



# NATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE COUNCIL

## Forty-fifth meeting of the Australian National Search and Rescue Council

20 October 2021

Microsoft Teams, Video Conferencing



*“The mission of the National Search and Rescue Council is to develop and maintain an effective, efficient and integrated national search and rescue system that meets international obligations and domestic requirements”*



## Executive Summary

The 45<sup>th</sup> meeting of the National Search and Rescue (NatSAR) Council was held via video conference on 20 October 2021. Mark Morrow, Executive Director Response, and Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) chaired the meeting.

This was the second year that the Council was unable to meet in person, due to COVID 19 restrictions. To cater for an online meeting format, the Council adopted an abridged version of the traditional agenda with the intention for a number of initiatives to be progressed out of session. These include, the evaluation of Directional Findings (DF) Units, a review of National Search and Rescue (SAR) Performance, NatSAR Council Working Groups progress, preparation for the National SAR Managers Course (NatSARMC), drafting of the 2022-24 NatSAR Council Business Plan and SAR Engagement.

The annual meeting was attended by 27 delegates from the 10 SAR authorities that are responsible for the Australian SAR system, across more than 53 million square kilometres, and represent each of the eight state and territory police forces, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and AMSA. Observers from our SAR partners, New Zealand Search and Rescue Council (NZ SAR Council) also attended at the meeting.

The meeting focused on reviewing the following strategic and governance documents, managed by the NatSAR Council Secretariat:

- NatSAR Council Charter
- National SAR Manual
- Cross Jurisdictional Request Form

The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss routine agenda items such as training and jurisdictional updates and further progress the Australian Electronic Night Search Guidance for incorporation into the next edition of the NatSAR Manual.

The Data Working Group Chair updated the Council on the outcomes from their 1<sup>st</sup> convening in August 2021. The group's focus is to develop a common understanding of SAR incident data collection and requirements across the jurisdictions. The Data Working Group was established following Council agreement during the 44<sup>th</sup> annual meeting to develop a national approach for collecting and presenting SAR data.

The Council also confirmed that plans are underway for the 46<sup>th</sup> NatSAR Council annual meeting. A tentative date of 20 and 21 October is scheduled with a meeting location to be confirmed early in 2022. With the existing Business Plan expiring in 2022, the focus for members in the lead up to the annual meeting will be the development of the 2022-24 Business Plan.

Overall, the meeting resulted in 11 outcomes that will be jointly progressed over the next 12-24 months.

Each year the Council recognises outstanding contributions to search and rescue through the SAR awards program. The awards program highlights the collective achievements of the national SAR system and is key in increasing the NatSAR Council profile. This year's media campaign saw an audience reach of over 1.6 million readers. NSW Police and QLD Police facilitated Award ceremonies in their respective jurisdictions. This year's recipients were recognised with acknowledgement letters from The Deputy Prime Minister (DPM), the Hon Barnaby Joyce.

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List of attendees

<b>NATAR Council Members</b>	
Mark Morrow	Chair (AMSA)
Kevin McEvoy	AMSA
Julian Mitchell	AMSA
Jim Fryday	AMSA
Jim Whitehead	QLD Police
Bernard Peters	TAS Police
Dave Wiss	TAS Police
Gavin Radice	WA Police
Neville Patterson	WA Police
Paul Gatty	VIC Police
Mark O'Rourke	VIC Police
Greg Barras	VIC Police
Michael Smith	NSW Police
Anthony Brazzill	NSW Police
Paul Farquharson	NSW Police
Christopher Raeburn	NT Police
Jarrold Ayers (Craig Wall)	SA Police
Mark Travers	AFP
Christopher Ambroz	Defence
Mick Fleming, Ash Bailey, Josh McGregor, Mark Semmler	Secretariat (AMSA)
<b>Observers</b>	
Darryl Wright	NVMSARC
Duncan Ferner	NZSAR Council

