.

Looking back to this time last year, we were in the first, uncharted weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a sense of foreboding but little real insight into the long-lasting implications of a mysterious new virus that was cutting a swathe through our community and our operations.

A year on, we have just finished a summer boating season directly shaped and driven by COVID.

Our volunteers - our rescue vessel crew members, radio operators and support teams - maintained a relentlessly challenging tempo from the booming start to the season on the October long weekend through to the end of February.

I am particularly mindful of the determination of our volunteers from MR Jervis Bay, whose colleague John Gallimore passed away while he was on radio duty in February. The members' commitment to the safety of our boating community was such that despite their loss, they refused all offers to stand down in the wake of John's death and maintained their duties. On behalf of us all, I extend my condolences and pay tribute to their stoicism and dedication.

As forecast, record numbers of boaters took to the water along our coastline over the past three months. This was not only driven by overseas and even interstate COVID travel restrictions but also by the accelerating popularity of boating throughout the pandemic last year, with NSW Maritime reporting increases in new boat registrations, registration transfers for second-hand boats and new boat licences.

But while many keen newcomers were out enjoying the water, COVID also managed to dampen people's summer activities. The traditional drawcard events on Sydney Harbour were scrapped or scaled back due to a COVID cluster and subsequent lockdown on Sydney's Northern Beaches and as a precautionary measure to prevent large crowds assembling along the shoreline.

Units in the Greater Sydney, Illawarra and Hunter/Central Coast regions returned to restricted operations and our traditional

missions - 61 per cent - were in response to largely preventable problems: flat batteries, engine problems and issues with fuel, including more than a few instances of boaters simply running out of fuel a considerable distance offshore.

Many operations, however, were conducted in traumatic circumstances, with crews from MR Coffs Harbour, Woolgoolga, Trial Bay, Port Macquarie, Forster-Tuncurry, Tuggerah Lakes, Lake Macquarie, Port Kembla, Shellharbour and Batemans Bay all joining coordinated searches for people who were missing or charged with the grim responsibility of returning those who were deceased to their loved ones.

I remind all our members who were engaged in these - or any other - activities that if they feel in need of any support, our confidential Critical Incident Support Service is freely available 24/7.

Call 1800 049 933.

We recorded a 67 per cent increase over last summer in our operational response.

summer rosters for the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race, New Year's Eve and Australia Day were redrawn.

The increased traffic along the length of the coastline, however, led to substantial upturn in our units' workloads, with boaters and others, including kayakers, jet ski riders and rock fishers, caught in emergencies at all hours, seven days a week and sometimes despite warnings of hazardous conditions.

We recorded a 67 per cent increase over last summer in our operational response. While the 2019-2020 season was, of course, impacted by the Black Summer bushfires, storms and floods, this year's demand was still 27 per cent higher than the five-year peak over the summer of 2016-2017.

The majority of our rescue

This edition of *Soundings* records our volunteers' tremendous efforts over the summer months, ensuring their hard work is acknowledged. Again, I thank each of our members for their commitment and contribution, whatever their role.

As always, there were warm-hearted and uplifting moments among the tragedies and the long, sweaty days, when we congratulated people for new ratings or lengthy service; when our members celebrated our ethos of respect and diversity at the Sydney Mardi Gras; when we applauded our female members and yes, when we helped rescue injured wildlife.

It's important to remember that happiness, too, is part of our story.

Stacey Tannos ESM
Commissioner



The Commissioner presents MR Shellharbour's Steve Thompson with his five-year Long Service pin, with Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell.

Jervis Bay member dies serving community

Unanimous vote to name new rescue vessel in John Gallimore's memory.

A new Marine Rescue NSW superboat is to be named in memory of a volunteer from Marine Rescue Jervis Bay who died on duty while serving our community.

John Gallimore, 76, suffered a medical episode while on shift as a Radio Operator at the unit on February 11. Despite the very best efforts of a fellow volunteer and NSW Ambulance paramedics, he was unable to be saved.

He is the first member to die on duty since the formation of MRNSW in July 2009.

In his eulogy at Mr Gallimore's funeral, Unit Commander Tony Dagger announced the unit's members had unanimously agreed to name the new *Jervis Bay 40*, due in coming weeks, after Mr Gallimore.

"His name will be on that vessel for as long as she serves Marine Rescue Jervis Bay: a reflection of

the respect John had within the unit," he said.

Mr Gallimore's name also will be added to the Roll of Honour inscribed on the NSW Emergency Services Volunteers Memorial in Sydney, joining three members of the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association and Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, who passed away during their service in the years before MRNSW was established.

A member since January 2010, Mr Gallimore was a skilled and experienced volunteer, holding the senior qualifications of Coxswain and Watch Officer. He was also the unit's Membership Officer.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos extended his condolences to Mr Gallimore's partner Judy and family members on behalf of MRNSW.

"John's death is a loss for us and for our community, especially those

who enjoy boating on the South Coast," he said. "John's commitment to our mission of saving lives on the water was unwavering, both as a skipper and a Radio Operator watching over boaters for their safe return to shore, as he was doing at the time of his passing.

"John was a valued and much-loved member of his unit, whose contribution, leadership and abilities will be missed."

Royal Australian Air Force No. 37 Squadron Commanding Officer Tony Kay wrote to extend the Squadron's deepest condolences to the unit.

"As one of your team who routinely supported 37 Squadron training through retrieval of our Air Sea Rescue equipment for training missions, John enabled Search and Rescue capability for the whole of our nation, and many have benefitted as a result," he said.



MR Jervis Bay member John Gallimore passed away while on radio duty on February 11.

"Working together and supporting broader society is an admirable characteristic of the people of our nation. These experiences serve to remind us of the privilege it is to work with people like John."

A gifted educator who led by his example

Marine Rescue Jervis Bay Unit Commander Tony Dagger delivered a eulogy for John Gallimore. This is an extract.

"John's membership of Marine Rescue NSW is dated the 21st of January, 2010: the first week that the Jervis Bay unit was officially declared operational. A Founding Father of the unit.

"John was a Radio Operator, Watch Officer, Crew, Leading Crew, Coxswain, Instructor, Assessor and Subject Matter Expert on a wide range of subjects. All this, plus taking on roles of Training Officer, Membership Officer and Security Officer along the way. John could not be just a member, his desire to contribute and make a difference was a driving force. He took being a member of Marine Rescue seriously as he knew there would be times when peoples' lives may depend on

us and how we performed and he intended that we would always be at the highest levels of readiness and capability.

"If we had an incident on the Bay, or out to sea, and John was not skippering the rescue vessel, he would often monitor, and if necessary, participate in the Marine Rescue radio traffic from his home.

"Nothing was ever too small for John to attend to. When we had maintenance to do on the vessels or at the radio base, John would be one of the first to put his hand up.

"When we had Air Force joint exercises or helicopter exercises, or were operating as safety vessels for the Huskisson Iron Man swim, he would be at the front of the queue.

"John took training new recruits seriously and he was always the first to try and get the new recruits assigned to his watches. He took



Work on the new *Jervis Bay 40*, to be named after John Gallimore.

great pride in watching our new crew or radio operators learn and demonstrate what he had taught them. He was a gifted educator.

"John had a strength of character along with a need for excellence that meant he would not accept second best efforts from his crew. But he would always encourage and explain when things did not quite go to plan, and if time would permit, he would

say, 'let's go and do that again'.

"John was a true gentleman, he was patient, polite but determined at the same time. He was a mentor to many of us and he led by example.

"John's legacy within Marine Rescue Jervis Bay will be significant, his impact on all of us will be there for many years to come. We will miss our dear friend, colleague and mentor."



Chair
James Glissan AM ESM QC

From the Chair

Diversity and respect enhance our ability to attract the best.

MRNSW is rightly recognised as a national leader in the volunteer marine rescue sector, with the benefit of outstanding operational capability, resources, training and above all, people.

Of all of these advantages, our people are our greatest strength. Much of our success is due to the shared commitment, teamwork and camaraderie in our ranks, among both volunteers and staff, each of whom brings a unique mix of abilities, experience and perspective.

Our people come from different cultural and community backgrounds and all walks of life. They have a range of life and career skills and interests. Diversity - be it in age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability or sexuality - produces great benefits for MRNSW and our shared commitment to being respectful, inclusive and welcoming makes us stronger. Enhancing our ability to attract the best people makes us more vibrant, representative of the communities we serve and ultimately, successful, both now and into the future.

We are remarkably fortunate that 25 per cent of our members are women, who are active at every level of the organisation. This is one of the highest proportion of female volunteer membership across the

emergency services. We marked International Women's Day on March 8 with pride in our female volunteers' achievements.

We are increasingly attracting members across a broader age range. The life and operational experience of our older members - many of whom are devoting their retirement years to serving their communities after lengthy careers - is enhanced by the fresh viewpoints and drive of our younger cohort, who are still working, studying and some even at school. Strategically, this safeguards our future, ensuring we have an experienced team at the helm now with a clear succession path to these younger volunteers, on whom we will rely to take our service forward. This reality is recognised by our community, with MR Crowdy Harrington named the

MRNSW, the foundation of our success is our fundamental, shared commitment to working together to save lives on the water and each making the best contribution we can to that mission.

It is this teamwork and dedication to mission success that were essential to our efforts over another challenging summer. An influx of boaters holidaying along the coastline rather than overseas or interstate resulted in a heavy demand on our services. Our crews responded to several tragedies, searching for those missing over long days, but also to capsized boats, numerous people in the water, fires on vessels and boaters running out of fuel far offshore.

More and more, we are seeing our crews tasked not just on

More and more, our crews are tasked seven days a week; a workload that is taxing for all units.

local Volunteer Group of the Year on Australia Day and its 18-year-old radio operator Tyler Blake the Young Volunteer of the Year.

On March 6, the MRNSW team again took part in the Sydney Mardi Gras, sending a powerful - and colourful - message of our commitment to respect, diversity and support for our LGBTQI+ colleagues, family and friends.

This is not a hollow gesture but a lived experience in our ranks, with our first rainbow crew soon to take to the water at MR Port Jackson.

A number of our people also live with disability, as well as the abilities that add to our strength; again, reflecting the broader community. A new project to begin in coming weeks will help us to communicate more effectively with boaters and other water users who have hearing impairment to help them stay safer.

Regardless of these or any other differences each of us brings to

weekends and peak holidays but seven days a week, maintaining a workload that is taxing for all units. There is a need to carefully avoid burn-out in our membership to ensure we do not push people to the point where they feel meeting the demand is too much to sustain. I encourage all our members to take time, wherever possible, to recharge so they can stay the course. Our community cannot afford to lose any of our highly skilled workforce.

Sadly, over summer we did lose a skilled and valued member while on watch. MR Jervis Bay Coxswain and Watch Officer John Gallimore became the first to die on active duty since MRNSW was established.

I extend the condolences of the entire organisation to John's partner, family, friends and colleagues. Their loss is also ours.

Safe sailing
Jim Glissan



Diverse abilities ... Coxswain Mark Moretti, on board *Botany Hacking 30*, will appear in a documentary featuring people who use Cochlear implants.

Record summer workload on tragic coastline

Crews launch 1,600 missions as more people than ever take a boating holiday.

Marine Rescue NSW volunteers set new operational records over summer, responding to a five-year seasonal peak in the number of emergencies, including a series of fatalities along the coastline.

Predictions that foreign and interstate COVID travel restrictions would result in a bumper summer on the water were borne out as more people than ever took a NSW boating holiday.

Emergency services, including MRNSW crews, responded to nine fatalities on our coastal waterways, including seven men swept off rocks at Port Kembla, Coffs Harbour and South West Rocks, a missing snorkeller on the Far South Coast and a man who died when he fell overboard from his yacht on Lake Macquarie.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said that as forecast, a COVID-driven surge in demand for MRNSW services had outstripped other recent peak holiday periods.

"This was a hectic summer for our volunteers, particularly in the Hunter/Central Coast, Greater Sydney and Monaro regions, where there was a constant stream of boaters calling for our help," he said.

"Variable weather and poor boating conditions in the north of the state saw less consistent activity in those regions but tragically, large swells and rough seas on the Mid North Coast contributed to two of the fatalities to which our crews responded, at Coffs Harbour and Trial Bay."

Heavy demand saw our crews launch a total of 1,579 rescue missions from the start of December to the end of February - up 67 per cent from 947 last year and 27 per cent higher than the five-year peak over the 2016-2017 summer.

Twenty-six per cent of this season's operations - 403 - were in response to life-endangering emergencies, in line with the five-



Coffs 30 searches around the Coffs Harbour southern breakwall after a 20-year-old man was washed into the sea on January 21. Photo: Frank Redward Photo Video.

year trend, which hit 28 per cent in 2017-2018. These included 34 Mayday responses. Ninety boats were grounded and 60 capsized.

In all, 3,900 people, including 504 children, along with 38 pets, were returned safely to shore.

Our radio operators kept a safety watch over more than 77,000 people on board almost 22,000 boats that Logged On over the three months - up from 19,600 vessels last summer. Boats Logging On were among 69,640 radio calls handled by our radio specialists, who also provided regular weather updates and warnings, radio checks for boaters and a range of other safety information.

MRNSW crews joined coordinated searches in response to a string of fatalities in which people were washed into the ocean from rocks at Coffs Harbour, South West Rocks and Port Kembla, as well as a snorkeller who failed to return from the water north of Batemans Bay.

At least another 30 people were thrown into the water in a range of incidents, including a kayaker south of Ulladulla, four men left clinging to eskies off Broughton Island near Port Stephens and boats that overturned crossing coastal

bars at Narooma, Evans Head and Nambucca. MR Tuggerah Lakes reported an alarming increase in the number of people in the water, with 12 overboard in six incidents.

In another reminder of the importance of vessel maintenance and safety checks, particularly before the start of the peak season, 61 per cent of incidents were sparked by engine failures (651) flat batteries (180) or fuel problems (135), including a number of boaters who simply ran out of fuel.

Commissioner Tannos thanked each of the volunteers who had kept watch over the airwaves and responded day and night to rescue

those in trouble on the water, as well as all those who had provided valuable support to the frontline.

"Boaters know that they can rely on our volunteers to help when they need it," he said.

"They know our radio operators are keeping watch for their safe return to shore and monitoring the airwaves for distress calls. And they know our crews will head on to the water around the clock, frequently in hazardous conditions, because they will not leave someone out there in trouble on the water.

"Our community owes all our volunteers a great debt of gratitude for their commitment and service."



MR Trial Bay's Jon Cragg surveys the search operation for a missing spearfisherman washed off rocks near Trial Bay Gaol.

Toll highlights need for safety awareness

Volunteers' professional response helps prevent more loss of life.

Nine deaths along our coastline and a spike in the number of life-threatening emergencies involving people in the water across the peak summer season have drawn attention to the need for vigilance and safety awareness on and around our waterways.

MRNSW crews joined lengthy search operations for those missing in coastal waters and responded to a boating fatality on Lake Macquarie.

Seven of the nine men who died along the coastline were swept into the ocean from rock platforms and sea breakwalls, including five from the same rock platform below Hill 60 at Port Kembla in two separate incidents within the space of a month. Another was lost while snorkelling.

At least another 30 people ended up in the water offshore, on coastal bars and enclosed waters such as rivers when their boats or kayaks capsized or overturned or while rock fishing, including a man admitted to hospital in a critical condition after being washed off rocks in the Royal National Park.

Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell said the number of fatalities and life-endangering emergencies highlighted the need for people to exercise caution around the water.

"NSW saw a terrible loss of life over summer but the toll could have been much higher, given the significant number of people who

ended up in the water," he said.

"The rapid and professional response of our crews and our emergency services colleagues, as well as Good Samaritan members of the public, ensured many lives were saved. The heavy workload of our volunteers is testament to their skill and dedication to saving lives and keeping boaters safe."

He said boaters and others on and around the water needed to know the rules, take all appropriate safety measures and be vigilant about potential risks to their safety.

"The most fundamental rule, whether you're boating, paddling or rock fishing, is to make sure you and everyone with you always wears a lifejacket. It can save your life but not if you don't have it on," he said.

"Boaters should make sure they have the required safety equipment, their vessel is in good nick, check the conditions and always Log On with Marine Rescue NSW."

The week around the Australia Day public holiday was the most tragic of the summer.

Director Operations Andrew Cribb said MRNSW crews had played a pivotal role in extended multi-agency search operations over the week.

"These operations involve a heavy concentration of personnel and resources across the rescue services," he said.

Emergency services were called to the Coffs Harbour breakwall about



Members of MR Port Kembla and Shellharbour return from a search operation following the death of three fishermen washed off rocks below Hill 60, among nine lives lost on the coastline over summer.

6pm on January 21 in response to reports a man had disappeared while walking along the pathway. A short time later, a local family reported to police that their son, 20, had not returned home from a walk on the beachfront.

Crews from MR Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga joined the large-scale operation, searching south to Sawtell and up to 6nm out to sea. The young man's body was located by family members on January 23.

A major emergency response began about 10pm on January 22, after several people were washed off rocks into the sea at Hill 60.

The bodies of three men were recovered a short time later. Two others made it back to shore with minor injuries.

With eyewitnesses unsure just how many people had been on the rocks in the darkness, a search was launched at daylight next day. Crews from MR Port Kembla and Shellharbour searched from Red Rock to Windang Island and up to 4nm out to sea with no one sighted.

Less than three weeks later, another two men died on February 12 when three were swept off the same rock platform. A Police Highway Patrol officer swam out

to two of the men with a flotation device before a Surf Life Saving crew transferred the three to shore. One man died at the scene and the second in hospital.

Crews from MR Batemans Bay searched over two days for a snorkeller who entered the water at Richmond Beach in the Murrumbidgee National Park on January 25 and was not seen again. The search was eventually suspended in poor conditions.

Volunteers devoted three days to a search for a 53-year-old man who was washed off rocks while spear fishing with his son at Lagers Point, at South West Rocks, about 1pm on February 4.

The crew of *Trial Bay 30* and two Rescue Water Craft operators were quickly on the water with other emergency services.

A crew from MR Port Macquarie bolstered the search assets on the second and third days before the operation was suspended late on February 6 with no trace of the man.

In the only boating tragedy of the peak season, *Lake Macquarie 20* responded within minutes when a sailor was knocked overboard from his yacht off Wangi Point on Lake Macquarie on February 14.



Emergency services launched a joint operation to search for a missing snorkeller who disappeared north of Batemans Bay on January 25.

