

COAST GUARD

AUTUMN/WINTER 2018



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COAST GUARD

The National Magazine of the Australian
Volunteer Coast Guard Association

AUTUMN/WINTER 2018

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WIN A SET OF THESE COAST GUARD BINOCULARS FOR YOUR FLOTILLA'S TOWER OR RESCUE VESSELS

HOW would you like a new pair of binoculars for your vessel or tower?

Ten years ago, through the generosity of **Extravision**, free pairs of Itec binoculars were distributed to many Coast Guard flotillas around the country.

Believe it or not, with the exception of one pair that were accidentally dropped, they all seem to be still on active duty and none of them have even needed servicing.

Replies to a recent email to flotillas asking for information on the binoculars produced a surprising response.

A large number said they had them, were still using them, and didn't have any problems.

Which is surprising given the environment binoculars live in and the rough treatment they probably get from time to time as well as their use by lots of different crewmen on different crews.

One flotilla said: "We have two pairs, one on a rescue vessel, the other in the tower. Both are working perfectly."

Another said: "We have two sets of binoculars, one for each of our primary and secondary rescue vessels. Both are used and do not seem to require repair."

Yet others said: "We are still using them, they still work fine. It's unlikely they have ever been serviced."

"Ours are still in good condition."

"We have a set of binoculars that are on our boat and are operational."

Clearly they are damn good binoculars!

If you want to discover just how good, all you need to do is **enter our competition and you could win one of two new sets for your tower or vessel.**

The prizes will go to the best written entry (of 200 words or whatever length you need) explaining how your binoculars saved the day during a search; or how they could have done if you had a set and had seen something crucial; or why they are an essential item in your flotilla's tower; or why you really need a pair of these binoculars for your tower or vessel.



Or anything else that comes to mind regarding binoculars and Coast Guard.

Send your words (and pix if relevant) to editor.nat@coastguard.com.au by June 30th.

Winners will be notified by email and reported in the next issue of *Coast Guard*.

Of course, the prizes will be provided by Extravision, supplier of Australia's largest range of optical products.

Like the rest of the fixed focus range; just pick them up and look, and everything will be in focus.

The Pre-Focus system means that you do not have to fiddle around trying to focus to get a clear image. The focus has been PRE-FIXED at the factory and everything from approx. 25 metres to infinity will be in focus for people with normal eyesite, even spectacle wearers.

The 7x50 is easily the most popular binocular for the small boat owners and serious fisherman. Easy to use, the no fuss/no focus means you can pick them up and see those markers or other boats instantly without having to try and focus while the boat is tossing around and one hand is busy hanging on.

They are light and the 50mm objective lens diameter means they are good for low light conditions i.e. early morning and late evenings, even at night.

But our prizes are the top of the line 10x50 models with a close focusing range of approx. 30m.

Like the 7x50 sets they are waterproof so will take all the spray and even a dunk in the ocean if you accidentally let go of them (rule number one is always put the strap around your neck).

Accessories included with all Coast Guard binoculars are Case and Strap, Cleaning Cloth, Floating Binocular Strap, Eyepiece and Objective Dustcovers.

Extravision is a retail, wholesale importer and distributor of optical products and associated accessories.

The company sells and repairs binoculars, telescopes, microscopes, rifle scopes, night vision, underwater cameras and more.

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WIN THESE TOP-OF-THE-LINE COAST GUARD BINOCULARS.

The company sells a trio of Coast Guard binoculars starting with the 7x35 which is about two thirds the size of the 7x50 and 10x50 sets, making them a favourite with female boaters because their compact size and light weight, combined with the fixed focus system means they are very easy to use.

The Victorian Government fuels marine rescuers' anger then it becomes an early Father Christmas

VICTORIAN Coast Guard flotillas awoke to a bumper Christmas present only weeks after fears that they faced a bleak holiday season with strapped finances.

The present, shortly before Christmas, was the Victorian State Government finally announcing the release of funding for the Victorian volunteer marine search and rescue providers to the tune of \$11.3

we will not see any money coming through until after Christmas but at least the money is there and ready for distribution," said Mark.

"Our future is looking extremely bright and we can honestly say we are now in a sustainable position. I personally could not have received a better Christmas gift than this one delivered by the Government."

It was a different story a few weeks earlier

so heavily on sausage sizzles, raffles and periodic single-purpose grants to survive from year-to-year," the report said.

Minister for Ports **Luke Donnellan** had said the fuel costs would be repaid but the rescue groups were saying little had changed.

Meanwhile the Boating Industry Association of Victoria said the government spent less than a quarter of the \$27 million collected annually in marine licences and registration on boating.

Announcing the funding package, the Minister for Emergency Services **James Merlino**, joined by the member for Carrum, **Sonya Kilkenny**, said the record funding would be provided over the 2017-18 and 2018-19 financial years.

Mr Merlino said it was a crucial investment in the sector, which would significantly reduce the fundraising burden on volunteers.

He said it was the first time MSAR had been funded in this way, and it was "part of a wider program of reforms that would improve governance and deliver better coordination between marine search and rescue units."

The money also ensures the continuation of a small centralised team within Emergency Management Victoria intended to drive reform and build volunteer capability.

At the end of February, Emergency Services Commissioner **Craig Lapsley** visited the Port Fairy and Warrnambool Coast Guard services and said they were in good shape.

"They have now secured state funding for their ongoing operations," he said.

"The mood of both was excellent in the sense they can see they have a bright future. They welcome the opportunity to be more structured."

Mr Lapsley said Port Fairy in particular had been vocal about the need for the state government to invest locally.

"They will see the full benefits," he said.

VF16 Warrnambool Coast Guard's commander **Allan Wood** said the funding provided financial security.

"We also filled Mr Lapsley in on how our flotilla is travelling," he said.

"Membership is in a good state at the moment. We have never missed a call out."

He said the boat would soon be updated, with \$30,000 worth of electrical improvements to be implemented.



VF16 Warrnambool's Keith Prest, Allan Wood, Geoff Spencer and Victorian Emergency Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley. Photo: Christine Anson.

million over the next 2 years.

Victoria's marine search and rescue volunteers are being given the money to help them buy new vessels, equipment and protective clothing, as well as cover fuel and other operating costs.

Victoria Squadron Commodore **Mark Bainbridge** said the financing would cover:

- operational costs,
- training costs,
- and insurance premiums, with:
- every flotilla and unit receiving around \$25,000 plus per annum to cover the above with the insurance being covered separately.
- Plus, the vessel replacement program can now be rolled out with every flotilla and unit receiving a fully funded new vessel every 12 years.

"There is still a lot of work to be done and

with newspapers saying that "bungling bureaucrats have delayed paying for fuel for lifesaving rescuers to search for boaters in distress."

The story was that an administrative backlog in fuel reimbursements had left cash-strapped volunteers to shoulder the costs—about \$40,000 over several months—prompting fears that this "could force the state's 30 rescue flotillas off the water during peak "snapper season" and summer.

The nineteen Coast Guard flotillas and eleven other independent rescue groups were sent by police to more than 1400 incidents last year, including 14 fatalities.

A 2014 parliamentary inquiry found the volunteers were facing "increasing financial pressures" and called for more government funding.

"Victoria's volunteer (rescue) organisations should not be compelled to rely

DRAMATIC RESCUE NOT JUST A ONE-OFF DURING THE BUSIEST WEEK OF THE YEAR FOR QF11 YEPPOON

A FATHER'S nightmare unfolded as his son's joyride off Rosslyn Bay instantly became a desperate emergency, reported **Sean Fox** for the *South Burnett Times*.

The man's son and two women were riding a jet ski off the popular water spot when the vehicle started to sink with the trio aboard.

An anxious onlooker to the situation, the parent phoned **QF11 Yeppoon** Coast Guard for help at lunchtime of a Sunday before Christmas.

However, the *Bendigo*, a yacht on a training sail, was first on the scene to assist the group of three in the water in Keppel Bay after the jet ski had submerged.

Capricorn Coast Yacht Club Sailing School keelboat instructor **Tony McDonald** said the *Bendigo* brought two women on board who were struggling in the conditions.

Sailing School principal **Mike Schmidt** said the sail courses include man overboard training and the crew were able to successfully put this into practice in a real-life situation.

"All three members of the crew training group successfully completed the 12-hour course," he said.

QF11 Skipper **John Tait** immediately took the three riders from the jet ski before towing it to Rosslyn Bay Harbour.

The rescue signalled the start of what would become the Yeppoon Coast Guard's busiest week of the year, according to Flotilla Commander **Jim Warren** with eleven rescue operations through the week.

In a separate emergency, an urgent phone call was received when a Marine Assist contributor reported a breakdown of a 6m cabin boat near Moresby Bank, 47nm NE of Rosslyn Bay Harbour after fishing overnight.

Gormans Removals Rescue skippered by John Tait) departed Rosslyn Bay Harbour at 0940hrs and returned with the boat in tow at 1610hrs.

As that operation was concluded an urgent phone call was received from a 5m tinny with 5 POB that had run out of fuel in rough conditions 1nm NE Wreck Point so *Gormans Removals Rescue* headed back out and took the five occupants on board before towing the boat into harbour at 1640hrs.

On the same day, *RMH Rescue* skippered by **Jim Warren** conducted two rescues

in Keppel Bay.

A Marine Assist contributor in a 6m power boat, with 2 POB, reported a



breakdown off Sloping Island. The rescue vessel could not find the target boat at that location but while returning to the harbour, a second call gave a new location 1nm off Farnborough Beach opposite Barlows Hill. The boat was towed back to harbour.

Then another Marine Assist member in a 6m power boat, with 2 POB, called after a breakdown at Considine Beach so *RMH Rescue* towed that vessel back to harbor.

As with an incident the previous week, some of these events should have provided a lesson for boat skippers about

Three in distress as jet ski sinks.



communication.

Another family had a scary evening on board a vessel when it ran out of fuel; their radio didn't work and their mobile phone was flat.

The 6m boat with two adults and two children was located after the Australian Maritime Safety Authority detected a distress signal in the vicinity of Pelican Island early one evening.

The Yeppoon Police requested *RMH Rescue* skippered by **David Smith** to divert from a trip to Great Keppel Island

and search for the vessel in distress.

A woman and two children were taken on board *RMH Rescue* and the boat towed back to Rosslyn Bay Harbour.

No trip report had been provided to the Coast Guard before the boat left Rosslyn Bay Harbour so it was not reported overdue.

QF11 said this incident, like the others, illustrates the need for all boat operators to be able to contact the Coast Guard directly without using a third party which causes delay.

The flotilla pointed out that all boat skippers should be able to use a VHF radio or have the Coast Guard phone number recorded in their mobile phone.

And to make sure they're safe on the water, the Coast Guard suggested a safety checklist including:

Check expiry date on flares and distress beacon,

Ensure distress beacon has current registration with AMSA,

Join Marine Assist through Coast Guard.

Confirm adequate fuel on board.

Confirm adequate food and water on board, allowing extra for delays.

Check weather forecast and tides.

Test radio/Charge mobile phone. If no GPS, load Emergency + app on mobile phone to provide latitude and longitude when calling for help.



Family saved from disastrous start to the year after their vessel goes onto a sandbar

QUICK-thinking Coast Guardians ensured a family avoided a disastrous start to 2018 after a failed attempt to cross the treacherous Caloundra bar.

QF4 Caloundra volunteers sprung into action late in the afternoon after lifesavers alerted them to a catamaran floundering as low tide waters went “ripping out” of the Pumicestone Passage, reported **Scott Sawyer** of the *Coolumb & North Shore News*.

Flotilla Commander **Joe Allen** was one of the three-man volunteer crew who rushed to the aid of the catamaran’s skipper, his wife and daughter.

“They were starting to get a bit concerned,” Mr Allen said.

He said the catamaran had tried to cross the notoriously tricky bar at the “wrong spot” and ended up pushed up onto a sandbar where the catamaran’s rudders were snapped.

With limited fuel supplies the skipper used the outboard motors to free the catamaran from the sandbar, but with no rudders, the catamaran was now at the mercy of the sea.

The skipper dropped anchor and made contact with Kings Beach lifesavers who were able to alert the Coast Guard crew at about 1530 hours.

