

Review into Volunteer Marine Rescue Organisations in Queensland



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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	- 3 -
Executive Summary	- 4 -
Key Observations.....	- 8 -
1. Introduction.....	- 10 -
2. Approach	- 10 -
Part One: The Volunteer Sector and Marine Search and Rescue.....	- 12 -
3. Context and Background.....	- 12 -
4. The Role for Government - State Responsibilities.....	- 13 -
5. Current Volunteer Association Organisational Arrangements.....	- 15 -
6. The Queensland Recreational Boating Environment.....	- 18 -
7. Roles and Response Activities	- 20 -
8. The Authorising and Regulatory Environment.....	- 21 -
The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)	- 22 -
Work Health and Safety Act (2011)	- 22 -
Incorporated Associations	- 22 -
Australian Tax Office and Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission (ACNC)-	23 -
Compliance with the Service Level Agreement	- 23 -
Part Two: Stakeholder Views.....	- 24 -
9. Consultation	- 24 -
10. Governance and Transparency	- 24 -
Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (AVCGA)	- 24 -
Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland (VMRAQ).....	- 26 -
11. Volunteer Attraction, Retention and Profile.....	- 27 -
12. Resourcing	- 29 -
13. Capital Costs - Vessel Replacement/Refurbishment	- 30 -
14. Training, Exercising and Administration	- 31 -
14.2 Specific comments:.....	- 31 -
Exercising.....	- 32 -
15. Information Management (including Vessel Recording/Tracking).....	- 32 -
16. Open Water Access	- 32 -
17. Other Stakeholders	- 33 -
Queensland Recreational Boating Council.....	- 33 -
Marine Radio Moreton Bay	- 33 -

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Queensland Water Police	- 34 -
Queensland Ambulance Service	- 34 -
Part Three: Reviewer’s Commentary	- 36 -
18. Elements of the Marine Rescue Environment	- 36 -
19. Organisational Governance	- 36 -
20. The Role of the Volunteer Marine Search and Rescue Sector.....	- 37 -
21. Commonality, Consistency and Coherency.....	- 37 -
22. Maritime Risk Assessment.....	- 38 -
23. State Oversight Mechanisms	- 39 -
24. Radio Communications Network.....	- 39 -
Technology and an Integrated Capability Approach	- 40 -
Part Four – Path to the Future	- 42 -
25. The Case for Change.....	- 42 -
26. Where Does Government Interpose?	- 42 -
27. Where to and how to get there	- 43 -
A Future Vision - Attributes of an ideal Volunteer Marine Rescue Sector	- 43 -
28. Options for Government.....	- 45 -
Short Term Reform.....	- 46 -
Major Reform - Transition Pathway and Actions.....	- 47 -
29. Conclusion	- 50 -
Attachments	- 51 -
Attachment A - Blue Water Review - Terms of Reference	- 51 -
Attachment B - Consultation List.....	- 52 -
Attachment C - Comparative State Volunteer Marine Rescue Arrangements	- 54 -
Victoria Volunteer Marine Rescue Sector Arrangements	- 54 -
New South Wales Volunteer Marine Rescue Sector Arrangement.....	- 56 -
Western Australia - Volunteer Marine Rescue Sector Arrangements	- 59 -
Attachment D - Boat License and Registrations Number	- 63 -
Recreational Marine License Holders in Queensland as at 31 January, 2008-2018	- 63 -
Boat Registrations in Queensland as at 31 January, 2008-2018	- 63 -
Attachment E - Volunteer Marine Rescue Organisation Activity Statistics	- 64 -
Attachment F - Service Level Agreements.....	- 65 -
Attachment G -AVCGA Strategic Review by <i>Cameray Consultants</i>- Excerpts	- 80 -
Attachment I - Marine Radio Moreton Bay Details	- 83 -

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List of Abbreviations

- ACNC – Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission
- ACT – Australian Capital Territory
- AMSA – Australian Maritime Safety Authority
- ATO – Australian Tax Office
- AVCGA – Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association
- C4I – Command, Control, Coordination, Communications and Information
- DGR – Deductible Gift Recipient
- EMVic – Emergency Management Victoria
- Hp – Horse Power
- HQ - Headquarters
- IT - Information Technology
- MERL – Maritime Electronic Recording and Logging
- MSAR – Marine Search and Rescue
- MRMB - Marine Radio Moreton Bay
- MSQ – Marine Safety Queensland
- NSW – New South Wales
- QAS – Queensland Ambulance Service
- QFES – Queensland Fire and Emergency Service
- QGAir – Queensland Government Air
- QLD – Queensland
- QRBC - Queensland Recreational Boating Council
- RACQ - Royal Automobile Club of Queensland
- RFS – Rural Fire Service
- ROIP – Radio Over Internet Protocols
- SAR – Search and Rescue
- SES – State Emergency Service
- SOLAS – Safety of Life at Sea
- SLA – Service Level Agreement
- VHF – Very High Frequency
- Vic – Victoria
- VMR – Volunteer Marine Rescue
- VMRAQ – Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland
- VMS - Vessel Monitoring System
- VTS – Vessel Traffic Service
- WA – Western Australia

Executive Summary

Background

This Blue Water Review has been authorised by the Commissioner for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. It examines and identifies key issues in the provision of marine search and rescue services by the two volunteer organisations, the Australian Volunteer Coastguard Association (AVCGA) and Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland (VMRAQ). It will hopefully provide a catalyst for policy change to ensure a sustainable and effective volunteer rescue service into the future.

Approach

Extensive consultation was conducted with the both organisations, other Government agencies and boating related groups. Consultation concentrated on the rank and file membership. Only three of volunteer units were unable to attend meetings. The experience of other State jurisdictions was also canvassed. This report represents the views of members and state-wide observations from the reviewing officer.

Context

Queensland Police are the authority for Marine Search and Rescue (MSAR) and have a limited number of vessels strategically positioned around the coast. Police's MSAR role is supported by a total of 47 VMR Squadrons and Coastguard Flotillas spread around Queensland. The network of volunteer units has developed in an ad hoc manner with community-minded boating enthusiasts responding to a need for a boating safety net by establishing private marine rescue groups. As populations increased the demand for their services rose, and these private groups transitioned to join established associations.

The current MSAR system comprises Commonwealth and State agencies, and volunteer groups, supported by various communications networks. Volunteer organisations see their role as broader than responding to Police-tasks SAR events. The majority offer an on-water assistance service in the event of misadventure. This comprises 90% of their operational activity, although which of these 'assistance' responses avert a potentially critical incident cannot be measured.

QLD recreational vessel numbers are increasing but only at the same rate as population growth. Notably, compared to other vessels Powered Water Craft are tripling in numbers, and vessels in the 6 to 8 metre range have increased at 50% above other vessel types. The following points are important in understanding the complexities of this sector:

- Approximately \$3.2 million is provided annually by Government recognising the public good. Yet volunteers in the sector are not seen as part of the Emergency Services.
- There is huge diversity across the state in terms of a volunteer unit's activities, numbers of volunteers, financial state, operating environment, and management.

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- AVCGA and VMR have differing corporate structure. Both are incorporated entities (AVCGA in the ACT) with charitable status. Coastguard Flotillas are unincorporated and full members of the AVCGA. VMR (Queensland) is an entity incorporated in QLD. VMR Squadrons are incorporated in their own right and affiliated with the State (VMRAQ).
- The regulatory and authorising environments for the volunteer organisations is complex. Key is the Australian Maritime Safety Authority who is responsible for setting vessel compliance standards, crew competencies, and operating parameters. Other legislation at State and Commonwealth levels determine financial requirements and reporting, requirements of Association, and WHS duty of care.

In sum, the sector is a complex mix of federal and state arrangements, where paid and volunteer members work side by side, and where two associations with differing cultures and structures provide identical services. It has evolved in the absence of any strategic vision or risk-based approaches and while the system is functional there is scope for significant reforms to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Volunteer Issues

While many issues were raised with the review the following key issues represent the greatest concern for volunteers.

Governance and Transparency

Both organisations suffer from poor internal communication, dated constitutions, and a lack of transparency. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The issues commonly raised (which I believe have some veracity) include for example: Lack of financial transparency and potential serious conflicts of interest; Flotilla members being removed without due cause or due process; and, a constitution that allows Executives to entrench their positions.

Units feel unable to separate from Coastguard as the AVCGA National Board consider that they, rather than the Flotilla or the Community, own the assets (including monies in bank accounts). The governance frameworks of both organisations (but moreso AVCGA) are in need of major reform to minimise future risks for Government.

Volunteers Retention and Attraction

The majority of units are having difficulty attracting and retaining volunteers. Volunteers believe the public and Government do not value their services. They have a low volunteering profile and they are not recognised as emergency service volunteers under any Act. They also cited the cost of becoming a volunteer (e.g. paying for uniforms and training in the Coastguard), and frustrations at the length of training and then what little time is spent on the water.

Resourcing and Fundraising

Squadrons and Flotillas need to raise significant funds for operating expenses and vessel replacement or refit. The Government contribution to operating expenses is minimal

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compared to the cost for most units. Insurance and auditing fees alone exceed the operational payments provided by Government. For boat replacement the Government provides \$10,000 per unit per year. Put towards a new vessel, it would only represent at best between 15-25% of replacement cost after accruing for 10 years.

Units primarily raise funds through Boating Membership schemes, some cost recovery assisting the public, sponsorship and fundraising. The amount of time spent fundraising is for many units excessive (80% of their volunteering time for some units) and is a major frustration and the great deterrent to volunteering.

Training and Administration

Training is strongly emphasised to ensure compliance with AMSA. However, the training load is a challenge especially for small units who struggle to qualify new crew or coxswains. Many units felt that the competency requirements were ever changing and, in some cases, people lost interest because of the time it took to qualify. Volunteers with obvious mariner skills rarely had these skills recognised and had to undertake the process from the beginning. There is a significant administration load for both the unit operations and for training. The more remote or distant units with minimal members are worthy of additional support with their administration load and direct training.

State-wide issues: Integration, effectiveness and efficiency

State-wide risk assessment and capability analysis

The MSAR capability of volunteer units has developed in an individualistic way. Vessel type and capability, operating areas and roles are determined by each unit. Some areas would appear to be over serviced. The maritime tourist and recreational boat environment has undergone significant change but there is no extant state-wide maritime risk assessment. A risk assessment and capability gap analysis would inform vessel design specifications, locations of rescue units and supporting infrastructure to better mitigate the risks at sea.

Lack of commonality and consistency

Across the sector there is minimal commonality or consistency between units and between organisations. It represents a confusing arrangement for the boating public - variable costs of membership, variable amounts for donations or invoices if having to be towed, and confusing reciprocal rights between units. Between units, information transfer regarding vessel movement is variable, differing IT systems are in play and on-call response arrangements do not appear to be coordinated to provide a broader coverage period for units in close proximity. Overall there is scope for far better integration and coordination.

Leveraging a single buyer approach to vessel replacement and equipment

With two organisations and units operating as individual entities opportunities for coordinated purchasing and state-wide sponsorship is lost. Significant efficiencies could be achieved through for example, an integrated vessel replacement program, common onboard systems, and a single safety equipment supplier. Furthermore, with two different organisations in operation potential major naming rights sponsors shy away from support.

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Radio Communications Network

Numerous radio communications stations utilising different frequencies and maintaining various radio watch timings indicate a bewildering system. Ownership arrangements of radio network facilities and equipment are highly variable, and the equipment is generally dated. This element of the marine rescue system needs rationalisation.

State oversight

The QLD Volunteer Marine Rescue Committee provides a level of oversight. Although its remit is wide, especially to do with integration and standardisation its effectiveness has been limited. New arrangements with a clear mandate and the authority (or financial levers) are required.

Conclusion

There is significant disillusionment in the sector around internal governance, limited Government funding and the lack of profile for volunteers in the sector. The long-term viability of a many units is questionable. Heavy reliance on fund raising, (to support other funding streams) to cover both operational costs and capital expenses is wearing on many volunteer units. Despite this, volunteers remain motivated and committed to providing a safety net for the boating public; and accepting of reform to improve the sector.

The state-wide volunteer MSAR capability is poorly integrated and lacks coherency. This increases overall costs and places both the public and volunteers at increased risk. Without a state-wide risk assessment and capability analysis the effectiveness of sector's resource allocation is only conjecture. Continuing down a path without significant reform appears untenable as the sector's capacity to deliver the public good for which it has been established will continue to steadily degrade. Given this, the case for sectoral reform seems clear.

Options for Government

To achieve significant reform that results in a single integrated, capable and respected volunteer marine search and rescue organisation will be difficult. It will require a long-term view, and both persistent and consistent effort. Funding reform to achieve the structural and cultural change will be crucial. There are three broad options for Government depending upon the extent they wish to oversee this sector and the resources they are prepared to commit.

- A minimalist approach actioning easy to achieve reforms in the short term.
- A middle ground undertaking small reforms now and articulating a vision for the sector and a pathway to change over five years.
- The maximalist approach going for major reform and moving immediately to enact the change process as fast as feasible.

The middle ground presents the best risk to return balance. It engages the sector on the policy journey and with the right consultative and oversight mechanism builds stakeholder ownership. Achieving early reforms as discussed in the review will build the sector's confidence in the Government's intent before the more challenging reforms are attempted.

Key Observations

- As this sector has developed without any overarching strategy it has resulted in a system, which while functional, has significant scope to improve in both effectiveness and efficiency. **Page 12**
- It will be necessary to take this sector on the journey where the desired outcome and advantages are clear from the start. There are several astute and progressive thinkers across both organisations and enlisting their support will be crucial to avoid any change process being derailed by an 'old guard'. **Page 13**
- Other states do not differentiate in any requests for on-water assistance. Because the state provides 70-80% of the funding they have taken the view that any requests for on-water assistance should be responded to if it is within the capabilities of the volunteer sector. In cases of obvious boating negligence MSQ (for the public) and AMSA (for commercial vessels) can take action. **Page 15**
- There is a risk to Government in working with organisations without strong governance frameworks and practices. From a corporate governance best practice approach the lack of diversity on the Boards of both groups is poor practice notwithstanding the view that there is significant expertise (from retired or semi-retired members) in the organisation. Similarly, the ongoing long-term tenure of the Coastguard leadership is a source of risk. I also formed the view that a number of Council or Board members did not fully appreciate their corporate governance roles and accountabilities. **Page 17**
- The examples above are highlighted to indicate the need for an objective state-wide risk assessment and capability gap analysis to inform future state-wide response needs, resource allocations and public expectations. **Page 18**
- Activity levels are only a very coarse indicator of risk mitigation in the sector. A range of other measures needs to be applied under a strong risk assessment framework to fully understand where risk is not adequately covered and where over-servicing may be apparent. **Page 21**
- This sector's maritime environment provides a unique attraction for volunteers but unless their expectations for fulfilling roles supporting the boating public are met then attraction and retention will continue to be challenging. **Page 28**
- It may be worth examining whether this sector could leverage off the standard Government Fuel Supply contracts for RFS. I understand a similar arrangement is being explored for SES. **Page 30**
- A more coherent and coordinated approach to vessel fleet maintenance and management has the potential to reap dividends in standardisation, efficiency and reliability. At best estimates there are between 75 and 90 vessels of varying types across the 47 units. Most units work in an isolated way drawing on the best local and/or internal knowledge to determine repair, refit and replacement arrangements. The sector would benefit from examination by somebody deeply experienced in small vessel fleet management and cost benefit analyses to provide data and guidance on where savings in the through-life cost of ownership could be achieved. **Page 31**
- This is a key issue in need of resolution. If not resolved, the negativity and disenchantment amongst flotillas will continue with more seeking to leave the AVCGA creating issues for Government. **Page 37**

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- The pressure on volunteer organisations to raise funds creates a perverse outcome where in some cases the boundaries of their status as public benevolent institutions is being tested. **Page 37**
- Should the State wish to have greater involvement and oversight of this volunteer sector then two elements are key; a common and consistent approach state-wide as discussed in the previous paragraphs; and, a state-wide risk assessment process involving the sector should be undertaken to ensure that State resources are effectively targeted at mitigating the identified risks. From this can be derived performance measures to set a level of service that is appropriate to the risk environment and guide future capability development. **Page 38**
- Rationalising the maritime VHF arrangements in aspects such as infrastructure and maintenance, channel usage, geographic coverage, and volunteer radio watch location and hours is a key initiative. **Page 40**
- Technological advancement will significantly change the future landscape and both volunteer organisations will need support to plan how future technology can be utilised and integrated to best support their role. **Page 41**

1. Introduction

1.1 The review of Queensland’s volunteer marine rescue organisations (hereafter termed the Blue Water Review) has been undertaken at the direction of the Commissioner Queensland Fire and Emergency Services at the request of the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. This component of the review has comprised extensive consultations with Queensland volunteer groups, other external organisations, and interstate jurisdictions of relevance to the sector. Under the Terms of Reference for the review (shown at attachment A) the review is to provide an “issues paper” based on consultation for Government consideration. It is anticipated that a second stage of the review will develop an agreed framework for action by government.

1.2 The volunteer marine search and rescue sector is both highly diverse and complex. It comprises highly motivated and well-intentioned volunteers, yet it is beset with poor governance and internal communication, negligible commonality and consistency, and major resource challenges - both people and financial. This review should be the catalyst for change.

1.3 For the ease of the reader this paper is divided into four parts.

- Part one outlines general considerations including the context of the volunteer marine sector and its structure, the role of the sector, Government’s role, the legislative and authorising environments that guide the Volunteer’s operations and comparative frameworks in other State jurisdictions.
- Part two considers the issues raised by the various volunteer units.
- Part three identifies issues observed by the reviewing officer from a holistic and state-wide perspective.
- Part four examines the case for change, a future vision and transitional pathways.

1.4 Throughout the paper key observations by the reviewing officer are in highlighted text boxes.

2. Approach

2.1 Consultation was conducted with Queensland volunteer rescue organisations, Government authorities, boating representative groups, and interstate authorities with responsibilities for similar sectors. Consultation was conducted over the course of October and November 2018. Three volunteer rescue groups were not able to meet face to face and telephone contact was made with these organisations at a later stage (their details are noted at the consultation list at attachment B). Attendance at the consultation sessions varied from one or two key identities from the unit, to (in the case of Burdekin) more than 30 members of the Squadron. Eight un-solicited submissions were received by the review team.

2.2 A questionnaire was sent to all volunteer units as a basis for discussion. Generally, discussions lasted for two hours or more. Where convenient some units were grouped together for the meetings especially in the south east of Queensland. Meetings were kept

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deliberately informal to prompt open discussion and encourage members to put forward their viewpoints. An administrative assistant took contemporaneous notes during all meetings.

2.3 While meetings were an information gathering exercise, the opportunity was used to explore different viewpoints and options, manage future expectations, and potentially shape the environment in advance of future government action. What became obvious during consultation was the diversity of the units and a surprising lack of commonality of systems and processes.

2.4 It is important to note that invariably the rank and file members of both volunteer organisations consulted were focussed on providing a service to the boating public despite the range of frustrations they expressed. For them, the structure of the organisation, bureaucratic arrangements, and hierarchical impediments were considered secondary to being able respond effectively to incidents on the water. They seem genuinely open to change as long as it improves the level of service without requiring disproportionate efforts from them.

Part One: The Volunteer Sector and Marine Search and Rescue

3. Context and Background

3.1 Two volunteer organisations through their Flotillas, in the case of the Australian Volunteer Cast Guard Association (AVCGA), and Squadrons in the case of the Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR), provide a general safety net for the boating public, and those living and working on or near the water. For clarity throughout this report reference to Flotillas will refer to AVCGA units and reference to Squadrons will refer to VMR units unless described otherwise. Where the term ‘volunteer units’ is used it refers collectively to VMR and AVCGA units.