'It wasn't the first or last' tragedy on rocks

Confronting scenes as three men swept to their deaths in dark at Hill 60.

Marine Rescue Port Kembla volunteer Ray Miller spent many career years in the navy but one overnight radio shift at the unit's Hill 60 base in January hit the experienced veteran - and other members of the emergency services - hard.

Three men, aged 45, 49 and 69, died on January 22 when they were washed off rocks while fishing in front of the unit's radio base. A huge wave swept five men into the ocean but two managed to clamber back to shore with minor injuries.

Ray, who has just notched up five years with the unit, took the first call for help about 10pm.

The Radio Operator's experience that night is an insight into the confronting and challenging circumstances that can face our volunteers and other emergency services members when they report for duty to serve the community.

While Ray said he was okay in the aftermath of the multiple drownings, he conceded "you don't want many of those" nights on shift "but it wasn't the first and it wasn't the last".

"When I came into work, it was still daylight and you could see people were virtually shoulder to shoulder down there. It's not unusual to see 25 people there at night," he said. "We got the first call from a guy on the rocks. He was calm and composed. I got his name, phone number and he said 'look, two people have been washed off the rocks, they're face down, not moving'. And then he said 'oh hell, another one has gone in, we need a chopper here now'."

Ray immediately alerted the NSW Police Force Marine Area Command, which activated mass rescue resources, including helicopters and its Wollongong vessel with divers on board. Before long, emergency services were assembling at a command post in the carpark at the

base, with coordinators operating from the radio tower's deck, which has a direct line of sight over the popular but hazardous fishing spot.

Unit Commander Kevin Bradley joined Ray in the radio room and they watched the response unfold.

"We could see where someone was floating in the water. You could see them in the moonlight. There was a lot of white water and you could make out the dark shapes," Ray said.

Air ambulances winched two men from the water and the third was recovered by Marine Area Command.

"We finished up with two bodies in the carpark under blankets," Ray said. "There was a young woman from the ambulance and she was very upset. It upsets the professionals.

"The thing that really gets to people like me and that ambulance officer is that these guys in their 40s, they've probably got teenagers at home and now they've got no guidance from their fathers for the rest of their lives. What are those kids going to do?"

Surf Life Saving NSW Chief Executive Steven Pearce said it had been a confronting scene for first responders.

"[This is] just an absolutely horrible way to start the long weekend," he told media the next morning, as Surf Life Saving and MR Port Kembla and Shellharbour crews launched a search operation to confirm no one else was missing.

NSW Ambulance Inspector Norman Rees said it had been "very chaotic ... it was a very distressing scene".

That same afternoon, more fishermen were washed off the same rocks, with one requiring oxygen. Just three weeks later, another two men died when three were knocked into the ocean. A Police Highway Patrol Officer leapt



MR Port Kembla Unit Commander Kevin Bradley and radio operators Ray Miller and Doug Cooper on the Hill 60 radio base deck overlooking the rocks where five fisherman died this summer.

into the water to go to their rescue.

Ray recalled an earlier incident in which another man had been washed off the rock shelf.

"They didn't find his body. It was really sad. The next day, a lady was sitting on the rocks staring out at the water. I was on duty and it looked really suspicious," he said.

"I took her down a bottle of water and asked if she was okay. She thanked me and said her husband had gone into the water and she was 'waiting for him to come back to me'. For more than a week she just sat on the rocks, watching."

The January 22 fatalities held a particular sting for the unit.

In August last year, a young man had handed in a mobile phone he had found nearby to Radio Operators Michelle Davidson and Doug Cooper.

Michelle found a contact number

in the phone and called it, hoping to find the owner. It turned out to be the owner's daughter, who lived in Kempsey and had lost contact with her dad. Michelle handed the phone to police, who were able to return it to James Jung.

A couple of weeks later, James dropped in to the base to thank the volunteers for finding his phone. Soon after, he and his daughter re-established contact.

In a cruel twist of fate, the dad who had so recently been reunited with his family was one of the three men who lost their lives on the rocks. He had been wearing a lifejacket.

"It was bitter-sweet," Michelle said. "We had connected them but then all of a sudden it was his time. At least he didn't go without reconnecting. He wasn't alone."



Michelle Davidson and Barrie Weston on duty at Hill 60 the morning after the multiple deaths, with Monaro ROM Glenn Sullivan.

Help and support are only a phone call away

Confidential counselling always available to volunteers in need.




CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

You're saving lives on the water but who's supporting you?

It can be tough out there. If you feel like you need help, even just to talk things through, we're here.

Just reach out

1800 049 933

MRNSW CISS - provided with the support of the NSW RFS



Marine Rescue NSW members have been encouraged to reach out for support for their mental health and wellbeing if they feel troubled by their operational duties or other factors in their lives.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said the organisation's Critical Incident Support Service was freely available to volunteers and staff around the clock.

"The service is confidential. Trained counsellors are there to help, even if you just want to talk something through," he said.

"As a community, we are increasingly aware of the need to safeguard our mental health as well as our physical wellbeing.

"Our members are committed to saving lives on the water but sometimes that can be a heavy

burden to shoulder. Tragedies impact many people - including the emergency services personnel who respond - and some of our volunteers have been engaged in operations in traumatic circumstances over this summer and in seasons past.

"I truly encourage any of our members or staff who feel in need of support to make the best use of our Critical Incident Support Service.

"It is not a sign of weakness to ask for help. In fact it is the opposite. It can take great courage to admit you could do with some support - sometimes not just for yourself but the benefit of those around you."

The MRNSW Critical Incident Support Service is supported by the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Call 1800 049 933.



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Emergency services in public health appeal



Thosh Chege (third from left), Glenn Evans (fifth from left) and Greg Urand (right) take part in an emergency services COVID safety video.

Marine Rescue NSW joined other emergency services in early January to promote COVID safety.

MR Port Jackson Unit Commander Greg Urand and member Thosh Chege, along with Greater Sydney Regional Operations Manager Glenn Evans, assembled

with personnel from the NSW Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service, NSW Police Force + Rescue NSW and Surf Life Saving for a campaign appealing to people to wear a face mask, sanitise and maintain physical distancing to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

COVID keeps Sydney crews on home waters

Unusual summer on Harbour as pandemic claims landmark events.

It was a summer like no other on Sydney Harbour, with the biggest weeks on the boating calendar uncharacteristically subdued.

Marine Rescue NSW volunteers traditionally are at the centre of the action as the national and international spotlight shines on Sydney Harbour from Boxing Day to Australia Day.

The continuing impact of COVID-19, however, scuttled summer highlights and unfavourable weather conditions limited the usually frenetic boating activity on the premier waterway over the festive period.

Crews remained ready to respond to emergencies on the water, despite a COVID cluster and lockdown on Sydney's Northern Beaches just before Christmas forcing units in the Greater Sydney, Hunter/Central Coast and Illawarra regions to return to operating on an on-call basis rather than rostered on duty at their bases. Radio bases in these areas operated with core numbers of personnel until the restrictions were eased.

COVID's first victim of the summer was the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race, cancelled for the first time in its 76-year history. MRNSW



Crews from Sydney units saw in the New Year on a strangely quiet Sydney Harbour, responding to just a handful of minor incidents on the water. Photo: Tony Gordon.

volunteers stayed on their home waters rather than turning out in their usual force to help maintain safety at the start of the blue water classic. MR Eden radio operators, who watch over the fleet as it heads south to Bass Strait, missed being part of the spectacle.

Next came a strangely quiet New Year's Eve, with the 9pm fireworks cancelled and the midnight skyshow scaled back.

Crews from MR Port Jackson, Middle Harbour, Broken Bay, Cottage Point and Botany Port Hacking were on the water under sullen skies from morning until after midnight but reported just a handful of minor incidents among many fewer boats out.

Scant crowds on the foreshore included a single man at the normally cram-packed Bradleys Head vantage point.

Popular Australia Day events also were cancelled or cut back.

The unusual summer calendar ended on January 26 with the rapid evacuation of a Middle Harbour marina when a young boater poured 150 litres of fuel into the engine bay rather than the fuel tank of his mate's dad's cruiser. After Fire + Rescue NSW pumped out the boat, *Port Jackson 30* towed it to its mooring.

Boating popularity booms over past year

The popularity of boating boomed in 2020, with hundreds more people taking to NSW waterways throughout the pandemic year.

NSW Maritime has reported that there were 682 more general boating licence holders at the start of this summer compared to last.

An additional 1,282 boats were registered in NSW at the end of November, compared to the same time in 2019. Waiting lists are reported for jet ski purchases.

NSW Maritime Executive Director Mark Hutchings said anecdotally,

vessel use had increased significantly throughout COVID, including existing boats being used more often and more new boats out on the water.

"Starting in March 2020 and continuing right through winter and into spring, statistics show an uptick in both boat licences and registrations, which likely related to COVID-19 causing an increase in interest in boating as one of the remaining leisure options," he said

Mr Hutchings said it was important for new boaties to focus

on following the NSW boating rules and any local waterway restrictions, such as speed limits.

Robert Sanasi took delivery of his first boat – a 5.7m runabout – and was issued a mooring licence after successfully passing the test for his boat licence.

"We are empty nesters and recently moved to Lane Cove and it seemed like the thing to do. In March there wasn't much to do, so my son and I got our boat licences," Mr Sanasi said. "I have zero boating history, so I've hired a guy for six



First-time boater Robert Sanasi.

one-hour slots to teach me gradually what to do on my own boat.

"If you make a mistake on land, the consequences are different."

Groundbreaking technology envy of others

IT systems developed to support volunteers in mission to save lives.

Marine Rescue NSW is continuing to introduce new and upgraded technology to support its members in their work to save lives on the water.

A revamped member records system was rolled out in mid-February, followed soon after by a new rostering system for our 45 units.

This follows the introduction of a new Incident Management System to the groundbreaking Seahawk vessel logging and tracking network in September last year.

IT Director Florian Glajcar said Marine Rescue's IT systems had been purpose-developed to help volunteers in their vital work to keep boaters safer on NSW waters.

"This is not technology for technology's sake. It has been carefully designed to give our members the tools they need to safely and successfully manage their operations," he said.

The Otter membership system records a range of important information on volunteers, including their service records, qualifications, personal contact details and positions they hold in their unit.

"Otter is the cornerstone of our suite of integrated IT tools. Everything links back to it," Mr Glajcar said. "Data is drawn from the system to authenticate the identity

of members logging in to use all our other applications, such as Seahawk, the MRNSW e-shop and the Radio Club member system."

The updated Otter system now holds additional details about members, such as relevant health information like allergies and doctor's contacts, their ratings, licences, first aid certificates, marine drill currency and uniform sizes and preferences.

It records an individual's total length of service in one file, even if they have left and returned to the organisation, to help ensure they receive appropriate MRNSW and national service recognition and enables training certificates to be easily downloaded and printed.

Data from the original Otter - developed by Mr Glajcar and NetBit and introduced in early 2013 - was migrated to the updated system over 24 hours from February 18.

MRNSW IT Developer Oscar Willems worked with units and operational staff to develop the new online roster system to simplify the task of rostering volunteers for vessel, radio and other duties.

Mr Willems said the system was another way Headquarters supported units by helping them work smarter, not harder.

"It will save our rostering officers a lot of time and effort in cross-



Northern Rivers Regional Operations Manager John Murray (left) and Director Operations Andrew Cribb meet members of Volunteer Marine Rescue Queensland to demonstrate our IT systems.

referencing members' availability and qualifications for various duties," he said. "We've worked closely with our units on the system's development and within hours of it going live, six units had created online rosters."

The system enables members to indicate their availability - or absence - for a designated period and once a roster is published, to take on additional shifts to fill gaps or seek someone to swap shifts they may no longer be able to perform.

The rostering system also is integrated with Otter so that if an individual does not have the required qualifications for a specific duty, they cannot be assigned that role.

Director Operations Andrew Cribb and Northern Rivers Regional

Operations Manager John Murray headed to Brisbane in February to demonstrate Seahawk and the new Incident Management System to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and Volunteer Marine Rescue Queensland personnel.

"We're always happy to share the benefits of our technology and experience with our volunteer marine rescue colleagues," Mr Cribb said. "Our integrated technology is the envy of services around Australia."

Mr Cribb said VMRQ already used Seahawk to transfer the safety watch over boats crossing from Queensland waters to MR Point Danger and could see the benefits of extending its use beyond the cross-border region.

Project to help hearing impaired stay safer

As part of a commitment to make its vital safety and preparedness information more accessible, MRNSW is reaching out to deaf and hearing impaired members of the boating community.

Working with MR Jervis Bay volunteer and Auslan interpreter Sean Sweeney, a series of eight targeted videos is being developed for members of the Deaf Community and those with a hearing

impairment. Each video will be signed by Sean, with the videos also subtitled.

Topics such as Logging On and Off, wearing a lifejacket, maintaining your vessel, how to use a flare and understanding boating weather will be covered.

Sean said he was delighted to be part of such an innovative project.

"Boating is a popular pastime within the Deaf Community and

these videos will help ensure that it is as safe as well as an enjoyable one," he said.

The videos will be uploaded to the MRNSW website and promoted within the Deaf Community.

MRTV episodes also are now fully subtitled. The monthly program is a key channel for our safety information as well as stories on MRNSW activities and the addition of subtitles will increase



MRTV is now subtitled.

the accessibility of this important community boating resource to enhance public boating safety.

Thanks to the incredible women in our ranks

Female members assured there is no limit to what they can achieve.

More than a quarter of MRNSW members are women and on International Women's Day, we thanked each of them for their service and contribution to our mission of saving lives on the water.

Our female members are visible and active at every level of our organisation, from Board Director Pat Fayers to our newest recruits just starting their MRNSW voyage.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said the organisation was fortunate to have an incredible female workforce of both volunteers and staff.

"Women comprise 27 per cent of our volunteer membership, which is one of the highest proportions in the emergency services," he said.

"They are equally as skilled, qualified and experienced as their male colleagues, whether they operate on the water on our rescue vessels or Rescue Water Craft, on the airwaves in our radio bases or in the many administrative, management, fundraising or other support roles essential to keep our units functioning effectively."

Marine Rescue women are a diverse collective, across different ages and life stages, with varying roles and responsibilities.

Four inspirational, encouraging women were profiled on MRNSW social media for International Women's Day on March 8.

MR Merimbula member Amanda Shane was already a volunteer with the local Rural Fire Service brigade when she decided she would like to try something else. One day she walked past a Marine Rescue poster and, coming from a family that enjoyed fishing, decided to join.

As mum to two-year-old Olivia, Amanda successfully manages to balance the demands of motherhood with being a volunteer, thanks to the service's structured training that she said had made it easy for her to set and achieve her goals.

"Being a member at Marine

Rescue Merimbula, I've always felt supported in achieving my goals. Unit Commander Sonia Teston is a great female role model and she's provided encouragement for me to first become a Radio Operator and now currently in my training as a boat crew member.

"My message to other young mums out there is that Marine Rescue is a great way to meet other people, learn new skills and have some fun. You'll have a great sense of achievement and most important, help to save lives on the water."

MR Ulladulla Membership Officer Gabrielle Boermans organised an International Women's Day morning tea for women from MR Ulladulla, Sussex Inlet and Kioloa.

In the decade since she joined the unit, Gabrielle has witnessed a pleasing change, with more and more women joining and taking on an increasing variety of roles.

"Quite a few of our current women members and more recent women applicants are participating and involved in operational roles such as crew, skipper, radio operators and administrative support at various levels," she said. "As a woman, there's a supportive culture and no limit to what you can achieve if you want to."

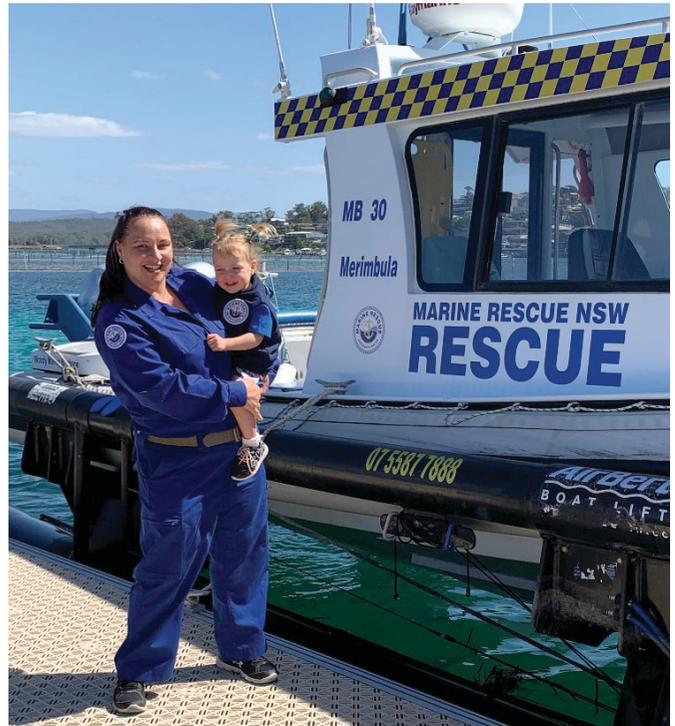
When Caron Parfitt left the corporate world and moved to Bermagui, she looked around for some volunteering work. Having a sailing background, the local Marine Rescue unit seemed a perfect fit.

Seven years later, Caron is Unit Commander of MR Bermagui.

She said she'd always felt valued and supported at the unit for who she was as a person and the skills and experience she could offer.

"Whatever I've wanted to try, I have been encouraged to give it a go and have always felt supported through the process," Caron said.

"It's been great to see increasing numbers of women joining the



Combining motherhood and volunteering ... MR Merimbula member Amanda Shane with our youngest recruit, two-year-old Olivia.

service and more and more of them taking up leadership roles. My experience shows that what counts is not your gender but your ability and willingness to get things done."

At MR Forster-Tuncurry, six of nine most recent members to join have been women - something of which Deputy Unit Commander Fran Breen is extremely proud.

"It's been great to hear the enthusiasm of the younger women who are joining our unit and to know

that they are part of a supportive and welcoming organisation that will help them achieve their potential."

She said volunteering at Marine Rescue was a great way of transferring skills learned in the workplace to a worthwhile community service organisation.

"For any woman out there thinking of trying something different, I encourage them to have a go and see just what they can achieve."



Women from MR Ulladulla, Sussex Inlet and Kioloa attend an International Women's Day morning tea.

Rescue experts assemble at Headquarters

Board maintains distance as Commissioner chairs first meeting of year.