A precarious 95-minute rescue followed, as the crew secured tow ropes to the catamaran and then navigated their way back into the Pumicestone Passage.

“The tide was absolutely ripping out,” Mr Allen said.

He said the masses of tidal waters and the removal of the catamaran’s stabilising centreboard due to shallow waters left the catamaran “very unstable to tow in”.

He said Kings Beach swimmers and the nearby boardwalk were at risk of being struck because the catamaran was shifting from side to side.

So the crew drew up alongside and secured the Coast Guard boat to the stricken vessel to guide it safely back to its Golden Beach mooring.

Mr Allen and the crew had to travel slowly up the Pumicestone Passage into the outgoing tide.

He said it was a timely reminder with large tides still around.

He said the incident followed another close call on New Year’s day, when a pontoon boat attempted to go ashore on the northern tip of Bribie Island and started getting swept out to sea by the tides.

Mr Allen said one of the men aboard the pontoon boat threw an anchor out in desperation and held the anchor rope in a bid to stop the boat being dragged out.

When the anchor line tightened the rope ripped the man’s hands apart, leaving him with what Mr Allen described as “quite serious injuries”.

The Coast Guard retrieved the boat and the injured man was taken to hospital.



QF4 Caloundra radio operators will be able to see you now if you get in trouble.

The recently refurbished radio room for QF4 communications now includes a new security camera system. (*Screen photo above.*)

After the system was proven to be totally effective, the main camera was moved further up the new radio mast and now provides clear pictures that allow operators to see not only the area around the Base building and the flotilla’s vessels on the pontoon, but also enables the operator to observe the entire Caloundra Bar and Pumicestone Passage.

Furthermore, by utilising the camera’s zoom feature, the operator can keep an eye on vessels crossing the Caloundra Bar and observe activities a lot further down the Passage past the Blue Hole to ensure all is well in local waters.

Moving the main camera higher up the radio mast.





R U B - A - D U B - D U B FOUR MEN IN A TUB BUT IN FORTY MINUTES ... IT TURNS INTO A SUB.

IT WAS a bad day for boating. The BOM had issued a Strong Wind Warning.

A south-easterly, blowing over 35 knots (65kph – a Gale on the Beaufort Scale), had whipped up 2-metre waves on Moreton Bay.

Cold rain was pelting down, restricting visibility. Most sensible boaties stayed home.

But not all.

At 1300, QF2 Brisbane commander **Steve Fleming** watched four young men launching a 5m catamaran in Manly. They crowded aboard and headed out to sea.

Shaking his head, Commander Fleming predicted, “We’ll get a call from Water Police about them within the hour.”

Sure enough, forty minutes later the phone rang. It was the Water Police, requesting a Coast Guard vessel join them in a search for four men reported clinging to an overturned catamaran near Green Island.

Coxswain **Paul Burchell**, flotilla purser **Simon Gideon** and I immediately boarded

By **Harvey Shore**

our 8-metre **CG-22** and sped out of Manly Harbour.

We met up with a Water Police boat near the datum point and began a search under their direction but there was no sign of the upturned cat.

Considering the wind strength and direction, Paul Burchell suspected it had probably drifted further north. With approval from the Water Police SAR Mission Coordinator, we turned in that direction.

Rain squalls kept reducing visibility

to just a few boat-lengths, and the swell made it hard to spot any low-lying object in the water, but in the distance, we thought we could faintly see something... yes! It was a row of people sitting on an overturned cat!

We ploughed our way through the choppy water towards the target, calling the Water Police to follow us.

Quickly, we came up on the young sailors.

“Only four of you?” we asked. “Yes.”

“Anyone hurt?” “No.”

“Don’t you know there’s a Strong Wind Warning in place?”

“Yes, but we thought it was ideal conditions for sailing.”

“Oh really! See any other sailors out here?”

They were silent for a moment, looking around. Not another sail was in sight.

“Maybe you’re right.”

Paul Burchell hurled a tow-rope to the



A long, slow and wet tow back to port.

Paul Burchell hurls a line to the cat’s owner.



catamaran’s skipper and brought his cat alongside our Coast Guard boat.

For twenty minutes we stood on our open deck in the rain, trying to flip the cat upright so we could more easily tow it back to Manly but the broken mast and sail under the cat defeated all our attempts.

In the end, and with the owner’s reluctant agreement, we had to tow it upside down, through the rain and rough seas, slowly back to Manly harbour...a long, cold and wet job. But at least all four young men lived to tell the tale.

Commander Fleming watched his thoroughly soaked crew bring the cat slowly into harbour and shook his head.

“If only boat owners would check the weather before going to sea, we’d all be a lot safer ... and drier!”

Amateur sailors in sinking houseboat rescued by Southport Coast Guard

A GROUP of amateur Tweed Heads sailors were “extremely lucky” not to sink their houseboat in waters off Main Beach in January.

QF1 Southport Coast Guard commander **Ken Stanley** said two men and a woman, who appeared to be “real amateur sailors, were escorted into the Seaway about 0900 hours after their two-storey houseboat got into “serious trouble” out to sea near Main Beach.

He told the *Gold Coast Bulletin*’s **Alexandria Utting** the group had travelled up the coast from Tweed Heads in a boat that was not built for open water.

Coast Guards were alerted to the near-disaster after a member of the public phoned to say they could see a boat, that looked like it was sinking, from the shore at Main Beach.

“We went out there and he was taking on water at the bow,” Ken Stanley said.

“You could see it quite clearly, the boat was 15-20 degrees in the water and the motors were right out.”

Ken said two rescue boats escorted the group back into the Broadwater across the calmer southern side of the bar, where there is an area of shoal build-up.

“The main concern we had was that when he came though the Seaway, with the conditions as they were and the bow being dipped down, if he got into any sort of trouble or a wave came, he’d just nose dive straight in,” he said.

“Thank goodness he followed us in because if he had headed to the northern side and the waves had been half-a-metre higher he would have sunk on the bar.

“For a houseboat it was extremely rough as they have no wave clearance.



The houseboat being escorted into the Seaway by coast guards.

“Even after he was through the bow was still dipping down.

“I think they were real amateur sailors and to tell you the truth, I wouldn’t have tried to cross the Southport bar alone in those conditions, no way.

“It’s not a done thing, to be out in a houseboat in that sort of weather.

“They’re not designed to be in open water and to bring them up from the Tweed to here, I hate to say it, I don’t think it was really good decision.”

The sailors told Coast Guards they expected to continue on to Jacobs Well.



READYING FOR MAJOR MARINE CRISIS ON THE GOLD COAST

MORE than 50 volunteers and emergency service personnel spent three hours searching for and retrieving 13 people from the water on the Gold Coast.

But not everything was as it seemed, reported **Kristy Muir**, QF1’s rescue vessel heads out to sea as Gold Coast volunteers and emergency services prepare for a major search and rescue exercise in rough conditions. *Photo: Kristy Muir*

The large scale search and rescue was a training exercise built around the sinking of a large 12 metre commercial vessel off the coast and involved a helicopter winching rescue.

QF1 Southport joined with Surf Life Saving Queensland, and Volunteer Marine Rescue Southport, Jacobs Well and Currumbin, as well as Queensland Police

Service divers from Brisbane and the Gold Coast for the training exercise in treacherous conditions, three nautical miles east of the Seaway.

Gold Coast Water Police Acting Senior Sergeant **Mitch Gray** told the *Bulletin* ten vessels and a helicopter were involved in the training and it had been a huge success.

“We’ve never really had a major incident like that down here,” he said.

“(The training is) to give our search and rescue crews an experience as to how difficult it is to spot a swimmer out in the

middle of the ocean.

“And that was the realisation for them, they (swimmers) can’t be seen, because of the swell, wind and the white water, they can’t really see them till you’re 30-40 metres away at most.”

The training also showed crews what debris, people and life rafts look like on the surface.

Acting Sen Sgt Gray said the big swell and rough conditions were the ideal conditions to train in as it made the exercise more realistic.

“It wasn’t pleasant, that’s the reality of what we do—we generally don’t rescue people on those beautiful Gold Coast days—the prevailing winds are always sort of 15-25 knots from either the south or the north,” he said.

“So we got a typical windy day on the Gold Coast, which is perfect for training.”



It was only there for a trial but then You Little Beauty drops in for a quick rescue as well

A NEW rescue drone was barely out of the box for a trial before it was put to use in a real rescue at Lennox Head.

Two teenage boys were seen in distress about a kilometre north of the patrol area at Lennox Head, on the New South Wales far north coast. The 17-year-old and 15-year-old boys were about 700m offshore in a swell of about 3m.

A member of the public reported seeing the boys, and within two minutes the new drone had located the boys and dropped an inflatable flotation device to them.

They clung to the rescue pod and were able to swim to shore, exhausted but unharmed.

The rescue drones, from Coast Guard supporter **SOS Marine**, were only unboxed in the morning as part of a collaboration between Surf Life Saving NSW and the State Government which announced it would invest \$430,000 in drone technology as part of a trial on the NSW north coast.

Deputy Premier **John Barilaro** said that investment had paid off when the technology was used in the dramatic rescue.

"This is a world-first rescue," he said. "Never before has a drone fitted with



a flotation device been used to rescue swimmers like this."

Ballina lifeguard supervisor **Jai Sheridan**, who operated the drone, said being part of the operation had been "unreal".

"I'm just so happy that it was a really good outcome and these two boys were able to make it to shore safely," he said.

He said the difference in response time was critical. "Stuff can happen in a matter of seconds out in the surf. It's ever changing."

"I was able to launch it, fly it to the location, and drop the pod all in about one to two minutes," Jai Sheridan told reporters. A government official confirmed the rescue took only 70 seconds, compared to the average six minutes it would take for

a lifeguard to reach the swimmers.

Surf Life Saving NSW project manager for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), **Kelvin Morton**, said the project was a world-first.

"There is no other lifesaving operation or organisation worldwide that is doing what we're doing on the size and scale that we're doing it," he said.

"These Unmanned Aerial Vehicles that we're using to drop these inflatable pods are innovative and we know that most or all of the lifesaving organisations around the world are stepping back and waiting to see how this goes."

He said the drones gave surf lifesavers a new advantage. "It gives them eyes across the water at a height of 60 metres and they can move at 50 kilometres an hour," he said. "They've never had that ability before. They can see things in the water that a jet-ski simply cannot."

The rescue pods designed by **SOS Marine** are called (ULB's) (ULB stands for "you little beauty" which people would say when they the rescue pods arrived.).

They are ready-to-go for rapid deployment and carry a small pod containing water rescue and safety devices to be deployed by operators.

From a hovering position above the person/s in distress, the UAV operator is able to use the attached microphone to calm the patient and, if needed, explain that a pod is about to be deployed containing: a self-inflating floatation device capable of supporting 3-4 people with attached sea anchor to keep it stable; an EPIRB signaling unit to keep track of them in the event vision is lost; a shark repellent device capable of keeping sharks at bay for up to 8 hours, a whistle plus an automatic SOLAS light for night rescue, SOLAS grade high visibility retro-reflective. The lightweight pods are reusable.

SOS Marine said the story and video went all over the world and just in time because it is really tough manufacturing in Australia but "now the world can see what we do."

The drone footage shows a birds-eye view of the ocean before the drone ejects the yellow floatation device, which inflates when it hits the water. The two teenage boys were able to grab onto the floatation device and swim to shore. *Video:*

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-18/drone-rescues-boys-from-surf-lennox-head/9340784>



HOME-MADE BOAT AUSSIE LOST

HONOLULU (AP) — An Australian man sailing alone in a homemade boat was rescued off the coast of Hawaii after he was blown off course on a journey home from Panama, the Coast Guard said.

The 62-year-old man was in a 30-foot (9m) sailboat and flagged down a commercial passenger boat nearly 4 miles (6 kilometers) from Maui on a Sunday afternoon in January, Coast Guard officials said.

The crew of the *Trilogy V* told authorities the man appeared disoriented, and he was having trouble sailing into port. The man was not identified.

The man had sailed from Panama more than 100 days ago, and he was on his way to Australia when weather forced him to Hawaii, officials said.

A Coast Guard response boat towed his vessel, the *Kehaar Darwin*, to Sugar Beach on Maui.

