

Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland Inc.

Code of Practice

For the Specification, Design, Supply and Operation of Volunteer Marine Rescue Vessels

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Overview

The primary purpose of Volunteer Marine Rescue QLD is the safety of life at sea. Everything we do is based on this premise.

It is our intention to achieve our goal by providing a rapid first response for provision of search & rescue, medical evacuation and training. Other tasks may be carried out that benefit the wider community interest. Such activities may include towing of disabled or stranded vessels, community services (such as the dispersal of ashes), assistance that VMR provides to other agencies such as police, fire and ambulance etc. and we may also support other entities and persons when VMR support is the only option available to them.

This Code of Practice acknowledges and makes reference to all governing legislation and standards. In particular this includes but is not limited to:

- Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Act 2012 (National Law)
- Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Regulation 2013
- Marine Orders attendant to the National Law authorized by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)
- Exemptions from the National Law as prescribed by AMSA
- National Standards for Commercial Vessels (NSCV)

When the National Law was first created, AMSA gave careful consideration to many different organizations who operated non-recreational vessels in varied applications, to determine which vessels would be regulated under the law as Domestic Commercial Vessels. At that time AMSA determined that vessels owned and operated by Volunteer Marine Rescue jurisdictions around Australia are indeed regulated as domestic commercial vessels under the National Law.

Where this Code of Practice is silent on a matter or prescribes any matter, such silence or prescription is in addition to and not intended to limit applicable legislation. If this Code of Practice contradicts current or future legislation, that legislation shall naturally take precedence.

A vessel referred to by this Code of Practice is intended to be a rescue vessel operated by the Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland Inc, or one of its affiliated squadrons, for the purposes of the association.

Within this document, the Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland Inc. is referred to as VMRAQ.

Areas of Operation

VMR Rescue Vessels are intended to work within near coastal waters of Queensland as described in NSCV Part B. These waters can generally be defined as within 15NM of the coast, coastal islands, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park or anywhere within the area of Torres Strait.

These areas contain the following water limits

- Class E smooth Water
- Class D partially smooth
- Class C near coastal offshore (NSCV Part B)

Where there is clear immediate danger to life and a rescue vessel may be able to assist, a VMR vessel may also operate in the following areas:

- Inland Impoundments
- Beyond Class 2C Near Coastal limits

However VMR crews must remain mindful of the risks associated with operating vessels in such areas. In particular Exemption 24 Schedule 1 (3) (B) prescribes the requirement to undertake a risk assessment and confirm the ability of the vessel and crew to operate in the environment to be encountered beyond near coastal limits. If such an operation is to be considered it must be authorized by both the skipper of the VMR vessel and an on shore controller of the relevant VMR Squadron.

Design of Vessels

General

Rescue vessels are to be no larger than 12M and suitable for operation by a person holding the qualification of National Coxswain Grade 1 (near coastal) or equivalent. A rescue vessel must be of a proven hull design. If a design is being considered that is not already in use by VMR, a sister ship should be available for testing in similar configuration at a similar operational weight. Such a sister ship must also be compliant with NSCV for its intended operation. No prototype designs shall be considered.

Engines

For reasons of cost, ease of maintenance and ease of replacement, the use of a recognized brand of Four Stroke Outboard engine is strongly preferred. If a squadron wishes to construct a rescue vessel using an alternative type of engine and/or driveline, a business case must be presented to the VMRAQ state council in writing before approval for subsidy funding is sought. The business case must include:

- The reason why outboards are unsuitable for the intended vessel or operation
- How the squadron plans to fund the vessel
- How the squadron plans to fund ongoing maintenance
- Who will be accountable for ongoing specialized maintenance

- A demonstration of how the operation and maintenance will be sustained over the life of the vessel

Designed for Safety

When designing a rescue vessel, careful consideration must be given in design characteristics, to the safety of crew and persons. Rescue vessels are often called on to work in adverse weather conditions and circumstances, so consideration may need to be given to the provision of extra equipment or the extension of the design of the vessel with respect to adverse and emergency operations.

Some examples of such consideration include but are not limited to:

- Extra hand hold rails
- Extra cleats or staghorns *etc.*
- Large safety rails on foredecks
- Adequate built on fenders or foam buffers
- Adequate cockpit & side lighting for night operations

Performance Criteria

The maximum speed in a fully loaded condition is to be no less than 32kts

A rescue vessel should be able to maintain a cruising speed of 23kts. In the case of Outboards, this speed should be achieved at no greater than 4200rpm.

