



Welcome



Welcome to the September edition of the Communique. In this edition you'll find updates about the Marine Rescue Implementation Working Group (MRIWG), the Minister's visit to VMR Whitsunday, new QFES Marine Rescue Implementation (MRI) team members, resource to risk update, the new Queensland Marine Rescue Volunteers Facebook group and more.

Going forward there will be a change to our communications approach: i) we will be commencing a monthly update called 'Marine Rescue Implementation Monthly' which will provide regular updates about MRI progress and news within both Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland (VMRAQ) and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (AVCGA).

ii) Communiques will become the 'Marine Rescue Implementation Working Group Communique' and will focus on providing information and outcomes following each MRIWG meeting.

iii) a managed private Facebook group for Queensland Marine Rescue Volunteers will begin and,

iv) further face-to-face meetings to gain your insight will be scheduled.

If you have any questions, comments, content suggestions or would like to be added to mailing list for future Communiques and monthly updates email the QFES MRI team at: marinerescue@qfes.qld.gov.au with the subject line: Add me to MRI mailing list.

Top left photo: MRI Fleet Officer John Schwarzrock meets with VMR Thursday Island and St Pauls.

Marine Rescue Implementation Working Group meeting – Townsville 7 and 8 September 2021

The Marine Rescue Implementation Working Group (MRIWG) held its fourth meeting on 7 and 8 September 2021 in Townsville. At this meeting the Working Group agreed several key areas to inform the implementation of the single, integrated marine rescue service.

Working group members were briefed on the Legislation, Policy and Governance, Fleet, Capability, Finance and Administration sub-working groups, and the Communications and Engagement strategy (including the naming and branding process) and future consultation with the sector.



Updates were provided on the proposed financial model, and the proposed new marine rescue service structure which will continue to progress through sub-working groups.

Members were briefed on how the Vessel Replacement Program (VRP) will be implemented. The process was endorsed by the Working Group and squadrons and flotillas will be consulted about the program's rollout based on the priorities agreed with the Fleet Sub Working Group.

The Working Groups consists of broad representation with members from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), Queensland Police Service (QPS), Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ), Volunteer Marine Rescue Service Queensland (VMRAQ), marine rescue service sector volunteers and, Queensland Recreational Boating Council (QRBC).

While some Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (AVCGA) volunteers are engaging and consulting on the work of the MRIWG independently, the national board is currently not participating in the MRIWG at their own discretion. QFES is continuing to engage and consult with the national board separately.

Additional sector volunteers from the original Expression of Interest pool have joined the MRIWG or its sub-working groups to provide their personal expertise to the working groups.

Top right photo: MRIWG members in Townsville.

The road to a single entity

For many marine rescue service volunteers, the road to a marine rescue single entity in Queensland has been ongoing for some time. We know from other states that this journey takes some time and it's important we get it right and that means lots of input from the MRWIG and ongoing engagement with volunteers and the sector's stakeholders.

The Marine Rescue Implementation was borne out of the independent [Blue Water Review \(BWR\)](#) that was released in 2019 and consulted volunteers from both Queensland marine rescue organisations and government authorities, boating representative groups and interstate authorities. The BWR identified concerns across the sector.

Then QFES Commissioner established the Blue Water Review Working Group (BWRWG) in early 2019 to consider the BWR and define a future vision for the marine rescue sector in Queensland. Its membership had volunteers from AVCGA and VMRAQ, and representatives from Surf Life Saving Queensland, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Ambulance Service, Maritime Safety Queensland and Queensland Recreational Boating Council. It met ten times during 2019 and consulted widely with sector volunteers.

The BWRWG delivered a number of [recommendations](#) to the Queensland Government for sector reform which include a single, integrated marine rescue service in Queensland. This was considered by the Queensland Government in 2020 and was announced as a Government Election Commitment in October 2020 which includes a \$35.38 million investment for transition and establishment of a single, integrated marine rescue service and replacement vessels for aging fleet.

The MRIWG was established as part of this commitment and its role is to provide advice about the marine rescue sector in Queensland and assist with the planning and delivering of the single integrated service.

The Working Group continues to work through the design phase which will inform the transition to and establishment of a single, integrated marine rescue service for Queensland. The Government's commitment and the progress of the MRIWG was further outlined at the recent Parliamentary Estimates hearings.

Minister Ryan's visit to VMR Whitsunday – 8 September

The Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, Mark Ryan MP visited Volunteer Marine Rescue Whitsunday on 8 September 2021. Minister Ryan along with QFES staff were shown the unit's two rescue vessels, Whale Song VMR2 and Coral Sea Marina VMR1. VMR Whitsunday also showed the Minister VMR1's capabilities on the water.