**Agenda, 20 October 2021 (1 – 3.30pm)**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Paper</b>
<b>1. Meeting Administration</b>	Chair	Verbal
1.1 Welcome and introduction		
1.2 Acknowledgement of Country		
1.3 General housekeeping		
1.4 Acceptance of Agenda		
<b>2. Routine review of Council supporting documents</b>	Chair	
2.1 Charter review		Paper
2.2 NatSAR Manual review		Paper
<b>3. Strategic Developments</b>		
3.1 Aircraft Electronic Night Search Guidance	AMSA	Paper
3.2 NatSAR Data Working Group		Paper
3.3 Cross Jurisdictional Request Form		Paper
<b>4. SAR Training</b>		
4.1 Impact of COVID 19 on SAR training	All	Verbal
4.2 National SAR Managers Course	QLD	Verbal
<b>5. Jurisdictional updates</b>		
5.1 Round table discussion on recent significant incidents	All QLD	Verbal Verbal
5.2 SAR Response to high-risk groups		
- Despondents (autism, dementia)		
- Lost person behaviour database		
- Jurisdictional programmes	QLD	Verbal
5.3 Unlocated victims of violent crimes		
<b>6. Secretariat update</b>	Secretariat	
6.1 Australian SAR Awards		Verbal
6.2 Annual incident analysis report		Verbal

## 45th NatSAR Council Annual Meeting Outcomes

Outlined below is a summary of the agreed notes and actions from the 45<sup>th</sup> NatSAR Council annual meeting. Subsequently, a formal letter is sent to Police Commissioners outlining the most significant outcomes. A full meeting report is provided to the Council for review and feedback, ahead of the report being published.

### Meeting administration

- 1) Mick Fleming, Manager of the Secretariat conducted a rollcall to confirm all jurisdictions were represented.
- 2) Mark Morrow, Chair, declared the meeting open at 13:06, thanking members for their attendance and acknowledged the second annual meeting where the COVID-19 pandemic had prevented a face-to-face meeting.
- 3) The Chair acknowledged the successful recipients of the 2021 Australian Search and Rescue (SAR) Awards and congratulated NSW Police as recipients for both the National Award and Commendation in the Professional category.
- 4) The Chair broadly expressed interest in better understanding jurisdictions' views on the future of the NatSAR Council, including the current governance arrangements and whether the current Council structure was meeting both the operational and strategic needs of members and their respective executives.
- 5) Noted the current structure allows each jurisdiction to have one 'official delegate' (Superintendent/Inspector level) who is responsible for representing their authority's strategic interests in SAR and providing a conduit for formal decision making through to their organisational structure. In addition, the 'members' operate through their respective delegate as determined through their organisational structure to provide operational expertise for SAR and administrative support to Council business through the Secretariat.
- 6) The Chair agreed to contact all jurisdictions to discuss the Council's structure and strategic direction, similar to what was commenced with NSW Police earlier this year.

**Action 1: Chair to commence consultation with the jurisdictions to discuss the Council's structure and strategic direction, similar to what was commenced with NSW Police earlier this year.**

- 7) The Chair noted an abridged version of the annual meeting agenda was adopted to allow for an online format and encouraged members to participate in relevant agenda items as they progress, understanding there are several barriers that online meetings present.
- 8) Members accepted the annual meeting agenda.

### Routine review of Council supporting documents

#### NatSAR Council Charter review

- 9) Confirmed the Secretariat had undertaken an administrative review of the National Search and Rescue Council Charter. Proposed changes were submitted as a paper to

members ahead of the meeting, which included minor administrative changes since the previous review in 2020.

- 10) The Chair noted that as per the Charter, the NatSAR Council Business Plan is due to expire in June 2022. The Chair reiterated the need for the Secretariat and Chair to engage the jurisdictions about how the Council is structured and its strategic direction to ensure this is clearly represented with the Council Business Objectives for the 2022-2024 period.
- 11) Council endorsed the proposed changes to the Charter and agreed for the Secretariat to publish the updated version on the NatSAR Council website.