Rescue Vessels with a length equal to or greater than 7M should be powered by more than one engine. This requirement becomes critically important in a vessel designed to operate beyond sheltered waters, or in a remote area.

Minimum vessel endurance to be 10 hours at cruising speed in loaded ship condition. A vessel should have an efficient design and sufficient fuel capacity to achieve this benchmark.

VMRAQ Specified Equipment

NSCV Part C details the equipment required to be carried aboard a domestic commercial vessel with respect to its size and intended area of operation. The operation of rescue vessels in adverse and emergency circumstances, combined with the fact that a rescue vessel may be called on to operate beyond its normal limits, requires an extra level of protection for vessel and crew. For this reason in addition to the requirements of NSCV Part C, the following equipment or fittings shall be carried:

- 1) For all vessels greater than 7M a life raft, even where positive flotation means such a raft is not required for NSCV compliance. In this circumstance the raft may be portable and stowed in forward cabin should the size, relative weight or other characteristics of the vessel make use of a hydrostatic release mechanism impossible
- 2) Where a vessel is constructed with rigid sides and is $\leq 7M$, minimum 75mm "D" rubbers and $>7M$ 90mm "D" rubbers must be fitted to adequately protect the sides of the vessel from abrasion.
- 3) Where a vessel is of "RIB" or other soft sided design, use of compact durable foam is strongly preferred, rather than air-filled bladders. In all cases the outer covering on the sides shall be held on by "sail track" and not simply bonded to the side of the vessel
- 4) If $>7M$ the vessel must be fitted with Windscreen wipers and washers

- 5) The vessel must have adequate handholds and rails to allow the crew to work safely in heavy weather conditions, these rails and handholds must be fitted to the inside and outside of cabin/wheelhouse, cockpit, fore and aft decks as required.
- 6) The number and strength of cleats and bollards near the gunwales of the vessel to allow safe effective rafting operations (As a guide this is a minimum of 2 along each side of a vessel up to 7M and 3 or more along each side of a vessel >7M)
- 7) Non-skid or anti-slip coating applied to all decks and gunwales
- 8) 2 x hand held high intensity spotlights
- 9) Orange strobe light/s fitted to the top of the cabin or fixed console well above the heads of the crew.
- 10) Minimum 2 x marine VHF radios
- 11) Satellite phone as required to proceed beyond 15NM from shore or beyond areas of known GSM phone coverage
- 12) 1 x hand held compass
- 13) Engine hour meter
- 14) Fuel flow meter or suitable fuel management alternative instrumentation.
- 15) 1 x backboard stretcher unless stowage of such equipment is not practical
- 16) Every Class C vessel shall be fitted with Automatic Identification System (A.I.S.)

Constructing a New VMR Vessel

VMRAQ Partial Subsidy

Under certain circumstances, VMRAQ may provide a partial subsidy to a squadron to be used towards the cost of a new rescue vessel. Consideration may be given to providing subsidy if the following criteria are met:

- The squadron intending to construct the vessel has not received a similar subsidy from VMRAQ within the previous ten years
- The Squadron has no outstanding debt
- Funding shall only be considered for a primary rescue vessel
- The proposed design of the vessel meets with all applicable legislation
- The proposed design of the vessel meets with this code of practice

Applying for Subsidy

If a squadron believes a proposed vessel should attract VMRAQ subsidy, that squadron should advise VMRAQ of its intention to apply in March of the financial year before the build project is to commence. *e.g.* if a squadron wishes to commence a building project in September, a notification should be provided in March of that same year. This first step is a simple notification made to the VMRAQ Secretary

After this, the squadron should make a detailed application for subsidy funding which includes the following:

- Detailed design specifications of the proposed vessel, including brand, hull configuration, Powerplant, general equipment, performance specifications and drawings of the vessel
- Total expected cost of the project including a schedule of payments, if known
- Recent bank statements showing the financial status of the squadron

- Details of how the vessel is to be funded, *e.g.* details of grant applications, sponsorships, consolidated revenue of the squadron, fundraising efforts *etc.*
- Confirmation of the storage, security and maintenance arrangements may be required if the vessel is of a substantially different size or type to the vessel that is being replaced
- A copy of squadron minutes showing the resolution to proceed with the project which nominates the person or committee in charge of managing the build project

VMRAQ Consideration of an Application

The VMRAQ State Council will consider all applications for subsidy funding at one of its normal general meetings. The merits of each application will be decided with regard to the operational need for the proposed vessel, the squadron's eligibility for funding, the proposed design of the new vessel, and the ability of VMRAQ to supply requested funding in any given financial year. Subsidy funding for a new vessel, if approved, will be provided on dollar for dollar amount for the direct cost of the vessel and its core equipment described herein, or the maximum amount the squadron is entitled to, whichever amount is lower.