Marine Rescue NSW welcomed the State Rescue Board to its Headquarters in February.

Board members assembled at the Cronulla complex for their first, socially distanced, meeting of 2021.

The Rescue Board comprises the heads or senior representatives of the rescue agencies that operate across the State, along with the State Emergency Operations Controller.

MRNSW Commissioner Stacey Tannos has been the Chair of the Board since November 2015.

The Board's role is to ensure the efficient and effective maintenance of rescue services - on both land and water - throughout NSW.



RFS Commissioner Rob Rogers, SLS Chief Executive Officer Steven Pearce, SES Commissioner Carlene York, VRA Commissioner Mark Gibson, Commissioner Stacey Tannos, NSW Ambulance Commissioner Dominic Morgan, NSW Police Inspector Aimee Templeman, representing the State Emergency Operations Controller and Fire + Rescue NSW Commissioner Paul Baxter at MRNSW Headquarters, with Police A/Superintendent Robert Corry on Zoom. Photo: Brad Whittaker.

MRTV
MARINE RESCUE TV

Volunteers saving lives on the water

Grants help upgrade three units' facilities

Three MRNSW units have been granted more than \$90,000 in funding for projects to upgrade their facilities.

MR Lake Macquarie was awarded \$44,000 and MR Port Stephens \$44,360 under the State Government's Crown Reserve Improvement Fund Program.

Grants and Sponsorship Manager Mat Smith said the program supported Crown Reserve Managers to maintain and protect the State Government properties they occupied.

"While many of our units sit on Crown Lands, only a handful are Crown Reserves and eligible to apply for funding under this program," he said.

"This funding helps our units to preserve their sites on behalf of their owners - the people of NSW."

The Lake Macquarie unit will put its funding to essential underpinning work on its boat base on the Pelican waterfront and Port Stephens will repair and upgrade footpaths



The Inner Light Tea Rooms on the Nelson Bay Reserve.

and driveways on its grounds surrounding the former Nelson Bay Inner Light. This heritage site, which includes Tea Rooms and a gift shop, is popular with visitors and for weddings.

The 150th anniversary of the initial opening of the Light Room will be celebrated in April 2022.

Further south, MR Kioloa has received \$5,000 from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and \$1,000 from the Shoalhaven Council Mayor to replace the carpets in the unit's beachfront base, which were damaged during last summer's bushfire emergency.

Our volunteers earn State commendation

Award recognises members' life-saving role and support for communities.

Marine Rescue NSW volunteers' remarkable service to the community has been honoured with a Special Commendation in the 2020 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.

Centre for Volunteering Chief Executive Officer Gemma Rygate said the Special Commendation was in recognition of the outstanding contributions of Marine Rescue volunteers and particularly for their role in saving lives and supporting communities across NSW in 2020.

The awards are in their 14th year and have grown to become one of the largest celebrations of volunteering across Australia.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos thanked the Centre for acknowledging the critical role of all volunteers in building strong,

cohesive and resilient communities.

"We have all faced great adversity over the past 18 months, with few of us not touched in some way by the dangers of bushfires and floods or the health and economic crises caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

"Our volunteers, along with their counterparts in the emergency services and countless organisations around our State, make an enormous contribution to the safety and wellbeing of our society as a whole.

"The essence of volunteering is to give back to the community and to provide selfless service.

"Our volunteers have gone above and beyond their specific roles and responsibilities to support others in need through these recent crises."



Commissioner Stacey Tannos and MR Botany Port Hacking radio operator David Fairlie show off our Volunteer of the Year Commendation. Photo: Brad Whittaker.

Members of the MR Crowdy Harrington unit also have been recognised for their service to their small coastal community.

The unit was named the

Volunteer Group of the Year at the Harrington Crowdy Head Australia Day celebrations and Radio Operator Tyler Blake received the Young Volunteer of the Year Award.



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Marine Rescue flies vibrant flag for respect

Contingent builds a boat and steers it on to the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Marine Rescue NSW always needs a committed crew and a sturdy rescue vessel to operate at its peak. And we had both on parade at this year's Sydney Mardi Gras.

Our crew in blue built a boat in Moore Park and sailed it on to the hallowed turf of the Sydney Cricket Ground, rising on a tide of thunderous applause on Saturday, March 6.

Almost 40 volunteers, staff, family and friends joined our contingent to send a strong - and vibrant - message of inclusivity, respect and diversity.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said the service's participation in Mardi Gras reflected its commitment to welcoming and serving people from all walks of life.

"We are a reflection of the community we serve. Our diversity is a great strength and we want to ensure everyone feels welcome in our organisation," he said.

COVID-19 restrictions saw this year's Mardi Gras move from its traditional home on Oxford Street to the SCG, with a crowd of about 36,000 people enjoying the big arena spectacular. About 5,000 participants from more than 100 LGBTQI+ and community groups took part. MRNSW marched in our third parade alongside our emergency services colleagues.

Volunteers from MR Port Jackson, Middle Harbour, Broken Bay, Terrey Hills, Botany Port Hacking, Central Coast, Port Kembla and Bermagui and Headquarters staff members joined in to support members of the LGBTQI+ communities, colleagues, family and friends.

MR Bermagui Coxswain Volker Aebischer said he had travelled to take part in memory of his friend and fellow unit member Di Manning, who had passed away in 2019.

With Headquarters IT Support Officer Matt Sims and Grants and Sponsorship Manager Mat Smith as



The Marine Rescue NSW crew in blue assembles in Moore Park ahead of the 2021 Sydney Mardi Gras Parade, sending a strong message of respect, diversity and inclusivity.

crew members, Volker steered our course around the ground from the helm of our corflute rescue vessel.

MR Central Coast member Megan Loaney said she had had an "absolutely incredible experience".

"I thought it would be a fantastic opportunity and being a part of the LGBTQIA+ community, I was thrilled at the idea of meeting other Marine Rescue members who were also part of the community. I will remember it for the rest of my life."

MR Port Jackson Training Officer David Mills has worked with Mardi Gras in an operations capacity for 15 years, including as Operations Coordinator for the first time this year.

"I've never been in the parade as a participant, however, due to the change to a COVID-safe parade from Oxford Street to the SCG this year, it not only provided me an opportunity to do my much loved role in Operations but also march with Marine Rescue, an organisation I absolutely love volunteering for," he said. "The diversity I see in Marine Rescue is a strength that

we should be very proud of and thankful for in an organisation where our similarities and differences are celebrated."

MR Botany Port Hacking recruit Mary King said that as a new member, it was great to see MRNSW support LGBTQIA+ communities.

"Interacting with other unit members at Mardi Gras who are supporters as well felt very wholesome and welcoming. It was an all-around terrific time and I appreciated other unit members' contribution to make everything

happen. Having my partner by my side during this occasion made it much more meaningful," she said.

MR Broken Bay Unit Commander Jimmy Arteaga said supporting Mardi Gras was an extension of Marine Rescue's values of respect, inclusiveness and acceptance of all members.

"By participating in the event, I got the opportunity to demonstrate our values of supporting diversity and inclusiveness while having a really fun time with my MRNSW colleagues," he said.



MRNSW maintained its commitment to building its rescue vessels in NSW, with staff and volunteers taking to the tools.

and diversity in big arena Mardi Gras



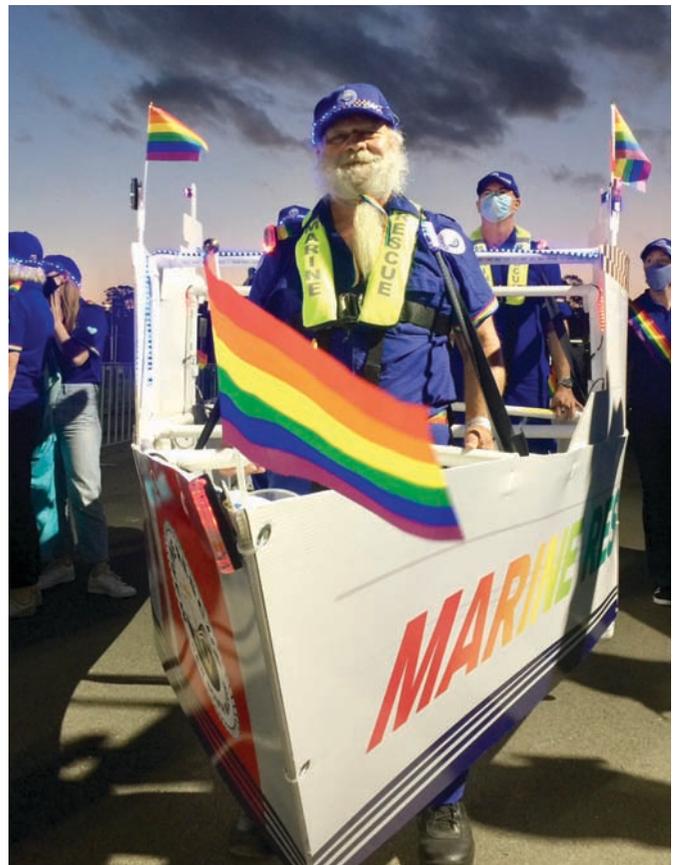
Members of the MRNSW contingent, complete with a floating rescue vessel, rise on the tide of thunderous applause as they enter the Sydney Cricket Ground, before being greeted by our theme song, *Rescue Me*.



MR Port Jackson on parade ... Kat Harding, David Mills, Emma Strowbridge, Pauline Ramsey, Sophia Psaltis and Jade Nolan.



Diana Bridgford from MR Middle Harbour was one of the 34 volunteers, staff, family and friends waving the MRNSW flag.



MR Bermagui Coxswain Volker Aebischer, at the helm of our vessel, marched in memory of his late unit colleague Di Manning.

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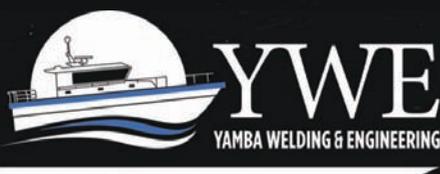


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Regatta teaches old sea dogs new tricks

Steam power meets 21st century technology as Putters Log On via App.

The days of steam power, polished brass and clinker-built timber boats were fondly remembered as the annual Port Hacking Putters Regatta set off from Hungry Point on the first Saturday in February.

Under grey skies, Cronulla MP Mark Speakman and MR Botany Port Hacking Unit Commander Noel Parkinson rang the bell to send the flotilla of 55 classic and wooden vessels on its way for a 90-minute cruise around Gunnamatta Bay and on to Lilli Pilli.

Mr Speakman said the regatta not only celebrated the history of boating on Port Hacking but also raised funds for the local unit and safety awareness, with skippers encouraged to Log On via the free MRNSW smartphone App.

Entrants included the *SS Minnow*, under the uncertain control of the Skipper and Gilligan, the steam powered *Choof and Puff* and an historic 1910 RME.

Rescue vessel *Botany Hacking 31* joined the procession, with the crew keeping a watchful eye out for anyone in need of a helping hand.

Presiding over the event was Putters Commodore, MRNSW Assistant Director of Training and Education, Brad Whittaker.

Mr Whittaker said the regatta was one of the Sutherland Shire's



Grey, misty skies didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the boaters who donned period costume and fancy dress to board the 55 vessels that took part in this year's Port Hacking Putters Regatta. Photos: Brad Whittaker.

most colourful events and an annual celebration of the Hacking's boating heritage, with many historic boats taking part and crews getting into the spirit by dressing in period costume and fancy dress.

"Some of the boats might be more than a century old but on the day, everyone was able to Log On and Off," he said.

"It just goes to show that you really can teach an old sea dog a new trick."

Passengers on the *Tom Thumb III* ferry raised \$1500, with the support of Cronulla Ferries and Dominelli Ford, for the unit.



Cronulla MP Mark Speakman and MR Botany Port Hacking UC Noel Parkinson ring the bell to send the flotilla off on its 90-minute cruise.



The annual Putters Regatta rekindles the romantic days of steam power, polished brass and clinker-built timber boats plying Port Hacking.



The *SS Minnow* takes out the Commodore's Call prize, much to the delight of its passengers, Gilligan, the Skipper too, a millionaire and his wife, a movie star, the Professor and Mary Ann. Photo: Bob Wilson.

Brothers prove two birds of a feather

Trapped frogmouth freed in behind the scenes operation.

As emergency services worked desperately in the dark after five men were washed off a rock platform at Port Kembla in January, another, smaller, rescue was taking place on the sidelines.

The command post for the joint search and rescue operation was established in the carpark at the MR Port Kembla Hill 60 radio base.

In the midst of the action, a tawny frogmouth became trapped in the tower's security fence, injuring a wing. Kind-hearted police and ambulance officers and Unit Commander Kevin Bradley joined forces to free the distressed bird, placing it in a box to be watched over by the unit's radio operators until it could be ferried to a wildlife service or vet.

Early the next morning, a police

officer on scene agreed to drop the bird at a veterinarian on his way to his next appointment, saying he would also ask his brother's advice.

Seems caring for members of the animal kingdom - and tawny frogmouths in particular - runs in the family. Turns out Senior Constable Phillip Brown's brother is everyone's favourite TV vet, Dr Chris Brown.

The unit has been told the bird pulled through.



Dr Doolittles ... Senior Constable Phillip Brown ferries an injured tawny frogmouth from the Hill 60 radio base for treatment, while his brother Chris (left) cosies up to another on *I'm a Celebrity*.



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Dramatic roo-scue to reach tired swimmer

Our radio operators keep watch over countless incidents on their local waterways but the team at MR Ballina spied an unusual rescue from their radio tower on January 5.

A wallaby had run into a bit of trouble crossing the river against the tide and a determined 'roo-scue' team was on the way.

Grabbing a surfboard, local resident Cooper helped the tiring

wallaby to the bank to safety.

Another local, Lenny, gave a hand to lift the animal up on to dry land, while our radio operators called the local WIRES team.

After a quick once-over, the healthy but tired wallaby was released into the scrub around the base where it had come from.

A great joint operation to save a life on the water!



Two local residents helped this wallaby to safety after it got into trouble on the Richmond River. Photo: Merty Kertter.

Trainers to range far and wide in new trucks

Safe, rugged workhorses added to road fleet after market review.

These new MRNSW vehicles will be covering a lot of territory along the NSW coastline and inland to two key waterways.

The 2021 Ford Rangers are the new workhorses for our three Regional Training Managers in their roles to manage and support our volunteer training.

The Rangers were chosen after a market review to identify the preferred vehicle to provide our staff with a combination of safety, durability and efficiency while comfortably functioning as a mobile office during their travels along the coastline and inland to the Alpine Lakes and Murray River.

The XLT 2.2 models, supplied by Dominelli Ford at Kirrawee, also offer plenty of space to store the variety of training gear the three Training Managers routinely carry

and will be an eye-catching feature at community engagement activities.

They are lower emission and offer greater fuel economy than the team's previous vehicles.

MRNSW Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell and Fleet Officer Sean Jewiss handed over the keys to the first two vehicles to RTM Central Jane Shirriff and RTM South Stuart Massey at State Headquarters in early February.

Deputy Commissioner Barrell said the rugged vehicles offered greater safety, with equipment now securely stored in the rear compartment and a suite of safety technology, including sensors and cameras incorporated into the bullbars and canopy, reversing cameras and lane assist.

"The canopy has been custom designed with power and lighting



Start your engines ... Fleet Officer Sean Jewiss, Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell, RTM Central Jane Shirriff and RTM South Stuart Massey with two of the eye-catching new vehicles.

and the layout allows the RTMs to quickly access essential equipment such as mannequins, first aid gear and community engagement resources," he said. "With the

addition of these vehicles, our fleet is now safer, greener and more environmentally responsible."

Northern RTM Rodney Page also took delivery of a new Ranger.

Manager builds on her record of success

Company's priority to deliver unprecedented service to loyal customers.

The owners of a key MRNSW fleet builder have appointed a new leader to steer Yamba Welding & Engineering through its next business evolution.

The Whiskey Project Group acquired YWE and maritime design company Naiad, in late 2020.

It has now appointed Rebecca Sinclair as the YWE General Manager.

Ms Sinclair, who took the helm in February, has a strong track record of delivering operational and financial results across the construction, oil and gas, defence and technology sectors.

She said YWE founder Bill Collingburn had forged remarkable relationships and established YWE as Australia's leading manufacturer of government and specialist watercraft.

"The logical next step for YWE

is to work hand in hand with our customers to consolidate this position and then ensure we are operationally prepared for expansion so we can harness the opportunities emerging from the Commonwealth's investment in maritime defence assets," she said.

"An absolute priority is to ensure our loyal customers, such as Marine Rescue NSW, receive an unprecedented level of service and have our expertise and innovative approach at their disposal."

With a resume that stretches over 25 years as a senior manager for large-scale commercial projects, Ms Sinclair is known for demonstrated results in lifting business performance through productivity and process improvement.

"I am really excited to be guiding YWE through our next phase of growth. YWE has such a talented



New Yamba Welding & Engineering General Manager Rebecca Sinclair on board the new Port Jackson 31.

and dedicated team, who are experienced in building to the exacting standards of clients such as Marine Rescue, Transport for NSW, Australian Border Force and the Australian Defence Force. The potential for YWE is enormous and it's my role to ensure the business

seizes these opportunities and delivers the best possible product to our customers, while securing the future of our people and our community by creating career pathways and upholding the legacy and trust that YWE has built over the past 45 years."



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Marine Rescue at work



Lifejackets save lives ... but only if you're wearing them. All four people on this runabout were wearing their jackets and made it to shore, with the help of members of the public, when their boat overturned on Shelly Beach, Nambucca Heads, on February 4. The skipper had Logged On when heading out and had just Logged Off when the boat rolled. *Photo: Gary Nichols.*



They're friendly, honestly! MR Trial Bay members Ian Turner and Ian Creswick, ready to remove competitors' timing tags at the finish line of the Trial Bay Triathlon, supported by the unit, in February.



Planning for success ... MR Port Jackson and Broken Bay crews attend a NSW Maritime briefing for Sydney Harbour activities on New Year's Eve. *Photo: Sydney ROM Glenn Evans.*



Summer training ... MR Evans Head members Mark Korsman, Rohan Shanahan, Kira Hartland and Hugh Johns joined forces with Ballina Jet Boat Rescue for an exercise on the Evans River in January.



A deck with a view ... *Lord Howe 40*, the first dedicated rescue vessel to be based at the World Heritage-listed island, arrives in December. The unit is awaiting its rescue accreditation (see page 29).