**Action 2: Secretariat to incorporate agreed changes to the Charter and publish the updated version on the Council's website for reference.**

### **NatSAR Manual Review**

- 12) The Chair confirmed the NatSAR Manual amendment process is managed by the Secretariat through the NatSAR Council inbox. The Secretariat collates the suggested amendments and conducts a screening/review process with the relevant subject matter experts, before presenting them to Council for review and final endorsement. The next edition of the manual is published annually, generally sometime in Jan/Feb.
- 13) The Chair personally acknowledged the contribution of Jim Whitehead, QLD Police to the Council and his dedication to ensure the annual review of the NatSAR Manual from a land SAR and policing perspective.
- 14) The Council endorsed the proposed NatSAR Manual amendments and agreed for the Secretariat to incorporate these into the 2022 edition.
- 15) Jim Whitehead, QLD Police advised the Council that the manual is now registered with the National Library of Australia. This platform introduces the document into the national fora and contributes to the Council's strategic objective to further develop the profile and credibility of the national SAR system as the Centre of Excellence for SAR.

**Action 3: Secretariat to incorporate the agreed amendments into the NatSAR Manual and publish the 2022 edition on the NatSAR Council's website.**

### **Aircraft Electronic Night Search Guidance**

- 16) Scott Constable, AMSA presented the Aircraft Electronic Night Search Guidance paper, which addresses input and questions from the jurisdictions since the draft guidance was last presented in 2020. Confirmed the intention for the guidance is to be included within the NatSAR Manual once endorsed by the Council.
- 17) Noted the questions outlined within the Aircraft Electronic Night Search Guidance paper have been collated from the jurisdictional subject matter experts, which will be addressed before the guidance is finalised.
- 18) Scott welcomed further feedback on the proposed improvements before a final paper is submitted to Council for endorsement.

**Action 4: Scott Constable to work with the Secretariat to seek feedback on the proposed improvements to the Aircraft Electronic Night Search Guidance and facilitate a response to the outstanding questions.**

### NatSAR Data Working Group

- 19) Confirmed the Data Working Group was established following discussions from the 44<sup>th</sup> NatSAR Council meeting regarding the significant discrepancies in data collection across the agencies. Members confirmed the benefit of drawing valuable insights from data for strategic decision-making from a national perspective and agreed to establish a dedicated working group to determine the need and viability for a national SAR database to produce more meaningful SAR data.
- 20) Dan Gillis, Working Group Chair provided a progress update following their first convening in August 2021 and confirmed their 'in principle' support for a national SAR database. The working group noted the need to further explore the discrepancies in metadata reporting categories and the associated definitions before a standardised set of metadata can be established. Subsequently, further consultation will be required with the jurisdictions to determine how standardised definitions can be adopted by the jurisdictions and determine the practicability of rolling out a national SAR database across several agencies and jurisdictions.
- 21) The Council noted the working group's progress and supported an initial focus on the 'fundamental' metadata elements with the intention to standardise definitions down the track. Additionally, members agreed the need for the working group to undertake a 'needs and benefits' analysis for a national database and to present a paper at the next annual meeting on their findings and recommendation going forward.
- 22) The Working Group Chair agreed to present a progress report to the Council following their next convening.
- 23) Christopher Raeburn confirmed that Dave Mitchell would be the Northern Territories representative on the Data Working Group.

**Action 5: Data Working Group Chair to incorporate Council feedback into the planning for the next working group meeting and subsequently develop a paper to report their progress back to the Council.**

**Action 6: Secretariat to incorporate Dave Mitchell as the NT Police representative on the SAR Data Working Group.**

### Cross Jurisdictional Request Form

- 24) Confirmed that purpose of the [Cross Jurisdictional Information Request paper](#) is to propose the [Cross Jurisdictional Request Form \(Attachment A\)](#) for use between jurisdictions to make requests for information and data.
- 25) Noted this initiative resulted from previous discussions between the Secretariat and WA Police, and subsequently during the 1<sup>st</sup> Teleconference in 2021 as a means to streamline information requests through the NatSAR Council.
- 26) Neville Patterson, WA Police provided an overview on the initiative and confirmed its primary intention is to share ideas amongst Council member agencies, particularly when an agency is commencing an initiative to address a particular issue. This process would allow an agency to submit an information request form to the other jurisdictions seeking relevant information, advice or data to assist in the planning stages and encourage shared and/or joint initiatives.