The man's boat did not contain communication equipment or an engine and his sails were in poor condition, officials said.

"Being disoriented while at sea in a vessel with no communication capabilities aboard can be deadly if not handled quickly," said Petty Officer 2nd Class **Jacob Schlereth**, a boarding officer and engineer at Station Maui. "We commend the good Samaritan for recognizing the complications and contacting the proper authorities to initiate a rescue."

AN ANIMAL RESCUE STORY GETS THE MOST ATTENTION ON DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

FORGET rescuing boats. If you want lots of publicity for your flotilla go for the animal stories.

Dogs are good but koalas are one better as **VF4 Westernport** discovered when they saved a koala from a watery doom.

Fortunately they took lots of photos and they ended up all over the media within Australia and overseas...which will never pass up a cute animal story.

On a Sunday the crew from VF4 Westernport came across a stranded koala after completing a routine assist.

The koala was found about 400m from shore clinging to a line on a swing mooring, it was soaked and cold—looked like it had been there for quite some time.

The crew managed to manoeuvre the vessel and recover the koala, wrapping it in blankets to dry it off and ensure the crew were not scratched.

The crew returned it to some native bushland near to where it was found—the koala looked very happy to be back on dry land!

It was a busy day surrounding this with three other assists completed taking the total assists in Westernport to fourteen for the preceding seven-day period.

VF4 crewman Sean Hannam with the koala.



Most were pretty standard; general breakdowns. Most in this week seemed to be either be fuel or mechanically related.

Not surprising really because the week coincided with the start of the fishing season in Victoria.

People were taking to the water after not using their vessels for up to six months so, quite a lot of contaminated fuel, fuel blockages and general mechanical breakdowns.

Like other flotillas, VF4 has been trying to spread the word to ensure boaties do a pre-season vessel check, drain the fuel etc. and potentially get the vessel serviced.

They even had an article going out in the local paper with that messaging.

There also was one serious activation to a kayaker who had activated his EPIRB.

There was a severe and quick weather change, causing him to fall off his kayak and he was unable to get back on.

He activated the EPIRB and both Coast Guard and Air Wing were activated to the last known location.

Fortunately he was able to swim ashore on a nearby island.

He was collected by the Air Wing and transported to hospital to be treated for hypothermia.

It is thought he spent about 45 minutes in the water with water temperatures around 11 degrees



Above: Hooking up one of the other assists.
Below: Arriving on-scene for another assist.

and at the time ambient air temperature around 12 degrees, winds were gusting about 35-40 knots during the assist.

Unlike the koala assist, a film crew from Channel 9 did not turn up for this one. Nor did all the media people who loved the koala rescue have any interest.

Bottom line: if you are going to rescue any animals make sure there is a camera on board the rescue vessel.



GIFT FROM BANK BUYS FLIR CAMERA FOR VF10 WERRIBEE

THE volunteers at VF10 Werribee Coast Guard have been presented with a \$17,997 grant from the **Bank of Melbourne**.

Point Cook bank branch manager **Jason Christie**, who visited the Coast Guard's Werribee South headquarters to present the cheque (**photo below**), said he was delighted to present the money from the Bank of Melbourne's community grants program.

Werribee commander **Bruce Lawrence** said the grant would be used to buy and install a high-grade, ship-mounted FLIR (a camera which can see in the dark) on the Coast Guard's rescue vessel **CG10**.

Bruce said the camera would greatly assist with the Coast Guard's night-time rescue work.

He said that within the past 12 months, the Werribee flotilla volunteers had helped out more than 50 vessels and more than 150 people.

"A good number of the calls we attend are at night and our new ship-mounted FLIR will be a wonderful addition to **CG10**'s impressive search and rescue equipment," Mr Lawrence said.



CRABS TO FUND QF20 AGAIN

QF20 Keppel Sands will be one of seven local community groups to benefit from funds raised by the resurrection of the Keppel Sands Krabastic Festival after a decade.

All the seven Community Groups were working enthusiastically and diligently together to bring back the Fantastic Keppel Sands Krabastic Festival to the region at Easter.

Keppel Sands is a unique, tropical seaside village situated on the beautiful Capricorn Coast overlooking the picturesque Keppel Island Group and is home to the World Mud Crab Tying Championships.

The Krabastic Festival is a tropical-themed magical family fun day held in Keppel Sands on the streets, in the parks and on the beach featuring live crab events and lots of fun and games for all ages and prizes.

The festival was planned to feature a large shaded picnic area in Schofield Park where people could gather with friends and indulge in food and drinks, inspired by the tropical location, oceanic abundance and local influences with an Arts and Culture precinct, amusement rides, creative and traditional market stalls and all day entertainment.

Funds raised from the event go toward supporting the seven Keppel Sands Community Groups: Australian South Sea Islanders Movement Inc, Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association Inc, Keppel Sands Community Advancement League, Keppel Sands Rural Fire Brigade, Keppel Sands SES, Keppel Sands State School and the Sandhills Community Sports and Social Club.



VICTORIA BLESSES THE FLEET FOR THE START OF SUMMER

FINE weather blessed the Blessing of the Fleet ceremony hosted by VF1 Frankston Coast Guard towards the end of last year.

Dignitaries and visitors attended a 1000 hours church service held at St Paul's Church, Frankston, before making their way down to the pier at approximately 1115 hours for the official Blessing of the Fleet.

It was estimated over 100 people attended to watch the fifteen emergency service vessels from around Port Phillip,





including **Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, Water Police, VMR, SES and Surf Life Saving Victoria**, be blessed ahead of the 2017 summer.

Les Ingram, Flotilla Commander, VF1 said the "Blessing of the Fleet was a huge success. The efforts put in by our members were highly regarded by the VIP's, invited guests and the general public."

The guest speaker was **John Harper**, the CFA chaplain. **Mark Bainbridge**, Squadron Commodore Victoria Squadron, took the salute.

Some of the dignitaries in attendance included; Commissioner **Craig Lapsley** ESM, Emergency Management Victoria, **Cindy McLeish** MP (Shadow Minister for Environment, Communities & Volunteers, Member for Eildon) representing **Matthew Guy**, **Sonya Kilkenny** MP State (ALP) Member for Carrum, representing the premier, **Chris Crewther** MP and the Federal Member for Frankston, **Ashley O'Loughlin**.

Other invitees included representatives of the Frankston Fire Brigade, the SES, VFVB, Port of Melbourne, Frankston Yacht Club, Parks Victoria, CFA, Transport Safety Victoria, Water Police, Frankston City Council, Frankston Surf Life Saving Club and Ambulance Victoria.

Photos were taken by **Brahma Clare**, **John J Billing** and local amateur photographer, **Steve Brown**.



UP THE CREEK WITH QF2 TO HELP CLEAN OUT A TWO TONNE MESS AFTER THE OLD HULKS DEPART

IN A a good example of community support, QF2 Brisbane sent crewman **Ian Williams** and a 3m RIB to help locals remove over two tonnes of rubbish from a nearby creek earlier this year, reports **Harvey Shore**.

The Wynnum Creek clean-up, organised by State MP for Lytton **Joan Pease**, followed the removal of several derelict vessels by Maritime Safety Queensland.

The old boats had gone but numerous tyres and logs which had supported them were left behind. Storms and king tides had since washed these into the creek.

So, volunteers from all over the district decided to clean up the creek and adjacent parkland.

Brisbane's **Caltex** Refinery sponsored the event. Staff from Joan Pease's electoral office provided a sausage sizzle.

QF2 actively supports its local community in many ways, from providing traffic monitors on ANZAC Day to precisely positioning buoys for major yachting events like the Saint Helena Cup.

QF2 Flotilla Commander **Steve Fleming** realised this Wynnum Creek clean-up was another good opportunity for the local flotilla to actively support the local community in a highly-visible way.

He assigned crewman Ian Williams to take a shallow-draft vessel to the creek and provide as much help as possible.

Ian was warmly welcomed by local clean-up crews on arrival, and spent the day helping them drag logs and tyres ashore.

He was fortunate to have a boat to sit in. Most of the other volunteers spent the day in knee-deep mud.

Everyone judged the clean-up a great success. Many truck-loads of muddy rubbish were removed.

QF2's RIB was featured prominently in subsequent media coverage, and organisers heaped praise on QF2's active support for its local community.

Australian Volunteer Coast Guard



Above: Volunteers worked all day to remove tyres and logs from the creek.

Below: State MP Joan Pease, up to her gumboots in mud.



Below: Locals farewell Ian Williams in the QF2 shallow draft RIB.



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**PROUDLY SUPPORTING
VOLUNTEERS IN THE MARINE
RESCUE ORGANISATIONS.**



The visitors from VMR Hervey Bay take a good look around QF4's main rescue vessel *Caloundra Rescue*.

CALOUNDRA SHOWS OFF ITS NAIAD RESCUE VESSEL TO THE VMR

QF4 *Caloundra* recently received a few special visitors to check out their primary rescue vessel, *Caloundra Rescue*.

The visitors were from VMR Hervey Bay and they wanted to know just about everything about the capabilities of *Caloundra Rescue* as they are looking to possibly purchase a new vessel.

Caloundra Rescue is a 10.2m *Naiad* with inboard diesel engines driven by jets rather than propellers.

The on-duty Echo crew gave their guests a good look around the vessel and a special demonstration of its abilities.

The crew from Hervey Bay were quite impressed and felt that the journey down to Caloundra was definitely worthwhile.

The boat builder and Coast Guard sponsor **Yamba Welding and Engineering** is

QF5 Noosa's Dovo's Rescue goes through its paces. The New Zealand-designed Naiad was built by Yamba Welding & Engineering. The vessel sports twin Yamaha 250 hp F250F four-strokes. Full story Spring/Summer 2013 edition.

rapidly going from success to success.

So much so the visitors will have to get in the queue if they want to follow the lead of QF4 *Caloundra* and QF5 *Noosa*, which also has a Yamba-built *Naiad*, not to mention other marine rescue organisations, and order a *Naiad* design boat in either mono hull or cat hull.

YWE as been building for **Queensland Police, Queensland National Parks, NSW RMS and Marine Rescue NSW.**

And the company has just landed large contracts with both **Australian Border Force and Australian Federal Police** with



QF4 Caloundra's Naiad jet-boat, the first of its kind in Australia. Powered by Yanmar engines, the New Zealand-designed boat was built by Yamba Welding & Engineering. Full story autumn/Winter 2014 issue.

two by one year options.

The Border Force contract is for 12m and 5.4m *Naiad* vessels. The first order is for four 12m and four 5.4m boats worth \$5.4m. The AFP is for one 9.5m *Naiad*.

YWE then has a large patrol vessel to build with another organisation...so they are running out of room to build.

The latest contracts highlight the growing demand for rigid-hulled inflatable boats (RIBs).

New Zealand's Coastguard fleet of 75 vessels, for example, is almost entirely RIBs.

RIBs are the preferred choice for NZ Coastguard rescue vessels for various reasons. The inflatable tubes are softer which helps when a Coastguard vessel comes alongside another vessel to aid them, and so avoids any potential damage done to both vessels.

They also aid in floatation so that if the vessel becomes swamped with water, the inflatable tubes prevent the vessel from sinking completely.

Thanks to the hull shape and design, RIBs also are more comfortable at high speeds in rough conditions. This enables crews to get to rescue areas faster but still safely, and so reduces the victim's risk of drowning or hypothermia.



IN MOOLOOLABA QF6 HAS TO TACKLE YET ANOTHER TRAWLER IN SERIOUS TROUBLE

IT WAS a very mild Sunshine Coast winter's night, a very light breeze, relatively warm temperature and a half waning moon; a beautiful night that many true boaties would just love to be out on the water.

I had been asleep for an hour when I received a call from the base radio operator at around 2220 hours advising that we had

Words and photos by Bryan Beck, Senior Skipper and Duty RLO.

radio operator to "call in the skipper and crew and I'll call you back for details in 10 minutes".

When I called back, the detail was "a trawler has gone aground on the rocks at

rocks at the northern end of Mooloolaba Beach.

Unfortunately, I just missed the Senior Constable from the Water Police, but met with the owner on the beach.