3.2 The establishment of the network of volunteer units providing this service has occurred in a relatively ad hoc manner. In many cases, enthusiastic local individuals with boating and fishing interests saw a need to provide a basic marine safety net. Under their own auspices they took the initiative to provide this service initially utilising private boats and personal resources. As the needs grew, and more structured organisations became the norm, they then transitioned to more formal arrangements under one of the two volunteer rescue Associations.

3.3 Many of the VMR Squadrons grew out of the previous Sea Rescue, and then latterly the Air-Sea Rescue organisation, that was operating in the 1960s. By 1970 Coastguard was operating out of Townsville and Cairns and the two organisations have continued to grow in parallel to the current day. Without any strategic oversight, but due to unstructured local coordination, the coverage of both Squadrons and Flotillas along the Queensland coast north of the Moreton Bay has resulted in Squadrons and Flotillas generally being geographically and logically grouped but staggered along the coast to provide safety coverage.

3.4 The current arrangements have evolved to a marine rescue system comprising Commonwealth and State government oversight, volunteer and fully paid services, interwoven but not necessarily linked communications arrangements, and differing technological approaches to information sharing, vessel safety, and vessel tracking. Even within each of the organisations there is seemingly minimal commonality in the membership arrangements and charges, provision of uniforms and training costs for volunteers, information technology systems, record keeping and storage.

Observation: *As this sector has developed without any overarching strategy it has resulted in a system, which while functional, has significant scope to improve in both effectiveness and efficiency.*

3.5 Across the sector there is significant diversity across most of the metrics by which volunteer units could be gauged. For example;

- their financial state and capacity to fund raise
- the numbers of active volunteers
- their vessel type(s), and age
- the maritime environment in which they operate

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- their activities and overall operational concept

3.6 This diversity will be problematic if seeking to move the sector forward in an iterative way as there is no easily identifiable 'one size fits all' approach. Various arrangements or frameworks were put to units during the consultations. What may work well in the southeast corner was considered counterproductive for other units in the north and far north. Some units are quite wealthy, have a strong volunteer and financial membership base and highly developed training and administration processes. However, units in remote or isolated areas may need special consideration. While remote area units are incredibly positive and resilient (and inspirational in their can-do attitude), they have in most cases next to no capacity to fundraise, operate with just a handful of volunteers, and are barely able to manage the administration and training requirements.

3.7 Accommodating this diversity in a policy response will be challenging to ensure there are no unintended consequences or perverse policy outcomes. It will also require a well-considered and nuanced strategic communications plan to ensure the desired outcomes are achieved without significantly disenfranchising the volunteer base.

Observation: It will be necessary to take this sector on the journey where the desired outcome and advantages are clear from the start. There are several astute and progressive thinkers across both organisations and enlisting their support will be crucial to avoid any change process being derailed by an 'old guard'.

4. The Role for Government - State Responsibilities

4.1 In examining the volunteer maritime search and rescue sector a foundational question is the role of Government in this sector. The extent of Government's support, in policy terms, is influenced by two aspects; the formal national and state arrangements under an Intergovernmental Agreement for Search and Rescue (SAR) and Intergovernmental Agreement for Maritime Response Arrangements; and, less defined considerations such as the benefit from a public interest or public value perspective of State Government involvement in volunteer marine search and rescue. These latter considerations will significantly influence the extent to which Government should fund the sector and the type and level of service they expect in return. The perception of risk for Government will also influence the design of any future framework.

4.2 Often during consultations volunteers drew analogies with the State Emergency Service (SES) and the Rural Fire Service (RFS). They believed they were saving Government significant money by providing a service that similarly saved lives, yet they were not adequately resourced. The view was expressed that boating has moved from an activity for those who are relatively affluent to becoming a more ubiquitous activity and worthy of greater government support. Overall the number of registered vessels has grown by 18% in the last decade. This growth is roughly equivalent to the population growth over the same decade.

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4.3 Marine search and rescue in Queensland is a governance, oversight, and operational framework comprising many elements. These include:

- Oversight through legislation, regulation, and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) authorising environment;
- Command and coordination at Commonwealth, State and local level involving the Australian Search and Rescue Authority, Queensland Police as the State Hazard Management Authority and volunteer units in their call out and risk assessment processes;
- Supporting activities such as communications (facilities and operations), training, and public boating safety education;
- Air and on-water operational response from Queensland Police, volunteer units, Queensland Government Air helicopter services, and in serious incidents, the Australian Defence Force, Border Force, and other contracted Commonwealth and State assets (e.g. AMSA's Emergency Towing Vessel capability); and,
- Public and commercial mariners who, through convention, are required to lend their support to other mariners in distress.

4.4 Government support to marine search and rescue is provided to many elements of this system through several channels. Funding is provided to full-time paid services that have multiple roles (i.e. not dedicated to just MSAR) such as Queensland Government Air (QGAir) and Queensland Water Police.

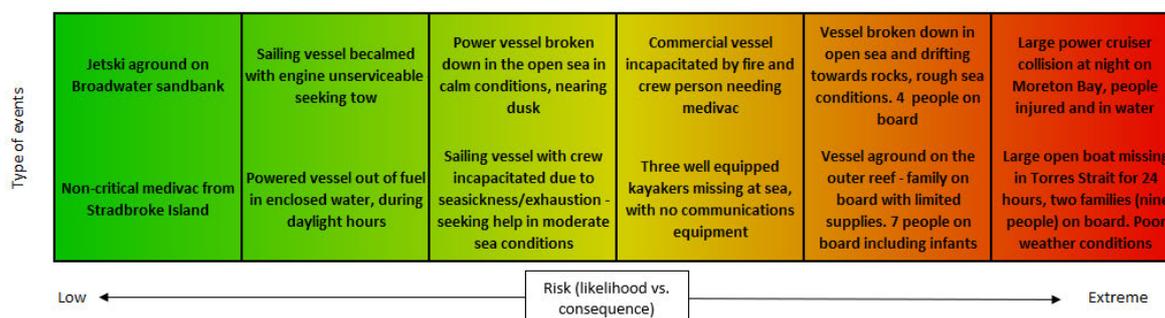
4.5 The volunteer sector provides a major additional capability that takes significant tasking and resource pressure off these full-time assets especially for tasks appropriate to their capabilities (for example: not as time critical, impacting only a small number of people, or in areas where other assets are not available).

4.6 The Government supports both volunteer organisations with funding through a service level agreement. The current three-year agreement is due to expire in June 2019 and over that period \$8,824,703 (excl. GST) will have been provided to both organisations since 1 July 2016. Furthermore, nearly all units have accessed various grant schemes (most notably the Gambling Community Benefit Fund) to provide additional equipment and facilities.

4.7 By providing funding there is an implicit recognition by Government of the public good that accrues. However, there is a philosophical question about the extent of response activities that Government could consider it is appropriate to fund. Should for example there be a funded response to a boating member aground where the issue maybe more of inconvenience and embarrassment in having to wait several hours for the tide to rise. To explain this further Figure 1 shows a continuum of the types of activities undertaken by this sector with the risks increasing from left to right.

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Figure 1 – Risk Analysis Diagram



4.8 Other State jurisdictions have recognised a need for change in the marine rescue sector but have adopted differing frameworks, funding models and operational roles and response arrangements. Attachment C shows a comparison between other State jurisdictions arrangements for this sector. All have recognised the public value and the need for Government involvement in the sector. New South Wales have established a public company, funded primarily by levies to ensure the provision of rescue services, a C4I¹ framework, and oversight of training, capability development and compliance. The models in Western Australia and Victoria have oversight of the sector residing in a government department or government agency (e.g. Emergency Management Victoria) with slight variances in the extent of oversight and direction.

Observation: Other states do not differentiate in any requests for on-water assistance. Because the state provides 70-80% of the funding they have taken the view that any requests for on-water assistance should be responded to if it is within the capabilities of the volunteer sector. In cases of obvious boating negligence MSQ (for the public) and AMSA (for commercial vessels) can take action.

5. Current Volunteer Association Organisational Arrangements

5.1 Both Volunteer Marine Rescue and the Australian Volunteer Coastguard Association are incorporated organisations operating as Public Benevolent Institutions with relevant access to tax and GST concessions. They have deductible gift recipient (DGR) status through registration under the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission and endorsement by the Australian Taxation Office. However, they operate under different corporate structures.

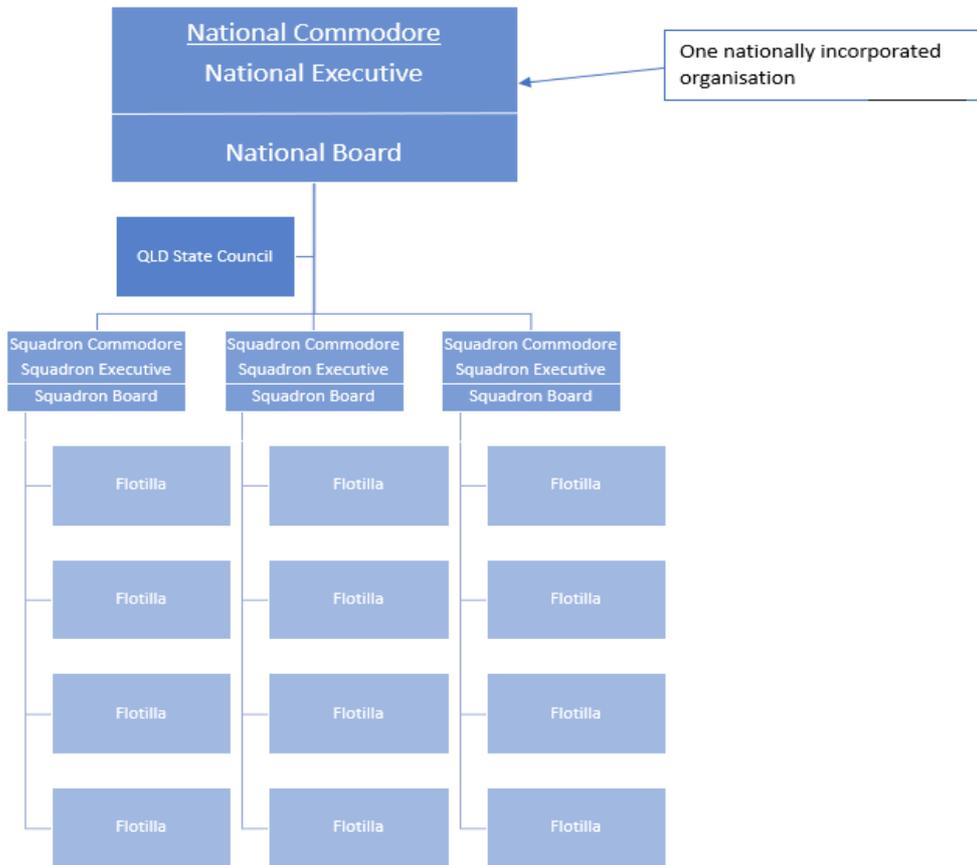
5.2 The AVCGA is a national entity (incorporated in the ACT) which is the single incorporated association through which each of the Queensland Flotillas operates. The Flotillas are unincorporated associations operating under the constitution of the national body. Members of Coastguard are full members of the Association with voting rights. The organisation has a strongly hierarchical structure with Flotillas reporting through a regional Squadron arrangement. Squadron representatives then represent at the state and national level. The State level arrangements have been established as an administrative tool to permit the passage of funding from the State Government and onto Flotillas. The State council is not

¹ C4I - Command, Control, Communications, Coordination and Information (or Intelligence)

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empowered in a governance sense as this role sits with the National Executive and National Board. This structure is a source of significant angst at the Flotilla level and discussed further in Part Two and Three of this report. Figure 2 outlines the Coastguard structure.

Figure 2 – Organisational Structure of Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association

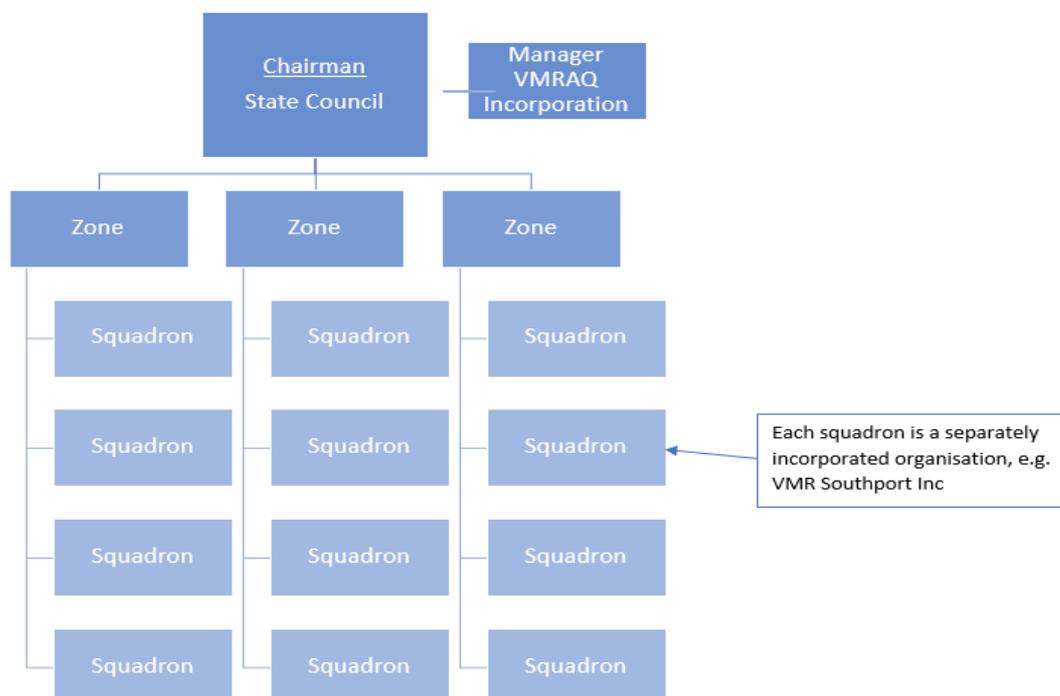


5.3 Volunteer Marine Rescue Queensland is an incorporated association in its own right as a charitable entity. Each of the VMR Squadrons is also a separate incorporated association with charitable status, working with the state entity as affiliated organisations. Members of each Squadron are only members of their own Squadron and do not have voting rights at the State level. Squadrons elect representatives to a VMR zone and the elected zone representatives are State council members. Figure 3 further describe the VMR corporate structure.

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Figure 3 – Organisational Structure of Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland



5.4 Understanding the corporate structure is important as it was a source of considerable discussion during consultation. In Coastguard in particular, a number of members of the National Executive have been in their respective roles for a long period - the National President is, for example, into his 6th two-year term. The constitutional arrangements whereby representatives are elected as Squadron representatives and then to the senior management boards leaves many members feeling significantly disenchanted and disempowered. The AVCGA constitution permits a “closed shop” of executives who, from the outside, seem dismissive of member concerns and react to criticism by seeking to remove those asking legitimate questions.

5.5 The members on the senior management boards of both Associations are only those who have been elected from within the organisation. This lack of board diversity represents a risk.

Observation: *There is a risk to Government in working with organisations without strong governance frameworks and practices. From a corporate governance best practice approach the lack of diversity on the Boards of both groups is poor practice notwithstanding the view that there is significant expertise (from retired or semi-retired members) in the organisation. Similarly, the ongoing long-term tenure of the Coastguard leadership is a source of risk. I also formed the view that a number of Council or Board members did not fully appreciate their corporate governance roles and accountabilities.*

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5.6 Currently, the determination of the operational requirements across the whole sector is left primarily to the judgements of the members of individual Squadrons and Flotillas. These requirements are influenced by the specifics of their geographic area and expectations of sea conditions, and the activities they perceive they will be required to undertake. Their understanding of these aspects then informs the type, capacity and capability of the vessels they will acquire, and their response arrangements. However, there is no state-wide or region-wide objective assessment of the risks on which to base an assessment of the response needs and therefore capability requirements or capability² gaps.

5.7 Some units are planning their immediate future capability needs on a perception that they have a remit to cover 99% of possible activations and, for example, cover distances offshore to which they have rarely had to respond. Others determine that they will have a significant role in supporting other agencies, for example, medical evacuations from offshore islands. This role then becomes a significant design determinant in a new vessel yet there is no formal Memorandum of Understanding with Queensland Ambulance Service for such a role. Others place unrealistic self-imposed response activation times on their members and in do so, preclude volunteers who live beyond a set travelling time from the Unit. While the approach adopted by individual units is done with the best intent, it is to a certain extent conducted in isolation and the objectivity of how the operational requirement is derived is questionable.

Observation: *The examples above are highlighted to indicate the need for an objective state-wide risk assessment and capability gap analysis to inform future state-wide response needs, resource allocations and public expectations.*

6. The Queensland Recreational Boating Environment

6.1 Recreational boating in Queensland, as with many other states, has continued to increase at a steady level. As at January 2018 there were 259,967 Queensland Regulated Vessels of which approximately 150,000 are classified as open runabouts. Additionally, there are more than 23,435 powered water craft (December 2016 figures) and another 7,441 Domestic Commercial Vessels. Figure 4 shows the increase in Queensland regulated ships between 2008 and 2018 with particular emphasis on the more popular sizes of recreational vessels (i.e. not all vessel sizes are covered). This table also shows the increase in vessel licences over this period. The growth in licenses for powered water craft the indicates the numbers of registrations of these vessels will continue to grow at a significant rate.

6.2 The table Figure 4 only indicates registered vessels and do not take account of other water users such as kayakers, paddle boats, paddle boarders and small vessels powered by engines less than 4 Hp (3 Kw). It is also the view of the reviewing officer that in remote locations there are probably a significant number of unregistered vessels regularly being used.

² Capability in this sense refers to all the elements that comprise a holistic capability - people, organisation, doctrine, training, equipment, information etc

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Figure 4 – Boat Registrations and Licences in Queensland, 2008 to 2018

Vessel Type	3-4m	4-4.5m	4.5-5m	5-6m	6-8m	Total	RMD* only Licences	PWC* & RMD Licences
Jan 2008	79,800	47,957	25,280	30,153	14,307	219,643	55,2213	51,287
Jan 2018	96,199	59,217	28,411	36,411	19,216	259,967	706,669	184,336
% Increase	20%	23%	12%	20.0%	33%	18.3%	27.8%	259%

* Recreational Marine Drivers (RMD) Licence
* Powered Water Craft (PWC) License (Jet ski)

6.3 The number of vessels in the 6 to 8 metre range have increased by 33%. This figure seems to correlate with anecdotal views of an increase in larger trailerable boats travelling offshore particularly to the outer Great Barrier Reef. Attachment D provides further details of boat registrations and licences.

6.4 Determining a trend line to assess in a statistically meaningful sense the number of activations (shown in Attachment E) as against the increase in boating activity through registration figures is challenging and beyond the capacity of this part of the review. However, the following subjective observations are offered:

- The cost of ownership of technologically advanced systems, particularly navigation systems, has reduced significantly and their use is now ubiquitous leading to (generally) less major incidents related to navigation failings.
- The sometimes fickle 2-stroke outboard engine is a fading relic and modern 4-stroke outboard engines are highly reliable.
- While engines are more reliable, the increasing reliance on electronic systems means that battery power supply is critical, and this aspect has become problematic and an increasing source of vulnerability.
- While not applicable everywhere, communications connectivity exists through a layer of options encompassing mobile phone, direct internet applications, VHF radio and in extremis Emergency Locator Beacons (EPIRBs). The latter two require only a relatively small investment for those who want to ensure an appropriate level of risk mitigation.
- Increasing affluence compared to overall boating costs have made boating a possibility for many people with negligible mariner skills.

[REDACTED]

While boats and technology have advanced (in both size and complexity), the licensing regime has remained generally static and the capacity of the public to understand the maritime risks has not progressed at the same rate.

