



# NATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE COUNCIL

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

15 – 17 October 2025

The Ship Inn, Southbank – Brisbane, QLD



Figure 1: Queensland search and rescue imagery from the 2024-25 period – Supplied by QLD Police



## Executive Summary

The 49<sup>th</sup> National Search and Rescue Council (NATSAR) Annual Meeting was held in Brisbane from 15 to 17 October 2025, hosted by the Queensland Police Service. The meeting brought together Commonwealth, State and Territory SAR agencies, observers from New Zealand, and volunteer sector representatives to consider national search and rescue (SAR) activity, emerging risks, governance arrangements and future strategic priorities.

The Council noted continued growth in SAR demand, reinforcing the need for stronger national coordination and SAR national data. The Council emphasised the value of ongoing contribution of volunteer organisations and supporting agencies.

The Council agreed to undertake a comprehensive review of the NATSAR Manual. Members acknowledged the Manual's critical operational role and the need to ensure clarity of purpose, structure and level of detail. The review will be coordinated through the newly established Strategic Working Group and informed by subject matter experts. The Council also recognised the importance of the Lost Person Behaviour Database within the Manual and with land SAR decision-making.

The Council discussed initiatives aimed at improving interoperability and communications in SAR operations, including Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) regulation, national radio communication interoperability and Satellite Emergency Notification Device (SEND) messages. Discussions about these initiatives will be progressed through relevant national working groups and committees.

The Council approved the 2025–2027 Business and Work Plan and endorsed amendments to the NATSAR Manual for publication in early 2026.

The Council confirmed priorities for 2026, including delivery of a NATSAR Council Strategic Plan, engagement with Commissioners and Ministers, preparation for the 50th NATSAR Council Annual Meeting, and continued reform to ensure Australia's SAR system remains coordinated, contemporary and fit for purpose. The Council also recognised outstanding contributions to SAR through the annual Australian SAR Awards Program, with awards presented at Queensland Parliament House across four categories. Read more on the 2025 awards [here](#).

## Table of Contents

Attendees.....	5
Meeting Agenda.....	6
49 <sup>th</sup> NATSAR Council Annual Meeting.....	9
Formal opening .....	9
Agenda Item 1. Welcome and introduction .....	9
Agenda Item 1.1. Welcome and apologies .....	9
Agenda Item 1.2: Adoption of agenda .....	9
Agenda item 1.3: Administration.....	9
Agenda item 1.4: Actions from previous meetings .....	9
Agenda Item 2. National SAR Activity .....	10
Agenda Item 2.1. Member SAR Activity Reports.....	10
Agenda Item 2.2. Council Observer reports .....	10
Agenda Item 2.3. Coronial findings & recommendations.....	10
Agenda Item 2.4. National analysis of SAR activity.....	10
Agenda Item 3. SAR Technology Working Group.....	11
Agenda Item 4. Communications in SAR .....	12
Agenda Item 4.1 SEND alerting.....	12
Agenda Item 4.2 National Radio Communication Interoperability .....	12
Agenda Item 5. National SAR issues .....	12
Agenda Item 5.1 SAR Asset Capability equipment update .....	12
Agenda Item 5.2 Standards Australia Review AS 2092.2 & Electronic Visual Distress Signals (EVDS).....	12
Agenda Item 6. Looking Ahead .....	13
Agenda Item 6.1 NZ Reform.....	13
Agenda Item 6.2 Women in SAR.....	13
Agenda Item 6.3 Strategic Working Group and NATSAR Reform.....	13
Agenda Item 7. Updates.....	14
Agenda Item 7.1 Dive Working Group .....	14
Agenda Item 7.2 Data Working Group.....	15
Agenda Item 7.3 SAR Training.....	15
Agenda Item 8. Aerodrome Emergency Plans .....	15
Agenda Item 9. NATSAR Council Governance.....	16
Agenda Item 9.1 NATSAR Manual .....	16
Agenda Item 9.2 Council Governance Documents.....	16
Agenda Item 10. Next meetings .....	16

Agenda Item 10.1 50 <sup>th</sup> NATSAR Council annual meeting .....	16
Agenda item 10.2 Teleconference 1 - 2026.....	17
Agenda item 11: Any other business.....	17
Agenda item 12: Wrap up & meeting closure.....	17
Australian SAR Awards program.....	17
Presentations .....	18
2025 Australian Search and Rescue Awards .....	19

## Attendees

### **SAR Authorities/NATSAR Members**

- Australian Maritime Safety Authority
- Australian Defence Force
- Australian Federal Police
- Queensland Police
- New South Wales Police
- Victoria Police
- Northern Territory Police
- South Australia Police
- Tasmania Police
- Western Australia Police

### **Observers**

- New Zealand Police
- Maritime New Zealand
- National Volunteer Marine SAR Committee
- VRA Rescue NSW

## Meeting Agenda

### DAY 1 WEDNESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2025

Time	Topic	Speaker
1200-1300	<b>Lunch (Optional)</b>	
1300-1315	<b>Formal Opening of NATSAR 49</b>	A/g Deputy Commissioner, QPOL
1315-1330	<b>Agenda Item 1: Welcome and introduction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and apologies – for noting</li> <li>• Adoption of the agenda – for decision</li> <li>• Administration – for noting</li> <li>• Actions from previous meetings – for discussion</li> </ul>	Chair (paper) Chair (paper) Secretariat (verbal) Secretariat (paper)
1330-1500	<b>Agenda Item 2: SAR Activity</b> <p>2.1 Member SAR Activity reports – for discussion (approx. 10mins each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NSW land (paper)</li> <li>• NSW maritime (paper)</li> <li>• NT (paper)</li> <li>• QLD (paper)</li> <li>• SA (paper)</li> <li>• TAS (paper)</li> <li>• VIC (paper)</li> <li>• WA (paper)</li> <li>• ADF (paper)</li> <li>• AFP (paper)</li> <li>• AMSA (paper)</li> </ul>	All
1500-1530	<b>Afternoon tea and official photo</b>	
1530-1620	2.2 Council Observer reports – for discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Volunteer Marine SAR Committee Report</li> <li>• New Zealand SAR Report</li> <li>• National land SAR</li> </ul> <p>2.3 Coronial findings &amp; recommendations – for discussion</p> <p>2.4 National analysis of SAR activity – for discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistics</li> <li>• Thematic Report</li> </ul>	NVMSARC (paper) NZ SAR Council (verbal) VRA NSW (verbal) All (verbal) AMSA (paper)
1620-1645	<b>Agenda Item 3: SAR Technology Working Group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report – for noting</li> <li>• Shared national capability – for discussion</li> <li>• National RPAS working group – for discussion</li> </ul>	AMSA (paper) AMSA (verbal) AFP (verbal)
1645-1655	<b>2025 National SAR Award recipients</b>	Secretariat (verbal)
1655-1700	Day 1 wrap up	Secretariat
1730	<b>QLD Police tour of Brisbane River</b>	QPOL

**DAY 2 THURSDAY 16 OCTOBER 2025**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
0830-0900	<b>Tea and coffee on arrival</b>	
0900-0910	Recap of day one	Secretariat
0910-0930	<b>Case Study:</b> Kosciuszko Plane Crash	AMSA & NSW Police
0930-0945	<b>Agenda Item 4: Communications in SAR</b>	
	4.1 SEND alerting – for discussion	AMSA (paper)
	• Attachment A – NECWG White Paper – for noting	TAS Police (paper)
	4.2 National Radio Communication Interoperability – for discussion	
0945-1000	<b>Agenda Item 5: National SAR issues</b>	
	5.1 SAR Asset Capability equipment update – for noting	AMSA (verbal) AMSA (paper)
	5.2 AS 2092.2 Review – EVDS – for noting	
1000-1030	<b>Presentation:</b> How marine rescue services in Australia must adapt to new boating technologies – for discussion	MRNSW
<b>1030-1100</b>	<b>Morning Tea</b>	
1100-1120	<b>Case Study:</b> Bass Strait Missing Aircraft	AMSA & TASPOL
1120-1200	<b>Agenda Item 6: Looking ahead</b>	
	6.1 NZ Reform – for discussion	NZ Police & Maritime NZ
	6.2 Women in SAR	AMSA & MRQ (Verbal)
<b>1200-1300</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
1300-1345	6.3 Strategic Working Group & NATSAR Reform	NT Police & Secretariat (paper)
	• Proposed priorities – for discussion	
	1. Manual review	
	2. National capability	
	3. Lost person behaviour database	
	4. National SAR database	Secretariat (verbal)
	5. Funding	
	• Terms of Reference – for noting	
1345-1500	<b>Presentation</b>	GM Aviation, Land & Maritime Transport
	6.4 The Bureau of Meteorology	
<b>1500-1530</b>	<b>Afternoon Tea</b>	
1530-1555	6.4 The Bureau of Meteorology – continued	
1555-1600	Day 2 wrap up	Secretariat
1630	<b>SAR Awards</b> - QLD Parliament House, 2A George St	Order of Proceedings

**DAY 3 FRIDAY 17 OCTOBER 2025**

Time	Topic	Speaker
0830-0900	Tea and coffee on arrival	
0900-0910	<b>Recap of day two</b>	Secretariat
0910-0935	<b>Presentation</b> International Maritime Rescue Federation	IMRF
0935-1000	<b>Agenda Item 7: Updates</b>	
	7.1 Dive Working Group report	NSW Police (paper)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcomes of in-person meeting – for noting</li> <li>• Underwater search capability – for discussion</li> <li>• Terms of Reference – for decision</li> </ul>	
	7.2 Data Working Group – for noting	AMSA (verbal)
	7.3 SAR Training	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National SAR Managers Course report – for decision</li> <li>• RTO update – for noting</li> </ul>	Course Director (paper) QPOL (verbal)
1000-1030	<b>Presentation: Mental Health – Blame My Brain</b>	
1030-1100	<b>Morning Tea</b>	
1100-1110	<b>Agenda Item 8: Aerodrome Emergency Plans</b>	AMSA (paper)
1110-1130	<b>Agenda Item 9: NATSAR Council Governance</b>	
	9.1 NATSAR Manual:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amendments – for decision</li> <li>• Manual Review Team Terms of Reference – for decision</li> </ul>	Secretariat (paper) Secretariat (paper)
	9.2 Council Governance documents	Secretariat (paper)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Report (Oct 24 - Oct 25) – for decision</li> <li>• Business &amp; Work Plan (Oct 25 - Oct 27) – for decision</li> <li>• Governance arrangements – for decision</li> </ul>	Secretariat (paper) Secretariat (paper)
1130-1140	<b>Agenda Item 10: Next meetings</b>	
	10.1 50 <sup>th</sup> NATSAR Council annual meeting – for discussion	Secretariat (paper) Secretariat (verbal)
	10.2 Telecon 1 2026: proposed 17 February – for decision	
1140-1150	<b>Agenda Item 11: Any other business</b>	
1150-1200	<b>Agenda Item 12: Wrap up &amp; meeting closure</b>	Chair
1200-1300	<b>Lunch (optional)</b>	

## 49<sup>th</sup> NATSAR Council Annual Meeting

### Formal opening

1. The Acting Deputy Commissioner of QLD Police officially welcomed the Council to South Bank, Brisbane, and opened the 49th National Search and Rescue (NATSAR) Council Annual Meeting on behalf of the 2025 hosts, Queensland Police Service.
2. The Acting Deputy Commissioner spoke of the importance of the NATSAR Council and national processes, noting that people and incidents don't see jurisdictional boundaries.

### Agenda Item 1. Welcome and introduction

#### Agenda Item 1.1. Welcome and apologies

3. NATSAR Council Chair, welcomed all Council members, observers, and presenters to the annual meeting and expressed appreciation to Queensland Police for hosting.
4. The meeting discussed the benefits of the NATSAR Council, including the following:
  - a. Value of once-a-year in-person meetings for relationship building, collaboration and information sharing.
  - b. Opportunity to gain information and insight as subject matter experts and leverage the united Council voice to advise higher level discussions/decisions.
  - c. The importance of national, strategic discussions, as part of the Council.
  - d. The benefits of interoperability between jurisdictions.
  - e. An opportunity to share international and national areas of interest.
  - f. An opportunity to collaborate and identify mechanisms to strengthen processes and relationships, which are both critically important in an incident.
  - g. An opportunity to share achievements and challenges.
  - h. An opportunity to better connect and engage the volunteer SAR sector to promote harmonised training and shared learnings.
  - i. Build intergovernmental and industry relationships through networking to promote collaboration and cooperation.

#### Agenda Item 1.2: Adoption of agenda

5. The agenda was adopted without amendment.

#### Agenda item 1.3: Administration

6. The Secretariat provided an overview of the building facilities and fire exits.

#### Agenda item 1.4: Actions from previous meetings

7. The Secretariat provided an overview of the key initiatives underway within the Council's action table. Members accepted the action table progress and agreed to close those completed.

## Agenda Item 2. National SAR Activity

### Agenda Item 2.1. Member SAR Activity Reports

8. The meeting discussed and noted the SAR Activity Reports from each jurisdiction and agreed the value of reports and associated discussion.
9. The Chair thanked all participants for the time spent on preparing the SAR Activity Reports, reaffirming this is a valuable opportunity to share experiences and knowledge from the previous year.
10. Members noted the key national themes are captured within the Thematic Report (refer Agenda Item 2.4).

### Agenda Item 2.2. Council Observer reports

11. The meeting discussed and noted the observer reports from National Volunteer Marine Search and Rescue Council (NVMSARC) and New Zealand Police & Maritime New Zealand.
12. NVMSARC, noted budget and recruitment/retention of volunteers are ongoing challenges.
13. New Zealand Police and Maritime New Zealand noted the challenge of long-distance searches and referred to a recent incident involving an Australian yacht missing off eastern New Zealand, in an area known as the 'Eastern Pocket'. The meeting agreed the benefit of targeted messaging to recreational sailors about areas of limited SAR potential, including limited on scene search capability. The Secretariat agreed to raise this with the Australian New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group (ANZSBEG).
14. The meeting recalled an action seeking volunteer land SAR representation on the Council and welcomed Commissioner of Volunteer Rescue Association (VRA) Rescue NSW. The Commissioner discussed the potential to establish a national volunteer land SAR representative body, similar to the NVMSARC. Members acknowledged the potential benefits of such a body and agreed the Commissioner would explore its feasibility and report back to the Council.

### Agenda Item 2.3. Coronial findings & recommendations

15. The Council discussed Coronial findings and recommendations of national relevance.
16. The Council noted the NATSAR Manual is often used in Coronial proceedings related to SAR, and that the NATSAR Manual is included in the *Intergovernmental Agreement on National Search and Rescue Response Arrangements* (IGA).
17. It was agreed the Secretariat would amend the SAR Activity Report template to include a section for coronial enquiries and links with the NATSAR Manual, to prompt discussion about potential improvements to the Manual.

### Agenda Item 2.4. National analysis of SAR activity

#### SAR Statistics

18. The SAR Activity Report Statistics paper was discussed. High level statistics showed a 4.23% increase in the overall number of maritime SAR incidents and an 11% increase in land SAR incidents in the last financial year.

19. The meeting acknowledged there is still inconsistency in data availability across jurisdictions and reaffirmed a strong desire for the NATSAR Council to enhance collective ability to provide national SAR statistics.

### Thematic Report

20. The *Thematic Analysis of National SAR Activity* paper was discussed and supported, which identifies important national trends drawn from the *Jurisdictional SAR Activity Reports*.
21. Key themes included:
  - a. benefits of collaboration between agencies and with volunteer groups.
  - b. benefits of proactive prevention of SAR.
  - c. trends involving self-harm, mental-health factors and adventure-based activities — notably, an uptake in adventure tourism and people venturing into the remote outdoors without adequate safety equipment or proper preparedness.
  - d. the various safety programs and community awareness initiatives underway for preventative purposes, such as the Safe and Found initiative, lifejacket campaigns and safety campaigns with National Parks.
  - e. several initiatives underway regarding technological advancements to support SAR operations, such as Starlink, RPAS, SARMAP and the value of the SAR Technology Working Group.
  - f. benefits of being able to tell a national story through SAR data.
22. The Chair highlighted the increase of SAR incidents from the previous year, and the competing priorities in across all agencies outside of SAR. The meeting agreed the importance of reporting national statistics to promote the work of the Council and as leaders in SAR, especially as government agencies face budgetary pressures across the board.

### Agenda Item 3. SAR Technology Working Group

23. AMSA and SA Police presented the SAR Technology Working Group progress report which was noted by the Council along with a discussion on shared national capability.
24. The Council agreed for the Technology Working Group to continue exploring options for national shared capability, taking into consideration discussions within the Strategic Working Group that focused on the cross-agency (state and commonwealth) considerations of a shared funding model.
25. AFP presented information on RPAS capability. Members confirmed that common challenges in operating RPAS within the current Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) regulatory framework, particularly where commercial RPAS requirements intersect with policing and SAR needs. The Council agreed the NATSAR Council Chair would engage with the National RPAS Working Group via its Chair, along with CASA, to discuss RPAS regulations and possible impediments to SAR.
26. The meeting agreed the benefit in SAR representation on the National RPAS Working Group.

27. The Council agreed the SAR Technology Working Group should monitor RPAS capability developments across jurisdictions and include this as an ongoing agenda item.

## Agenda Item 4. Communications in SAR

### Agenda Item 4.1 SEND alerting

28. AMSA presented on non-SAR related Satellite Electronic Notification Device (SEND) alerts (such as Apple's Satellite SOS messages) and the increasing volume of these notifications.
29. The Council discussed the importance of geo-sorting capabilities with SEND device providers regarding how such alerts should be routed and managed.
30. The Council agreed the matter be referred to the Strategic Working Group for further consideration and exploration of a coordinated national approach, including engagement with the National Emergency Communications Working Group (NECWG). AMSA agreed to provide data on the rising volume of SEND alerts to inform planning before progressing further.

### Agenda Item 4.2 National Radio Communication Interoperability

31. TAS Police presented on challenges in radio communication interoperability, particularly affecting cross-jurisdictional and multi-agency operations. The Council discussed the Public Safety Mobile Broadband (PSMB) initiative and agreed jurisdictions would engage with their communications departments to identify their conduit into this work and report back.

## Agenda Item 5. National SAR issues

### Agenda Item 5.1 SAR Asset Capability equipment update

32. AMSA provided a verbal update on AMSA's SAR equipment which was noted by the Council.
33. Members acknowledged the importance of understanding the Challenger Jets capability and requested AMSA provide a refresher of information.

### Agenda Item 5.2 Standards Australia Review AS 2092.2 & Electronic Visual Distress Signals (EVDS)

34. AMSA provided an overview on the review of Australian Standard AS 2092.2, specifically regarding the inclusion of Electronic Visual Distress Signals (EVDS).
35. In July 2024, the Council reaffirmed its position by formal correspondence to Standards Australia, that EVDS should not replace pyrotechnic flares and recommended that its formal objection be made publicly available, despite some differing views among state transport regulators.
36. The Council agreed to retain EVDS as a standing item on the NATSAR agenda to ensure continued oversight. It was also agreed that the Secretariat would engage with other national forums, such as the Australian Recreational Boating Safety Committee (ARBSC) and/or the Australia New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group (ANZSBEG), to share that the Council is actively collecting data on EVDS usage.

37. The Council also noted discussions within ARBSC and/or ANZSBEG on EVDS sales data, and the Secretariat agreed to follow this up.
38. The Council agreed the benefit of the NATSAR Council being represented on ARBSC and/or ANZSBEG and agreed the Secretariat would explore further.

## Agenda Item 6. Looking Ahead

### Agenda Item 6.1 NZ Reform

39. NZ Police and Maritime NZ presented on the reform of New Zealand's Search and Rescue (SAR) Council, driven by a need to refocus on its core responsibilities and improve system-wide coordination.

### Agenda Item 6.2 Women in SAR

40. AMSA and Marine Rescue Queensland jointly presented on the current state and future potential of gender diversity within the SAR sector.
41. The Chair encouraged the Council to take a more proactive and accountable approach in advancing gender diversity in SAR roles. Members agreed the reporting of jurisdictional initiatives and data would enable sharing of ideas and tracking of progress. Members also agreed to include 'diversity initiatives' as a standing item on the Annual Meeting agenda.

### Agenda Item 6.3 Strategic Working Group and NATSAR Reform

42. The Council noted the Strategic Working Group, chaired by NT Police, first met in September 2025. The Council endorsed the Working Group's Terms of Reference, and noted the following priority areas:
  - a. a comprehensive review of the NATSAR Manual
  - b. national capability through shared technology and resources
  - c. management of the Lost Person Behaviour Database (LPBD)
  - d. national SAR Database
  - e. development of a NATSAR Council Strategic Plan

### Comprehensive review of NATSAR Manual

43. The Council confirmed agreement to undertake a comprehensive review of the NATSAR Manual where a small group of subject matter experts (SMEs) will work from AMSA's Canberra office. The Secretariat will facilitate this process and prepare a letter to jurisdictional Commissioners/AC-level representatives to seek support for the review, including funding.
44. The Council noted the importance of the NATSAR Manual in SAR, and that the Manual is publicly available, accessed by coroners and sometimes families of those involved in SAR incidents.
45. The Council agreed the importance of documenting changes to the NATSAR Manual and – if possible – including a version control table within the document to assist in awareness of changes.

### National capability through shared technology and resources

46. The Council noted the Strategic Working Group's discussion on national technology and resource sharing. The Strategic Working Group recognised the potential benefits of national consistency and interoperability, particularly for cross-border incidents. It was agreed that the SAR Technology Working Group will explore this further and provide advice to the Council. The Strategic Working Group also supported leveraging existing cross-jurisdictional arrangements and sharing debriefs to inform future funding and technology decisions.

#### **Lost Person Behaviour Database**

47. The Council discussed the NATSAR Manual and its connection with the Lost Person Behaviour Database (LPBD) as a valuable and trusted reference for SAR responders.
48. The Council agreed on the importance of maintaining the ongoing integrity and currency of the LPBD and agreed for a small team of land SAR experts be established to maintain and update the LPBD, with a view to amending the Manual every 1–2 years.

#### **National SAR Database**

49. The Council noted that discussion on the development of a National SAR Database will be deferred to the next Strategic Working Group meeting and agreed for the SAR Technology Working Group to discuss and advise of any technologies that may support this initiative.

#### **Strategic Plan**

50. The Council endorsed the Strategic Working Group's role in drafting a NATSAR Council Strategic Plan, which will inform the Council's Business and Work Plans.
51. The Council confirmed the Strategic Working Group serves as a strategic advisory body to Council, noting the IGA identifies the NATSAR Council as the national coordinating body for search and rescue response arrangements in Australia.

#### **IGA and Ministerial awareness**

52. The Council reaffirmed the importance of the IGA, noted it was last updated in 2017, and agreed on the need for a review to ensure it remains contemporary and relevant.
53. Members agreed to provide the Secretariat with suggestions for possible amendments to the IGA.
54. The Council discussed the importance of Ministerial awareness of the NATSAR Council's work, and agreed to develop a package to Commissioners and Ministers that included:
  - a. Outcomes of the Annual Meeting, for noting
  - b. Strategic Plan, for endorsement by Commissioners and noting by Ministers.
  - c. A reminder of the IGA and that Minister's are signatories.

### **Agenda Item 7. Updates**

#### **Agenda Item 7.1 Dive Working Group**

55. NSW Police presented the Dive Working Group report, which was noted by Council.

56. Council agreed to the updated Terms of Reference for the Dive Working Group, which now more clearly specifies an annual in-person meeting.

#### **Agenda Item 7.2 Data Working Group**

57. The Secretariat advised that the Data Working Group did not meet in 2025. The Council agreed the National SAR Database is a priority for discussion by the Strategic Working Group.

#### **Agenda Item 7.3 SAR Training**

##### **National SAR Managers Course Report**

58. The Managers' Course Assistant Director reported the 2025 course was hosted in August by the Australian Federal Police at the AFP Majura Park facility in Canberra, ACT. The course was supported by 11 Directing Staff and attended by 22 participants.
59. The following recommendations were endorsed by the Council:
- i. commence bookings of Majura AFP complex and AFP Commissioners Dining room for the 2026 course dates 16 – 28 August 2026.
  - ii. confirmation of 2026 Course Director and Assistant Director
  - iii. an invitation is to be sent to New Zealand counterparts for the attendance of one student and one Directing Staff for the 2026 course.
60. The Council noted the benefit of students visiting the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC) during the Course, and thanked AMSA for facilitating this learning opportunity.
61. The Council thanked the Directing Staff for their dedication and acknowledged the outgoing Course Director for his significant contribution to the Managers' Course over a number of years.

##### **Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Update**

62. QLD Police provided an update to advise there are two options for students to obtain formal qualifications. Submission of evidence for an RPL pathway for an Advanced Diploma (Marine and Land) or alternatively a Diploma in either elective unit, Marine or Land, which is assessed under the QLD Police RTO.
63. The Council noted two components of the RTO work:
- a. Auditing of students' coursework against the relative training package.
  - b. Updating course material to reflect changes to the NATSAR Manual, Codes of Practice etc, and that this is the more time-consuming component.

#### **Agenda Item 8. Aerodrome Emergency Plans**

64. AMSA presented on Aerodrome Emergency Plans (AEPs), noting that jurisdictions had previously agreed to review their State AEPs to ensure alignment with national SAR arrangements. AMSA proposed amendments for the NATSAR Manual to address identified gaps, particularly in relation to Australia's international obligations.
65. The Council endorsed the proposed amendments to the NATSAR Manual, which had been reviewed by the Manual Review Team. It was noted the Australian Defence Force

(ADF) will consult with AMSA to confirm suitability for ADF aerodrome emergency response and draft alternative text for inclusion if required.

66. The Council agreed that AMSA will share its jurisdictional gap analysis of State AEPs with members to support alignment and improvements at the state level.

## Agenda Item 9. NATSAR Council Governance

### Agenda Item 9.1 NATSAR Manual

#### Amendments

67. The Council endorsed the proposed amendments for incorporation into the next edition, scheduled to be published in February 2026.

#### Manual Review Team Terms of Reference

68. The Council endorsed the proposed Terms of Reference for the Manual Review Team.

### Agenda Item 9.2 Council Governance Documents

#### Performance Report (Oct 24 – Oct 25)

69. The Council endorsed NATSAR Council's Performance Report for the 2024/25 period, which reviews achievements from the actions table, against the 2024/25 Business Plan and Work Plan priorities, including progress made against significant NATSAR initiatives.

#### Business and Work Plan (Oct 25 – Oct 27)

70. The Council endorsed the 2025–2027 Business Plan and Work Plan, which outline the high-level priorities and actions the Council will work towards over the next two years, with inclusion of the relevant actions from 2025 Annual Meeting.
71. The Council also noted that the Strategic Working Group will be developing a Strategic Plan, which may result in a future review and update of the Business and Work Plans to ensure alignment with broader strategic objectives.

#### Governance Arrangements

72. The Council endorsed the updated Governance Arrangements document, noting the key changes were made to Section 9, addressing the SAR Awards Program, with clarifications around voting procedures and the funding of travel and accommodation.
73. The Council discussed a proposal to split the Professional Award category into two, enabling marine and land nominations to be considered separately.
74. Council agreed to the Annual Report, NATSAR Manual and Strategic Plan (once developed) being available online via the NATSAR Council website, while the Governance Arrangements and Business Plan and Work Plan are to be retained for internal Council use only.

## Agenda Item 10. Next meetings

### Agenda Item 10.1 50<sup>th</sup> NATSAR Council annual meeting

75. It was noted the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in 2026 will be hosted by Western Australia Police. The Council agreed to finalise the Annual Meeting dates at a future date once potential implications of South Australia hosting COP31 were known.

76. The Council discussed and supported a range of commemorative initiatives for the upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> NATSAR Council Annual Meeting, including a rebrand of the NATSAR Council logo, an upscaled SAR Awards event with potential media coverage or livestreaming, and the inclusion of a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration alongside the Awards. