

Volunteers saving lives on the water

# SOUNDINGS



Quarterly Journal of Marine Rescue NSW | Issue 48, Spring 2021



## **SUNKISSED**

Spring on the water

## **LOCKDOWN LIFE**

Return to Covid operations

## **ALONE AT SEA**

Safety advice for solo sailors

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# SOUNDINGS

Quarterly Journal of Marine Rescue NSW

## Cover Image

On a clear, late winter morning, Brad Whittaker captures *Jervis Bay 20* from an unusual angle as it powers up during a training exercise.

## Publisher

Marine Rescue NSW  
202 Nicholson Parade  
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## Editorial & Advertising

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

This is my last edition of *Soundings*. Thank you to all the volunteers and staff who have told us their stories and sent us their photos so we can showcase their tremendous work to save lives on the water. A vote of thanks, too, to all our advertisers for their support for *Soundings* and our volunteers and to Nicole Brown for her valuable design skills. Best wishes to you all for the future. KW.

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Nicole Brown

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**MARINE RESCUE NSW**  
*Volunteers saving lives on the water*

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

## THE HELM

- 2 • Commissioner's report
- 4 • Chair's report

## ON THE RADAR

- 3 • Strong Covid rules maintain health, services
- 5 • Volunteers shape the service's leadership
- Radio safety messages target coastal boaters
- 6 • Port Jackson member our Volunteer of Year
- 7 • Two options to simplify NSW lifejacket rules
- 8 • Huge jump in boaters rescued in past year
- 9 • Solo sailors urged to prepare for risks at sea
- 10-11 • State of volunteering
- 12 • Personnel roll up their sleeves to save lives
- Keep your best mate safe in ruff conditions
- 13 • Newest superboat a 'vessel for the future'
- 14 • Units pondering identity of secret admirer

## MAKING WAVES

- 16-19 **Northern Rivers News**
  - Evans Head
  - Brunswick
  - Point Danger
  - Subzero
  - Wooli
- 21-24 **Mid North Coast News**
  - Trial Bay
  - Coffs Harbour
  - Port Macquarie
  - Lord Howe Island
  - Woolgoolga
  - Marathon swim
  - Forster-Tuncurry
- 25-27 **Hunter/Central Coast News**
  - Lake Macquarie
  - Tuggerah Lakes
  - Port Stephens
  - Newcastle
  - Lemon Tree Passage
- 28-31 **Greater Sydney News**
  - Hawkesbury
  - Botany Port Hacking
  - Sydney
  - Middle Harbour
  - Port Jackson
  - Broken Bay
- 32-34 **Illawarra News**
  - Port Kembla
  - Ulladulla
  - Kioloa
  - Jervis Bay
  - Sussex Inlet
- 35-38 **Monaro News**
  - Eden
  - Tuross
  - Alpine Lakes
  - Narooma
  - Bermagui
  - Merimbula

## ART GALLERY

- 15, 39 • Marine Rescue at work

## IN MEMORIAM & FEEDBACK

- 40 • Tributes to valued members
- Letters & correspondence



**Commissioner**  
Stacey Tannos ESM

## From the Commissioner

New strategic plan sets fresh sails for the journey ahead.

If there's one lesson the past year has taught us, it's the importance of having a good plan in place to deal with the uncertainties that lie ahead.

With this in mind, our leadership team and the Marine Rescue NSW Board have worked tirelessly over the past year to chart a fresh course to secure our future.

In recent months I've had the pleasure of working with the Board, our volunteers and staff on developing our future strategic direction. The Marine Rescue Strategic Plan 2022-2025 will enable us to build on our past achievements so we can best support our members and realise our vision for creating a world-class volunteer rescue service dedicated to preventing injury and death on our waterways.

Underpinning the plan are our values of respect, professionalism, continuous improvement and pride in our service, its people and its achievements. The plan acknowledges the vital importance of our volunteers and places a strong emphasis on improving our governance, processes and procedures and how we interact with our membership to shape a safer environment in, on and around

the water for all. I hope to be able to share our new plan in the coming months. To help us achieve our goals, a number of staff structural changes will occur. These include the creation of three operational zones to ensure better coordination and support to our units; bringing together new teams at head office; and the development of skills in the key areas including increased member and supporter engagement, ensuring workplace health safety and wellbeing and continuing to modernise our property, facilities and stores.

Our future success depends upon a strong, cohesive and unified organisation that operates as "One Marine Rescue". Together as one crew we are stronger and better able to build a modern, responsive, professional and effective emergency service.

As the past few years have clearly shown, challenges can arise without warning. This plan gives us the fresh sails we need to confidently navigate

we will do so. While much of the state remains in lockdown, some regions have seen a recent easing of restrictions, creating a patchwork of differing rules as to what boaters, and our members, can and cannot do out on the water.

What is certain is that once vaccination rates allow further easing of restrictions, the summer boating season will see a sharp increase in the number of boaters on our waterways and of those in need of our help. Recently, I met with our maritime safety partners to commence planning for this expected surge in boaters and I urge all members to also take the opportunity to ready themselves for the busy summer ahead.

I also caught up with our Unit Commanders online, together with Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell and CFO Todd Andrews, going through a range of key issues including Covid, our work to secure leases on Crown Lands and training. The meeting showed that even when

### The summer season will see a sharp increase in the number of boaters on our waterways.

the waters that lie ahead of us and continue to provide our vital services for the NSW community.

Cold, wet and windy winter weather and Covid restrictions have seen very quiet operating conditions for our crews over recent months. It is a mark of the professionalism of our members that despite the restrictions and adverse weather, their commitment to serving their local communities has not wavered, with radio bases remaining fully staffed, crew rosters filled and members ready to swing into action.

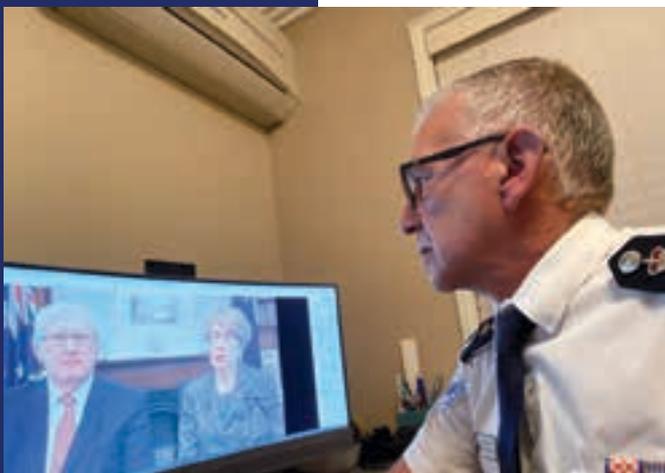
I want to sincerely thank all of our members for their cooperation and understanding during these difficult times and to assure you that as soon as we are able to safely further relax our current operating restrictions,

we are physically apart, we can still come together to discuss issues and effect positive changes. I particularly want to thank all of our unit leaders for providing outstanding leadership to their teams through these challenging times.

Congratulations to MR Port Jackson member Alex Fenwick, who was awarded the MRNSW Officer of the Year in a Voluntary Capacity at this year's Rotary Emergency Services Community Awards. Thank you to all our finalists, whose professionalism and dedication is an inspiration.

To all our members, stay safe, and all the best for the coming start to the boating season.

*Stacey Tannos ESM*  
*Commissioner*



The Commissioner watches the online Rotary Emergency Services Community Awards.

# Strong Covid rules maintain health, services

Volunteers prove resilience and commitment again: Commissioner.

The emergence and rapid spread of the Delta strain of Covid has led Marine Rescue NSW to again introduce our strongest risk management protocols across the organisation to protect our people while maintaining our life saving services.

After a progressive return to "normal" operations, training and fundraising earlier this year, the organisation's volunteers returned to social distancing in bases, meeting on Zoom and operating on-call in response to emergencies.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said the organisation's paramount priority was the health and welfare of its volunteers and staff.

"This always comes first. Always has, always will. No matter what," he said. "Our members demonstrated their resilience and adaptability last year when we all learned how to function in a pandemic.

"They are again showing the same commitment and determination to stay safe while also maintaining our services to the boating community and pursuing their own training progression."

The MRNSW Level Three protocols developed at the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic in March 2020 were re-introduced in late June when the State Government locked down the Greater Sydney Region, stretching from the Central Coast south to Shellharbour.

They extended to the Hunter Region and finally escalated to cover all 45 units when a statewide Covid lockdown was introduced on August 16. Relaxed regional restrictions saw all Northern Rivers units and MR Woolgoolga, Coffs Harbour, Nambucca, Trial Bay, Port Macquarie, Camden Haven, Alpine Lakes and Moama return to Level One protocols on September 11.

Personnel were encouraged to become vaccinated, particularly those in Local Government Areas of



Superboat *Jervis Bay 41* was delivered in accordance with strict Covid protocols. Crew members, including Murray Hotchin, wore masks and social distanced during their inductions. Photo: Brad Whittaker.

concern, who could leave their LGA to report for duty as an authorised worker - but needed to be able to prove they had had at least their first vaccination or an exemption.

The delivery of the new superboat in the MRNSW fleet, *Jervis Bay 41*, to its home port was carried out in accordance with strict Covid rules. Critical members were able to undertake their inductions and initial training on board while observing requirements around social distancing, minimum crewing and wearing masks.

Members of MR Point Danger again faced a challenging border crossing and lengthy delays to access their base on Duranbah Beach, which is located in NSW but can only be reached by crossing briefly on to Queensland roads.

NSW Maritime clarified that boaters who were not living in a Local Government Area of concern were allowed to use their boat for recreation while observing rules around social gathering, physical distancing and mask wearing.

Boating was limited to two

people, or more if all on board were from the same household. Boaters needed to be within their LGA or no further than 5km from home and were able to head up to 3nm offshore adjacent to their LGA.

MR bases reported that it had been quiet on the water, with few incidents troubling their crews.

From June 26, when the Greater Sydney regional lockdown began, until September 7, a total of 11,066 boats Logged On with an average of 2.8 people on board. In the early days of the pandemic last year, the average number of people on board



MR Lake Macquarie's Garry Gray wears a mask on duty.

each Logged On vessel fell from three in March to 1.95 in April when distancing rules were clarified.



We again encouraged boaters to stay home unless it was essential, to protect their own and our volunteers' health and safety.



**Chair**  
James Glissan AM ESM QC

## From the Chair

Volunteer survey reveals motivated team that feels valued.

Our volunteers are the heartbeat of Marine Rescue NSW. Without them and their commitment to serving their community, our organisation would not exist.

Earlier this year the Board of Directors asked management to seek our members' views on our direction, challenges, success and areas for improvement.

As a result, in recent weeks, 42 per cent of our volunteers took part in our latest membership survey and we have now had the opportunity to look at the results.

Certainly, you identified areas where we could do better but the overall impression is of a motivated, hardworking team of people who feel valued and are striving as one to achieve our mission of saving lives on the water.

Of all the results, the most pleasing was that 76 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "In my experience as a volunteer, MRNSW values and respects the flexibility and sacrifice members are required to make to support the organisation". Fifty-four per cent felt their contribution was recognised within their unit.

Members' motivations for volunteering confirmed our instinctive belief that there are many reasons our members give

us their time and energy. Given the options of being able to meet new people (0.98 per cent); learn new skills (5.42 per cent); support my local community (12.8 per cent) and save lives on the water (2.68 per cent), 73 per cent ticked "all of the above".

Seventy-nine per cent said they received the training and information they needed to perform their roles and 51 per cent preferred a blended training model incorporating both face-to-face and online training. The experience of training throughout Covid seems to have shown the value of both methods of training delivery, providing us flexibility and the opportunity to learn at our own pace but also the benefits of being able to interact with our peers and get hands-on experience.

The key challenge facing our

this day and age, in which people are time poor and facing multiple demands for their attention.

Given this, it is all the more commendable that more than 30 per cent of those answering said they planned to remain a member for more than the coming decade, with another 29 per cent nominating a five to 10 year tenure. This is a remarkable degree of dedication to our service and our cause.

Forty-four per cent of you thought the general public understood our role well. One of the challenges of our role is that our operations generally take place out of the public and media eye. I again encourage our units to use the media app rolled out this year to help continue building our profile.

These results have confirmed for each of the Directors our passion

### In challenging times, we are committed to providing members with every support we can.

organisation in coming years is recruitment and retention in the eyes of 54 per cent of respondents, with 64 per cent identifying personal, work and family considerations as the major barriers to their volunteering commitments. These results reflect the challenges of all volunteering organisations in attracting and keeping members in

and belief in our role to provide the strategic leadership of our organisation and our people.

In challenging times, as we face the renewed threat of Covid and the consequent restrictions on our lives and operations, along with the many other demands upon us all, we are committed to providing our members with every support we can to make your volunteering more rewarding and your mission more achievable.

The 2021 Board elections will soon be upon us. I encourage any member who wants to take a more active role in steering our organisation and representing our volunteers to nominate for election. It is truly an honour to be charged with the responsibility of leading such remarkable group of people and one you will find immensely rewarding.

*Good sailing*  
*Jim Glissan*



Members are being encouraged to nominate for election to the Marine Rescue NSW Board of Directors.

## Volunteers shape the service's leadership

Members encouraged to stand for election to the Board of Directors.

Volunteers have the opportunity to shape the strategic leadership of their organisation for the coming three years in the annual MRNSW Board elections in October.

Elections will this year be held for the positions of Northern Rivers, Mid North Coast and Hunter/Central Coast Regional Directors and a General Director.

The incumbent Regional Directors are Darcy Henriksen, John Lynch and Jim Wright and General Director Bob Wilson.

The elections will be held in conjunction with the MRNSW Annual General Meeting, which will be held on November 20.

The General Director is elected for a three-year term and the Regional Directors for two years.

Nominations for the elections open on September 13 and close on October 8, with voting to take place from October 18 to November 12.

Volunteers nominating for election

must have been an active member for at least two years, possess knowledge and experience of MRNSW and bring relevant skill sets such as professional qualifications or board, governance, fundraising or management experience to the role.

Women are encouraged to step forward, with Pat Fayers remaining the only female Director.

Regular and Life Members in all six regions are eligible to vote for the General Director and those in the three northern regions for their respective Regional Directors. Provisional members are ineligible to vote.

These will be the fourth elections to be held online. The 2020 Annual General Meeting was the first held concurrently at State Headquarters and on Zoom and also the first to be live-streamed on YouTube, meeting COVID-19 requirements and enabling volunteers to follow proceedings.



The 2020 Annual General Meeting was the first to be held in person at MRNSW Headquarters and on Zoom, as well as being live streamed on YouTube.

Plans are in place to repeat this format for this year's meeting to ensure compliance with any relevant Covid restrictions in place at the time.

Board Chair Jim Glissan encouraged motivated volunteers to nominate for election.

"This is a democratic opportunity for members who feel they could make a strong contribution to the

strategic leadership of our service," he said.

"Our Directors are elected to represent the interests of the entire membership and work with the Commissioner and staff to drive our progress and development. It is a challenging but rewarding role and I urge any interested member with the time and energy to put their name forward for election."

## Radio safety messages target coastal boaters

New initiative includes announcements in four community languages

A new public safety initiative is directly targeting boaters along the NSW coastline ahead of the expected surge on to the water for the summer boating season.

MRNSW has produced a series of Community Service Announcements for broadcast on local radio stations along the coastline, including a safety message in the key community languages of Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic and Vietnamese.

A total of 28 radio stations, including Arabic radio 2BACR, have so far agreed to air the messages to help improve boating safety.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos appealed to all boaters to make safety their highest priority this summer.

"Tragically, we've had 17

deaths on our waterways and our volunteers have rescued more than 10,000 boaters over the past 12 months," he said.

The three Community Service Announcements include how to Log On and Log Off with Marine Rescue, helpful tips on staying safe out on the water and how to help on the marine safety frontline by volunteering with your local Marine Rescue unit.

Commissioner Tannos said boating and fishing were popular activities with people from a wide range of backgrounds, making it important to broadcast safety messaging in community languages.

"We want everyone to have a great time on the water - and most importantly, to return home safely.



MRNSW boating safety messages are being broadcast by 28 community radio stations.

This initiative will play an important part in meeting that goal," he said.

"Undertaking the few simple actions we're outlining in these messages can dramatically boost your safety on our waterways," he said. "Have your engine serviced,

ensure plenty of fuel for your journey and check the weather and sea conditions before heading out. Most important of all, make sure everyone on board is wearing a lifejacket and Log On with us on VHF Channel 16 or the Marine Rescue NSW App."

# Port Jackson member our Volunteer of Year

Rotary awards held solely online amid Statewide Covid lockdown.

Marine Rescue Port Jackson member Alex Fenwick has been named the MRNSW Officer of the Year in a Volunteer Capacity in the 2021 Rotary Emergency Services Community Awards.

Due to Covid restrictions, this year's awards were held solely online on August 14, with our finalists, their families and volunteer colleagues forced to watch from home.

The other three MRNSW finalists were MR Port Macquarie member Alison Cameron-Brown, Neville Hamilton from MR Evans Head and MR Shoalhaven's Pat Welch.

Emergency Services Minister David Elliott said all the winners and finalists were deserving of accolades as "it takes a very committed person who values their community to put

themselves on the frontline when disaster strikes".

"There is more than 600 years of combined service from this year's finalists and I thank them all for their exceptional service to the community."

Alex has served with the Rural Fire Service for 26 years but three years ago felt he should do something for people in trouble caught in the other extreme, on the water, as well.

He initially joined Marine Rescue Terry Hills in 2018 before moving to MR Port Jackson. In his MRNSW duties as a Crew member, he has demonstrated the discipline acquired over almost three decades of emergency response experience.

During the 2019/20 Black Summer bushfire crisis, he spent

hours on the water in addition to his heavy firefighting workload.

Addressing the event in a recorded message, Commissioner Stacey Tannos said it had been an intense two years for the emergency services.

"Our people have responded magnificently to every challenge and I know I speak on behalf of all the Commissioners - and the Minister - in saying how proud we are of the calibre of all our members and their commitment to serving our community.

"Rotary's motto is Service above self. That is at the heart of the commitment of all our emergency services personnel - and especially our finalists here tonight - who go above and beyond the call of duty every day and night of the year."



MRNSW Rotary Volunteer of the Year, Alex Fenwick.



When the worst floods to impact NSW in decades inundated the Mid North Coast in March this year, residents found themselves in peril, with some forced on to the roofs of their homes to escape the rising water.

MR Port Macquarie member Alison Cameron-Brown and her

fellow unit members were among the emergency services personnel who responded.

Alison showed leadership and bravery in hazardous conditions, in which she herself was in harm's way, to save lives.

A member of the unit for more than six years, Alison has held the

roles of Unit Training Officer, Trainer and Assessor since 2018.

Her commitment is evident in these roles, attending to the readiness of the unit's crew members and trainees, as well as in her performance in search and rescue operations and the many other roles to which she is assigned.



Neville Hamilton first learned about altruistic public service as a Boy Scout in Victoria.

He built on this foundation through his experience in later years in three service clubs, becoming a District Governor in the Apex Club and also joining both Lions and Rotary.

Neville also has served as a city councillor in Berwick, Victoria, as an Australian Maritime College Invigilator and a Volunteer for Isolated Student Education.

In 2011, finding himself in Evans Head, he joined MR Evans Head.

Neville has held many roles in the unit over the past decade,

including Deputy Unit Commander, Administration Officer, Unit Training System Officer and Radio Officer.

In this latter capacity, he has played a highly skilled and vital role in managing local marine radio communications, monitoring boating safety and coordinating rescue missions.



The greatest reward for MRNSW volunteers comes from launching operations to rescue individuals at risk and return them to safety.

Recording and promoting the positive value to be gained from saving lives and giving back to the community is a powerful motivator, inspiring existing volunteers to

continue turning out in cold, dark and unfavourable conditions and drawing new members to the organisation.

William (Pat) Welch has been a member of MR Shoalhaven for 22 years, initially serving as a radio operator involved in numerous rescue operations.

He now keeps the record, photographing and otherwise recording the unit members' activities. Pat prints the unit's annual Marine Guide and for the past 15 years has been member of the Culburra Beach Progress Association, putting out its *Culburra Beach Bugle* magazine.

# Two options to simplify NSW lifejacket rules

We need to make laws easier to understand and save more lives: Minister.

NSW Maritime has proposed two options to simplify and expand lifejacket requirements on NSW waterways as part of the draft Maritime Safety Plan 2026.

The community has been invited to have its say and provide feedback on the lifejacket options and Safety Plan, which is now open for public consultation.

Minister for Transport and Roads Andrew Constance said more than seven out of 10 people presumed drowned in recreational boating incidents over the decade to 2019-20 were not wearing a lifejacket.

“Lifejackets are without a doubt the most important piece of safety equipment for survival in boating incidents where people are forced into the water,” Mr Constance said.

“We want to hear from NSW boaters on the two new lifejacket options that have been developed, because we need to make the law easier for people to understand and save more lives on our waterways.

“The draft Maritime Safety Plan 2026 will outline the NSW Government’s plans for maritime safety over the next five years, and support our goal of zero boating fatalities and serious injuries by 2056.”

The first option would require mandatory wearing of lifejackets by adults on vessels less than six metres when under way and at

all times for vessels less than six metres when boating alone, on alpine waters or between sunset and sunrise.

The second option would require the mandatory wearing of lifejackets by adults on vessels less than six metres in enclosed waters when under way, on all vessels in open waters in the open area of the vessel when under way and at all times when boating alone, on alpine waters or between sunset and sunrise.

Under both options, children under the age of 12 would be required to wear a lifejacket at all times on a vessel less than six metres in enclosed and open waters and in the open area of a vessel greater than six metres under way in enclosed and open waters.

Centre for Maritime Safety Chief Bernard Carlon said the draft plan built upon the achievements of the previous Maritime Safety Plan 2021.

“Each year, more than two million people explore our beautiful NSW waterways by boat and other watercraft and we want to ensure they can continue to enjoy this popular activity in the safest possible way,” Mr Carlon said.

“The proposed changes to lifejacket rules are designed to be simpler and easier to understand for NSW boaters, with the goal of driving increased wearing of



The State Government has proposed new options to simply lifejacket requirements for boaters on NSW waterways.

lifejackets to save lives. Both options being proposed will save lives on NSW waterways and support our ultimate goal - to get to zero fatalities on NSW waterways by

2056.” To have your say on the draft Maritime Safety Plan 2026 and the proposed lifejacket reform options, visit [haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/maritime-safety](https://haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/maritime-safety)



Learn more about the Maritime Safety Plan 2026 in an informative YouTube video at <https://youtu.be/c4xoy-sKJno>

An advertisement for Barrenjoey Marine Electrics (BME). It features the BME logo with a red lightning bolt, and logos for FLIR, Raymarine, and Furuno. The text says: "With over 40 years of experience, Barrenjoey Marine Electrics offers state wide technical support for all electrical and electronic systems onboard." Below this is a list of services: Marine Electronics, Thermal Imaging, Communication Systems, and Hydraulics. At the bottom, it says "DEFENCE - COMMERCIAL - MARINE RESCUE - RECREATIONAL" and "Get in touch today". Contact information includes the phone number 9997 6822, email sales@bme.net.au, and website bme.net.au.

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# Huge jump in boaters rescued in past year

Record number of vessels Log On, a third using free MarineRescue App.

More than 10,000 boaters owe MRNSW crews their thanks for returning them safely to shore last year.

Our crews launched a record 4,251 rescue missions in 2020-21 - 67 per cent more than the previous year. These included 1,234 operations in response to life-endangering emergencies.

A total of 8,973 adults and 949 children were rescued, along with 123 animals.

Our radio operators managed more than 256,000 radio calls - more than one every two minutes.

A record 77,921 boats Logged On, with 277,049 people on board. Thirty-four per cent of Log Ons were via the MarineRescue App.

Director Operations Andrew Cribb said this was a remarkable

operational performance by our volunteers in every unit.

"I thank each and every one of the vessel crew members, radio operators and every other member for their contribution to this outcome," he said.

Mr Cribb said the jump in this year's statistics could be attributed both to the booming popularity of recreational boating since the onset of the Covid pandemic - and the subsequent increase in the number of incidents on the water - and also the superior data collection enabled by the introduction of the new Incident Management System in September 2020.

"Even though we don't have quite a full year of data, we can already see the improved accuracy of the information being recorded," he



The crew of *Coffs Harbour 30* searches for a 20-year-old man washed off the breakwall in January this year. Photo: Frank Redward.

said. "Having accurate data about our operations is vital to ensuring we have people and assets when and where they are needed."

Fishing was the most common activity boaters were undertaking when they ran into trouble, followed

by cruising and sailing. Fifty-four per cent of rescues were sparked by engine, fuel and battery issues.

Almost 220 boats were grounded, 150 were disabled, 357 were overdue and 73 boaters made Mayday calls for help.

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## Solo sailors urged to prepare for risks at sea

Crews launch 62 missions in six weeks to rescue boaters out alone on the water.

A spate of rescue missions to save solo sailors in peril offshore in cold winter conditions has highlighted the need for those heading out to sea alone to take extra safety precautions.

MRNSW crews launched 62 missions in just six weeks from the start of July to rescue skippers who had headed out alone.

Joint operations by a number of emergency services were sparked to rescue an ill yachtie 47nm off Bermagui and a man on a disabled yacht 25nm off South West Rocks in late July.

Earlier in the month, another sailor ran into trouble as he struggled to make headway into Jervis Bay in 27 knot winds and on August 1, MR Forster-Tuncurry rescued a lone skipper battling in difficult conditions on his way south along the coast from Port Stephens.

Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell said boaters heading out on their own, especially far offshore, were in a vulnerable position if they ran into trouble.

"There's nothing like the peace and enjoyment of getting out to sea on your own but solo sailors have to make sure they have carefully planned for the risks they might face without someone else on board to help in an emergency," he said.

"Anyone travelling more than 2nm offshore is required to carry an EPIRB. Every minute counts in an emergency at sea, so if you're heading out alone, it is best to carry a GPS-equipped 406MHz EPIRB which can pinpoint your location within 120 metres, saving valuable search time.

"A marine radio equipped with DSC will enable you to send a digital alert to summon help at the push of a button and a satellite phone is also another sensible piece of kit if you're heading far offshore out of range of VHF radio.

"A Personal Locator Beacon will

enable you to call for help if you fall overboard and there's no one left on board to raise the alarm."

Deputy Commissioner Barrell reminded all boaters to be certain all their safety gear, including radio, EPIRB and lifejacket, was in good operating condition and serviced according to requirements.

A properly-functioning EPIRB proved pivotal to the rescue of a sailor on a 54 foot yacht who radioed for help after falling ill off the NSW South Coast on July 25. His faint radio signal was detected by MR Bermagui, who established contact with the sailor. Unable to give the radio operator his location, he was asked to activate his EPIRB, which identified that he and his dog were 47nm off Bermagui.

While the radio operators stayed on shift to provide communications support and reassurance to the sick man, a NSW Police vessel from Eden headed out on a marathon mission to return him to shore and a waiting NSW Ambulance.

This emergency was followed three days later when MR Trial Bay was activated in response to another lone sailor setting off his EPIRB when his 10m yacht's engine overheated and seized in heavy seas 25nm off South West Rocks. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority received the alert, deploying its Challenger jet from Melbourne and the Westpac Rescue Helicopter from Lismore, which located the vessel and established communication with the skipper.

The crew of rescue vessel *Trial Bay 30* headed out in a long-haul operation of more than seven hours in rough conditions to return the yacht to sheltered waters in Trial Bay about 9.45pm.

Two other emergencies closer to shore also resulted in crews deploying to rescue solo sailors. On July 16, MR Jervis Bay, MR Shoalhaven and a rescue helicopter



A crew member from *Trial Bay 30* boards a disabled yacht 25nm offshore to attach a towline to return the solo sailor to safety.

were tasked to locate a yacht struggling to enter the bay, before the skipper reported that he had made it to a mooring and on August 1, an 8m yacht travelling south from Port Stephens ran into difficulties just north of Seal Rocks. Forster 30 arrived on scene after a search to locate the vessel that had drifted despite the skipper deploying

his anchor to wait for help. The man, whose safety gear had disappeared when his tender was lost the night before, was unable to lift his anchor or sail in the conditions and had insufficient fuel to motor to Forster.

A crew member boarded the yacht to help raise the anchor and secure a tow line to return the boat safely to harbour.



MR Bermagui radio operator Dennis Walker maintained communication with an ill sailor during a marathon rescue mission.

# State of Volunteering: common challenges,

New report provides benchmark to compare results of our membership survey.

A new study of volunteering in NSW has found nearly 4.9 million residents across the state gave more than 1.5 billion hours of volunteer time in 2020, with a value of \$127 billion.

The NSW State of Volunteering Report, commissioned by The Centre for Volunteering, in conjunction with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, was released on August 9.

It found more people volunteered for more hours in 2020 compared with 2019, up from 4.7 million to 4.8 million, each for an average 25 hours a month.

The report provides a timely statewide, cross-sector comparison to MRNSW, which recently completed its own survey of its volunteer membership.

Centre for Volunteering Chief Executive Officer Gemma Rygate



said the findings of the report reinforced the fact that volunteering was irreplaceable, delivered substantial return on investment and was a vital ingredient for strong, connected, resilient communities.

"The benefits of volunteering are reciprocal and multi-layered - for individuals and groups receiving services from volunteers, for communities, for government, for volunteer-involving organisations and for volunteers themselves," she said.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said it was a fact that MRNSW could not exist without its volunteer members.

"We have more than 3,200 volunteers today and there's no way we or the Government could afford a

paid workforce of that size," he said.

"There's no way I could put a dollar value on that contribution to our community - it's beyond measure.

"The Centre for Volunteering study comes at an interesting time, providing us with a benchmark - albeit across different areas of the volunteering sector and with a much larger sample size - to compare our volunteers' views through our own recent survey.

"It confirms what we instinctively knew - we face the same challenges as all volunteer organisations and the various impacts of a global pandemic over the past 18 months."

The Centre for Volunteering report analysed the results of a survey randomly sent to NSW residents and "volunteer-involving" organisations.

Almost 76 per cent of the adult NSW population volunteered in 2020 and of these, 10.2 per cent did so exclusively in formal settings - such as Marine Rescue NSW. The typical volunteer in this capacity gave 14.8 hours a week.

This was by far the smallest proportion, with 30.3 per cent giving their time informally, without organisational support and 59.5 per cent volunteering both formally and informally.

In our survey, 58 per cent of respondents estimated they spent between one and eight hours a week on their duties and a further 27 per cent spent eight to 15 hours.

An overwhelming 62.4 per cent of the broader volunteering community said they volunteered to help others, with 31.5 per cent for social connection.

MRNSW members were motivated by a range of factors, including helping their community, saving lives, learning new skills and meeting new people (73 per cent chose 'all of the above').

Asked about barriers to volunteering, 55.6 per cent of



Graphics: NSW State of Volunteering Report

existing volunteers and 41.2 per cent of those who did not volunteer nominated a lack of time, due to family, work or study commitments.

This is an issue of even greater significance to our volunteers, with 64 per cent of respondents to the MRNSW survey of members identifying personal, work and family considerations as the major impact on their volunteering commitments.

Almost 28 per cent of respondents said Covid had had a negative impact on their

volunteering, including being unable to meet up due to restrictions and stopping the social interaction of volunteering; 7.4 per cent said it had been positive, enabling people to develop new volunteering opportunities closer to home and making people more empathetic.

The Centre for Volunteering report highlighted both the diversity of those who give their time to the community across different age groups and employment and life contexts. These ranged

## Why do you volunteer?

“ Moving from Melbourne to Bermagui a few years ago, I still had that desire to help people who are in a spot of trouble. Marine Rescue was a good fit, even down to replacing the blue scrubs with the blue uniform. I have enjoyed learning new skills and befriending many interesting members.”  
Andrea Wakefield, MR Bermagui



NSW State of Volunteering Report  
<https://www.volunteering.com.au/sovr/>

## shared motivations, enormous benefit

from spontaneous volunteers, students and skilled professionals to corporate-sponsored groups, individuals and tourists.

Thirty-one per cent of organisations also said they had people with a disability and migrants or culturally and linguistically diverse people.

It also highlighted an issue faced by organisations around the country: the long-term viability of their workforce and sustainability of their services, with 82 per cent identifying their typical volunteers as over 65 year olds. Thirty-four per cent of the MRNSW is aged 61 to 70 years and

another 23 per cent between 71 and 80.

However, pointing to an encouraging sign of generational renewal, the survey found 87.6 per cent of NSW residents between 18 and 24 years volunteered in 2020 - 640,000 youth who already have established a habit of giving their time, creating a potential volunteer workforce for the future.

These young people donated an average 9.4 hours a week and were especially likely to volunteer in groups (a sports team or creative group), advocacy, one-off events or for political, environmental or social

causes.

Ultimately, across the 12 months of 2020, the value of volunteering to NSW was approximately \$127 billion. This is the sum of commercial benefits worth \$53.1 billion and civic benefits valued at

\$74.1 billion. This figure includes the \$64.8 billion it would cost to replace the labour that volunteers contribute to NSW and represents a net return of approximately \$3.30 on every dollar invested by all stakeholders.

## To have and to hold

Respondents to the Centre for Volunteering survey were largely positive when asked about their volunteering intentions over the three years from 2020 to 2023.

Just over 68 per cent of respondents stated they would be volunteering about the same or more over this timeframe.

**69.1%**  
**OF ORGANISATIONS  
PREDICT THEY WILL  
HAVE THE SAME OR  
MORE VOLUNTEERS  
IN THREE YEARS' TIME**

MRNSW volunteers were even more upbeat about their future in the organisation, with almost 31 per cent stating that they intended to remain a member for more than a decade.

Another 29 per cent could see their membership extending between five and 10 years.

Asked about the main issues they were facing in 2020, almost 84 per cent of volunteer-involving organisations said volunteer health and safety, followed by 73.7 per cent nominating volunteer retention

(up 10.5 per cent over the past three years) and 61.2 per cent identifying volunteer recruitment (up 7.2 per cent).

Again, our members saw the same challenges on the horizon, with 54 per cent of our survey respondents targeting recruitment and retention as our major challenges over the next three years.

Internal and community recognition of volunteers; financial viability and sustainability; access to funding, grants or sponsorship; risk, insurance and legal issues and volunteer fatigue were among other challenges commonly identified in the NSW survey.

The organisations that responded reported attracting volunteers through a combination of methods, including word of mouth by personally approaching participants, members and their networks (90.3 per cent), social media (58 per cent) and open days and events (35 per cent). Despite the many challenges, organisations remained broadly positive about the outlook for their sector, even though significant uncertainty (17.7%) remained about how the next three years would play out.

## What are the rewards?



For me, the learning never stops. There's always something new to learn, and new ways of looking at things. I like to challenge the status quo and find better ways to get things done.  
"Marine Rescue allows you to invest in yourself, to be the best that you can, and to build and maintain your skills. If you do, the rewards are worth it."

Courtney Greenslade, MR Point Danger

## Where to from here?

Centre for Volunteering CEO Gemma Rygate said many factors had changed the volunteering landscape.

She said these included rapid technical innovation in the digital age and a move to more flexible and inclusive roles.

Motivations had shifted, with volunteering today more than ever seen as key to social inclusion.

"We need to consider untapped talent pools and look at all possible ways to engage this market by providing opportunities for all people who wish to volunteer," she said.

"This diverse volunteer pool demands new ways of thinking and planning for volunteer engagement that fosters social, economic and digital inclusion. All these factors are challenging the way the sector operates, requiring us to look

at alternative means to achieve the same ends and support our volunteers, client bases and achieve our organisations' missions. Today, in such a challenging climate we can only be agile, accept our circumstances, learn from our experiences and lead change."

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said MRNSW was conscious of these changes and committed to engaging with its current and future members to support them in maintaining their volunteer activities.

"The Training Academy is one way to do this. More of our members will be able to gain the qualifications they need more quickly, which will enable them to become more involved in their units' operations. This will be more rewarding and help spread the load to help people manage the demands on their time."

# Personnel roll up their sleeves to save lives

Generous response from our team in Emergency Services Blood Challenge.

Marine Rescue NSW personnel saved more than 310 lives in the three months from the start of June - and not one of them was on the water.

Our volunteers and staff joined in the 2021 Emergency Services Blood Challenge, making a fantastic contribution during these testing times.

Together, between June 1 and August 31, our Marine Rescue Lifeblood Team contributed enough donations of blood and plasma between them to help save more than 310 other Australians' lives.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos thanked all those volunteers and staff members who took part in the Blood Challenge.

"This response is typical of the generosity we have come to expect

from MRNSW people whenever they are asked to help their community," he said.

"Our mission is to save lives on the water but the Blood Challenge is another way we can achieve that mission on dry land."

Our people joined hundreds of emergency services volunteers and workers donating whole blood, platelets and plasma as part of the challenge.

Volunteers from MR Point Danger and Port Macquarie were among those who donated, along with Fleet Manager Kelvin Parkin and Greater Sydney Regional Operations Manager Glenn Evans.

Glenn reached an individual milestone, making his 100th plasma donation, in late June.

Ronny Maroun, from Australian



Greater Sydney Regional Operations Manager Glenn Evans makes his 100th plasma donation during the Emergency Services Blood Challenge.

Red Cross Lifeblood, personally thanked each of our donors for their contribution in being a vital champion and helping keep Australia's blood supply strong during this difficult climate.

Now that the challenge is

complete, the need for blood is ongoing with 33,000 donations needed each week to help maintain hospital demand and treat patients undergoing cancer treatment, women in pregnancy, premature babies, trauma and burn victims.



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# Keep your best mate safe in ruff conditions

Boaters have been urged to keep their best friend safer by making sure their dog - as well as all the people on board - is wearing a lifejacket when they're heading out on the water.

MRNSW volunteers last year rescued 123 dogs - more than two a week - along with more than 10,000 people from boats in trouble on NSW waterways.

Boating has boomed in popularity since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic last year, with crews noting more and more boaters were taking their pooches out with them.

Like people, wearing a lifejacket will give your dog the best chance of surviving if the worst happens.

While swimming comes naturally to dogs, some breeds tire quickly, while others can be rapidly affected by cold water, making a lifejacket essential to keep them warm and



A lifejacket will protect the boater's best friend.

afloat until help arrives. A dog's lifejacket should be snug while allowing it to walk, run, jump and breathe without difficulty. If it's too big, your dog may slip out of it or have difficulty swimming and staying afloat. Grab handles on the back will enable you to pull them back on board if they tumble into the drink.

## Newest superboat a 'vessel for the future'

*Jervis Bay 41* builder challenged to think outside the box, push boundaries.

The delivery of the latest superboat in the MRNSW fleet has provided the Jervis Bay boating community with a next generation rescue vessel ready to respond to emergencies now and for many years to come.

The brief for the build of the new *Jervis Bay 41* had been simple: MRNSW challenged Harwood Marine General Manager Giovanni Cervella to look outside the box and push the boundaries by developing a vessel for the future.

After nearly two years of planning, consultation and construction, the \$850,000 13.5 metre monohull recently made its debut on the bay's sparkling waters, ready for a Covid-safe introduction to its new crew members.

MRNSW Fleet Manager Kelvin Parkin said the delivery of a safe vessel with a long operational life able to meet the demanding operating conditions in the bay and offshore had been paramount.

"As our Jervis Bay unit works closely with the naval base at HMAS Creswell, we needed a vessel that could not only quickly and safely respond to emergencies in the worst of weather conditions but also reliably support the Navy's exercises," Mr Parkin said. "Critical in the build process was working with our volunteer members and challenging their thinking on what a rescue boat should look like. The outstanding result speaks for itself."

*JB 41's* varied hull, stepped bow and fine entry point enable it to tackle heavy seas forward while also reducing the risk of broaching in a following sea. This different set up allows a very dry ride even in heavy seas and provides a solid operational platform in the most trying of conditions.

The boat has a number of interesting features, including a specially designed hydraulic heavy lift platform which drops below the



A mighty fine ride ... the 13.5m \$850,000 *Jervis Bay 41* powers towards its new home base. Photos: Brad Whittaker.

waterline to assist in disembarking passengers and loading heavy equipment, along with a carbon fibre lifting davit with sockets both port and starboard as well as on the fly bridge. The deck area features a roll away tow line and roaming bilge pump system.

Mr Parkin said that the internal fit out had been carefully planned with high grade ergonomic seating, a stable internal workspace to lay out charts and grab rails for extended search and rescue operations.

"We created a massive amount of storage space below deck which can be accessed from the internal cabin floor, in which is kept the davit, stretchers and large fenders," he said. "The finished internal fit out is a mix of carbon fibre, fibreglass and alloy, giving the boat a high-standard yet industrial feel. The result is a workspace that is not just efficient but maximises volunteer comfort, helping to reduce fatigue and enabling crew to safely operate out on the water for longer."

As with other MRNSW vessels, *JB 41* is fitted with a full Raymarine electronics suite with customised

digital switching working from four stations including the fly bridge. With 16 inch multifunction displays, radio direction finder, FLIR camera and two loud hailer, the vessel is set up to quickly locate vessels in trouble when vital seconds count.

Powered by twin Yanmar 6LY engines that put out a combined 900 Horsepower, the boat can comfortably cruise at 20 knots with a maximum speed of 30 knots.

This is augmented by Veem Props in a rolled tunnel giving a high torque drive and a ZipWake ride

control system.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said one of the best aspects of the build was that it was completed in NSW, maintaining Marine Rescue's commitment to source boats locally and support local jobs and industry.

"Our organisation is built on community based volunteers and in sourcing our boats locally with builders like Harwood Marine, we're excited to be able to give something back to regional communities," he said.

*Phil Campbell*



The skipper and crew of *JB 41* have a full suite of the latest Raymarine electronics to support them in search and rescue missions.

# Units pondering identity of secret admirer

Anonymous correspondent thanks our people for their work on the water.

It's way past Valentine's Day but it seems MRNSW units have a secret admirer.

Over the past six months, 23 of our units have received anonymous thank you cards.

The identical cards feature a bright yellow gerbera on the front, with a hand-written message inside that reads "Thank you for the work that you do to help those on the waterways and in dangerous situations", usually accompanied by a smiley face. There is no signature.

The cards have been delivered to the Woolli, Kioloa, Port Jackson, Evans Head, Sydney, Port Macquarie, Nambucca, Camden Haven, Alpine Lakes, Brunswick, Forster-Tuncurry, Batemans Bay, Narooma, Hawkesbury, Eden, Newcastle, Norah Head, Port

Kembla, Port Stephens, Trial Bay, Ulladulla, Merimbula and Bermagui units.

MR Nambucca Unit Commander Gary Nichols said the unit's card had been pushed under the front door of its base, possibly pointing to a local resident as our mystery supporter.

The postmark on other units' envelopes, however, indicates the item was processed at Australia Post's South West Letter Facility in Strathfield, in Sydney.

MR Evans Head Administration Officer Kerrie Exley said it was "the nicest of mysteries."

"It's lovely to hear from a totally selfless person," she said.

Several units have posted the card on their Facebook pages to thank the author for recognising their members' hard work.



Appreciated ... 23 MRNSW units have received this anonymous card thanking them for their efforts.

"Received this card in today's mail. Thank you to the anonymous sender for your kindness and thoughts. It's little things like this that make it all worthwhile," MR Kioloa Unit Commander Peter White wrote.

If anyone knows our secret admirer, please let *Soundings* know on [soundings@mrnsw.com.au](mailto:soundings@mrnsw.com.au)

We'd love to return the favour by thanking them for their thoughtfulness and making our volunteers smile.



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## What we've been up to



Official business ... members of MR Evans Head gather on the waterfront with Clarence MP Chris Gulaptis and Richmond Valley Mayor Cr Robert Mustow, who were on hand to welcome the unit's new rescue vessel, *Evans Head 31*, to the area's waterways and present 25-year Long Service Medals to members Frank Skaines and Bruce Pedder in mid-July (see story Page 16).



A holey mess ... MR Nambucca members help the SES winch a catamaran from the water after it struck submerged rocks and was holed at the confluence of the Bellinger and the Kalang Rivers.



Sunrise by remote ... the early morning radio operators at MR Cape Byron enjoyed this view of dawn over the Brunswick River bar on the cameras linking their base with neighbouring MR Brunswick.



Putting skills to the test ... MR Forster-Tuncurry Coxswain/trainer Peter Mouwen takes Crew trainee Tanya Winchester through an assessment on board *Forster 30*.



Ship-shape ... MR Point Danger Coxswain Glen Hatton and Regional Operations Manager John Murray inspect progress on the unit's new 12m Naiad before statewide Covid restrictions were imposed.

# New Evans boat proves its speed and worth

Crew quickly on scene to transfer injured surfer for medical treatment.

The newest rescue vessel on the Northern Rivers proved its speed and capability in its first mission, to reach an injured surfer in severe pain on a remote stretch of the coastline.

A group of surfers were tow surfing 10nm from Evans Head on July 19 when one dislocated his shoulder.

His mates were able to get him on to one of their jet skis but his pain was so bad they could only travel at a snail's pace and called MR Evans Head for help.

Radio operator Bruce Pedder took the call and the crew of the new 10m Naiad, *Evans Head 31*, Bill Bates, Ken Exley and Rohan Shanahan, was quickly tasked.

*EH 31* headed out at best speed to intercept the jet ski with its ailing passenger.

Conditions were perfect, with smooth seas on a long swell, making for a quick passage to

meet the ski. The injured man, his wetsuit stretched tight over his distorted shoulder and obviously in excruciating pain, was transferred on board to the suspension seat behind the helm seat.

In no time, the *Naiad* had the patient back to waiting NSW Ambulance paramedics at the emergency pontoon, where he found some comfort in the green whistle.

"They wont cut my wet suit will they?" he asked as they closed the ambulance door.

This was a timely demonstration of our capability ahead of the visit next day by Clarence MP Chris Gulaptis and Richmond Valley Mayor Cr Robert Muso to welcome *EH 31* to the area and present 25 year Long Service Medals to members Frank Skaines and Bruce Pedder.

Both Frank and Bruce have made significant contributions to the unit and continue to serve as active radio operators.



MR Evans Head's Bill Bates and ski driver Callum Robson on scene as injured surfer Tom Summerfield is loaded into an ambulance.

Bruce came to the unit after he retired from service in the Royal Australian Navy and quickly adapted as a Radio Operator. He then qualified and served as a Crew member until 2017, continuing his radio duties since. Frank's background was in Public Works and his expertise was instrumental in the physical construction of all the facilities the unit still enjoys today.

He was a key figure in the construction of our radio base and tower, boat shed and training room. Over the years, Frank has served as a Radio Operator and Crew member and was Unit Commander from 2004 to 2007. He still provides his experience and advice to members while active as a radio operator.  
*Bill Bates*

# Covid challenges border operations again

Point Danger volunteers facing lengthy traffic jams to report for duty.

COVID-19 is again impacting boating activity and volunteer movements on the NSW-Queensland border.

MR Point Danger has seen a continuous decline in the number of local boaters Logging On, exacerbated by boating restrictions in both states, each with their own guidelines.

Similarly, the number of in-transit vessels travelling up and down the coast is below operational norms.

The good news is that the number of incidents and calls for help also are lower than in previous years.

With a mixed community of Queensland and NSW volunteers, simply reporting for duty is again proving challenging for many.

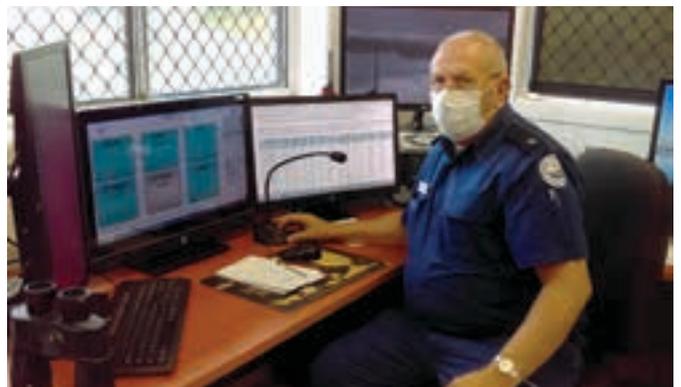
Volunteers need to have border passes and face lengthy traffic delays at peak times to reach our base and boat shed for their radio, administrative and boat duties.

Both these facilities are in NSW but even members who live on the southern side of the border need to cross briefly into Queensland to reach our Duranbah base.

This base is temporarily home to our radio operations while work is carried out on the Captain Cook Lighthouse, which also houses our radio room.

The unit is on the countdown to the arrival of our new rescue vessel, a 12m *Naiad*, in coming weeks.

*Point Danger 31* is expected to arrive on the Tweed River following its sea trials at Yamba in late



Masks on duty ... MR Point Danger radio operator Rick Vaughan on shift in the unit's temporary radio base at Duranbah.

October and begin operations in time for the peak summer season.

*PD 30* will then be removed from service on our border waterways and redeployed.

As a result, its AirBerth will be

surplus to our needs and is for sale. It has been well-maintained and serviced in the past two years. Contact Unit Commander Glendy Ashby on 0488 000 505 for details.  
*Phil Pickering*

## Citations awarded for skilful Woolli mission

Operation to rescue ketch demonstrates ability in demanding conditions.

Despite boating activity slowing throughout winter and the latest Covid lockdown, MR Woolli Deputy Unit Commander Matthew McLennan didn't have to wait long after gaining his Coxswain qualification to lead his first operation as skipper of rescue vessel *Woolli 30*.

Rather than a quick and simple job, the operation was more complex, with three people stranded on board a disabled runabout 12nm north off Sandon Bluffs and needing to be towed into the beach launch site at Minnie Water, which always requires a careful risk assessment.

The task was capably handled, with the boat and its passengers safely deposited on the beach at Minnie Water.

Matthew was presented with his Coxswain rating at an awards night in late June - well before the region's Covid lockdown - to commend members for their service over the past year.

Emilio Liqueste was presented with his 10 Year Long Service Medal and Michael Hammond was awarded a Unit Commander's Citation for his contribution to a number of rescues, particularly the recovery of three



Northern Rivers ROM John Murray (right) presents MR Woolli's Marty Hutchings, Kath Farrar, Matthew McLennan, Jackie Taffs and Richard Taffs with Commissioner's Citations for the *SV Mystic* operation.

people in the water after their vessel flooded and capsized.

A Commissioner's Citation was awarded to the unit and five members: Kath Farrar, Marty Hutchings, Matthew McLennan, Richard Taffs and Jackie Taffs for the *SV Mystic* rescue operation in January.

Demonstrating the members' ability in demanding conditions, the operation required close quarters manoeuvring in 20 knot winds, fading light and the backwash off NW Solitary Island to rescue a

43 foot ketch in danger of being washed on to the rocky shoreline after its engine failed and anchor dragged.

As well as risk to the vessel, the three people and dog on board, there was also an environmental risk, with the vessel right over a grey nurse shark aggregation site in the Solitary Islands Marine Park.

*Mystic's* tender was hanging off the stern after flooding and capsizing in the skipper's attempts to use it to hold the vessel off the rocks.

In an eight-hour operation, *W/ 30* was able to pass a tow line, set up the tow, release the anchor and move the vessel and people out of danger, while the Watch Officer in the radio base coordinated the operation and handled the radio and more than 60 phone calls.

The operation continued late into the night for the tow towards Coffs Harbour before handing over to the Water Police launch and then the long run back to Woolli and a late-night bar crossing.

*Richard Taffs*

## Neighbours help boost Brunswick capability

Members of MR Brunswick headed north on a beautiful late winter day to join our neighbours for a Rescue Water Craft training session on the Tweed River.

Our unit is building its RWC capability to ensure that we can be swiftly on the scene of emergencies on the Brunswick River bar and our shallow and confined waterways.

We were fortunate to have members of MR Point Danger to support our training drills on the Tweed on board *Point Danger 20* and from their radio base.

With their help, we were able to

complete a new operator induction and assessment.

Many thanks to Point Danger Coxswain Glenn Hatton, Northern Regional Training Manager Rodney Page and our Brunswick RWC Operator Robert Winter for their involvement.

Congratulations to Spike Greenwood on completing his RWC Operator assessment. Over the past few months Spike has shown an outstanding commitment to training and his success sees him become our unit's fifth operator.

*Jonathon Wilcock*



Covid-safe training ... MR Brunswick UC Jonathon Wilcock and MR Point Danger Coxswain Glen Hatton on the Tweed River.

# Lessons learned and praise for rescue crew

'Champion' team responds in dark and even washes boater's wet clothes.

When Cherylle Stone's catamaran was dismasted in the dark off the Northern NSW coastline in July, a crew from Marine Rescue Iluka Yamba was quickly under way to the rescue.

Cherylle recounted the experience for the Port Stephens Yacht Club's *The Bilge* newsletter. Thanks to *The Bilge* editor John Grainger and Cherylle for permission for *Soundings* to bring you a rescued boater's story in her own words.

On the night of July 11, my 12.5 metre Grainger catamaran, *Subzero*, was dismasted!

The incident occurred about 15 nautical miles north east of Yamba as we were making an overnight passage from Coffs Harbour to Southport.

The boat was sailing north with a reef in the main and the wind was WNW averaging about 15 to 18 knots and seas were about 1 metre, conditions that the boat and crew could handle with aplomb.

My partner and the other crew member on board was Mike Norvill, who is an active member of Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie.

He commented that although it was an experience he could have done without, it was a valuable addition to his appreciation of rescue operations.

At 2115 there was a loud bang as the rig fell to the starboard side of the boat.

I immediately donned my life jacket and tether and found the angle grinder and we set about cutting the two side stays and



Welfare check next day ... Subzero skipper Cherylle Stone and crew member Mike Norvill with MR Iluka Yamba rescue crew members Marg Deguara, Frank Bond and Bob Adams.

disconnecting the jib furler.

I was unable to safely reach the pin for the screecher so we cut it

away with a knife.

The mast was broken about three metres from the base and lying over

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## from skipper of dismasted catamaran

the starboard side in front of the dagger board while the boom was on the cabin top.

Once we had cleared all lines and stays we attempted to push the boom overboard but it caught on the dagger.

It was too risky for us to attempt to disconnect it from the mast so Mike used his phone to call Marine Rescue Iluka Yamba about 2230.

They arrived in their 38 foot Steber about midnight, coming along the port side and passed the tow line to us which I put on the port cleat.

After some discussion it was decided the boat would tow better if the line was on the starboard side.

In the process of transferring it, I stepped through the starboard trampoline which had been partially dislodged. Fortunately, I kept a firm grip on the tow line and Mike hooked my tether over a cleat.

I attempted to climb back up but it's nearly a metre high at the bow and my upper body strength is not as it once was.

The rescue vessel backed up to within a couple of metres of the bows, Mike released my tether and I hand-over-handed on the tow line to the stern of the rescue boat where three pairs of hands hauled me and my self-inflated life jacket over the stern.

From Marine Rescue's perspective, they had a casualty who could be at risk of hypothermia and/or shock so the crew quickly got me to discard my wet outer clothes and gave me a Marine Rescue wet weather jacket, trousers, new lifejacket and skipper Marg's socks.

I was then wrapped in a warm woolly blanket and offered water and lollies and had the privilege of observing at first hand the extraordinary professionalism, competence and compassion of this team of five, who constantly communicated with each other, me and Mike (by phone) for the duration of the five-hour tow back



*Subzero*, dismasted about 12nm north-east of Yamba, back in the safety of the Clarence River, thanks to an overnight mission by the crew of *Iluka Yamba 30*. Photo: Marg Deguara.

to Yamba, where we anchored inside the breakwall with rig still attached.

Later that morning a shipwright appointed by the insurance company helped us to remove the rig and buoy it until it could be salvaged after the long weekend.

An assessor came up from Sydney the next weekend and pieced the pieces together.

He concluded that the lower port (windward) spreader, had probably broken at the mast joint.

This would cause the mast to break where it did. There was no corrosion evident.

Lessons learnt:

There are some obvious lessons to be learned, foremost of which is that I could have avoided a swim if I had secured the tramp with some extra line before mucking around in its vicinity.

If you don't want hassles with the insurer, make sure the boat is fit for purpose. *Subzero* was re-rigged in 2020, the sails were only on their second outing and the boat has all its equipment in good order.

Neither of us was injured, the boat was not taking water, we were drifting offshore and there was no immediate danger so the EPIRB stayed unused in its holder.

The VHF antenna is at the top of the mast, shutting down the main radio and the AIS signal.

The hand-held VHF is only good

for short distances so the next communication option was by phone. Had we been out of mobile range, we would have used the satellite phone.

*Rob's Passage Planner*, a book that has lots of information for passage making along Australia's east coast, is an excellent resource for quickly finding contact details of each VMR.

The big bolt cutters were never meant to cut the stays but they made short work of the wiring at the base of the mast.

While we were unsuccessful at ridding ourselves of the rig it did help that we could dislodge most of it from the deck by cutting the stays with an angle grinder.

The knife with combined serrated

and straight edge in the cockpit was blunt and was quickly replaced by a very sharp one from the galley.

The dismasting would have been a whole lot less complicated if we had been able to ditch the rig overboard at sea, not least because of the risk to the integrity of the hull during the tow.

On the other hand, pollution of the seabed has been minimised and an "autopsy" has revealed the probable cause of the dismasting.

The Marine Rescue crew were back to visit us on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, Marg to return my clothes, which she had washed and dried immediately after finishing the tow and everyone to check on our welfare. What a champion team.

*Cherylle Stone*



*Subzero* in full flight, racing on her home waters of Port Stephens. Fitting a new mast has been delayed by Covid border restrictions.

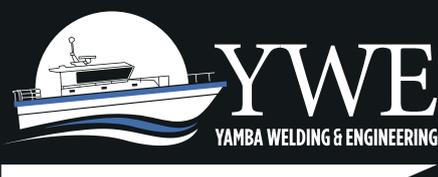
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# Trial Bay crews save lives under darkness

Night operations offshore and on river call on teams' skill and experience.

A long-haul operation offshore and another in the muddy shallows of the Macleay River have demanded all of MR Trial Bay crews' skill at operating under darkness.

The crew of *Trial Bay 30* headed 25nm off the coastline on July 28 on a seven-hour mission to rescue a lone sailor on board a 10m yacht who activated his EPIRB when his engine overheated and seized in heavy seas.

With the operation coordinated by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, the crew - skipper Peter Holyfield, Geoff Greenwood and Ian Turner - arrived on scene in fading light, towing the yachtie and his dog back to sheltered waters in the bay just before 10pm. Jennifer Edser, Donna Polkinghorne and Phil Hartley provided communications support from the unit's radio base.

AMSA thanked "the volunteers of Marine Rescue NSW and our partners in NSW Water Police, Westpac Rescue helicopters and Cobham Aviation Services for their



Seven hours at sea ... a crew member from *Trial Bay 30* boards a yacht to secure a towline after the small vessel's skipper activated his EPIRB 25nm offshore. Photo: AMSA.

support in this rescue".

Three weeks later, a boater stranded in the dark on a sandbank among oyster leases on the Macleay River called for help.

*TB 30*, with skipper Jon Cragg, Peter Holyfield and Geoff Greenwood on board, headed out to locate the man, who was reported to have become distressed and was in need

of medication. Phil Hartley was again on duty in the radio base.

Shallow water prevented *TB 30* from reaching the dinghy so the skipper jumped overboard into the river to wade through the oyster leases to the boat with a towline. The crew then returned the man to the unit's pontoon, where he was met by his wife.

Mid North Coast Regional Operations Manager Randall Gawne thanked the volunteers for their hard work to rescue the two men.

"Night operations always involve a higher degree of difficulty and risk and our members have again demonstrated their skill and capability to save these two lives on the water," he said.

## Buzz of achievement on Lord Howe Island

The MR Lord Howe Island unit has been abuzz with members training for their mission of saving lives on the waters around their idyllic home.

MRNSW Regional Training Manager Stuart Massey recently travelled to the island to conduct an intensive training boost.

This resulted in Ellis Whitfield and Caitlin Woods achieving their Coxswain rating, Brendyn Hancock and Heath Roberts their Leading Crew and Tracey Mills, Ben Gallen, Vivien Rink, Stephen Takacs and Tim Cruikshanks rated as Crew.

Another five completed first aid training, eight advanced resuscitation and 12 undertook drills. Several members have expressed interest in radio training.

"There was a buzz around the island when people found out about the training and ratings that were being achieved," Stuart said.

"I feel we made some real progress, particularly with the new recruits. I attended the base every day so members could come in and go through training when they had the time available.

"When the weather allowed, we got out on the boat but this was ruled out by frequent wind and storms. We ventured to sea a few times but when we couldn't we did laps of the lagoon to get skills logs done."

Headquarters training personnel plan to return to the island ahead of the boating season to continue helping members build their skills.



A scenic backdrop for members of MR Lord Howe Island taking part in sea survival training.

# Safety watch reassures endurance swimmer

First woman to circle Lord Howe Island thanks rescue team for its support.

After almost 14 hours in the water, surrounded by Galapagos and Tiger sharks, battered by currents and eight foot waves and with darkness falling, teacher Lauren Tischendorf was nearing exhaustion.

Up ahead through the gloom lay calmer waters inside a coral reef and the beckoning lights of a settlement.

While it might sound like the plot of a Hollywood adventure movie, this was a real life endeavour, with long-distance swimmer Lauren nearing the end of a marathon 35km endurance swim around Lord Howe Island - in which the local Marine Rescue unit played a pivotal role.

Earlier this year, swimmer Lynton Mortensen became the first man to swim around the isolated sub-tropical island. Determined to be the first woman, experienced endurance swimmer Lauren reached out to the Lord Howe Island Board for help.

They put her in touch with MR Lord Howe Island Unit Commander Jim McFayden, who was only too pleased to assist, offering the use of the unit's 16m vessel, *Lord Howe 40*, and tender to provide on-water support.

On a grey day in late April, wearing a thick layer of insulating grease, Lauren jumped into the island's idyllic lagoon and shadowed by the Marine Rescue boats, began her epic swim.

At the helm of *LH 40*, Jim provided weather updates, route advice and most importantly, lots of encouragement. As the swim progressed, conditions quickly proved to be tough.