On rare occasions when there is a clear imperative to replace a rescue vessel but the squadron genuinely does not have the capacity to raise the requisite funds, the VMRAQ State Council may give special consideration to increasing either the amount or the ratio of funds provided by VMRAQ.

If a proposed vessel is a substantially different vessel to the one it is replacing, the VMRAQ State Council may ask for extra justification of the project in the form of a submission that addresses some or all the following:

- The operational need for the different vessel
- The suitability of the vessel for its operational environment
- The ability of the squadron to fund the vessel
- The ability of the squadron to operate, maintain and fund the maintenance and ongoing costs of the vessel
- The ability of the squadron to provide a sufficient number of trained personnel to operate the new vessel

If the Application is Successful

VMRAQ is provided with Queensland Government funding under the terms of a service agreement held with Queensland Fire & Emergency Services (QFES). This service agreement prescribes that an amount of the provided funding shall be disbursed by VMRAQ for the purpose of subsidising new rescue vessels. For this reason it is only the intention of VMRAQ to perform its due diligence prior to approving a build project. Indeed most applications made within the terms of this code of practice are successful.

Subsidy funding will only be provided on a dollar for dollar basis of the cost of the hull, engines and core equipment. For this reason the maximum amount of possible funding may not be applied to every project.

If approval is given to subsidise the construction of a vessel, the squadron agrees to:

- Stick as closely as possible to the plans submitted in the application process and not unnecessarily vary the cost, scope or quality of a construction project
- Apply the received funding directly to the cost of constructing the vessel

- Sign an approved contract with the boat builder which adequately protects the interests of VMRAQ and the VMR Squadron and conduct themselves legally within the terms of that contract.
- Create, maintain and update a Personal Properties Security Register (PPSR) entry for the vessel construction project. VMRAQ recommends that the squadron engage a solicitor to effect this registration.
- Engage a surveyor to monitor the construction and protect the interests of VMRAQ and the relevant squadron during construction of the vessel. This must not be the same surveyor used by the boat builder to document the new vessel and enter it into survey.

Refusal of a Subsidy Application

An application for subsidy may be refused on several grounds. An application may be refused if:

- VMRAQ is over committed already making subsidy payments for that financial year
- The application does not meet the criteria set out herein
- The VMRAQ State Council doubts the ability of the squadron to train crew for, operate, store and maintain the vessel
- The VMRAQ State Council considers the vessel unsuitable for its intended operation or environment
- The VMRAQ State Council doubts the financial capacity of the squadron to build or maintain the vessel, including refusal to fund where a squadron would have insufficient financial reserves after constructing a vessel
- The VMRAQ State Council reasonably suspects fraudulent behaviour, criminal activity or conduct by a squadron or its key members which would breach the VMRAQ Code of Conduct
- Any other circumstance whereby providing Government funds to a project may be considered illegal, unethical or against standards of high moral conduct.

Refitting a VMR Vessel

Over the years, various high quality vessels have been constructed by VMR squadrons, many of which are still in use today. With the rapidly rising costs associated with constructing new vessels, it is often prudent for a squadron to consider a refit of a rescue vessel to extend its operational life rather than a complete replacement. When considering a refit it is prudent to be aware of applicable legislation. In many cases for example, a vessel that is not compliant with the latest requirements of NSCV may be required to be improved during a refit so that after the refit it does comply with all current requirements of that standard. For this reason careful project planning must take place preferably involving a marine surveyor.

When a squadron is considering a major refit of a rescue vessel, it may make application for subsidy funding under all the same circumstances prescribed for the construction of a new vessel. The same process should occur except that instead of supplying plans for a new vessel, the squadron should submit a report, preferably from a surveyor, describing the scope of works required to achieve the refit.