Triple trouble for Brunswick volunteers

Jump in boating traffic and emergencies in North Coast holiday boom.

With Australians unable to head overseas or even to Queensland and more holidaymakers than ever flocking to the NSW North Coast, the number of rescue operations launched by MR Brunswick tripled this summer.

Over the past few months we have seen a large increase in the number of vessels Logging On - up from 107 boats with 905 people on board last summer to 188, with 1,344 passengers, this season.

This radio base workload was reflected on the water, with the unit's crews conducting 13 rescue operations, compared to four over the same period of 2019-2020.

We have responded to a range of emergencies, including a search for a missing person at sea, a tinny broken down on the river, small and large tows and a number of vessels that had failed to Log Off.

In the lead-up to the peak season, our members assembled for

the official opening of our \$84,000 training and meeting centre by Police and Emergency Services Minister David Elliott.

We were also joined by Commissioner Stacey Tannos, Northern Rivers Director Darcy Henriksen, members of neighbouring units and local emergency services personnel.

Mr Elliott said the facility had been developed with a \$30,000 State Government contribution.

"The NSW Government is proud to support the volunteers and especially to help provide them with the facilities they need to provide an even greater service to our boating community," he said.

Commissioner Tannos thanked the Government for its four-year \$37.6 million investment in new and refurbished operating facilities, 38 new rescue boats and continued upgrading of the State's marine radio network.



Police and Emergency Services Minister David Elliott (in vest) with guests at the opening of the MR Brunswick training centre.

The remaining funding for the building came from a \$50,000 bequest from the estate of local medical practitioner Dr Suresh Rananavare.

This project was the culmination of extensive planning and input by the unit's volunteers.

We previously had to rent a local hall for our unit meetings and training but the funding from the Government and the generous

bequest from Dr Rananavare's estate has enabled us to have our own dedicated space.

We also received an Emergency Volunteer Support Scheme grant for \$4,400 to help equip and fit out the centre with audio-visual and IT tools and furniture.

We are confident that having first-rate facilities like this also will help us attract new members to the unit.

Jonathon Wilcock

New year, new outlook for Point Danger

Base moves from cliff-top to beachfront during repairs to lighthouse.

Marine Rescue Point Danger is on the move ahead of major repairs and renovations to its base at the foot of the Captain Cook Lighthouse.

After a quieter than usual holiday season, the new year means a temporary shift for the unit to make way for significant reconstruction work on the base of the 50-year-old lighthouse, which is infected with concrete cancer.

With the lighthouse straddling the state border, the work is being jointly funded by the Tweed and Gold Coast councils.

The first phase of the unit's relocation, potentially for up to a year, began on Friday, January 29, stretching across the weekend.

This involved closing the

unit's gift shop and moving the administration and finance offices downhill to our rescue base at Duranbah Beach, leaving only the radio room at the lighthouse.

Subject to confirmation by Tweed Shire Council, the radio room also will move in April.

Radio operations will be conducted from the MRNSW mobile incident command vehicle for a short time while the radio and computer infrastructure is moved from the cliff-top to the beachfront.

Work will then begin to demolish the rooms underneath the lighthouse and the public observation decks above these spaces. The unit's radio services for the boating community will continue as usual.

While the unit observed a slightly



Radio operator Gary Burch on duty in MR Point Danger's radio base, which will temporarily relocate during repairs to the lighthouse.

lower volume of boating activity on the Tweed River over summer, we have had a welcome increase in people expressing an interest in joining the unit in varying capacities.

Congratulations to our newly-qualified Watch Officers, Graham

Challender and Alan Rowlandson, and Crew members Sean Gray and Keith Smith, along with Gavin Bond, who was presented the Peter Barnes Perpetual Crewie of the Year for 2020.

Phil Pickering

Awards for daring offshore rescue in dark

Ballina crew and radio operators awarded citations for saving couple.

Six volunteers from MR Ballina have been presented with awards for their skill and determination during a life-saving offshore search and rescue mission in the dark last June.

Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell presented the members with Commissioner's Citations for their role in rescuing a couple whose 45 foot cruiser hit an object and rapidly began sinking bow-first 6nm south of Ballina.

He congratulated the volunteers on their rapid and professional response to rescue people whose lives were in imminent danger.

"There is no doubt those crew members, with top-class communications support from the radio base, saved two lives that morning. There can be no greater accolade," he said. "It is a demonstration of their teamwork and commitment to saving lives on the water that they were prepared to head out in difficult conditions, at some risk to their own safety, to help those in real trouble."



Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell (right) and Director Darcy Henriksen (centre) congratulate MR Ballina members awarded Commissioner's Citations.

The Citation was presented to crew members Glenn Sanders, Ian Grimwood, Phil Causley and Bill Ewen and radio operators Ray Tennent and Tony Hensley. Unit Commander Zsolt Mankowsky also accepted a unit citation.

Northern Rivers Regional Director Darcy Henriksen, Chief Financial Officer Todd Andrews and Regional Operations Manager John Murray attended the presentation, along with the leaders of other units.

The rescue operation began when the couple on board the cruiser issued a Mayday call just after 2am on June 12. *Ballina 30* was quickly under way, crossing the hazardous Richmond River bar on a large swell in challenging conditions.

The Westpac Rescue Life Saver guided the rescue vessel to the scene, where the couple was retrieved from the ocean. With the helicopter illuminating the river mouth, *BA 30* again made the

crossing safely and transported the couple to a waiting NSW Ambulance.

The cruiser's skipper, Guy Peluso, paid tribute to the volunteers.

"I have a very clear memory of the members that saved us standing shoulder to shoulder smiling as we were escorted to the ambulance," he said. "They were proud members of Marine Rescue who had trained and developed their skills over years to pull off an amazing rescue. We are very thankful."

Joint unit training proves twice as valuable

Training is the essence of building competent, reliable rescue teams.

MR Evans Head runs desktop training every Tuesday night and vessel training on Saturday mornings, along with night training when conditions are suitable.

Training with our colleagues from other units provides double the value and now that things are getting back to normal, we work with our neighbours whenever possible.

In one recent exercise, *Iluka Yamba 30*, skippered by Mick Madden, was tasked to "rescue" *Evans Head 30* offshore at South Evans Reef, while the Evans Head crew was tasked to "rescue" *IY 30*.

This valuable exercise involved both vessel crews, with the "incident" managed by both units' radio bases.

MR Evans Head is fortunate to have a new Unit Commander with extensive experience as a Local Emergency Management Officer with a number of councils, including our local Richmond Valley Council.

Ken Exley joined the unit in 2017 after retiring as Chair of the Local Emergency Management Committee and was elected in January. He also has a blue water background as an offshore sailor, including competing in numerous Sydney to Hobart Yacht Races.

Since joining the unit, Ken has



Evans Head 30 crew member Hugh Johns prepares to throw the heaving line to the crew on the foredeck of *Iluka Yamba 30* during an offshore training exercise.

qualified as a Radio Operator and Crew member and is a valuable mentor to new recruits.

In a family commitment, Ken's wife Kerrie is also a Radio Operator

and the unit's Administration Officer.

The unit is keenly awaiting the mid-year arrival of our new Naiad vessel now under construction.

Bill Bates

Beachfront brekkie back on summer menu

Thanks to emergency services volunteers at Australia Day event.

With the easing of COVID restrictions, MR Ballina has been a hive of socially distanced activity.

We have been able to resume our popular Breakfast @ the Beach barbecues, which have been warmly welcomed.

Members have celebrated the dedication of Radio Operator Joan Hurley over her 15 years of service.

A former Unit Commander and Admin Officer, we thank Joan for her time and commitment, as well as her cheerful smile and grace.

A strong focus on training has seen our crews undertaking search and tow simulations on board both *Ballina 30* and *BA 20*, spinal board and fire pump sessions and various other activities.

Thanks to Norm Lannoy, Phil Causley, Ian Grimwood and Hunter Leeder, as well as MR Point Danger's Courtney Greenslade for sharing their knowledge and experience.

Radio Operator training and public radio courses were run by Norm Eather and Chris Mackie.

Congratulations to Taylor Hession and Darryl Waddell for gaining their Crew and Radio Operator ratings, respectively.

Another three volunteers joined the unit in recent weeks, so we will have more accredited members over the remainder of the year.

On Australia Day, members were humbled by the gratitude expressed at a barbecue hosted by the Rotary Club of Ballina of Richmond to



Stand back ... MR Ballina's Ian Grimwood demonstrates the use of a fire hose during a summer training session.

thank local emergency service volunteers. We are looking forward to another year of supporting our

community, training together and continuing to grow as a unit.
Kath Begley

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'No Duff' challenges test Woolli volunteers

Training assessment takes realistic turn with 30-mile tow, hoax drowning call.

Marine Rescue Woolli members Matthew McLennan and Marty Hutchings had worked diligently for six months towards their goal of achieving their Leading Crew qualifications before Christmas.

With only days to go, a break in the weather, MR Woolgoolga Unit Commander Mitch Harvey available as Assessor and *Woolgoolga 30* able to be on the water to act as a "distressed vessel", it was all systems go, with a plan to complete the two assessments in the one day.

Matthew was up first, with a great demonstration of the skills and knowledge required.

On return to the Woolli Woolli River, with a side tow to gently place *Woolgoolga 30* alongside the Woolli wharf, our attention turned to lunch but it was not to be - at least not for the Woolli crew. A "No Duff" call came from our radio base to rescue an 11 metre motor/sailer 4nm abeam Woolli with engine failure.

Marty's assessment turned into the real thing as we were tasked to assess the situation and, if required, take the vessel in tow for Yamba, 30nm to the north.

A crew from MR Iluka-Yamba was activated to take over the tow at the halfway point.

Marty assumed control of *Woolli 30* and the target boat was located with the use of radar, as an 11m steel hull makes a good target. The sole person on board requested a tow due to engine failure, little wind and crew fatigue.

It was a text-book standard tow, with our Leading Crew candidate adjusting the tow length of approximately 100m for synchronisation, setting a speed to maintain a catenary in the tow line and setting up radio communications with the boat under tow. *WV 30* rendezvoused with *IY 30* south of Sandon River and transferred the tow.

With *WV 30* now homeward

bound, the assessment continued, with fire and man overboard drills completed before we were activated to respond at best possible speed to a Triple Zero report of a person drowning north of the campground at Sandon.

Woolgoolga 30 also headed north to assist. At 30 knots-plus, we were on scene in 15 minutes and began a shoreline search north from Plover Island, just outside the surf zone. Nothing was sighted and there was no sign of an emergency among people on the beach.

We crossed back over the Sandon River bar to meet up with two police vehicles at the ramp. Police Marine Area Command then stood all assets down, having determined it was a hoax call.

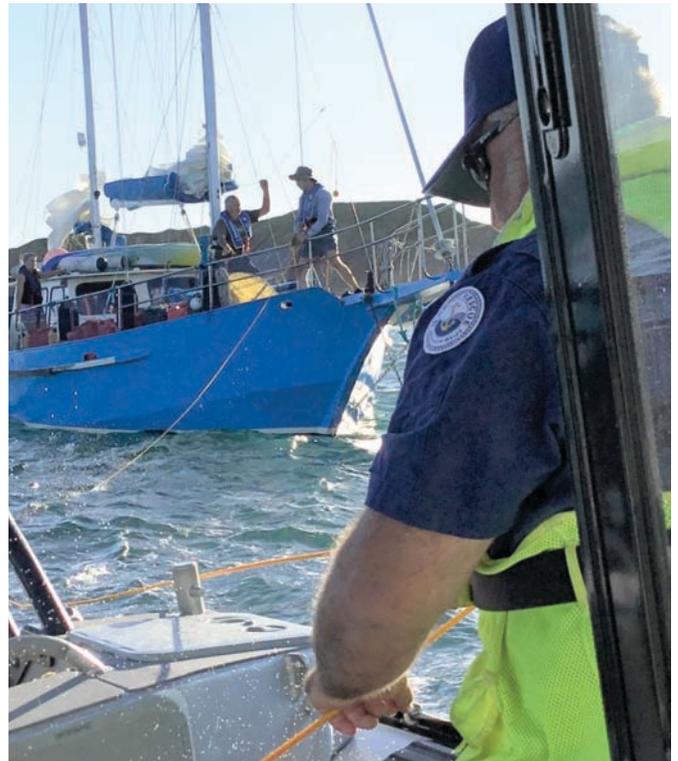
Just to make sure our Assessor didn't "pull any more rabbits out of his hat", we gave Mitch Harvey the helm for the return to Woolli and lunch at last. Congratulations to Matthew and Marty for achieving their Leading Crew ratings in unplanned, real-time circumstances.

Both were again on board, with fellow crew Kath Farrar and Richard Taffs, and Watch Officer Jackie Taffs in the base, for a challenging operation on January 24 and into the next morning, to rescue a ketch being washed on to rocks on the weather side of North West Solitary Island.

In difficult conditions, working in close in the back wash off the island, *WV 30* was able to tow the vessel to safe water and then transfer the tow to Water Police launch *WP 22* out of Coffs Harbour.

A successful rescue, due to the attributes we have developed as MRNSW with a suitable rescue vessel, training, skill, experience, equipment, teamwork and a little bit of courage.

Communications and coordination by Watch Officers Jackie Taffs at Woolli and Lindy Powells at



Marty Hutchings successfully throws a line to a ketch at risk of running on to rocks on North West Solitary Island and Matthew McLennan during his Leading Crew assessment (below).

Coffs Harbour contributed to the successful outcome.

Thanks to all our unit members for enabling us to assist the boating public over the holiday season through our extended radio base operating hours and the response to 10 activations.

Richard Taffs



Thanks to MR Coffs Harbour and Woolli Watch Officers Lindy Powells and Jackie Taffs for their contribution to a successful operation.

Grim discovery ends search for missing man

Coffs Harbour crews respond to two public reports of serious emergencies.

Part from a few busy days over the Christmas break, boating traffic on the Coffs Coast this summer was largely stifled by the nearly continuous rough weather.

MR Coffs Harbour consequently dealt with a comparatively low number of incidents, although major operations were launched in response to two public reports of serious emergencies in January.

The first involved a sighting in the gathering twilight of a sailboarder last seen heading out in a rough sea to the north east and not being seen to return. Although no request for help had been received, a search was organised - a difficult proposition with the target probably moving quite quickly or flat down on the sea in the gloom. Fortunately, he eventually returned to the beach to proudly explain he was training to break a world sailboarding record.

The second public report was of

a man suspected of being washed off the eastern breakwater of Coffs Harbour in very heavy seas. A woman raised the alarm when the young man was suddenly gone: she had not seen what happened to him but it was suspected he was washed into the harbour. It was just after 6pm and a search was soon organised, with *Coffs 30* and several jet skis concentrating on the inside of the wall and then along the outside in dangerous conditions.

No search could be conducted along the wall itself because of the heavy breaking waves and falling darkness. The search resumed at first light with drift tests conducted inside of the wall and again on the outside in the harbour entrance to try to establish a likely search pattern in the still three and four metre seas. *Coffs 30*, *Woolgoolga 30* and Police launch *Vanguard* continued searching in a south



Bob Ford keeps a careful watch as *Coffs 30* searches inside the breakwall for a man swept off the rocks. Photo: Mitch Harvey.

easterly direction for most of the day with no result. Unfortunately, the young man was found the next morning as the seas abated down in the rocks and handbars that comprise the breakwater.

While *Coffs 30* was only tasked to two other routine tows in January, our radio base referred calls for help

from those in trouble on the water to the closer MR Trial Bay, Nambucca and Woolli units to respond.

On a brighter note, our one-minute recruitment video is now being aired at the Coffs Fish Co-op and other popular venues around Coffs Harbour, with more to come.

Graeme King

Rescue workload leaps as tourists flock back

New mobile kitchen a massive boost for Forster-Tuncurry fundraisers.

The very welcome and desperately needed invasion of holidaymakers to our region post-lockdown, combined with exceptionally fine weather, has seen a marked increase in activity for MR Forster-Tuncurry over the past couple of months.

The unit launched 29 rescue missions over the first two months of 2021, including 11 offshore - a significant increase over the 11 operations overall at the same time last year.

In one of the more memorable (and fun) operations in January, *Forster 20* rescued a broken down 5m runabout with five people, including three children, on board on Wallis Lake.

Skipper Geoff Anderson decided to transfer the children to *FO 20* for

the tow back to shore, with the kids enjoying a memorable trip chatting with our crew all the way back to Tuncurry boat ramp. No doubt it made a great holiday story to tell their friends back at school!

With the increase in our operational tempo, we have also hit the ground running this year to recruit and train new members.

Nine have begun their radio operator training, with another five launching their crew training in early March. Some of the new recruits were drawn to join after seeing the unit's local cinema advertisement, which is clearly having the desired effect of raising awareness and volunteer numbers.

Our fundraising efforts have started again following the lifting COVID restrictions. The hard-



Skipper Geoff Anderson at the helm of *Forster 20* after taking three children on board as their runabout was towed back to shore.

working fundraising team received a massive boost with the unveiling of our new mobile barbecue van, which was bought last year but forced into storage during COVID. The fully enclosed and equipped kitchen reduces the workload for our team at local events, while its eye-

catching design raises our profile.

Thank you as always to all our members for their ongoing commitment, especially to the radio operators who volunteered to do extra overnight shifts to cover the busy holiday period.

Michael Portelli

Dad washed from rocks while spear fishing

Trial Bay team quickly on water for extended response operation.

Volunteers from MR Trial Bay devoted three days in early February to a multi-agency search for a missing spear fisherman washed off rocks near Trial Bay Gaol at South West Rocks.

The 53-year-old man and his son were spear fishing near Lagers Point when a large wave pushed them on to the rocks about 1pm on February 4.

The older man was swept back into the water a short time later and did not resurface.

The crew of *Trial Bay 30* and Rescue Water Craft operators on *TB 11* and *TB 12* were quickly on the water with other emergency services, contending with unhelpful search conditions as large swells smashed against rock ledges, producing white foaming waters that reduced visibility.

A crew from Marine Rescue Port Macquarie bolstered the search assets on the second and third



Rescue Water Craft operators Dylan Cameron and Ron Rider scour the rocky coastline near Trial Bay Gaol soon after a 53-year-old spear fisherman was washed into the water. Photo: Peter Holyfield.

day of the operation, scouring the coastline north to Hat Head as *TB 30* searched south. The search was suspended late on February 6 with no trace of the man.