"Conditions were pretty miserable," Lauren said. "Large waves and changeable currents made for slower than expected swimming and at one stage I barely made any progress for two hours.

"At no point did I feel like giving



Steely focus on the job ahead ... endurance swimmer Lauren Tischendorf prepares to circumnavigate Lord Howe Island.

up but it was reassuring to know that the Marine Rescue boats were there shadowing me and ready to help if there was a problem."

As darkness fell, Lauren slowly swam into the island's famous lagoon, the lights on the unit's tender helping guide her to shore, where a sizable crowd of locals had gathered to watch her arrival.

"It was wonderful to have the community come down to welcome me back and to hear them clapping and shouting as I made my way to the beach," she said. "I'm so grateful to Marine Rescue for their support. I'm particularly grateful to Jim, and we've now become good friends from our shared experience."

*Phil Campbell*

# Coffs vessel flies high for repowering project

Reinvigorated and ready to save lives over summer holiday season.

Although boating activity over winter was generally quite slow, on the few good days with little to no wind or sea, our boaters took to the water with gusto, with more than 50 boats Logging Ons with MR Coffs Harbour.

Our operators dealt with just nine incidents, of which four needed help from our rescue vessels, including a commercial fishing boat with a broken shaft and a lost propeller from a tinny. All were resolved without further misadventure.

Our biggest challenge was the repowering of rescue vessel *Coffs 30* with new 300hp Suzuki outboards.

With no slipway in Coffs Harbour, *CO 30* had to be craned out of the water on to the public wharf for the

work to be done over three days.

Mitigation strategies were put in place to minimise the risks to our people, the public and our vessel during the craning operations and while the boat stood propped up on the wharf. Temporary site fencing restricted public access and adjustable props and spreaders secured the vessel on the hard stand to allow the work to proceed safely and without incident. This was an excellent job by our boat crew, supervised by DUC Bernie Tight and with the aid of an experienced shipwright.

We now look forward to the approaching spring and summer with a reinvigorated rescue vessel to save lives on the water.

*Graeme King*



Caught with no slips ... rescue vessel *Coffs 30* had to be lifted on to the public wharf for work to fit new 300hp outboards.

# Youngest Coxswain stepping up as leader

Woolgoolga Deputy equally at home under or on top of the water.

Marine Rescue Woolgoolga volunteer Josh Stangl has loved the ocean for as long as he can remember.

“Ever since I was little, I fished, swam and boated with my dad. There really was nothing better than being in or on the water,” Josh said.

“Now as a dive instructor and volunteer at Marine Rescue, I have the privilege of the ocean being not just my playground but my office as well.”

At just 18 and only 18 months after joining, Josh became the youngest ever Marine Rescue Coxswain. He has now followed this achievement by becoming the organisation’s youngest Deputy Unit Commander and is stepping up again as Unit Commander Mitch Harvey takes paternity leave following the birth of his son Rowan.

Josh joined MRNSW after Mitch, his TAFE teacher, spotted his talent while Josh was completing his

Coxswain’s Certificate.

“I decided to join to get more experience and hours up on the water, and I’m glad that I did. The unit are a great team and I love getting out on the water and being able to help people,” Josh said.

Achieving his coxswain rating was the culmination of many hours’ study and training.

“I first obtained my commercial Coxswain’s Certificate from AMSA (Australian Maritime Safety Authority), before completing a bridging course with Marine Rescue.

“This course included theory and practical components on radar, vessel electronics and incident management before the rigours of a full day assessment covering search and rescue plotting, knowledge and practical testing, towing, drills and manoeuvring.”

As the newly elected Deputy, Josh sees a bright future for MR Woolgoolga and is looking forward



Young achievers .... MR Woolgoolga Deputy Josh Stangl and Unit Commander Mitch Harvey at the Iluka Yamba SAREX.

to working alongside Mitch to build and strengthen the unit.

“Even though I am young, I have many years working on commercial vessels and I remain calm under pressure in emergency situations. Mitch and I have many goals to achieve in the coming years, with achieving a new rescue vessel for the unit our first priority,” he said.

When he’s not on top of the water

as a volunteer, Josh can usually be found under it in his job as a dive master at Coffs Harbour.

“It’s the best feeling in the world to take people diving so they can experience life under the water. I love the ocean and being active, so besides being with my family, there is nothing more I’d prefer to do than work at Jetty Dive and volunteer at Marine Rescue Woolgoolga.”

# Speedy response to rescue struggling sailor

The Mid North Coast had been fortunate to avoid any form of lockdown until August so despite some Covid restrictions, MR Forster Tuncurry winter operations remained mostly normal, albeit at a slower tempo in the seasonal chill.

The crew of *Forster 30*, however, did not delay when a sailor with only one arm and his dog ran into trouble on board their 8m yacht during a northerly transit from Port Stephens.

The skipper was struggling in the challenging conditions and called the MR Forster-Tuncurry radio base for help about 12.15pm on August 1. *FO 30* arrived on scene by 2.30pm after a search to locate the yacht, which had drifted despite having its anchor deployed. A crew member transferred to the yacht to help raise the anchor and secure

a tow line, with the return to Cape Hawke Harbour completed just after 5pm.

The unit has continued to focus on training during the quieter months, with quite a few members achieving new ratings. Congratulations to new radio operators, Bruce Paynter, Carol Avis, Gary Bailey, Lyn McVicar and Veena Cochrane and new boat crew Ray Wakeling, Tanya Winchester, Mark Breen and Bob Parry.

You can’t help but be amazed at the level of effort our unit’s training personnel put into the months of training and then assessing our trainees. Thank you Peter Mouwen, Ray Mazurek, Tony Breen and Mike O’Halloran for your efforts, above and beyond your usual duties, in bringing our new boat and radio



Help when you need us ... *Forster 30* crew member Michael Portelli boards a small yacht to raise the anchor and attach a tow line.

crew on deck.

Our very own golden tonsils, Mike O’Halloran, has decided to step down as Forster-Tuncurry’s training officer, a post he has held since the Coastal Patrol days. While he will continue his radio shifts and remain

as our Search and Rescue Support Officer, he understandably wants to spend more time with his grandkids. Thank you Mike for all the years you have devoted to the role, which Peter Mouwen has now assumed.

*Michael Portelli*

# Renovation rescue gets family back home

Port Macquarie volunteers give back to the community that supports them.

In the aftermath of the NSW floods earlier this year, many residents were left with devastating consequences – destroyed homes, properties and entire livelihoods.

And for them, the challenges were just beginning.

Recognising the need in communities from the Mid North Coast to Western Sydney, not-for-profit organisation GIVIT teamed up with ABC Radio for a week-long radio appeal that not only supercharged donations but also put the call out for volunteers to donate time and services.

Recognising that its volunteers had an enormous skills base, MRNSW responded to that call and in turn, MR Port Macquarie willingly nominated to help, giving back to the community that provides them so much support.

An enthusiastic bunch of more than 20 unit members put up their hands to devote several days, including weekends, to help repair and restore the flood-damaged home of the Ward family, Amy, Greg and their son Midas.

Their house, in the small township of Kendall, had been completely inundated.

Amy has Muscular Dystrophy and is often in a lot of pain, with many of her condition's side effects making her life difficult.



A skilled volunteer workforce ... members of MR Port Macquarie with Amy and Greg Ward (centre), whose home the team restored after it was damaged in the March floods.

The family had thought they would be insured but their claim was unsuccessful. Without funds to return their home to a livable condition, Amy and Greg were living in a caravan and their son was living with his grandmother.

As the weather grew cold, the family were feeling like there was no hope left and despite some support through GIVIT, were struggling to find a way to get their home back.

The MR Port Macquarie team, keen to demonstrate they do even more than saving lives on the water, wasted no time getting stuck into the job.

Members were allocated a room

each, pulling down damaged walls and putting up new plasterboard under the watchful supervision of a plasterer and following up with fresh paint. A volunteer who is a qualified electrician rewired and replaced wall sockets where necessary.

The team was well supported with supplies from Port Macquarie Bunnings, with meals provided each day by local company PFD.

The renovations were above and beyond the family's expectations.

The walls and roof were scrubbed, re-plastered, holes patched up and the roof, ceilings, window frames and door frames painted. Windows were cleaned, the floor polished and

a new kitchen assembled.

The local community also donated furniture and other items that the team were able to get delivered and set up in the home.

Without the efforts of the unit's volunteers and local community, this family would never been able to move back into their home so quickly, if at all.

The family's thanks was a fitting reward for the volunteers.

"Thank you so much for fixing my house up. Could you please let all of the volunteers know that there is no words to describe how thankful I am," Amy said.

*Michelle Rayner*



All shoulders to the wheel ... member Eric Rennex prepares the front door and frame for painting during the renovation rescue.



MR Port Macquarie members hard at work on the restoration of the extensively-damaged Kendall home.

# Lake Macquarie beauty on your coffee table

Unit releases book giving boaters and visitors a treasure trove of information.

The beauty of the state's largest coastal lake has been brought into the lounge room following the publication of a new book by volunteers from MR Lake Macquarie, with all profits raised to be used to support the local unit's operations.

The comprehensive guide showcases beautiful Lake Macquarie and its adjacent coastline in glorious full colour, both in a large coffee table book and as an online e-book.

Released just in time for Father's Day, the book's first print run of 1,000 copies quickly sold out, with the unit deluged by more than 700 orders from keen readers.

More than just a collection of stunning images, the book is a treasure trove of information on the lake's rich history and attractions, with practical information for boaters using the lake's extensive waterways.

For boaters intent on exploring the lake's 120 square kilometres of pristine waterways, information is provided on 20 key attractions, including their history, how to get there, hazards when approaching, points of interest when arriving, mooring information, wind protection and what to do upon reaching each destination.

Boaters are also provided useful information on the many local boat ramps and jetties, where to source food and water, local weather and

other essential information to ensure a great day out on the water.

Like all coastal lakes, Lake Macquarie has its fair share of hazards, with the book giving boaters a heads up on where to find them, how to avoid them and what to do if help is needed.

And when your long day on the water comes to a close, the book highlights some of the best of the region's many local food, entertainment and accommodation options.

The book was researched and written by MR Lake Macquarie volunteer Lee Baines, a former engineer with ship design, construction and heavy engineering experience.

Lee joined the unit in 2017 intent on contributing to a safer community and reconnecting with his love of the water.

Holidaying in the Whitsundays in 2018 aboard a chartered pleasure boat, Lee purchased *Hundred Magic Miles of the Great Barrier Reef* by David Colfelt.

"That book is the encyclopaedia for boaters in that region," he said.

"After returning from the Whitsundays, I walked through Green Point Foreshore Reserve, up to White Bellied Eagle Lookout," he said.

"The view was stunning, reminding me of my recent holiday, and inspiring me to produce a



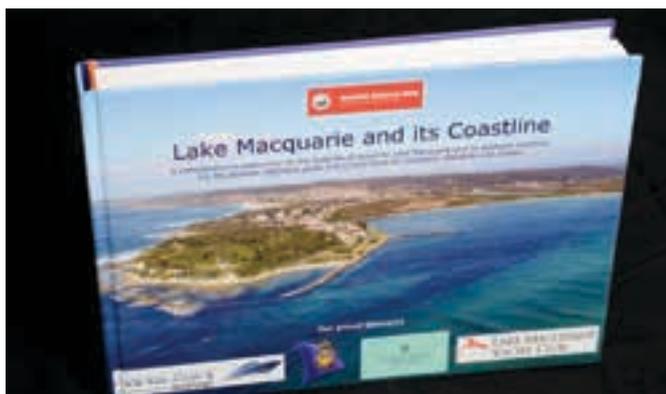
Voluunteer and author ... MR Lake Macquarie's Lee Baines promoting the unit's fundraising initiative with local media.

similar guide for Lake Macquarie."

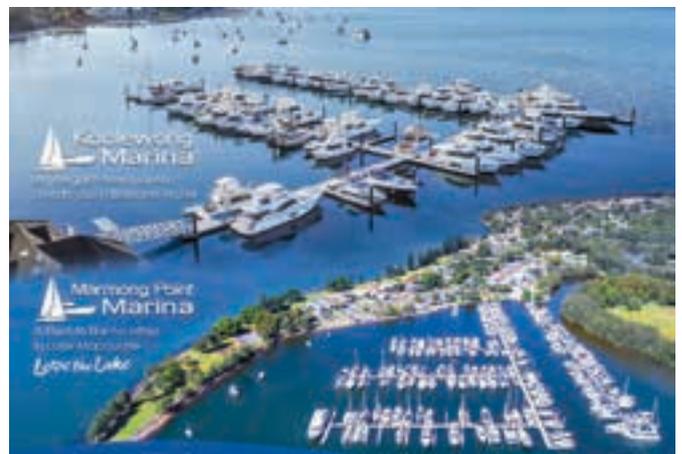
Two and a half years later, Lee's vision is now enabling locals to reconnect with their lake.

"I hope once Covid restrictions

have eased it will also inspire more visitors to stop and enjoy our beautiful waterway and support Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie at the same time."



The book will help readers plan a getaway around Lake Macquarie.



## A Lifestyle Like No Other

Discover the tranquil waters of Lake Macquarie's most scenic and protected bays from Marrmang Point Marina. The lake offers 110sq km of pristine waterway and is Australia's largest coastal saltwater lake. There is 178km of unspoiled shoreline with vast expansion of bush land, beaches and sandy islands waiting to explore. 245 berths for vessels up to 30m and dry storage facilities up to 30' all with power and water. Full service boatyard and large hardstand area.

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## Covid impacts ambitious training program

Port Stephens offers extra courses to build navigation, meteorology skills.

Training activities at MR Port Stephens have again been impacted by the renewed COVID-19 restrictions impacting MRNSW units and our community.

Our ambitious training program for new volunteers, both on our vessels and in our Communications Centre - always considered vital to the sustainability of the unit - has now been suspended.

We have 18 radio operator trainees waiting to resume training but the physical size of our Communications Centre means radio operations are limited to two operators per shift, without the usual addition of a trainee engaged in on-the-job training.

Although our 18 dedicated mentors are not able to take part in face-to-face activities at present, they are maintaining contact over the phone and on Zoom.

Radio Operator and Watch Officer workbook courses are offered online but Skills Logs, requiring face-to-face demonstrations of understanding, are not being

completed for the present.

In addition to mandatory radio and first aid courses, MR Port Stephens requires all radio operator trainees to pass additional courses provided by trained members of our unit before being assessed.

We offer courses in basic meteorology and an introduction to base systems, which includes our radios and meteorological equipment.

We also run a basic navigation course due to the high number of Log Ons by recreational fishermen who navigate into open waters to fish the islands just beyond our port entrance and to Broughton Island, 8.5 nautical miles north of the entrance.

The deep ocean waters off Port Stephens are considered one of the premier billfishing areas in the state and it is vital that all members on shift are knowledgeable of the open sea environment beyond our port entrance in the event of an emergency.

Fortunately, three Watch Officers,



MR Port Stephens' newest Crew member Howard Faulks receives his epaulettes from Master Ray McLeod and Coxswain Robert Johnson.

four Radio Operators and three Crew members successfully gained their ratings just before we went to Level 3 restrictions on August 5, with other volunteers working towards their operational assessments with our four Cert 4 Trainers and Assessors.

While numbers in the Communications Centre were

further reduced in winter by retirement and illness, we currently have 53 members supporting radio operations 24 hours a day.

We are hopeful restrictions will end soon and we can return to our normal training and assessment schedule to continue replenishing our skilled and rated membership.

*Will Scott*

## Experience pays for unit's second Master

After a long career in the Royal Australian Navy, it is no surprise that MR Lemon Tree Passage volunteer Chris Dando has sailed through at best speed to become the unit's second vessel Master.

