

MARINE RESCUE QUEENSLAND

Autumn 2013



FREE



The Official Journal

Volunteers Saving Lives

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State Council

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Chairman -	David Hodge	0403 480 316
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Marine Rescue Queensland

RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

Squadron Call Sign		VHF Repeaters	HF (2Meg)	27MHZ	VHF
VMR ST PAULS					
VMR THURSDAY ISLAND	VMR 422	22, 82	YES	YES	YES
VMR WEIPA	VMR 430		YES	YES	YES
VMR AURUKUN	VMR 498				YES
VMR KARUMBA	VMR 490	80		YES	YES
VMR BURKETOWN					YES
VMR MORNINGTON ISLAND	VMR 457			YES	YES
VMR BURDEKIN	VMR 481	80	YES	YES	YES
VMR BOWEN	VMR 487	21	YES	YES	YES
VMR WHITSUNDAY	VMR 442	81, 82, 22	YES	YES	YES
VMR MIDGE POINT	VMR 458	81, 21			YES
VMR MACKAY	VMR 448	80, 21	YES	YES	YES
VMR GLADSTONE	VMR 446	82	YES	YES	YES
VMR ROUND HILL	VMR 477	81, 82	YES	YES	YES
VMR BUNDABERG	VMR 488	22, 80, 81	YES	YES	YES
VMR HERVEY BAY	VMR 466	22	YES	YES	YES
VMR BRIBIE ISLAND	VMR 445	81, 21		YES	YES
VMR BRISBANE	VMR 401	81	YES	YES	YES
VMR RABY BAY	VMR 455	81	YES	YES	YES
VMR NORTH STRADBROKE	VMR 449	81	YES	YES	YES
VMR VICTORIA POINT	VMR 441	81	YES	YES	YES
VMR JACOBS WELL	VMR 450	82	YES	YES	YES
VMR SOUTHPORT	VMR 400	81, 82, 22	YES	YES	YES
VMR CURRUMBIN	VMR 420	82	YES	YES	YES
VMR POINT DANGER	VMR 460	22	YES	YES	YES

AFFILIATED SQUADRONS

VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE ST PAULS	Moa Island	C/- Thursday Is.	(07) 4069 4124
VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE THURSDAY ISLAND	PO Box 1018	Thursday Is. 4875	(07) 4069 2000
VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE WEIPA	PO Box 580	Weipa 4874	(07) 4069 7535
VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE AURUKUN	C/- Shire Council	Aurukun 4871	(07) 4060 6120
VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE KARUMBA	PO Box 163	Karumba 4891	(07) 4745 9999
VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE BURKETOWN	PO Box 68	Burketown 4830	(07) 4745 5101
VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE MORNINGTON IS	PO Box 1854	Gununa 4871	(07) 4745 7336



STATE PRESIDENT'S REPORT



When two people meet for the first time in a social situation, we are used to covering any awkwardness with a statement like "how's this weather?" But seriously how's this weather? We are used to our friends in the gulf region experiencing their normal monsoon conditions at this time of year whilst we on the east coast get a few showers from time to

time. Instead this year it's clean the other way around. The gulf has experienced much drier than normal conditions whilst the east coast has been hammered since January and at time of writing at the end of February, these conditions show no sign of abating, with the weather bureau keeping a watchful eye on a low pressure system off the north Queensland coast once again.

During this time a number of unique situations have occurred and many of our squadrons have been pushed to the limit. I have lived in the Redlands area of South East Queensland since 1972, yet I personally saw Cleveland Point cut by flood waters for my first ever time.

In Bundaberg the situation was once again very serious, with that Squadron called upon to perform many lifesaving tasks in both the Burnett River and adjacent offshore waters. I maintained close contact with both Gary Dick and Graeme Morley, but felt somewhat useless in trying to support them because I couldn't have transported resources or personnel to them anyway as they were cut off!

Most squadrons faced a tough time particularly over the Australia day long weekend. I am aware that more than 20 jobs for out of control vessels were let go, either because appropriate authority was not available to board the vessel or because the nearest squadron was pushed to the limit.

The worst outcome throughout the state was very minor damage caused when a berthing operation was in progress and a tornado started! I wish to openly congratulate my members for the conscientious, safe and professional manner with which you have conducted yourselves throughout this extraordinarily difficult time.

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DRIFTING VESSELS

An issue of contention for some time amongst VMR crews has been the management of drifting vessels when the owner cannot be readily identified and contacted. An analogy I use in this situation is akin to someone parking their motor vehicle in the right lane of the M1 and walking away from it. Just because this is an incredibly dangerous

situation, does not give another person the right to attempt to move the vehicle. Only the appropriate authorities can make such a move. It is the same with VMR crews. I am acutely aware of a number of factors:

- Our VMR crews join with the motive of assisting the boating public and strongly desire to do what they can to preserve both life and property
- The argument can often be made that a drifting vessel presents a hazard to other shipping in the area and should be removed for safety reasons
- There is a clear public expectation that we will not disregard reports of drifting vessels and take action
- A number of our squadrons have received often passionately negative publicity for not attending to drifting vessels reported to them in a timely fashion.

We sought clarification from authorities on this matter and indeed I attended a meeting specifically relating to unattended drifting vessels. The outcome was that only a harbour master, or delegated shipping inspector can authorise the boarding of an unattended vessel. In the next few months I will be visiting as many areas as I can and distributing the relevant information on dealing with unattended drifting ships. At a State level we will also endeavor to develop that squadrons can implement for this common situation to ensure their protection. In the meantime please refer all such cases to either Harry or myself and we will ensure the legal safety of our crews before proceeding.

Remember though importantly that any person may take reasonable action to save a life, so if life is in danger or reasonably suspected of being in danger, the above does not apply and the activity is a SAR.

INTRODUCTION OF SNJ

The time is almost upon us at which AMSA will assume jurisdiction of maritime matters nation-wide and implement the single national jurisdiction system. At time of writing there are no major immediate updates to the impact this will have on Marine Rescue operations in Queensland.

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Next week the Secretary Manager and State Training manager will both journey to Canberra for the National Volunteer Marine Search & Rescue Committee meeting. A key focus of this meeting will be introduction of SNJ. Again the early indications are that VMR in QLD have done the right thing in heading down the commercial TDM07 path and that this strategy may well be adopted nationwide.

NAME CHANGE

Our esteemed Vice President Mr Ron Matlick has been working hard in the background on our marketing. In line with this and to make ourselves a household name, the State Council approved a move towards promoting ourselves as simply 'Marine Rescue Queensland'. This aligns us with our counterparts in both NSW and WA and means that half of the states in Australia are now using this designation. Our letterhead has been altered to reflect this with the caption in the footer of page 'Volunteers Saving Lives' to remind everyone that we are indeed volunteers. Stay tuned as this strategy progresses!

TRAINING AND TRAINING AUDITS

Our State Training Officer Mr Gary Radford after an initial period under the wing of State Training Manager Mr Robert Brock, is now officially functioning with complete autonomy. Gary has been a gift to us with extensive experience in the fishing industry before coming to Marine Rescue. Gary has now started to visit squadron auditing training paperwork. The objective is not to punish squadrons who do not have everything perfectly setup but rather to assist squadrons in identifying any problems and correcting them. Gary has an excellent approach to his work and his assistance has been very well received.

Robert Brock will also now be travelling throughout the state checking on the currency of our current skippers. He will be working with squadrons to ensure that they have a skipper re-accreditation process in place and that it is being followed. Robert will work with existing skippers and check that both their knowledge and skills are up to scratch. Rob has announced to me that even I will be subject to this process. I find it reassuring that someone will be taking the time to check that I am up to date with all current and emerging legislation and that my skills are at the required standard. Rob is a great guy to work with and the worst outcome for me is that I might need to brush up on

something before a shipping inspector starts asking me difficult questions!

Marine Rescue Queensland exists in a rapidly changing landscape. I'm certain I will be communicating more changes in future articles. However I am equally certain that we are well placed as a team in Queensland to meet future challenges. I know to a large extent that the eyes of the nation are on us. I'm both incredibly proud and at the same time humbled to be working with such a great team of people.

Keith Williams
State President

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VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Wow, what a summer season

With the various weather events from Weipa to Currumbin our members have performed in a most professional manner on the water. A few of our rescue bases did receive some damage when hit by 70kt winds and this showed how dangerous it was out on the water. There have been a few news items on unmanned vessels breaking moorings and our members not being able to provide assistance. Keith, our state president, will be meeting with Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, Maritime Safety Queensland and Queensland Water Police in March to discuss this issue after the last flood event to see what can be done.

I attended the Moreton and Southern Zone meetings where the issue of power failures was discussed, as some squadrons were without power for several days. To that end all agreed to review processes and equipment needed to maintain radio coverage during these types of events that were lasting more than a few hours.

I also attended one of the two Unit Training Co-Ordinators workshops being held in February 2013. The workshop I attended at VMR Bribie Island had members from VMR Gladstone down south to VMR Currumbin participate. These workshops form part of our ongoing accreditation process with Maritime Safety Queensland. An outcome from the workshop included a few changes to our training processes that were agreed to be implemented around task books. Also our UTC's asked to be able to reset access passwords for their squadron members. This has now been implemented thus reducing the need to contact our state secretary manager Harry Hubner for password resets.

At the next state council meeting we will be discussing a series of recommendations to improve how we market Marine Rescue Queensland. Any ideas from our members would be most welcome either directly to the executive or via your squadron zone representatives.

In closing, our Facebook Page <http://www.facebook.com/MarineRescueQueensland> continues to have more 'likes' each week. We still need our squadrons to provide news items.

Regards
Ron Matlik
Vice President

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Information Day

Approximately 60 adults and seven children rolled up to meet 'Sally' who has been rescued more times in the Pumicestone Passage than anyone else, at the Volunteer Marine Rescue Bribie Island Information Day, which was held for anyone who was interested in becoming an active member within the squadron. The Information Day was held on Saturday, February 2, 2013 at the VMR Bribie Island base, which started at 10am and included morning tea, followed by a free barbecue.

Presentations outlined the requirements to become an active crew member on one of our rescue vessels or how to become a radio operator. Other opportunities were presented for volunteers to use their skills to become one of our important fundraisers, part of our administration staff or be part of our fun loving social committee.

Those considering becoming a volunteer, found out what training would be involved and how much commitment is required. Attendees also saw our newly renovated base, had a quick introduction to our radio room and inspected our three rescue vessels *Energex Bribie One*, *Energex Bribie Two* and *Energex Three*, and of course meet Sally one of our hardest working volunteers.

The day was a great success with several new members joining on the day and many more taking applications to consider.

VMR Bribie Island proudly sponsored by ENERGEX



'Sally' who has been rescued more times in the Pumicestone Passage than anyone else. Here 'Sally' is flanked by Steve Robinson and Jamie Kugelman in front of our recently renovated base. 'Sally' was named by the students of Banksia Beach State School and stands for Save A Life Like Yours. She is a 40kg life size training aid. *Photo by Peter McNamara*



Attendees at the Information Day. *Picture by Peter McNamara*



Dennis Ezzy presents a session on fund raising, social committee and administration to attendees at the Information Day. *Picture by Peter McNamara*



Annette Mengel presents an information session on crew and training to attendees at the Information Day. *Picture by Peter McNamara.*



BRIBIE ISLAND MARINE RESCUE QLD

Combined exercise



Energex Bribie One, Energex Bribie Two and Energex Bribie Three cruise past the base.

Photos by Peter McNamara



Energex Bribie One, Energex Bribie Three and Energex Bribie Two cruise Pumicestone Passage with the Glasshouse Mountains providing a backdrop. Photos by Peter McNamara

by Volunteer Marine Rescue Bribie Island

Volunteer Marine Rescue Bribie Island provided a spectacle on the Pumicestone Passage with their three vessels undertaking specific manoeuvres late in January 2013. The vessels could be seen cruising in varied formations and directions. Above and right is a snapshot of some of those. *Energex Bribie One* is 10.2m overall and is powered by 2 x 300hp 4-stroke outboards and capable of 37kts; *Energex Bribie Two* is 9.6m overall and is powered by 2 x 250hp 4-stroke outboards and capable of 30+kts; and *Energex Bribie Three* is 5.5m overall and is powered by a 74.6hp 4-stroke outboard and capable of 42kts.