Acquiring Vessels from other agencies

From time to time other government or related agencies who operate various water craft may make these vessels available for sale via the commercial market. These agencies are accountable to the Queensland community for use of their funds and in many cases operate under strict internal

policies and guidelines which govern how they may dispose of a vessel. Even more strict guidelines may in some cases govern how an agency may dispose of a vessel in favour of a not-for-profit agency such as VMR.

For this reason the following rules will generally apply:

- Only in rare exceptional circumstances will a vessel be “gifted” or otherwise transferred without payment, to VMRAQ or one of its squadrons
- In the case of gifting a vessel the disposing agency shall not deal directly with an affiliated squadron. Such negotiations will remain the responsibility of an approved officer of VMRAQ
- The sale of a vessel from another agency to a VMR Squadron must be managed by an approved officer of VMRAQ
- The normal consideration will be “First right of refusal” when a vessel is offered for sale, which means the disposing agency will consider fair market value for a vessel and then allow VMRAQ to accept or reject that price for the sale of the vessel. In the event of rejection, the disposing agency shall then list the vessel for sale on the open market.

Should a squadron learn of such a vessel being offered for sale they shall generally adopt the following procedure:

- Inform VMRAQ of their wish to acquire the vessel, stating the business case for the acquisition including an estimate of purchase cost, the expected cost of refit or rectification of faults and the purpose for which the vessel will be used.
- In the event of more than one squadron wishing to acquire a given vessel, the VMRAQ Executive will have the sole responsibility of deciding which business case has the greater merit and will then negotiate on behalf of that squadron.
- VMRAQ will then negotiate the sale with the disposing agency
- VMRAQ will oversee the payment, delivery and transfer of any certificate of operation for the acquired vessel

Operation of a VMR Vessel

Approved Core Activities

In all cases the final responsibility for any rescue mission rests with the master of the VMR Vessel. The master of the VMR Vessel must consider the safety of the vessel and the welfare of the crew.

The core business of the squadrons of Volunteer Marine Rescue in Queensland are summarized as:

- Search and Rescue services generally supplied to the Queensland Police
- Medical Evacuation services
- Training of Marine Rescue personnel
- Specialized transport services provided to other emergency services agencies such as Q.A.S., Q.F.E.S., and S.E.S. *etc.*

Notwithstanding primary services, in non-urgent situations, reasonable attempts are also often made to preserve property and prevent escalation of risk associated with a boating activity. It is often prudent for marine rescue crew arriving at the site of a disabled vessel to consider providing other services to enable the crew of that vessel to help themselves. Such services may include:

- Towing of disabled or lightly grounded vessels
- Provision of electrical power for “jump starting”
- Provision of fuel

The provision of fuel to a vessel is strongly discouraged. Refuelling a vessel at sea from portable containers carries significant risk. However on rare occasions, these risks are outweighed by other factors such as the endurance of VMR vessel and crew who might be required to conduct a slow tow over considerable distance if the vessel is not refuelled at sea. In such cases, specific SOPs must cover the storage of portable fuel containers on board a rescue vessel, the storage of fuel, means of passing fuel containers to a disabled vessel and procedures to minimize the risk of spillage or fire.

Other Approved Activities

In addition to those listed above, VMR Rescue vessels may be used for:

- Provision of support to Queensland Police at aquatic community events
- Demonstration purposes at community education and awareness events
- Fundraising opportunities ⁽¹⁾
- Disaster or counter disaster operations as activated by a Local Disaster Management Group or State Disaster Coordination Centre. ⁽²⁾
- Support for ceremonial occasions *e.g.* “sail past” *etc*
- Scattering of ashes at sea ⁽³⁾
- Voyage by sea for refuelling or maintenance
- Training of VMR crewmembers

⁽¹⁾ Fundraising events are limited by Exemption 24 of the national law, to activities that do not attract GST *i.e.* no commercial work.

⁽²⁾ When activated by a LDMG or SDCC, either the President, State Manager or State Training Manager must be advised. That person will ensure that other authorities are advised as required and that the activity will be compensated under the National Disaster Relief Arrangements or other process.

⁽³⁾ Scattering of ashes should, if possible be restricted to sheltered waters when non-VMR personnel are carried on board VMR vessels.

Banned Activities

Activities that are expressly forbidden are:

- Use of a VMR vessel not authorised by the VMR squadron
- Use of a VMR vessel in a commercial activity *e.g.* carriage of persons for profit *etc.*
- Use of a VMR Vessel for a recreational activity

Furthermore the handling of obviously deceased persons is strongly discouraged. The death of a person at sea or in a connected waterway is a serious matter which will normally be subjected to a rigorous investigation by the Queensland Police Service. In rare circumstances where an obviously deceased person is to be handled by a VMR crew the following must be considered

- QPS must be unavailable for the activity or there must be a pressing circumstance whereby QPS are not able to take immediate custody of the deceased
- QPS must request or at least authorize the activity

- The risks of handling an obviously deceased person must be considered such as biohazards etc.
- There must be measures available to protect the crew from harm *e.g.* medical gloves etc.
- All crew on the vessel must be briefed on the activity and approval sought from each and every crewmember present to be involved in the activity

Critical incident counselling is available and should be offered to member placed in the position of handling a deceased person.

VMRAQ Staff are available for advice. Address any queries or concerns to either the General Manager or Training Manager.

Towing is a High Risk Activity

“Girting”

Most serious accidents involving VMR Rescue Vessels occur when the vessel is heavily loaded in a towing configuration. Girting is a phenomenon that occurs very rapidly with little symptomatic warning. Various reports from crews being debriefed on girting incidents variously carry statements like “One second we were fine everything was going well and the next second we were upside down and swimming”

Obviously this is a situation that should be avoided, but given the rapid onset and lack of warning, early recognition of the circumstances that might cause a girting incident is the best defence.

Risk factors include:

- Towing heavy vessels
- Towing vessels which are heavily grounded
- Towing vessels which are also using their own propulsion *e.g.* engines or sails
- Towing when there is a large downward force such as towing sunken or partially sunken objects
- Using significant engine power on the rescue vessel
- A towline which is at a significant angle to the centreline of the vessel *i.e.* “off to one side”
- Any combination of the above factors leads to a reduction in the required magnitude of a single factor before disaster can occur

In summary, be aware of the factors that cause girting and watch closely for these risk factors developing long before any reduction in stability of the vessel is noted.

Other Towing Risks:

Generally other towing risks include:

- A vessel being towed will “run on” when the speed of the combined unit is being reduced
- A slack tow rope is a hazard that may foul the rescue vessel or suddenly come under load if not managed carefully
- When a tow rope is slack, the vessel being towed may move in a direction and orientation that is difficult to predict
- Danger to hands and fingers while securing a tow rope
- Danger of whip lash injury in the event of the tow rope snapping
- Manoeuvring alongside to transition from towing to rafting has its own set of risks
- Rafting another vessel makes the rescue vessel difficult to manoeuvre

- Dangers associated with crew working in close quarters with other vessels

Skipper Must be Present for Operations

When operational, an appropriately qualified skipper must be on board in charge of a rescue vessel at all times. The requirements for competency are described in the section "[Requirements and competency of VMR crew](#)" below.

During urgent or emergency operations, the skipper should be at the helm of the rescue vessel. During routine missions or training exercises, a person in training may operate the helm of the vessel providing they have undertaken a minimum level of training that makes the operation safe and that the skipper remains close to the helm station and immediately able to resume control of the vessel.

Exemption From Having a Skipper on Board for Training

Under very limited circumstances, a VMR Rescue Vessel may not require a qualified skipper on board in order to undertake certain low-risk duties. The circumstances under which the vessel may be operated without a skipper are:

- The vessel must be less than 7.5M in length
- The operation must be a low risk training activity
- The operation can only take place within sheltered waters
- The operational must be within 3NM of the point of departure
- Both the forecast and actual wave height must be less than 1.5M
- Such activities may only take place during daylight hours

The restrictions placed upon this exemption may be extended in certain areas of operation. However, in such cases, the area of operation must be negotiated with the State Training Manager, the manager must approve the variation in writing and a copy of the approval must be entered into the vessel's Safety Management System (SMS)

In deciding whether to approve such an activity, the State Training Manager will consider:

- Risks present in the area of operation
- SMS and Squadron Standard Operating Procedures which manage operational risk
- Squadron requirements for the training and experience of personnel who will undertake this activity
- Any other factor the manager considers may affect the safe operation of the vessel

If a skipper is not present during the operations described immediately above, then the person in charge and responsible for the safety of the vessel and crew must:

- Have completed MARF001
- Have completed MARF002
- Have completed MARF004
- Have completed MARF005
- Hold current HLTAID003 or equivalent senior first aid certificate
- Hold a LROCP
- Hold a RMDL or equivalent recreational marine driver's license
- Be approved by squadron management for the activity and proposed area of operation

Risk Assessment

Prior to each and every operation conducted by a VMR vessel, the risks of the operation should be assessed and recorded either in the vessel log, or on the form provided by VMRAQ to squadrons and attached to the vessel log. The risk assessment should examine:

- The type of mission to be undertaken
- The expected wind strength
- The expected sea state
- Other environmental factors *e.g.* night vs day and any rain
- The experience of the skipper
- The experience of the crew
- Any other factors which may increase the risk of the mission
- Measures to mitigate moderate-high risk missions

A summary of the level of risk should be categorized into low, medium or high risk. If the level of risk is assessed as anything other than low, then control measures should be considered and recorded. Such control measures may include but not be limited to:

- Declining the mission on the basis of crew safety, environmental or physical factors
- Deferring the mission until a later time if possible
- Making use of a better equipped resource such as helicopter or police vessel *etc*
- Making use of a better equipped rescue vessel
- Limiting the scope of the mission *e.g.* rescue the people but leave the boat
- Using a 2nd rescue vessel to accompany the primary vessel
- Increasing the number of qualified crew
- Placing a 2nd skipper on board
- Seeking advice/mentoring from a qualified person on shore
- Loading additional specialized equipment such as a tender, extra ropes *etc*
- Maintaining contact with an on shore monitoring station and arranging a contact schedule
- Conducting more extensive crew briefing
- Any other measure which enhances the safety of the mission

Maintenance of a VMR Vessel

Ensuring that each VMR Rescue Vessel is well maintained and operationally ready to respond, is critical to the safety of our crews and the success of our goals. VMRAQ undertakes to have each vessel inspected on an annual basis to ensure it remains seaworthy and that all necessary equipment is on board and functional.

To ensure each vessel remains safe and operational, each squadron should:

- Maintain the vessel and repair/replace defective items to the standard required by NSCV and this code of practice
- Develop Checklists to assist crews in maintaining vessels and conducting pre-departure checks
- Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure that all crew are trained in a consistent safe manner on all aspects of managing the vessel
- Develop a Safety Management System (SMS) generally compliant with Part E of NSCV
- Update the vessel's SMS with changes made to the vessel or its procedures

- Conduct an annual review of risks associated with the operation of the vessel and record the identified risks along with control measures in the vessel's SMS
- Keep maintenance logs as required in accordance with NSCV Part "E"

Engine Replacement

Outboard engine technology is developing all the time. VMR Vessels need to be reliable and ready to respond with a high degree of dependability. For this reason VMR squadrons often replace the engines on a reasonably frequent schedule, particularly in highly populated areas where VMR vessels can do a large number of hours in a year.

If replacing engines with a different type:

- Always seek the advice of a marine surveyor
- If the new engines are of a different weight or horsepower (kilowatts) rating to the engines being replaced, it may be necessary to have the vessel's stability information re-assessed and updated

In all cases when replacing engines, even of the same type:

- Advise the VMRAQ manager of the, brand, size and date of fitting of new engines to ensure that insurance data is kept up to date
- Enter the new information into vessel records
- Ensure that the manufacturer's recommendations are adhered to in relation to pre-delivery and running in of new engines.

Requirements and Competency of VMR Crew

Induction

The management of each affiliated squadron may make their own arrangements to recruit volunteer crewmembers. Squadrons are required to provide a thorough induction to prospective members before they commence active duty. This induction should be broken into two parts, safety in the workplace (base or premises in use by the VMR Squadron) and safety on board the vessel.