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- Reflecting the diversity across the state, the boating public in some areas of the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Torres Strait have greater innate mariner skills but utilise boats that are poorly maintained and inherently less reliable.
- Some units report an increase in assistance calls to yachts transiting the coast, citing increases in the number of retirees taking to the water for longer coastal passages (on-water grey nomads as they have been described). Calls for assistance due to incapacity from sea-sickness, exhaustion, and minor injuries on vessels with minimal crew (often husband and wife only) are reported as being on the increase.

7. Roles and Response Activities

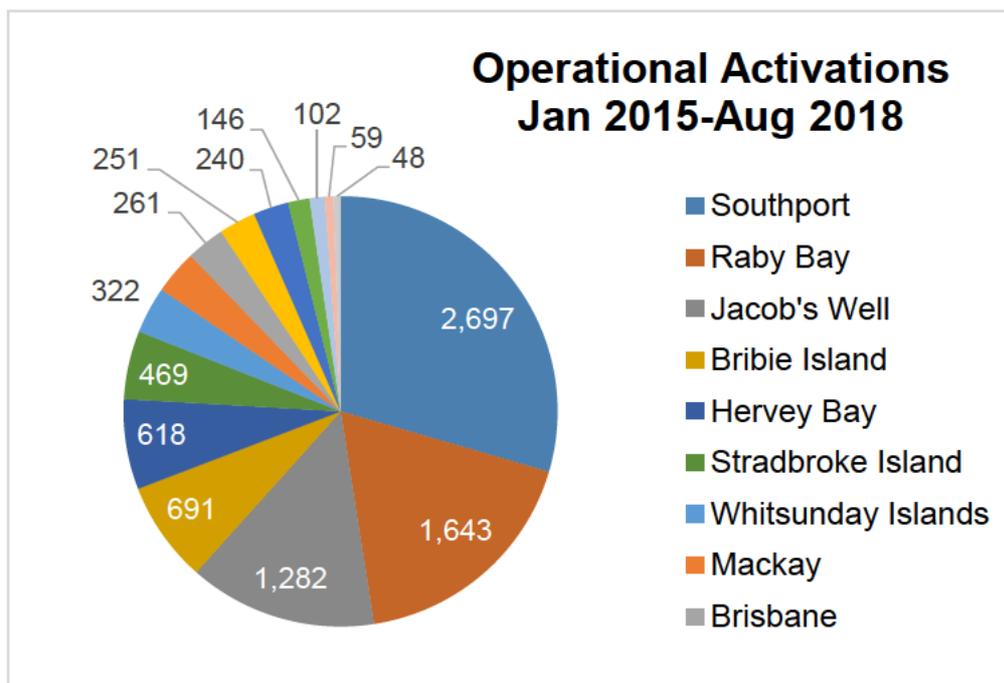
7.1 The volunteer marine rescue sector considers their primary role as responding to Safety of Life at Sea incidents in a search and rescue capacity under auspices of Queensland Water Police who are the Search and Rescue Authority. In addition, these rescue organisations;

- provide a general boating assistance service (often termed ‘an RACQ on water’);
- assist Queensland Ambulance Service with medical evacuations from other vessels on the water or from Queensland’s adjacent islands;
- to varying degrees, link with local disaster management groups to provide some assistance in disasters though assisting with radio communications, water transport and general disaster response activities;
- provide VHF radio and phone communications services to the boating public through log-on/log-off services, radio watch, and radio check-calls to ensure marine radio serviceability;
- to a varying extent educate the boating population on safe boating practices;
- assist other government agencies and non-government groups with transport by water to locations normally difficult to access; and
- provide some community service functions such as supporting community events, water sport activities, etc.

7.2 As expected, the level of activity for each Squadron or Flotilla varies markedly. Attachment E shows the activities undertaken by Squadrons and Flotillas for the past 12 months. These indicate the large variation in activity undertaken in the various areas. The chart in Figure 5 is used as one example to indicate the difference in activity levels across the State. These figures show, for example, that activations for VMR Southport, VMR Raby and VMR Jacobs Well account for about two thirds of the VMR activations state-wide. However, further commentary is needed to understand the import of these figures and some of the nuances which are not necessarily apparent in such an approach.

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Figure 5 – Operational Activations in Volunteer Marine Rescue Squadrons, 2015-2018



7.3 Data on activities is captured by the individual units and consolidated at the State level. There are two primary data sets; activations at the request of either Queensland Police or to support Queensland Ambulance Service; and activations by the unit themselves to provide assistance in an event not considered (at least initially) to be a Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) matter. While these figures are useful indicators, unit self-activation figures are a bland representation of the actual event. They do not for example represent the difficulty or complexity of the activity, the time involved, or the level of risk that was averted. Remote areas rightly argue that although they have fewer activations each one is a potential SOLAS event because of the distances involved and the dearth of other on-water support from either official or ad-hoc available private sources. There is no easy way to data capture the nuances of these activities without the system being ‘gamed’ to support an individual unit’s profile and utility.

Observation: Activity levels are only a very coarse indicator of risk mitigation in the sector. A range of other measures needs to be applied under a strong risk assessment framework to fully understand where risk is not adequately covered and where over-servicing may be apparent.

8. The Authorising and Regulatory Environment

8.1 There are several legislative and regulatory regimes that govern the operation of this sector.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)

8.2 Under a national agreement AMSA assumed regulatory responsibility for all Domestic Commercial Vessels on 1 July 2018. Previously the sector was regulated by Maritime Safety Queensland. Volunteer marine rescue organisation vessels are considered to be Domestic Commercial Vessels and therefore operating under AMSA's regulatory framework are required to have;

- A Certificate of Compliance; i.e. the vessel is 'in survey' for its intended use.
- A Certificate of Operation; i.e. the people operating the vessel are trained in its use; and it is operated in accordance with its purpose and capabilities
- A current Safety Management System i.e. how the vessel is to be operated, limitations, safety systems, operating procedures, etc.

8.3 Volunteer rescue groups are provided an exemption (Exemption 24) from some of AMSA's normal requirements for Domestic Commercial Vessels. These relate primarily to the need for full commercial qualifications for crew and some lessening of vessel survey interval requirements. Exemption 24 also specifically states that vessels operating under this exemption may only charge a 'nominal fee' for the activities that they undertake. This ensures that they are not undertaking operations in competition with commercial operators who have a higher compliance requirement. Advice on what constitutes a nominal fee is not specifically described in the regulations.

8.4 AMSA is also the National Search and Rescue Authority. The National Search and Rescue Manual is the agreed arrangements for the coordination, accountabilities and operational procedures for SAR nation-wide. The National SAR Manual has been endorsed by an intergovernmental agreement

Work Health and Safety Act (2011)

8.5 Both AVCGA and VMRAQ have statutory requirements under the Work Health and Safety Act. As set out in the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011*, those conducting a business have a duty of care to reasonably ensure the health and safety of workers and ensure other people are not put at risk by activities. Section three outlines further requirements, including (but not limited to) the provision of a work environment that does not risk health and safety. Workers, including volunteers, have a responsibility to follow workplace health and safety rules where this is reasonably possible.

Incorporated Associations

8.6 VMRAQ and the VMR Squadrons are incorporated under the *Queensland Incorporations Act 1981* s21. The AVCGA is an incorporated entity incorporated in the Australian Capital Territory. The Incorporations Act determine requirements of associations regarding meetings, constitutions, objects of the association, and director's duties.

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Australian Tax Office and Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission (ACNC)

8.7 Both organisations operate subject to the requirements of the ATO and ACNC for entities with DGR status. The Australian Securities and Investment Commission also have certain requirements regarding lodging financial statements and advice requirements regarding the name of the entity's 'public officer' and office holders.

Compliance with the Service Level Agreement

8.8 Funding is provided to both organisations through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) that contains a number of provisions in terms of objectives, services, financial accounting, and performance reporting. A copy of the VMRAQ SLA is at Attachment F (note: The wording of both SLA's are identical). Unfortunately, the articulation of the Government's requirements of both organisations is somewhat loose in certain areas making it difficult to use this as a tool to influence sector reform. The framework for performance measures is subjective and provides minimal fidelity on which to compare effectiveness. The SLA also refers to 'QFES accredited units'. It is understood in about 2012 there was a staff position responsible for oversight and compliance checks of volunteer marine units, but the position was subsequently abolished and there is no direct oversight by QFES of this sector. It is left to AMSA to provide the only compliance check external to either Association and AMSA advise that this sector is low on their risk-based priority list.

Part Two: Stakeholder Views

9. Consultation

9.1 The main emphasis of consultation program was directed at what could be termed the 'waterfront' of both organisation - the Squadrons and Flotillas providing the operational response. The issues discussed in this section are those arising mainly from these consultations. Issues arising from executive discussions are highlighted as such. There is strong sense of a genuine desire for positive change across both organisations. Volunteers are strongly motivated and committed to providing an effective boating safety net - that is their priority and how it is achieved is of a lesser consideration from most of the feedback received.

10. Governance and Transparency

10.1 A common theme from most of the consultations was a sense of hierarchically driven bureaucratic inertia, a lack of transparency and poor internal communications across the organisations. Feelings in Coastguard Flotillas ran most strongly but issues of communications failures and poor governance were also apparent, to a lesser extent, in VMR Squadrons.

Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (AVCGA)

10.2

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Flotillas cited several issues with the governance and transparency of the organisation and these are described below. The following issues arising from Flotilla consultations can **not** be fully verified. However, direct questioning by the reviewing officer and their repetition from many sources leads to a level of confidence in their veracity [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Financial Visibility

10.3 Many members complained about the lack of financial visibility. They cited requests for full financial disclosure being denied as they were not members of the executive, requests being denied on commercial-in-confidence grounds, or request being ignored. Financial reports when provided were overview audited statements lacking the detail necessary to understand fully the operations of the association. At the request of the reviewing officer, financial officers from the Public Safety Business Agency examined the accounts that the review was able to source. While no significant irregularities were found, they suggested that certain aspects needed clarification. This is discussed further at paragraph 28.3³

³ Under the QLD Associations Incorporations Act 1981 (19 May 2017) section 58C " Inspection of financial documents. If asked by a member of an incorporated association, the association's secretary must, within 28 days after the request has been made make the association's financial documents available." I have not examined the ACT Act to see if the same applies.

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Election to Squadron and National boards

10.4 The constitutional arrangements for election to Squadron and then National Boards are in the opinion of the reviewing officer flawed. [REDACTED]

Removal of Office Holders

10.5 It seems that the Association is quick to remove members or office holders who openly question decisions and seek full transparency. Several examples of the removal of members or Flotilla Executives in reportedly dubious circumstances were provided to the Review. Most recently the rationale for the removal of the Commander of the Tin Can Bay Flotilla gives cause for concern. While undoubtedly there will always be differing views the number of similar instances suggests this is the manner in which dissention is stifled. According to reports from one Flotilla, even when legal opinion has shown such actions to be without due cause the Association has been slow to respond and does not reinstate officials to their previous positions. The decision-making power of the Executive at Squadron and National level, reinforced through the election process, allows such actions to occur.

Conflict of Interest

10.6 From an outsider's perspective there are seemingly significant conflicts of interest with some Executive positions. For example, the AVCGA State Manager is a paid position but is also the elected Deputy National Commodore. The Director of the Coastguard Maritime Academy (a paid position in a Company wholly owned by Coastguard) is also the National Training Commodore and was in a Coastguard Executive position when the Academy was established. While not suggesting impropriety, it indicates a weak governance framework and poor understanding by Board members of their accountabilities in not questioning such arrangements.

Transparency of financial commitments

10.7 A major issue cited by many flotillas was the cost of insurance and the costs of auditing. In many cases these two costs well exceed the amount provided by the State for operations. The providers of insurance cover and auditing services for Coastguard Flotillas are determined at the national level. Requests by Flotillas for evidence of market testing or tendering for these services to ensure the best value for money was generally dismissed on the grounds of commercial-in-confidence. It is understood that the current insurer has been in place for over a decade and an attempt to market test approximately four years ago fell through when a second contender withdrew.

Financial limitations

10.8 Flotillas must go to the Squadron level to approve any funds over \$10,000. This is despite all the fundraising being undertaken at the local level and the accounts being managed locally. There is strong community association and shared sense of 'ownership' of Coastguard Flotillas (as there is with VMR). [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The local association does not own the physical assets and funds held in account as they are considered as 'nationally owned assets'.

Administrative Cost of Meetings

10.9 There is a high administrative expense and cost in AVCGA members' time attending meetings. It is understood that there are four Squadron Board meetings (four Squadrons in Queensland), three State Council, and two National Board meetings per year. It was also reported that there is a reluctance to use internet-based video communications (Skype for example) to reduce this expense. While it is recognised that there is a requirement for a set number of meeting under the Associations Act the numbers seem excessive and wasteful of scarce resources.

Strategic Review and AVCGA Future Direction

10.10

[REDACTED]

10.11

[REDACTED]

Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland (VMRAQ)

10.12 Issues of transparency within VMRAQ were considered to be primarily relating to poor communications or misinterpretation [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Some Squadrons complained about the financial transparency of the consolidated state accounts. There is some scope for greater clarity and transparency in this respect. The allocation of accounting cost codes for example would assist Squadrons to see money held in readiness for boat replacement. The cost to members in meeting attendance should also be examined to determine whether there is scope for savings in administrative overheads.

10.13 With Squadrons being separately incorporated there is greater autonomy. However, this creates challenges in developing a shared strategic vision, and consistency around strategic approaches. Squadrons also develop their own constitutions which can vary significantly. There are markedly different approaches to fees, charges, fundraising, and

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activities across the State. This creates challenges for the boating public in determining which squadron to join, what services are provided, and what mutual support agreements are in place between Squadrons. Some Squadrons were also critical of the general lack of a state-wide strategic direction; i.e. a public communications plan and assistance with marketing tools and mementos to build their profile; but conversely, they were highly protective of their independence!

11. Volunteer Attraction, Retention and Profile

11.1 Common to most volunteer organisations, the average age of volunteers in this sector is increasing. At the same time most units reported challenges in attracting and keeping new members, particularly a younger age group.

Age

11.2 As best as can be determined, the average age of the volunteers in this sector is approximately 69. The figure for volunteers who are active boat crew members is probably somewhat less. Due to the on-call requirements it is a role more suited to a retired person than somebody still in full-time employment. Some units are attempting to link with the Emergency Services Cadet program to develop interest from teenagers who will hopefully transition to full volunteer status at some stage. There is a minimum age of 18 years to be a Coastguard member creating a potential problem in this regard.

11.3 Of note, the Burdekin VMR Squadron is unique in the both the strength of its volunteer base and the diversity in age and gender of its members. An active program focussing on cultural change and processes to attract a younger cadre has paid dividends and is worthy of examining to see how its approach could be applied elsewhere.

Attraction and Retention

11.4 Many people volunteer in this sector because of the confluence of an attraction to the water and a desire to help their community. While many of the units based in the south east have sufficient volunteers, smaller communities and remote areas are in most part struggling to get a minimum number of volunteers. The review team visited units who have as few as six active members and their long-term sustainability must be in doubt. Keeping up to date with the training and administrative load for such units is arduous. It also begs the question of their ability to remain compliant with AMSA regulations and operate in a wholly safe manner.

11.5 The time it takes to train, the little time actually spent on water, and the amount of time devoted to fundraising were regularly cited as significant frustrations and a deterrent to continuing to volunteer. A rigid application of process in some units means that people with obvious mariner skills are required to go through the full training process also leading to frustration and disenchantment. A question posed for units was the amount of time spent fundraising and there was a diversity of responses. Some units [REDACTED] suggested 90% of volunteers' time was taken up fundraising. Larger units in the south east suggest 40-50% of a volunteers' time is spent fundraising, while some small

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communities do negligible fundraising due to the nature of the community in which they live and work.

Observation. *This sector's maritime environment provides a unique attraction for volunteers but unless their expectations for fulfilling roles supporting the boating public are met then attraction and retention will continue to be challenging.*

Profile and Recognition

11.6 Compared to the SES and the Rural Fire Service the volunteer marine search and rescue sector has a low profile. Mostly, the activities they undertake happen out of sight, and unless you are an active water user the knowledge of their role is limited. Their roles are not well always understood. As quoted by several VMR members, "people think we are there to rescue turtles and dolphins". They can on one hand be thought of by the public as funded and paid operatives. Conversely by some of the boating public they have a reputation as a "dad's army", not recognising the extent of their training and professionalism. This introduces an internal debate about whether to highlight or remove the "volunteer" in their title.

11.7 The lack of both formal and informal recognition was an irritant raised regularly in meetings. From the reviewer's understanding neither organisation have any plans to develop a strategic communication plan. There is no obvious coherent approach to raising their profile with the boating and non-boating public, and it seems to be left to individual units to determine their own approach. This disaggregated approach dilutes the ability of the association to lift its profile or gain a State-wide sponsor.

11.8 The sector is not included under any legislation such as the *Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Act* (or other similar Acts). This leaves the volunteers, but more so their organisations, at some vulnerability to litigation in the conduct of their activities. There is also no employment provisions coverage for the volunteers that exist under legislation for other volunteers. Perhaps the most significant aspect of concerns around recognition is a matter of perception; i.e. that Government in some way considers volunteers in this sector of lesser value than volunteers who fall under the Act.

Cost of membership

11.9 An issue raised regularly was the cost to an individual of becoming a volunteer in this sector. The issue has greater resonance in Flotillas than in Squadrons but there is a cost to volunteers in both organisations. Individual Flotillas have different approaches to the cost for volunteers. Volunteers, especially in the south east, cite the cost of being a volunteer is around \$500 when they have paid for uniforms, capitation fees, and mandatory courses (First Aid, Radio and CPR). Interestingly Flotillas that were comparatively poor sought less from their volunteers than those significantly better off. Most of the volunteers are retirees, willing to give their time, but the direct personal cost of volunteering can be significant and deters many.

12. Resourcing

Operating Costs

12.1 Units receive a supplement for their operating costs from Government of between \$20k and \$24k but this generally falls well short of their operating costs. Operating costs include, for example, fuel; maintenance of vessel; equipment and facilities; electricity; telephone and internet; insurance; audit fees; administration costs; and vehicle registration. Costs may include in some cases lease fees for buildings, radio towers, and marina berths. This means most units must resort to other means to cover their operating costs to remain viable. The following are the main ways by which the necessary funds are sought.

- Public fund raising;
- Sponsorships;
- Boating Membership (VMR) or Marine Assist (AVCGA);
- On-water activity fuel cost (or cost plus) recovery from the general public who require assistance;
- Providing training courses for other public groups or individuals;
- Lease of training rooms, radio towers or other facilities to outside groups or providers.

12.2 For volunteers the greatest complaint was having to conduct fundraising to ensure that operational activities could continue. Given, from their perspective, the criticality of the public service they provide, many felt it was incongruent that they should be fundraising through tried and tested methods such as sausage sizzles, meat raffles, etc. to provide “fuel for their vessels”.

Fuel

12.3 The specific issue of fuel costs particularly in more remote areas is a large challenge for smaller units. How fuel is accessed/delivered, stored, and usage accounted for can be difficult. In remote communities in Torres Strait fuel costs are 60% to 70% above southern Queensland rates and often receipts are not available.

12.4 When responding to a formal activation, either by Police for a SAR, or Queensland Ambulance Service for a medical evacuation, the costs of fuel are generally reimbursed. In some unit's cases this has required something of a battle to have the activation recognised. In any event the fuel costs only cover at best 30%-40% of the vessel operating costs. However, the arrangements under which the vessels operate (AMSA Exemption 24 and the unit's Deductible Gift Recipient status) constrain how much they could be reimbursed. This places the units between the proverbial 'rock and a hard place' - they are undertaking tasking for which a reimbursement close to full operating costs (not through life costs) could be expected but they are constrained by the legislation and regulation governing their operations from seeking such cost recovery.