Chris, who only joined the unit in February last year, recently completed his assessment to achieve his Coxswain qualification and now has been rated as a Marine Rescue Master.

He follows Daryl Jurd, who received an early Christmas present when he gained his Master rating on December 24 last year.

Unit Commander Stephen Vautier congratulated Chris on his achievement.

"I was on board as boat crew for his coxswain assessment, which was largely held on offshore waters," he said. "Chris had a lot of prior learning, up and down Australian waters and 30-plus years in the Navy, so he progressed quickly from Crew to Leading Crew and now to Marine Rescue Master.

"We are fortunate to also have Joe Blakiston as a Coxswain, several Leading Crew in training and another couple of coxswains coming up via recognition of their prior learning."

UC Vautier said member David Buttrey, who joined the unit in March this year in response to a newspaper recruitment advertisement, had



Lemon Tree Passage Marine Rescue Master Chris Dando.

taken up the role of Training Systems Officer.

"David hasn't been with us very long but we're very glad that he's



The unit's new Training Systems Officer David Buttrey.

come on board," he said.

David is close to his radio operator qualification, an important role for the unit's volunteers.

## Shallow water specialists focus on the future

Tuggerah Lakes planning for replacement of ageing vessel next year.

While the latest Covid lockdown has continued to restrict unit activities, MR Tuggerah Lakes has its attention firmly focused on the future.

The unit's ageing 6.25m Cobia vessel, *Tuggerah Lakes 21*, is due for replacement in 2022 and the unit is already beginning to consider the characteristics of its replacement. One thing is certain: it needs to operate effectively in very shallow waters.

MR Tuggerah Lakes is unique among MRNSW units, as all the waters within its area of operations are extremely shallow. The Tuggerah Lakes system has an average depth of just 2.4 metres. The rivers and creeks that feed into the system also are remarkably shallow at the points at which they reach the lakes.

Many of the rescue operations launched by our crews are in response to boats that have run aground, often involving out-of-area skippers who do not have the local knowledge required to navigate these tricky waters. A recent incident saw *TL 20* deployed

to a small trailer-sailer stuck in the mud with a couple and three small children on board.

It soon became obvious that even with a draft of less than one metre, we could not get anywhere near the boat, even by tying both our tow ropes together. Fortunately, the skipper of the grounded boat volunteered to wade out and pass the two tow ropes to his vessel and it was reloaded.

The shallowness of the lakes also can create significant high-frequency waves in strong winds, requiring a high level of crew protection and dangerous conditions for the variety of small craft that frequent these waterways.

The unit gained valuable insights from our flood support operations around the Taree district in March, discovering that it was difficult for people to board our vessels from the bow, which was often necessary because the stern needed to be kept in the deeper water to avoid grounding.

All these factors will be important to our considerations in planning for



MR Tuggerah Lakes is looking towards a replacement for its ageing Cobia, *Tuggerah Lakes 21*, due to retire from service next year.

our new vessel.

Unit Treasurer John Sheehan was presented with a Unit Commander's Citation in August. John had been a member of the unit since 2014, qualifying as a Radio Operator, Crew member, Leading Crew and Skipper.

His training as an accountant was put to good use when he became Treasurer in 2017.

John is now leaving us for family reasons. His outstanding enthusiasm

and dedication will be sorely missed.

Although the unit has been in various levels of lockdown due to COVID-19 in recent months, work is still being performed behind the scenes.

This includes routine maintenance work by our Operations Manager, Steve Corbett, often working alone to maintain required physical distancing.

*Peter McCann*

## Newcastle boaters stay safe during winter

Boaters largely stayed safe on Newcastle waters throughout winter.

MR Newcastle crews responded to few incidents, all involving small recreational and fishing boats suffering problems with their engines on the river and harbour.

All were successfully assisted.

Even despite the ongoing lockdowns and restrictions, it was great to see our boating fraternity keeping a smile on their faces.

These happy boaters (right) were assisted by the crew of *Newcastle 30* after they suffered fuel pump issues not long after departing the North Stockton ramp.

*NC 30* was activated by the unit's duty radio operators Helen Carter and George Vielhauer.

Leadership duo, Unit Commander Ron Calman and Deputy Lynette Van Homrigh were the crew, locating the two fishermen about 500 metres from the ramp.

The skipper appreciated that boaters' details are now stored in the MRNSW Seahawk tracking system, making it easier and quicker to Log On with the unit's radio base.

DUC Van Homrigh reminded boaters to Log On.

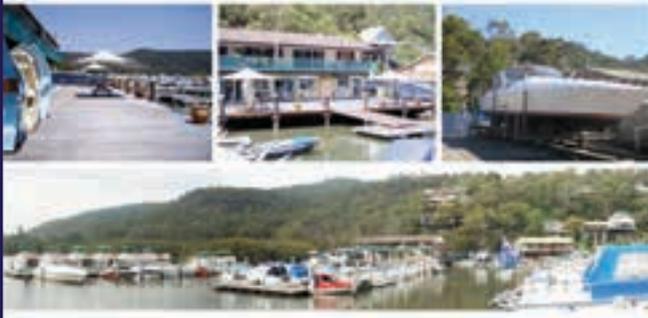
"Marine Rescue knowing where you are going might just save your life," she said.



Thumbs up for Logging On ... two boaters rescued by the crew of *Newcastle 30*.

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## New vessel to bolster Hawkesbury safety

Few incidents on river in lockdown.



Turning out in fair weather and foul for a decade, MR Hawkesbury member David Stocks.

Members of MR Hawkesbury are keenly anticipating the imminent delivery of our new rescue vessel, *Hawkesbury 30*.

Built by Sailfish Catamarans at Alstonville on the NSW North Coast, the new 8.3m vessel will be powered by twin 250hp Suzuki Marine engines, providing a welcome boost for boating safety on the Hawkesbury River.

It will replace our older catamaran, *HW 21*.

The re-introduction of Covid lockdown restrictions has seen the unit return to online training and meetings via Zoom.

Our crew members are remaining ready for call-out duties but there have been few incidents on the water to draw them from home.

Congratulations to David Stocks, who will be awarded his 10-year Long Service Medal once we are able to come together again.

David's knowledge and expertise are a great asset to volunteers from our unit and others in the Sydney region.

A unit executive member and former Training Officer, he is a Regional Assessor for Leading Crew and Coxswain ratings and a trainer/assessor for MRNSW firefighting

and sea survival courses.

Dedicated to ensuring members gain their necessary ratings, David holds training courses throughout the week and on weekends at times to suit our volunteers, ensuring they can learn effectively and progress through the various levels of operational qualifications.

He also oversees the maintenance of our two vessels' motors, with his knowledge proving instrumental in preparing the specifications for the new vessel.

Many of Marine Rescue Hawkesbury's team of Volunteers are long term dedicated Volunteers. The average tenure of our members is close to 8.1 years, with our longest serving member ringing up close to 53 years.

The unit has supported the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic on the last week in October every year, with the exception of 2020 when it was cancelled due to Covid. Participants on kayaks, canoes and stand-up paddleboards cover an 111km marathon course overnight.

We are hopeful the event will be able to proceed this year and are putting preparations in place to ensure we are ready if so.

*Kym Mahoney*

# Smooth switch over to new comms centre

Sophisticated \$1.3m facility helps Sydney unit meet boaters' needs.

The new Marine Rescue NSW State Communications Centre has been operating for more than four months now, after a smooth final sign-off from the old MR Sydney radio base at Terrey Hills at 6am on June 18.

Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell and a group of MRNSW Headquarters staff joined volunteers on the dawn shift and members of the executive for the start of operations.

This \$1.3 million state-of-the-art communications facility represents a significant upgrade to MRNSW emergency communications and coordination capability.

The Belrose centre is the rescue service's major 24/7 communications hub, monitoring marine radio for distress calls from boaters in trouble on the water and coordinating rapid rescue responses.

It is contributing to our ability to meet the needs of boaters, the broader community who require our services and the Marine Rescue bases along the coastline whose communications are managed by MR Sydney overnight.

For the first time, the unit has a communications centre that has effectively integrated a number of features to provide us with a sophisticated communications

capability.

The centre is equipped with six radio operator stations, the ability to add an additional station as required and a command duty operator station.

It includes a high-tech video array incorporating essential marine rescue data and information, Open CPN, statewide Seahawk coverage and the weather.

A multi-purpose space serves as a high-tech training and meeting room and the centre also includes offices, a computer server room, kitchen and parking spaces.

The new MRNSW radio system, Frequentis, went live at MR Sydney from the 4pm watch on August 16.

The State Communications Centre is currently operating dual Alto and Frequentis systems during the initial transition phase across Marine Rescue bases. The full transition to Frequentis operations will take place in the coming weeks.

The Frequentis system enables the unit to cover radio operations for MR Lord Howe Island.

The Terrey Hills base will continue to be used by MR Sydney for marketing, fundraising and training purposes.

The creation and opening of the new facility was achieved thanks to the commitment and planning of a number of our



MR Sydney Commander Matt King demonstrates the State Communications Centre video array to Deputy Commissioner Alex Barrell. Photo: Brad Whittaker.

members in partnership with MRNSW Headquarters staff, who have worked tirelessly to source a suitable facility and then create, implement a plan and deliver a modern facility that enables us to

provide a high-level professional service.

A special vote of thanks to the unit executive, the implementation team and the Headquarters team.

*Denis Comber*



The new State Communications Centre incorporates time-critical technology to support MR Sydney radio operators in their duties.



**MRTV**  
MARINE RESCUE TV

*Volunteers saving lives on the water*



# Port Jackson powers on through tough times

Volunteers building connections over Zoom during extended lockdown.

The Sydney community has been going through some tough times over the past few months and with the extended Covid lockdowns, MR Port Jackson is working hard to keep our members engaged with the unit.

During the lockdown, we have responded to seven incidents and conducted an operational assessment for a Coxswain, two Cert IV certifications and a unit election. Congratulations to re-elected Unit Commander Greg Urand and Deputy John Boyle.

The unit has recently taken on 25 new trainees, boosting our total to 65. Our face-to-face training has been replaced by weekly Zoom courses including topics from the learner activity workbook to radio and first aid training. About 20

members regularly attend, creating valuable connections, especially for our new members who haven't stepped on board a vessel or even in our base. Executive team members also are making outreach calls to ensure everyone is "doing ok".

We have also been focusing on training videos, including vessel introductions, towing, Marine Rescue Inductions and systems training. The unit has also almost completely removed all paper, moving everything online and completing necessary paperwork without printing a single piece of paper. Paul Ballard is working on our unit web page and we are trialing a new roster format with our coxswains rotating around the different teams so that their individual strengths can be shared among our crews.



A spectacular Sydney winter sunset over the stern of *Port Jackson 31*.

While the operational workload has dropped, we are still busy advancing the unit and our members while we are stuck at home and hoping for

everything to return to normal before the start of the summer boating season.

*David Mills*

# Members stay engaged despite restrictions

A new executive has taken the helm at MR Botany Port Hacking, with a greater emphasis now on volunteer engagement.

Under the new organisational structure, 30 of the 131 members are now directly involved with unit functions, supported by a dedicated group of Subject Matter Experts, Assessors, Watch Officers and skippers.

Highlighting our camaraderie, our members offer our congratulations to Glenn McMahon on the award of his 35-year Long Service Medal.

Like other units, we have been functioning under the latest Covid restrictions and lockdowns since June 26, with normal activities such as fundraising, training and vessel operations curtailed. Alternate ways of functioning continue to be explored.

We have increased our community awareness efforts, boosting our Facebook presence

and providing regular reports to Sutherland Shire community radio 2SSR. These will provide a strong basis when fundraising can begin again and benefit our sponsors.

These include St George Motor Boat Club for our vessel pen, Ramsgate RSL for its ongoing sponsorship and NSW Ports, which we thank for its support with a grant of more than \$3,000 to bolster our community engagement and recruitment and to purchase radio operator training texts and a new barbecue.

Training activities have resumed on Zoom and a pause on recruitment is enabling the unit to focus on the continuing development of the current membership base.

Congratulations to newly rated radio operators, Rod Hackett, Ken Parker, Alyssa Luongo and John Hartman, and Greg Spencer who has achieved his radio and crew ratings. Others are enrolled in



MR Botany Port Hacking's Glenn McMahon (right) marks 35 years' service with Joy Fitzpatrick, Rohan Stirling and UC Greg Inglis.

assessor training, CERT IV TAE and the Coxswain recognition pathway.

Congratulations to rostering officer John Werda for his amazing ability to satisfy all rules yet still allocate our members within their personal capabilities.

While overshadowed by the Covid restrictions, a new marina has been installed at Hungry Point to provide much needed protection and support facilities for our 12.5m

*Naiad, Botany Hacking 30*. This facility will be shared with MRNSW to provide safe haven for other units' vessels when needed.

We are saddened by the death of Lewis Stockbridge. Lewis originally joined the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard and his service as Watch Officer, Stores Officer, Deputy Unit Commander and Commander spanned more than 30 years.

*John Lembke*

## Base the 'go to' for emergency coordination

Victims of three tragedies brought ashore at Middle Harbour in past year.

The aluminium gangway to the pontoon at the MR Middle Harbour base has seen a lot of intense activity in the past 12 months. And with three full-blown emergencies at the pontoon in a year, more than its share of tragedy.

All required safe and rapid medical evacuations from vessels to waiting ambulances, with in each case, up to a dozen emergency services personnel working on the patient on a vessel, then on the gangway as they were gurneyed up to the base on their way to hospital.

Funded by the NSW Government, the gangway was installed in 2016 and has become the "go to" for emergency services coordinating rescue efforts in the northern and eastern sectors of Sydney Harbour.

Last September, a 15m flybridge cruiser arrived at the pontoon at

extreme speed. Alerted by the huge bow wave, members scrambled to the vessel to discover a teenager fighting for life in the cabin after suffering a heart attack. We took over CPR from his parents and worked for some time, to be relieved by Ambulance officers, Police and the Toll Air Ambulance specialists as they arrived on scene.

Then, on July 25, an RMS vessel arrived at the pontoon, again at high speed, again with a heart attack patient. A diver, 40, had been spearfishing with friends near Grotto Point. Ambulances, police and the Toll helicopter were rapidly on the scene.

Lastly, on August 21, a very similar emergency to the one last year. A very large catamaran, with a teenage heart attack victim, arrived at our pontoon. Emergency Services



The MR Middle Harbour gangway provides responding emergency personnel with access to patients on vessels. Photo: Crismen Tache.

were close by and work on the patient had already begun when we arrived back at our base.

Tragically, none of these patients survived. All spent many minutes without highly trained medical assistance or a defibrillator. And as our training emphasises, rapid

intervention is critically important with heart attacks. Perhaps our only consolations are that we did all we could and that all personnel had a safe and manageable way to access the patients, and get them away to hospital.

*Howard Gipps*

## Unit extends its contribution to community

Members of MR Broken Bay are committed to caring for our local community and environment on and off the water.

Our crews completed seven missions in the seven weeks after the onset of the Delta strain lockdown on June 26 - the third extended lockdown to impact our unit since March 2020.

Earlier, the unit helped an elderly couple who had walked down to West Head Beach in Pittwater but did not feel they could manage the walk back up.

*Broken Bay 20* skipper Andrew Majewski and crew Julie Derry took them aboard the vessel, kindly returning them to Church Point for a coffee and to order them a taxi home.

Off the water, our Administration Officer Rochelle Ward has come up with an environmentally-sustainable way to recycle the stockpile of old

work uniforms that had built up.

Rochelle sought out local community group Avalon Boomerang Bags, whose volunteers have repurposed the old uniforms to make free shopping bags for customers who have forgotten theirs. She also worked with local group, Blanket Patrol, to donate our used fluorescent jackets to the homeless.