It was a crab boat, about 15m long with its flood lights lighting the surrounds, bouncing around on a relatively flat rock shelf just north of the sand beach.

The seas were calm with a small wave breaking over the rock shelf, rocking the boat sideways with its keel aground and with each larger wave the boat was being slightly lifted and pushed a little further over the shelf, towards the sand beyond.

The owner said there were three people on the boat, that the vessel was taking on water and the bilge pumps were operating.

It was about one and a half hours before high tide, with our rescue vessel operational and on standby awaiting instructions.



an assist.

As part of our risk management procedures at **QF6 Mooloolaba**, when the boat skipper and crew are activated for an operational task at night, the rescue liaison officer (RLO) is also advised for additional support management of the operation.

That night, I was the RLO, so I told the

Mooloolaba Beach".

Whoop's! "I better get down there pronto and assess the situation from the shore."

In transit, I was provided more detail:

- Many calls from the public were coming in.
- The sergeant of the Water Police had been advised and was sending an officer to the scene.
- The owner of the vessel was on his way to the beach.
- Skipper and crew had arrived to open and prepare our primary rescue vessel.
- Fire & Rescue had been advised and had spoken with the owner.
- The actual location of the grounding was on the



I was prepared to attempt to pull the vessel off the shelf, while it was partially floating and being lifted a little with the larger waves, but it needed to be done in the next couple of hours.

The owner had to agree to the attempt and we discussed some proposed methods.

However, we needed to ascertain the extent of damage to the hull and the amount of water flowing into the hull, as we were not prepared to proceed with any rescue attempt without a good knowledge of the vessel's hull integrity and any possible environmental issues.

Unfortunately, the crew could not provide the required confidence for any attempt to proceed.

Understandably, it was dark, the crew were being rocked quite severely at times

Continued next page

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and of course it was an extremely stressful and emotional situation for them.

Around 2330hrs, the decision was made not to proceed with any rescue attempt that night and the rescue vessel crew were stood down.

The owner would wait the required time for the tide to recede and the vessel to stabilise for the people aboard to safely disembark.

The next morning I again met the owner on the beach; he had been in contact with the insurance broker and the matter of recovery was in their hands.

The owner thanked me for Coast Guard Mooloolaba's concern and assistance the previous night, which I really appreciated.

The incident was extensively reported by the media, with pictures and interviews over the next several days.

With the insurance company assessing that the vessel was a write-off with some stress fractures along the hull, it became a salvage for Clayton's Towing, who winched the vessel up to a stable position against the promenade wall.

Eventually the vessel was moved to a more accessible location where it was dismantled and removed.

How did it happen? From media reports:

- The *Matahari* was returning to Mooloolaba from a two-day crabbing expedition, with two crew members and one passenger aboard.
- The skipper handed the helm to the teenage crew person, who fell asleep with the vessel on auto-pilot.
- The boat was cruising at 10–15 knots when it hit the rocks.
- When police arrived an hour later, the boat was rocking violently from side to side and the tide was coming in.
- It was 5 hours before the master, crew and female passenger could safely leave the stranded vessel.

Right: Duty RLO Bryan Beck is interviewed for the TV at the scene.



Above: The salvage begins after the vessel is found to have structural flaws.
Below: *Matahari* ends its days being cut up into pieces to enable removal from the beach.



MANY years have passed since Mooloolaba was the largest fishing port on the East Coast but there always seem to be fishing boats in trouble.

A few months before *Matahari* became the second fishing boat to end up on the beach, **QF6 Mooloolaba** went to the assistance of the trawler **David Lawrence**.

The 18m-vessel displaced over 50 tonne and was located 22 miles ESE of Pt Cartwright.

He had lost all electrical power, engine, steering and all ancillary hydraulics and his winches were no longer operating.

Initially the trawler was under tow by another trawler but they were making very limited progress and formally requested aid.

The trawler was sighted approximately Australian Volunteer Coast Guard 20

20 nautical miles East of Pt Cartwright.

The trawler attempting to tow the *David Lawrence* had been making very slow progress and slipped his towline on our approach.

The tow was set-up with a new specially made-up bridle that had been prepared in recent weeks for just this

Returning the trawler to its berth.



sort of difficult heavy vessel situation and it worked just as envisaged.

Due to the disabled steering gear, the trawler would not tow directly astern and the adjustable bridle catered for this very effectively.

The sea conditions were somewhat less friendly than they had been closer inshore, a steady 6.5 knots average was maintained with around 150m of the heaviest towline deployed.

The next problem to be considered was that the trawler had its long, heavy stabiliser arms deployed outboard, but had no way of lifting them up without any power.

He was brought across the bar and into the river.

During the afternoon the vessel owners were able to lift the outrigger arms with endless chains and he was rafted to the trawler berths.

SIX MEN LOST AS FISHING BOAT ROLLS AND SINKS IN ATROCIOUS WEATHER

THE WORST recent commercial fishing tragedy was the loss of six lives when the beche-de-mer fishing vessel *FV Dianne* capsized and sank a few miles north-east of the Town of 1770 on a Monday evening in October.

There were seven men on board but only one member of the crew was able to get off the vessel and stay afloat, clinging to the hull, until he was chanced upon and rescued by a passing yacht.

Police search and rescue co-ordinator Sergeant **Jeff Barnett** said that "it was only through sheer luck that a passing couple on a yacht managed to hear the scream of the man that was rescued and he raised the alarm."

The yacht's skipper said the survivor did not have a life-jacket, was only wearing a pair of shorts and was 20nm away from where the vessel initially was thought to have sunk.

The missing six men were thought to have been below deck when the boat rolled in heavy weather. The survivor was reported to have heard his crewmates screaming and knocking on the hull while he hung onto it on the outside.

There were indications that the trawler floated for some time after sinking about midnight and that assisted the survivor who did not see any of his crewmates emerge.

No further survivors were found despite a large air and sea search that was hampered considerably by the weather hindering search efforts with seas up to 3m and 30 knot winds.

The rescue helicopter was stood down because of the weather and a couple of times aircraft were able to get up they were immediately forced back.

Twelve vessels and six helicopters with a fixed-wing aircraft were used initially

while the fixed-wing aircraft continued to search.

The search area expanded from 100 sq. nautical miles to almost 300 sq.nm and by the third day of the search the hope was that the six men would be found in a life-raft because the water temperature meant the chances of survival unsupported in the water was not promising.

The air and sea search continued with Water Police saying it was on a slightly different scale in different areas depending on weather and drift information but the hope was that survivors had managed to get to an area not yet searched.

Eventually, Water Police sonar located the converted scallop trawler a few miles off Round Hill Headland, near 1770 and



The FV Dianne.



Searching for the missing vessel in poor conditions.

with the helos returning to their bases in Bundaberg, Gladstone or Rockhampton

a full recovery operation commenced but only two bodies were found in the sunken trawler by police divers.

An assembly of specialist police and professional salvage crews began a recovery operation for the *FV Dianne* and prepared to raise the trawler to the surface.

A barge was towed to the scene in preparation but salvage operations were suspended due to the weather and the barge relocated to Bundaberg.

Maritime Safety Queensland said it was "a tragedy needing answers" and its Executive Director (Maritime Operations), **Jim Huggett**, described the incident as the worst he could recall in nearly thirty years with MSQ and acknowledged the efforts of all involved in the response.

"The search and rescue continued for three or four days in the hope of finding more of the six missing crew," Jim said.

"However, with no further survivors found, our efforts have shifted to a search for answers about why the *Dianne* capsized and sank.








Continued next page

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Continued from previous page

"This incident will be going to a Coroner's inquest and it will take time to put all the evidence together."

Jim is in charge of MSQ investigators who are working with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority lending technical expertise to the lead investigative agency, Queensland Police.

"The latest part of the operation is to recover the vessel, which will be inspected and analysed to determine any contributing factors.

"Our role is about technical details of the incident such as the stability of the vessel and what caused it to capsize.

"We and everyone else in the investigation are keenly aware that finding answers to the questions of what went wrong and why are of great importance, especially to the grieving families.

"We also hope the answers will point the way to future safety improvements for the industry and we are committed to that end."

Above: The sole survivor thanks rescuers as he leaves the police boat at the town of 1770.
Below: Four of the missing men.



GROUNDINGS GALORE FOR MARITIME QUEENSLAND

Maritime Safety Queensland said the tragic loss of life on the *FV Dianne* topped a list of incidents in the last quarter that proved once again the sea is an unpredictable environment with safety never guaranteed, even for those most familiar with it.

But the incident "wasn't the only one that involved us, to varying extents, in responses we'd gladly have done without."

"The recreational vessel *Southern Ocean* ran aground on Gould Reef with nine people aboard. We worked with the Queensland Police Service to ensure, as the highest priority, that all nine were safely rescued. We then turned our attention to helping organise the salvage of the vessel, with minimal damage to the reef being a primary objective.

"The fishing vessel *Mana* also grounded, this time on Lady Musgrave Reef. Once again there was no loss of life and no serious injuries, but we were heavily involved in removing pollutants from the vessel prior to its refloating by salvors. It's just as well we took that precaution, because once *Mana* was removed from the reef, she proved so badly damaged that the salvor was unable to

prevent her from sinking in deeper water.

"A little further south another fishing vessel, the 15-metre *Reward II*, ran aground on the beach at Eurong, Fraser Island. We helped secure the site, keeping curious onlookers at a safe distance, before again working with the crew and owners to arrange salvage. We are pleased to report that on this occasion a successful tow was arranged and the ship was able to make it to Bundaberg for repairs.

"The grounding disease must have been contagious. Even the **Australian Border Force** found it was not immune when its patrol vessel *Roebuck Bay* came to grief at Henry Reef, off the Lockhart River in far north Queensland. Once again we lent a hand as our Assistant Regional Harbour Master (Northern Ports), **David Ferguson**, coordinated the final leg of a skilful stern-first towing operation by the *Coral Knight*, calling on the skills of port pilots and *Svitzer* tug masters to get the *Roebuck Bay* safely into Cairns for repairs.

"The spate of groundings might be written off by some as bad luck, but any capable mariner knows that a grounding should, in most circumstances, be preventable. We are investigating, or assisting the lead investigative agency for each of these incidents, to determine the causes and what can be learned from them."



Mareeba man Brock Hawke (right) and girlfriend Grace Thong with a rescuer after they spent 11 hours at sea after getting into difficulties.

QF8 CREW NEED THEIR ZODIAC AS WELL TO FIND TWO MISSING KAYAKERS DURING A MAJOR SEARCH

TWO young kayakers spent 11 hours in crocodile and shark-infested waters after their vessel was swamped between Lucinda and Pelorus Island.

Water filled the vessel manned by 19-year-old **Grace Thong** and 20-year-old **Brock Hawke** about 1300 hours on a Saturday when they were well short of Pelorus Island, reported **Andrew Backhouse** from the *Townsville Bulletin*.

They abandoned the kayak and Ms Thong wore the only lifejacket on board as the couple trod water, trying to make land.

Battling through a strong current and winds, they made for the jetty at Lucinda but missed it by 200m, and were carried further out to sea.

They went on to endure another 11 hours in the water until about midnight when, by chance, they washed up on rocks at Hinchinbrook Island.

Meanwhile, the alert was raised about 1730hrs that the two kayakers were overdue.

Senior Constable **Nick Swan**, from Townsville Water Police, said that sparked a massive air and sea search operation.

The search was hampered by difficult weather conditions which included 45km/h winds and 3m seas.

It was called off at 0100 hrs to Australian Volunteer Coast Guard

start again at first light.

The duo were eventually found thanks to a methodical search method by a crew from **QF8 Townsville Coast Guard**.

Coxswain **Michael Dunkley** led the search and began searching the stretch between Lucinda and Pelorus Island, working north because of the southerly wind.

A fortuitous encounter with Mr Hawke's brother, who was also searching for the couple, provided information about the duo.

Water Police then advised the Coast Guard to check the coast of Hinchinbrook Island and the crew searched near George Point.

"We had to launch our zodiac vessel because of the shallow water," Michael

QF8 Townsville's rescue vessel at full speed.



Dunkley said.

Two of the crew volunteered to brave the rough water. Within 20 minutes they sighted the missing couple but were unable to land because of the weather.