The VMR Whitsunday team then provided a tour of the Whisper Bay base building. The hospitality of the Squadron was greatly appreciated as is their outstanding contribution to their community.



Top right photo: Minister Ryan with VMR Whitsunday members and QFES staff on his visit to VMR Whitsunday. Photo credit: Shirley Wodson.

Queensland Marine Rescue Volunteers Facebook group

The Marine Rescue Implementation Team has set up a [private Queensland Marine Rescue Volunteers Facebook group](#). This is a moderated private Facebook group where volunteers can share squadron and flotilla updates, ask questions and more. To join the group and find out more about the forum terms and conditions, click the “Join Queensland Marine Rescue Facebook group” button.

**Join Queensland Marine
Rescue Facebook
Group here**

Parliamentary Estimates

At this year's Parliamentary Estimates Legal Affairs and Safety Committee hearing held on 12 August 2021, the Minister and Commissioner outlined the Marine Rescue Implementation progress so far this year and reaffirmed the commitment to a single, statewide marine rescue service.

The Commissioner outlined the MRI budget remains at \$35.38 million with \$17.38 million across the forward estimates for the vessel replacement program. The remaining \$18 million provides transitional support to an integrated marine rescue service and ongoing operational subsidies to provide service continuity to both AVCGA and VMRAQ units.

The Minister thanked both the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association and Volunteer Marine Rescue Association of Queensland for their continuing contribution to community safety and community service and reinforced the commitment to boosting the marine rescue capability in Queensland and a single, integrated marine rescue service.

The Minister acknowledged it is a complex reform however the Government remains fully committed to the integration while also recognising progress with MRIWG established and implementing the consultation structure.

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[Read Estimates
Hansard here](#)

Sub-working groups

Several sub-working groups have been stood up and have met since the June 2021 MRIWG meeting. The sub-working groups advise the MRIWG on key program areas within the implementation. These are:

- Legislation, Policy and Governance
- Fleet
- Finance and Administration
- Capability

Below is a brief update on the sub- working groups.

Legislation, Policy and Governance sub-working group

The Legislation, Policy and Governance sub-working has met four times this year and focuses on the policy and legislation pathway. The Legislative Framework will serve as a foundation to the creation of the new service and its functions for the community.

Fleet sub-working group

The Fleet sub-working group has met three times this year and is working on the delivery of the Vessel Replacement Program including vessel specifications, training and operational requirements in the context of the future concept of operations for the marine rescue service.

Finance and Administration sub-working group

The Finance and Administration sub-working group met in August and is working alongside with other sub-working groups to develop the financial model for the future service. This will help inform the resourcing model for the implementation and enduring service provision.

Capability sub-working group

The Capability sub-working group has held its first meeting in August 2021 and will continue to support and advise on the Resource to Risk project, Concept of Operations and service delivery model for the future service.

Resource to Risk update

The Resource to Risk project has completed the initial round of engagements meeting with 42 of 47 units to conduct the initial workshops. The Resource to Risk project looks at the minimum resourcing requirements (vessels, crewing and training) for each of the units. Profiles for squadrons and flotillas are now under development and secondary consultations will begin in early October 2021. The program is due for completion by the end of the year and will inform future capability and resourcing requirements and vessel replacement priorities.



Top right photo: VMR Burdekin participating in the Resource to Risk Project.



Vessel replacement program

The Vessel Replacement Program (VRP) has been endorsed by MRIWG and the Fleet sub-working group will continue to work towards establishing priorities for vessel replacement.

The VRP funding is \$17.383 million over four years as announced by the Queensland

Government, and now includes the integration of the Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) funds previously provided through the service agreements which brings the total funding to \$18.94 million.

The program provides benefits to units including access to government procurement process and standing order arrangements.

Prioritisation for vessel replacement is based on inputs from squadrons and flotillas which include but is not limited to the Resource to Risk project and areas of greatest need. The Fleet sub-working group will also work on prioritisation and will engage with identified units.

Units will also be able to participate in co-contributions for vessels under this program. The model will use a QFES owned, locally managed approach, which means vessels will remain in their local communities with the support of the Department and be locally operated and managed by local units. This model is similar to other QFES volunteer services.

Service Agreements 2021-22

On 3 September 2021, VMRAQ and QFES finalised their service agreement for the remainder of the 2021-22 financial year. The agreement includes additional support for insurance costs and incorporation of the one-off direct squadron relief grant.

QFES and AVCGA national board continue to work together on the 2021-22 service agreement. In the interim, QFES has released information to all Flotillas regarding how to apply for the one-off direct flotilla relief grant to ensure there is adequate time to consider, apply for and acquit the grant opportunity.

All enquires on the grant should be directed to marinerescue@qfes.qld.gov.au or contact the team via 07 3635 3484.