The fleet cruising south in Pumicestone Passage.
Photo by Peter McNamara



The fleet cruising south approaching the Bribie Island bridge.
Photo by Peter McNamara

vmr bribie island
recognises
local butcher



Local butcher Greg Harvey, from Bongaree Plaza Meats. is seen being presented with a Certificate of Appreciation from Cheryl Robinson, president of the social committee from Volunteer Marine Rescue Bribie Island. Greg has supplied quality meat trays for our raffles, and also great deals for our barbecues throughout the year.



Christymas Function 2012



VMR Bribie Secretary Peter Morton mans the bar.



Group shot of party revellers.



Peter McNamara, Kevin James and Larry Hooper discussing all things radio.



Another table of revellers.



Arvo Jaavuo and Bev and Con Galtos in party mood.



Janine Jaavuo and Betty Eivers enjoying good company.



Mobile Phones present Volunteer Marine Rescue Bribie Radio Operators with New Challenges

By Peter McNamara Radio Officer,
VMR Bribie Island

Due to the increase of use by recreational boaters of mobile smart phones as their only means of communications radio operators have to be more alert to some of the problems that might cause.

Over the past few months we have faced new challenges at Marine Rescue Bribie whereby GPS positions are provided from mobile phones.

Most mobile phones operate on a decimal based system as opposed to a degree and minutes system that means the position is provided in degrees and decimal of degrees (not degrees and minutes).

Not using the correct system can place the search area for a vessel needing assistance more than 30nm away from where the vessel is located.

To overcome this problem radio operators must identify when GPS positions are given from mobile phones (as opposed to vessel based GPS equipment).

Unfortunately most mobile phone users won't know which system their mobile phone uses, so Marine Rescue Bribie Radio Operators in the **Interest of Safety** have been instructed to provide the rescue vessels with two GPS locations. The original GPS position from the mobile phone and the converted position.

One of Marine Rescue Bribie's Volunteer radio operators, Peter Morton, has developed a GPS Locator system whereby you type in the mobile phone GPS position provided in degrees and decimal of degrees and converts them to degrees and minutes.

The Marine Rescue Bribie's assist form also has the question put on it to check if the GPS position is from a mobile phone.

We should already have asked the caller their observed

... the other thing that makes it tricky for all radio operators not all mobile phones use the same system ...

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Commodore's Report

Summer 2013

Happy new year to all. I hope you spent it well. Unfortunately this summer has been extremely hot and windy. It has been hard to find a good day to get out on the water. The Christmas/New year break was very busy for our crews who volunteered their time. We were called out to a lot of vessels. The most common problem we came across was vessels out of fuel.

We have had a couple of good news stories over the last couple of months. D roster were on duty, when a distressed father came down to the base telling them his sons had fallen out of their boat. The boys were able to make a phone call to their father. Their phone was in a waterproof bag. D roster headed out and were able to locate the boys quickly and return them to Victoria Point unharmed. Great work D roster. The training Ian does with his crew proves to be of a very high standard.

We were also able to be involved in the releasing of a turtle that had been nursed back to health. We now have our own 'Turtle Man' at the base now. (See story following) Well done to the crew who released this beautiful animal back to the wild.

Our new vessel is well on the way now. The hull is all welded together and has been pressure tested. We are still looking at early April for delivery. The trivia night fundraiser went extremely well. With our supporters and a generous public support, we were able to raise the target of \$10,000. This money is being used to purchase an infra-red camera (FLIR) for the new vessel. I cannot thank the Bendigo Bank enough for their support in helping to organise and run the event. They also gave us a very generous donation to ensure we achieved our target. Thanks Justine and her staff for your support.

We have been running a raffle over summer. Some great prizes were on offer. The first prize was an 8hp Suzuki outboard. There was also three other prizes. This raffle has raised some important



funds for us. The raffle was drawn on Australia day at a base barbecue. Thank you to everyone who bought a ticket and congratulations to the winners.

If you are interested in sponsoring or joining VMR Victoria Point, please contact the secretary on secretary@vmr.org.au

Finally, remember to be safe on the water. Good trip preparation is the difference between a great day and a bad day. Remember to log on with VMR.





Cyclone OSWALD ...



What was left of cyclone Oswald decided the floating pontoon at Victoria Point would make good Lego bricks and like any unruly child left them scattered around afterwards. What is left of the pontoon is now lying in the car park but that did not stop duty skipper Ian Priestley from trying his luck fishing off the jetty ...

After requests from ourselves and a number of boaties, the council have brought forward the replacement of the pontoon so it will hopefully be replaced between February 11 and the middle of March. In the meantime, launching our rescue vessels is slightly more challenging, particularly if the wind and current decide to lend a hand.

Dave Paylor – Secretary
Marine Rescue Victoria Point



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Turtle returns home

thanks to Victoria Point VMR



Victoria Point Volunteer Marine Rescue secretary Dave Paylor returns the recovered turtle to waters near Russell Island.

By Shannon Holloway

A sick young turtle has recovered and been returned home to the waters between Russell and Lamb Islands thanks to the helping hands of Victoria Point's Volunteer Marine Rescue.

Rescue vessel *Victoria Point 1* was redeployed as 'turtle transport' after the turtle spent time at Australia Zoo's Wildlife Hospital recovering from an infection.

VMR secretary and rescuer Dave Paylor said returning the animal was a "standout experience" compared to a typical day of rescuing distressed boaties.

"The Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital rescued the juvenile turtle in November when it was found floating," he said.

"Some turtles contract an internal infection which prevents them from diving below the surface obviously not a good situation for the turtle. Having been cured it was now ready for release."

Mr Paylor planned to get a good photo of the turtle in the water during the release, but was impossible to hold onto the eager turtle.

"As soon as we got underway the turtle noticeably perked up and after a short 20 minute trip we were ready to let it go," he said.

"I had a quick bit of training on how to lift the turtle from the box into the water.

"The intention may have been to hold the turtle in the water for a good photo opportunity but there was no hanging on the 15kg of flapping flippers once it got the taste of saltwater and was keen to go."

Mr Paylor said it was a wonderful experience to return a wild animal back to its home.

"Marine Rescue Victoria Point would like to thank



WHITSUNDAYS MARINE RESCUE QLD

was that a cyclone *or what!*

Not a cyclone but a lot of wind and swell out of the north. Those boat owners not lucky enough or quick enough to get their boats into a safe haven for the big blow ran the risk of losing their vessel to the rocks.

I'm lucky enough to have had a perfect view from my balcony of boats slowly making their way across Pioneer Bay during the afternoon of the storm event. It was distressing to see so many boats that were dragging anchor or had broken off their mooring and washed up near Cannonvale Beach, off Pigeon Island, or into the rocks or rock wall around the marina and nearby. Luckily nobody was injured during all of this.

But it did raise a question in a lot of people's minds ... *why isn't VMR out there saving these vessels?*

There is a very simple answer – *we're not allowed to do that.* We are civilians and have certain restrictions imposed upon us by the Government and Workplace Health and Safety. Our charter is to save lives, not someone's \$100,000 boat, and even then we can only do that if called to do so by the owner of the boat or the Police. We can't take it upon ourselves to use the assets and equipment that we have to arbitrarily go out there and stop someone's boat from crashing into a rock.

But this might be a more relevant question ... while you were standing on the beach watching vessels head towards their fate and wondering why VMR wasn't out there, did you think to call MSQ (4946 2200) or the Water Police (4967 7222) that you were witnessing an event that might require their involvement – potential oil spills, people dangerously stranded on



The final insult? Whitsunday Magic finally came to rest few hundred metres to the west of Pigeon Island late on Thursday, January 24. It used to be one of the Whitsunday's tourism treats to dine on her aft deck. All I can say now is "don't order the soup!"

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new motors for VMR1

Nothing lasts forever! The power trains for *VMR1* have been running for over a year and while they still have many years (or engine hours) of life left in them, it is VMR Whitsunday's policy to replace engines when future costs of the current engines are considered likely to exceed the future costs of new engines. Our operational requirements of the engines on *VMR1* are very demanding—very high up-time and fast response from a local supplier are at the top of our list.

For several months the management committee has been discussing the replacement of the existing motors and putting together a list of requirements against which suppliers were asked to provide quotes. Whitsunday Yamaha Marine has again convinced the committee that their motors and local support are key factors that VMR Whitsunday cannot ignore.

The motors arrived at Yamaha's Cannonvale dealership Whitsunday Yamaha Marine late in November and *VMR1* was put up on the stand at Hawkes Boatyard in early December so that the replacement could take place.

VMR has been lucky enough in the past to get a major grant or a thankful donation from dedicated sponsors to pay for the motors on *VMR1*. But not this time! Payment for these new motors has come from our own reserves which makes our fund raising, general sponsorships and

Geoff Fitzsimmons (VMR Whitsunday President), Ray Lewis, and George Christensen MP at the award presentation.



It is with great pleasure that the VMR Whitsunday is able to announce that a local VMR member has been awarded the Australian Volunteer of the Year Award. Ray Lewis was presented the award by local member George Christensen MP at a special ceremony held at the VMR base. Ray was overwhelmed by the recognition bestowed on him.

Ray has worked tirelessly for VMR as a volunteer for the past few years, as a skipper of *VMR1* and especially in the training of new recruits. An often thankless task, training of new recruits is vital to the flow on of members into operational positions within VMR. Ray will also be found at any VMR fundraising event, and behind the barbecue at social nights and Sunday afternoon music sessions.

Want to be a hero? Come along to our member's social night and see how easy it could be for you to get involved in something important and have fun at the same time. Have a chat with Ray and our other great volunteers and you could be next.

Well done Ray and congratulations.



left: Neale from Whitsunday Yamaha Marine unloading the new engines for VMR1. Where's the Santa Suit Neale?

below: VMR Whitsunday President, Geoff Fitzsimmons, inspecting the motors before lifting onto VMR1.





VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE

ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INC.

CODE OF CONDUCT.

V.M.R.A.Q. Personnel will maintain the highest standards of conduct in serving the Queensland community. In particular, V.M.R.A.Q Personnel will always strive to maintain these five principles required of all members of Volunteer Emergency Services

V.M.R.A.Q Members Will:

- 1. RESPECT THE LAW AND THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT.**
- 2. RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE.**
- 3. BE DILIGENT.**
- 4. ALWAYS ACT WITH INTEGRITY.**
- 5. MAKE DECISIONS AND UTILISE RESOURCES WITH DUE REGARD FOR ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY.**

For more information on the 5 principles, please refer to the Code of Conduct & Anti Discrimination Manuals held by your Management Committee.

Date of Issue 01.09.96



JACOBS WELL MARINE RESCUE QLD



On Christmas day Santa was seen handing out treats to children spending time on boats or camping in the Jacobs well area. He was ably assisted by Marine Rescue crew members aboard the Jacobs Well One rescue vessel. Some pictures were taken showing them happily receiving the Santa handouts.



The Australia Day floods had impact on many people throughout Queensland and other states. The thoughts of management and crews of Marine Rescue Jacobs Well are with them at this time. Our area of operation was also impacted with a number of activations for drifting house boats and lots of debris washing down our rivers. Gold Coast City Council has advised that the Bedrooms camping area is now permanently closed due to the ongoing encroachment of sand dunes and

the subsequent weather event of January 2013. Notices advising of this action will be erected in the area and more information is available on the website www.mystraddie.com.au Normal Australia Day celebrations were cancelled and a major fund raising project for VMRJW was also called off. Best wishes to all victims of the floods and we hope you are back on your feet soon.



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JACOBS WELL MARINE RESCUE QLD



Some photos of our rescue boats manoeuvring in the local waterways or about to be washed and refuelled at the base.

STATISTICS FOR PREVIOUS QUARTER (NOVEMBER 1, 2012 TO JANUARY 31, 2013)

- Total number of activations (including training) 275
- Total number of hours 367.6
- Total number of persons assisted 258

- Total fuel used 8048 litres

BREAKDOWN OF ACTIVATIONS

Medical	16
Grounding	16
Breakdown	73
Fuel	8

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SOUTHPORT MARINE RESCUE QLD

Busy season

The festive season has been and gone and Southport has been extremely busy with all the added marine traffic using the Gold Coast's waterways.

With semi decent weather, a bit of rain, moderate winds and bearable summer heat, the waterways were quite busy, however no major incidents were attended.

In saying that, VMR Southport activated in excess of 150 times over the December/January period with the New Year's Eve/New Year's Day crew assisting over 25 vessels in the 24 hours, ranging from flat batteries to vessels running aground.

Sadly, VMR Southport were again called upon to assist with vessels in distress due to the flooding over the Australia Day weekend. Thirteen vessels were assisted over the weekend, mainly due to broken moorings caused by the cyclonic winds experienced. Many vessels suffered serious and expensive damage. Several vessels still remained beached around the area.

Our primary rescue vessel, *Marine Rescue 1* has been returned to Noosa Cat for some running repairs. The vessel has been running poorly of late due to engine cavitation and propeller issues.

At last report, Wayne and his team had found several

possible causes and were working hard to rectify these. Several hundred litres of were found within the hull as well, due to a previous fibreglass repair which certainly wouldn't have helped our cause.

Hopefully we will see the return of the vessel in a week or two. Both other vessels are running well.

Training is progressing well with Paul Butler, a long standing member, achieving the VMRAQ coxswains ranking. Tuesday night training is in full swing again and five members are in the process of being examined for their MSQ coxswain's tickets. Three new radio operators are also currently being assessed. Several members have achieved crew rankings over the past few months and several more are very close to achieving same. Congratulations on all the hard work to all.

Preparation is still underway on our radio tower works with engineering reports being sourced at present due to different opinions on how the repair/replacement should be undertaken. The cost is the scariest factor we still haven't found out about yet.

All else is good at Southport as we prepare for yet another couple of days of dirty weather, hopefully nowhere near as severe as the last dose.



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White Crew's

'Wet 'n Wild' Australia Day Public Holiday

by Jayde Morris

It started at 5:45pm Sunday night. The first call came in via phone from the Water Police of a 10m yacht that was reported leaning against the red beacon opposite the Southport Yacht Club. We grabbed our wet weather jackets and braced ourselves for the gale-force winds and driving rain outside. Once we had located the yacht, two fellow crew members and myself swung into action with ropes and secured the vessel to *MR2* as best we could to allow our experienced skipper better control over the yacht. Ever cautious of the unsecured and swinging boom, we were able to secure the yacht (along with the much appreciated help from a member of the general boating public) to a swing mooring safely outside the channel and reported the end result to the Water Police. Surprisingly, there was very little damage to the yacht given the weather conditions, so I bet the owner would have been really pleased!

We returned to base drenched and had a change of clothes, then the tumble dryer soon found itself in use with our wet gear!

Another vessel was soon reported drifting in Biggera Creek and the next batch of dry crew members accepted the job and departed base. Our chef started on dinner as we weren't exactly sure how this evening was going to play out with jobs. No sooner had we all enjoyed our delicious, hot meal, when a call came in from a distressed boat owner whose bow had just been caught on a swinging house boat. Water Police were contacted and advised of the situation and we proceeded to the Marine Stadium to try our best to assist in the fierce weather. It was nothing short of a mission to untangle the two vessels with 50km/h wind gusts and piercing rain, but we finally managed to free them, much to the relief of the boat owner. As per the Water Police, we left the house boat in the safest possible place we could. Before we could even head back to base we were called to Sundale Bridge to assist the Water Police vessel with a yacht that was resting against the construction rails. We attached our heavy duty tow rope to the 15m yacht and under direct supervision from the Water Police Officers, the next three quarters of an hour were spent trying to safely secure the yacht to a sturdy swing mooring outside the channel and within safe distance from other anchored vessels. After successfully tying on enough ropes to hold down a fortress, and hopefully this yacht against the constant battering winds,

Water Police and *MR2* bid each other goodnight and departed for their respective bases, and warm clothes! Returning to base sometime after midnight, we all went to bed and hoped for a decent night's sleep.

Being the lucky person sleeping in the radio room, I took a call at 2am from Sanctuary Cove Security who were reporting a drifting vessel with unconfirmed details. They called back 10 minutes later and told us they thankfully no longer required our assistance as they could not confirm anything more about this vessel. I squeezed in two hours of half-sleep before a frantic 4:30am phone call from a man on a house boat that had just broken its mooring near

Runaway Bay

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the Southport Pool. Sleepy crew members were rounded up and sent out in the pouring rain to assist this gentleman who was now drifting into the channel with little steering and very low visibility. *MR3* was soon sent out to assist *MR2* with the house boat in the unmanageable weather and together they successfully eased the vessel up onto the beach. Earlier radio calls from another concerned member of the boating public about a drifting yacht in the channel outside the VMR base were taken care of by the rescue boats on their way back to base. This yacht was then anchored with great difficulty in the howling wind on our very own SNOO swing mooring and the details of the vessel were passed onto Water Police.

We huddled round the kitchen table with cups of tea and coffee, wet clothes taking their turn in the tumble dryer, and savoured our hot breakfast before making our way up to the south arm of the Coomera River for another assist. What we didn't expect to find were one metre swells there! Once again bracing the unforgiving wind and torrential rain, we manoeuvred yet another yacht onto a swing mooring inside Paradise Point Marina. A skilled crew member had perfect timing in feeding the rope through the loop on the swing mooring – which in this weather, was a huge achievement! We noted the vessel information for the Water Police and prepared for the journey back to base. Wavebreak Island was taking the brunt force of the tide coming in through the Seaway, whilst the Seaway itself looked daunting with its predicted 6m swells, and the reports weren't lying. Concerned for public safety, the Police had blocked off the walkway to the end of the South Wall in front of the Seaway Tower, as waves were actually breaking over the walls. A smaller job consisted of a small sailing cat that needed to be towed from the west to the east side of Marine Stadium. The owner was highly relieved and very thankful for our assistance after the tow.

Earlier that morning, we had been advised by Water Police to prioritise any vessel that was in an emergency situation, and that these vessels would take preference over any other vessel not in immediate danger. Being in constant contact and under direction from the Water Police, we successfully re-anchored approximately 13 vessels and assisted five vessels in distress. This also included assisting a gentleman to move his party pontoon away from the vicinity of the rocks near The Grand jetty. In my three years as an active member, I have never experienced such a windy, wet, cold and busy crew! I don't think the tumble dryer stood much chance against our wet clothes each time crew members returned from an assist. Thank goodness for the change of dry clothes! I am extremely privileged to have worked with such fantastic, experienced crew members and a special thank you to our two outstanding skippers who passed on such valuable knowledge and advice during this rough weather. We could not have successfully completed any of these assists without the solid team work and communication that was displayed on this crew. I am so proud to be part

NOTABLE JOBS:

A VMR Southport crew was recently called to assist a vessel reportedly out of fuel in the Tipplers Channel. On arrival at the vessel's location, the skipper advised the VMR crew he was enroute to Mooloolaba and had only just left Hope Island. Furthermore, he then advised of his disappointment with his mechanic who had serviced the vessel's engine the week before. It was his understanding that as part of the service the mechanic was required to check and top up ALL fluids.

A man called VMR recently requesting a battery jump start for a suspected flat battery on his wakeboarding boat. VMR attended his location and on arrival were embarrassingly advised that the man had successfully sorted his problem. His throttle lever was now in neutral and the vessel fired up first go!

A crew was tasked over the New Year period by Queensland Ambulance to transport paramedics to a young female who had been stung by an unknown marine creature. With the recent appearance of the Irukandji Jellyfish further south on the Queensland coast than usual, priority was given to this activation. On attendance, the lass was treated by the medical staff, who did not believe the patient's symptoms were consistent with that of an Irukandji sting, but transported to hospital as a precaution.

Whilst a crew of conscientious VMR fundraisers were selling raffle tickets at Wavebreak Island over Christmas, they achieved a better sale than expected. Approaching an anchored vessel, the lady aboard advised her husband had swum ashore and could not get back to the boat due to the strong outgoing tide. Could VMR retrieve and return him please? The crew obliged, to then be told by the man he would buy whatever amount of raffle tickets he could with whatever money was in his wallet. \$82 for a 40m boat ride isn't a bad effort! Let's hope he wins a prize.

Rumour is rife at VMR Southport that one of our better known members had a nasty fall on her yacht over Christmas. No, it didn't involve alcohol (well, maybe it did?) or a slippery floor. She actually fell out of bed. Funnily enough, the day the rumour broke, her yacht was seen precariously parked outside Seaworld with one hull high and dry on the beach and the other hull, at a funny angle, in the water. Don't worry. We know it was the tide's fault.



VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INC.

WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

The Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland Inc. accepts the principle that the Workplace should be a healthy and safe place and therefore requires that its member Squadrons should adopt a standard Workplace Health and Safety Policy.

SQUADRON

WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

The Squadron shall:

- (a) Ensure by all practical means, the observance of Workplace Health and Safety Standards as may be required.
- (b) Ensure that all Squadron working/active members should have regards for the Health and Safety of themselves and others.
- (c) Conduct appropriate Health and Safety educational programs.
- (d) By periodic Safety Audits, identify unsafe or unsatisfactory equipment, conditions or practices and take steps to rectify these.
- (e) Maintain records of work associated illness or injury.



100 rescues

story courtesy *Bowen Independent*

Last year was a big one for Bowen Volunteer Marine Rescue member Robert 'Blue' Andersen, who celebrated 20 years with the organisation and clocked up 100 rescues as a skipper.

By the end of 2012, it was 102 rescues as a skipper and that number does not include the number of times Blue went out on a rescue as a member of the crew, or skippered or crewed a training or maintenance run.

All up, he would have more than 200 voyages under his belt – all with one aim – of protecting the community, in particular its boating fraternity.

Blue joined VMR in 1992, then known as Air Sea Rescue, starting as a crew member. In 1996 he became a skipper.

At the time of his joining, community work was far from new to him.

"I'd been in SES for 20 years and they were having an SAR (search and rescue) exercise, where you have squads from neighbouring areas come and train together by acting through a created scenario," Blue said.

"I was looking for a new challenge so I decided to join VMR, which was called Air Sea Rescue at the time."

Boating was not new to Blue, having grown up in Bowen and having "been involved with boats since I was a young fella".

While Blue can't recall his first ever rescue, he can remember his first rescue as a skipper, which he



Robert 'Blue' Andersen clocked up 20 years with Volunteer Marine Rescue Bowen, and with it more than 100 rescues as a skipper in 2012. Photo Adam Gatkowski – VMR Bowen

described as "starting small".

It was on June 1, 1996, at Dalrymple Point. The vessel in trouble was named *KT*, and all up the rescue boat covered just two miles.

"It was just around the corner, a little tinnie was broken down in the North Channel," Blue said.

Since then the rescue missions have become a little bigger, some even attracting national attention, such as the search for the three missing crew members of the *Kaz II* – later dubbed the 'ghost ship'.

The catamaran was found empty and drifting about 160km off Townsville in April 2007 after leaving Airlie Beach, with crew members' clothes folded on the deck and laptops left on inside.

The State Coroner Michael Barnes later concluded the three men aboard fell into the sea while attempting to rescue each other and died.

"Police sent us out at night time, we left here nearly 7pm and by the time we got out there it was raining and extremely rough," Blue said, recalling one of the times the Bowen boat was called out over the days the search went on.

"I had three crew members with me and they all got sick.

"We had to go out and search around Nares Rock and Holborne Island but it was totally useless because it was so rough and rainy and you couldn't see."