While our key mission is saving lives on the water, these two projects are also helping us to look after our environment and contributing to our community. Thank you to Rochelle.

We have settled on a 7.5m centre console Naiad to replace our ageing 6.8m Gemini RIB, *BB 20*.

Congratulations to members who have been recognised for almost a century of combined service.

Peter Francis was awarded the First Clasp to the National Medal (25 years) and Bruce Hale and Gregory Robinson the National Medal (15



*Broken Bay 20* crew Julie Derry and Andrew Majewski helped an elderly couple to make it home safely from a challenging beach walk.

years). Venijamin Hadzic and Simon Forrester received the MRNSW 10-year Long Service Medal and Warwick McKenzie, Brad Atkin, Gavin Jarvis and Terence Stewart the MRNSW five-year pin.

Thomas Manson, Andrew Cooke and Matthew Bruin have attained their Crew qualification and Duncan Watts his Leading Crew rating.

*Jimmy Arteaga*



Initiative ... Rochelle Ward

## \$565,000 vessel improves search capability

Port Kembla Naiad a 'valuable investment' in Illawarra boaters' safety.

Crews from MR Port Kembla would be able to respond faster to an emergency on the water following the delivery of their new \$565,000 rescue vessel, Police and Emergency Services Minister David Elliott said.

Mr Elliott said the 10m Naiad, *Port Kembla 31*, had arrived at its new home on Port Kembla Harbour in mid-July.

"*Port Kembla 31* 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.

"This outstanding rescue vessel is a valuable investment in the safety of the Illawarra's large local boating community and its many visiting boaters. As well as operating within the harbour, the boat can quickly

deploy up to 30nm out to sea."

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said the boat, purpose-designed and built to meet demanding local operating conditions, would prove a reassuring presence for locals and visitors alike.

"Boaters in the Illawarra can rest easier knowing that this state of the art craft is at the ready should they run into trouble," he said. "Built by Yamba Welding & Engineering, it is part of our ongoing commitment to support manufacturing in NSW, as well as the safety of boaters."

Unit Commander Kevin Bradley thanked the local community for its generous support for the unit's energetic fundraising to contribute 20 per cent of the cost of the new vessel.

He said the vessel was a significant improvement over the unit's former catamaran, *PK 30*,



*Port Kembla 31* is lowered into the water for delivery to the unit.

which members recently stripped of its livery ahead of its sale.

He said *PK 30* had served the unit well on numerous missions.

"The upgraded search and rescue technology on *PK 31*, including radar, sonar and FLIR night vision, will improve our search

capability," he said. "With a greater rear deck area, larger windows for better visibility, improved handling and manoeuvrability and greater volunteer comfort, our crews will be able to operate more safely for longer periods and in a wider range of weather and sea conditions."

## 'New' boat fills gap as old workhorse retires

With our brand new vessel due for delivery around the end of the year, MR Kioloa crews will be plying our local waterways on a redeployed vessel from the Mid North Coast over the next few months.

Unit Commander Peter White, Len Gallina and Erik Adriaanse travelled to MR Port Macquarie to take delivery of the northern unit's superceded *Cobia*.

This loan vessel will take over rescue duties at Kioloa following the sale of our old *Cobia* workhorse, which regrettably required some major work and in the end proved uneconomical to repair.

Our temporary vessel is another 6.25m model.

Although the centre console version lacks the weather protection of our old boat, our crew members have been impressed by its speed and stability.

It is a welcome addition to our rescue capabilities, already responding to two emergencies.

The more recent incident saw two boaters thrown from their vessel near Racecourse Beach, north of Kioloa, and hit by the motor as the boat spun in circles on the water.

Our crew arrived on scene to find both boaters had made it to the beach and were receiving first aid from onlookers while waiting for a NSW Ambulance to arrive.

One of the boaters escaped with bad bruising but his mate was not so lucky, receiving deep lacerations to his leg from the propeller.

He was airlifted by the Toll rescue helicopter to Wollongong hospital.

Their boat eventually ran aground on the beach.

As well as not having a kill switch on their motor, neither man was wearing a lifejacket, which almost proved disastrous as the badly



Len Gallina and Erik Adriaanse on board the former MR Port Macquarie vessel on loan to MR Kioloa until its new boat arrives.

injured man was unable to swim and his friend struggled to keep him afloat until they got to the beach.

Although we were unable to beach our boat to assist at this point, the next morning Peter and

Len helped the boat's owner to recover it from the beach using the unit's tractor - a service we often provide to boaters bogged on our local ramp.

*Peter White*

## Sussex Inlet team stretches operational reach

Focus on winter training builds rescue readiness for summer emergencies.

Marine Rescue Sussex Inlet members have taken advantage of the calm before the storm, braving the chill to maintain their training regimen throughout winter.

Although there is a lower demand for the unit's services during the colder months, the operational tempo ticks up as summer draws close and recreational and fishing boats find themselves in trouble on the treacherous Sussex Inlet bar.

The addition of two Rescue Water Craft, together with a Ford Ranger and trailer have enhanced our capability to respond rapidly to emergencies on this crossing and expanded our operational reach beyond St George's Basin, the Sussex Inlet River and the seas east of Wreck Bay to surrounding waterways previously out of reach.

To ensure our familiarity with these waters, the unit has held RWC training at locations such as

Fishermans Paradise, Lake Conjola and Swan Lake.

We are working on developing joint search and rescue operations with our neighbouring units at Jervis Bay and Ulladulla, which have both assisted us over the past six months.

We are grateful for the support of MR Ulladulla Master Lesley Kelly, MR Jervis Bay Unit Commander, Tony Dagger and MR Kioloa Commander Peter White, who have travelled to lend their knowledge and experience to our unit members working toward their Leading Crew rating.

Thank you, too, to Regional Training Manager Stuart Massey and Regional Operations Manager Bruce Mitchell for their support, time and expertise.

With restrictions again in place due to Covid, the unit has returned to online training for various courses. We are also developing unit-specific training videos to



Sussex Inlet 20 heads out for a night exercise on St Georges Basin as part of a Leading Crew training course led by RTM Stuart Massey.

compliment MRNSW training materials, covering a range of RWC skills and vessel equipment such as Multi-Functional Displays, radar and night vision camera. Socially-distanced practical training has been delivered outdoors in small groups where possible.

Despite these challenges, members have achieved the following ratings over winter: five Senior Crew, two Leading Crew, two Radio Operators, three Crew Members and one RWC operator, with more on track.

*Karen Lowry & Brett Eurell*

## Covid trip proves importance of teamwork

I'm writing this from downtown Bundaberg in Central Queensland on the last few days of a 10 week caravanning holiday.

Having left NSW pre-2021 Covid restrictions, we have been travelling through outback NSW and Queensland and up through the Gulf Country to the tip of Australia at Cape York and are now just making our way back home. We'll probably have to head inland when we are in NSW to avoid any Covid hot spots.

Our Ulladulla base and operations have been left in the more-than-capable hands of my trusty Deputy Dave Lindley, who has managed our team of committee members, skippers, radio operators, crews and other personnel flawlessly.

Of course, this has been made easier because our committee and

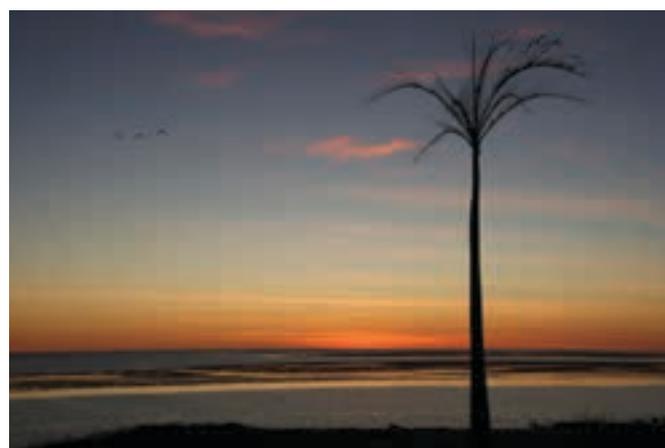
members are more than capable.

Having a competent team meant that we could enjoy ourselves on our trip, knowing full well that all issues would be taken good care of by the relevant responsible people.

I will be back home in less than a week now and I suppose I will have to get used to the mask-wearing etc that has eluded us in Queensland.

After we clean the red dust from our hair, van and car, I will conduct a debrief with the committee members and attend to any residual issues.

Training will be my main focus. I hope all our trainees have been using the down-time to keep their skills current and using our online training systems to further their learning. With fundraising sadly taking a back seat during the



Sunset over the water at Karumba in Queensland's Gulf Country. Photo: Dave Hall.

lockdown, our marketing team will need to be ready to jump straight back into the task once restrictions have been lifted.

Since June, our crews have

responded to just 10 incidents, with colder weather, an horrific storm and, of course, the virus deterring most boaters.

*Dave Hall*

# Fond farewell to faithful Jervis Bay boat

*Colin Woods* to stay on home waters as unit welcomes replacement.

Winter was marked by one chapter closing and another opening for members of MR Jervis Bay.

Sunday, July 11, was the final day for the unit's retired rescue vessel *Jervis Bay 40 (Colin Woods)*, for many years the largest boat in the MRNSW fleet.

Members hold a great deal of affection for the 40-foot Steber, which spent a decade as an Australian Federal Police vessel before being acquired by the then Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in November 1999.

*JB 40* served faithfully in numerous operations in the intervening 22 years, saving many lives and towing hundreds of boats to safety around the clock in all conditions and acting as a training platform not only for the unit's members but also in support of

RAAF Hercules air drop training exercises.

Stripped of its livery, the boat has been sold to the operators of the Jervis Bay Sea School, so will remain a familiar presence on local waters. Its departure was followed in August by the arrival of its \$780,000 replacement, *JB 41*, which is named after the unit's late Membership Officer, Coxswain and Watch Officer John Gallimore, who passed away while on radio duty in February this year.

The 13.5m aluminium monohull was built by Harwood Marine on the Clarence River in the State's north.

With careful observance of Covid risk management protocols, inductions and initial Coxswain and Crew training were able to be carried out upon the vessel's arrival, helping ensure it will have sufficient crew for its official entry to active



MR Jervis Bay members Darren Huxter and Lester Shute prepare *JB 40* for its farewell from active service in July.

duty for the peak season.

Seven unit members have been presented with new pins to accompany their Commissioner's Citations awarded in recognition of their meritorious service in rescuing 25 Australian Defence Force personnel in imminent danger when their Zodiacs were stranded in 40 knot winds and four metre seas in November 2016.

Congratulations to Paul Haslam, Kevin Hill, Brian McParlane, Harold Plum, Lester Shute, Michael Sutton and Robert Zivkovic for this achievement.

Sadly, members are mourning

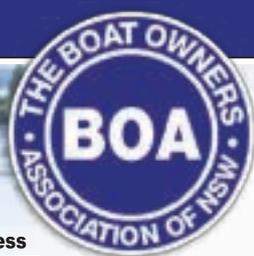
the loss of our former volunteer Desmond Owen.

Des joined the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in 2004 as a radio operator and remained with the unit when it became MR Jervis Bay.

A hard working member, Des was always willing to help new members on radio duty. As well as achieving his Watch Officer rating, Des also was a crew member and Membership Officer and was also involved in fundraising before he left the unit in 2016. As a unit we feel privileged to have known and spent time with Des.

*A Smith*

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MR Jervis Bay crew members begin their inductions and training on board their new vessel, *JB 41*. Photo: Brad Whittaker.

# Eden expands service with first rescue vessel

New on-water operations to begin in time for peak summer season.

Marine Rescue NSW is to expand its capability by deploying a rescue boat to operate out of Eden for the first time, providing greater protection to boaters on the Far South Coast.

MR Eden will take delivery of the unit's first rescue vessel in time for the peak summer holidays.

MR Point Danger's vessel *Point Danger 30* will be re-deployed to Eden once its new 12m Naiad arrives in coming weeks.

This will ensure operations can begin at Eden by the peak Christmas-New Year holiday season, ahead of the delivery of a new vessel purpose-built to meet local conditions in early 2022.

MRNSW will continue to work closely with the NSW Police Force Marine Area Command, which operates the large ocean-going launch, *Falcon*, out of Eden.

The unit also will gain a second base, providing a crew ready room and training facilities, at the Port of Eden as part of its expansion.

Commissioner Stacey Tannos said the new Point Danger and Eden boats were among 38 funded by the State Government as part of its \$37.6 million investment in MRNSW.

"The support of the State Government and boating community is essential for us to continue



New resource for the Far South Coast ... MR Point Danger rescue vessel *PD 30* will be redeployed to MR Eden in time for the peak summer holidays.

expanding our capability and service to ensure that we are rescue-ready from one end of the coastline to the other," he said.

The unit will be looking to recruit new members to manage its expanded workload, under the leadership of Unit Commander Stuart Manson, recently elected unopposed, and Deputy Nancy Weatherman.

Eden was the test unit for the changeover to the new Frequentis radio system linking radio bases to the State Communications Centre

operated by MR Sydney. The unit's radio operators managed almost 5,500 radio calls in 2020-21, initiating more than 40 rescue missions and Logging On about 1,600 boats.

New radio equipment was installed in the base on August 9 and subjected to considerable testing until the robustness of the connections was assured. The final cutover for Eden was on August 16.

The unit is continuing to maintain its services during the current Covid restrictions, with training

activities taking place within risk management protocols, including over Zoom.

Crew training is in hand with some existing members updating to operational readiness and others progressing to Leading Crew. A big thank you to MR Narooma for assisting in bringing our Coxswain up to operational readiness.

Congratulations to Training Services Officer Kent Farrell, who has been awarded the National Medal for 15 years' service.

*John McKinnon*

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# End of an era as Mountains leader bows out

Founding Alpine Lakes Unit Commander says it's time to step back.

The times they are a'changing at our High Country unit as Marine Rescue's own Old Man Emu heads to a quieter paddock.

After a decade at the helm as the founding member and Unit Commander of MR Alpine Lakes, Les Threlfo will be retiring from the ranks at the end of this year.

UC Threlfo made the announcement as members assembled at their base by Lake Jindabyne on August 8 to congratulate the unit's first Coxswain, Allan Norman, and four members who have all served throughout the life of the unit.

Monaro Regional Director Glenn Felkin and Regional Operations Manager Glenn Sullivan presented Allan with his Coxswain epaulettes.

Ten-year Long Service Medals were presented to Les, Adolf Franco and Vernon Dunning. Ann Forster was unable to attend.

With health issues ruling him out of active duty, when the Snowy Mountains was subsequently locked down again thanks to Covid in mid-August, Les was staying safely home apart from venturing out to care for an emu he and his wife feed daily.

He said he had enjoyed his time with MRNSW, establishing and building the alpine unit.

"I'm going to miss it but healthwise I can't help it. I've loved



Members of MR Alpine Lakes and Director Glenn Felkin assemble before the state lockdown to congratulate Coxswain Allan Norman and 10-year veterans Les Threlfo, Adolf Franco and Vernon Dunning. Photo: Glenn Sullivan.

every minute of it but it's time to let them run their own show now," he said.

The Alpine Lakes unit was not only the first on an inland waterway but also the first formed after the creation of MRNSW and without any affiliation to the state's original marine rescue services.

Les related the story of its foundation in the June 2019 edition of *Soundings*.

"The birth of the unit was in August 2009, when Inspector Tony Hill from the NSW Police Force Marine Area Command rang me at home in Jindabyne to inquire whether I would be interested in establishing a unit in the Alpine

area," he said. "This would require me to find enough brave souls in the Monaro district willing to volunteer some of their precious time to assist.

"In most country towns, everyone is already involved in one of more of the Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Ambulance, Rotary, Lions, fishing clubs and the Country Women's Association."