Observation: *It may be worth examining whether this sector could leverage off the standard Government Fuel Supply contracts for RFS. I understand a similar arrangement is being explored for SES.*

13. Capital Costs - Vessel Replacement/Refurbishment

13.1 The largest capital expenses facing units are, the cost of vessel replacement; the cost of major refits; and the cost of engine replacement. The Government provides \$10,000 per year per unit for vessel replacement or major refits. These funds are managed by Coastguard (State) and VMRAQ. In general, these funds are available to units after 10 years and must be matched at least dollar for dollar by the unit. However, this is a relatively small contribution to the cost of a new vessel - at best between 10% and 30% depending upon the vessel type; and this funding may only just cover the cost of a major refit. Regarding capital expenses for vessels the following points are made:

- There is a point in a vessel's life when the ongoing cost of maintenance makes continued operation economically unviable.
- The Table at Attachment H shows that approximately 36% of the primary vessels in the volunteer marine rescue fleet are in excess of 17 years of age. This indicates an approaching wave where about 40% of the primary vessels could need replacing over the period 2019- 2023.
- Vessels will have some resale value, but units are still required to provide the up-front costs of a new vessel and then hope to recoup some funds through the sale of the old vessel. Depending upon the vessel type there is an age beyond which the value of the vessel diminishes rapidly and a detailed analysis (cost-benefit / vessel through life cost of ownership) must be undertaken to determine the best approach - refit or replace.
- There is no coordinated buying approach across either VMR or Coastguard. Flotillas and Squadrons are generally left to determine a new vessel's specifications (within a broad set of parameters set by the VMR/AVCGA state authority) and negotiate individually with boat builders.
- Flotillas and Squadrons have differing approaches to outboard engine replacement depending upon the unit's location and relationship with suppliers, how quickly the hours run up, and their financial situation. For those units that can afford it and run up the hours relatively quickly, replacement at about 500 hours seems to give the most cost-effective turnover.
- There is a significant difference in maintenance costs between vessels stored out of the water and those in the water. It was also obvious that even vessels on trailers suffer badly from the environment unless they have permanent shelter from rain and sun. While difficult to assess, storing a vessel undercover severely limits the deterioration and can add several years to its life before either major refit or replacement.

Observation: *A more coherent and coordinated approach to vessel fleet maintenance and management has the potential to reap dividends in standardisation, efficiency and reliability. At best estimates there are between 75 and 90 vessels of varying types across the 47 units. Most units work in an isolated way drawing on the best local and/or internal knowledge to determine repair, refit and replacement arrangements. The sector would benefit from examination by somebody deeply experienced in small vessel **fleet** management and cost benefit analyses to provide data and guidance on where savings in the through-life cost of ownership could be achieved.*

13.2 The lack of adequate funding for new vessels was a source of angst in many units. It added significantly to the pressure on volunteers to fund raise to continue build the funds available for major capital expenses, while simultaneously being able to manage operational costs. As a number of volunteers quoted - 'you can't buy a \$600,000 boat just from selling sausages at Bunnings'.

14. Training, Exercising and Administration

14.1 The training and administration workload were seen by many units as demanding, and in some cases excessive. For smaller units with less than 10 active members keeping on top of records, training management, accounts and internal organisational reporting requirements was a burden that they could barely manage. There could be some scope for rationalisation with direct training and administrative support being provided to those very small units who have minimal numbers of volunteers. The Gulf region and Torres Strait in particular, are areas where a hub and spoke arrangement may work well. One regional centre providing the administrative and training support and finance management for a number of sub-units with funding consolidated in one area.

14.2 Specific comments:

- Many volunteers consider the training requirements ever changing and it is difficult to keep records, curriculum and assessment requirements current.
- The training process (for competent crew) is relatively inflexible and when combined with a risk averse approach by some trainers/executives, volunteers who have good basic mariner skills are put off.
- The training requirements of the organisation may be in excess of AMSA's requirements (Comments relating to AVCGA in particular) which increases the administrative load and time for volunteers to become qualified.
- There is a view that AMSA's Exemption 24 will at some stage be withdrawn and that vessel crew training certification and vessel compliance requirements will be the full domestic commercial vessel requirements. For this reason, both organisations see their Registered Training Organisation status as crucial and seek as far as possible to provide commercial level certification. AMSA advise there is no consideration of changing these arrangements in the short to medium term.
- Remote regions suffer from limited access to trainers for their own units, and also funding to conduct highly desirable combined Squadron exercises and training. The Gulf is a special situation with limited private vessels in the area, long transits, no other

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dedicated response vessels (i.e. Water Police), unique risk factors and negligible infrastructure in the area.

Exercising

14.3 Participating in well planned SAR exercises with adjacent marine rescue units and the Queensland Water Police is a way of building confidence, developing understanding, and knowledge of local conditions and features. In remote areas it is crucial where some units may be required to provide coverage for a neighbouring Squadron or combine crews to mount a response that continues over several days. In remote areas inter-unit exercising is a significant drain on financial resources but is essential in ensuring a credible capability in a crisis.

15. Information Management (including Vessel Recording/Tracking)

15.1 The lack of commonality and diversity of information technology systems across both organisations was surprising. This is another area where it seems units have been left to go it alone and develop their own systems and processes. There appears minimal advice around common standards, appropriate processes, security and privacy, and storage/recording of information. Acknowledging that information technology may be a challenge for some older volunteers there is still a reliance on some technology that is approaching the end of its life (such as facsimile machines) for passing information.

15.2 While both organisations encourage the boating public to 'log-on' when departing and 'log-off' when returning (and similar for transiting yachts and power cruisers) the arrangements for transferring information between rescue units appear relatively ad hoc with no state-wide agreement on a consistent approach. The management of vessel information is also undertaken in different ways; some are able to enter data directly into an automated system, while some are primarily reliant on pen and paper records. To deal with this shortcoming, AVCGA is directing their Flotillas to utilise an automated software system called 'TripWatch' that they are rolling out. Flotillas who already have their own software systems (one called MeRL - Maritime Electronic Recoding and Logging) are resisting this software as they consider it inferior to the system they are already employing. Marine Radio Moreton Bay also have concerns as their operations utilise MeRL to log and pass vessel information from southern Moreton Bay to Sandy Straits.

15.3 It is understood that some VMR Squadrons are set to trial 'TripWatch'. Further comments on technology as part of an improved holistic approach to recreational vessel safety is in Part Three.

16. Open Water Access

16.1 A significant number of Squadrons and Flotillas' have access to their normal operating areas constrained by tidal heights, i.e. they need a certain tide height in order to cross bars

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or launch their vessels at boat ramps for example. In some cases, this is the result of siltation and or sandbank build-up in inlets, creeks and harbours, in others it is the size of the vessel and the design constraints of particular boat launching ramps.

16.2 Cardwell in particular, expressed major concerns about the silting of Hinchinbrook Harbour which is increasingly restricting their operations (and also badly impacting the local economy). They have no alternative sites from which to launch and at the current rate of siltation they considered that their operations will be severely limited within 12 months.

16.3 Operational response constraints due to open water access limitations should be considered as part of any state-wide risk and capability assessment.

17. Other Stakeholders

Queensland Recreational Boating Council

17.1 This group represents the interests of the boating public in lobbying Government and related government agencies. They are supportive of the work of the volunteer rescue sector but consider the system could be streamlined to be more effective in better meeting the needs of the Queensland boating public and visiting recreational vessels.

17.2 From their perspective representing users, a single organisation would be preferable as it would permit the development of common systems, charges, and processes state-wide. Over time they considered it would create a system of maritime safety that is far better integrated, that employs technology more effectively, and has clarity for the vessel user/operator. Because there are two volunteer service providers, and not wanting to be seen to preference any particular group, they feel somewhat constrained in their lobbying efforts on behalf of the sector.

17.3 The Council, as representatives of the service users, consider there is a degree of 'over servicing' with scope for; rationalising the number of rescue service providers from the Sunshine Coast to the QLD/NSW border; and, examining the myriad of marine VHF communications arrangements across the State with a view to a major re-structure.

Marine Radio Moreton Bay

17.4 This organisation is not aligned with either of the volunteer rescue groups and provides VHF radio coverage principally for the southern Moreton Bay region seven days per week for 13 hours per day. Initially linked with the Moreton Bay Trailer Boat Club it is now supported by the Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron and located within their grounds. The volunteers are passionate about the work they undertake, their role in educating the public on boating safety and radio use, and their contribution to the marine safety arrangements in southern Queensland. A briefing provided by the group is at attachment I.

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17.5 While their utility and intent are not questioned, their operations add to an already complex, confusing and duplicative marine radio network across south east Queensland.

Queensland Water Police

17.6 Queensland Police are the authority for search and rescue (both land and sea) within Queensland. Coordination and response to a MSAR incident generally falls to the nearest adjacent Water Police unit. Subject to a range of factors, they will normally contact the most appropriate volunteer unit and formally task their assistance. When tasking a unit for formal SAR, by convention, the cost of fuel is reimbursed by the Police. Some points to highlight:

- Volunteer units have some misconception about the role of Water Police vessels seeing their role primarily for MSAR not as on-water policing assets. Similarly, they do not recognise that in major incidents the vessel crew may all be fully engaged as SAR coordinators at shore HQs if an incident runs over several days.
- There is generally very good coordination and liaison between Police and the volunteer units where contact is regularly exercised.
- In remote areas it is important that the relevant Police tasking authority has a good knowledge of the facilities, locations and capabilities (including experience) of the local volunteer units. Similarly, local units need regular communication with the tasking Police Unit to build trust and understanding. Often it is the volunteer unit that will be advised of a potential SOLAS incident and will contact the Water Police. Clarity around the boundaries of the Police regions, 24hr telephone contacts, and which Water Police unit to contact was cited as a concern for some northern units. In the Gulf area particularly this level of understanding and communication in both directions, as well as clarity around the responsible authority (Townsville or Thursday Island) was expressed as a concern. When pressed it was agreed that the issue is being worked upon and improving.
- Police conduct SAR exercises with volunteer units on a regular basis and this is key to building confidence, capability and understanding.

Queensland Ambulance Service

17.7 Queensland's islands are a unique aspect of this sector not replicated in other States. Volunteer units' assistance is regularly sought to assist with (generally) non-critical medical evacuations from the many Moreton Bay islands, Fraser Island and islands within the Great Barrier Reef principally in the Whitsunday Group. Some units consider this almost a primary role, for example on Stradbroke Island where in certain situations the crew will be on standby for such an event and unwilling to undertake other activities or training.

17.8 There is no formal agreement for this tasking and it appears to be left to local or regional arrangements (and personalities to an extent) between the Ambulance area authority and volunteer units. Some volunteer units are training a cadre of crew to medical

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First Responder level, while others are including medical stretcher and stretcher access capabilities in their new boat specifications. It is considered that the requirement for this role should be quantified and a formal arrangement between the volunteer organisation and the Queensland Ambulance Service should be negotiated.

Part Three: Reviewer's Commentary

18. Elements of the Marine Rescue Environment

18.1 The volunteer sector comprises one element of the maritime rescue capability in Queensland. It cannot operate in isolation from the other elements of the system. This part of the review identifies the issues considered important by the reviewing officer from a whole-of-state perspective and to an extent, 'joins up the dots' from an overview position. It looks to set the scene for moving to an effective, integrated and sustainable marine rescue system.

18.2 It is also important to take a holistic approach to capability. Beyond response vessels it is necessary to consider the priority and resources attributed to the fundamental inputs to capability - individual and collective training, people, command and management, information and information systems, facilities, and logistics support for example.

19. Organisational Governance

19.1 Previous paragraphs have noted the organisational issues inherent in both AVCGA and VMR - lack of transparency, poor communications, lack of diversity at a board level, limited (or no) strategic vision or goals, and possible conflicts of interest. [REDACTED]

19.2 [REDACTED]

19.3 [REDACTED]

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Observation: *This is a key issue in need of resolution.*

20. The Role of the Volunteer Marine Search and Rescue Sector

20.1 There is a slight ambiguity in the role of the volunteer rescue units with a range of competing functional and regulatory tensions that limit their freedom of action. Are they a dedicated SAR asset or are they primarily an RACQ-on-water resource and does their charitable status enhance or detract from their operational parameters. The public funding of their activities is only minimal therefore they need to recoup operational costs (if acting as an RACQ) in the best way possible. Yet their status as charitable entities and operations as organisations subject to AMSA Exemption 24, limit the extent to which they can cost recover. So, to conduct their general boating assist operations they need to both build a membership base that pays for an RACQ like service and cost recover from the non-members they assist. Both actions must be managed carefully to ensure the regulatory constraints they operate under are not contravened.

20.2 When responding to general assist calls from the boating public, who are not members of either association, two different approaches are in play. Coastguard units are resolute that they only ask for a donation from the person being assisted. In doing so they advise them of the approximate costs involved in their call out to shape the level of donation.

20.3 Most VMR squadrons openly admit they invoice those they are assisting in similar circumstance, seeking a level of cost recovery based on the determination by the particular Squadron. This varies from fuel only costs, up to 2.5 times the cost of fuel plus a call out fee in the more extreme cases.

Observation *The pressure on volunteer organisations to raise funds creates a perverse outcome where in some cases the boundaries of their status as public benevolent institutions is being tested.*

21. Commonality, Consistency and Coherency.

21.1 A weakness in the current system of marine safety is the lack of common and consistent approaches. At the organisational level Coastguard and VMR are following their own agendas which are broadly related but generally separate. Internally, VMR Squadrons and to a lesser extent Coastguard Flotillas largely operate as individual and somewhat isolated entities especially around fee structures, cost recovery, fund raising, information management systems, and administrative processes. Units are generally planning their future capability independently of other units and in the absence of any meaningful strategic vision or direction. The only internally common processes relate to training.

21.2 Some units have worked hard to develop better integration for such things as logging and recording of vessels, the transfer of vessel information between units for transiting

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vessels and in particular, reciprocal membership support agreements. However, it remains relatively ad hoc and inefficient leading to the following;

- potential over-servicing in some regions;
- uncertainty for the boating public about services, costs and who to contact;
- inability to develop a strategic communications strategy to improve the sector's profile;
- limited ability to leverage any state-wide sponsorship;
- inability to leverage economies of scale in purchasing;
- incompatible processes between units for recording and transferring of information; and,
- potential for errors in transferring information on transiting vessels.

22. Maritime Risk Assessment

22.1 The growth of volunteer units in this sector has been based on units' or individuals' perception of the risk to the boating public and their desire to mitigate this risk by establishing local rescue services. Changes in technology, levels of boating activity (especially tourist activity), vessel types and population movement in the past decades have potentially changed the risk in the marine environment since many of these units were established.

22.2 Over the last two decades there has been a significant increase in boating activity, particularly in tourist related activity such as whale watching, bareboat yacht charter, fishing and diving charter activities. As far as the reviewer has been able to determine there has been never been a state-wide assessment of risks for these and public boating activities. Comparatively in the land environment, risk assessments are the basis for planning and capability development to mitigate unforeseen and potentially ruinous events - not so in the maritime zone.⁴

22.3 In moving to reform this sector, other States have undertaken a rigorous risk assessment and capability gap analysis to inform appropriate vessel types and the location of rescue services. Queensland's offshore waters and the remoteness of some areas, combined with milder weather conditions attract boating activities year-round, and present unique risk circumstances.

Observation *Should the State wish to have greater involvement and oversight of this volunteer sector then two elements are key; a common and consistent approach state-wide as discussed in the previous paragraphs; and, a state-wide risk assessment process involving the sector should be undertaken to ensure that State resources are effectively targeted at mitigating the identified risks. From this can be derived performance measures to set a level of service that is appropriate to the risk environment and guide future capability development.*

⁴ It is understood that approximately 12 years ago MSQ conducted an assessment of the risks in the merchant marine sector, focussed primarily on large merchant vessels in QLD ports and transiting the GBR.

23. State Oversight Mechanisms

23.1 Apart from the Service Level Agreement the State currently has limited mechanisms with the authority to drive reform in this area. A Committee called the Queensland Volunteer Marine Rescue Committee comprises representatives from:

- Australian Communications Authority
- Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association
- Queensland Fire and Emergency Service
- Queensland Police Service
- State Emergency Service
- Maritime Safety Queensland, Department of Transport and Main Roads
- Royal Life Saving Society Queensland
- Surf Life Saving Queensland
- Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland.

23.2 This group has in the past convened quarterly and with an agenda to provide advice to the Minister and Queensland Government and voluntary organisations involved in marine rescue. It has a standing remit to investigate and recommend on matters referred to the Committee; and ensure suitable guidelines are in place for the standardisation of an integrated Queensland statutory service/volunteer marine rescue capability. It is evident that success in the latter point has been minimal. Advice from the past Chair of this body indicates that its effectiveness has been limited as it has no legislative cover nor formal reporting lines. A strong oversight and advisory mechanism will be important in taking forward any reform agenda.

24. Radio Communications Network

24.1 The radio communications network that underpins a large part of the maritime safety system is a somewhat cluttered and confused arrangement that needs rationalisation. At the higher level Maritime Safety Queensland through their Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) in five centres, provide a VHF watch on Channels 16 and 67 (as well as specific Port Control channels) - these are primary channels for vessel initial calling and for distress calls. While the VTS is primarily used to support merchant traffic it can also support the boating public. As VHF radio is essentially line of sight, radio coverage at sea is enhanced through radio repeaters located on high points and coverage from Brisbane to north of Cairns is in most part seamless.

24.2 Many volunteer units operate their own radio watch, the majority during daylight hours on weekends and public holidays, some for 12 hours a day, seven days a week. When the volunteer units cease radio watch the relevant VTS centre assume the safety watch responsibility.

24.3 The Service Level Agreement between the State and VMR/AVCGA identifies the provision of radio watch as an agreed service. However, it seems there is a significant level of duplication in the region from Hervey Bay south to the border. Although the boating public are increasingly using mobile phones for communications the VHF network is still a key element. Issues with the current arrangements include.

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- In addition to channels 16 and 67 there are another 10 channels in use on the Queensland Coast for the recreational boater to call a volunteer rescue station depending upon their geographic location.
- In the Moreton Bay and Broadwater area there are a myriad of units all providing varying levels of radio watch service leading to a degree of mutual interference, over-servicing and confusion for the boating public.
- Marine rescue units have differing arrangements for their radio infrastructure. Some own their towers and lease them out to other users, some lease space on towers owned by commercial telecommunication operators, other have repeaters on Government owned towers. Many of the towers are in locations vulnerable to cyclones or inaccessible and therefore needing helicopter support to access for repairs or maintenance. Maintaining a radio service and radio infrastructure is a significant expense for many units.
- Although many of the volunteers enjoy manning the radios it increases pressure on small units to maintain this service from their small volunteer base.

Observation: Rationalising the maritime VHF arrangements in aspects such as infrastructure and maintenance, channel usage, geographic coverage, and volunteer radio watch location and hours is a key initiative.

Technology and an Integrated Capability Approach

24.4 Providing an operational on-water response is but one element of a holistic marine rescue capability. The other 'fundamental inputs to capability' are poorly served by the current arrangements. Two organisations and an individualistic approach at unit level has resulted in significant inefficiency. No integrated and systemic approach to capability development, in its broadest sense, was observed in this sector.

24.5 While much of the focus has been on vessels and response, there are reforms that could be implemented to enhance the safety for the public and allow volunteers to be more effective in the areas of training, logistics, exercising and command and coordination. However, it is around technology where there is the greatest scope for improvements. Such areas include; information systems, internet connectivity, data transfer between units and data management and IT auditing systems. On the radio side, digital radio communications systems and/or switching systems using ROIP (radio over internet protocols); and real time vessel monitoring and tracking systems are becoming commonplace. Elsewhere, VMR is examining the use of aerial drone support in sea search activities.

24.6 Technology must be carefully assessed and the operational concepts clear before moving down a particular path. There are also technologies that will quickly become everyday applications that can provide significant capability advances. For example, communication capability through the 5G network represents a potential step change, the impact of which is not yet fully appreciated.

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Observation *Technological advancement will significantly change the future landscape and both volunteer organisations will need support to plan how future technology can be utilised and integrated to best support their role.*

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Part Four – Path to the Future

25. The Case for Change

25.1 The review of the volunteer marine rescue organisations has examined the sector from various perspectives, listened to many viewpoints and researched alternative arrangements and systems. In the opinion of the reviewer there is a strong case for broad sectoral reform. This reform should best take an iterative approach, but its aim should be to address the following key issues addressed in previous paragraphs.

- The lack of integration and consistency between Squadrons, Flotillas and the two rescue organisations resulting in systemic inefficiencies (sections 13, 15, 21, 24, 25)
- Poor governance and transparency leading to volunteers feeling disempowered and alienated (sections 5.4, 10, 19)
- The absence of a coherent, risk-based strategic approach to maritime rescue service provision and future capability (paragraph 5.7, 7.3, 22). Such an approach would see better alignment of public expectation with the service provision.
- The low profile and lack of recognition of the work undertaken by volunteers in the sector (sections 11.6, 11.9)
- The major resourcing challenges of many units. Indicating a need for a new funding model better aligned to factors such as activity, risk reduction, and capacity to fundraise, with funding supplementation potentially coming from a user pays approach (sections 12, 13, 20.1).
- Poorly integrated radio communications, overly costly for some units, wasteful of volunteer hours and puzzling for mariners. (sections 24 and 15)
- Risks for Government, the public and volunteers. Accountabilities in the current arrangements are diffuse leading to risks for Government, as a provider of funding, the public as users of a service semi-publicly funded, and the volunteers providing the service.

25.2 Any reform process will be challenging, however, volunteer units seem generally receptive to a new approach. Some Flotillas and Squadrons are already struggling to maintain even the most minimal capability due to volunteer numbers, lack of financial resources and their physical environment operating constraints. Continuing the current approach may lead to volunteer numbers continuing to dwindle due to frustration and disillusionment, the operational life of some vessels being extended beyond what is economically sensible and increasing risk.

26. Where Does Government Interpose?

26.1 While the volunteer marine rescue sector does not have the same profile as SES or RFS it is seen by the boating public and Government agencies who utilise their capability as an essential public service. In the hierarchy of emergency services undertaking activities for the public good, it has an approximate alignment with the Surf Life Saving movement but without the public profile. However, based on the risk profile of the sector (large transit

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distances offshore, poor weather, mechanical reliability, isolated operations etc.) there is a case for stronger Government oversight than the Surf Lifesaving movement.

26.2 At Figure 6 is a matrix demonstrating Government’s basic strategic options for this sector based on desired levels of control versus the resources being committed. In each of the quadrants there is a relationship between funding levels and the extent of control (and therefore risk). Where Government positions itself will be more nuanced than this simple diagram suggests. But it is a fundamental question about where Government sees itself in this sector. Fully funding and controlling such as the RFS model, or primarily hands-off, minimally funded and left to the organisation to provide the service for the public good - as in the Surf Life Saving model. The answer will depend upon the capacity and willingness of the State to provide additional resources and their confidence in the ability of the sector to effectively apply the resources to the public good.

Figure 6. Strategic Options Matrix

Options for Government
An indicative reform matrix

Resources
(Increasing)

----->

Less	<p><u>Current situation</u></p> <p><i>Minimal Oversight.</i> <i>Limited resources.</i></p>	<p><i>Limited State oversight.</i> <i>Minimal change to VMR & AVCGA structures.</i> <i>Major funding increase. SLA with improved KPIs</i></p>
More	<p><i>Significant increase in State oversight</i> <i>Minimal funding increase. Reform achieved through regulation & other govt support/levers.</i></p>	<p><i>Total reform. One volunteer group.</i> <i>Strong State direction and control. Major funding boost</i></p>

27. Where to and how to get there

A Future Vision - Attributes of an ideal Volunteer Marine Rescue Sector

27.1 Change in this sector will be challenging due to entrenched positions, organisational ownership, personal preferences and an underlying wariness about Government intentions. It is worth considering a timeline in which to achieve significant reform if that is the Government’s desire. Given the experiences in other jurisdictions a five-year horizon would

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seem reasonable to achieve major reform. This would permit a staged approach with issues being managed in a deliberate and considered way.

27.2 A simple tool in futures thinking is to envisage success. In this instance what does the ideal volunteer marine sector look like and what attributes will it demonstrate. From a strategic viewpoint any future arrangements in this sector should be based on some fundamental principles. In no particular order, these could be:

- Clear accountabilities and responsibilities
- Customer (the boating public) focussed
- Retain strong community links and community sense of 'ownership'
- For volunteers - fulfilling, respectful of their contribution and uncomplicated
- Risk-based planning and operating at all levels
- Shared strategic vision
- Transparency in decision making - financial, people and operational decisions
- Receptive to moving with new technology
- A stable funding model independent of Government budgetary variations

27.3 The transition process to achieve reform will need to agree a desired outcome for the mooted five-year horizon. Having heard many opinions and looked at other jurisdictions the following ideal attributes of Volunteer Marine Search and Rescue organisation are offered for consideration.

- A single organisation with capable vessels, appropriately located, manned by skilled and motivated volunteers.
- The organisation is able to leverage positive public support (as an emergency service group), state-wide profile and economies of scale (in purchasing) to deliver value for money in its operations and capability enhancement/development.
- State-wide, units are effectively integrated and interoperable for systems, people and processes and closely linked to relevant government agencies. From the boating public's perspective, the system is "seamless".
- There is effective command and coordination at all levels, supported by efficient and responsive communications systems.
- Government has confidence in the level of public service provided and see the resources allocated being expended effectively.
- The organisation provides added public value through being able to contribute their skills and capabilities to assist in other situations, especially emergency events.

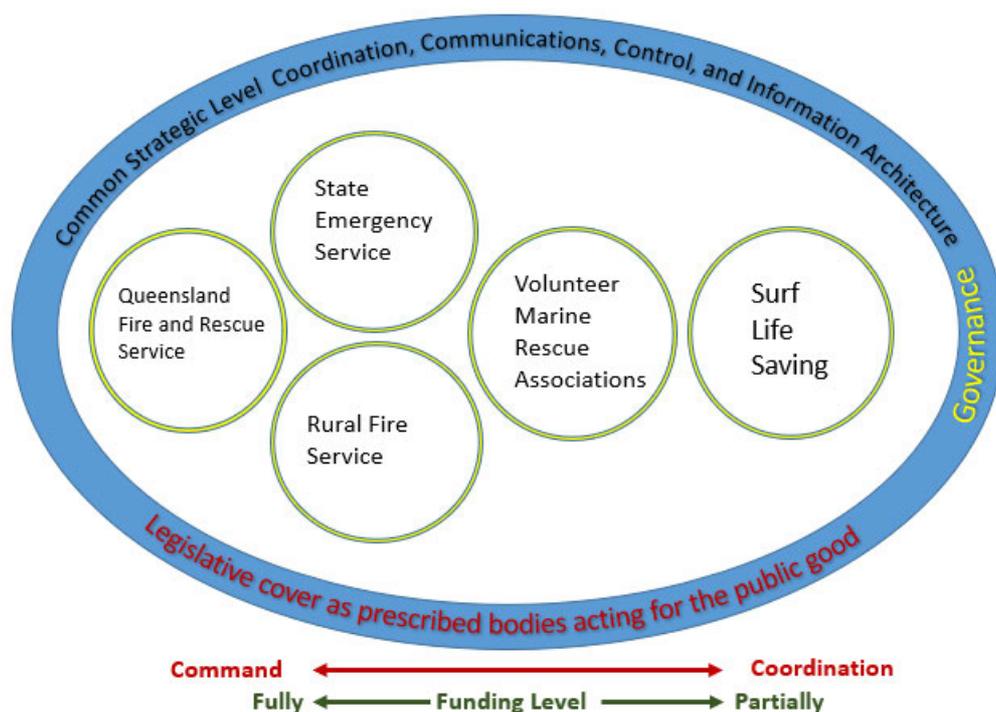
27.4 There is scope in this future vision to have the volunteer sector more closely associated with other volunteer organisations similarly providing a public good in situations of danger and crisis. This would overcome some of the complaints around profile and recognition and provide greater capacity for Government to influence governance. This association could be in a collaborative way through developing an architecture and language common to all organisations. It would potentially see the sector having legislative cover and recognition but not being 'commanded' as such by an external agency.

27.5 This approach is represented at Figure 7. It attempts to describe this association drawing synergy from a common approach and close collaboration with organisations who

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similarly act in good faith for the public good. The collaborative approach is strongest at the strategic level while allowing operational units the peace of mind to undertake their roles in the knowledge of legislative protection.

Figure 7. A future model for an assimilated emergency services strategic framework



28. Options for Government

28.1 If Government is of a mind to seek reform in this sector, then there are range of broad approaches that could be considered. These include;

- Undertaking only small reforms that are easy to implement and show some quick gains. Low risk but low return.
- A staged approach undertaking some early reforms but articulating a pathway to major sectoral reform over a five-year period. Medium risk and potentially high return.
- Move straight to major reform and commence the actions necessary immediately. If a fully integrated single volunteer organisation is desired outcome a time frame of over two years would be required. High risk and potentially high return.

28.2 The staged approach has potentially the best outcomes for the least risk. It provides the opportunity to engage the sector and take them along a journey of change. While there

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will no doubt be challenges, early action that acknowledges and obviates some of the volunteers' concerns will be well received.

Short Term Reform

28.3 In the short term, some of the actions that Government could consider include:

Legislative Inclusion and Oversight

28.4 QFES is examining legislative reform in the Emergency Services sector. A team has been established within QFES to identify opportunities for amendment to portfolio legislation to support QFES in building a modern and sustainable service. Along with a range of technical and structural amendments to modernise the legislation, consideration will also be given to whether the legislation provides sufficient support and opportunity for volunteers in contributing to the objectives of QFES. It would be worthwhile considering the way the volunteer marine rescue sector could be included under any amendments to the Act and the benefits that would accrue. It may also be worth considering how legislative inclusion could provide greater authority to any oversight and coordination mechanisms such as reconfiguring a current committee or a new board to oversight the sector.

Insurance

28.5 If the sector is included under any statutory provisions, it is understood that the insurance provisions applicable to SES and RFS could be applied to this sector. Such action would be a considerable saving for most Squadrons and Flotillas and remove one source of angst.

Fuel

28.6 Neither organisation has any contractual supply arrangements for fuel state-wide. There may be an opportunity for Squadrons and Flotillas to leverage off the Queensland Government fuel contracts as a way of saving some costs especially for remote areas where this is a significant expense.

Vehicle registration

28.7 It is understood that RFS and SES vehicles have access to discounted registration fees for vehicles and trailers. Whether this sector could utilise similar arrangements should be examined.

Governance

28.8



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Funding - Short Term



Major Reform - Transition Pathway and Actions

28.10 A significant reform program is necessary to address the shortcomings and issues identified in section 25. If Government decides to take this approach then this process will require resources, detailed planning and consultation. A project team within QFES will need to be established to lead the change over the long term and negotiate the transition to a single volunteer organisation if that is the future vision. It will be important for Government to articulate its strategic vision and how it will manage the reform early in the process to avoid rumours and mis-information. Other elements of the structures necessary to effect this change include the following:

- A Transition Advisory Board comprising representatives of volunteer groups, recreational boating groups, Water Police, AMSA, Maritime Safety QLD, and co-opted advisers or specialists as required. Terms of Reference for this Board should be

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established by the Commissioner QFES. The chair of this group should be appointed by either the Commissioner QFES or the Minister.

- A specialist working group convened to undertake a state-wide maritime risk and capability assessment with a specific Terms of Reference.
- Other working groups to inform the project team and Board, reporting on such things as: communications and supporting information technology, volunteer attraction and retention, training, and vessel capability.
- Outcomes and milestones established by the Board and endorsed by QFES.
- Clear reporting lines to the Minister and regular advice to the sector's stakeholders on actions underway and progress.

28.11 For the longer-term reform agenda the following areas could be considered for more detailed examination.

Funding and Funding Level

28.12 Reforming the sector will need to encompass examination of different funding models and funding levels. The level of funding will need to strike a balance so that unit and community ownership of the assets and operating costs is encouraged (to nurture efficiency and care), and so that the boating public does not view it as a free resource to cover their own laxity.

28.13 In terms of funding sources, there are likely to be unintended consequences no matter which approach is adopted. In other jurisdictions NSW use a levy system on boat registrations and licenses and WA use their emergency services levy to fund the sector for example. If a boat and boat trailer registration levy is a policy option for example, then there are negative consequences for many units. Those units who rely on boating membership, or marine assist membership as a significant funding source are likely to see this funding dry up. If the public considers they are paying for a service through a levy they are unlikely to pay twice for on-water assistance. This may drive Government to provide a higher level of funding.

28.14 An alternative approach may be using market driven forces. For example, by working with insurance companies to provide industry wide discounts for boat insurance for people who are members of a volunteer marine rescue service. This would encourage boating membership of volunteer units and increase their funding base. But the diversity apparent in Queensland regions (in terms of population and boating public) would mean some adjustment formula would be required to cover either of these two approaches. However this issue is approached, there needs to remain some remit for most volunteer units to contribute to their sector in a meaningful way; but with the flexibility to provide higher levels of assistance to remote areas where the risk dictates a response capability is necessary.

An Integrated VHF Radio Communications System

28.15 An area in need of review is the marine radio capabilities and radio watch systems in use with both volunteer groups, Government agencies and commercial entities. It is beyond the technical capabilities of the reviewing officer to offer realistic options in this area. It is

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clear there is significant duplication and inefficiencies in a VHF radio network that is poorly integrated, has variable capabilities and is not simple from the maritime user perspective.

28.16 There is scope to provide a more effective service through integration with both current MSQ services, developing Emergency Services radio capabilities and the current volunteer sector services. Advanced communications technologies and linked internet applications have the potential to create a more customer focussed system. Any review of this aspect should also look at the assimilation of vessel tracking systems (AIS, VMS, and like systems) into a future state-wide vessel safety system.

Public Boating Regulation, Education and Awareness

28.17 Responding to emergency events on water is but one element of a policy response. Appropriate education and regulation is another element of a holistic policy response that should be considered as a risk mitigation strategy.

28.18 The license requirements to be in control of a recreational vessel are generally a one size fits all condition. Whether you operate in an enclosed river on a four-metre vessel or travel offshore to outer barrier reef islands in a 16-metre sailing vessel the license requirements are the same. There is also no requirement for any renewal or re-endorsement of a license. A license could have been granted 15 years ago but there is no opportunity to ensure the license holder is both aware of contemporary safety requirements and capable of safe operation of the vessel of which they are now in charge.

28.19



Leverage of Government Single Source Contracts

28.20 Depending upon the future emergency service legislative status of this sector the extent to which the volunteer units could access the Government's single source buying power should be investigated. Similar to the SES and RFS, they could possibly achieve savings in terms of telecommunications and internet services, fleet vehicle purchases, power suppliers, and some general equipment purchases such as computers for example.

Facilities and Leases

28.21 The shore facilities where Squadrons and Flotillas are based are the subject of a wide variety of lease and ownership arrangements. Some are on council leased land, many are on State Government's land administered by numerous Departments, some are on land belonging to Port Corporations. In sum, it is a jumble of different agencies, different lease terms and different costs. For individual volunteer units negotiating their leases is challenging

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knowing who to contact and how to approach the negotiation. There is scope to rationalise the leases where State Government has an interest in the property. It would be worthwhile supporting volunteer units in their interaction with State Government Departments and aiming to achieve a degree of cross-Departmental consistency in the lease arrangements would be beneficial.

29. Conclusion

29.1 Although committed to providing a volunteer search and rescue service in sometimes challenging circumstances, across the sector volunteers express significant disillusionment. This is a result of both internal organisational issues, and their perception of being on the second tier of emergency service volunteers not worthy of recognition or appropriate funding. The long-term viability of several Squadrons and Flotillas is questionable, and the lack of a cohesive and integrated state-wide marine rescue capability is obvious. Given this, the case for reform seems clear.

29.2 Previous paragraphs have outlined a balanced reform approach - undertake actions to demonstrate initial successes and gain support, outline a long term strategic vision and put in place the structures that engages the stakeholders to drive the long-term reform. However, without a commitment to significant funding improvements any reform will achieve only minimal positive outcomes.

29.3 To achieve significant reform that results in a single integrated, capable and respected volunteer marine search and rescue organisation will be difficult. It will require a long-term view, and both persistent and consistent effort. Continuing on a path without significant reform will result in greater operational risks for the boating public and the volunteer organisations, and reputational risks for government. Arguably, the Government could expend the same effort in continuing to extinguish evolving disputes and negotiating between different parties, as it will expend in undertaking major reform. And with no reform the sector's capability to deliver the public good for which it has been established will continue to steadily degrade.

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Attachments

Attachment A - Blue Water Review - Terms of Reference

Background

The Minister for Fire and Emergency services has requested the Commissioner Queensland Fire and Emergency services to institute a review of the State's volunteer marine search and rescue arrangements and organisations.

Purpose

The purpose of the review is to; firstly identify the key issues impacting the delivery of a comprehensive and effective volunteer based maritime search and rescue capability; and secondly to develop options and recommended strategies for Government to address those issues determined by the Minister to have priority.

Scope

The reviewer will

- Conduct a comprehensive and broad based information gathering process and assessment of existing arrangements in Queensland and around Australia. This will include in the first instance Statewide regional stakeholder visits with operational squadrons and flotillas to understand the issues at the local and tactical level
- Examine how the authorising environment operates, and whether there are issues in the operation of chains of command, management and overlapping responsibilities.
- Identify key, recurrent and systemic issues (including those from local visits) to inform a briefing for the Minister.
- Identify for the Minister an issues paper with recommendations for matters of policy to be further examined and reported on.
- Upon receiving Ministerial endorsement on the policy issues to be progressed, the reviewer will move to further engagement and consultation under a second terms of reference. This will include a calling for submissions, public engagement and other policy development work in the areas of legislation, governance frameworks, funding and C4i arrangements as necessary to achieve the policy outcomes expected of government.

Reporting

The reviewer will report to the Commissioner QFES and provide interim updates as to the progress of the review.