QF2 Brisbane Coast Guard takes part in RAMPSAFE

Ahead of the peak boating season Brisbane Coast Guard along with QPS, Maritime Safety Queensland and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries have been hosting RampSafe at various boats ramps on weekend mornings to talk to boat users about water safety and safety equipment required for recreational vessels in Queensland.



Boat users can grab a coffee from the coffee cart and have a chat about the requirements for lifejackets, flares and other equipment before heading out to the water.

This is a great community engagement opportunity to ensure recreational boat users are prepared.

So far, they have had RAMPSAFE events at Colmslie Boat Ramp, Whyte Island Boat Ramp, Manly Harbour Boat Ramp.

Keep an eye out on their [Facebook page](#) for more information.

Top right photo: QF2 takes part in RampSafe. Photo credit: Brisbane Coast Guard- QF2 Facebook page.

[QF2 Facebook page](#)

Concept of Operations

The MRIWG has endorsed the revised Concept of Operations (CONOPS) for the future marine rescue service.

The founding CONOPS builds on the work of the BWRWG and provides a structured approach to the overarching mission, goal, objectives and outcomes for the single, integrated marine rescue service in the future.

MRIWG thanks all who have contributed to the CONOPS development and looks forward to the CONOPS evolving through the implementation process.

[Read revised CONOPS here](#)

New Marine Rescue Implementation (MRI) team members

Since our last Communique, three new team members have joined the MRI team to support the development of the new integrated services. All MRI positions are fully funded from the QFES budget for 2021-22 and do not impact the \$35.38 million Queensland Government commitment to the sector. Assistant Commissioner Greenfield and the MRI Director, Matthew Thompson, continue to lead the MRI program. Meet the newest team members below.

Chloe Chapman, Business Support Officer

Chloe is providing business support to the Marine Rescue Implementation team and providing support to both VMRAQ and AVCGA through the implementation. Chloe has had previous roles within QFES including with the Rural Fire Service (RFS), State Operational Coordination Branch and QFES People branch.





Karen Mahoney, Senior Program Officer (Finance and Procurement)

Karen is overseeing the Finance and Procurement for the implementation and will be assisting with the future financial model and procurement. This work will support both AVCGA and VMRAQ through the integration transition. Karen has previously worked for NAB, QPS and has worked in QFES Fleet and State Operations Centre.

Jade Keogh, Senior Project Officer

Jade is overseeing the project management for MRI and is working closely with all MRI team members and volunteers to ensure the implementation stays on track and schedule. Jade has had previously roles within QFES and most recently was managing QFES's Service Agreements with VMRAQ, AVCGA, Surf Life Saving Queensland, the Royal Life Saving Society Queensland and the PCYC Emergency Services Cadets Program, as well as working on the implementation of the QFES Volunteerism Strategy.



Volunteers may remember Jade from Blue Water Review and her role as secretariat and is thrilled to be back on board and working with VMRAQ and AVCGA.

New service name consultation

The MRIWG endorsed the consultation process for a new service name. Volunteers will be consulted and asked to choose the preferred name for the future marine rescue service.



Further details of the process will be provided shortly, however the MRI team is encouraging volunteers who want to have their say on the future name to register their email to marinerescue@qfes.qld.gov.au with the subject: ***Marine Rescue Service naming process.***

Covid-19 and vaccines

As the COVID-19 situation continues to develop around Australia, there are a number of COVID-19 hotspots and exposure venues in various States and Territories.

For the most up to date information on COVID-19 Hotspots and Exposure Venues please visit the [Queensland Health website](#) here.

Maritime Safety Queensland also provides weekly COVID-19 updates which can be accessed [here](#).

Protect yourself and those around you by staying at home if you are unwell, practicing social distancing and maintaining your personal hygiene. Out on the water, please regularly assess your exposure risk and your colleagues' risk during self-activation and SAR activities. Together, we can continue to keep the transmission of COVID-19 to a minimum.

**Queensland Health
COVID-19 Health Alerts**

COVID-19 vaccine rollout

If you have not yet received a COVID-19 vaccine Queensland Health has vaccination locations across the state.

Read more about these locations, how to register and book through the [Queensland Health COVID-19 website](#).

You can also book appointments through [Vaccine Clinic Finder](#).

If you have any questions about the vaccines, please contact your General Practitioner.



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To provide feedback or suggest story ideas for the future communications, please email: marinerescue@qfes.qld.gov.au

[Join the Queensland Marine Rescue Volunteers Facebook Group](#)

This email has been circulated through other communication methods to ensure accessibility.

QFES acknowledges and recognises Traditional Owners as custodians of the lands where we work together with the communities of Queensland. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors of these lands, their spirits and their legacy.