Just like that mission, where there was no happy ending, VMR Bowen and Blue have been involved in their fair share of boating tragedies.

BOWEN MARINE RESCUE QLD



There was the search for the Korean tourist who drowned at Horseshoe Bay in July, 2010, and the Bowen mother, 30, who went missing while travelling alone between Bowen and Gloucester Island in a fishing dory in December 2010.

“That was a traumatic trip for everybody concerned,” Blue recalled.

“We had to pull her body out of the water.”

Blue was also the controller for the search for Bowen bus driver Peter Neven, whose four metre vessel began taking water and sank about 100m from shore at the mouth of the Don River in March, 2007.

Emergency services spent four days searching for him between the Don River and Abbot Point, where a second person in the boat made it ashore. The search was finally called off and his body was never found.

The tragedies however are far outweighed by the number of people VMR Bowen is responsible for saving and seeing home safely.

There are also the occasional humorous rescues – including one where VMR Bowen was called to Middle Island because of a large grassfire, to find a naked woman stranded on the beach and her partner asleep in a boat anchored nearby – she had apparently lit the fire to get his attention.

Although Blue wasn't involved in that rescue, one early rescue he does laugh about is helping out a boat broken down near Charity Reef north of Bowen.

“It was extremely rough and one of the crew members got sick,” he said.

“Rather than have him go to the back of the deck and spew over the side, where he could have got washed off, I told him to spew out onto the back deck from inside the cabin, not thinking that when someone went out to put the tow rope on to the other vessel that was broken down, there would be spew all over the tow rope.

“Because the crew bloke was sick I had to go out and give the other crew bloke a hand to pick the tow rope up while a fourth person drove the boat.

“That made me sick so there were two of us spewing then, in buckets on the way back.

“It was extremely rough.”

Rescues in rough weather seem par for the course for Bowen VMR.

“One thing that never changes is it is nearly either always rough, or it's black as the ace of spades,” Blue said.

“You very seldom get a calm day or a moonlit night. It's Murphy's law.”

Some things that have changed over the years however are in the areas of navigation, communications and the increase in local boat ownership.

When Blue joined VMR, the rescue boat was a Cougar cat with one GPS, one depth sounder, 'pretty primitive' radar and a directional finder.

“Now (on the 10-year-old Noosa cat) we've got state of the art navigation.

“We have two GPS units, two depth sounders, radar – and all of this is integrated into the one system so we can have them all showing at the same time.

“The latest thing we have added is FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared).”

Added in July 2010, it improved rescuers' vision at night and in poor conditions in daylight, thereby boosting its search and rescue capabilities.

In the area of communications, it has been described as 'the age of mobile phones,' with many boaties choosing to rely on those to keep people on shore apprised of their situation, or call triple-0 of the base if they run into trouble.

However the marine radio is preferred for its reliability over distance.

With the increase in local boat ownership, and corresponding increase in activity on the water, VMR Bowen would love to see some more members, particularly younger ones.

Blue is one of 10 skippers, with another about to be signed over, amid 35 active members.

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GLADSTONE MARINE RESCUE QLD



President Jeff lowering the flag on the old building for the last time.

by Maurie from Gladstone VMR

The week beginning January 20 was just like any other week warm to hot and very dry but there was glimmer of hope on the horizon in a half baked cyclone called Oswald in the gulf. We decided to do some preliminary work and mow the radio repeater site and top up the batteries just in case we couldn't get there, a normal practice in the 'wet season'.

Well, 'Oswald' rapidly degenerated and to us it looked like petering out to nothing like many others. Well how wrong we were as it came down as a low pressure system and parked over Central Queensland for a few days dropping over 1000mm of rain on Gladstone in three days. While all this rain caused a lot of local flooding the major problem was the Awoonga Dam that overflowed by



President Jeff raising the flag on the new building.

8.3m causing unprecedented flooding in the Boyne River.

This wild weather had a profound effect over the entire area. On the Thursday night a fishing boat sank in Casuarina creek some distance north of Gladstone and out of our operating area. To our surprise we were asked by the Gladstone Water Police to assist as their main rescue vessel was not available and help from other agencies to the north was not possible due to a gale warning. Access from Gladstone to the area was via the 'Narrows' a protected tidal passage from half to full tide.



Four wise men L-R: Brian Costin, Maurie Frazer, Ian Learmonth, Jeff Kidner.

The search for the crew went on for three, 14 hour days in appalling conditions. but thankfully most of it was conducted in protected waters. Our vessel was the only one able to operate due to the Gladstone Harbour being closed. On the second day one person was found alive but unfortunately the second person has never been found.

While this was going on, the Boyne River was at major flood height. Two major pontoons, and 20 odd vessels were washed from their moorings. Some were swept out of the river and others were sunk or seriously damaged. Our smaller vessel, *QGC Rescue 3* was one of the few vessels able to provide help. Our crews worked tirelessly to provide assistance to our stricken members and those in the wider boating community.

In addition just to add to the problems, on Sunday the



L-R: CEO of Gladstone Ports Corp Leo Zussino and Minister for Transport Scott Emerson.

GLADSTONE MARINE RESCUE QLD



New training room.



Our vessel from the building verandah.



Terry Werder in the much improved radio room waiting for a call.

whole communications system went down for 24 hours including mobile phones, internet and landlines. This was due to the main fibre cable south of Gladstone and the backup near Kingaroy failing due to the flooding.

Now on a lighter note on December 15 we abandoned our old building and started operating from the new headquarters. This gave us an opportunity to have a clean out while we were moving. The dump scavengers found some goodies for their collection from the rubbish.

With our new base we took the opportunity to upgrade and replace all our electronic equipment and introduce some new features thanks to donations from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund and APLNG. We even have a large TV with a Skype camera for use in face to face communications.

Our official opening was conducted on January 16 and was performed by the Minister for Transport Scott Emerson and the CEO of the Gladstone Ports Corporation Mr Leo Zussino.

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GLADSTONE MARINE RESCUE QLD



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When she asked me why, I replied,
"Well, you still haven't used the gift I bought you last year!"
And that's how the fight started ...



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The Burnett floods - again!

The old saying about lightning not striking the same place twice obviously does not extend to flooding in the Burnett River. The initial flood predictions associated with heavy rainfall from ex-cyclone Oswald, looked like a repeat of the 2010-11 floods. However this event rose to 9.53m, exceeding the previous 1942 record of 8.59m. The 2013 flood came down much quicker than did the previous event and caused major damage to property and evacuations, particularly at North Bundaberg. It also resulted in a repeat of the chaos and heartbreak for owners of vessels moored in the Burnett River. Even though the Disaster Management Committee posted warnings for the river some local and most out of town owners were unable to respond by moving vessels to safe anchorage.



This barge was manoeuvred into the harbour after stopping in the entrance.



Numerous vessels foundered or were wrecked on the rocky shore.

By February 26 unmanned vessels, pontoons, navigation buoys and heavy debris were coming down stream. Several multiple vessel groups were associated with the 'daisy chain' mooring buoy system. The large fuel barge from Midtown Marina ended up on rocks near the lighthouse, and the 20m cane ferry capsized and was washed to sea, where it appears to have sunk. The shoreline from Burnett Heads to Elliott Heads was littered with grounded and wrecked vessels. Seven vessels ended up on Fairymead Sugar Plantation well away from the river.

We maintained a register of vessels which were reported missing or which grounded – this 40 entry list was far from complete.

Unfortunately one life was lost when an elderly skipper fell from his yacht in the river.

ACTIVATIONS

This flood event caused us to re-think our readiness and capacity to respond to such an emergency in the region. We are now looking at manning a dedicated operations room on a 24 hour basis to support the normal radio roster and having a skipper and crew at the base, when conditions allow operations on the river.

Our restriction on dealing with unmanned vessels again has caused significant and often negative comment in the community. It would be highly desirable to have redefinition of the VMR role in such emergency situations to minimise subsequent hazards to navigation and life of other vessel owners, when it is safe to do so.

Given the current operational restrictions we attended



BUNDABERG MARINE RESCUE QLD



The owner could not be transferred safely to this tri when when it was at sea.



Bundy Rescue manoeuvres to rescue a father and his toddler from their disabled yacht in the strong current. *Photo John Wood.*

16 activations between January 26 and February 10 that were flood related. Three involved taking persons off endangered vessels, five were tows of endangered manned vessels, two were transfers of a pump, two to return or attempt return owners to vessels, two were rescues of a person from the river and one the transfer of QFRS personnel to inspect the flood damage at Skyringville (a fishing village on a former northern channel of the river).

On January 26 skipper Garry Dick and his crew, were called to assist a drifting 12.8m yacht. While berthing the disabled vessel at Port Bundaberg Marina they were hit by a squall, recorded at the marina at 55kts. This may have come off one of the six tornados which hit the area that day. Garry did a marvellous job in managing that situation.

On the 27th the same crew had four activations which included two police activations from 000 calls to remove skippers from drifting vessels. While returning to base they found the entrance to the boat harbour was blocked by a drifting geotechnical barge. The barge was manoeuvred



Justin and Stormy safe at the VMR Bundaberg base.

into the harbour, much to the delight of its owners who provided a very generous donation. Another activation involved the attempted return of an owner to a trimaran to recover essential medication and to allow him to bring the vessel back safely. The vessel was located 1.6nm north of the lighthouse, but was partially submerged and not safe to board. It eventually washed up at Barga.

On February 28 Bill Ker and his crew were tasked to take a father and his toddler off a disabled yacht in the raging current in the Swing Basin. This operation was



Bundy Rum departing Burnett Heads Boat Harbour with QFRS Urban Rescue crew. *Photo John Wood.*

successful, but the vessel broke anchor during the night and is one of those still missing.

During the course of the floods we recorded several short bursts of an EPIRB alarm on our 121.5 MHz monitor, but RCC in Canberra had no record of a 406 Mhz signal. At 06:30 on February 3 the EPIRB alarm at base sounded continuously and our EPIRB tracker indicated the source was in the Burnett Heads Boat Harbour. We located the transmitting and water damaged EPIRB and took it back to base for disconnection of the battery.

BUNDABERG MARINE RESCUE QLD



Corsair rescue - number two.

The unprecedented escape of the Burnett River from its normal channel caused the local Disaster Management Committee to task QFRS Urban Rescue personnel to inspect the fishing village at Skyringville on Barubbra Island for potential loss of life and building safety. Unavailability of helicopters meant the QFRS crew had to go to Skyringville by boat. *Bundy Rum* was tasked for this job on February 3, which meant going out to sea in 20kt winds and locating the entrance to Skyringville and the snags in the turbid water. Fortunately there was no damage to report.

I was still at base completing the paperwork for the Skyringville job on February 3 when we received a radio message that a sailing dinghy had capsized near the sugar terminal, with an unknown number of persons in still the still flooded river. *Bundy Rum* was readied for the third job that day, with a nearby crew. When we arrived at the Corsair dinghy, now on the north rock wall, we found an elderly woman clinging to a light painter rope and an activated inflatable vest on the rocks. Two persons had been rescue by a tender from a vessel at Port Bundaberg Marina. The woman refused to be rescued unless the dinghy was also recovered.

I indicated we were there to save her, not the Corsair. Unsuccessful negotiations took place with *Bundy Rum* staying on station about two metres off the rock wall in an 8kt current. When I eventually agreed to try to recover the dinghy, we threw the lady a life jacket and took her off the rocks, but were unable to hook onto the dinghy. The woman then jumped back into the current to hook us onto

the painter, despite being told to stay on board. The light line broke and we had to pass a heavier line. We came off the wall, got her on board again and towed the dinghy to the Port Marina beach where it was righted and bailed out. It transpired the woman was teaching two students how to sail! We returned to base, did the wash down and started the paperwork.