This was one of a string of emergencies to which the unit's crews responded over summer, including rescuing an old fishing charter boat with gearbox problems, a dive boat full of divers, an 11m

yacht with a failed motor and no wind late at night and a 12m cruiser stranded 9nm off the bar.

Off the water, the unit's chefs cooked up a storm, selling bacon and egg rolls to tourists at the Ingenia Holiday Park. The South West Rocks Scouts learned about a day in the life of a crew member on *TB 30* during a visit to the unit.

When the judges could not pick a

winner in a colouring competition, all 10 scouts received an MRNSW hat.

Unit members also supported the Trial Bay Triathlon in mid-February.

The volunteers were ready at the finish line to hand the 300 competitors who completed the course water and bananas before cutting off their timing tags. A good day was had by all involved.

Lorraine Rider

Rain, wind, floods hamper season's boating

Camden Haven turns focus to training after quieter than usual summer.

Heavy rainfall and strong winds combined to keep boaters off Camden Haven and the surrounding waterways over much of December and January.

This made for a quieter than usual summer for the members of MR Camden Haven.

Although we managed to carry out several safety patrols along the river, which helped promote our volunteers' services to locals and visitors, the bad weather hampered even these operations.

The persistent rain resulted in flooding, which combined with big seas to prevent many vessels heading offshore and even on to the river.

Our local boat ramps were covered with flood debris.

On December 29, two boats called for help when they broke down on the river.

The crew of *Camden Haven 10* went to the rescue, towing both boats safely back to local ramps.

Our first rescue for 2021 was not until January 6, when a 5m centre console vessel with three people on board was stranded 3nm east of the bar by electrical problems that preventing it from starting.

Skipper John Evans, Neville Adams and James Atkinson headed out on *CH 30*.

On arrival, the sea state and wind meant it was unsafe to transfer the three on board the rescue vessel so they remained in place for the tow back across the bar into the river.

The rescue was supported by



Camden Haven 30 returns three people on a stranded runabout back across the bar to safety in the unit's first rescue of 2021.

Radio Operator Michael Lill and Duty Watch Officer Ken Rutledge in the unit's radio base.

The unit is now concentrating on

training seven new Radio Operators and two Crew members to maintain our capability.

Ken Rutledge

A tale of two summers on Nambucca River

New volunteers notch up extra hours training on the water.

On January 8 last year, MR Nambucca Rescue Water Craft operators rescued a record 11 people in just two hours on the notorious local bar - our busiest day in a hectic summer season.

January 2021 could not have been more different, with the unit carrying out few rescues over a quiet summer.

While people were around, they were not in the water at our critical ebb times.

This allowed the unit additional time for training activities, helping many newer members get valuable hours on the water.

Thanks to our Headquarters Fleet team, Kelvin Parkin and Sean Jewiss, for swiftly delivering two replacement RWCs when ours were out of action, enabling us to continue patrolling the area

surrounding the bar, particularly on low tides that prevented *Nambucca 20* from launching.

We had incredible rainfall over a wide area of the region over the season and with a lot of water heading downstream on the river, we anticipated sand deposits around the river mouth would be cleared.

Unfortunately, this was not the case and the sand build-up around our base is far worse than ever.

The prohibitive cost of dredging has the unit now looking for a Plan B and perhaps even C.

Our end of year get together at the Nambucca RSL was a great evening, with almost all members attending.

Most were accompanied by their wives or partners, who were given special thanks for their contribution to the Nambucca team.



Heavy rainfall failed to flush out sand build-up from the Nambucca River - here two hours before low tide - which can prevent *Nambucca 20* from launching.

While not officially MRNSW members, our partners are just as important to our operations as our volunteers, who would not be able to fulfill their responsibilities without the support of their families.

Thanks to guests, Mid North Coast Regional Operations Manager Randall Gawne and MR Woolgoolga Unit Commander Mitch Harvey and his partner, for their attendance.
Gary Nichols

Australia Day honours for Crowdy members

Teenage radio operator takes youth award for his service to the community.

The members of MR Crowdy Harrington were proud to be named our local Volunteer Group of the Year on Australia Day.

Our youngest member, Tyler Blake, 18, was also recognised as the Young Volunteer of the Year in the awards, presented by the Harrington Crowdy Head Chamber of Commerce.

Tyler is a fully qualified Radio Operator, who performs at least one 6.5-hour shift a week and usually puts up his hand if extra shifts need filling.

An amateur actor, he has completed a TAFE course in accountancy and is a whiz with computers. He is also proving to be one of our top fundraisers.

We have been lucky in our region not to have been affected by COVID itself. Despite the restrictions, testing of anyone with symptoms,

closing, cleaning and starting again, we have been able to steer all but one of our radio and crew trainees through to their assessments. We now have a new group of trainees already on training shifts and in the classroom.

We are looking forward to some sort of normality by the end of this year. Here's hoping the vaccine will rid us of this pandemic and we will be able to get back to our usual routines with a few good lessons learnt in the process. We will be cleaning and sanitising well into the future.

All our summer visitors must have taken note of messages to look after their boats because we had a town full of extras and no call-outs over the season.

Our primary vessel, *Crowdy 30*, was off the water for repairs for a time but our secondary vessel,



Volunteers of the year ... members of MR Crowdy Harrington with their Australia Day award.

Crowdy 20, remained available to take any operational load. *Crowdy 30* was straight back into action on its return to service. On February 7, three days after it was back on the water, we were called to rescue a boater who couldn't restart his motor.

We are finally able to go ahead with our markets and have resumed

our other fundraisers, including pub raffles and bucket day. We also will be pursuing a couple of other ideas.

Wishing everyone a safe and happy new year and we look forward to catching up with more of you face to face again. Don't forget to drop into our base if you are visiting our little slice of paradise.

Cheryl Rowe

Captain of a rescue vessel for the day? Tick!

Port Macquarie crew helps Jake cross a wish off his bucket list.

Members of MR Port Macquarie have helped a seriously ill teenager cross a wish off his bucket list in a heartwarming voyage on the Hastings River.

Fifteen-year-old Jake Spurdle has been battling Osteosarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer that leaves sufferers with acute nerve and bone pain.

One of Jake's wishes was to take a ride on rescue vessel *Port Macquarie 30* with his mum Nyky.

Appointed an honorary skipper for the day, Jake took the helm on *PM 30* on March 10.

Unit Commander Greg Davies said everyone involved had been humbled by Jake's courage and bravery.

MR Port Macquarie was front and centre of local Australia Day celebrations this year, taking over activities on the foreshore, including organising about 50 market stalls, a ticketed music event and the traditional Sail Past.

The day culminated in a display showcasing the capability of the



Aye Aye, Captain! Seriously ill Port Macquarie teenager Jake Spurdle was appointed honorary skipper of *Port Macquarie 30* for a tour up the Hastings River with mum Nyky and unit members.

unit's vessels and appreciation to frontline health workers over the past year.

About 60 members were involved in ensuring the success of the event, which generated welcome funds for the unit, spending many hours to ensure all COVID Safe NSW and council requirements were met,

installing fencing, portable toilets, water and hygiene stations and acting as COVID safety marshalls.

The unit launched 33 rescue operations from the start of December through summer, which was down on recent years despite an increase in boat traffic.

As well as routine vessel assists,

the unit joined the multi-agency search for a missing spearfisherman at South West Rocks, which was unfortunately scaled back after four days, and also responded to a fully equipped tinny washed up on Pelican Island that was subsequently found to have slipped its mooring.

Rob Breskal

Lord Howe unit all set for rescue inspections

With all the pieces now in place, the new MR Lord Howe Island is just waiting to undergo the final formalities before it can begin operations.

The unit needs to complete its official State Rescue Board accreditation, certifying that it has the qualified personnel, vessel, equipment and communications essential for its role, before it can undertake its first rescue mission.

Accreditation inspections will be carried out by officers from the NSW Police Force Marine Area Command on behalf of the Board.

The unit is ready, with its rescue vessel, *Lord Howe 40*, delivered late last year and construction now complete on its new base,

overlooking the lagoon where the boat is moored. Marine radio communication equipment has been installed on Intermediate Hill, linked to the MRNSW communications system on the mainland via a satellite link.

Training also is well advanced on and off the water, with some members already gaining their Crew and Radio Operator ratings.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said the challenges of developing a new service on a remote island were increased by the immense popularity of Lord Howe as a holiday destination.

This had been heightened by COVID restrictions on overseas travel, with the island booked out



The new MR Lord Howe Island base, nestled under Norfolk Pines beside the lagoon where the unit's rescue vessel is moored.

since a six-month travel ban was lifted in October.

"The process is under way to complete the State Rescue Board accreditation and we're hopeful this can happen quickly but it depends on being able to get flights and accommodation on the island,"

Commissioner Tannos said.

The occupation certificate for the new building cannot be issued until it is inspected by a certifier who also needs flights to the island. With a limit of 400 visitors at a time, accommodation venues are reported to be booked until mid-September.

One hectic day proves value of our service

Port Stephens members manage heavy workload on water and airwaves.

Over an extremely busy summer, one January day in particular demonstrated the need for MR Port Stephens' services to keep our boating community safe on the water.

On Saturday, January 23, our volunteers on duty in the radio base and on our rescue vessels had an extremely busy day, Logging On 64 boats and responding to 10 emergencies.

Our members can be proud of efficiently managing that heavy workload. On top of their MRNSW duties, the afternoon and night shifts also performed the unit's routine service, answering calls to the Rural Fire Service.

The first call-out for our boat crews was about 7am and the Duty Skipper did not sign off until after 9pm. There were only two hours throughout the day when one or both of our boats were not on the water. We were well supported by our colleagues from neighbouring

MR Lemon Tree Passage, who responded to two of the tasks.

Incidents on the day included a vessel with fuel pump problems; a 43 foot cruiser taking on water after possibly hitting something in the water (pumped out and assisted by *LT 30*); a cruiser with a failed water pump; a fouled anchor; a vessel taking on water south of the port; a long-term overdue vessel eventually located and four jet skis assisted, including a tinny towing a jet ski and both in the end needing to be rescued due to engine problems.

In addition, a member of the public reported a paddler had washed up on the rocks at Barry Park. Our Watch Officer immediately alerted Fingal Surf Life Club, whose members quickly responded.

While this was our busiest day of the season, over December and January the unit launched 68 rescue missions, took 6,517 radio calls, including a dozen Maydays and Logged On 1,225 boats.



Port Stephens 31 returned these four men safely to shore after their boat sank off Broughton Island on January 18.

On January 18, *PS 31* returned four divers to safety after their boat sank close to Broughton Island. Nearby boat *Black Ops* rescued the men from the water, where they were clinging to eskies, before they were checked by a paramedic and transferred to *PS 31*.

On February 7, our vessels and members were preparing to farewell our late member Barney Pinney when the radio base received a

Mayday call from a vessel on the rocks on Boondelbah Island, 2km outside the port. Water Police, *PS 30* and a NSW Maritime jet ski rapidly responded. Two people were on the boat when the crews arrived, with one on the rocks, who was retrieved by *PS 30*. Police towed the boat off the rocks, returning it safely to port.

Barney was part of our mission until the very end.

Iain Blackadder

Training ensures crew remain rescue-ready

Lemon Tree Passage saves person clinging to hull of capsized dinghy.

Marine Rescue Lemon Tree Passage rescue vessel crew are committed to training in all conditions, for all scenarios, to ensure they can provide a highly-skilled emergency service to their boating community.

A mid-February exercise on board *Lemon Tree 30* gave the crew practical search and rescue experience in low visibility, due to persistent rain.

A buoy was dropped in the water to simulate a person overboard.

The crew on board, Haymo Fischer on navigation, trainee Chris Zammit on the helm and Skipper Daryl Jurd, then began a sector search pattern, which is used to search a circular area around a fixed

central point. Upon completion, the crew held a debrief on the activity and discussed the lessons learned from observing how wind and tide affected an object in the water.

Exercises such as this ensure the unit's crews remain rescue-ready when called to assist boaters in trouble on local waterways.

Over summer, the unit responded to 13 incidents, including a person in the water.

About 4.30pm on December 5, a member of the public alerted MR Port Stephens to a laser dinghy that had capsized in the wind with two people on board. One person had managed to get back on the dinghy but the other was bobbing in the water north of Mallabulla jetty.



MR Lemon Tree Passage trainee Chris Zammit at the helm of *LT 30* during a training exercise in February.

LT 30 was tasked to respond and quickly under way, arriving on scene to find a person clinging to the hull of the boat.

Both were wearing lifejackets. They were taken on board the rescue vessel and the boat taken under tow back to to shore.

Demanding pace for Lake Macquarie team

People in water operations a reminder of the need to maintain vigilance.

Volunteers from MR Lake Macquarie have maintained a demanding operational pace so far in 2021.

In the first two months of the year, the unit performed 109 rescues, including 102 within Lake Macquarie and seven offshore.

Four people ended up in the water in three separate emergencies, sadly including a fatality.

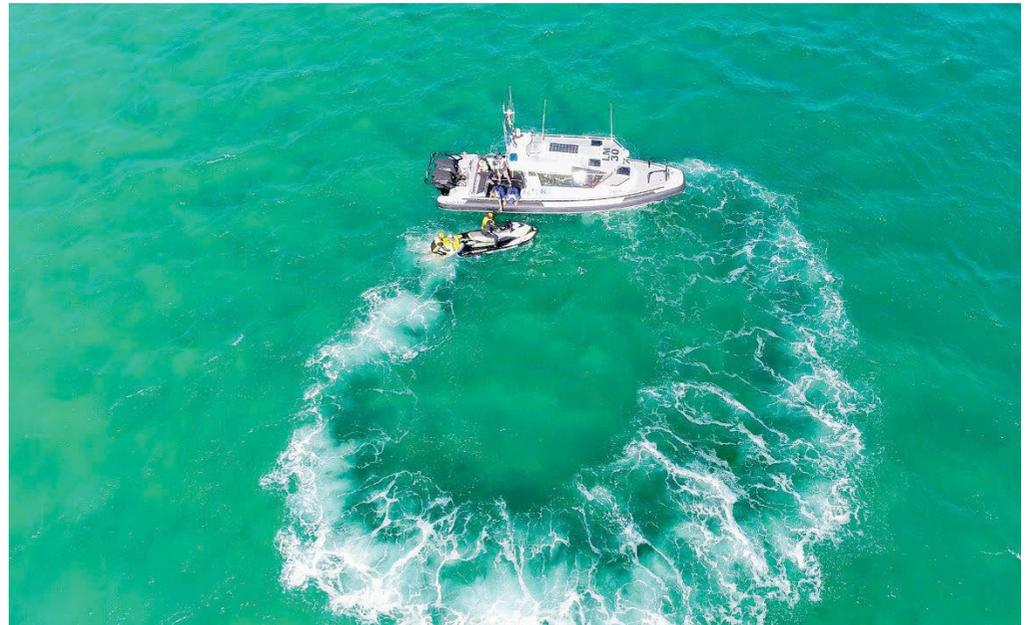
Crews towed 11 boats off the sand in Swansea Channel and the unit notched up 28 operations over the Australia Day long weekend.

In addition to our response workload, the unit also staged a search and rescue exercise on Swansea Channel with our colleagues from MR Central Coast.

The series of people in the water responses remind us that despite the best efforts of the public, we need to remain vigilant.

Our first incident was a jet ski operator playing on the Swansea bar, who became too exhausted to climb back on his vessel. Both *Lake Macquarie 20* and *LM 13* reached him within five minutes of deployment, returning him to shore on *LM 20* to regather his strength before climbing back on his jet ski.

LM 20 was again activated on February 8 when a 4m tinnie was



Rescue Water Craft operators located two search targets within six minutes in a joint training exercise for MR Lake Macquarie and Central Coast on Swansea Channel. Photo: Jim Wright.

swamped by a wave, immediately sinking off Moon Island. The two on board were not wearing lifejackets and were luckily plucked from the water by a nearby fisherman before our crew transferred them to shore.

When their boat later resurfaced, it was retrieved by *LM 20* to remove the navigational hazard.

On February 14, a yachtman was knocked off his yacht in 25 knot southerly winds and was found off Wangi Point on the lake.

LM 20 arrived on scene within

two minutes of the first call. We found a yacht with a very distressed occupant and sails down, to be told a person had been knocked into the water some 10 minutes earlier.

After an initial search, we joined the Westpac helicopter to locate and recover the missing person.

We extend our condolences to the deceased man's family and friends.

These emergencies served to highlight the value of our constant training activities.

The Swansea Channel exercise in

mid-January was designed to test our Rescue Water Craft response capability.

The RWC operators located the two search targets in the water, one of whom was unconscious, within six minutes.

The exercise was staged under real-time conditions and was so life-like that a member of the public ran to assist our members as they brought the "unconscious" man ashore.

Malcolm Druce

MP calls for funding to dredge channel

Member of Parliament has called for funding to dredge the badly-silted Swansea Channel to be included in this year's State Budget.

Speaking in Parliament on February 17, Swansea MP Yasmin Catley said since the start of the year MR Lake Macquarie had been called to at least 13 incidents in which yachts had been grounded in the channel.

She said the unit had recently

responded to two serious emergencies - a fatality on Lake Macquarie and a capsized near Moon Island.

"Both incidents demonstrate the critical role Marine Rescue plays in keeping the community safe," she said. "Serious accidents, medical emergencies and sinking vessels are the types of incidents that Marine Rescue should be responding to.

In fact, a substantial portion of the

assists that Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie undertakes help yachts stuck in sand," she said.

Ms Catley said dredging had been delayed by the death of the contractor last year but had not been completed by Australia Day, as advised, costing the region economically as holiday-makers knew the channel was not navigable.

"I urge the Government to include dredging for the Swansea



Channel in this year's budget, so that everyone in New South Wales can experience beautiful Lake Macquarie," she said.

Grant a breath of fresh air for Newcastle

Dry berth keeps boat in peak condition, protects waterways.

Marine Rescue Newcastle has been fortunate to receive a \$30,250 grant for a vital piece of equipment to help ensure the unit remains ready to respond to boating emergencies.

Grants and sponsorship for many of the items that make a unit run are a welcome breath of fresh air.

Port Waratah Coal Services presented the unit with a Community Investment and Partnership Program grant for a dry berth for rescue vessel *Newcastle 30*.

PWCS Chief Executive Officer Hennie Du Plooy said it was an easy decision to support the unit's application for funding support.

"The new dry berth asset will help an essential service save lives on Newcastle Harbour and along Newcastle's coastline," he said.

"We're proud to partner with local organisations like Marine Rescue Newcastle through our program

to deliver critical health, safety and environmental outcomes and services to our community."