The Coast Guard radioed the Water Police and the Queensland Government Air Rescue Helicopter was dispatched to the island at 0930hrs. By 1000 hrs they were at Ingham Hospital where they were treated for minor abrasions and dehydration.

Hospital staff confirmed they were in a stable condition.

Queensland Government Air Rescue Helicopter senior aircrew officer **Dan Hoare** said it was a positive outcome after the helicopter conducted two unsuccessful search sorties the night before.

The Bulletin understood the couple were advised not to attempt the expedition because of the bad weather.

Sen-Constable Swan said the duo had a lucky escape.

"At the end of the day this is a good outcome that we've located them but it could have quite easily ended up in death or serious injury," he said.

He said the rescue highlighted the need for people to check weather conditions and carry emergency equipment during voyages.

"They probably should not have gone out in those weather conditions, especially without an emergency beacon like an EPIRB," he said.

"It's not a legal requirement on a kayak but it is your responsibility to make sure you travel safely."

Ms Thong and Mr Hawke declined to comment.

AN EMPTY BOAT WASHES ASHORE SPARKING SEARCH FOR THE MISSING BOATIE

AN EMPTY boat washed onto shore in the middle of the night sparking a vessel and helicopter search in Central Queensland with mounting fears of a serious incident.

Shortly after midnight, the **Jim Warren**, flotilla commander of **QF11 Yeppoon** received a phone call from a Bangalee resident that he had found a 6m half-cabin fibreglass boat washed up on Farnborough Beach 800m north of the boat ramp.

Police were informed and after a check of the registration it was found that the boat belonged to a 40-year-old Mackay resident who had been visiting Yeppoon and had launched his boat from Rosslyn Bay Harbour where his vehicle was still parked.

Emergency services combined to find the missing man with Queensland Police Service's Maritime Search and Rescue Coordinator requesting the assistance of the RACQ Capricorn Helicopter Rescue Service.

At 0640 hrs the Capricorn Rescue helicopter was launched to search the coast and Keppel Bay Islands.

The helicopter crew commenced a search from the stricken vessel, along the coastline and then throughout the islands in an effort to find the missing man, however the crew were unable to locate him or any sign of his whereabouts.

As the primary Coast Guard vessel was already on an operation to Port Clinton it could not participate in the search but Coast Guard and police made numerous calls to organisations along the coast to alert them to the missing person.

The air search took approximately two hours to complete with the RACQ Capricorn Helicopter Rescue Service helicopter landing back at the Rockhampton airfield shortly before staff at The Hideaway on Great Keppel Island phoned the Coast Guard to report that a passing fisherman had picked up the missing person from Middle Island.

He later told the Coast Guard that he had anchored his boat off Middle Island in the afternoon to go snorkelling. However, when he surfaced, his boat had drifted away and was out of reach.

He swam to the island where he spent the night without food or water, having left his mobile phone in the boat.

He said he had been unable to attract the attention of the rescue helicopter when it flew overhead in the morning. Then some people in a dinghy saw him stranded and took him to Great Keppel Island.

He was subsequently provided with transport to Rosslyn Bay by the Keppel

Konnections ferry, suffering from cuts and scratches.

"I spoke to him this morning, he was quite shaken up," Jim Warren said.

"He was only in a pair of shorts and t-shirt and had to spend the night on the island."

Jim thought the boat may not have been anchored properly "or his anchor might not have been the right size for his boat."

The QF11 commander said this was the second recent incident when an unattended boat has resulted in snorkellers being stranded without any means of communication. Leaving at least one person in the boat is a sensible precaution.

In neither incident had the vessel trips been registered with the Coast Guard radio operators and so they were not reported as overdue.

No destination had been provided which could be the starting point for a search.

He encouraged boat owners to make use of the free Coast Guard service to provide trip plans before departure by using VHF radio, mobile phone or by lodging a trip sheet in person or by email.

He also offered some timely advice to check your anchors when going out on the waters.

"Make sure you have plenty of anchor rope out," he said.

"If you have five metres under your boat you should have at least 25 metres of anchor rope out.

"Your anchor should be appropriately sized for the size of the vessel."

Meanwhile the empty boat, which had drifted 15km overnight before washing ashore at Bangalee,



The helicopter search track.

Farnborough Beach, had quickly become unseaworthy and the insurance company become responsible for its removal from Farnborough Beach.

The boat owner had lost his vehicle keys as well as his mobile phone when his boat was overturned on Farnborough Beach so his wife drove from Mackay to provide alternative transport.

The empty boat washes-up on the beach.



The tide and waves make short work of it.



By the next tide it's a write-off all over the beach.



FISH, FISH HOOKS AND A FEW JELLYFISH CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR PEOPLE

FOR QF6 Mooloolaba the accident was almost incidental to an assist for a vessel returning from the Barwon Banks which called for assistance because the engine would not engage forward gear.

Ian Hunt reports that the rescue vessel was quickly underway and soon found the disabled vessel about 12 nautical miles north east of Pt Cartwright. A tow was



The fish.

quickly established and they headed back towards Mooloolaba.

The crew rafted up the vessel prior to dropping it off at the floating pontoon near QF6 and Ian noticed that the skipper of the vessel was favouring one hand.

It soon became obvious why. Five hours earlier he had caught a large snapper

The patient.



with a two hook rig, with the fish being caught on one of the hooks.

On removing the fish, the second hook had penetrated deep into his hand and could not be removed (much pain resulted when tried).

Undeterred, they kept fishing until they decided to head home mid-afternoon.

The skipper declined to go to the Emergency Department to have the hook removed to prevent infection.

"No," he said. "We'll take the boat back to Brisbane, then I'll go to the hospital."

The story was later put on Facebook that the fish hook barb had embedded itself under a tendon and that he was admitted to hospital for the hook to be surgically removed under general anaesthetic—no wonder it hurt when he tried to remove it.

At QF11 Yeppoon it was a fish that caused the problem, not a hook.

After his family's boat broke down 24km north-east of Rosslyn Bay Harbour around



The barb.

midday, eight-year-old **William Weaver** kept fishing while waiting for the Coast Guard vessel to reach their position beyond Barren Island.

The 6m power boat suffered a breakdown in big swell due to contaminated fuel and waited 90 minutes for help as conditions caused delays with rescue crews.

In that time, the family continued fishing and the young boy reeled in a red emperor.

Proud of his huge catch, he held the fish up to admire it but it slipped from his grasp and the dorsal fin punctured his leg, causing considerable pain.

Skipper of **Gormans Removals Rescue**,



The hook.

John Tait, reported the family were relieved to see the rescue crews when they reached them.

The sea was reportedly too rough for crews to get close enough to pass on first aid equipment or to transfer the patient so the boat was towed to Rosslyn Bay and the young boy was taken to Yeppoon Hospital to have the fish spike removed.

Jellyfish stings also have kept QF11 on the hop in recent months.

At the end of February a woman was stung by an irukandji off Great Keppel Island. She had been swimming when she felt intense pain in her right foot.

She was stabilised by the critical care flight paramedic before being transferred to Rockhampton Hospital in a stable condition.

Two weeks earlier a four-year-old boy was also stung while swimming off Great Keppel Island.

He also was stabilised on the scene and flown to Rockhampton Hospital in a stable condition.

A man in his 30s also was "stung in the rib cage area" and was suffering from pain. **Gormans Removals Rescue** skipper **James Fleming** and crew went to his aid with an onboard ambulance officer.

He said the man was on a "holiday break with his wife and friends".

"The job was to get over there, get the ambulance over there and deal with the issue and get back to base," James said. "A number of people have been stung but others have been stung and not affected the same way he was."

The patient was taken on board and provided with medical assistance during the return passage. When the rescue vessel arrived back at Yeppoon the patient was taken to Capricorn Coast Hospital.

Jellyfish are said to be rare for much of the year and are most commonly seen during the warmer months from December to March.



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SUDDEN STORM CAUSES HAVOC ON MORETON BAY FOR SEVENTEEN VESSELS

By Harvey Shore

ALL Coast Guard volunteers know those dark and stormy nights, when thunder and lightning crash outside, and rain pelts down almost vertically, whipped along by strong winds.

When you're tucked up safely at home, all warm and cosy...and then your phone rings.

One such classic "dark and stormy night" that
The 10m yacht grounded at Green Island.

hit Brisbane on a Sunday evening in February.

The Bureau of Meteorology recorded 167,000 lightning strikes in Brisbane that night.

More importantly, Water Police recorded that seventeen

commander **Steve Fleming** called me and two dozen other volunteers from our cosy houses and hot dinners, sending us into the maelstrom of lightning and rain, to assist boats caught in the wild conditions.

Those boats ranged from a tinnie swamped in the Brisbane River, to a 13-metre ocean-going yacht blown ashore at Lucinda Bay on Moreton Island.



The 13-metre yacht beached at Lucinda Bay on Moreton Island.

vessels on Moreton Bay struck trouble in the horrendous seas kicked-up by the sudden storm and called for help.

Water Police called QF2 Brisbane Coast Guard, and

QF2 volunteers worked late into the night, in the midst of heavy rain and lightning strikes, to rescue the most serious distressed vessels.

By Monday morning, we were still assisting vessels blown aground all over the Bay and taking calls from people wanting to be rescued and carried ashore.

Two of the biggest vessels grounded in the storm were a 10-metre yacht at Green Island, and the 13-metre yacht beached at

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Canting the 13m yacht over prior to re-floating her.

Lucinda Bay.

Commander Fleming was asked to assist both yachts to reach deeper water, and he visited both of them on Monday to inspect and assess their situations.

Judging that both vessels could be re-floated without damage, Commander Fleming spent the rest of Monday assigning three rescue boats and crews for both jobs and preparing special equipment such as extra-strong bridles and tow lines.



The 13m yacht at Lucinda Bay safely re-floated.

10m yacht at the top of the tide.

Commander Fleming took **Mark Sherwood** and me in our largest vessel, the 13m **CG-29**, accompanied by **Paul Burchell** and **Simon Gideon** in our 6m **CG-23**, and headed over to Lucinda Bay, to re-float the 13m yacht beached there.

This was certainly a challenge, since she was high and dry on the beach, but **The 13m yacht at Lucinda Bay, accompanied to deeper water by CG-23.**



Before dawn on Tuesday morning, our three boat crews gathered at QF2's Manly base for a briefing, then left before dawn to reach the two yachts before the 0800 hours high tide.

QF2 Training Officer **Allan Tennent** took **Geoff Stanhope, Brad McKibben** and **Mark Laurendet** in our 8m vessel **CG-22** to Green Island, where they quickly re-floated the

Tuesday's extra high tide came to our aid.

CG-23 took the yacht's halyard and used it to cant her over, while Steve Fleming used a strong bridle made the night before to enable **CG-29** to gently ease her off the sandy beach into deeper water.

Both operations went smoothly and professionally, and both yachts were undamaged and returned to port under their own power.

Cairns boaties caught out by the weather too

GOOD weather conditions turned rough for a number of hours on a February weekend putting a number of private vessels into difficulty in reef areas off the Far North Queensland coast, reported Sergeant **Andrew Ibell**, Officer in Charge of Cairns Water Police.

A line squall with strong winds with gusts in excess of 37 knots and heavy rain moved north over coastal and reef waters very quickly, catching a few boaties unawares.

Between 0800 hours and 1000 hrs, search and rescue authorities were involved in coordinating or monitoring at least 5 separate incidents where small vessel operators got into difficulty in the heavy weather conditions.

Eight nautical miles east of Mourilyan Harbour, the crew of a 4m dinghy activated their Emergency Positioning Radio Beacon (EPIRB) when the rough seas and heavy rain threatened to swamp their craft.

The vessel was travelling with another smaller dinghy at the time and became separated in the storm.

The 4m vessel made it safely to Mourilyan Harbour while the smaller dinghy came ashore 12 nautical miles away at Cooper Point.

The crew of a small vessel called a Mayday via marine radio when their vessel started taking on water near Oyster Reef.

A number of commercial tourist vessels responded with the dinghy being located and taken under tow to safety by one of these vessels.

An 18 foot vessel travelling between Cairns and Green Island reported via a Mayday radio call that they were taking on water and required assistance.