In the premises the induction should include:

- The requirement to sign in and sign out of premises
- Evacuation procedures
- Emergency procedures (Fire, bomb threat *etc.*)
- Site specific requirements
- Introduction to squadron Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- The requirement for adequate PPE (Covered shoes, hat *etc.*)
- A declaration by the candidate of the minimum level of health and fitness required to perform the tasks of an operational crewmember
- The requirement to follow the VMRAQ Code of conduct

- The requirement to follow directions of the person in charge or responsible for safety of members
- Any other points required to ensure the safety of members

An induction to the VMR vessel should include:

- Introduction the vessel Safety Management System (SMS)
- An overview of the location and use of lifesaving apparatus and other equipment
- The requirement not to attempt any task without training and supervision until competency has been achieved
- The requirement to follow directions of the master of the vessel
- The requirement to hold on securely and not move about the vessel unnecessarily
- The requirement to use adequate PPE (Sunscreen, hat, sunglasses, lifejacket *etc.*) as appropriate for conditions
- The requirement to maintain all parts of the body within the confines of the cabin or cockpit of the vessel.
- Advice of known hazards on board the vessel and the appropriate control measures (*e.g.* lines under strain *etc.*)
- Any other points required to ensure the safety of crewmembers

Task Books

Upon completion of the Shipboard Safety Skill Set (SSSS) described below, each candidate wishing to progress their qualifications further should be issued with a current AMSA approved Task Book.

NOTE that this requirement applies to every crewmember, including those who have no intention of completing training to the level of skipper or the qualification of coxswain.

The purpose of a Task book is not to summarize that a person is competent in a particular skill. Competency based training carries the requirement to demonstrate how a person built a skill and that they are capable of carrying out that task in their normal work role or environment. Task books are an important tool to demonstrate and record the journey of the candidate building a particular skill.

Who can sign a task book?

- The State Training Manager
- A VMRAQ approved State Training Officer (paid or volunteer)
- A person approved by VMRAQ as an assessor
- A person holding the qualification of National Coxswain Grade 1 (Near Coastal), its direct equivalent or higher qualification
- A person approved by VMRAQ under the terms of Exemption 24 to the National Law, as competent and current to operate VMRAQ rescue vessels, irrespective of how they achieved that competency (Skipper)
- Another person specifically approved by VMRAQ to sign all or some areas of a Task book according to qualifications held by that person.

Levels of Crew Training

Described below are the minimum levels of competency and associated subjects of study to meet the various task roles of Crew, Competent Crew and Skipper. These levels of training are not considered to be complete until all assessments have been validated and the appropriate

statements of attainment and/or qualification have been issued. In addition, for Competent Crew and Skipper level training, the appropriate areas of an AMSA approved Task Book must be completed before a statement of attainment is issued.

Minimum Crew Level

Once a member has completed the induction prescribed by the squadron, they may travel on board a VMR vessel as part of their normal duties. However within six (6) months they must complete a level of training consistent with the "Shipboard Safety Skill Set" (SSSS) composed of subjects from the "MAR" training package. This level of training is comprised of the following units of competency:

- MARF001 "Apply basic survival skills in the event of vessel abandonment"
- MARF002 "Follow procedures to minimise and fight fires on board a vessel"
- MARF004 "Meet work health and safety requirements"
- MARF005 "Survive at sea using survival craft"

Should a candidate not be able to meet this minimum level of training within a six month period, they may still remain an active member of the VMR squadron, however they must not be carried on board a VMR rescue vessel as a crewmember until this minimum level of training is complete.

Competent Crew

Once a member has completed the Shipboard Safety Skill Set as outlined above they may elect to pursue further training. The next step is Competent Crew. Competent Crew is comprised of:

- All requirements outlined in "Minimum Crew Level" above
- MARN002 "Apply seamanship skills aboard a vessel up to 12 metres"
- Long Range Radio Operator's Certificate of Proficiency (LROCP)
- HLTAID003 "Provide First Aid"

Members are required to complete this course before proceeding on towards a VMR Skipper. All relevant areas of a Task Book must be complete before a statement of attainment will be issued.

Skippers of VMR Rescue Vessels

Skippers of VMR Rescue Vessels may be, persons who have completed the qualification of National Coxswain Grade 1 (Near Coastal) under the national system (NC1), a directly equivalent qualification which can be transferred to an NC1 qualification or a person who completes a Certificate II in Maritime Operations (Coxswain) in addition to the requirements laid out below as approved under Exemption 24 of the National Law.

NOTE; a qualification as a skipper or coxswain is not permission to command a VMR Rescue Vessel. Permission to operate will only be granted to persons who meet additional requirements and who are approved by squadron management.

To progress towards the level of skipper a candidate must complete:

- All The requirements outlined in the "Competent Crew" level above
- MARK001 "Handle a vessel up to 12 metres"
- MARI001 "Comply with regulations to ensure safe operation of a vessel up to 12 metres"
- MARC006 "Operate main propulsion unit and auxiliary systems"
- MARC005 "Operate inboard and outboard motors"
- MARH001 "Plan and navigate a passage for a vessel up to 12 metres"

- MARB002 “Perform basic servicing and maintenance of main propulsion unit and auxiliary systems”
- MARJ001 “Follow environmental work practices”
- Complete a local area knowledge test determined by the squadron for the intended area of operation

All relevant areas of a Task Book must be complete before a statement of attainment or qualification will be issued.

At this point a Certificate II in Maritime Operations can be issued. If a candidate has sufficient sea time as prescribed by AMSA, they may wish to pursue the qualification of National Coxswain Grade 1 (Near Coastal). To do so they will need to:

- Present their Certificate II Maritime Operations
- Present their completed Task Book
- Complete a medical fitness declaration
- Completed the prescribed eye sight test including a test of colour vision
- Present evidence of sufficient sea time
- Complete the final holistic assessment prescribed by AMSA
- Pay the fees prescribed by AMSA

In all cases, candidates who either complete the training prescribed above, or independently obtain the qualification of NC1 will need to complete the following final assessments before being granted approval to operate VMR Rescue Vessels as Skipper:

- TDMMF107B “Assist with Search & Rescue”
- Complete a final practical assessment with a VMRAQ approved assessor
- Complete any final holistic assessment required by the squadron to operate its vessels in the local environment
- Obtain written approval of the VMR management squadron to operate its vessels along with any restrictions the squadron management deem necessary

3 Year Reaccreditation

Once approval is given to operate a VMR Rescue Vessel, each skipper will be required to undergo a reaccreditation once every three (3) years as determined by VMRAQ. In this case an approved State Training Officer or other qualified person approved by VMRAQ, will liaise with each skipper to arrange a suitable time to undertake this process. Reaccreditation is not designed to question a skipper’s ability to operate a vessel, rather it is intended for VMRAQ to be able to validate and record that each skipper is current in all procedures and processes. This is designed to ensure the protection of all skippers and crews.

The reaccreditation process is reviewed on each occasion by the State Training Manager and State Training Officers in order to match the reaccreditation process with the latest updates in procedures, regulations, best practices and any lessons learned.

Should this process discover a gap in the knowledge or skill of an operational skipper, that person may take up to 3 months to practice the skill or study the required knowledge and finalize the reaccreditation process successfully. If a second attempt still identifies gaps in knowledge or skill, the case will be reviewed by a state trainer and further attempts will be at the discretion of that trainer. If a skipper cannot complete or declines to complete the reaccreditation process, their

permission to operate VMR Rescue Vessels shall be removed until such time as the reaccreditation process has been successfully completed.

In general each skipper can expect the following general areas to be reviewed:

- Knowledge of the Rescue Vessel SMS with an emphasis on emergency procedures and the risk register
- Knowledge of and any changes to Domestic Regulations
- Knowledge of basic navigation
- Crew management and teamwork practices
- Practical vessel operations including berthing, departing a berth, manoeuvring and towing operations
- Local area knowledge
- Marine Rescue specific operations including operations in adverse circumstances
- Critical incident review
- Any factor that may affect the safety of crews and the safe operation of the vessel

Squadron Obligations

VMR Squadrons may be considered as volunteer workplaces. In keeping with our commitment to safety, squadrons have obligations as listed below to ensure that VMR premises and vessels remain the safest possible working environment for crewmembers.

VMR Squadron management committees shall ensure the following:

- Ensure that a Safety Management System compliant with NSCV Part E, is produced, promulgated to members and reviewed as required by legislation and standards
- That suitable training program/s be in place to protect the safety of VMR members
- That all VMR Rescue Vessels are maintained in sound working order in line with their certificate of survey with respect to their design, construction and equipment carried
- That a list of active current skippers is developed that describes any restrictions placed upon the skipper
- That all critical or traumatic rescue events are suitably debriefed and that each such incident is communicated to VMRAQ
- Ensure that all incidents that occur on board VMR Rescue Vessels or at VMR occupied premises are investigated and communicated to VMRAQ
- That all records are kept for a minimum of 10 years as required by legislation
- That all laws and rules applicable to VMR squadrons are followed