Unit Commander Ron Calman said the berth meant *NC 30* would need to spend far less time out of the water for cleaning, maintenance and any repairs to damage to the hull caused by salt and growth.

"That means we're ready to head out at a minute's notice whenever we receive a call for help. It's also good news for the environmental health of our waterways, as the boat's hull will no longer need to be coated with anti-fouling chemicals."

The unit was busy over summer, performing 23 operations. In mid-January, a 5m runabout was stranded on an oyster bank near the Stockton Bridge with two elderly adults and a young boy on board.

The low tide prevented *NC 30* getting closer than 120m. Those on board had no sun protection and



Port Waratah Coal Services Chief Executive Hennie Du Plooy presents MR Newcastle UC Ron Calman with a \$30,000 grant.

faced an uncomfortable wait for the tide to turn some five hours later, so a Surf Life Saving jet ski was deployed but again, could not get close enough. The SLS operator left and returned with an old surfboard to use as a rescue float.

After *NC 30* crew member Rick Nevile handed over his shoes and

a pair of gloves to protect the SLS volunteer from the oyster shells, he was able to get close enough to get the surfboard in a position to tow each of the three people to *NC 30*, which returned them to the Stockton boat ramp. *NC 30* returned on the high tide to retrieve the boat.

Lyn Van Homrigh

Operations maintained despite COVID limits

Members of MR Central Coast gathered for their first unit meeting in person in almost a year on December 19 but any hopes of COVID-free summer operations came crashing down just three days later.

While a few members had still attended the December meeting via Zoom, many had been able to turn up in person thanks to Andrew McKellar organising a room at the Ettalong Diggers Club.

The emergence of the Avalon COVID cluster, however, led to the unit again operating on Level 2 restrictions from December 22 to January 30. Minimum crewing did not prevent us from responding to emergencies or continuing training.

In mid-January, two Rescue Water Craft Operators, Geoff Hawes and Paul Hanlon, headed north for a

joint training exercise with MR Lake Macquarie. Both reported that it had been a great learning opportunity.

Now that we are back to "normal", our training has really picked up, with many members working towards higher ratings and additional night exercises organised.

An intake of new members to start shortly also will be added to the training roster.

Despite COVID restrictions stretching to the Central Coast, our waterways were still busy over the peak season, especially when we had a decent bit of weather.

Australia Day proved busy from early morning until sunset with six operations, including two broken down ski boats, two stranded runabouts and a rendezvous with a crew from MR Broken Bay to take over a tow to Gosford.



Dark ops ... MR Central Coast is staging additional night training exercises following the lifting of COVID restrictions.

Around lunchtime, our radio operators received a call from a group of women who had hired a barbecue boat for the day. They had drifted across the channel as the tide was heading out and become beached on Pelican Island at Woy Woy. Our RWC operator on *CC 11*

transferred a towline from *CC 21* to the boat but unfortunately, it would not budge off the sand. Our crew advised the passengers they would have to wait for the tide to change and checked they had enough water with them before departing.

Mitch Giles

Steep increase in people rescued from water

Tuggerah Lakes appeals to boaters to know their limits and check conditions.

Marine Rescue Tuggerah Lakes has appealed to boaters on its local waterways to take extra safety precautions after recording an alarming increase in the number of people thrown into the water in a range of emergencies recently.

Both of the unit's rescue vessels were kept busy responding to incidents, sometimes simultaneously, across the three lakes over summer, including a search for three people who could not be located after their catamaran capsized on January 19.

They were among 12 people who ended up in the water in six different incidents in the two months from December 6 to February 7.

Deputy Unit Commander Bob Sutton said these had followed the four people pulled from the water by the unit's crews in September when they ran into trouble on a paddle boat and two kayaks.

"We have seen an increasing trend of people needing to be rescued from the water but this is the largest number I have seen in such a concentrated period over the five years I have been with the unit," he said.

"Boaters and people on jet skis, kayaks, windsurfers and other craft need to be aware of their own and their vessel's abilities and be sure to check the conditions, which can quickly become hazardous on the

Tuggerah Lakes."

The crew of *Tuggerah Lakes 21* rescued two people when a sailing dinghy overturned south of Toukley Bridge on February 7, returning them to a waiting NSW Ambulance at the unit's base.

The crews of both *TL 20* and *TL 21*, along with three NSW Police officers on a private vessel, launched a search at dusk on January 19 for three people who could not be located when their catamaran overturned off Long Jetty. Fortunately, all were later found safely on shore.

This followed a similar incident on January 8, when another catamaran overturned 300m offshore at Killarneyvale, throwing four people overboard. Three made their way to land while the fourth returned the boat to shore, with *TL 20* keeping watch.

Surf Life Saving rescued a man from the water when his boat overturned crossing the bar to The Entrance Channel on January 4.

In December, passing boaters came to the aid of a man thrown off his sail boat when it overturned half a kilometre from Saltwater Creek and another who fell from his boat near Picnic Point boat ramp.

Wyong Police and Ambulance officers provided praise and support to the crew of *TL 21*, Bob Sutton, Bob Blue, John Cluff and Anthony



Skipper John Dare and crew member Danny Knight on board *Tuggerah Lakes 20* during a summer operation.

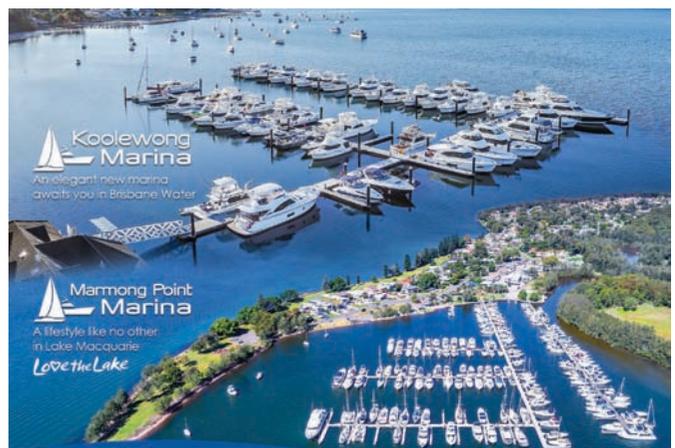
Hollingworth, who were called to recover a body from the water near Tacoma boat ramp on January 24.

The unit held its first on-site meeting in almost a year in February, congratulating Bob Sutton, John Sheehan and John Dare on

their five-year service pins and members who had achieved new ratings: Graeme Cartwright, Craig Roberts, Bob Blue and Russell Crimmins (Senior Crew) and Peter Brown, Richard Tyszkiewicz, Tim Macdonald and Mark Balogh (Crew).



MR Tuggerah Lakes Deputy Unit Commander Bob Sutton accompanies Wyong Police to the Tacoma boat ramp.



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MAKING WAVES
Greater Sydney News

Rookie boat owners left high and dry

Cottage Point guides jet skis home.



MR Cottage Point members conducted 67 missions over summer, including helping new boat owners beached on run out tides.

As the summer wound up, members of MR Cottage Point were able to reflect on one of our busiest seasons in memory.

In a summer dominated by many new boat owners, the unit's crews launched 67 missions over the three months from the start of December.

These included rescuing new owners who had made common mistakes such as becoming stranded or beached as the tide ran out or lost within the waterways of Ku-ring-gai National Park.

Keeping an eye on the tides and knowing how to navigate back to your home port or boat ramp are key to ending a day on the water stress-free. Checking the tides should be an essential part of your weather calculations to ensure you are not left high and dry when the tide runs out.

With limited storage on board, many jet ski owners have mobile phones and devices that rely on network coverage for their navigation needs on the water.

Unfortunately, poor coverage on the waterways of the National Park can leave many struggling to chart a clear and confident course home.

Many of the bends and bays in the park look very similar and our crews have been approached

by more than a few jet ski riders asking for directions back to the "boat ramp", with no idea of the name of the ramp or sometimes even the suburb from which they departed. We have a finely tuned set of questions to help us track their movements and provide a guesstimate of their launch location, allowing us to guide them back.

Training new crew members has been a strong focus, with 17 new volunteers in training since June.

MR Cottage Point members were proactive in the lead-up to the boating season, reaching out to educate local boaters and the wider community about our services and boating safety, particularly by visiting boat ramps and marinas to ensure any new boaties on our waterways were aware of the "No Wash" zones and speed limits throughout our area of operation.

We regularly visit all our local boat ramps to hand out information on safe boating.

Our area maps are in high demand as they describe all the local beaches and bays in our area, as well as providing information on our waterways and how to contact Marine Rescue on VHF marine radio and local phone numbers.

Tony Gordon

Fast start to year for Port Jackson crews

Young boater discovers that some days you get extremely lucky.

Two days of record-breaking heat at the end of November pointed to a cracking Sydney summer on the water, only to give way to extended bouts of cool and wet weather into January and the Northern Beaches COVID lockdown.

When the blue sky returned mid-way through January, the boating public was out in force and MR Port Jackson was out there with them.

It turned into one of our busiest months ever. Our crews were on the water for 18 of the 31 days, rescuing boats in trouble on 16 of those. We carried out 64 operations across the month, including three offshore and six in response to life-endangering emergencies.

This operational workload was on top of assessments for 13 Crew, two Leading Crew and a Coxswain, followed by another Coxswain and two Crew early in March.

One of our most memorable operations was on Australia Day.

As the crew rounded the last headland before the Spit Bridge, we spied a d'Albora Marina tinny towing a 9m cruiser into the open channel.

It transpired that a young Ben

and nine of his mates had taken his father's cruiser out for the first time. They did what all responsible boaters do and went to fuel up for the day.

As Ben was paying, his mate filled up. Little did he know he had actually put the fuel nozzle in the fishing rod holder and proceeded to pour 150 litres of fuel into the engine bay. This is where sheer luck came in: Ben got back on board and tried to start a hot engine on a 30+ degree day not once, not twice but three times.

At this point he knew something was wrong and called over one of the attendants, who lifted the engine cover and immediately activated a full evacuation, towing the cruiser into the channel away from other people, the marina and property.

Port Jackson 30 remained under lights ensuring everyone kept a safe distance from the vessel until Fire + Rescue NSW, NSW Maritime and the Port Authority arrived on scene.

Once the boat was pumped out and with an all-clear from Fire + Rescue, *PJ 30* returned the cruiser to its mooring at Balmoral. A great



A rapid evacuation was sparked when a young boater mistakenly poured 150 litres of fuel into the engine bay of this cruiser.

outcome for all, despite Ben's consternation about telling his dad!

Port Jackson has had the pleasure of hosting camera crews for a new documentary about Sydney Harbour being produced by the Discovery Channel. Crews have captured footage of our volunteers out helping boaters on our stunning harbour over summer, including the refuelling blunder by Ben's mate and two sinking vessels.

The unit's long term Training Officer Jarrod Ison has announced he is stepping down. Jarrod has

been instrumental in inducting our trainees and managing our training activities for more than five years. We thank him for his contribution.

On a cheery note, we have welcomed two tiny recruits with the arrival of James and Penelope Finnerly. Congratulations to proud parents, our membership officer Dylan and his wife Kristen.

Our larger 'baby', new rescue vessel *PJ 31*, is due for imminent delivery after its successful sea trials in mid-March.

David Mills

Community turns out to find missing teen

Marine Rescue Hawkesbury volunteers joined a huge community effort to search for a missing 13-year-old boy in late January.

The boy went missing from his Central Coast home on January 27.

NSW Police, Rural Fire Service members and local residents turned out to locate the boy, who has non-verbal autism.

The crew of *Hawkesbury 21* was tasked to search around local rail bridge structures on the Hawkesbury River.

Happily, the boy was found safe after a passerby spotted him on a houseboat about 50m from shore.

This was one of 55 incidents to which MR Hawkesbury responded over three months, including five on Australia Day.

Many incidents were sparked by boats running out of fuel or with flat batteries or engine problems, although a number also became stuck on the river's infamous mudflats.

On February 13, a barbecue boat with eight people on board was beached on the north side of Long Island on a falling tide.

With two of the people suspected to be suffering from hyperthermia, the passengers called Triple Zero for help.



Hawkesbury 21 was tasked to search around bridges on the Hawkesbury River for a missing teenager in January.

Both the unit's rescue vessels responded, with *HW 22* transferring two youths to a waiting NSW

Ambulance at Parsley Bay while *HW 21* transported the remaining six to Dolphin Marina.

Broken Bay draws lessons from lockdown

COVID recruits become guinea pigs for fast tracked induction program.

COVID has created the opportunity for MR Broken Bay to re-evaluate its induction experience for prospective members, new trainees and the watches that those trainees join.

Our Duty Officers have told us it could sometimes be challenging when trainees came to them after their induction with no consistent levels of experience: some may have been experienced mariners while others came with little or no on-water background, which proved equally daunting for the trainees themselves.

So enter Class 201, our only trainee intake for 2020, who became our guinea pigs for a new eight-week Fast Track Induction program!

The class joined in late 2020, with a schedule of weekly Zoom sessions over six weeks, learning from a selection of subject matter experts within the unit.

We are fortunate to have a wealth of experience among our Coxswains, including previous Unit Commanders

and master mariners, who gave up evenings to devote to specialist subjects such as search and rescue and seamanship.

While the Zoom experience is not perfect, it did enable our new class to complete their workbooks and all of their formal mandatory training courses, ensuring a consistent base level of knowledge.

Then, just as they got excited and ready to join their watches, COVID once again thwarted our plans as Sydney's Northern Beaches became the latest hotspot.

Our Bayview base remained closed, with crews on standby only.

Finally, in January and February the trainees got to join their watches, all trained, ready to go and keen to start working through their skills logs.

They saw plenty of action with our crews. Over two months, we conducted 32 operations, as well as taking part in the curtailed New Year's Eve celebrations on Sydney Harbour and supporting the Big Swim from Palm Beach to Whale



Broken Bay 30 makes it safely back to its home waters under threatening skies after duty on Sydney Harbour on New Year's Eve.

Beach on January 31.

We plan to learn from our trainees and watches what can be improved for next time but one area we have invested in is our Broken Bay website.

Here we have detailed all the timelines for the full year and the training requirements for new intakes and built out Frequently

Asked Questions for prospective members. We also have set up regular information evenings to ensure we recruit new members who join with an understanding of what is entailed, share our passion and commitment and will be happy and fulfilled members of our Broken Bay community.

Jimmy Arteaga

Determined effort to build unit capability

Marine Rescue Botany Port Hacking members are now part of a joint training initiative helping two organisations build important skills to save lives on the water.

The unit has started 2021 taking part in a fortnightly training schedule with crews from Toll Ambulance Rescue helicopters.

The training sessions, conducted offshore from Port Hacking, require the helicopter pilot and rescue vessel skipper to maintain a precise and steady course so a helicopter crew member can be safely winched on to the large back deck of *Botany Hacking 30* to practice retrieving a patient for medical treatment.

This activity is just one element of

the unit's training activities as part of a determined effort to strengthen its search and rescue capability for both rostered duties and after-hours call-outs in the area.

Unit members' commitment to building their skill and knowledge is reflected in their recent achievements, with numerous ratings awarded, including a Master, three Coxswain, 12 Crew members, four Senior Crew, five Watch Officers and 22 Radio Operators.

The unit was again one of the busiest in the state over the peak season. Its crews launched 151 rescue missions and the Solander radio base handled 3,169 radio calls, Logging On 993 boats,



The crew of *Botany Hacking 30* lends a helping hand to a boater in need of a tow back to shore after breaking down near Dark Bay.

including the 55 participants in this year's Port Hacking Putters Regatta. The unit was fortunate to receive

a \$1,500 donation from regatta passengers on the *Tom Thumb* ferry, Cronulla Ferries and Dominelli Ford.

A (Little) Sirius problem for ageing cruiser

All hands to the pump as distraught owner puts a bucket on his list.

We see them quite a lot, old boats near their end through age or lack of maintenance. This vessel was an old Williams 30 but looked pretty good, aside from her perilous list. There was no one on board.

Master Tony Whybrow and crew threaded *Middle Harbour 30* through the clutter of moorings in Little Sirius Cove on February 13 and paused to assess what could be done.

With no evident damage to the boat and no owner in sight, a pump-out was urgently needed, although she was well down in the water already.

It was literally a race against time but thankfully one that we ultimately won.

The NSW Police Marine Area Command was able to trace the owner, who was understandably distraught. He'd only bought his pride and joy a month earlier and everything had seemed fine when he'd last been on her. He arrived, still very upset, as pumping progressed.

Problem was, it was impossible to see where the water was coming in. Could have been a water inlet fitting or a shaft seal or even hull damage below the waterline. Could have been many things. But the cause remained elusive. Thank goodness the public had called it in to Marine Rescue Sydney.

There was an automatic bilge pump on board but it had apparently



Skipper Tony Whybrow on the deck as *Middle Harbour 30's* pumps get to work to drain a listing Williams 30 at Little Sirius Cove.

failed or had not been left on "Auto." It took *MH 30* more than an hour to restore an even keel before we were called away to other duty.

The owner stayed aboard and as he didn't have a bucket to hand, we loaned him one to finish the job.
Howard Gipps

Job sharing builds wider understanding

Sydney radio base works tirelessly to maintain around the clock support.

Members of MR Sydney worked at maximum efficiency over the peak summer holiday period to respond to boaters in trouble on our waterways and support our MRNSW colleagues.

As well as handling more than 3,800 calls, our radio operators also worked with our vessel crews across Greater Sydney and beyond to ensure the seamless management of emergencies and other incidents.

Our radio base recorded a total of 1,430 VHF radio calls and 2,383 phone calls and texts over December and January and Logged On 2,562 boats, including 1,086 (42.4 per cent) via the Marine Rescue App. The unit managed 373 emergencies and incidents - a quarter of the State's total for the period. In addition, our team was also involved in managing incidents when conducting the overnight watch for other bases.

Understandably, the busiest periods were the weekends and

public holidays, with the duty watches on these days working tirelessly to maintain our high levels of support.

Working as a team is important to our success in offering the boating public a reliable standard of service.

MR Sydney has been proactive in offering opportunities to MR Broken Bay, Cottage Point, Middle Harbour and Port Jackson volunteers to gain "hands on" radio experience in our 24/7 base, with reciprocal offers for our members to experience vessel operations. This initiative gives members who usually undertake rescue vessel duty the chance to engage in all facets of our radio operations to learn more about our various functions.

It is a practical demonstration of the importance of working collaboratively to manage incidents and training exercises, as well as providing insight into how we can work to improve communications and understand our joint roles.