A tourist vessel responded and provided assistance to the vessel to safely return to shore.

Another vessel called to report by marine radio they were travelling between Michaelmas Cay and Yorkeys Knob and taking on water in the heavy sea conditions.

The progress of this vessel was monitored with it arriving safely in Yorkeys Knob.

The crew of a 6.2m vessel near Norman Reef contacted family ashore to report they were in difficulty.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority Challenger Jet responded to the scene. Contact was eventually established with the crew of the vessel by mobile phone establishing that they had made it into the calmer waters behind Norman Reef and no longer required assistance.

Throughout these incidents **QF9 Cairns** and **QF15 Innisfail**, Cairns Vessel Traffic Services (VTS), AMSA, Challenger Search Aircraft, EMQ Rescue Helicopter and Water Police Cairns coordinated responses to each of the incidents.

Rescue authorities thanked the commercial vessel operators who offered or responded to assist the vessels in difficulty.

While the incidents were all resolved in a relatively short time frame without the loss of any vessels or injuries to occupants, it is a timely reminder to boaties to regularly check weather conditions prior to and while out on the water.



Marooned on the rocks. The sunken runabout was not recoverable but some equipment including a large esky was retrieved.

Lucky escape for five fishermen after boat sinks near Great Keppel Island

QF11 YEPPON Coast Guard was called on to rescued five marooned spear fishermen one evening after their boat sank, reported **Leighton Smith**.

The five men were all Cuban nationals who spoke limited English, and were trapped on *The Child*, a rocky island adjacent to Barren Island, east of Yeppoon and Great Keppel Island, after their unattended boat sank while they were in the water fishing.

Flotilla Commander **Jim Warren** said that the men had been spotted by a passing fisherman, Coast Guard Marine Assist member **Darren Young**, when they displayed a V sheet distress sign at about

1600 hours on the north side of the island.

Mr Young then made a radio call to Coast Guard Yeppoon radio operator, **Ken Hudspith** who in turn informed the police and the Coast Guard mobilised a response.

Skipped by **Jim Goodsell**, the *Gormans Removals Rescue* departed Rosslyn Bay Harbour at 1710 hrs and was on scene at 1805hrs.

Mr Warren said the Coast Guard manoeuvred as close to the rocks as they safely could before asking the men to swim to the rescue vessel.

"They made a couple of trips to ferry their personal gear, spear guns and eskys over to



The rescue required the men to swim out to the Coast Guard vessel.

the rescue vessel," he said.

"There were no injuries but they appreciated the water that was supplied by the Coast Guard crew."

The vessel returned to harbour at 1920 hrs and the men were met by the owner who had lent the boat to them.

It is understood the person who loaned the boat to the men was a resident of Gracemere and that some of the fishermen were visiting from Brisbane.

Club Marine launches new website

COAST Guard sponsor Club Marine, Australia's leading provider of recreational boat insurance, has launched an all-new website with a crisp, mobile-friendly design and a raft of exciting new features designed to inform, entertain and assist the boating community while providing exclusive benefits to Club Marine members and agents.

The new website, intended to be an online boating lifestyle hub for all boaters, went live at the end of last year.

The company said that no matter whether viewers were Club Marine members, new to boating, or just exploring everything our fantastic on-water lifestyle has to offer, they were making it easier than ever to find everything needed to inspire and protect the boating lifestyle, online at everyone's fingertips.

Boaties were invited to check out the 'explore boating' section and immerse themselves in an expansive video library, read feature articles from Australasia's favourite marine lifestyle magazine Club Marine, and catch up on the latest news and featured events across the country.

There also is a new 'member benefits' section that brings together all the perks of being a Club Marine member so they can check out competitions and promotions, get discounts on everything from chandlery to repairs from our network of specialists, and find the nearest marine service providers.

There also are details about the Club Marine App and how members benefit from Club Marine Assist, the round-the-clock service that helps members when they need it most.

Anyone buying a boat or wanting to upgrade from existing insurance can review the insurance features specific to their type of boat and get a quote quickly and simply, with the option to buy online and receive a 5% discount.

Existing online insurance services for Club Marine members are even easier to access, including 'manage your policy' and 'make a claim'. These services can be used to renew a policy, update details, or get a certificate of currency emailed automatically within minutes. And lodging a claim online from a mobile device is now even simpler, with the new fully mobile responsive website giving a quicker, better online experience.

"A lot of work and effort has gone into creating what we believe is an extremely exciting and dynamic destination for members and non-members alike," said Club Marine CEO Simon McLean.

"At Club Marine, we're as passionate about boating as our members are. We wanted to create a website that shares our love of all things boating, while drawing on our immense experience in the marine industry. We've achieved that with a wonderful mix of entertainment, information, safety advice and essential services that are geared toward helping our members and the broader boating community to enjoy their boating as much as possible," said McLean.

"It's all part of our commitment to ensure boating's better with Club Marine."

At clubmarine.com.au there will be continuously uploaded new videos, magazine articles and latest news, along with important information for Club Marine members and vital safety advice for everyone getting out onto the water.

"I SHOULD'VE SWITCHED SOONER"

Karl Stubbs the Commuter



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The skipper and his three passengers cling to the hull of the upturned trimaran. *Photo from the police helicopter.*

A WATERPROOF PHONE SAVES THE DAY AND FOUR PEOPLE FROM THE WATER

KENNETH Graham took three teenagers aboard his 32' Farrier trimaran *Rush 3* in Manly Boat Harbour on a Sunday morning in mid-March, for a pleasant day's sailing to Tangalooma on Moreton Island.

He didn't log on with **QF2 Brisbane** Coast Guard as he left Manly. He just sailed off into a pleasant morning. What could possibly go wrong?

Four hours later, with the breeze gusting to 30 knots and the sea turning choppy, he decided to head for home.

The sail was up and *Rush 3* was making good speed. The teens were below deck,

By Harvey Shore

sheltering from the wind, but everything was going well.

Then, suddenly, a powerful wind shift hit the vessel side-on. It buried the leeward hull, and without warning the big trimaran nose-dived and capsized in the blink of an eye.

"A bullet of wind hit us and before we could react the boat was up on one hull and over she went," said Mr Graham who was on the boat with daughters Jade and Alice as well as her boyfriend.

The three teens in the cabin were hurled

upside down and in turmoil, unsure what was happening, and struggling to get out.

No one could reach life jackets or the EPIRB. One moment they were safe and sound – the next they were struggling for their lives underwater.

Owner Ken Graham spent several frightening minutes getting the teens, who included his two daughters, onto the upturned hull.

Then he looked around for help. No other vessels were in sight.

They were alone in a rough sea and out of touch.

Then his youngest daughter Alice held up her mobile phone. She'd been holding it when the trimaran capsized.

She kept a tight grip on her phone as they clung to the upturned trimaran. "I was thinking to myself, 'it's waterproof. I've got to hold onto it so we can contact someone,'" she said.

She dialled triple-0 but couldn't get through. Then she tried sending a text message to her mother. "We have capsized. Call 000," she wrote, and gave a rough position.

Luckily, this text message was received and Mrs Graham called triple-0, who alerted Brisbane Water Police.

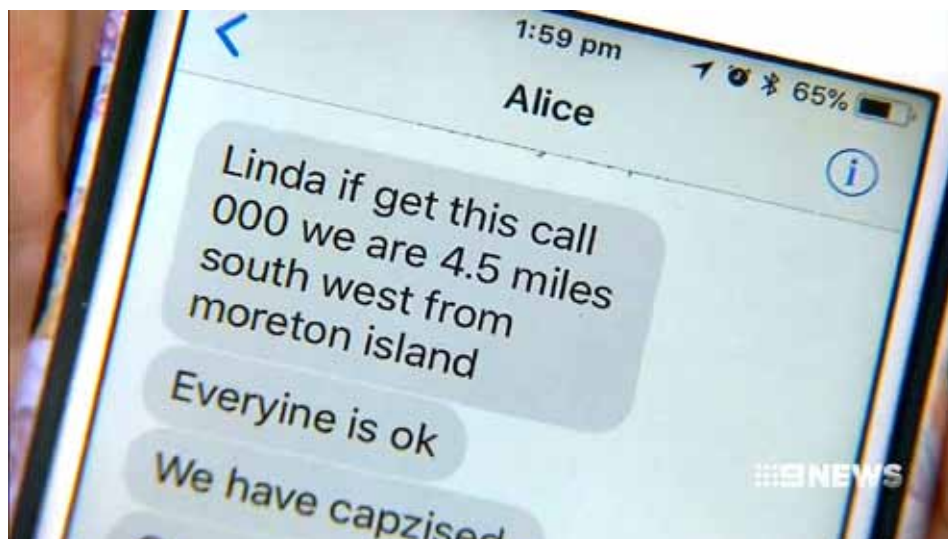
A SAR was immediately launched. The police helicopter and QF2 Brisbane Coast Guard were activated.

Unfortunately, the rough datum point given in the text message was indeed rough.

The search was initially directed to the wrong area of Moreton Bay. This potentially fatal error was quickly adjusted and QF2 administration officer **Paul Burchell** and his crew in *CG-23* were soon heading to the correct location.

They spotted *Rush 3*'s upturned hull and a

The life-saving text message that sent the rescuers to sea.





Above: Mark Sherwood ties lines to the upturned hull, while Simon Gideon and Paul Burchell stand guard in CG-23. Below: Mark Sherwood (left) tying lines to the upturned hull, assisted by the trimaran owner. Photos Craig Bowen.



Next day. A dry Mark Sherwood with *Rush 3*.



Water Police vessel moved in to rescue the people clinging to it.

The three teens were rushed back to QF2 in Manly, where ambulance officers were waiting.

Owner Ken Graham chose to stay out with *Rush 3*, as QF2's crew began preparing to turn her upright.

Meanwhile, QF2's deputy flotilla commander **Craig Bowen** had taken more crew from 'B' Roster aboard another flotilla vessel, **CG-22**, and arrived on scene. They were soon joined by flotilla commander **Steve Fleming**, who had the most experience righting upturned trimarans.

By this time, the wind had turned sharp and the light had started to fade.

Despite the risk of hypothermia, QF2 crewman **Mark**

Sherwood went into the water four times to secure lines to the upturned hull of *Rush 3*.

When Steve Fleming was satisfied the lines were positioned correctly, he began the process of flipping the trimaran over from the stern.

Despite the tall mast being intact and the sail fully raised underwater, the operation worked perfectly. The bow lifted smoothly up from the water, and in one deft movement, *Rush 3* flipped over and sat upright.

The trimaran suffered no damage in the process and was soon ready to be towed to Manly.

Despite being chilled to the bone from his numerous immersions, QF2 crewman Mark Sherwood (an experienced sailor) agreed to go aboard *Rush 3* and keep her steady during the tow.

Rush 3 reached the QF2 pontoon in Manly Boat Harbour at 2100 hours, where 'B' Roster crew spent another hour securing her and pumping her dry. She stayed there overnight and was claimed and removed next day by her grateful owner.

NOW LOST BUOYS KNOW HOW TO FIND THE WAY TO GO HOME

MARITIME Safety Queensland's Townsville office has been trialling "Contact Us" stickers lately with some of its navigation aids, given that these valuable pieces of equipment have a propensity, for a variety of reasons, to break free from their place of deployment and just go drifting.

In January this trial paid off handsomely when the Townsville office received a telephone call from a Rocky Ponds couple saying they had one of the buoys in their back yard.

Someone's back yard is certainly not the place where Maritime Safety Queensland chooses to install navigation markers which are, after all, meant to inform mariners where to find deep water.



Obviously something was wrong!

It transpired that this particular back yard is fringed by a beach upon which the buoy washed up, having somehow been cut free (perhaps by a passing boat running over its anchor rope) from its position at the recently-dredged Molongle Creek Channel five nautical miles to the south.

So there it was, all washed up and with no place to go, awaiting discovery by homeowners Helen and Glen who spotted the 'contact us' details riveted to the buoy.

They did exactly that by phoning MSQ to let them know where they could pick it up after they had loaded it into the back of their ute and stored it in their shed.

The buoy was soon back with its grateful owners at Townsville, who have decided that the "contact us" plate is a successful experiment.