At 4:30pm another yacht at the marina advised the same dinghy and three persons had returned to the river and capsized again and were floating down stream, soon out of sight of the marina. *Bundy Rum* returned to the river to find two young people had been recovered again by a dinghy from the marina and that the older woman was on the northern rock wall opposite the boat harbour car park, and she did not have a life jacket. She again refused rescue unless the dinghy was recovered. I advised I was not prepared to recover the dinghy in the conditions which had deteriorated to include a 0.5m swell as well as the current.

Police officers then became involved as it was not

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BUNDABERG MARINE RESCUE QLD

considered safe for the woman to wait on the rock wall for a private recovery which could not occur before dark. Eventually the woman was rescued from the wall after she agreed to use heavier VMR ropes to secure the dinghy. The woman and a police officer were returned to shore at Burnett Heads at 6:30pm.

This incident broke all the rules of responsible boating and endangered the life of the students and rescue crews on two occasions. Should she have been charged with an offence? Watch this space. They recovered the dinghy the next day after considerable exclamation on the air waves about three dinghies being washed out to sea. Fortunately we were not required.

On a lighter note on January 14 we were advised that the Water Police vessel *SW Gill* had lost power on one engine during a transfer of QFRS personnel to Lady Elliott Island. *Bundy Rescue* was tasked to rendezvous with the *Gill* to complete the job to Lady Elliott. The running transfer of two QFRS people and their equipment took place about 11nm north-north east of Burnett Heads. The task was to remove an aluminium phosphide canister that had washed up on Lady Elliott Island some weeks earlier. This was one of the several such reports of canisters coming ashore along the east coast. (See article page 40)

Once at Lady Elliott the firies and their gear were taken ashore in the island's dive barge. The canister was secured in a 150L sealed drum and taken back to Bundaberg for deactivation.

OUR SQUADRON

Dennis James has successfully completed the MSQ / VMR Coxswain's Course at Hervey Bay and squadron assessments as a VMR restricted coxswain. Three new members are undergoing training as radio operators.

The new vessel committee has prepared a schedule of requirements for our new primary rescue vessel and this is now in the hands of the manufacturer who will liaise with a



top: QFRS officers approach *Bundy Rescue* on the Lady Elliot dive barge.

above: QFRS officers take the secured aluminium phosphide canister from *Bundy Rescue*.



Marine Rescue Bundaberg's President, Garry Dick, presents Dennis James with his coxswain's epaulettes.



VMRAQ Training Conference



Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland (VMRAQ) held their Unit Training Coordinators (UTC) Continuous Improvement Meeting at VMR Bribie Island on Saturday, February 16. This workshop was attended by 22 members from all VMR squadrons from Currumbin in the south to Gladstone in the north. Conducted by Robert Brock, VMRAQ Training Officer and was assisted by Gary Radford, also from VMRAQ. Training needs analysis; partnerships with other squadrons, private boat owners, refrigeration and diesel engineers; commercial insurance; record keeping; and audits by Marine Safety Queensland (MSQ) were discussed at length.

The introduction of a new training package was outlined, which is to be introduced over the coming years and to be in place by 2016. VMRAQ is a registered training organisation, each squadron has qualified trainers and assessors and most squadrons have an MSQ approved assessor. Through the squadrons the VMRAQ provides the required training and issuing of qualifications for VMR crew members.

VMR Bribie Island social committee provided morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.



left from top:

UTC's and A/UTC's concentrating at the workshop.

Front L-R: Hans Lubbers, Betty Snell (both from Bribie Island), Colin Haigh (North Stradbroke), Andy Ross (Raby Bay), Back L-R: John Burdett (Bribie Island, back view), Peter Leech (Brisbane), and John O'Callaghan (Bundaberg) enjoying a chat and morning tea.

Trevor Davies and Kim Lynch both from Gladstone.

Robert Brock (VMRAQ) presents sessions to: Front L-R: Lindsay Hamon (Jacobs Well), Phil Morton (Harvey Bay), Trevor Davies and Kim Lynch (Gladstone); Middle L-R: Ron Matlik VMRAQ Vice-President (Jacobs Well), Jannie Bloem (Jacobs Well), Ray Boak (Currumbin), David Roberts (Jacobs Well), Leith Lindsay (Hervey Bay), John O'Callaghan (Bundaberg), Dave McDonald (Southport, obscured), Back L-R: Peter Leech (Brisbane), Shane Rudolph (Victoria Point, obscured), unknown, Paul Sears (Bribie), Betty Snell (Bribie), Colin Haigh (North Stradbroke), Andy Ross (Raby Bay).

Photos John Trail

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HERVEY BAY MARINE RESCUE QLD



VMR Hervey Bay Commodore Tom Hudson presents Senior Radio Operator Lorraine Goode (left) and Radio Group Co-ordinator Christine Walker (right) with their certificates commemorating 10 years of dedicated service to the Volunteer Marine Rescue Hervey Bay radio room.

NOTES FROM A STORM

The bad weather that struck our region at the end of January has changed the seabed in some areas of Hervey Bay and The Great Sandy Straits. River and creek beds have also been changed. This is, of course, not unusual and is an ongoing activity of mother nature.

Those visiting the Esplanade in the days following the storm may have noticed the continued change in beach levels as the calmer waters continued to drop their load for quite some time.

So it is not possible to give a definitive list of changes but during February our boat crews identified significant changes in two regular boating areas. We would suggest that skippers pay very close attention to the depth of water:

1. To the south of EU1.
2. Around Moon Point.

There will be changes in other areas that have not yet come to our attention. **Please navigate with care in all areas.**

During and after such a storm VMR Hervey Bay receives a large amount of 'out of the ordinary' information and requests. This time phone calls ranged from "I found a turtle in my backyard and have put it in the bath" to "There is a large tree floating three miles off Rooney's" and "I need a grinder to cut my anchor chain free from debris".

Regrettably we are not able to assist every caller but we do pass all calls to the relevant authorities or emergency services where we cannot help ourselves.

The reasons we cannot assist every call during a storm vary – the Mary River in flood, and flowing in excess of 20kts, is a dangerous beast. We would not normally enter the river until conditions have been declared safe by the Water Police.

We are generally not able to 'salvage' vessels – our primary concern is the safety of life at sea. If an empty vessel has been washed ashore, unfortunately we cannot make an attempt to retrieve it. If somebody is onboard the vessel and in danger, we will most definitely attempt to help them, so long as conditions are safe for our crews to do so.

Fortunately we are usually able to marry up reports of 'missing' and 'found' boats – as with the tender washed away from Maryborough and found by the skipper of the Fraser Island barge in Wangoolba Creek.

In the aftermath of the recent storm a lady who was anchored safely at McKenzies rafted a drifting and unmanned launch alongside her yacht. The launch caused damage to her yacht and the situation eventually became difficult to manage. She did not want to let the launch go free because she knew that it was somebody's pride and joy. Also, letting it go may result in damage to another boat and that she was going to have her yacht repainted in the near future anyhow.

Fantastic seamanship. We here at VMR Hervey Bay would like to thank you and everybody else who has contributed to making the seas that little bit safer over recent weeks.

A FRIDAY NIGHT RESCUE – DECEMBER 28

The weather turned nasty one night last December, transforming what should have been a pleasant evening out on the water into a night to remember, for all the wrong reasons. The following is the story of one boatie's adventures that night and the lessons learnt. Many people have expressed their admiration for Ken's 'fessing up' and we are grateful for this opportunity to share his story ...

It was a dark and stormy night ... even though it was full moon ... but I'll get to that soon. I'd been fishing all day and was pretty tired (factor number one) as the sun set at Mackenzies. I could see the storm front in the distant west but the fish were biting so I stayed 'til dark and the fish stopped. It was almost high tide and thick cloud had covered the sky, making it very dark, even as the full moon was rising. The lightning was impressive in the distance and I knew I should get back to Urangan before the front hit (staying too long led to rushing – factor number two).

Without taking the time to tidy the boat, I headed across

HERVEY BAY MARINE RESCUE QLD



smooth waters for the green beacon at Duck Island – which I didn't know was out of action, so I was actually heading for the green light to the south of Duck. As I approached the green light, a flash of distant lightning highlighted the absence of an island (a bit un-nerving). A southerly wind was picking up and I realised there would be rougher water ahead so I needed to tidy the boat interior for the rest of the trip to Urangan.

I stopped the ever-reliable Honda 50 outboard while I rearranged things around my feet. In the dark, I didn't notice a rod catch the motor remote kill switch lanyard – I left the interior light off to keep my night vision. The plastic clip that deactivates the kill switch had been pulled out but I didn't realise it for another 48 hours. I knew about the clip – I hadn't pulled it by accident in over 10 years of boating – but I was too tired to think of it as a reason why the Honda would not start again. I had a brand new Optima AGM battery with heaps of power. I had plenty of fuel in two separate cruisetanks.

It was suddenly too rough to safely attempt removing the outboard motor cover to look for a fault. After choking and cranking at least 10 times, I reluctantly accepted that the motor was dead, a bad storm was approaching, and I was in exposed waters. The realisation of the seriousness of my situation got my heart racing.

I noticed that I was fortunately being blown towards Duck Island (almost no current at high tide) so I grabbed a paddle and guided my 4.5m half-cabin to the southern point of Duck where I dropped my reef anchor on rock, in shallow water near the green beacon, and let out 40m of rope. I had deliberately left the SARCA anchor at home earlier to reduce clutter in the boat.



Previously anchored near Bundaberg in the Burnett River, this cement yacht was deposited 50 miles away on the beach half way down Fraser Island. The skipper had left the retractable keel up.

It was about 7:30pm and I knew this was a safer spot to ride out the coming storm – being slightly protected by the island from wind (which was now 30kts westerly) and from waves (which were now white-horsing). I put my lifejacket on and pulled out a red flare just in case things got worse.

I used my mobile phone to ring VMR and got a recorded message to ring 000 if I was in an emergency situation. I wasn't in an emergency situation (yet) but I felt the wind pick up to 40kts and thought about the consequences of my reef anchor straightening – I'd have been blown out into violent open water to the east. I thought about swimming for the island. I thought about my boat being hit by lightning.

I rang 000 and told the police my situation. The local police emergency co-ordinator rang me to say that the VMR skipper Tom Hudson had been asleep in bed when the police rang him around 8:30, but he and the crew (Alex, Christine and Vivianne) drove through heavy rain,

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HERVEY BAY MARINE RESCUE QLD



The Spirit of Hervey Bay departs Maryborough Wharf on February 10, accompanied by Hervey Bay RSL Rescue, for the return journey down the recently flood ravaged Mary River. At their peak, flood waters around the tree in the foreground were well above the top of the photograph. We are grateful to the Hervey Bay Boat Club who organised these river cruises throughout the year in order to raise funds for Coast Guard Sandy Straits and VMR Hervey Bay.

launched the rescue boat, and headed out to bring me in.

As they left the boat harbour, the lightning was intense, the wind was howling, and the rain was so heavy that visibility was about three metres. I was relieved to receive a phone call from the police, advising me that the rescue boat's ETA was 45 minutes – they were coming directly across. It was an hour after high tide. Alex rang me to say they were approaching the bottom of Big Woody Island and asked me to flash my boat lights when I saw them approaching.

The next 50 minutes were scary for all of us. My boat was bouncing around in white water. I could hear big waves crashing on the west coast of Duck Island and the wind was incredible. I was trying to see if my anchor had dragged but I couldn't see much in the dark but rain. It turned out that my anchor had dragged a lot but it's a good thing I couldn't tell at the time! The rescue boat was in huge waves and took a long time to find the bottom end of Big Woody – and only because the rain eased.

I tried to ring Alex back, to ask where he was, but he couldn't hear the phone. I wondered if the rescue boat had run aground in the storm. The wind soon eased and the waves eased quickly. I prepared to go to sleep, as I was so tired, but around 10:30pm I saw the lights of the rescue boat coming. I flashed my spotlight at them and they were on to me. The tide had dropped a couple of metres and I was now in very shallow water – a bit too shallow for Tom's liking, with all the rocks around. The crew threw me a rope but didn't say much – I think they were still getting over their freaky trip to

Duck Island.