MR Sydney members Mel Little, Helen Manifold and Sandy Howard inspect work on the new State Communications Centre.

Work on the new State Communications Centre at Belrose is on track for an operational changeover from the Terrey Hills base in late April. This purpose-built facility will have a radio room with stations for a watch supervisor and six radio operators and a large video wall to enhance the operators' situational awareness. A multi-

purpose space can be used for meetings, training and as a search and rescue coordination facility with vision to the radio room and video wall though a double-glazed window. It has two offices, a kitchen, secure parking and a security system to give added protection to our overnight operators.

Denis Comber & Sandy Howard

Record-breaking summer on Jervis Bay

Duck Derby draws large crowds for Australia Day fun and fundraising.

The peak holiday period lived up to all expectations for members of MR Jervis Bay, who maintained a quick tempo from the last days of 2020 into the New Year.

We saw new highs in the number of visitors to the bay, with the unit setting our own record, Logging On 62 boats in a single day.

The number of jet skis on the bay in a single day all also reached a new peak, with 21 counted on Australia Day. Unfortunately, none of them Logged On but our crews were called to return three of the craft to the Woollomia boat ramp when they each experienced engine problems.

These were among 82 operations from the start of December, including towing several boats from open waters outside the heads

into the bay to safe harbour and anchorage.

On February 17, following a report from a bushwalker, *Jervis Bay 40* searched for a suspected upturned runabout off Moes Rock, south of the bay.

A three-hour coordinated search with the Australian Federal Police and a Toll rescue helicopter failed to find any trace of a boat and with the light quickly fading, the police called the search off.

The unit's annual Duck Derby on Australia Day again proved a huge success, even though COVID restrictions meant we had only six weeks, rather than the usual four months, to sell tickets. The outstanding efforts of our fundraising team ensured the day



Members of MR Jervis Bay set up for the unit's annual Duck Derby, which drew crowds to Moona Moona Creek on Australia Day.

was enjoyed by many families and friends at Moona Moona Creek.

We are now in the final stages of the build and fit-out of the new *JB 40*, with sea trials scheduled for late March before its run down

the coastline from Harwood to its new home waters. The boat will be named in memory of our member John Gallimore, who is sadly missed after his death while on radio duty on February 11 (see story, page 3).

Port Kembla fuelled up and ready to go

Two new projects upgrade unit's infrastructure and Hill 60 security.

Marine Rescue Port Kembla has recently completed two projects to upgrade its infrastructure and improve security for its members at the isolated Hill 60 radio base.

Unit Commander Kevin Bradley said a new fuel trailer had significantly improved the unit's ability to ensure its vessels were maintained at constant operational readiness.

"We need to make sure that our vessels are filled to their maximum capacity at all times," he said.

"This new trailer saves us time and inconvenience."

The trailer, which carries 300 litres, means the unit is now self-sufficient for its refuelling, instead of the vessels needing to travel north from Port Kembla to Wollongong Harbour and rendezvous with a fuel tanker to fill up.

"The trailer's capacity allows us to pump 300 litres at any one time

to keep the vessels topped up. It's stored at the Hill so we just hook it up to one of the members' trucks, take it to a local servo and then refuel," he said.

UC Bradley and fellow members Ronny Zalunardo and Graeme McCrudden designed the apparatus, sourcing an aluminium trailer, electronics supplier and manufacturer to fabricate the tank locally to achieve significant savings on the cost of a standard-build fuel trailer.

UC Bradley said the trailer design, construction and safety had been signed off by MRNSW Headquarters.

The second project to come to fruition is an upgrade to security at Hill 60.

"We've upgraded the emergency lighting and installed a new fence around the compound," he said.

"It's all about making sure our members are safe."

Access to the base also was



A new 300 litre fuel trailer and security fencing are the latest projects to upgrade facilities for MR Port Kembla.

improved as part of the upgrade, permitting a rescue vessel, trailer or other large vehicles to be easily manoeuvred on to the site for safe storage if needed.

UC Bradley said the final stage of improvements to the radio base would be to level the compound and replace the grass with a hard surface.

"It can get pretty slippery and

slushy in bad weather," he said.

Previously-completed works have included repairs to the base's viewing deck, radio tower and concrete structure, repainting and the renovation of the building's lower floor to add a training space and new amenities.

A suite of new online marine radio technology also was installed in the radio room.

Sussex Inlet doubles volunteer workforce

Enthusiastic trainees meet ambitious schedule to gain new qualifications.

In an extraordinary achievement, MR Sussex Inlet has more than doubled its membership in less than a year.

The unit's volunteer numbers have jumped from 14 last July to 35 in February, enabling us to bolster our capability by doubling our complement of trained crew and increasing our cohort of radio operators by 60 per cent.

We could not have made these strides without the commitment of our trainers and the enthusiasm shown by our new recruits, some of whom travelled significant distances on weekends to undertake their training, pending their relocation to Sussex Inlet this year.

Notably, all our newly-qualified members achieved their ratings within their six-month provisional periods.

So what did we do to drive this success? In mid-2020, we made a concerted effort to recruit new volunteers to counter a decline in our active membership to a level below 'critical mass' due to older members retiring and natural attrition over several years.

We launched a recruitment drive in July, holding a socially-distanced information night at our base. Well attended by members of the community, this resulted in six new members.

Other public relations activities over the period included reports about our recruiting drive in the local weekly magazine, the *Sussex Inletter*, and comment on local social media sites, which are still generating positive responses. A significant contributor was word of mouth from our new recruits.

By September, we had 14 new recruits. With many opting to pursue both radio and crew duties, a training plan was devised that gave priority to Radio Operator training while also supporting Crew education. Some who were not keen on operational roles are supporting our administration, fundraising and event coordination.

The Radio Operator trainees were given an ambitious schedule of targeted completion dates for various sections of their Learner Activity Workbooks, with Crew trainees following a similar schedule for reading their Learner Manuals and completing their workbooks.

Some trainees progressed through both their radio and crew programs at the same time, with crew recruits encouraged to team up for mutual support and sharing learning opportunities.

While there was some minor attrition over the period, we settled into a crew training routine of three teams of three focused on the



Driving success ... newly-qualified radio operator Greg Collins works with radio trainee Susan Bowman.

Crew Skills Log. Fortunately, we were able to borrow boats from MR Port Kembla and Headquarters to provide a second training vessel so members could quickly progress and sign off their towing skills.

We set a 'stake in the sand' for rating assessments in early December and by the end of January, we had four new Radio Operators and six new Crew members.

This schedule was a challenge for our training team, who were supported by all our qualified vessel crew on the water and Jim Cross and key qualified radio operators.

New volunteers are still rolling in and we have more members starting

or close to completing their crew training, while others are already starting the process of gaining higher ratings.

Other than our focus on training, the December and January holiday period was generally quiet, with the unit responding to about 20 calls for help, mostly in St Georges Basin with a few boats needing a tow from seaward across the sand bar.

Sadly, foundation member John Nicholas passed away in January. A memorial service was held at the base and a plaque commemorating his service was unveiled on our Crossing the Bar memorial (see In Memoriam, page 47).

Les Pataky

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Kioloa launches pawsome search mission

Happy ending to tail of shipwrecked pooch on deserted coastal island.

The summer influx of visitors to the Kioloa and Bawley Point area translated to a surge in boating traffic on the local coastline.

It was great to see that boat owners seemed to be getting the message about checking their vessels after the winter layoff, which was reflected in a lack of rescue calls to MR Kioloa. Nevertheless, our unit maintained a 24/7 call-out readiness, as well as monitoring daily radio traffic and boat movements.

On our busiest day, December 30, the unit monitored the departure and return of 58 vessels from the Kioloa boat ramp. Disappointingly few Logged On but our radio operators remained vigilant in keeping watch for their safe return.

On December 29, we conducted a search and rescue mission with a difference - but one our pawsome volunteers had the skills to complete. About midday, a member of the public sought our help for a dog that appeared to be stranded on Brush Island. A boat crew was



Summer on the coast ... MR Kioloa members kept watch over boaters making the most of the conditions and put their search skills to use in the hunt for a very good boy stuck on Brush Island (below).

quickly assembled, with long-time visitor Graeme Cook also jumping aboard, volunteering to go ashore to retrieve the dog while the crew of *Kioloa 20* managed the boat on the island's rocky coastline.

The trio searched the shoreline for two hours without success before returning to base.

With the help of a few locals on Facebook, we were finally able to track down the missing pooch, his

owner and the tail. The dog had made it to the island when the owner's boat overturned nearby three days earlier.

The owner regularly returned to the island over those three days and it turned out he had managed to rescue the pup just an hour before our crew arrived.

In the end, it was a win-win: the dog was safe and well at home with his relieved owner and our team



seized an opportunity to practice its search and rescue techniques.

Peter White

Crews see in New Year after rescue rush

The 2020 year finished in a rush for volunteers from MR Shoalhaven, who were called to two emergencies in quick succession on New Year's Eve.

Shoalhaven 30, with skipper Ray Jones and Mark Asper on board, rescued four people on board a five metre runabout that had broken down with engine problems wide off Penguin Head, near Culburra Beach.

With the four delivered safely to port, the pair was quickly under way again when a call came from a seven metre runabout with two people on board stranded 2nm off Kinghorn Point, Currarong. It, too, was safely returned to shore.

The new year was just two days old when we launched the

first mission of 2021, rescuing a disabled commercial fishing vessel off the Crookhaven Lighthouse. Mike Boadle and Marty Kaye on *SA 30* took the boat under tow to Greenwell Point. Several more rescues kept our crews and radio operators busy across the season.

Training is essential to ensuring we remain ready to respond to emergencies such as these. In December, trainees Lynne Hocking and Trevor Davies joined old hands Paul Poulsen, Rob Rego and James Guy for a helicopter training exercise with the crew of the CHC rescue helicopter based at HMAS Albatross.

It was a great opportunity for our members, especially our newer recruits, to practice this vital skill.



MR Shoalhaven's Ray and Viv Jones were part of the unit's team that raised \$5,200 at the Shoalhaven Heads Hotel Charity Day.

Members took part in the Shoalhaven Heads Hotel Charity Day, raising a creditable \$5,200 selling raffle tickets to locals and visitors and we also benefited from money raised at the Family Day on the Green on the weekend

before Australia Day at the Culburra Bowling and Recreation Club.

On a sad note, in February we farewelled much loved member Clifford Kenney, whom we will all miss. Our sincere condolences to Cliff's family.

Ulladulla saves lives in treacherous conditions

Accolades for volunteers' determination and skill in offshore operations.

Despite inclement weather and unfavourable seas keeping many boaters on shore, MR Ulladulla launched a series of rescue missions over summer, including two in response to life-endangering emergencies.

Crews were rapidly under way when a kayaker activated his Personal Locator Beacon on January 13 and a lone sailor called for help from his yacht, which was taking on water, further south on January 29.

Both operations, among seven over the season, were in high winds and treacherous seas.

Kayaker Chris Welsh set off his PLB when his craft overturned off Lagoon Point, south of Ulladulla, and he was being swept out to sea in very rough conditions.

With *Ulladulla 30* and *Ulladulla 20* en route, a rescue helicopter located the man and winched him to safety.

UL 20 located the kayak some distance away, only spotting it as it flipped end to end as the wind carried it off. It was returned to our base on the back deck of *UL 30*.

The lucky paddler retrieved it the next day, thanking our members and telling of how at least two of his companions had passed but did not see him in the sea, even though he was waving his paddle at them.

The kayak club to which Mr Welsh belongs is reported to have since made PLBs mandatory for all its members.

On January 29, a lone yachtsman called for help when his boat began taking on water off Brush Island. The experienced sailor left his sail up and by the time the crew of *UL 30* reached him, he was about 10nm from his original position. Skipper Lesley Kelly, Coxswain Allan Brook and crew members Clive Woodward and David Catton battled large seas, high winds and driving rain to locate the stricken vessel and return the skipper to safety. This was no mean feat in the conditions and all



Reunited ... MR Ulladulla members Kel Greathead, Keven Marshall and David Lindley give rescued paddler Chris Welsh a helping hand to collect his kayak after the unit returned it to shore on *Ulladulla 30*.

involved showed great determination and skill, including Radio Operator John Taber and Watch Officers Keven Marshall and David Lindley.

The grateful skipper and his wife offered their heartfelt thanks to the crew and made a generous donation.

Another incident in January highlighted the potential risks for some boaters at sea.

A lone sailor on a newly-purchased tugboat requested help north of Ulladulla as he made his way from Mackay in Queensland to Tasmania.

The tender he was towing behind his vessel had filled with rainwater and was starting to sink. The skipper - who was not wearing a lifejacket - lowered himself into the tender, attempting to bail it out. Not surprisingly, he failed to empty the tender and clambered back on to the tug, sustaining minor injuries, which was when he called for help.

The crew of *UL 30* responded, taking his tender on board and escorting the tug into Ulladulla Harbour and a waiting ambulance.

Our crew then helped the skipper to manoeuvre the tug to and from the fuelling wharf, before he informed us that he had suffered

a heart attack the previous week but was still pressing on alone to Tasmania. We wished him all the best for his onward voyage.

Our marketing team's work is

paying dividends, with our monthly harbour markets proving successful so far this year, with many stalls and visitors. Well done, team!

Dave Hall

If you're not a member of the Boat Owners Association, you should be!



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Boating access to prized anchorages

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Monaro unit leaders visit the neighbours



Monaro Region Unit Commanders and Deputies, Regional Director Glenn Felkin and ROM Glenn Sullivan meet in Merimbula in February.

The leaders of units in the MRNSW Monaro Region have gone a-roving.

The Unit Commanders and Deputies from the Batemans Bay, Tuross, Narooma, Bermagui,

Merimbula, Eden, Alpine Lakes and Moama units are holding rotating regional meetings to visit each other's bases every two months.

The first meeting was at the Merimbula RSL in February, followed

by an inspection of the Merimbula unit's base and vessels.

Monaro Regional Operations Manager Glenn Sullivan said the unit leaders would gain a better understanding of their colleagues'

local waterways and conditions, facilities and challenges.

"The different environments will spark different conversations and everyone will take away new ideas for their units," he said.

Dennis honoured for his bushfire support

Chef worked every day to serve evacuees meals with a side of good humour.

Marine Rescue Bermagui volunteer Dennis Walker has achieved the rare honour of being recognised with a special award by one of our fellow emergency services.

In late January, Bega Valley Mayor Russell Fitzpatrick presented Dennis with a special award from Bermagui Surf Life Saving Club for his outstanding contribution to the community during the Black Summer bushfire emergency.

This recognition was in addition to his NSW Premier's Bushfire Emergency Citation.

Far South Coast Branch Director of Life Saving Cheryl McCarthy said: "We are proud to call Dennis an honorary member of the (Surf Life Saving) team forever."

This was one of the few occasions on which Dennis seemed to be short of words.

On New Year's Eve 2019, the

Bermagui Surf Club opened its doors to provide refuge to more than 5,000 people from Bermagui and nearby communities who were evacuating from harm's way.

MR Bermagui volunteers were called to help at the evacuation centre and Dennis was one of the first to respond. A qualified chef, he was quickly tasked to assist with catering, playing a vital role in food preparation and catering logistics.

Dennis worked every day throughout January as residents faced four evacuation alerts. Many will remember the amazing meals Dennis turned out for them as they sought refuge from the fire threat.

His incredible work ethic and good humour, always serving breakfast and lunch with a joke, was appreciated by everyone who came through the evacuation centre's doors.

As well as many jokes, Dennis



MR Bermagui volunteer, chef and jokester Dennis Walker with his Surf Life Saving Award and Unit Commander Caron Parfitt.

has many roles. Although we are not selling paper raffle tickets these days, he continues to tout our online raffle tickets about town; he is always the first to volunteer to work at a fundraising sausage sizzle or event; he represented our unit in the 2020 "together in isolation" ANZAC dawn commemoration and

is a regular 'first mate' for towing practice with Peter Ford in *The Jane Too*. He even does a reasonable dress-up as 'Where's Wally?' and Rod Stewart!

The admiration of his fellow volunteers at MR Bermagui goes without saying. Well done, Dennis.

Debbie Worgan

Tuross welcomes newest addition to fleet

Ocean Cylinder to help crews get to the scene quicker than ever.

Members of MR Tuross welcomed the newest addition to the MRNSW fleet to its new home waters on the Moruya River on the Far South Coast on February 4.

The \$400,000 *Tuross 21*, a 7.5 metre Ocean Cylinder vessel, was built by Yamba Welding & Engineering and transported by road to Moruya after undergoing rigorous sea trials.

Unit Commander Alan Blessington and Training Officer Blaise Madden drove the 998 kms from Tuross to Yamba for the two-day induction handover and were both super impressed with the new boat's suite of search and rescue technology and equipment and its greater manoeuvrability and reliability.

UC Blessington said the vessel was a significant upgrade over the unit's current boat, with its updated technology and equipment sure to improve the unit's search capability.

"After a tough year for the Eurobodalla community, this new vessel is the perfect start to the 2021 for the region's many local and visiting boaters," he said.



Tuross 21 is put through its paces during its sea trials ahead of its delivery to the Moruya River.

WIN News was on hand to capture the moment *TU 21* entered the Moruya River.

Emergency Services Minister David Elliott said Tuross crews would be able to be on the scene of an emergency more rapidly after the delivery of their new boat.

"*Tuross 21* is one of 38 new rescue vessels funded by a \$37.6 million four-year State Government investment to support the vital, life-

saving work of Marine Rescue NSW volunteers," he said.

The boat is moored at Preddys Wharf, specifically to ensure rescue crews can be on the scene of emergencies on the nearby bar as quickly as possible. It can also be deployed up to 15 nautical miles out to sea.

Unit members have been putting in a huge number of hours each week to raise the funds for our

contribution to the cost of the vessel and fuel trailer, including selling raffle tickets at up to five venues concurrently twice a week, running an Australia Day Breakfast BBQ and Bunnings sausage sizzles. Thank you to our local community for supporting us. Our crew members are all looking forward to training on board and mastering the boat and its on-board equipment.

Ilze Svarcs

Major changes at the top for Narooma

Members of MR Narooma have farewelled Unit Commander Paul Houseman, who has handed over the leader's epaulettes after three years.

Paul has provided the unit with exemplary leadership and his knowledge and skills will be greatly missed now that he and his wife Carol have moved to Wollongong.