Regardless, Les waded in and assembled enough volunteers to form the new unit, developing its capability with dedicated training support and resources including two rescue vessels, a 4WD and a unit shed alongside Lake Jindabyne over the past decade.

At the time the unit was founded, Les was a member of the local RFS and the Controller of the Snowy River SES unit.

"My time in Marine Rescue has been better. There isn't the pressure there was in the SES. The unit was one of the biggest in the state, responsible for first response rescue up in the mountains, doing everything. I built it to do that but there was a lot of pressure," he said.

Les' wife Anne Jones is a committed wildlife carer in the



MR Alpine Lakes' first Coxswain, Allan Norman.

mountains and together they have fed a local emu, Dorothy, every day for the past 12 years.

"She's 30-years-old. She was hatched by someone on a farm but that lady died and Dorothy wasn't looking real good because she wasn't being fed. My wife is a wildlife carer so we got involved. We feed her apples and pasta every day.

"She waits in the same spot every day. She recognises the car, whichever one I come in. There's a crow that likes to take a piece of her pasta. He waits on a line in the street and by the time we get to Dorothy, he's there, too. They're smart, animals."

Kate Woods



She can run the pants off a kangaroo ... Les Threlfo and his wife Anne Jones have fed Dorothy the emu daily for the past 12 years.

# Bermagui team critical to ill sailor's rescue

Mayday call sparks marathon operation to return man safely to shore.

One of the most important roles MRNSW units perform is our radio watch - monitoring the airwaves for distress calls from boaters in trouble on the water.

Mid-afternoon on Sunday, July 27, MR Bermagui on-duty radio operator Volker Aebischer detected a faint Mayday call on VHF Channel 16, sparking a marathon multi-agency rescue operation.

Although the radio signal was weak, Volker established that a lone sailor had become ill and disoriented and was in need of help.

Unclear on his location, the sailor believed he was 20nm offshore, somewhere between Bermagui and Eden.

Fortunately, he also had a EPIRB on board, which he was asked to activate to pinpoint his location.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority's Rescue Coordination Centre in Canberra picked up the signal and provided the coordinates for the sailor's location, which turned out to be much farther out to sea, 47nm east of Bermagui.

As the NSW Police launch *Falcon*,

based at Eden, prepared to depart on a lengthy voyage to reach the sailor, our radio base broadcast his location to request help from any vessels in the vicinity.

Two ships responded, with a bulk carrier diverting course and reaching the 54 foot yacht in an hour, before proceeding to shadow it for the next three hours to protect it from the strong winds.

It must have been frightening for the sailor to have an enormous ship bearing down on his small yacht at night.

A container ship also offered assistance but was not needed as the bulk carrier was closer.

The Police crew on board *Falcon* reached the yacht at 9.30pm.

Due to poor radio reception, MR Bermagui managed communications between the sailor, *Falcon*, and the two large ships until 10.30pm.

The sailor, and his dog - which no one had known was also on board - were successfully transferred via a tender to *Falcon*, returning to Eden by 3.30am. A waiting NSW Ambulance transferred the man to



MR Bermagui radio operator Volker Aebischer maintains radio communication with a lone sailor throughout a late night operation.

Bega Hospital.

MR Sydney radio operators at the State Communications Centre then broadcast Securite warnings to alert other vessels in the area to the potential navigation hazard created by the abandoned yacht.

The professionalism of MR Bermagui radio operators, Volker, Dennis Walker, Steve Angelo and Unit Commander Caron Parfitt, was crucial to the success of this joint

rescue operation, demonstrating the unit's important role in keeping boaters on our area of the coastline safe on the water.

This emergency highlighted the importance of using VHF radio and the need to ensure you are carrying the required safety equipment in good working order whenever you go out to sea, especially if you are alone and a long way offshore.

*Debbie Worgan*

# Tuross executive looking to smoother times

Marine Rescue Tuross is looking to smoother seas ahead after a "bumpy" couple of years.

In the unit's biennial elections, Alan Blessington retained his position as Unit Commander and Harley Moss was elected Deputy Unit Commander.

Alan said he welcomed the opportunity to build on his learnings from his first tenure leading the unit.

"The last two years were a bumpy ride, with the constantly changing response to coronavirus and many other challenges," he said.

Harley said he was keen to support Alan in implementing changes for the smooth running and

development of the unit. No stranger to rescue organisation leadership, Harley served as Commander and Deputy of the Tin Can Bay Flotilla of the Australian Coast Guard in Queensland for several years.

An experienced sailor, he has long held a commercial master's ticket and also served in the Royal Navy. He recently added Marine Rescue Coxswain and Master to his qualifications.

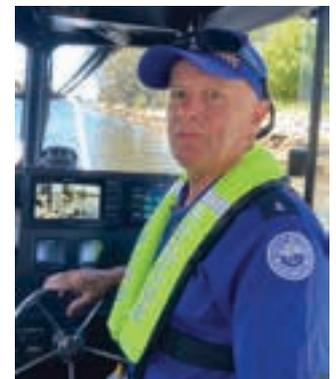
Members thanked former Deputy Paul Carter, who stood down for personal reasons, for his hard work.

The South Coast has many Intermittently Closed and Open Lakes and Lagoons (ICOLLS),

including Coila Lake at Tuross Head. These are generally left to open naturally, unless assets are threatened by high water levels.

It has been seven years since Coila last opened, however, just as in January 2021, its water level surpassed the 2m indicator again in June and as heavy rain was expected, a digger arrived to make a narrow channel across Coila Bar Beach. Within hours the small channel became a wide torrent, which was quite a spectacle.

Many residents and visitors alike wished the lake could remain open indefinitely, however, by early July the opening was but a trickle and



New Tuross DUC Harley Moss.

by July 9, the high Coila Bar sand walls were back in all their former (seemingly) invincible glory.

*Ilze Svarcs*

# Narooma builds capability and resources

New boat shed will improve response time to emergencies on bar.

The statewide Covid lockdown imposed in mid-August slowed the considerable recreational boating activity that had continued on Narooma waterways in recent months, despite Covid restraints on tourism and cold winter conditions.

Fortunately, few boaters had run into trouble, although two people on a small runabout were forced to call MR Narooma for help when their engine failed near Aughinish Rocks, 1.2 km south-west of Montague Island. The crew of *Narooma 30* returned them safely to shore.

The unit has nevertheless remained busy, building its capability and resources. We have taken delivery of a new vehicle to tow our secondary response vessel, *NA 20*, to nearby waterways, increasing the scope of our operations.

An AirBerth also is on order for



Towing skill on land as well as water ... MR Narooma has a new vehicle to tow its secondary vessel, *Narooma 20*.

*NA 20*, which was redeployed from MR Port Kembla earlier this year.

Members, especially our boat crew, are looking forward to the construction for our new over-water facility at Mill Bay, which has been placed on hold until restrictions are lifted. This \$600,000 boat

shed will enable our vessels to be kept securely under shelter and also improve our response time to emergencies on the hazardous Narooma bar.

July saw a number of personnel movements at Narooma, with some experienced members leaving us for

personal reasons. We are sad to see them go but wish them well in their future endeavours.

Five new members have been recruited, with four in training to become Radio Operators and another to join our vessel crew.

*Craig Petterd*

# Members far from idle as boat activity wanes

Merimbula focuses on training in midst of Covid travel restrictions.

While MR Merimbula has been fortunate to avoid the scourge of the Delta strain of Covid, restrictions on holidaymakers and visitors from other areas of NSW and interstate have reduced boating activity on our local waters.

The unit, however, has been far from idle, concentrating on targeted training and encouraging both new and not-so-new members to obtain or refresh their qualifications.

The results speak for themselves. In the past few months, three new members have qualified as Radio Operators. Congratulations to Andy Clarke, Bill Harvey and Bill Kearney.

Volunteer Bernie Ryan deserves special mention, attaining not only his Leading Crew rating but also then backing it up with his Coxswain qualification. Unit Commander Sonia Teston also gained her Coxswain rating.

Well done to both Bernie and Sonia. Several more members are on the cusp of being assessed for their Crew rating.

With the absence of large visitor numbers to the region since the 2019-2020 bushfires, MR Merimbula, like other units, is feeling the negative effects on our fundraising activities. Ever optimistic that this summer period will see a return of holidaymakers, we have turned our minds to organising the 2021-2022 annual raffle. Apart from raising funds, this is a valuable way for us to interact with local and visiting boaters.

As vaccination rates increase, we are also keenly hoping to restart our fundraising BBQs and days for the public to inspect our rescue vessel. All these events are magnets for attracting potential volunteers to join our team or providing us with an



Double the achievement ... MR Merimbula's Bernie Ryan, presented with both his Leading Crew and Coxswain qualifications.

opportunity to discuss boating safety and our services.

As always, our members are ready to adapt to the changing times. We will bide our time and

continue to train, monitor marine radios and head out to rescue boaters in trouble on our waterways when needed.

*Bill Blakeman & Sonia Teston*

## What we've been up to



Seeing double ... our twin 10m Naiads, *Evans Head 31* (front) and *Port Kembla 31*, head offshore from the Clarence River during their sea trials, before being delivered to their new home waters. The two boats were built in tandem by Yamba Welding & Engineering.



Cat on the water ... MR Hawkesbury's new 8.3m boat, built by Sailfish Catamarans on the Northern Rivers, took to the Richmond River at Ballina for testing and stability assessments in late August.



Safely back to shore ... an outing for a dad and his two sons went awry when their runabout's engine failed in deteriorating conditions. The crew of *Batemans 30* was quickly on the scene to save the trio.



And we're live ... MR Sydney radio operator Mel Little on the first shift in the new MRNSW State Communications Centre after a successful transition from the old Terrey Hills radio base.



Congratulations ... MR Cottage Point member Tony Mulry (centre) earns his Crew epaulettes, presented by Ken Edwards and Mike Evans before Sydney's latest Covid restrictions were imposed.

# Sydney leader built strong foundations

A role model with high expectations.



Original MR Sydney Unit Commander Ron Woosey.

Members of Marine Rescue Sydney are mourning the loss of one of our “founding fathers”, former Unit Commander Ron Woosey.

All our members are special to us but Ron stands out as extra special.

He was a leader in defining what Marine Rescue Sydney is and does today.

Ron’s intellect and determination led us to become the primary radio base for the Sydney region and most importantly, a 24/7 operation.

We have continued from the determined foundations Ron established and the seeds he planted have now blossomed into the new State Communications Centre.

Ron joined the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol’s Terrey Hills Division in 2005, undertaking executive roles including Operations Officer before becoming the Divisional Commander in 2007.

At this time there was debate about the roles of the RVCP radio bases at Terrey Hills and The Spit, as well as competition with the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard base at South Head.

Ron knew that if we were to survive and thrive, we had to provide a professional around-the-clock

service and committed himself and his team to achieving that.

He made large personal sacrifices by doing multiple overnight shifts every week for several years and working hard to build the membership from 30 to 70 to cover the “graveyard” shifts.

It was Ron who established our enduring call sign identity as Marine Rescue Sydney.

Upon the establishment of MRNSW, Ron became the first Unit Commander of MR Terrey Hills. He was my first Commander when I joined 11 years ago and the same applies for a number of our members. I have very clear memories of his leadership by example and expectations of professionalism. He was a role model.

In 2012, after five years as leader and carrying a heavy burden of many overnight shifts, Ron stepped back to take it a little easier. He continued as a radio operator, standing watches, even through his wife Joyce’s illness, until his own illness took him a few months ago.

He was chuffed to receive his National Medal recognising 15 years of volunteer service late last year.

Our members have described similar qualities that Ron brought to us, including dogged determination, strong opinions, a focus on doing the things we needed to do to grow in a changing landscape and challenging us to be a professional volunteer service, not just a club of like-minded marine radio volunteers.

All of these qualities give us, and me in particular, an example to reflect on and a desire to continue to the legacy he helped create.

We will miss you Ron. We won’t forget your contribution and will continue the journey you set us on.

*Matthew King*

# Botany Bay rescuers caring, professional

Dad and son thank ‘amazing’ team.



The crew of Botany 30 organised NSW Ambulance care for a sick boater when he and his son broke down on Botany Bay.

On Saturday, July 3 just gone I was out on my boat with my son on Botany Bay.

It was time to call it a day only to find that my engine would not start.

After a few checks and trying to pull start the engine a few times with no luck, I called the Marine Rescue line.

From the start, I believe it was Ted who took the call and was calm and professional and advised that your vessel was on its way.

During this time though I had started to hyperventilate and was not in the best condition when your crew arrived. Your crew, Bob, Phill and Chris, pulled up alongside and

were fantastic.

They organised for me to be checked out by the Ambo’s before towing my boat and taking my son and I back to the boat ramp at Tom Uglys Bridge.

The whole time they were patient, caring and professional.

My son and I cannot thank you enough for helping us in our time of need. At this point it was well after dark and they still had to go and do another rescue, eating more into their personal time and risking their safety to help others.

Again, thanks to your amazing team.

*Michael Fay*

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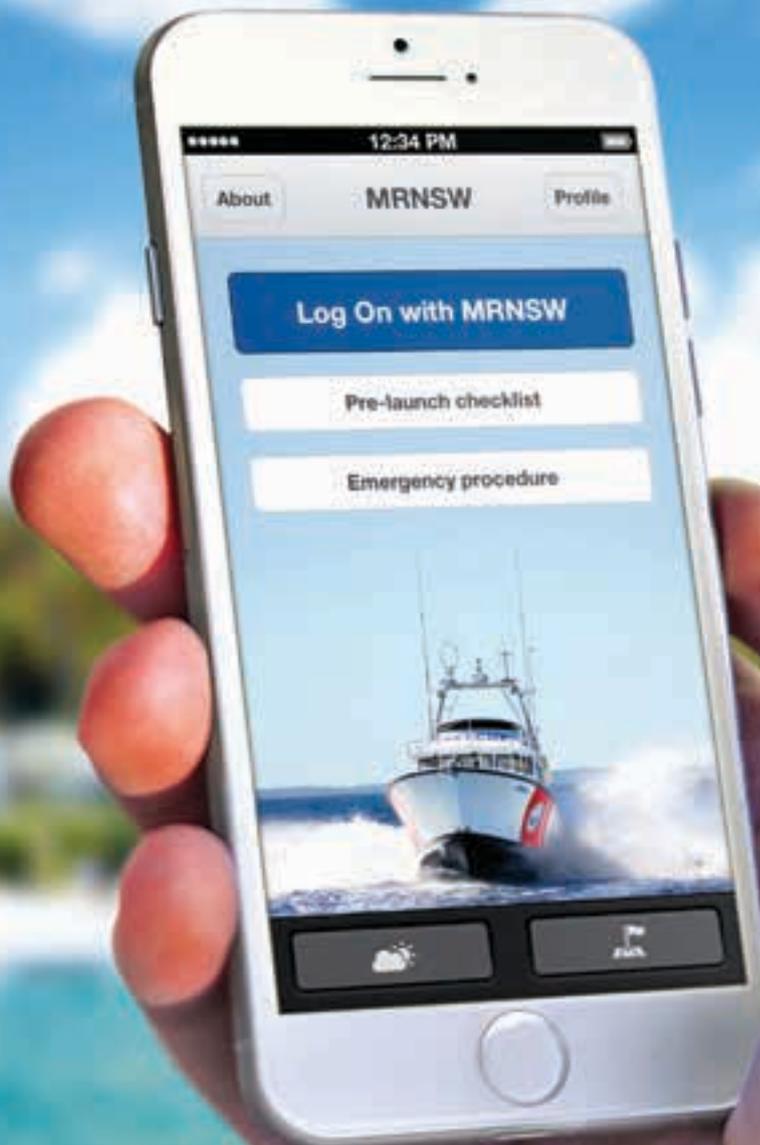
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