- 27) Neville Patterson explained that the database would contain ideas and concepts that others would be willing to share and therefore privacy issues are not an issue. The information maintained would be no different to what would be available through the means of a Freedom of Information request.
- 28) Confirmed the information request process would include a NatSAR member accessing the form via the NatSAR Members' Area SharePoint page and submitting the form to the Secretariat via the NatSAR inbox ([NationalSARCouncil@amsa.gov.au](mailto:NationalSARCouncil@amsa.gov.au)). The Secretariat would send out the request to members with a specified timeframe for jurisdictions to respond. The Secretariat will collate and share the information responses.

**Action 7: Secretariat to investigate how the NatSAR members' area SharePoint site can be used to host the Cross Jurisdictional Request Form and responses for sharing with members, keeping privacy and member access in mind.**

## SAR Training

### SAR Training (impacts of COVID-19)

- 29) The Chair noted that during the 44<sup>th</sup> NatSAR Council annual meeting, members agreed for SAR training to be a recurring agenda item during annual meetings to monitor the future impacts on the SAR system and emphasise the disparity between face-to-face training and online/remote training for SAR.
- 30) WA Police advised that Jim Whitehead, QLD Police delivered an online version of the NatSAR Managers Course (NatSARMC) largely due to the cancellation of the 2021 National SAR Managers Course. Noted the necessity for the course noting the WA and NT Police promotions and tenure process is tied to the Advanced Diploma.
- 31) WA Police confirmed the online course was successful in obtaining the Advanced Diploma and would consider this in the future, should the need arise.
- 32) Christopher Raeburn, NT Police confirmed that NT Police also undertook a similar online approach that contributed to strengthening their SAR capability by having more trained SAR managers. Noted the online version of the course is particularly useful for remote location learning within the Northern Territory.
- 33) Noted an opportunity for the course training material to broaden as it is primarily QLD focussed.
- 34) Jim Whitehead, QLD Police and Director of the NatSARMC commended the success of the online courses, however noted the usual in-person course allows more interaction between students across all jurisdictions and the opportunity to share prior learning experience as one of the key successes of the course.
- 35) Members noted that online training is a suitable substitute in circumstances where the Advanced Diploma is tied to a jurisdiction's tenure process like WA and NT Police but agreed there are challenges for 'skills development training', which relies on practical, in-person learning and shared experiences to achieve a high level of competency.
- 36) Members agreed that in-person training delivers more beneficial training outcomes and is the more preferable option for SAR learning. However, noted the unprecedented

impacts that COVID-19 has on delivering the in-person course, particularly for inter-state travel.

### **SAR Managers Course**

- 37) Noted the cancellation of the 2021 SAR Managers Course due to the COVID-19 restrictions and confirmed it has been rescheduled to occur in Canberra (in-person) during the first two weeks in August (1–12 August) 2022.
- 38) Jim Whitehead, Course Director confirmed that the venue and accommodation has been booked and encouraged the jurisdictions to begin planning for attendance, both students and Directing Staff.
- 39) Noted there will be some slight course modifications as a result of changes in the RTO requirements.
- 40) Jim Whitehead emphasised the immediate need for members to consider succession planning for the Course Director position given his impending retirement from QLD Police in July 2022 ahead of the course in August.
- 41) The Chair noted the success of the course is driven from the jurisdictions as a national training initiative for Police to attain the Advance Diploma. Further confirmed the importance for jurisdictions to consider a suitable Directing Staff member to take on the Director / Assistant Director role for the upcoming course, understanding there is a 2-year commitment as Director.

**Action 8: Members to nominate suitable candidates to take on the Director and Assistant Director roles to deliver the 2022 NatSAR Managers Course and Secretariat to establish a process to ensure the continuation of the course beyond 2022.**

## Jurisdictional Updates

### **Round table discussion on recent significant incidents**

- 42) The Chair introduced this agenda item as a useful opportunity for members to share recent incidents, key issues and lessons identified.
- 43) Noted the Dive Working Group Chair, Ray Busby shared some valuable lessons learnt from a recent cave rescue coordinated by NSW Police during their working group meeting. Paul Farquharson, NSW Police further noted that NSW Police identified a number of considerations for future SAR incidents, including the way they can access isolated sites, how they carry equipment to the site and the associated fatigue issues.
- 44) Agreed for the Secretariat to circulate the Dive Working Group meeting outcomes to members for information.
- 45) Gavin Radice, WA Police shared a recent incident involving an 8-year-old child who had gone missing after being swept away in dangerous rapids. The SAR incident involved several complexities that pushed the limits of WA Police capabilities. Gavin acknowledged the team's bravery and management of the incident given the complex nature of the incident.
- 46) Jarrod Ayers, SA Police shared a multi-agency response to two large incidents during September, involving AMSA, Defence and SA Police, which involved delays in response due to resource availability issues. The incidents highlighted improvement