Deputy Unit Commander John Lundy has stepped up as Commander while crew member Scott Bowden has taken over as Deputy.

Another change at the top has been the removal of the asbestos-riddled roof of the radio base and its replacement with a new colorbond

roof so a solar power system can be installed.

Boaters generally stayed safe on our waters over a busy holiday period, although one incident could have had a disastrous outcome.

About 2pm on December 13, our radio operators spotted two people clinging to the hull of their capsized boat 20 metres off the Narooma bar. Both were wearing lifejackets. A Mayday call was issued and *Narooma 30* and the unit's two Rescue Water Craft were activated.

The boat sank 150m offshore, with the two people drifting towards a nearby fishing boat, which pulled them from the water as *NA 30* crossed the bar. They were taken



Former Narooma Unit Commander Paul Houseman presents the leader's epaulettes to new leader John Lundy.

aboard and transported to shore. The unit's vessels headed back to search for the boat and collect any debris to reduce navigational

hazards. While the grateful passengers lived to fish another day, their boat could not be recovered.

John Lundy

Crossing bar and border a problem in south

Sand build-up and COVID closures impact operations at Merimbula.

Mother Nature's decision to play around with sand distribution on the Merimbula bar made for a frustrating summer for local and visiting boaters and MR Merimbula vessel crews alike.

While demand for our services remained steady, fortunately with no life-threatening emergencies, the shallow conditions on the bar at low tide continued to restrict operations for our larger vessel, *Merimbula 30*, to three hours before and two hours after high tide.

The easing of COVID restrictions and lifting of NSW border closures in late 2020 saw our regular Victorian boaters return in droves. This led to an increase in the number of disabled boats needing rescue, with four returned to safety within as many days.

This rush came to an abrupt end when Victoria closed its border with NSW on New Year's Day.

The resulting exodus of Victorian holidaymakers came almost a year

to the day after the 2020 bushfire evacuations.

NSW Government Bushfire Emergency Citations were presented to 31 of our 50 members at the unit's Christmas dinner, acknowledging their efforts during the Black Summer bushfires.

Monaro Regional Operations Manager Glenn Sullivan also presented Deputy Unit Commander Bill Blakeman with the National Medal recognising 15 years of volunteer service.

The unit recently marked the launch of 'Sapphire Rescue. The history of Marine Rescue Merimbula saving lives at sea'. Written by local resident Rosemary Young and published with the support of an Emergency Volunteer Support Scheme grant, the book covers more than 70 years of volunteer marine rescue in Merimbula.

We were proud to be invited to mount a display on local marine emergency services at the



Rotary President Sue Jellis presents MR Merimbula Unit Commander Sonia Teston and Deputy Bill Blakeman with a cheque for \$3,275.

Merimbula RSL Club, which is one of our great supporters. Created with the help of the Old School House Museum curators, the display was mounted in mid-December.

Despite tough times, we have continued to receive generous community support for our service, with significant donations from The Steel Framing Company and the estate of Margaret Hetherington.

Merimbula Rotary Club President

Sue Jellis recently presented the unit with the proceeds of a joint effort by the members of our two organisations, who teamed up to encourage visitors to the New Year's Eve Market to go beyond the normal gold coin entrance contribution and donate their spare change. The result was a cheque for \$3,275, which will put towards our goal of installing solar panels on our base.

Roger Barson

Summer boaters head for the High Country

Alpine Lakes keeps watch over Trout Challenge entrants vying for big prizes.

While many people try to escape the heat of summer by flocking to Australia's famous coastline, more and more visitors are making their way to the Snowy Mountains to enjoy some fun on the Alpine Lakes.

Visitor numbers in the Mountains this season have been up on previous summer holiday periods, with plenty of boat and water enthusiasts about.

Our MR Alpine Lakes members have been busy on patrol and enjoying our time on the water in this beautiful holiday destination we call home.

We aim to have a presence on the water during these peak times not only to ensure we can be quickly

on the scene of an emergency but also to raise awareness about our services to the boating community, upskill our members through various training activities and hopefully attract more volunteers to the unit.

We are keen to recruit new members to bolster our numbers and introduce new skills and personalities to our existing team.

MR Alpine Lakes is actively involved in some great events throughout the year, including the Sri Chinmoy Multisport Classic, dragonboat races, the Lake Jindabyne Sailing Regatta and the more recent Snowy Trout Challenge.

This year's Challenge has been expanded beyond the usual week, instead running from October until



Catch of the day! Dave Bryant and Travis Godde snared this beauty on Lake Jindabyne. Photo: Snowy Trout Challenge Facebook.

the end of April to help keep the High Country COVID-safe. With more than \$20,000 in prizes on offer, we have seen many visitors trying to bag one of the 430 tagged trout.

Teamed with plenty of return

guests coming back to spend Christmas and the Australia Day weekend by the beautiful lakes, this has made for a successful holiday period at our high altitude.

Karina Hermeston

Minister delivers \$200,000 for base upgrade

Search for missing snorkeller among 40 operations for Batemans Bay crews.

A search for a missing snorkeller presumed drowned was just one of more than 40 operations carried out by members of MR Batemans Bay over December and January.

Emergency services were called to Richmond Beach in the Murrumbidgee National Park on January 25 in response to reports a snorkeller had entered the water and not been seen again. Crews searched into the evening and the next day before poor conditions saw the operation suspended.

The response to a yacht taking on water in 5nm east of Brush Island on January 29 resulted in an injury being sustained by one of our members on board *Batemans 30*.

Thankfully, our training kicked in and a more serious injury was avoided, with the member expected to make a full recovery.

Off the water, we welcomed Customer Service Minister Victor

Dominello MP and Bega MP Andrew Constance on January 20 to announce a \$200,000 Infrastructure Grant for the expansion of our base.

Mr Dominello said the official funding announcement had been delayed due to COVID.

"Marine Rescue is a fantastic organisation whose dedication allows local and visiting boaters to hit the water knowing help is at hand if needed," he said.

Mr Constance said local Marine Rescue units were vital to coastal and inland waterway communities.

"We are so fortunate to have such dedicated volunteers keeping the boating community safe," he said.

Work began on the extensions on February 22. The culmination of about eight years' hard work, the project will create additional space for members, more storage and amenities and will allow our small inflatable boat to remain on its trailer



Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell, Monaro Director Glenn Fellkin and Unit Commander Richard Blundell welcome Bega MP Andrew Constance and Community Service Minister Victor Dominello.

hooked up to our ute so that our response times will be even faster. The work is expected to take about 12 weeks, subject to the weather.

Funding is now being sought to repaint the building.

We also have been busily fundraising, including bingo and

our regular markets, although the weather has played havoc with those. A steady flow of people expressing interest in joining the unit has seen a number of younger volunteers signing up, which is great for the bay's ageing demographic.

Richard Blundell

Dual Maydays end frustrating Eden season

The summer ended for our southern-most unit with two Mayday calls from boaters in trouble up to 30nm offshore.

On February 26, three men on board a 5m boat made the call when a wave punched through the windows of their boat and it was taking on water. This was followed two days later by a boater with a blown engine and smoke in the wheelhouse. Our colleagues at Eden Water Police brought both safely back to shore.

The cancellation of the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race for the first time in its history made for a calmer festive season for MR Eden watchkeepers. Although relieved of their overnight watches, our members missed being involved in the annual spectacle.

The radio base has been quieter in general over the past few months,

marked by periods of inclement weather, often with days of strong to gale force winds, punctuated by the occasional good days when frustrated boaties could get out.

The closure of the Victorian border due to COVID-19 reduced the number of visitors to Eden over summer, further impacting on our workload, although visitors from the ACT kept the town afloat.

We recorded only a small increase in the number of boats on our waters over the previous disastrous summer when bushfires ripped through the region.

From December 2019 to February 2020, 228 boats Logged On for local trips and for the equivalent period this summer, we watched over 373 vessels. The number of transiting boats fell from 74 to 50.

A large jump in the number of



This won't hurt a bit ... Guy Illy bandages Ursula Wall's wrist during a first aid training exercise at MR Eden.

people on board for local trips this season - up from 1,342 to 2,344 - can be attributed to the extra outings by Eden's tourist vessels.

Unit Commander Peter Horne has decided to hand over the reins after two years at the helm and five as Deputy Unit Commander. Deputy Stuart Manson has stepped into the

role until our elections, with Kent Farrell as acting Deputy. We are pleased Peter is continuing as a member of our unit executive.

The new leaders hosted a lunch to thank Peter and three of our other former commanders for their service and contribution to our unit.

John McKinnon

ART GALLERY

Our story in pictures

Marine Rescue at work



Sunrise operations ... the crew members of *Port Jackson 20* have a spectacular view out Sydney Heads as they shadow a boat with electrical issues from Sydney Harbour north up the coastline to Long Reef before handing over to their colleagues from MR Cottage Point to complete the journey to the vessel's home port of Pittwater.



No wonder it's called the Sapphire Coast ... *X Ray 21* carves through pristine Eden waters with a crew from MR Merimbula on board to support a South Coast fishing competition. *Photo: Phill Small.*



In good company ... MR Alpine Lakes UC Les Threlfo and his wife Anne Jones meet Governor-General of Australia David Hurley and his wife Linda during a Vice Regal visit to Snowy Monaro.



Learning on the job ... MR Sussex Inlet trainee Karen Collins on shift at the unit's radio base. The unit has increased its radio operator numbers by 60 per cent (see story page 39).



Two decades of commitment ... Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell presents MR Botany Port Hacking Unit Commander Noel Parkinson with his 20-year Long Service Medal in February.

Barney made the world a better place

Port Stephens salutes good friend and shipmate in touching tribute.

Sunday, February 7, was a special day for members of MR Port Stephens, who were honoured to be asked to scatter the ashes of our former Coxswain, Watch Officer and Boat Manager, Barney Pinney.

Our good friend had been bravely battling mesothelioma for some time and finally succumbed to this deadly disease in mid-December.

He had been a most active member of our unit for eight years, holding the ratings of Coxswain and Watch Officer. He was also the current Boat Manager.

Barney's many skills ranged from being a competent and trusted skipper, skilled navigator and lecturer, engineer and systems expert. He was always willing to share his knowledge and wide ranging experiences.

Barney's wish for his ashes to



Coxswain Barney Pinney at the helm.

be scattered in the waters of Port Stephens from our vessel *Port Stephens 31* was fulfilled during a small private family ceremony. Our members lined up on the breakwall in a touching salute to Barney as *PS 31* departed the marina for his final trip across the bar.



Members of MR Port Stephens line the breakwall to farewell Barney on February 7.

As our members farewelled *PS 31*, *PS 30* and *Water Police 45* left the marina under flashing lights in response to a Mayday call from a boat on rocks.

Barney was a good friend and shipmate. The world is a better place for Barney having been here

and without doubt our unit has been able to deliver on its promise to protect and serve our community due to his efforts. Our sincere sympathies are extended to his wife, Merrill, and family.

Tony O'Donnell & Iain Blackadder

Sussex Inlet loses its founding member

New rescue boat named after John Nicholas before his passing.

Members of MR Sussex Inlet have farewelled founding member, (Francis) John Nicholas ESM.

Volunteer marine rescue services in Sussex Inlet began in 1974 when John established a stand-by marine radio base in his home for the Shoalhaven Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, at Greenwell Point, of which he was a member.

As more residents joined the organisation, it was decided in 1982 that Sussex Inlet should apply to the national headquarters of the RVCP to be recognised as a new division, serving the growing boating community of Sussex Inlet and St Georges Basin.

The new division was formally established, with John appointed Divisional Commander. Members used their own private boats to meet the needs of the boating community,



John Nicholas ESM.

providing an efficient rescue service for the local inland waters as well as the adjacent coastal waters of Wreck Bay. In 1991, John was promoted to Captain and appointed the RVCP Southern Region Captain for NSW. He was appointed Officer Commanding of the RVCP in 1998.

John's many honours and awards include the RVCP Bronze Albatross



The commissioning of *Sussex Inlet 20*, named after John Nicholas.

Award for Bravery in 1994; Life Membership of RVCP in 1995 and MRNSW in 2012; the National and Centenary Medals 2001; the Emergency Services Medal 2002 and a South Coast Community Award in 2015.

In his later years, John continued to actively serve as a night base operator, supporting 24/7 radio

operations until only a few years ago when his eyesight started to fail. He was ably supported by his wife Dot throughout his long career.

The unit's new rescue vessel, *Sussex Inlet 20*, was commissioned in 2020 and named *John Nicholas* to honour our founder's lifetime of service to the boating community.

Les Pataky

IN MEMORIAM

Tributes to valued members

Life Member served diligently for 21 years

Strong, smart and resilient, Lou was driven by saving lives on the water.

Marine Rescue Woolli member Llewellyn Grayson passed away on December 22, at the age of 55.

Lou joined our predecessor service, the Volunteer Rescue Association Marine at Woolgoolga in 1999, where she served with distinction both on the water and in administrative roles.

Gaining the ratings of Watch Officer and Leading Crew, she took part in numerous search and rescue missions. Lou was awarded Life Membership of the VRA for her contribution to the unit.

She then became a Life Member of the new Marine Rescue NSW upon its establishment.

Lou and her partner Rodney May transferred to MR Woolli when Lou purchased a bush block and established a home in the hills behind Tucabia, north-west of the village of Woolli.

Their former unit's loss was certainly our gain, with Lou serving diligently as both a radio operator and rescue vessel crew member.

She received her 20-year clasp in May of 2019 and maintained active

service into 2020, until her battle with cancer required palliative care.

Even then, she continued to study the NATSAR Manual as she had a lasting ambition to gain her Search and Rescue Support Officer rating.

Lou was strong, smart, resilient, and fiercely independent. Her volunteering was driven by her commitment to saving lives on the water.

On December 22, unit members formed a guard of honour to farewell Lou. May she rest in peace.

Richard Tafts



Life member Llewellyn Grayson.

Commander Masters change management

Stewart steered the course to new service and merged Tuggerah Lakes unit.

In his time as a marine rescue volunteer, Stewart Masters certainly had ample opportunities to guide and manage change.

Stewart joined the Tuggerah Lakes Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in January 2007, becoming the Divisional Commander. With the establishment of MRNSW, he managed the division's transition to Marine Rescue The Entrance, becoming its Unit Commander.

This change included the establishment of a new base at The Entrance North.

In 2014, he facilitated the merger of MR The Entrance and MR Toukley to form the new MR Tuggerah Lakes.

This new change required the amalgamated unit to manage two bases and renovate the old Toukley facility as its new headquarters.

An excellent seaman, Stewart rose from Crew member to Master, Trainer and Assessor and was held in high esteem.

He was always keen to improve the seamanship skills of the unit members and encouraged their progression through the ranks.

His efforts not only resulted in greater skills on the water but also ever-increasing membership.

Former Unit Public Relations Officer and skipper Denis O'Mara said Stewart had been a classic

commander, always conscious of members' personal needs.

"His understanding of 'The Loneliness of Command' was unique and when difficult decisions needed to be made, it was always to ensure the best outcome for the unit and its members," Denis said.

"His direction to steer the course for a successful transition to Marine Rescue was well supported by his partner Vicki and a tight group of skippers and experienced members who also understood the difficulty of such a task but the benefits MRNSW would create for the future of NSW

marine rescue services."

Denis said Stewart had shown compassion and strong leadership to the members, with the unit well respected in the local community.

Due to ill health, Stewart resigned in 2016 to move to his home state of Tasmania.

After a long battle with a brain tumour, Stewart passed away on January 8.

Our condolences go to his partner of many years, Vicki Buchanan.

Fair winds and following seas old friend.

Tony Younglove



Former Unit Commander Stewart Masters, third from front, at the commissioning ceremony for Tuggerah Lakes 21 in 2014.

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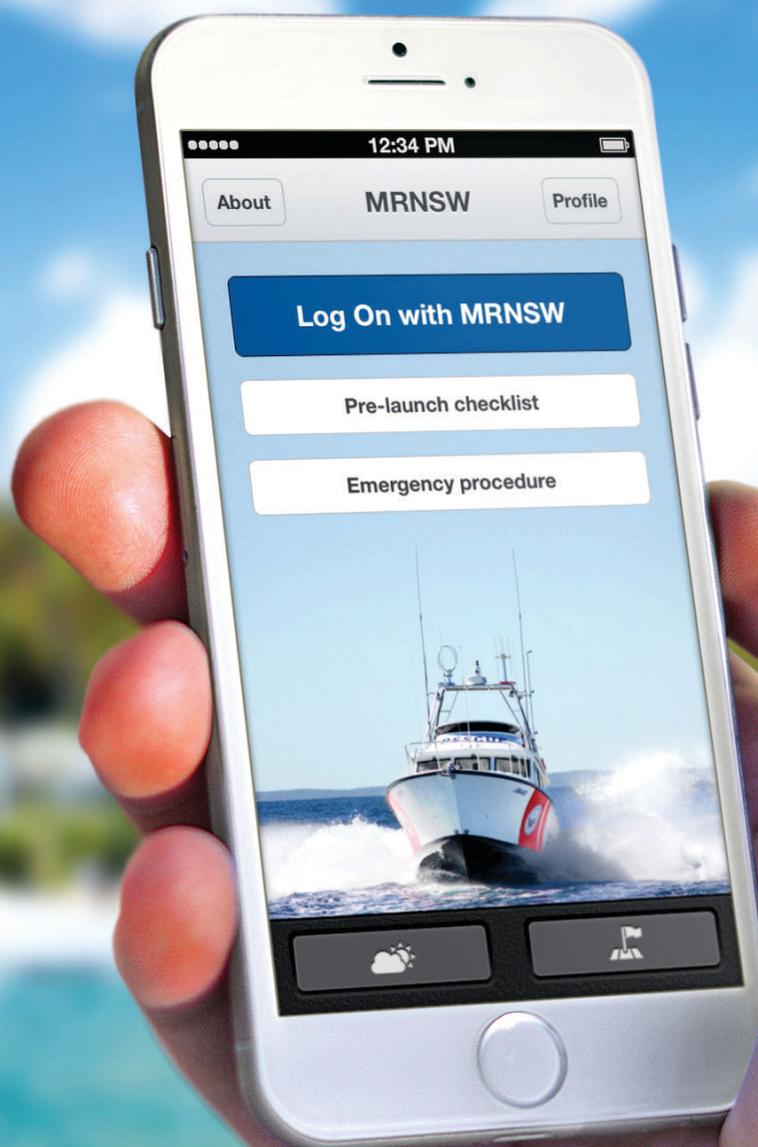
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