ENDORSED/NOT ENDORSED

Doug Smith
Deputy Commissioner
Strategy and Corporate Services

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Attachment C - Comparative State Volunteer Marine Rescue Arrangements

Victoria Volunteer Marine Rescue Sector Arrangements

<p>What were the key issues that you were seeking to resolve/rectify/improve upon in going to a new arrangement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better Funding and Insurance for the sector • A common training and assessment strategy • A strategic and risk based approach to marine search and rescue vessel procurement • Better communication platforms for the sector and improved arrangements between Victoria Police and volunteer MSAR units
<p>What is the organising framework and governance model for your arrangements?</p>	<p>Volunteer Marine Search and Rescue units are listed as Support Agencies in the Emergency Management Manual Victoria. The Reform Implementation Board provides strategic oversight of the implementation of the Government's Response to the Parliamentary Inquiry. The Reform Implementation Board is chaired by the Emergency Management Commissioner. There is also a Marine Search and Rescue Working Group, comprising all volunteer MSAR organisations as well as key partner agencies. The working group is chaired by Victoria Police. Principally, the Working Group reviews proposed sector policies and procedures before sign off by the Reform Implementation Board.</p>
<p>What is the source of funding provided to volunteer units? Levees, consolidated revenue, grants, state private sponsorship etc. If possible what is the quantum of Govt funding to the sector (inc levees etc)?</p>	<p>In December 2017, the government committed \$11.34m in funding over two years (Op ex and Cap ex) and a commitment to resolve a sustainable funding model for the sector.</p>
<p>In general, what percentage of funding is provided to volunteer units for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Vessel replacement costs; b. Operating costs; and, c. Other funding provided.? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) All current and future MSAR vessels will be 100% state owned and allocated to volunteer MSAR units under a vessel use agreement (b) Volunteer MSAR units receive a subsidy for their operating costs. For most MSAR units this will typically cover 75% of their current operating costs. (c) EMV currently fully covers the cost of insurance for the sector. In addition, EMV recently ran an engine upgrade program whereby 100% funding was provided to change over the engines on 16 existing MSAR units. MSAR units also have access to a range of grant programs.
<p>What is the expectation on local units to fund raise? Are they charitable institutions?</p>	<p>Units are expected to fundraise to cover any funding shortfall</p>

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<p>Beyond dedicated SAR response what other types of services are provided? Eg. General assistance for breakdowns, aground, towing etc, support to SES or other Emerg Serv/Govt agency support, medical evac at request of ambulance services, boating education, etc.</p>	<p>At present units principally provide search and rescue services when tasked by Victoria Police. MSAR units in Victoria also provide ad-hoc educational services to the boating public. Provide vessel tracking and monitoring services, radio listening watches including weather services. In addition, they also support local community events such as ocean swims and spreading of ashes etc</p>
<p>Determination of maritime risks. In Brief, who undertook this, how was it managed and is it re-assessed on any regular basis?</p>	<p>The EMV MSAR Office conducted a risk-based review of the risks at key boating areas and coastal departure point. The risk assessment took into account historic marine incidents, local environmental hazards, current MSAR unit capability both in terms of vessels and people and emerging boating activity trends</p>
<p>How is training and compliance managed? Eg centrally by paid employees, by the volunteer org with oversight by some paid employees, primarily by the organisation etc</p>	<p>The EMV MSAR Office has developed a training and assessment strategy, whereby EMV paid staff play a coordination role with volunteer trainer and assessors. EMV has also released a training and assessment package for use by units that have historically had deficiencies in this area.</p>
<p>Legislative arrangements. Are the volunteers in this sector recognised under legislation and what cover or benefits does this provide them?</p>	<p>At the present time MSAR volunteers in Victoria are not covered by legislation.</p>
<p>Insurance and Workcover. Is this managed by the volunteer sector themselves or does the State provide cover under their own policies?</p>	<p>EMV provides comprehensive insurance cover for the sector. With respect to WorkCover my understanding is that MSAR volunteers are subject to overarching Victorian Worksafe legislation but are not required to pay any premium.</p>
<p>How is marine radio traffic (for general recreational boating safety reasons) managed / organised?</p>	<p>In Victoria, Kordia maintains on behalf of the state a comprehensive network of coastal VHF marine transceivers (16/67 and DSC). In addition to the hardware, Kordia also maintains a 24/7 radio listening watch and weather service. MSAR volunteers maintain various local limited coast stations providing local weather services as well as vessel tracking and monitoring</p>

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<p>Have there been any major issues in implementing your arrangements that you would be happy to share?</p>	<p>The MSAR Reform in Victoria is tracking very well. We find that some of our messaging does not always reach volunteers at a local level. There are also challenges where state policies or procedures may differ to that of National Volunteer Search and Rescue units such as the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard.</p>
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New South Wales Volunteer Marine Rescue Sector Arrangement

<p>What were the key issues that you were seeking to resolve/rectify/improve upon in going to a new arrangement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One single entity with a clear chain of command • To provide a more effective and efficient rescue service <p>In doing so, it allowed for structured organisation to be put in place with strong governance arrangements, consistent messaging to members of the boating community, uniform training, standardisation of equipment, better buying power, greater ease to deal with service delivery gaps (if identified)</p> <p>In essence, a more capable and effective rescue organisation, with safer and more motivated volunteers, better able to service the community and save lives 24/7.</p>
<p>What is the organising framework and governance model for your arrangements?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRNSW established as a Company Limited by Guarantee • The Company is registered as a Not-For-Profit organisation with Deductible Gift Recipient status. • Each volunteer member must be attached to a unit and is a member of the Company. • The Company has one Constitution, with subordinate Rules and Standard Operating Procedures. • All assets are owned by the company. The units are part of the single entity company. They cannot legally own any assets. • The marine radio network (public) for NSW is owned and operated by MRNSW • Board consists of 3 General and 6 Regional Directors, who are members (in their own right) elected by the membership. • The Board elects one of the 9 Directors as Chair • The Board appoints the Commissioner • Commissioner is responsible for the day to day operations of MRNSW and for the hiring and firing of staff • Each unit has an elected Unit Commander (UC) and Deputy Unit Commander (DUC). • The UC and DUC appoint an executive team from within their unit membership. • We work closely with Marine Area Command as they have the legislative responsibility for the coordination of rescue and they play an important role in advising and endorsing operational SOPs and also supporting quality assurance through our annual Operational Readiness Inspections on all 44 units and 82 vessels.
<p>What is the source of funding provided to volunteer units? levees,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About \$6.3M annually from a levy on boat licenses and regos • \$1.7M as an annual grant from government

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<p>consolidated revenue, grants, state private sponsorship etc. If possible what is the quantum of Govt funding to the sector (inc levees etc)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About \$2M raised annually by units, through either fundraising or grants that they have been successful in obtaining.
<p>In general, what percentage of funding is provided to volunteer units for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. Vessel replacement costs; e. Operating costs; and, f. Other funding provided.? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) HQ provides 80% of the cost of a new vessel (unit to contribute the balance) b) Units are provided between \$10,000 and \$27,000 annually towards operational expenses (namely fuel/amenities) depending on the number of vessels they operate; if they are a radio base, SARCC, boat base or any combination of the above. c) HQ pays for all telecommunication accounts, uniforms, insurances, training, capital works (on a case by case basis and subject to budgetary constraints). HQ also provides all IT infrastructure and support, HR support, finance and administrative functions and all other back office functions that are required to run a business.
<p>What is the expectation on local units to fund raise? Are they charitable institutions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Units are required to contribute 20% towards the costs of their vessel/s. This provides them with a 20% equity in the vessel. Should it be sold in the future to upgrade, the value of the 20% equity from the sale will go towards their 20% contribution of the new vessel.
<p>Beyond dedicated SAR response what other types of services are provided? Eg. General assistance for breakdowns, aground, towing etc, support to SES or other Emerg Serv/Govt agency support, medical evac at request of ambulance services, boating education, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24/7 Radio communications (monitoring and broadcast); towing assists for multiply reasons. We have an MOU in place with the NSW Rural Fire Service whereby we provide logistical support when called upon during coastal bushfires, or to answer the Public Information hotline phones established at the RFS Comms Centre or the State Emergency Operations Centre. MRNSW has access to RFS Critical Support team. MRNSW are also recognised within emergency management plans/sub-plans as a key support agency in Tsunami, Storm, Flood events/disasters.
<p>Determination of maritime risks. In Brief, who undertook this, how was it managed and is it re-assessed on any regular basis?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Marine Service Delivery Model was commissioned by the State Rescue Board and undertaken by a team consisting of members from – NSW Marine Area Command, one representative from each of the former volunteer marine rescue services, maritime and a member from the State Rescue Board Secretariat.
<p>How is training and compliance managed? Eg centrally by paid employees, by the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRNSW is a Registered Training Organisation. MRNSW has 5 paid training staff and a volunteer Training Officer and Training Support Officer in each of the 44 Units. A train the trainer program was introduced to increase the number of trainers and assessors, to spread

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<p>volunteer org with oversight by some paid employees, primarily by the organisation etc</p>	<p>the workload and allow unit Training Officers to manage their own training calendars. Hundreds of volunteer Subject-Matter-Experts, Trainers and Assessors deliver the majority of training and assessments at unit and regional levels under the oversight/coordination of the training department (staff)</p>
<p>Legislative arrangements. Are the volunteers in this sector recognised under legislation and what cover or benefits does this provide them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRNSW is recognised as an emergency service organisation under the <i>State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989</i>. This affords protection from liability, employment protection provisions and the legal framework for the organisation to operate. It also allows for a rescue policy to be produced that sets out the specifics. • As an emergency service organisation, volunteer members of MRNSW are captured under the <i>Workers Compensation (Bush Fire, Emergency and Rescue Services) Act 1987</i>. This provides the special workers compensation benefits specifically designed for volunteers. It also provides insurance coverage for loss of personal items/belongings whilst performing a work related activity.
<p>Insurance and Workcover. Is this managed by the volunteer sector themselves or does the State provide cover under their own policies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Rescue NSW is insured by Treasury Managed Fund (TMF) a state government self-insurance fund.
<p>How is marine radio traffic (for general recreational boating safety reasons) managed / organised?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRNSW has radio bases (located near their unit base or part of it) that operate daylight hours, weekends and public holidays. MRNSW also has about 16 Search and Rescue Coordination Centres that operate 7-days and some 24/7. The strategic location of the SARCCs provides coverage in areas where a radio base would normally operate but is not available or off-line. • MRNSW has also introduced a Radio over Internet Protocol (RoIP) that translates analogue radio transmissions into digital format which can then be received anywhere in the State that is established as a Hub with the necessary receiving servers and equipment. This provides coverage in the event that a SARCC is off-line or unavailable for any particular reason. Currently Marine Rescue Sydney operate as the State Operations Centre (Hub) providing 24/7 radio monitoring backup support and consistent overnight monitoring support for much of the state.
<p>Have there been any major issues in implementing your arrangements that you would be happy to share?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the arrangements was quite significant as would be expected, but went quite well. Critical to have buy-in by the broader membership and quality committed staff. The funding required to run the organisation was underestimated at the time of its formation. However, a reasonable amount of up-front and ongoing funding was provided and this was fundamental in the successful amalgamation through being able to show immediate improvements, reduce/eliminate costs to members and immediately establish a common organisation (consistent uniform/branding, new vessels and equipment, staff support etc)

Western Australia - Volunteer Marine Rescue Sector Arrangements

<p>What were the key issues that you were seeking to resolve/rectify/improve upon in going to a new arrangement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One association and one responsible agency. • Improve the consistency in the guidance and support provided to all VMR groups and a more coordinated approach to carrying out monitoring activities and marine search and rescue operations. • Meet legislative obligations • Provide equalisation with other DFES Operational Services
<p>What is the organising framework and governance model for your arrangements?</p>	<p>WA Police are the Hazard Management Agency (HMA) for Marine Search & Rescue. Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) Groups are a combat agency to the WA Police and provide on water assets and resources to Marine Search and Rescue incidents within Western Australia.</p> <p>Fire & Emergency Services Act provides for the registration and functions of a VMR Group.</p> <p>Each of the State's DFES-registered VMR Groups functions as an independently incorporated association, however, all operate under one representative organisation, Volunteer Marine Rescue Western Australia. VRMS is the responsibility of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES).</p> <p>DFES Operations Capability Portfolio includes the Marine Services branch and provides the internal structure to aid in supporting and developing capability of VMR groups to deliver their service.</p> <p>Marine Services Branch Structure Commissioner Deputy Commissioner Assistant Commissioner Manager Marine Services Regional Coordinator Karratha: 8 VMR Groups Regional Coordinator Geraldton: 9 VMR Groups Regional Coordinator Metro: 10 VMR Groups Regional Coordinator Albany: 9 VMR Groups Program Officer Administration Support Corporate and Strategic Services</p>
<p>What is the source of funding provided to volunteer units? levees, consolidated revenue, grants, state private sponsorship etc. If possible what is the quantum of Govt funding to the sector (inc levees etc)?</p>	<p>DFES provides Operational funding and Capital funding to VMRS groups. Capability funding is provided through the State Government's Emergency Services Levy. Additional funding is sourced locally through Federal Government funding opportunities, sponsorship and donations.</p>

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<p>In general, what percentage of funding is provided to volunteer units for:</p> <p>g. Vessel replacement costs;</p> <p>h. Operating costs; and,</p> <p>i. Other funding provided.?</p>	<p><u>Capital Funding</u></p> <p>DFES are in the process of implementing a State-wide procurement process for Rescue Vessel's. This will see a panel of preferred boat builders established through a turn-key model. There will be a Replacement and Refurbishment Schedule that will be based on the below unless otherwise negotiated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 year refit/refurbishment • 10 year refit/refurbishment • 15 year replacement <p>Through this process, the vessels will be 100% funded by DFES for the replacement/refurbishment costs. The vessel being replaced will be sold and the sale proceeds will be transferred to DFES and deemed the groups contribution towards the new vessel.</p> <p>For other capital purchases outside of vessels, the groups are requested to submit a Capital Grant Application. These applications are prepared and submitted approximately April each year. A Capital Grant committee is established which generally comprises of 2 x representatives from the VMRWA Association, 2 x Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioner Operations Capability, Executive Director Corporate Services and the Manager Marine Services.</p> <p>The Capital Grant committee review these applications and decide what application are supported for the new financial year.</p> <p><u>Operational Funding</u></p> <p>DFES provides Operational funding to all groups. All eligible operational expenditure is 100% funded. Groups are provided with an Operational Grant each year. The Operating Grant is calculated based on the previous two years operating grants with a 1% CPI increase. The groups are then presented with an offer and have the ability to request a funding adjustment if they believe the group will incur higher operational expenditure that year.</p> <p>Once finalised, the groups are paid quarterly in advance. At the completion of each financial year DFES conducts an audit of their financials for the previous financial year to determine how much they actually spent versus how much they were given. Any variances are incorporated into the new offer for the financial year they are going into. This ensure over or under payments are reconciled.</p> <p><u>Other Funding Sources</u></p> <p>DFES provide 100% funding for approved VMR training. This includes external training courses that are deemed necessary as part of the VMR role.</p>
<p>What is the expectation on local units to fund raise? Are they charitable institutions?</p>	<p>There is no expectation from DFES for VMR groups to fund raise. Individual group may prefer to fund raise for non-eligible operational expenditure</p>

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<p>Beyond dedicated SAR response what other types of services are provided? Eg. General assistance for breakdowns, aground, towing etc, support to SES or other Emerg Serv/Govt agency support, medical evac at request of ambulance services, boating education, etc.</p>	<p>VMR services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carry out monitoring activities and marine search and rescue operations; • assist other agencies in providing emergency services support. • promote the safety of life and property from natural disasters, accidents and other events that may require marine search and rescue operations to be carried out; • promote Marine Safety educational displays and initiatives. • VMRS vessels do not support salvage operations where there is no threat to life.
<p>Determination of maritime risks. In Brief, who undertook this, how was it managed and is it re-assessed on any regular basis?</p>	<p>In 2015, DFES employed an external consultant to develop a 'Resource to Risk Model'. This document reviewed each VMR group and provided an overall risk rating. Groups were reviewed on their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating environment (complexity, remoteness, redundancy, support services, rock fishing, and beach hazards) • Meteorology (wind, waves, tidal, cyclone and temperature). • Vulnerability (population & tourism profile, boat registrations, combined ramp/mooring measure). • Prevalence (average annual occurrence of incidents and critical incidents). <p>The risk rating determines the number, size and type of resources each group should manage matched with the marine risks that exist in each location. This will be reviewed every 5 years.</p>
<p>How is training and compliance managed? Eg centrally by paid employees, by the volunteer org with oversight by some paid employees, primarily by the organisation etc</p>	<p>All VMRS are required to comply with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority requirements and operate under an exemption 24. Within this exemption it states that the responsible body is tasked with delivering a structured training program for Skippers, Restricted Skipper & Crew. DFES has developed VMRS training packages for skipper, restricted skipper, senior crew, crew, radio operator, and operational induction. DFES paid staff endorse the volunteer training officers at each group to provide these training courses internally. The administration and recording of courses is captured on the VMRS Training Pathways on-line training system and the WAFES Academy.</p>
<p>Legislative arrangements. Are the volunteers in this sector recognised under legislation and what cover or benefits does this provide them?</p>	<p>VMRS volunteers are registered emergency service personnel, under the <i>Fire and Emergency Services Act 1998</i>. DFES Commissioner holds legislative responsibility to provide for the VMR Groups. This is done by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing Capital & Operational funding to VMR groups ○ Providing training to VMR Volunteers ○ Providing administration support ○ Providing Wellness and welfare support
<p>Insurance and Workcover. Is this managed by the volunteer sector</p>	<p>DFES ensures its volunteers are covered by an appropriate level of insurance cover over all insurable risks. All VMR Groups are covered by the WA Government insurer, Risk Cover. All claims are managed by DFES in conjunction with Risk Cover.</p>

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themselves or does the State provide cover under their own policies?	VMR groups are not required to obtain their own insurance unless they perform activities not associated with Marine Rescue such as the conduct of Recreational Skipper Tickets.
How is marine radio traffic (for general recreational boating safety reasons) managed / organised?	WA Water Police are responsible for managing coastal radio Perth and Hedland. Some VMR groups offer limited radio coverage in local areas for vessels logging on & off. In the Metro area some groups provide 24/7 coverage. This is a secondary function to their core role of marine search and rescue and is not a mandatory requirement. DFES are in the process of establishing a state-wide Radio Over Internet Protocol (ROIP) a system into all VMR groups. In addition the NSW Marine Rescue App. "Log On/Log Off" will be trialled for implementation to Western Australia. This will assist with providing improved coverage to the boating public.
Have there been any major issues in implementing your arrangements that you would be happy to share?	Initially the groups were hesitant to come under the one association and agency, although once some of the larger groups came on board, many just followed.