opportunities to increase SAR capability, particularly the need for additional fixed wing training. Additionally noted the importance of early contact with State Marine Safety Officers in order for prompt use of their powers.

- 47) Christopher Raeburn, NT Police highlighted an incident involving a 4-day search for a missing 72-year-old hiker after setting off on a half-day hike in Litchfield National Park. Although the incident was successful in finding the hiker, NT Police provided NT Parks some feedback to address communication gaps, improving hiking track quality and providing more effective markers for hikers.
- 48) Christopher Ambroz, ADF supported NT Police's comments regarding the incident involving the missing hiker, noting that most jurisdictions would have limited capability to search such large areas and would be similarly challenged. Christopher Ambroz offered to share some of the Department of Defence's technical information around the UNIPAC III project, which standardised an air droppable SAR kit capable of sustaining 20 (with overflow to 30) survivors for a period of 3 days.
- 49) Greg Barras, VIC Police raised the question whether the Council had previously addressed or considered the complexities and legal risks associated with SAR related incidents that occur on shared state and territory borders, particularly when exercising policing powers inter-state, for instance using firearms.
- 50) The Council discussed the current channels that these types of concerns would be raised/addressed and noted the establishment of swearing-in protocols in some jurisdictions that are established at a Police Commissioner level to swear in officers to perform their duties in another jurisdiction. These arrangements have been established on a state-to-state basis.
- 51) Discussed the need for operational interoperability issues to be covered by legislation (and training), so police are covered from a legal perspective. Further discussed the legal framework that would apply in this circumstance and noted Australia's Counter Terrorism laws may cover the carriage of firearms across borders.
- 52) Noted that some jurisdictions (QLD and NSW) have already established MOU's for the provision of SAR capability to support SAR incidents but excludes normal policing functions, such as the carriage of firearms.
- 53) Mark Morrow requested the Secretariat refer to the IGA and outcomes of previous meetings to ascertain exactly what discussions have taken place previously and to determine the need for an overarching arrangement for cross jurisdictional operations through the Council.
- 54) Paul Farquharson noted that operational interoperability issues were discussed at NatSAR 41, including discussions regarding its relevance to the IGA.
- 55) The Chair wrapped up the discussion commending the Council collaborative efforts when conducting SAR responses. Noted the importance of discussing cross jurisdictional barriers through the Council to ensure we are able to address them at a national level for improvement purposes and increase the overall capability of the Australian SAR system.

**Action 9: Secretariat to circulate to Council members the previous Dive working Group meeting outcomes for information.**

**Action 10: Secretariat to review the IGA and revisit records of past meetings regarding discussions on cross jurisdictional operations and report findings at the next teleconference to determine the need for an overarching arrangement through the Council.**

**Action 11: Christopher Ambroz to provide to the Secretariat information on UNIPAC III project regarding standardised air droppable SAR kits to forward onto members for information.**

### **SAR response to high-risk groups**

- 56) Jim Whitehead, QLD Police provided a progress update on high-risk SAR groups and how this data feeds into the development of operational guidance within the NatSAR Manual, particularly in the lost person behaviour space.
- 57) Noted minor word changes within the NatSAR Manual related to the Distance Tables for LPB Despondent and Alzheimer's categories, the incorporation of additional information on human remains and updated images of powered craft and multi-hulled vessels.

### **Secretariat update**

#### **Australian SAR Awards**

- 58) Josh McGregor, Secretariat provided an update on the Australian SAR Awards nominations received, confirming the SAR Awards recognises outstanding contributions to SAR within the Australian region.
- 59) Confirmed that 30 nominations were submitted for the 2020/21 period, which is an improvement of 8 nominations since the previous year. Confirmed the following successful recipients of the 2021 awards:

#### **Professional Category:**

NSW Police Dive Unit which consisted of Senior Sergeant Ray Busby, Sergeant Josh Lisle, Sergeant Steven Wye, Senior Constable Tim Boardman and Senior Constable Ryan Good.