MSQ also thanks Helen and Glen for their helpful intervention.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA RUNS THE GAMUT FROM STUCK ANCHORS TO LIFE JACKET SCARCITY AND DEAD ENGINES

ON A fairly rough afternoon with the wind gusting up to 20 knots a call was received in the radio room at the South Australian squadron's North Haven from a vessel drifting downwind in a northerly direction in the vicinity of Glenelg.

The vessel was not in any immediate danger with ample water around and plenty of depth. The information given to the duty

By Jack Djaic

The dead weight went away with the speed of a rocket, if only the rockets ever flew in that direction. The skipper of that vessel was visibly relieved of stress and worry upon being freed of such a 'heavy' problem.

The vessel was then followed to the Glenelg Marina where the paperwork was done, donation accepted and goodbyes said.

Quickly From Port Adelaide to North Haven

We are often prepared, ready and willing to be of service to the public in ways other than the usual search and rescue. In this

instance we helped a sailor by assisting him in transferring his yacht from a vessel repair place located in Port River to his mooring in North Haven public marina on a quiet, flat calm day.

The job was carried out by our *Nautic Star* duty vessel. The yacht needed some more tender loving care while at her mooring which was going to be done by her owner. A discussion ensued between our crew and the owner addressing the topics such as safety gear and their use as well as practical stowage, engine use, its maintenance, and

cleanliness of the engine well, use and stowage of pyrotechnics, usefulness of the electronics etc.

It was the time well spent with the yacht's skipper as it turned out to be a good knowledge refresher for all present.

The yacht and her skipper were then left comfortably secured at her mooring at North Haven.

Three life jackets for six POB

Occasionally our crews, probably country-wide, run across grossly neglected, poorly maintained, poorly equipped and inadequately manned vessels miles away from shore.

One such event happened to a North Haven duty crew. A telephone message was received by the radio room from a passing vessel that observed another vessel struggling to bring to life an outboard engine.

The observation took place in Barker Inlet half way between St. Kilda channel and Black Pole. The area is known for its shallows nearer the shores even at high tides.

Nautic Star was promptly dispatched to investigate and provide assistance if need be. According to the original information received there were three people on board the vessel, however it was amusing to notice that there were no less than six people present, three boys and three girls, all in their late twenties.

On approach, the vessel did not give the impression of glint or glimmer, the rego number was hardly readable, the hull and windscreen were smeared and stained with dirt.

Bigger disappointment arose upon stopping alongside and looking into the inside of the hull – the bottom was nearly all covered with dead tree leaves, the gear was strewn all over the place unsecured and, of course, uncleaned. Disregarding the first impressions, the immediate question put to these people was "what is the problem?"



crew was that the vessel was not able to fully retrieve its anchor.

Our *Intrepid* was the duty vessel of the day and promptly set off to the area to look for a vessel adrift. Sailing against a stiff southerly it took about 45 minutes to cover the distance of some 12 nm and start searching. The effort was not exceptionally difficult as there were not many boats in the surrounding area while one of them really stood out from the crowd.

It was a 35 foot Riviera, white colour, and of course a fly-bridge, with a middle aged man and his 20-something companion as crew. They explained that their anchor had been raised to about 2m below the surface and could not be lifted any further due to the anchor holding a very heavy, supposedly up to 200 kilogram, metal contraption that the anchor picked up from the bottom upon retrieval.

The contraption was of unknown nature, origin or how long it was lying about on the bottom. There were no means available of handling this kind of weight any further.

The solution became obvious—hello bolt-cutters—and that was suggested to the skipper. He could not have been happier when one was duly retrieved from the *Intrepid's* stowage.

A couple of careful approaches by the *Intrepid* had to be made in closely spaced rough sea in order to pass the cutters on to the skipper who then easily cut his, about 8mm, anchor chain near the anchor bracket.





Answer: the battery was flat.

Having already realised that there will be more than one thing wrong with this vessel the answer to the next question was already known before the question was even asked: “what type of battery is it—car type or marine?”

“Car type.”

So, they needed a tow to St. Kilda ramp.

Fine, that wasn’t a problem. “Will you all don your life jackets now, please, before we commence the tow.”

Obligingly they eventually retrieved them from some obscure place and started washing the jackets with the sea water, all three of the jackets; more leaves and cob webs were falling off the jackets.

Having done the washing the boys promptly donned the jackets to the chagrin of the girls.

“Aren’t the girls going to don a jacket each as well?”

“We’ve only got three jackets here” blabbered the boys.

“At least then be gentlemanly and courteous to your female friends and LET THEM wear the jackets, (you...)”.

“If you fall over the side at least you’d have more agility to walk through the shallows till we pull you in again.”

If only it was okay to punish them by having them walk a mile through the shallows all the way to the ramp. (This is a popular area for crabbing during the season, lots of people come crabbing around here, especially at low tide).

Shortly after they were moored at St. Kilda ramp and were offered a lecture on marine batteries, boat maintenance and mandatory equipment which they carefully and with interest listened to, to the satisfaction of our crew who had a feeling of a positive achievement.

“Our position is...”

...800m out of North Haven.”

Or so they would have us believe .

Once in a while the words are uttered amongst us: “We don’t need the practice of looking for them,” which is true enough, but we go looking for them anyway.

In this instance these two guys reported

to our base at North Haven by phone that they couldn’t start their engine and requested a tow back to the ramp.

It should be only a quick job they reckoned because they’re only about 800m directly out of the marina .

Nautic Star promptly left the base expecting to be back shortly.

The vessel made the appropriate distance in the said direction only to find that there was no one there. Obviously the given position was wrong and that meant the vessel requesting help could now be anywhere within a few miles from here.

A systematic search was required to approach all the vessels in the reasonable vicinity and check them out. It took about half an hour to visit a few boats before the one in trouble was found some **two and a half miles** from the entrance to North Haven marina.

The two boys were briefly told that they have been terribly wrong with judging their distances and that if their situation was of a more serious nature they could have been in bigger trouble due to the time lost to arrive to the scene.

Once back at the ramp the boys were given, with consent, a short tutoring in how to judge distances for which they were thankful. They were also invited to enroll in a PIC course soon.

A long tow to Garden Island ramp

The sailing channel through Barker Inlet from Black Pole to the Garden Island ramp is narrow and often substantially shallow.

A call was received by the duty radio

operator that a vessel had run out of fuel and was unable to return to its destination—Garden Island ramp.

Nautic Star was dispatched to assist this vessel that was anchored just a short distance from Black Pole. (What we call Black Pole is actually the Entrance Beacon into the Barker Inlet sailing from the sea, and it’s not black at all.)

By the time *Nautic Star* arrived the tide was at its lowest point, making the navigable channel very difficult to navigate with a tow due to the channel’s shallowness and narrowness.

The next high tide wasn’t going to be of much help as the difference in levels wasn’t going to be sufficient for a safe passage. Another solution had to be considered.

The only other possibility was to take the tow through Port River, North Arm, Speedboat Club section of the North Arm to arrive to the back of Garden Island.

The time needed to complete this assist was to be at least 2 hours at 6-7 knots of speed. The boaties were asked to don the life jackets and the convoy got onto its merry way.

Well it was merry until they arrived at the Garden Island bridge that separates North Arm from the Speedboat Club section. The speed boats’ competition was in progress so the club’s marshals were preventing vessels from proceeding past the bridge.

This situation meant that *Nautic Star* and her tow were now stranded with nowhere to go. A serious discussion ensued with the marshals who were adamant that “none shall pass.”

Our crew demanded that the racing be stopped for the amount of time required for the assist to pass, which was a matter of some 10 to 15 minutes. Luckily, the race organisers understood the gravity of the situation and obliged by delaying the next series of racing between two-boats-at-a-time so that we could pass on.

We even got a little bit of PR as our passing was brought to the attention of the racing spectators. The rest of the job was successfully concluded with a little tutoring how to ensure sufficient amount of fuel for the trip planned.





Alongside the sinking boat and the skipper decides to bail with a bucket until it proves pointless.

A SINKING BOAT IS A QUESTIONABLE PRESENT FOR BOATIE AT CHRISTMAS

ON Christmas Eve, QF6 Mooloolaba's *White Sunday* crew were undertaking a training activity about 2 miles off Alexandra Headland and about a mile or so north of Point Cartwright.

The training involved a drift analysis using the flotilla dummy **Fred**, followed by some practice throwing the heaving line at a floating target. We were interested in checking what effect the 15 to 20 knot northerly and big flood tide would have on the drift patterns that day.

At about five minutes to midday we had just begun to make our way back to base for a lunch break when a radio call from our radio operator informed us that he had a report of a boat off Kawana which was taking water quickly and was sinking, with 4 people on board.

A "black hulled runabout" was our only description at that time.

We immediately changed helmsman and course and ran *Mooloolaba Rotary Rescue* at best speed south past Point Cartwright to the Kawana area keeping a close watch for a black-hulled boat which might be our target.

It was not difficult to find. We saw a black-hulled runabout about half a mile off Kawana Beach still under power, making poor headway into the now 20 knots of northerly chop, white-capping on a moderate easterly swell.

The boat's very high bow running angle was also a confirmation that there may be

By John Burge

water in the stern.

We ran straight to it and pulled up about 20m off, upwind. Our target vessel

The boat goes down.



immediately came to us, albeit at almost a right angle to our hull.

We could immediately see there was urgency. The crew were in water half way to their knees and the water was lapping the transom.

We had prepared lines for bow and stern and readied some fenders on the 7-minute high speed journey and with some difficulty in the sloppy conditions, secured the boat's bow and stern on our starboard side.

As soon as possible, and with great care in the lumpy conditions, we took off the three middle-aged men who were crewing the fishing trip and brought them through our starboard side door to the safety of our deck.

The skipper was asked whether he wanted to come aboard or stay, while we got a pump going, and he opted to stay and bail with a bucket while we set up, primed and started the pump.

We did get the pump primed and started and pumped some water from the hull which was now quickly settling. The ocean was winning this race.

Our next decision was made for us as the pump prime faulted, possibly because the intake hose could not be kept vertical and the foot valve was most likely opening and closing in the slop.

At this stage the boat was clearly sinking. We literally pulled the skipper from his now submerging vessel and used the lifting strop to get him in through the side hatchway.

He was understandably very distressed and shocked and had muscle cramp, with a possible hand/finger injury.

The three others were shocked and fatigued but seemed ok.

In the meantime the runabout had completely submerged, sinking stern first

in the usual manner of outboard-driven boats with only a bit of the bow showing.

Lines were cleared and the boat allowed to go. This was to avoid any fouling with *Mooloolaba Rotary Rescue's* drive and steering mechanisms, and to allow us the opportunity to get to medical help quickly.

The submerged boat moved about 10m away and its contents were now well scattered, the buoyant ones beginning to drift inshore towards Kawana Beach.

In the meantime police and ambulance and MSQ had been alerted, so we made our way at a safe speed back to the base pontoon to seek ambulance assistance for any injuries or shock.

We were joined by the police RIB on our way upstream to our pontoon.

So what's the questionable Christmas Gift?

The best possible gift would have been to have been able to bring both the crew and their boat, back to safety, but in the circumstances that was really not a viable option.

We got the people to safety on our vessel and possibly saved lives in doing so.

Our training stresses that people's lives are always our first priority and we managed that, so I guess that was our next best, or probably the best Christmas present.

When the ambulance officers and police officers had left the base pontoon we took *Mooloolaba Rotary Rescue* out again to the site of the sinking, to see whether we could gather any belongings for the owner. The boat was still there, still floating with its bow tip just showing above the water this time much closer inshore.

We contemplated the possibility of attaching a buoy but it was already too close to the beach to ensure the safe operation of the rescue vessel.

It was now the responsibility of MSQ and we would await the instructions of the Harbour Master on whether it was a

After its eventful voyage the distressed vessel finally is dragged onto the beach.



With the vessel in the surf-line the bobcat gets ready for action.

navigation hazard and they would instruct if they required us to do anything further.

There were no floating items; we learned later that they had been collected by the good work of the **Kawana Surf Lifesavers** and were being held for the owner.

Clayton's Towing then did a great job in retrieving the vessel from the beach to reduce any environmental impact.

We can only guess why a vessel which had been safely to Caloundra Twelve Mile that morning would start to take water on the return journey.

Perhaps a bung had become dislodged, but that would not have caused the massive water ingress, possibly a crack in the hull opened by punching into the northerly slop on the way home, or a crack or split in the transom.

There was certainly no way that the

standard bilge pump could cope and the rapid rate of ingress once we got the boat alongside, indicated a serious gap of some sort had opened up.

By the way, the earlier training with Fred did prove useful. We were able to predict quite accurately which way the vessel and debris would drift – a small side learning in a very busy hour of high adrenaline.

Footnote: By Deputy Commander QF6, Steve Bellamy.

At around 1600 I met up with the owner at Kawana Beach and the vessel was about 75m offshore drifting south.

After a call to their insurance company it was agreed that the insurer would cover the salvage costs and Claytons Towing was called.

If the vessel was left to its own devices it would have been a mess all over the beach, which is an important turtle hatchery.

Around 1730hrs they arrived, assessed the scene and arranged for the gear to get the boat from the surf line.

After a short briefing with the crew on the QF6 vessel, Claytons then hooked up a line and started to drag it ashore.

It was all going well until it hit a sand bar and the extra strong plasma rope decided it had had enough.

With a loud whistle and crack the line parted.

The vessel had come close enough inshore for the steel cable to be hooked on and it was dragged up the beach until the suction of the sand held it fast.

This is when they used the bobcat to roll over the hull.

As it rolled over the owner was very happy as he got his expensive cooler bag back.

The boat was then dragged back up the beach to the waiting tilt-tray tow truck.

A sad end for the boat but a safe one for all on-board.

There's always another boat.



Aground on Flinders Reef.

A QF3 REDCLIFFE RESCUE ON A REEF WHILE QF6 MOOLOOLABA LISTENS IN

Coast Guard **Mooloolaba QF6** is a 24-hour station and on some nights the radio watch is switched through to trained Coast Guardians who run the operation from their homes, to relieve the radio crews from sitting up all night through the week, when many work day jobs as well.

One such operation is run from my home and we use our spare bedroom for this setup, which consists of a roll top desk, a VHF radio and a computer all linked back to headquarters.

This allows me to rest on the bed until a call comes through, and on some nights with strong wind warnings or very bad weather, I have been able to have a few hours of sleep.

This was not to happen a few weeks ago, as deep into the night I heard a MayDay call – so of course my ears are alert and I'm sitting in front of the radio with my heart pumping.

This is what we are trained for – the worst possible scenario.

With not a second's hesitation **VTS Brisbane**, who also monitor 24 hours a day, responded.

They are there for all shipping in and out of all ports in Brisbane, which is a big job.

What I heard was that a yacht with four men on board had run aground on Flinders Reef (off Cape Moreton) and their boat was taking water and sinking.

Water Police were scrambled, plus a helicopter and also **QF3 Redcliffe** Coast Guard and **VMR Bribie Island** – what a great response from my end, but I know the guys on the distressed vessel probably thought it all took too long and nothing

Australian Volunteer Coast Guard 38

By Sue Clarke
(Her story right hand page)

much was happening.

VTS kept talking with them, monitoring that they were all OK and letting them know what was happening.

From my end I was just so pleased we have these excellent men and women who are highly trained continually to respond to such emergencies.

We live in a great country and I am so grateful knowing that my family or myself will always be helped in times of need.

As the night continued, I heard the helicopter crew talking with the water police boat, finding out their position and estimated time they would be at the reef.

Coast Guard Redcliffe tow the stranded yacht off Flinders Reef the next morning.



The helicopter I imagine with their big light shining down would have given these desperate men some comfort and fortunately the tide was dropping so their water ingress problem was not as urgent.

The Coast Guard Redcliffe boat crew, who were on their way within 20 minutes of their call, were on the scene shortly after the police and once the situation was observed, and all seemed safe to leave the yacht's crew on board until daylight, those good men and women went back to their cold beds, knowing they had responded as usual to a crisis and that it had been averted.

The helicopter assessing the situation told the police boat crew they would stand by until they arrived and advised them the best option for rescue of the stricken men was off a rock at the end of the reef.

Once the police boat crew arrived the helicopter flew back to base, to standby for their next assignment.

After that the radio went quiet, the rescue mission was nearly over and another wonderful mission was complete without loss of life.

From an update I read, the men stayed on board and were rescued at first light, back to Scarborough, but the salvage crew could not get their boat there before the next high tide, so requested Coast Guard Redcliffe to do the job.

As always, they responded with a yes and took the boat back to the slip yard to be assessed.

All was well.

Although I could go back to bed, I went and made a cup of coffee reflecting on the amazing men and women who spend their lives in service to others.

I take my hat off to them, as from my safe bedroom, sitting at a roll top desk speaking on the radio, I am not cold or wet, I do not risk my life for others and yet I know without the back-up of a team, these brave folks' job would not be possible.

So, I applaud all those who sacrifice their time and sometimes their lives to keep us safe.

Well done!

FIRST IN ALL THINGS

I AM always amazed at the interesting backgrounds, varying talents and skills possessed by our volunteers at QF6 Mooloolaba, writes Ian Hunt.

One such QF6 member is Sue Clarke, who joined QF6 in January 2015 and who is now a base station radio operator and is also the first female QF6 chaplain.

Sue is no stranger to being first in many fields, as after leaving Queenwood Girls School she became the first female optical mechanic and worked with O.P.S.M. and other companies.

Sue also won the first Women's Championship Sailing trophy at the Balmoral Sailing Club in Sydney.

After marrying, Sue spent time in Arnhem Land at the Numbulwar Mission Station, where she was their first pre-school teacher and first banker and enjoyed her life there until she and her husband Bill returned to Sydney to raise their three children.

Sue and Bill had a magical and adventurous 46-year marriage until she became a widow when the love of her life was taken out by melanoma.



Before that, Sue was one of the first Life Coaches in Queensland, having trained with the Life Coaching Academy USA and was Secretary of the *Christian Counsellors Association*.

She also spent time as the first female on the board of *Focus on the Family Australia*, attending board meetings in Melbourne and also

freezing through winter visiting Canberra to sit on the first Regional Women's Advisory Council under Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. John Anderson, she found herself adding value to the amazing women contributing to our nation's policy-making for three years.

Now Sue happily spends her time, after a stint at Nambour Hospital, as one of the many chaplains serving the people on the Sunshine Coast.

Sue has the honour of utilising her house for the female QF6 radio operators who feel safer in a home environment to do the late night watch shifts, as Mooloolaba Coast Guard services all boats 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

This is the first time a female has hosted night watch in her home.

As well as doing day time shifts in the radio room, Sue also has the opportunity to go to sea on the yellow Coast Guard boats to conduct a service for and support people scattering the ashes of their loved ones.

Sue also makes arrangements for anyone who wants to place a plaque on the QF6 Memorial Wall in Penny Lane Park, as a wonderful opportunity to honour their loved ones with a lasting tribute.

Sue is also a Justice of the Peace (Qual) if needed.

Sue admires the Coast Guard crews, as they are all instantly available when anyone at sea in trouble needs their help. She lives in the shadow of many who have gone before, assisting those "who go down to the sea in ships" and have found themselves in trouble – she is able to pray that all goes well.

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South Australian training commodore and budding radio star Brenda Hermesen at the mike.

THE South Australia squadron resumed training activities in earnest after the Christmas period and holidays with a large group of members from **SAF1** and **SAF6** gathered at North Haven to eagerly undertake an SSSS survival theoretical and practical course.

It was on a warm day that made the participants all too eager to remain in the water even past the required exercise time. (Photos below.)

Certainly beats conducting such an exercise during our winter months.

Heartfelt thanks go to our safety vessel crew **Eliza Camac** and **Jamie Corry** as well as the stand by lifesaver **Jamie Prizrenac**.

It's planned to continue this kind of training until all members who require it, in all SA flotillas, have been through the process.

Other regular training addressing the variety of seamanship, navigation and radio operation skills, while not forgetting the first aid and CPR, officer's courses,

leadership courses as well as TAE skill sets, will continue on a pre-planned schedule that's regularly organised and reviewed by the training personnel in all of our flotillas under the watchful eye of the Squadron Training Commodore **Brenda Hermesen**.

Commodore Hermesen convened a training seminar for all South Australian training personnel towards the end of last year and it was well attended with all the flotilla training officers, flotilla executives and squadron training vice-captains taking part.

The seminar addressed topics such as MAR training subjects including the content, and the methods of passing the knowledge on to the listeners/trainees.

An extensive explanation was given of the methods and procedures regarding the correct recording of training outcomes as they are related to each individual.

The session took all day to conclude and was extremely well received and

appreciated by those present.

Training of MAR subjects to members at **SAF1** North Haven and **SAF10** Port Vincent also was well attended by an enthusiastic audience of learners in good numbers at both venues.

Additionally, and to the satisfaction of **SAF10**, the regular training effort produced a couple of new Coxswains Certificate II as well as vessel skippers, thanks to this qualification.

We never ceased to be amazed and very appreciative of the energy Brenda puts into her role of being a training organiser, lecturer and supervisor.

She even found time to hold an informative session on air with a local radio station. The topics of discussion, of course, included who we are, what we do, and how to join us as the time on air went on.

The session was meant to be a short one, perhaps some 15 minutes, but the talk by Brenda became so interesting that the station presenters let the discussion go on for about an hour. Well done, we thank Brenda for her effort.



FORTY YEARS BEFORE THE MAST AND THEY STILL WON'T LET HIM GO

Phil Smith recently celebrated his 40th Anniversary as a member of QF2 Brisbane Coast Guard, writes Harvey Shore.

He joined QF2 in October 1977, five years after it was founded.

Phil is the longest continuously-serving member of the flotilla and still reports for duty as a regular crewman on 'B' Roster.

He's been a coxswain and led many daring rescues at sea. These days he mostly keeps watch in QF2's radio room, but he's still actively involved in rescues.

Phil spent his 40th Anniversary standing watch in the radio room, answering calls from boaties in trouble at sea.

It was a busy Sunday – with calls for help coming from all over Moreton Bay.

Late that afternoon, Phil was directing a QF2 vessel to a breakdown near the mouth of the Brisbane River, when he heard a PanPan on VHF-16 from a solo fisherman whose motor had just failed while crossing the South Passage Bar.

He calmly responded to the distressed



Phil Smith with his 40-year Long Service Award, surrounded by his 'B' Roster shipmates.

vessel, while quickly re-directing QF2's rescue vessel to its location.

The DV's skipper later told news media, "I was on my own, in the middle of the Bar, when my engine cut out.

"Waves and breakers were all around me, some about one metre high. I was panicking

and called Brisbane Coast Guard for help.

"The guy on the phone kept me calm until that big yellow boat arrived. I was safe! I want to thank everyone that helped me, especially that guy on the phone."

That guy on the phone was 40-year Coast Guard veteran Phil Smith.

...and Frank Millican reaches 30 Years of Service in Townsville

FRANK has been in the QF8 Townsville Coast Guard for 30 years and during that 30 years he has been flotilla commander twice, from 1991 to 1993 and 1996 to 1997 as well as flotilla training officer (1994 to 1995) and flotilla deputy commander (1995 to 1996).

He became the North Queensland deputy commodore from 1998 to 2002 and squadron commodore from 2002 to 2006.

Frank was awarded substantive rank of squadron commodore in 2006 and has been training officer again for 12 months, overseeing all training in Townsville.

Frank is a qualified trainer and assessor, which provides vital support to the trainers within his Crew C1 with his wealth of knowledge and experience.

During the time Frank served on the Townsville flotilla's executive and North Queensland squadron executive he performed all these duties with great integrity.

He has provided interaction between external organisations for the Coast Guard ensuring the reputation of AVCGA was always held in the highest regard.

Frank participates in all the fund-raising activities within QF8. While holding executive positions with QF8, Frank is a vital member of fundraising for the flotilla's ongoing costs. As commander and deputy he was a significant member of the Townsville executive which provides a service to community groups and EMQ organisations in the Townsville area, ensuring that Townsville Coast Guard is a respected member of our community.

Frank was awarded the 20 year Long Service award in 2007 and the National Medal in 2004.



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