The tow back to Urangan was uneventful, save the current across the harbour entrance. I thanked the crew for coming to get me. One of the ladies said that she had enjoyed the experience! I was unhitched at the public boat ramp at midnight – absolutely exhausted, but very grateful to the VMR crew. The whole evening was an education for everyone involved.

As we survived, we're now more 'experienced'.

HERVEY BAY FROM ABOVE

It's the second day of the new year and I wake up blissfully happy and very excited. Today I am going to throw myself out of a plane, thanks to the wonderful people at Volunteer

Marine Rescue Hervey Bay and the awesome team at Skydive Hervey Bay.

The skydive was offered as a raffle prize by Skydive Hervey Bay, who openly voiced their positive opinions about VMR and the work they do.

The prize was won at the VMR Christmas party by my Mum, Christine, who, like the other wonderful volunteers, dedicate their time and good will to assist those in need out on the water. Now, as much as Mum probably would have done the jump herself, she was kind enough to offer it to me for Christmas and I was only too willing to accept!

I have always wanted to do this and for anybody contemplating doing the same thing, I couldn't





It has been a busy summer for all here at Straddie what with medivacs, tows, lost boats and pontoons, flat batteries and fuel drops.

With the onset of the school holidays, the population swells enormously and accompanying that is an increase in sickness/accidents that may require evacuations to hospital on the mainland. As we always have at least two ambos on duty during this time, it means we do the medivacs instead of Marine Rescue Raby Bay who usually do them when there is only one ambulance officer on the island. Raby Bay still get called out to do them as well, to give you an idea that it is a busy time.

These emergencies happen 24/7 and many of them require late night and early morning call outs resulting in tired crews the next day. We older fellas recover more slowly. It does, however, give you a warm sense of achievement when thanked by grateful patients and/or their families.

One evacuation required taking a young girl off Blakesly Anchorage south of Dunwich. The ambo on board was not looking forward to it as it usually requires wading ashore to do the first response before evacuation can occur. As luck has it, at low tide there is a drop-off deep enough to allow us to run the boat up on the sand leaving the motors comfortably in the water though raised. On this occasion, we were able to drop the motors into the sand (after turning them off) to keep the boat steady. We were then (for the first time) able to drop our ladder over the bow and then retrieve everyone without even getting their feet wet. We had one happy ambo.

Some of you may have seen the television report of a tinnie being towed upside down through the South Passage Bar. An experienced boatie and his two young sons were returning from a day's fishing through the north channel when one of the sons yelled out that there was a log in front of him. The father was unsure if it was his evasion and subsequent wave hitting him or whether he hit the log but they ended upside down trapped under the boat. The father took the life jacket off each son and swam them from underneath the boat and put their jackets back on, went back for the EPIRB which he deployed and waited for their rescue. A helicopter came to their rescue and one of our skippers, Rob Brain, with crew Skip Ruppenthal, Linda Thiery and our intrepid president, Richard Dunn went out to the boat. The EPIRB could not be located but the boat had to be retrieved as it was posing a navigational hazard. There was no choice but to tow the boat upside down. Richard managed to hook it first time (no mean feat in the middle of the bar) and off they set at four knots for a relatively short trip to Amity.

At the same time this was occurring, a boat was burning to the waterline in Horseshoe Bay off Peel Island. Moreton Bay is an exciting place.

Two days later, we received a call that a boat had fuel problems off Point Lookout. On contacting the skipper (who had very poor English), we ascertained he had no idea where he was except somewhere off Point 'Look'. With great difficulty, we also learnt he had a non-functioning GPS, no torch, but may have been near Shag Rock. We had a look from the hill on Point Lookout but were not convinced we could see him but off we headed anyway, Rob Brain, Richard Dunn and me.

It was now 1930, winds picking up and very lumpy seas especially heading out to the bar. My phone log (they didn't have a radio either) was as long as your arm by this stage and getting longer. We had convinced him to anchor and turn on his lights and headed up to Shag Rock, strobes going strong. No luck, but with great language difficulty found we had gone past him about 20 minutes before and before he turned his lights on but had not rung us.

He had just picked up the boat that day, a 28ft Mustang sports cruiser, and he and his mate were heading to the Sunshine Coast.

He had some fuel but could only go at seven knots. After following us back to the north channel of the bar, we decided that he had to be towed. By that time, Keith Williams,

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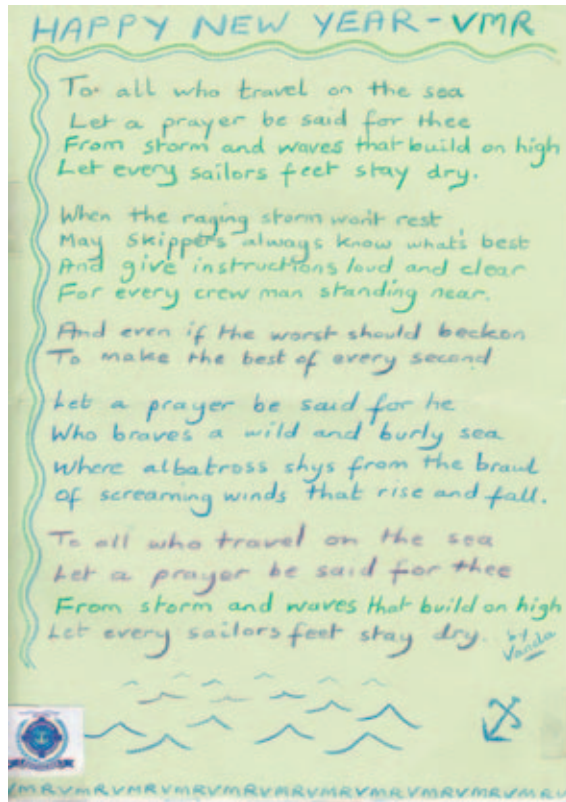
NTH STRADBROKE MARINE RESCUE QLD

Rob Brock, Gary Radford and Raby Bay crew had arrived on *RB 11* as our standby boat. Talk about the cavalry.

We successfully negotiated the bar and took them into Amity where we found his anchor winch would no longer hold. We tied him up to the boat ramp posts and left him with instructions to go nowhere until the Water Police saw him the next morning. Got home about 0130.

A few weeks ago, Gary Radford conducted an Elements of Shipboard Safety course at our base. A number of people from other units attended as well as from the Straddy Flyer Water Taxi. We were able to accommodate a number of these people at the base for what was a very successful weekend. Thanks must go to Gary for organising it, food and all.

On the Saturday of that weekend, we got an activation call for two people who had been washed off the rocks at Frenchman's Beach at Point Lookout. The lifesavers



were subsequently called who were there in minutes although the people had found their way ashore. It takes us at least one and a half hours from activation to get to the Point by boat through the bar on an average day so it is important that we have established a line of communication through both the lifesavers and lifeguards at the Point. They can get to any of the usual places in a matter of minutes saving valuable time.

I would like to mention some new recruits who are proving to be great additions to our crews. Welcome aboard Peta Kielly, Belinda Brown, Garry Goody and Damian Marsh.

To finish, I would like to add a New Year poem that our intrepid radio operator, admin secretary and crew Vanda Franey composed for us at Marine Rescue North Straddie but I would like to share with you all.

Doug Fraser

Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons

In Queensland all vessels operating outside smooth and partially smooth waters must carry a 406 EPIRB if more than two nautical miles from land.

Distress Beacons for mariners are of two basic types:

- EPIRB's or Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons, and
- PLB's or Personal Locator Beacons (otherwise known as a personal EPIRB).

EPIRB's tend to be a larger unit used in ships or recreational vessels and PLB's are smaller units, usually worn on your belt, used in a variety of situations from crew on ships to bushwalkers and people working in remote areas.

Note that the use of a PLB by crew on a boat does not remove the requirement for an EPIRB to be carried by the boat itself.

All 406 MHz EPIRB's and PLB's are suitable for use anywhere in the world, but their country of origin and/or registration procedures are significant factors to be considered so that an appropriate rescue mission can be

initiated.

A distress beacon should only be activated when there is a threat of grave and imminent danger. If there is an emergency and conditions permit, communication via radio to other ships or land stations should be the first option.

EPIRB's are designed to float in the water. With an upright aerial, the water surface is used as a reflector. It is important that PLB's are held so that the aerial is upright.

Once activated EPIRB's will transmit their signal for a minimum of 48 hours, a PLB will transmit for a minimum of 24 hours. The signal is detectable by satellites and overflying aircraft and any such detected signal in Australian waters will be forwarded on to the Rescue Co-ordination Centre in Canberra.

A major advantage of the 406 MHz signal, now in standard use, is the ability for the distress beacon to transmit a code that identifies that specific unit that has been activated, rescue authorities can immediately know who and/or what they are searching for, in addition to the location of the emergency.



Distress beacons may or may not have GPS reporting capability. Those with GPS capability will normally transmit the latitude and longitude of the activated distress beacon to Canberra within seconds of the activation. The precision of the reported position will generally be to within about 100m.

The position of activated distress beacons that do not have GPS capability will be calculated by satellites passing overhead. This may take several satellites or passes overhead to provide the calculated position which will have an accuracy of about five kilometres. This process generally takes about 90 minutes to complete but, depending on your location and the conditions, may take up to five hours.

The storage of an EPIRB on a vessel will vary. Typically it will be kept in its mounting bracket near an exit – ready to be grabbed when exiting the vessel in an emergency.

Some EPIRB's may be 'water activated' or have a hydrostatic release and their storage must be with these factors in mind. An EPIRB kept in a grab bag is perfectly acceptable but it should be a manually activated EPIRB. Water activated EPIRB's should be kept in their mounting bracket. Ensure the storage location is dry and weather protected to help ensure the equipment will work when required.

Registration of your EPIRB can provide rescue organisations with vital information to assist with you rescue and also the details of three emergency contacts, who may (hopefully) be able to provide additional information about you, other persons on board, your vessel or your voyage.

Registration is free and can be completed by telephoning **1800 406 406** or online at **www.beacons.amsa.gov.au** The online option allows you to update your details and record information on planned itineraries.

AMSA will issue you with a sticker to attach to the distress beacon to indicate it has been registered and the registration expiry date – which is two years from the date of registration.

If you accidentally activate your distress beacon, turn it off immediately and call the Rescue Coordination Centre in Canberra as soon as possible on **1800 641 792**.

Obviously you do not want to be held responsible for the initiation of an unnecessary search and rescue operation. Marine Rescue Hervey Bay will be pleased to contact Canberra on your behalf if you have accidentally activated your distress beacon while at sea.

You will not be prosecuted for an accidental activation of a distress beacon.

If your Australian registered EPIRB is activated outside Australian waters, its signal will be sent to the rescue authority or the location in which the activation has occurred. Another signal will also be sent to the Rescue Coordination Centre in Canberra.

If you purchase a foreign distress beacon for use in Australia, it is important that the unit be re-coded with the Australian country code - 503.

The AMSA website displays all makes of distress beacon available in Australia. It also shows the old 121 MHz distress beacons that should no longer be purchased. This website also contains important warnings about the purchase of American and Canadian distress beacons for use in Australia.

The website address is :
www.beacons.amsa.gov.au/beacon-models.html

All approved distress beacons have a 'self test' button, used to show that the unit is in working order. This test can be done at any time with the need to contact the Rescue Coordination Centre in Canberra. Do not perform a live activation in order to 'test' the unit.

From February 1, 2009 the signal from the older 121

FOR a LAUGH ...

Driving to the office this morning on the motorway, I looked over to my right and there was a woman in a brand new BMW doing 90 miles per hour with her face up next to her rear view mirror putting on her eyeliner!

I looked away for a couple seconds and when I looked back she was halfway over in my lane, still working on that makeup! It scared me (I'm a man) so bad, I dropped my electric shaver, which knocked the bacon roll out of my other hand. In all the confusion of trying to straighten out the car using my knees against the steering wheel, it knocked my mobile from my ear, which fell into the coffee between my legs, splashed and burned BIG JIM AND THE ROUND TWINS, causing me to scream, which made me drop the cigarette out of my mouth, ruined my shirt and DISCONNECTED AN IMPORTANT CALL!