#### **Professional Category Commendation:**

NSW Police Marine Area Command members, Sergeant Tony Hogg, Senior Constable Matthew Gray and Senior Constable Nicholas Leach.

#### **Non-professional Category:**

Andrew and Michael Coronis.

#### **Non-professional Category Commendation:**

Captain, Chief Officer and the Crew of the ship MT Godam.

#### **Long-standing Contribution Category:**

Southport Volunteer Marine Rescue.

#### **Long-standing Contribution Category Commendation:**

Mr Francis Egan.

- 60) Noted the AMSA Media Team are working with the Deputy Prime Ministers Office to release a social media announcement in the coming days. Additionally, a focused media campaign is being coordinated by AMSA and will include awardee interviews.
- 61) The Secretariat commended the efforts of the recipients and reminded members that voting is now open for the 2022 Australian SAR Awards. [Nominate here for the 2022 Awards](#)
- 62) Noted the following media coverage of the 2021 Australian SAR Awardees:
- [NSW Police news: Water police recognised for dangerous rescue efforts \(9news.com.au\)](#)
  - [Solar Coaster rescue near Lord Howe Island earns Port Stephens police a search and rescue award | NewcastleHerald | Newcastle, NSW](#)
  - [NBN News | PORT STEPHENS WATER POLICERECOGNISED FOR EPIC RESCUE](#)
  - [Port Stephens Officers Commended for Rescue Operation - 2hd](#)
  - [Latest News - NSW Police Public Site](#)

### Annual Incident Analysis report

- 63) Ash Bailey, Secretariat noted that previously jurisdictional SAR incident statistics are presented to Council Members at annual meetings using a standardised template that members populate ahead of the meeting.
- 64) Noted the Secretariat is working on a more streamlined approach with the aim of reducing the workload of Council Members and continue the aim in producing a communications piece that is more engaging and meaningful.
- 65) Noted the Secretariat is working with the AMSA publishing team to present the information to the Council. The Secretariat will seek agreement from Council for the report to be published on the NatSAR website, noting there any privacy concerns.

### Meeting Closure

#### Any other business

- 66) Christopher Raeburn, NT Police questioned whether previous discussions had been raised through Council regarding the establishment of an indigenous lost person behaviour profile. Chris noted NT data has identified a trend in SAR incidents involving indigenous people where the missing person has travelled much further than the current guidance suggests.
- 67) Jim Whitehead confirmed that the current data collected within the LPB database does not currently consider 'race', however expressed interest in the data which may support the establishment of another LPB category in the NatSAR Manual.
- 68) Duncan Ferner, NZSAR provided a brief update from the New Zealand perspective indicating they are undertaking a sector-wide review on recreational safety.
- 69) Bev Driscoll, NZSAR was introduced to the Council as the coordinator of the NZSAR initiative and expressed interest in the Council's input to share thoughts and ideas.

Confirmed the aim of the initiative is to prevent people from putting themselves into situations where they need to be rescued.

**Action 12: Christopher Raeburn, NT Police to provide relevant data to Jim Whitehead on indigenous lost persons to consider establishing a new lost persons behaviour profile within the manual.**

#### **Date and location of next meeting**

- 70) The Chair noted that TAS Police is scheduled to host the next annual meeting, however as Victoria has missed out on the previous 2 years, proposed that VIC Police have another opportunity to host again in 2022. Members supported this arrangement for 2022.
- 71) Confirmed the Chair would write to the VIC Police Commissioner to invite VIC Police to host the 46<sup>th</sup> NatSAR Council annual meeting scheduled for the 19 & 20 October.

**Action 13: Secretariat to arrange correspondence from the NatSAR Chair to the VIC Police Commissioner regarding the hosting arrangements for the 46<sup>th</sup> NatSAR Council annual meeting.**

#### **Meeting close**

- 72) Mark Semmler, Secretariat provided an overview of the key action items and confirmed a record of meeting outcomes will be circulate to members in the coming weeks, followed by the official meeting report that is published on the NatSAR Council website.
- 73) The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

## 2021 Australian Search and Rescue Awards

The NatSAR Australian Search and Rescue Awards are presented by the NatSAR Council in recognition of outstanding contribution to search and rescue within the Australian region.