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Attachment D - Boat License and Registrations Number

Recreational Marine License Holders in Queensland as at 31 January, 2008-2018

Year	Recreational Marine License Holders				
	Holds RMDL only	Holds PWCL only	Holds RMDL and PWCL	Total RMDL	Total PWCL
January 2018	702,838	467	178,988	881,826	179,455
January 2016	681,708	445	149,931	831,639	150,376
January 2014	656,095	360	123,180	779,275	123,540
January 2012	624,988	330	96,435	721,423	96,765
January 2010	592,179	281	73,045	665,224	73,326
January 2008	552,213	218	51,069	603,282	51,287

RDML - Recreational marine driver license

PWCL - Personal water craft license

Boat Registrations in Queensland as at 31 January, 2008-2018

Year	Boat Registrations						
	Up to 3.0m	3.01-4.0m	4.01-4.5m	4.51-5.0m	5.01-6.0m	6.01-8.0m	8.1-10.0m
January 2018	8,457	96,952	59,370	28,420	36,449	19,026	4,547
January 2016	8,635	95,057	58,226	28,178	35,889	18,349	4,572
January 2014	8,825	92,302	56,314	27,517	35,179	17,789	4,587
January 2012	9,059	87,955	53,352	26,827	34,028	16,868	4,662
January 2010	9,832	85,205	51,307	26,471	32,855	15,773	4,645
January 2008	10,175	79,800	47,957	25,280	30,153	14,307	4,497

Year	Boat Registrations						Total Registered Boats
	10.01-12.0m	12.01-15.0m	15.01-18.0m	18.01-20.0m	20.01-25.0m	Over 25.0m	
January 2018	3,824	3,006	712	230	139	45	7,956
January 2016	3,857	3,027	716	221	133	44	7,998
January 2014	3,900	2,978	722	197	118	47	7,962
January 2012	3,891	2,937	703	181	110	47	7,869
January 2010	3,880	2,882	691	165	104	52	7,774
January 2008	3,795	2,707	668	141	101	62	7,474

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Attachment E - Volunteer Marine Rescue Organisation Activity Statistics

Volunteer Marine Rescue Unit Activations 1 January 2018 to 5 November 2018

	Breakdown	Drifting Vessel	EPIRB	Flares	Grounding	Insufficient Fuel	Medical	Search	Sinking/Sunk Vessel	Training/Patrol
VMR Southport	446	18	0	1	49	13	53	6	16	775
VMR Jacob's Well	186	6	1	0	46	14	14	11	15	569
VMR Bribie Island	109	17	0	1	14	4	4	18	6	682
VMR Raby Bay	152	5	0	0	11	10	221	8	9	197
VMR Hervey Bay	108	3	0	0	5	10	39	6	4	125
VMR Brisbane	35	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	5	156
VMR Victoria Point	44	1	0	0	7	2	0	3	2	125
VMR Whitsunday	46	1	1	1	2	3	25	10	4	58
VMR Stradbroke Island	12	1	0	1	2	0	84	0	2	43
VMR Gladstone	28	0	1	1	1	1	5	2	1	75
VMR Mackay	34	0	1	2	0	3	0	1	4	47
VMR Bundaberg	22	1	0	0	2	1	1	3	1	44
VMR Port Douglas	13	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	2	37
VMR Bowen	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	20
VMR Currumbin	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
VMR Weipa	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	16
VMR Burdekin	2	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	13
VMR Round Hill	8	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	2
VMR Thursday Island	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Coast Guard Unit Activations 1 November 2017 to 31 October 2018

	Activated by:				Activation type:						Total
	Police	Ambulance	Self	Total	Medivac	Training	Miscellaneous	Assistance	SAR	Community Service	
QF8 Townsville	4	1	69	74	6	170	0	4	59	0	239
QF9 Cairns	2	1	39	42	1	56	0	36	3	1	97
QF12 Tully	1	0	5	6	0	2	0	6	0	0	8
QF14 Ingham	6	0	20	26	0	22	0	24	1	0	47
QF15 Innisfail	5	0	17	22	0	14	1	14	5	3	37
QF16 Cooktown	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
QF23 Cardwell	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	1	0	1	6
QF25 Cape York	7	0	0	7	1	5	1	2	4	0	13
QF11 Yeppoon	3	3	134	140	4	162	25	123	5	1	320
QF19 Rockhampton	0	0	3	3	0	19	2	2	1	0	24
QF20 Keppel Sands	1	0	2	3	0	1	9	1	2	0	13
QF24 Thirsty Sound	2	0	4	6	0	1	0	4	2	0	7
QF4 Caloundra	5	0	72	77	2	745	53	72	3	0	875
QF5 Noosa	3	0	145	148	3	568	5	136	1	8	721
QF6 Mooloolaba	2	0	150	152	2	435	4	146	3	0	590
QF17 Tin Can Bay	4	0	88	92	0	123	99	84	2	4	312
QF21 Sandy Straits	0	0	11	11	1	37	0	6	0	4	48
QF1 Southport	1	0	106	107	0	310	0	104	0	2	416
QF2 Brisbane	18	0	115	133	3	49	11	119	11	0	193
QF3 Redcliffe	18	54	179	251	61	199	14	171	14	0	459
QF7 Redland Bay	1	0	57	58	1	86	1	53	1	3	145

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Attachment F - Service Level Agreements

SERVICE AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

AND

**VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE
ASSOCIATION QUEENSLAND INC**

**IN RELATION TO THE PROVISION OF
STATE FUNDS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE
VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE SUPPORT
PACKAGE**

**FOR THE PERIOD
1 JULY 2016 TO 30 JUNE 2019**

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Parties

State of Queensland acting through the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services of Emergency Services Complex, Level 2, Corner Kedron Park Road and Park Road, Kedron, Queensland

(QFES)

AND

Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland Inc of Emergency Services Complex, Level 2, Corner Kedron Park Road and Park Road, Kedron, Queensland ABN 46 387 273 867

(VMRAQ)

Background

- A. VMRAQ provides marine search and rescue services.
- B. QFES administers the Volunteer Marine Rescue Support Package (VMRSP).
- C. The aim of the VMRSP is to promote and support the partnership between QFES and Volunteer Marine Rescue organisations in providing a safer marine environment.
- D. The Parties have entered into this Agreement for the provision of funds by QFES to VMRAQ in accordance with the "blue water" component of the VMRSP.
- E. The objectives of the "blue water" component of the VMRSP are to:
 - a. support the provision of effective marine search and rescue and safety services;
 - b. foster improved community awareness of safety issues in the "blue water" environment; and
 - c. In conjunction with QFES, develop and implement policies which govern the provision of the above services.

Agreed Terms

1 Interpretation

1.1 Definitions

The following definitions apply unless the context requires otherwise:

Agreement	This agreement between the Parties and includes any Schedules
Business Day	A day that is not a Saturday, Sunday or any other day which is a public holiday in the place where an act is to be performed or a payment is to be made

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Confidential Information	<p>Information that is by its nature confidential, and:</p> <p>(a) when received it is marked as confidential in nature;</p> <p>but does not include information which:</p> <p>(b) is or becomes public knowledge other than by:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(i) breach of this Agreement; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(ii) any other unlawful means;</p> <p>(c) is in the possession of either party without restriction in relation to disclosure before the date of receipt from the other;</p> <p>(d) has been independently developed or acquired by either of the parties;</p> <p>(e) is disclosed by compulsion of law, including during testimony before any judicial or quasi-judicial court or tribunal, under court subpoena, parliamentary order or as part of discovery during legal proceedings; or</p> <p>(f) is required by Queensland Government policy to be disclosed to any government agency, authority, department or to any parliamentary committee.</p>
Constitution	The Constitution or Rules adopted by VMRAQ to govern its operations, as amended from time to time.
Funding	Is the GST inclusive amount specified in the Table in Schedule 2
Minister	Means the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services
Objectives	Means the objectives stated in Schedule 1
Blue Water Associations	Means VMRAQ and Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (AVCGA)
Performance Measures	The measures stated in Schedule 1
Performance Report	The report provided by VMRAQ in accordance with Clause 10
The Parties	QFES and VMRAQ

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Term	Is the term of this Agreement specified in Clause 2
Volunteer Marine Rescue Support Package	forms an overarching document which reflects the initiatives that have been implemented for volunteer marine operations in Queensland

1.2 Interpretation

In this Agreement:

- (a) headings are inserted for ease of reference only and shall not form part of, nor be used in the interpretation of the Agreement;
- (b) words importing the singular shall include the plural and vice versa;
- (c) words importing a gender shall include other genders;
- (d) a reference to a person shall be construed as a reference to an individual, firm, body corporate or other entity (whether incorporated or not), or, where a position is nominated, the individual occupying that position;
- (e) a statute, regulation, code or other law or a provision of any of them includes any amendment or replacement of it; and another regulation or other statutory instrument made under it, or made under it as amended or replaced;
- (f) a party includes the party's executors, administrators, successors and permitted assigns;
- (g) a reference to money is to Australian dollars, unless otherwise stated;
- (h) "Including" and similar expressions are not words of limitation;
- (i) where a word or expression is given a particular meaning, other parts of speech and grammatical forms of that word or expression have a corresponding meaning;
- (j) a provision of this Agreement must not be construed to the disadvantage of a party merely because that party was responsible for the preparation of the Agreement or the inclusion of the provision in the Agreement; and
- (k) if an act must be done on a specified day which is not a Business Day, it must be done instead on the next Business Day.

2 Term

- 2.1 This Agreement will commence on 01 July 2016 and terminate on 30 June 2019 unless terminated earlier by either of the Parties under Clause 26.

3 QFES Obligations

3.1 QFES will:

- (a) provide VMRAQ with the Funding in accordance with this Agreement;
- (b) process Funding payments in a timely, transparent, effective and efficient manner;
- (c) liaise and work collaboratively with VMRAQ in the monitoring, review and evaluation of the use by VRMAQ of the Funding to achieve the Objectives.

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4 Accomplishment of Objectives

- 4.1 VMRAQ must use the Funding to accomplish the Objectives.
- 4.2 Accomplishment of the Objectives will be achieved through the strategies listed in Schedule 1.
- 4.3 VMRAQ agrees to promptly notify QFES of any relevant matters that may affect VMRAQ's ability to:
- (a) accomplish the Objectives;
 - (b) achieve any of the Performance Measures; or
 - (c) discharge any of its other obligations under this Agreement.
- 4.4 VMRAQ must carry out its obligations under this Agreement diligently, effectively and in a professional manner.
- 4.5 VMRAQ must comply with:
- (a) any relevant legislation and requirements of any Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Authority, and
 - (b) any departmental or whole of government policy notified in writing to VMRAQ, in relation to the Funding, the Objectives and the performance of any other obligation under this Agreement.
- 4.6 VMRAQ must adopt and maintain appropriate internal governance arrangements which must include, without limitation, requirements for dealing with conflicts of interest, and adherence to any financial, reporting and monitoring requirements of this Agreement.
- 4.7 VMRAQ must communicate and provide information reasonably required by QFES, and comply with all reasonable requests, directions and monitoring requirements to the satisfaction of QFES.

5 Allocation of Funding

- 5.1 The Funding will be allocated in accordance with the Table in Schedule 2.

6 Payment and use of Funding

- 6.1 Funding directed to VMRAQ includes an annual amount, as outlined in the Table in Schedule 2, to assist VMRAQ in complying with its public liability insurance obligations. This amount will be paid to VMRAQ in August of each year.
- 6.2 Funding, other than that part of the funding specified to be in respect of public liability insurance, will be paid by QFES to VMRAQ in two instalments in the last week in August and the last week in February each year during the term of this Agreement.
- 6.3 QFES will not provide any funding unless VMRAQ has fully complied with Clauses 9 and 10 of this Agreement.
- 6.4 VMRAQ must provide QFES with relevant bank details to allow payment of Funding by electronic funds transfer at least 30 days before the Funding is due to be paid.
- 6.5 VMRAQ must place the Funding in a secure bank account and/or investment account and maintain records in line with currently accepted accounting practices.

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- 6.6 VMRAQ must provide QFES with receipts for the Funding within one month of receiving the funds from QFES.
- 6.7 VMRAQ must use the Funding only for the purpose of achieving the Objectives, and otherwise in accordance with this Agreement.
- 6.8 In addition to any other rights which QFES may have, if VMRAQ use the Funding for any purpose other than that stated in clause 6.7, or as otherwise approved in writing by QFES, QFES may serve VMRAQ with a notice for repayment of the Funding that has been spent, used or applied without QFES approval, and this amount will be deemed to be a debt due and owing to QFES.
- 6.9 If, at the expiration or termination of this Agreement, there remains an amount of Funding that has not been spent by VMRAQ, then QFES may require VMRAQ to refund the unspent Funding within twenty (20) business days of the expiration or termination of this Agreement, and this amount will be deemed to be a debt due and owing to QFES.

7 Funding for Accredited Units

- 7.1 Funding allocated to units is based on provision for 25 accredited units and 6 Zones. Units without accreditation will not receive funding from QFES. Should there be a reduction in accredited units, the Funding will be reconsidered on a pro rata basis.
- 7.2 VMRAQ will distribute the funds to accredited units based on the guidelines and policies developed by VMRAQ and approved by QFES.
- 7.3 A pre condition to funding any additional unit is that the QFES Accreditation Administration Procedures have been complied with in the formation of that unit.
- 7.4 No additional funding will be automatically available in respect of any new unit established and accredited during the term of the Agreement.
- 7.5 Following the accreditation of any new unit, QFES will support and promote applications for additional Government funding consequent to the increase in the number of accredited units. Should recurrent funding for any new unit be approved by Government, the additional funds will be distributed to VMRAQ in accordance with this Agreement. Should recurrent funding for any new unit not be approved by Government, funding for any new unit must be derived from the existing funding allocation to VMRAQ or other funding sourced by VMRAQ.

8 Agreed Services

- 8.1. VMRAQ will direct funds to enhance the provision of the following services:
- (a) Search and rescue operations, medical evacuations ("medivacs"), safety radio and communication services and joint agency training;
 - (b) Public awareness and education;
 - (c) Training of personnel involved in (a) and (b);
 - (d) Equipment and materials in support of (a) and (b); and
 - (e) Administrative support in connection with (a) and (b).

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9 Financial Records

- 9.1 Unless QFES notifies you in writing otherwise, VMRAQ will provide the following financial documentation:
- (a) a detailed audited financial report including details of the expenditure of the Funding in relation to achievement of the Objectives, by the end of the August following the end of each financial year;
 - (b) a copy of any other financial statements VMRAQ is required by law to lodge; and
 - (c) any other financial documentation or records reasonably requested by QFES, to enable QFES to comply with the law, or its own departmental or whole of government policy.
- 9.2 The financial report will include:
- (a) all expenditure relating to the 'Keeping Vessels in Survey/Maintenance' program and any other expenses incurred;
 - (b) the total amount of funding received;
 - (c) any other amounts received that could be attributed to expenditure incurred in achieving the Objectives; and
 - (d) any amounts of the Funding which remains unspent, as at the date of the financial report.
- 9.3 VMRAQ must ensure the audited financial report is certified by an independent qualified accountant who has not had involvement in the preparation of the statements or accounts of VMRAQ, is not an employee or a member of VMRAQ, and who is:
- (a) registered as a company auditor or a public accountant under Queensland law;
 - (b) a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia or the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants; or
 - (c) a person whose accounting qualifications are acceptable to QFES.
- 9.3 VMRAQ must provide QFES and/or its nominee with access to its financial records and accounts for Government auditing purposes, if required by QFES.

10 Performance Measures

- 10.1 In addition to the audited financial report required under Clause 9, by the end of July and January of each year of this Agreement, VMRAQ must provide QFES with a progress report which details its achievements against the Performance Measures for the immediately preceding six months (a **Performance Report**). The report is to identify units and the amount directed to units under the 'Keeping Vessels in Survey/Maintenance' program.
- 10.2 Each Performance Report must contain a certification by the President or Secretary/Manager that VMRAQ has complied with this Agreement and the information provided is, to the best of VMRAQ's knowledge, accurate and complete.
- 10.3 QFES will use the Performance Report to evaluate the performance of VMRAQ in the achievement of the Objectives.
- 10.4 The Performance Reports will be reviewed by QFES against the Performance Measures, and QFES will not be obliged to make any payment of Funding unless QFES is satisfied the Performance Measures have been satisfactorily met.

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- 10.5 VMRAQ must provide any information or copies of documents that QFES may reasonably require in conjunction with a Performance Report.

11 Acknowledgement of QFES Funding

- 11.1 Where appropriate, the Funding provided by QFES under this Agreement is to be publicly acknowledged. Without limitation, this acknowledgement may include, for example, prominent references to the Funding in reports and publications, in material used or displayed, and on equipment (as agreed between the parties from time to time).
- 11.2 VMRAQ agrees to make arrangements for the Minister and/or senior executives of QFES to participate in public relations activities associated with the handover/commissioning of equipment and/or services provided by the fund.

12 Queensland Government Logo on Vessels

- 12.1 The Queensland Government logo will appear on both sides of VMRAQ vessels in a prominent, visible location, to an agreed minimum size.

13 Liaison

- 13.1 The officers responsible for the administration of this Agreement are:
- (a) VMRAQ - the President, Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland Inc or the person authorised to act in the position.
 - (b) QFES – Assistant Commissioner State Emergency Service (SES), QFES, or the person authorised to act in the position.
- 13.2 In addition to any other reporting obligation under this Agreement, VMRAQ must provide QFES with any further information relating to this Agreement and the Objectives as required by QFES, acting reasonably.

14 Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation

- 14.1 VMRAQ must have, and maintain for the Term, insurance under the *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003* to cover all eligible persons including workers, volunteers, directors and trustees.
- 14.2 VMRAQ volunteers are afforded accident insurance under the QFES Contract of Insurance with WorkCover Queensland. VMRAQ and affiliated units must maintain and implement effective risk management policies and practices to ensure safe workplaces for all members.

15 Public Liability Insurance

- 15.1 VMRAQ must have, and maintain for the Term, public liability insurance to a value of at least \$10 million per claim or occurrence in respect of activities undertaken under this Agreement.

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16 Goods and Services Tax (GST)

- 16.1 In this clause "GST", "supplier", "recipient", "taxable supply", "tax invoice" and "input tax credit" have the same meaning as defined in *A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999 (Cth)* (GST Act).
- 16.2 VMRAQ acknowledges that for the purposes of the GST Act under this Agreement it will be a Supplier and may be required to pay GST to the Commissioner of Taxation.
- 16.3 The Parties agree that the Funding is inclusive of GST and that the Funding will not be varied by the amount of the GST.
- 16.4 Each Party must do all things, including providing Tax Invoices and other documentation, that may be necessary or desirable to enable or assist the other Party to claim any Input Tax Credit, adjustment or refund in relation to any amount of GST paid or payable in respect of any supply made under or in connection with this Contract.

17 Recipient Created Tax Invoices

- 17.1 QFES, as the Recipient of a taxable supply, can issue Tax Invoices and adjustment notes in respect of any Taxable Supplies by VMRAQ. QFES will issue the original or a copy of the Recipient Created Tax Invoice (RCTI) or adjustment note to VMRAQ within 28 days of the making, or determining the value, of the Taxable Supply or adjustment and will retain the original or a copy.
- 17.2 Each RCTI will contain all the information required for a Tax Invoice by the GST Act, including the words "recipient created tax invoice" and the ABN of VMRAQ and QFES.
- 17.3 In the event of a RCTI being issued by QFES, VMRAQ will not issue Tax Invoices to QFES in respect of those Taxable Supplies.
- 17.4 VMRAQ and QFES are both registered for GST under the GST Act and that each Party will notify the other, in writing, if it ceases to be registered for GST.

18 Pay As You Go Withholding Tax

- 18.1 In this clause, "ABN" has the same meaning as in the *Taxation Administration Act 1954 (Cth)* (**PAYG Legislation**).
- 18.2 VMRAQ acknowledges that under the PAYG Legislation, QFES must withhold part of any amounts payable to VMRAQ if VMRAQ has not supplied an ABN.

19 Corporate Existence

- 19.1 VMRAQ shall at all times maintain its existence as a corporate entity and shall advise the Assistant Commissioner, SES, QFES of any change to its Constitution.
- 19.2 QFES may withdraw the Funding where an amendment to VMRAQ's Constitution materially affects VMRAQ's capacity to comply with this Agreement or accomplish the Objectives.
- 19.3 VMRAQ must ensure that it complies with its Constitution.
- 19.4 In the event that VMRAQ fails to comply with its Constitution in any way it must, immediately upon becoming aware of any non compliance, advise the Assistant Commissioner, SES, QFES in writing of that non-compliance and detail its proposal for remedying the non-compliance.

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20 Transfer of Vessels

- 20.1 VMRAQ will ensure that no vessel for which whole or part - funding has been received from the Queensland Government will be transferred to any unit of a Blue Water Association which is not accredited by QFES.

21 Variations

- 21.1 Any variations to this Agreement must be in writing and signed by the Parties.

22 Dispute Resolution

- 22.1 A party claiming that a dispute has arisen must notify the other party in writing of the details of the dispute.
- 22.2 Within 14 days of receiving a notice of dispute (or such longer period as agreed in writing between the parties) the Assistant Commissioner, SES, or a QFES officer holding an equivalent position, and the Secretary Manager of VMRAQ must meet and endeavour to resolve the dispute.
- 22.3 If this fails the President of VMRAQ and the Commissioner of QFES must, within 14 days of the failure to resolve the dispute, meet and endeavour to resolve the dispute.
- 22.4 If this fails, the Parties agree to appoint a mediator to endeavour to resolve the dispute.
- 22.5 If the Parties fail to agree as to the appointment of a mediator, the mediator will be appointed by the Australian Commercial Disputes Centre (Queensland).