DAMN WOMEN DRIVERS!



Update from the Deputy Commissioner's Desk

January 15, 2013

Aluminium Phosphide

Updated Information

Over the past couple of months the QFRS has responded to more than 20 incidents involving aluminium canisters washed up on Queensland shores. In some cases the canisters were removed by the public. The canisters are about 23cm high and 10cm wide. They are sealed with a plastic cap incorporating a compressible rubber O-ring. An example is shown here on the right.

In all instances so far there were no placards or markings on the containers.

The canisters contain a toxic solid material usually as a pellet (1.5cm in diameter). The material is aluminium phosphide (UN 1397). An alternative material namely magnesium phosphide (UN 2011) is used or a combination of the two metal phosphides. The material is commonly used in the maritime industry and in the agricultural industry for fumigation. A photo of pellets within a canister is shown on the right.

What happens to the metal phosphide, how does it get to and affect us?

The aluminium phosphide reacts with moisture (water or acids) to generate phosphine gas (UN 2199). Phosphine is classified as a toxic, flammable gas. The National Exposure Standard (NES) is 0.3 parts per million and the Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health value (IDLH) is 50 parts per million. The gas also has a very low odour threshold with an odour described as varying from a garlic-like to rotten fish. The odour threshold is about 30 x

less than the NES. Phosphine is heavier than air and is of great concern in enclosed spaces such as residences, or silos in an industrial setting.

The route of entry for phosphine is through the respiratory system and affects our respiratory and circulatory system causing symptoms such as headache, rapid pulse, low blood pressure, gastric/chest pain, and cardiovascular arrest. Thus, firefighters need to protect their respiratory system.

How do I stay safe and what is the approach adopted to make these incidents safe?

Apply the dynamic risk assessment protocols to determine the nature of the problem. If a canister is discovered and it is suspected it contains aluminium phosphide adopt the normal HAZMAT directives (INCDIR 16 series) and the approach:

- Establish incident control zones and restrict access
- Minimise the use of personnel within the hazardous area
- Ensure resources are upwind/uphill of the hazardous area
- Adopt appropriate PPE and respiratory protection – SCBA and structural fire fighting ensemble is suitable; and
- Establish a decontamination corridor.

Fresh air is a suitable decontaminant for phosphine gas. To ensure success of decontamination a PID or AP4C/2C chemical agent detector should be used on Personal Protective Clothing (PPC).

The container contents need to be identified prior to determining and implementing any mitigation actions.





This is undertaken by a scientific officer. The QFRS has a range of detection and identification equipment suitable to identify metal phosphides and phosphine gas.

Depending on the circumstances there are a variety of approaches that can be successfully applied to make the canister safe. These range from:

- Securing the canister in a salvage drum and making arrangements for a qualified hazardous waste contractor to remove and subsequently safely neutralise the material
- Burning; or
- Neutralise the metal phosphide, for example in water.

To illustrate the last example; metal phosphide pellets are slowly added to the water in a container (such as a drum).

Phosphine is generated as can be seen by bubbling in the water and it is dispersed in the air. When the bubbling subsides further pellets can be added. The process is continued until complete.

Detection instruments such as the AP4-C or PID are used to measure the airborne concentration of phosphine.

Before considering any disposal or destruction methods the Scientific Branch should be contacted through your Fire Communications Centre.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A Standing Order will be circulated to further define the procedure for responding to Aluminium Phosphide Canisters.

A Scientific Officer should be contacted to identify the container contents prior to determining and implementing any mitigation actions.

The Scientific Branch Volunteer (Scientific Advisor) Network has been appraised of his product and relevant procedures. The Scientific branch can be contacted if further information, education and awareness is required. Furthermore the Scientific Branch is identifying regional teams to facilitate the identification and management of these canisters.

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BRISBANE MARINE RESCUE QLD

The wild conditions and heavy rain towards the end of the Australia Day long weekend led to a couple of busy days for our crews. The huge seas of Sunday meant no recreational sailors were silly enough to tackle the gusty conditions. The weather prediction for the Brisbane Bar was extreme and worrying; 40-45kt wind with gusts of 45-50kts at times and a sea swell of seven metres! On the Monday, Alpha Crew were fairly certain they would not be called out. However a huge array of driftwood and large logs were floating by with some stranded on the VMRB boat ramp. The Aspley cubs and their leaders, who were camping at the neighbouring Brownseas facility, enthusiastically joined in cleaning up. Not long after, we saw some crab-pot floats drifting by in the fast rising tide followed by a water tank that obviously had been in the water for a long time as the bottom half had worn away. The floods of 2011-12 came to mind and we recalled how our rescue vessel was damaged by something submerged in flood water back then. The water tank was retrieved and secured on land together with a pile of logs, large and small.



left: Delta crew's rescue on January 12.

below: Energex Sandgate 1 towing the yacht in the Brisbane River with Sandgate Rescue II nearby.



A message was received that a sailing catamaran had broken its moorings in Cabbage Tree Creek and that it had a large hole in one hull caused by a subsequent collision with a bollard. As people were still on board the vessel that by now had one hull very low in the water and in danger of capsizing, there was no time to waste. Navigating with care to avoid hitting logs and the like, our crew made it to the vessel in time and was able to tow it to a public ramp where the owners went safely on shore to eventually trailer the vessel for major repairs.

A small 'tinny' with an outboard motor was floating near the end of the Shorncliffe Pier and there was a sighting of a ship's mast not far away. Our radio operator reported these sightings to the Brisbane Water Police. Subsequently, we were asked to investigate the floating craft in case there was a vessel registration number that could trace the owner – who may have by now, been a missing person. But no, the 'tinny' was found without

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BRISBANE MARINE RESCUE QLD



registration and it was covered in moss and barnacles, having been floating around somewhere for a long time.

When the owner of the crab pots was contacted, he was surprised to discover they had shifted from Nundah Creek and contained five keepers between them!

The next day was extremely busy on the Brisbane River so our after-hours crews were called on by Maritime Safety Queensland to monitor the situation. At 6.30am on Wednesday, January 30, *Energex Sandgate 1* was readied by Les Pascoe, Nino Aceto and Col Nielson and they were on duty in a very short time. They were expecting to see drifting boats needing to be secured but they must have all have maintained their moorings or been refastened because none was evident. When our crew reached the Victoria Bridge, they encountered a commotion as bystanders had seen someone plunge from the bridge just a few minutes before. A call was made to the Water Police and a search commenced. Due to the amount of debris in the water, it was difficult to avoid damage and maintain a watch. A call was made by Water Police to activate *Sandgate Rescue II* which duly joined the search with Bob Chapman and Ian McCartney as crew. They were all stood down at 2pm. (However a body was recovered two days later.)

As they were starting to head back to base, MSQ directed our crews to a man on a boat which had been rescued the previous day. The current was very strong and the boat had a broken prop so the inboard motor was useless and the little 10hp auxiliary outboard could make



The debris on the ramp on Australia Day weekend.

no progress to steer the yacht away from rocks. A line was cast and Col boarded the vessel to assist the disabled owner to fix it. When they reached a suitable mooring point, the anchor was set but the ropes were ineffective so the vessel was soon once more adrift. Another line was thrown and secured and *Sandgate Rescue II* went to a pontoon at Southbank to assist with the tying up once *Energex Sandgate II* towed the yacht there. It was 5pm before our tired crews returned to base.

In the few weeks prior to the above activity, VMRB had effected a number of interesting exercises. While on a training day in December and passing behind the wrecks of Tangalooma, Sierra crew was signalled by a family in their five metre runabout. After about half an hour of trying to get the motor running, the crew took the boat under tow and headed to Whyte Island. Later in the day the crew received two further calls for assistance however, in both cases, the activations were cancelled prior to or just after departure from Cabbage Tree Creek.

Quebec crew had a very busy day around Christmas with a late morning call to assist a power boat with a flat battery anchored off the Sand Hills. In reasonable

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BRISBANE MARINE RESCUE QLD

conditions it was a fairly quick return to Cabbage Tree Creek. Late in the afternoon they received another call, this time to assist a vessel anchored off Cowan Cowan with engine trouble. The crew was quickly despatched and located the vessel before dark. The vessel required a tow back to Scarborough Boat Harbour so there was a bit of work to do. The crew made it safely home around 20:00.

Another composite crew of Karl Nast, Shane Clark, Chris Hillyard and Tony Lloyd volunteered to crew on Boxing Day and they were kept busy with an early morning call from a stricken vessel located at the Sand Hills. This tow was eventually handed over to VMR Victoria Point as the master's home port was in the southern bay.

At the end of 2012, two people who had recently purchased a used four metre runabout had travelled from the South Pine River to St Helena Island. They then had engine failure and were not experienced boaties. So the questions came to mind: Had they underestimated the distance and run out of fuel? No, they had enough fuel, so what was the condition of the battery, motor, etc? Allegedly both good and the motor had just been serviced! (Heard that before?). *Energex Sandgate 1* was pressed into service and it pounded through the increasingly rough water to locate the stranded vessel – and eventually did under difficulties. The rescue vessel appeared to have hydraulic problems even before attaching a tow rope. Nevertheless, the tow began ever so slowly, back towards the Pine River – but, because of the sea conditions, it was agreed that the tow should be to Cabbage Tree Creek. Master of Alpha Crew, Joe McCoy, now had a good look at the rescued vessel and soon found the cause of the engine failure to be a broken ignition safety lanyard – an essential part of which was lying on the vessel floor. An expensive experience!



Our grounds were merging into the bay!

It was mid-week and after hours on January 2 that Bob Chapman and Ian McCartney attended to a call for assistance. A power boat with an engine that wouldn't run required a tow from the Measured Mile to Schulz Canal. Conditions were perfect so this was a walk in the park for such an experienced crew.

We received a call late on Thursday night on January 4 to assist a tinnie located at Pinkenba whose engine decided not to work. Fortunately we were able to respond in pretty quick time with Callum Baird and Neil Sheppard aboard *Sandgate Rescue II* just before midnight. It was a relatively slow run across to the Brisbane River as a stiff sou-easter was blowing. Once in the river the conditions were much more favourable to the RIB. The tinnie and her crew were quickly located and returned safely to the Pinkenba boat ramp. Our crew returned to base around 02:00 .

After hours around midday on January 10, we received a call from the Water Police to assist a jetski rider whose jetski had broken down at Indooroopilly. Bob Chapman and Les Pascoe answered the call for assistance and were soon on their way in *Sandgate Rescue II*, journeying from Cabbage Tree Creek up the Brisbane River to locate the stricken vessel and tow it further upstream. Almost five hours passed between the start and finish of this job. Indeed a job well done.

Greg Keough reported on January 12 that Delta crew was engaged in training on the Pine River when a request for assistance was received mid-morning. A nine metre Bay Cruiser had engine trouble and was drifting into shallow water south of Port of Brisbane and west of St Helena Island. The vessel skipper was directed to anchor up.



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Energex Sandgate II was despatched and it was a rolling trip SSE with a beam sea and 15-20kts north east winds. The crew rounded the outer port and located the vessel towards the mangroves. Fortunately – at this point – a king tide was less than two hours into ebb and they were able to carefully navigate the area and throw a line to the vessel in less than a metre of water.

The Bay Cruiser was old and constructed of timber – heavy too. The going was very slow with the combination of head winds against ebbing tide, two inexperienced crew aboard the towed vessel and the heavy, sluggish towed vessel. As they rounded the Port of Brisbane land reclamation to enter the shipping channel – destination Aquarium Passage (also known as Doboy Creek) – they encountered a large dredge inbound and planned to come around behind it to take advantage of the flat wake waters. Quickly abandoned that plan as a fully laden container ship and the *Tangalooma Flyer* were bearing down outbound and intersecting between the two vessels and the dredge!

The ebbing king tide was now at its strongest as large volumes of water exited the river mouth against the strong north-north east winds, creating pressure waves estimated at 2-2.5m. It was a difficult situation and our skipper, Ross Lind, utilised his considerable skills to keep the towed vessel from broaching and free from damage. Significant wave action was experienced well into the lower reaches of the river, easing as they rounded the first right-bend. They had to slow again while the *Pacific Dawn* passed then crossed the river and safely negotiated a congested mooring area for the towed vessel to anchor.

Paperwork completed and *Energex Sandgate 1* headed for Shorncliffe. Seas were still over one metre and the wipers flipped back and forth constantly to clear the windows of spray, but the crew were happy – much more comfortable than the occasional solid sheets of water that washed over them earlier – and after five hours on the

water the welcoming navigational marks of Cabbage Tree Creek appeared ahead of them.

On January 17, our squadron hosted a visit by Liberal Party members Senators Sue Boyce and Gary Humphries, Kerry Millard (MP for Sandgate) and Rod McGarvie (candidate for the Federal seat of Lilley) around our base. Bob Chapman was just the person to make sure they had all the relevant data to make informed decisions about matters relating to our services.

Bob teamed with Glenn Philip and Luke Hillyard to monitor competitors in the Queensland Cruising Yacht Club Surf to City Race. Their watch began at 10.00am on January 19 and finished at 9am the next day – a long stint!

Recently our after-hours crews have been busy. At 1am one morning, our dedicated volunteers pumped out a vessel that was sinking in Cabbage Tree Creek.

On February 21 Thomas Grice and Kelly Williams answered a call at 18:00 for a 5.2m vessel with engine trouble north-west of St Helena. A strong wind warning had been issued and they were fortunate to locate the vessel exactly where they indicated they would be. *Energex Sandgate 1* proceeded to tow the vessel at a steady pace so as not to knock the towed vessel or crew around. They successfully navigated through the boat passage from the south to the Whyte Island boat ramp and this really showed the value of night time familiarisation of our area of operation. Upon arrival at the Whyte Island boat ramp they discovered that the pontoon they expected to tie up to at Whyte Island had been washed away in the recent bad weather. Quick change of plan; they decided to raft the vessel alongside *Energex Sandgate 1* and slowly motor in toward the boat ramp to get out of the swift flowing current. Once within approximately two metres the Master of the towed vessel gave himself a large push off *Energex Sandgate 1* to give himself enough momentum to reach the boat ramp. All in all, considering the conditions,

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RABY BAY MARINE RESCUE QLD

The VMR Raby Bay Christmas party provided a bit of social atmosphere in the run up to Christmas, and Santa, as usual exchanged his sleigh and reindeer for Energex Medivac and Suzukis to visit the children in the local canals on Christmas Day. On New Year's Eve *RB II* was on patrol up the river. Nothing exciting happened until after the fireworks. An otherwise dull evening became busy when they were first, flagged down by a boat having difficulties, then tasked by water police to conduct two searches for people in the water.

Mid-January, we had what must surely be a first for VMR Raby Bay, if not for all units. We had a 'petivac'. Late Saturday afternoon we got the call, "could we take a vet over to North Stradbroke Island to transfer a sick dog to a pet hospital?" The duty officer agreed, thinking it would be a good training run. Just on closing time the pet ambulance rolled up, but no vet. About an hour later the vet arrived, surfboard under his arm, accompanied by a dog. We thought, "what's going on here?" Anyway the boys took them to Dunwich on *RB IV*, where the sick dog was treated, and subsequently transferred to Raby Bay, to be whisked away to the pet hospital. The owner was quite thankful and the vet spent Sunday surfing. The crew went home tired after an extra long day.

This trip aside, our number of medical evacuations has been down, due to the presence of extra QAS officers on North Stradbroke Island over Christmas, and VMR Stradbroke Island doing a number of these transfers. The total number of activations has been down also. Poor weather has kept responsible boat owners off the water.



However, we will all remember the Australia Day weekend.

Strong winds on Saturday January 26, in the wake of ex-tropical cyclone Oswald, saw a 43ft sailing vessel drift past Cleveland Point. The owner radioed for help, his engine broken down and his anchor dragging. *Energex Medivac* took the vessel in tow and escorted her to her pontoon in Raby Bay. As the winds rose over the weekend, *RB II* and *Energex Medivac* were despatched several times, including two medivacs, a search for several drifting vessels at Karragarra Passage, the transfer of 10 SES volunteers and equipment to Stradbroke Island, and the recovery of a large power catamaran that had broken away from its pontoon and landed on the rocks in the Dampier Canal. At times over the weekend, the winds exceeded 60kts as measured at our rescue base. On Sunday our base was cut off from Cleveland as waters surged over the road. A power outage followed, but we were able to remain fully operational, using our new three phase generator, recently purchased with a grant from Redland City Council.

In the aftermath of the strong winds on the weekend, there were boats aground all around the southern bay islands area. At high tide on the 29th *Energex Medivac*, *RB II* and *RB IV* were involved in attempts to recover three stranded vessels. Unfortunately we were unable to shift the 72ft ex-Sydney ferry in Canaipa Passage, or the 36ft Fairway at the Redland Bay Golf Course (not quite on the fairway). The king tide and storm surge had put these beyond our capabilities, but we did drag a 35ft Tasmanian registered sailboat from the beach at Karragarra Island.



RABY BAY MARINE RESCUE QLD



The following day we freed another sailboat from the same beach, and were sent to investigate a sunken boat in front of the Grand View Hotel. It turned out to be a rather battered boat and certainly beyond our help. We got just close enough, in the shallow water, to make out the name as the waves lapped over it, which ironically was *Y Care*.

On the 31st *Energex Medivac* was involved in the recovery of a large cruiser, which had sunk in Spinnaker Sound. This was subsequently towed to a shipyard up the Brisbane River for repair. On the return journey we stopped to recover another grounded yacht at Colmslie. That night she did another trip to the One Mile for a medivac.

After a less eventful weekend that followed, on Monday *Energex Medivac* was taken up the river to Brisbane Shipyards for some much needed repairs to her hulls.

FUND RAISING

Collections continue to keep us afloat, although we are still down on last year's total. The people of Brisbane and



the Redlands continue to provide fantastic support.

Our grants committee, Jocelyn Ashcroft and Duncan Willis are busy again. This is one area sadly overlooked in the past, but they are making great headway. To date we have received grants from the Redlands RSL, Redland City Council and the Gambling Community Benefit Fund.

We were successful in renewing our *Energex* sponsorship, now in its third year, and greatly appreciate their contribution to assisting the boating public and the population of North Stradbroke Island through us.

TRAINING

Unfortunately the two members who attend the coxswains training course at Hervey Bay a few months ago have not quite completed all the requirements. On the other hand, we are proud to have four new *VMR* coxswains added to our skipper pool, three of whom have completed the course in house. We have a few others not far off, with only one or two of the TDM07 modules to complete.

We are also fortunate in having three more trainers with Cert IV in TAE and three newly qualified First Aid trainers in our unit. Best of all, we finally have our very own, newly appointed MSQ assessor, in Cliff Matfin. Rob Brock will surely miss all the visits he used to make to sign off all of our paper work.

ACTIVATIONS FOR VMR RABY BAY

November 1, 2012 - January 31, 2013

Medivacs	47
Breakdowns	42
Insufficient Fuel	4
Grounding	9
Sinking/ Sunk Vessel	0
Search	9
Drifting Vessels	4
Flares	1
EPIB Activation	0
Training	57

But Sir, I didn't anchor here ...
Total

Persons returned to Sa
Amount of Fuel used (L

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BURKETOWN MARINE RESCUE QLD

Hi to one and all from the Burketown Squadron. We hope that everyone had a terrific Christmas and New Year. Well we are still waiting for the wet season to arrive, though our thoughts go out to those that have been affected by the unseasonal wild weather south of us.

2013 started off with a night navigation training exercise other than that we have been fairly quiet given the time of year, though we have added an additional three members sign up with the squadron due to new blood moving to town.

The pub is still progressing with high hopes that it will be operational by Easter, though we aren't holding our breath as there is still much to do. Imagine the celebrations when it does finally open.

As we don't have much to report I thought I would throw in some trivia on maritime superstitions. We've all heard them, but how many of us really know what they mean, or, more importantly, where they came from?

You probably won't find a more superstitious group of people than sailors and fishermen. Their present superstitious beliefs date back several centuries and include examples such as: its bad luck to sail on a Friday. If you whistle or sing into the wind on a boat, a storm is sure to follow. Sailors who wear earrings or have tattoos won't drown. It's bad luck to have women on board because they make the sea angry or jealous. Beliefs and superstitions are passed down from generation to generation, and it's a brave sailor who turns his (or her) back on tradition. **Ignore them at your peril!**

- Leaving port on Friday is poor form in the mind of the well-travelled sailor. The superstition is thought to spring from the crucifixion of Christ on Good Friday. Doubters would believe the career mariner would like an extra day in port. Legend says the British Navy fought this superstition to the point that they laid the keel of a warship on a Friday, launched the vessel on another Friday, named the craft *HMS Friday* and sailed it out of port for the first time on Friday. As you should suspect, it never made it back to the harbour again. One other boat made this mistake and was never heard from again. Want to know which one? The *Titanic*. Yup, left port on a Friday and look what happened to them.
- Bananas are bad luck on a boat, everyone knows that. This is because putting bananas next to other fruit makes them turn rotten faster. It was documented in the early 1700's that almost every ship that disappeared at the sea was carrying a cargo of bananas. Transatlantic crossing in the 17th and 18th centuries was a very risky endeavour. Often the vessels would stop along the way in tropical islands to gather provisions such as food and water. There the passengers and crew would often purchase wooden crates of bananas from the locals and bring them aboard the ship. These crates would have all manner of critters in them such as bugs, spiders, vermin and snakes, posing a danger to crew and passengers

of venomous bites and diseases. A more scientific explanation is that since the banana gives off ethylene gas when it ripens, it causes other perishable foodstuffs to spoil more quickly, possibly leading to food poisoning or starvation. Another theory is that bananas carried aboard slave ships fermented and gave off methane gas, which would be trapped below deck. Anyone in the hold, including cargoes of imprisoned humanity, would succumb to the poisoned air, and anyone trying to climb down into the hold to help them would fall prey to the dangerous gas.

- Mariners are nearly split on the subject of women sailing aboard a vessel. A woman on board is bad luck as it makes the seas angry and is an omen of bad luck for everyone aboard. A way to counter this effect is by having a 'naked' woman on board would calm the sea. That is why many vessels have a figurehead in the form of a naked woman; perched on the bow, calms the sea and her open eyes will guide it to safety, this figure almost always being bare-breasted. It was believed that a woman's bare breasts would 'shame' the stormy seas into calm. However, in harbour it was another matter, with wives and sweethearts frequently staying aboard ship. Naming a ship for an engaged woman will make the vessel jealous. Women on board distract the crew and place it in peril. Sailors believe women to be superior navigators. Many women were successful as pirates.
- Sailors believed that if a cat licked its fur against the grain it meant a hailstorm was coming; if it sneezed, rain was on the way; and if it was frisky, the wind would soon blow. They also believed cats could start storms with the magic stored in their tails so they always kept them well fed and contented. Anger the ship's cat and it may call a gale. Black cats are lucky and bring sailors home from the sea. If the ship's cat approached a sailor it was good luck but then if it approached and went away, it was bad luck
- Sailors pierced their ears to improve their eyesight. A gold earring was both a charm against drowning and the price paid to Davy Jones to enter the next world if a sailor died at sea.
- Do not leave the deck bucket right side up, it simulates the boat filling with water and sinking.
- An unpopular sound is that of ringing bells at sea. Hearing a bell could portend sudden death. Hopefully the bells heard from navigation aids aren't considered part of this problem.
- Whistling – One widespread and universal superstition forbids whistling in the wheelhouse or anywhere on board for that matter as it will raise a gale, hence 'whistling up a storm'. It's not good form to whistle on the neighbour's boat as well.

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