This year's awards recognise 14 recipients who were instrumental in saving the lives of many people, conducting dangerous operations or contributing to search and rescue over their extended careers.

The winners of the 2021 Australian Search and Rescue awards are:

### Professional Search and Rescue Award

**Recipients:** NSW Police Dive Unit  
Senior Sergeant Raymond Busby,  
Sergeant Josh Lisle, Sergeant Steven  
Wye, Senior Constable Tim Boardman,  
Senior Constable Ryan Good.

The NSW Police Dive Unit have been awarded the Professional Search and Rescue Award for assisting in the tragic recovery of two deceased persons, who had unfortunately drowned in a remote area of a canyon.



The police officers hiked into the canyon for approximately two hours with heavy dive equipment. Upon entering the water, the police officers conducted their search in an enclosed, confined, underwater cave system where risk of entrapment or entanglement with dive equipment was high. Despite the strong currents and presence of an underwater whirlpool, the officers were able to retrieve the deceased persons so they could be returned to their families.

This incident was physically and mentally fatiguing for the officers involved and their efforts under the challenging circumstances were commendable.

### Professional Commendation Award

**Recipients:** NSW Police Marine Area Command Sergeant Tony Hogg, Senior Constable Matthew Gray, Senior Constable Nicholas Leach

On Monday 9 November 2020 the NSW Marine Area Command received a Mayday Relay distress call for an 11.5m yacht Solar Coaster with three people on board and in distress 320 nautical miles north-east of Sydney. The yacht was making slow progress west towards the Australian mainland after being de-masted during the night.

It was under electric motor power by a petrol generator, with the progress of the yacht initially monitored by NSW Water Police. The main engine was underpowered to deal with

ocean swells and current and was making very slow progress. Monitoring of the crew and supplies was ongoing throughout the night at the Marine Area Command.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) Challenger Rescue jet then conducted a fuel and supply drop to the stricken vessel, including a Satellite phone to establish better communications.

Monitoring of the yacht was continued on its voyage for another 48 hours by Marine Area Command and contact maintained to check the welfare of the crew. On Wednesday 11 November, the yacht had made minimal headway covering only 40 nautical miles in 48 hours, fatigue and health of the crew was failing with only 3 days water and food remaining. It was very evident that the yacht and crew would not make mainland Australia without outside assistance.

As such, officers from the Marine Area Command stepped in to conduct, what is considered to be, one of the longest non-stop tows conducted by Water Police. The officers from the Marine Area Command - Port Stephens Sergeant Hogg, Senior Constable Gray and Senior Constable Leach - conducted this operation in extreme conditions and saved the lives of three men. The crew covered a distance of over 400 nautical miles in sea conditions up to 5 metres and winds of over 40 knots to conduct the operation and bring the men and yacht safely to shore. Fatigue on board the Police launch for the 54-hour operation was a major issue, however, was extremely well managed by Sergeant Hogg on minimal or no rest.



All three crew performed their duties as police officers and mariners with extreme professionalism and courage under adverse ocean conditions and I consider to be a great example of “Outstanding Contribution to Search and Rescue” in Australia.

### Non-Professional Search and Rescue Award

**Recipients:** Samuel Michael Coronis and Andrew Peter Coronis

On the morning of Sunday 2 August 2020 in the South Passage Bar, Moreton Bay, QLD. Samuel and Andrew Coronis were returning to Brisbane in their fishing vessel. Conditions were 2.5-3m swells and approximately 12-15 knot winds. In the process of returning home, Samuel and Andrew discovered a semi-submerged vessel with its bow out of the water, they found a male and female in distress as well as their canine companion. Samuel called triple zero as Andrew manoeuvred the vessel closer to the persons in the water. Samuel instinctively dived into the water with two life jackets and swam towards them.



The female was caught up in a crab pot rope which was wrapped around her neck and strangling her. Samuel removed the ropes and fishing line from both parties. In the meantime, Andrew was able to retrieve the canine from the water. The female was unconscious when pulled to safety on board their vessel and CPR was successfully administered by Andrew.

Samuel and Andrew's act of selflessness ultimately saved the lives of two people. Their empathy and courageous attributes during the rescue are a fine example of exactly what the National Search and Rescue Awards represent.

### **Non-Professional Search and Rescue Commendation**

**Recipients:** Captain Rohit Upadhyay, Chief Officer Santosh Kumar and the Crew of MT Godam

On 3 December 2020 in the Torres Strait, the crew of the MT Godam displayed excellent professionalism and skill in rescuing two fishermen clinging to life on a piece of wood after their fishing boat had capsized.

The Torres Strait is known for its dangerous reefs and strong flowing current. On the day of the rescue the crew encountered rough weather conditions which hampered their visibility. The crew lost sight of the fisherman three times but persisted with the rescue. Upon sighting the fisherman a fourth time, it was noted that there were predatory hammerhead sharks circling the men.

A smoke marker and man overboard (MOB) lifebuoy were deployed, the fisherman grabbed a hold of the MOB and the MT Godam was moved within 1.5 meters from the fisherman so that the crew could easily catch the buoy and rescue one of the fishermen. A rescue helicopter was tasked to retrieve the other fishermen. It was noted that the survivors had been in the water for over 17 hours.

The precision by which the rescue was carried out given the circumstances and the assistance provided by the Master, Chief Officer and the crew of MT Godam was incredible.



The rescue was widely covered by the Australian and International media.

## Long-standing Contribution to Search and Rescue

**Recipient:** Southport Volunteer Marine Rescue

Volunteer Marine Rescue Southport has been in operation since the late 1960s, throughout this time its members have continuously provided maritime search and rescue services to those operating vessels in the waters of the Gold Coast region.

The current VMR Southport Unit operates under a service agreement with the Queensland Government's Fire and Emergency Department that requires the unit to undertake a broad range of SAR activities including responding if a surface vessel has requested assistance, transmitted a distress signal, is apparently in distress, is reported to be overdue, is unable to make a safe haven or is sinking or has sunk.

It is estimated that in the 50+ years that Southport VMR has been in operation there have been in excess of 35,000 rescue activations, 2,500,000 volunteer hours contributed, over 80,000 persons returned to safety, 1.8 million litres of fuel used in the 28 rescue vessels that have been part of the fleet over the half-century; and tens of millions of dollars of property saved from the perils of the ocean.

In order for Southport VMR to achieve its high level of SAR support for those operating their vessels in the Gold Coast waters, they have a 24/7 radio operator and 6 crews, consisting of 12-14 individuals who operate a 24-hour shift over each weekend, including public holidays.

Southport VMR crews include a fully qualified Queensland ambulance service first responder. These professional qualifications provide the ability to stabilise individuals prior to the arrival of more qualified personnel. The fact that there are multiple volunteers qualified in this role demonstrates the professionalism of the VMR Southport crews.

For the past 50 years VMR Southport has 'walked the talk' regarding saving and assisting lives and property at sea and providing personnel and equipment in order to carry out search and rescue operations at sea and on the Gold Coast waterways.



## Long-standing Contribution to Search and Rescue Commendation –

**Recipient:** Francis Egan

Mr Francis "Frank" Egan has been recognised for the Long-Standing Contribution to Search and Rescue Commendation based on his 54 years of dedicated service to the volunteer marine search and rescue sector in Victoria. Frank was a founding member of the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard and has served in many roles at various flotillas in Victoria.

Unfortunately, the record keeping systems have only provided electronic records back to the early 90's, but available records indicate Frank has achieved over 5,000 sea hours

specifically related to marine search and rescue. In addition to this, Frank has not only dedicated the last 54 years of service to helping the boating community, but he has also been instrumental in training thousands of marine search and rescue volunteers in Victoria.

There is no specific incident that makes Frank eligible for this award, rather, it is the countless and selfless years of service dedicated to marine search and rescue. There is no doubt Frank is responsible for saving hundreds of lives at sea during this time, while also having direct involvement in returning deceased who lost their lives at sea to their families following extended on-water searches.