23 Transfer of a Unit from one Blue Water Association to the other

- 23.1 Where VMRAQ becomes aware of:
- (a) a VMRAQ unit proposing to transfer to another Blue Water Association; or
 - (b) a unit of another Blue Water Association proposing to transfer to VMRAQ, VMRAQ must give immediate notice in writing to QFES, providing the details of the transfer.
- 23.2 Where a VMRAQ unit intends to transfer to another Blue Water Association, VMRAQ must use its best endeavours to resolve any dispute with the unit.
- 23.3 QFES agrees to make available the Director, SES Operations, QFES to act as a mediator to resolve any dispute between VMRAQ and a unit proposing to transfer to another Blue Water Association.
- 23.4 QFES may, at its discretion, notify the other Blue Water Association and involve it in any mediation of a dispute.
- 23.5 In the event of a transfer of affiliation, any transfer of assets and/or Government funding entitlements will be subject to Departmental endorsement and approval, which may be granted, granted with conditions or refused, at QFES's discretion.

24 Internal Association and Squadron Disputes

- 24.1 VMRAQ is to ensure that internal disputes are resolved according to the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice.

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- 24.2 If a matter cannot be resolved locally, the President, VMRAQ shall review the matter and take such action deemed necessary to resolve the matter in accordance with the above-mentioned principles. This action may include, but is not limited to, mediation, arbitration, investigation and/or disciplinary action in accordance with the Constitution and By-laws of the Association.

25 Compliance with Laws

- 25.1 In carrying out its obligations under this Agreement VMRAQ must:
- (a) comply with all relevant laws and the requirements of any statutory authority; and
 - (b) obtain and maintain all permits, registrations and licences required to be taken out in connection with the accomplishment of the Objectives; and
 - (c) use its best endeavours to ensure that any entity which is affiliated with VMRAQ as a unit complies with the terms of this Agreement to the extent possible.

26 Termination of Contract

- 26.1 In addition to any other rights which QFES may have, if VMRAQ breaches any term of this Agreement, QFES may give VMRAQ a written notice requiring VMRAQ to remedy that breach within 14 days.
- 26.2 Subject to clause 22, if VMRAQ fails to comply with a notice given to it by QFES under clause 26.1 and the Parties fail to resolve any dispute within eight weeks of the date of the notice of dispute given under Clause 22.1 (if any), QFES may terminate this Agreement immediately.

27 Suspension of Payment

- 27.1 If, in the reasonable opinion of QFES, VMRAQ has –
- (a) failed to satisfy any of the Performance Measures or achieve the Objectives as required by the Agreement;
 - (b) expended the Funding otherwise than in accordance with this Agreement;
 - (c) not provided the information, reports or other documentation required by the Agreement or requested by QFES;
 - (d) failed to comply with any law (statute or otherwise), or departmental or whole of governmental policy where QFES has requested VMRAQ do so; or
 - (e) otherwise, breached a term of this Agreement,
- then QFES may suspend payment of the Funding, or part thereof, for a period of time and on specified conditions as notified by QFES acting reasonably.
- 27.2 The right to suspend payment under Clause 27.1 is in addition to any other right QFES may have (whether under this Agreement or otherwise), including the right to terminate the Agreement under clause 26.

28 Other Rights of Termination

- 28.1 Where QFES is required to cease Funding to VMRAQ because of changes to the State budget or any guidelines or policies of the State or Commonwealth Government, despite there being no default, QFES may exercise its right to terminate this Agreement at any time by giving VMRAQ a minimum of three (3) months notice.

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28.2 QFES is not required to pay VMRAQ any compensation for an exercise of its rights under clause 28.1.

29 No Agency

29.1 The Parties acknowledge that nothing in this Agreement constitutes VMRAQ as agent for QFES (or the State of Queensland) in connection with any of their respective operational or other activities.

30 Confidential Information

30.1 VMRAQ must not disclose Confidential Information belonging to QFES except where VMRAQ has obtained QFES's prior written approval (which may be subject to conditions) or where required by law.

30.2 QFES reserves the right to make available, disclose, and allow the disclosure of, to the extent that it is not prohibited or regulated by any legislation, any information received from VMRAQ or otherwise relating to this Agreement to:

- (a) any Queensland Government department, agency, authority, or Minister; and
- (b) any third person, including any court, tribunal, governmental committee or other person within government, where such disclosure would be permitted or required by law, or otherwise would be consistent with established government policies, procedures or protocols or for public accountability purposes to the extent required in those circumstances.

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Signed for and on behalf of the
State of Queensland acting through the
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

Signed for and on behalf of the
Volunteer Marine Rescue Association
Queensland Inc

By:

KATARINA CARROLL APM
Commissioner
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

By:

KEITH WILLIAMS
President/Manager
Queensland State Council
Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Inc

Signed:



Signed:



Dated:

26-8-16

Dated:

25-07-16

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SCHEDULE 1 PERFORMANCE MEASURES 2016 – 2019

OBJECTIVE 1: To support the provision of an effective Marine Search and Rescue (SAR) and Radio Communications Safety Service

Goals	Strategies	Performance Outcomes
1. Maintain an effective SAR and Safety Radio Service	<p>1.1 Conduct Search and Rescue and Medivac operations</p> <p>1.2 Provide an effective Marine Safety Radio Service</p> <p>1.3 Provide appropriate number of qualified members for Rescue Operations</p> <p>1.4 Provide training and development opportunities for personnel to maintain and improve skills</p> <p>1.5 Conduct SAR Exercises</p> <p>1.6 Provide adequate levels and types of equipment for SAR Operations</p> <p>1.7 Develop and implement appropriate operational policies</p>	<p>1.1.1 Number of Activations a. QPS activated (SAR) b. Self activated c. Medivacs d. Report on number of unit hours expended on activations</p> <p>1.1.2 Number of units utilising fee for service arrangements</p> <p>1.2.1 Number of Radio watch hours carried out</p> <p>1.2.2 Number of units providing 24 hour coverage</p> <p>1.3.1 Units maintain sufficient qualified crew for units operational roles Attach training report with number of courses conducted and number of qualifications gained in the reporting period. Report number of active members in the association</p> <p>1.4.1 Report on the following areas: a. Current RTO Status and any VET audits, 'addition of scope', etc b. Other development programs</p> <p>1.5.1 Number and type of exercises conducted (include agencies involved and the controlling agency e.g. QPS, VMRAQ, AVCGA AusSar, AMSA, ADF, etc)</p> <p>1.6.1 All Equipment complies with the appropriate Association and legislative standards</p> <p>1.7.1 Operational policies reviewed and upgraded as appropriate Workplace Health and Safety initiatives implemented</p>

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SCHEDULE 1 PERFORMANCE MEASURES 2016 - 2019

OBJECTIVE 1 (continued): To support the provision of an effective Marine Search and Rescue Service

Goals	Strategies	Performance Indicators (1)
1. Maintain an effective SAR and Marine Safety Service	1.8 The provision of additional funds to enhance the Associations Vessel Management Program	1.8.1 Report on the following areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The name (location) of the units scheduled to have vessels replaced in the forthcoming 12 months; Description of each new vessel including type, size, motors; Anticipated date of delivery of the vessel at the unit; The name of the new vessel (if applicable) Estimated dollar amount of QFES funding to the project

Notes:

- Whilst the funding provided under the 2006 Supporting Marine Volunteers: Saving Lives Policy was a 'once off' payment in 2006-07, the requirement to report on the Vessel Management Program after 2006-07 continues.

OBJECTIVE 2: To foster community awareness of safety issues in the Blue Water environment

Goals	Strategies	Performance Outcomes
2. An increased level of Marine Safety awareness and education in the community	2.1 Provide Marine Safety, Education activities and services to the local community; and 2.2 Disseminate marine safety information through community events	2.1.1 Number of public courses conducted 2.1.2 Number of community assists 2.1.3 Number of public events attended

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Attachment G -AVCGA Strategic Review by *Cameray Consultants*- Excerpts

[Redacted content]

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Attachment H - Vessel Age and Comparative Audit and Insurance Costs

	Age of primary vessel	Audit Costs	Insurance Costs[#]
VMR Jacob's Well	10	*	*
VMR Southport	13	\$4,200	\$14,800
CG Redland Bay	20	\$6,000	\$10,000
VMR Brisbane	10	\$4,000	\$7,500
VMR Bribie Island	3	\$1,500	\$16,000
VMR Raby Bay	18	\$2,500	\$13,000
VMR Stradbroke Island**	18	\$1,500	\$6,000
VMR Victoria Point	5	\$1,000	*
CG Tin Can Bay	10	\$2,000	\$20,000
VMR Hervey Bay	16	\$3,000	\$8,000
CG Sandy Straits	18	\$4,600	\$18,200
VMR Bundaberg	1	\$1,500	\$8,600
VMR Round Hill	14	\$700	\$3,500
VMR Gladstone	12	\$4,200	\$10,000
CG Keppel Sands^	15	\$3300	\$12,000
CG Rockhampton	10	\$3,800	\$8,000
CG Yeppoon**	10	\$6,000	\$20,000
CG Stanage	20	\$4,200	\$8,000
VMR Mackay	10	*	*
VMR Midge Point	13	*	\$500
VMR Airlie Beach	1	*	*
CG Cairns	20	\$3,000	\$14,000
CG Cooktown	27	\$3,500	\$9,600
VMR Port Douglas	0	\$0 (pro bono)	\$8,800
CG Innisfail	14	\$5,000	\$12,000
CG Tully	18	\$1,100	\$9,300
CG Cardwell	20	\$4,400	\$7,600
CG Ingham	18	\$8,000	\$11,000
CG Townsville	8	\$2,400	\$38,000
VMR Bowen	17	\$800	\$6,000
VMR Burdekin	6.5	\$800	\$10,000
CG Southport	15	\$7,000	\$32,600
CG Mooloolaba	6	\$6,500	\$32,500
CG Noosa^	15	\$3,000	\$24,400
CG Redcliffe	14	\$5,500	\$24,000
CG Caloundra	*	*	*

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CG Manly	18	\$5,300	\$27,000
VMR Currumbin	*	*	*
CG Seisia	*	*	*
VMR Karumba	11	*	*
VMR Burketown	15	*	*
VMR Mornington Is.	17	*	*
VMR Weipa	20	*	*
VMR Aurukun	*	*	*
VMR Thursday Island	9	*	*
VMR St. Pauls	N/A	*	*
VMR Yorke Island	12	*	*

Key:

* no information provided

** replacement vessel under construction presently

^ audit cost is to date in 2018 - will increase slightly before end of year

Insurance costs for VMR Squadrons are subsidised by VMRAQ. The costs reflected in this table are the figures that are paid by VMR Squadrons, as per the advice given to the reviewer by individual Squadrons.

Attachment I - Marine Radio Moreton Bay Details

Marine Radio Moreton Bay
Review of Volunteer Marine Rescue Organisations
September 2018

1.0 Executive summary

There is a significant number of Rescue Services along the Queensland Coast that have Rescue vessels at their disposal. Most of these Organisations operate their own marine radio services independent of one another, and currently none of these services operate seven days nor 24 hours in the Moreton Bay region – one of the busiest waterways in Australia according to per capital boat ownership and use.

Whilst it is generally agreed by most Marine Authorities that the marine radio is the most important piece of safety equipment on board a vessel, the radio services presently provided are fragmented, under-utilised, duplicated, lack standardisation and are inconsistent in their delivery.

It is requested that the following issues and recommendations be included, in addition to the current scope of items in the Review by the Minister for Fire & Emergency Services.

1.1 Background

Marine Radio Moreton Bay was founded in 1977 as part of the MBTBC, this volunteer organisation currently operates in facilities provided by the RQYS.

MRMB is the only marine radio services provider which operates seven days a week, with the view to ultimately provide 24/7 radio coverage to local and transiting vessels from Seaway Tower on the Gold Coast to the South, up to Hervey Bay in the North. Radio traffic exceeds 18000 calls per year.

MRMB utilises an electronic management system called MeRL, which is seamlessly connected with CG Mooloolaba, Sandy Straits and Tin Can Bay to monitor boat movements. MRMB also run a monthly Radio course for the boating public as a way of promoting all aspects of boating safety, particularly radio usage. This course is free of charge.

MRMB liaises with the most appropriate Rescue unit in the area to afford assistance to 'boaties' who require it, and has arrangements with the Brisbane Water Police should issues escalate.

As part of marine vessel safety activities performed along the entirety of the Queensland coastline, Limited Coast Stations typically provide four main marine safety services:

- Recording details of vessel movements for short duration trips;
- Recording details of vessel movements for longer duration cruising such as transits up and down the Queensland Coast;
- Action on, and escalation to, Rescue Services when vessels are in distress or require assistance; and
- Maintaining a SAR watch on a vessel based on ETA's and ETR's.

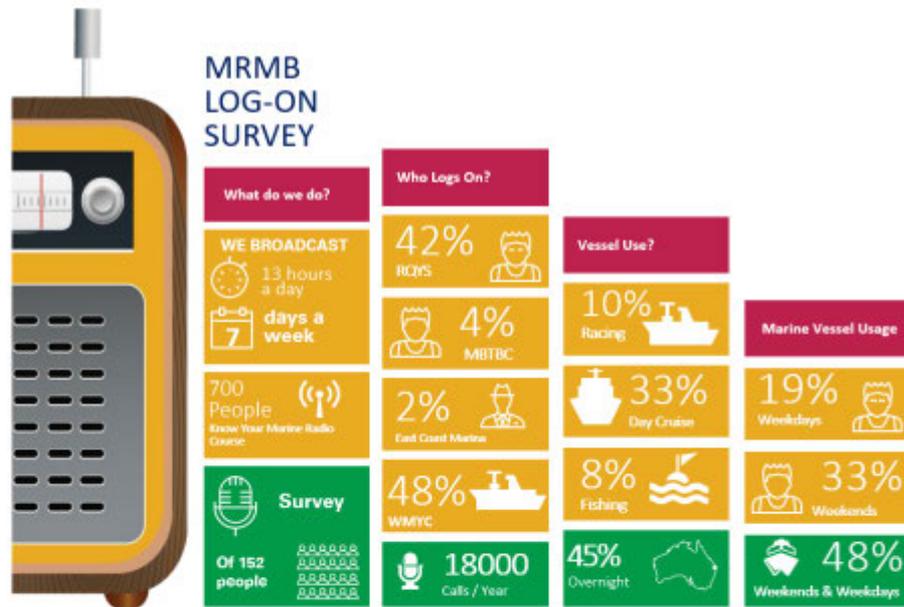
Updated information such as weather forecasts, potential hazards, Notice to Mariners and radio equipment checks are also provided.

There has been little in the way of collaboration between Coast Guard, Volunteer Marine Rescue and other independent organisations that provide these services. Queensland's Limited Coast Stations have developed operational procedures independently over time.

1.2 Overall observations

Overall observations and challenges to the success of effective recreational vessel management, particularly in the Moreton Bay area, have been identified within this submission (please refer to section 2.0 for detailed observations), specifically:

- There is a duplication of effort across local vessel management service providers. Many of the Limited Coastal Stations operate on discrete systems with varying levels of capability and automation, resulting in a lack of effective communication between service providers. This is also impacted by unclear and poorly defined areas of operation for both service providers and recreational mariners.
- Despite this duplication, there is no consistent 24/7 radio coverage of one of Australia's busiest waterways – Central Moreton Bay.
- A recent survey¹ undertaken by MRMB (administered and reviewed by Dr. Judy Drennan, a consumer behaviour researcher) highlights a lack of awareness of Marine Vessel safety and communication activities and protocols among recreational mariners. The survey showed that a vast majority of recreational mariners rarely or never log-on to a Marine Radio Service when they're boating. A summary of survey results is shown below.



¹ Refer to Appendix 1 for detailed survey results

1.3 Summary of recommendations

As a result of the observations noted above, this submission makes the following recommendations to enhance the marine vessel safety and communication processes throughout Queensland's coast and waters:

- Establish or nominate a principal Radio Station for each operational area;
 - Introduce Digital Radios in all Limited Coastal Stations.
- Introduce a common electronic vessel management system; and
- An education and marketing strategy similar to the activities currently undertaken by MRMB to promote effective radio usage among recreational boaters.
 - Correct and consistent radio usage protocols should be emphasized;
 - MRMB have been running a 'Know Your Marine Radio' course for the last 4 years, free of charge, to promote boating safety. In that time 700 people have completed the course; many have also gained their Marine Radio licence, which MRMB conducts on behalf of the Australian Maritime College, Launceston Tasmania.

2.0 Observations

2.1 Duplication of effort across local vessel management service providers

Criteria

Each local vessel management service provider should have a clearly defined scope of operation and area of responsibility.

Condition

The following observations have been noted within our investigation as part of the submission to the review of Volunteer Marine Rescue Organisations in Queensland:

- Many of the organisations are in very close proximity and all provide a similar service. There are 21 such stations between Tweed Heads and Hervey Bay, with 10 in the Moreton Bay Area alone;
- 38% of Limited Coastal Stations operating in South East Queensland only operate on Weekends and Public Holidays, impacting manning levels and operator proficiency; and
- Vessel Tracking Systems are not consistent between the Limited Coastal Stations. Systems range from manual "pen & paper" based systems to integrated electronic tracking systems that incorporate MMSI numbers, vessels movement tracking and allow automated sharing and transparency of vessel tracking data. The more mature systems, as used by CG Mooloolaba, CG Tin Can Bay, CG Sandy Straits and MRMB, have automated escalation workflows if the mariner fails to check in at defined times.

Consequence

- Poorly synchronised communication processes create a duplication of effort, increasing the risk of mismanagement and inappropriate responses in a safety critical event;
- Inefficiencies and duplication of vessel tracking activities lead to errors in communication and responses;
- Considerable competition for air-time resulting in cluttered airwaves; and
- Lack of transparency and coordination regarding vessel movement has significant safety implications particularly during emergency situations.

Cause

- Legacy operating models and a lack of a unified approach to vessel management; and
- Inadequate and/or insufficient communication across service providers and marine rescues bodies.

Recommendations

- Establish or nominate a principal Radio Station for each operational area; and
 - Introduce Digital Radios in all Limited Coastal Stations.
- Introduce a common electronic vessel management system.

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*Marine Radio Moreton Bay
Review of Volunteer Marine Rescue Organisations
September 2018*

2.2 Lack of awareness of Marine Vessel safety and communication activities and protocols

Criteria

Recreational mariners should be aware of the facilities and systems that exist to enhance safety and the processes to effectively communicate with vessel rescue services.

Condition

Many recreational vessels are unsure as to how and to whom they contact for the service they require, particularly during out-of-hours operations of their home port. A recent independent survey by MRMB (Administered and reviewed by Dr. Judy Drennan, a Consumer Behaviour researcher) highlights this problem and suggests areas that could be further enhanced to promote radio knowledge and improved safety outcomes for the average boating enthusiast. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the detailed survey results.

Consequence

- Lack of awareness of marine radio processes can significantly impact the escalation of marine safety issues to appropriate authorities, such as marine rescue service or water police.
- Inability to receive important marine information updates such as:
 - Weather forecasts;
 - Tidal information;
 - Hazards to Navigation;
 - Notice to Mariners; and
 - Active monitoring during bar crossings.

Cause

Insufficient prioritisation of training and awareness activities for marine vessel operators.

Recommendations

- An education and marketing strategy similar to the activities currently undertaken by MRMB to promote effective radio usage among recreational boaters.
 - Correct and consistent radio usage protocols should be emphasized;
 - MRMB have been running a 'Know Your Marine Radio' course for the last 4 years, free of charge, to promote boating safety. In that time 700 people have completed the course; many have also gained their Marine Radio licence, which MRMB conducts on behalf of the Australian Maritime College, Launceston Tasmania.

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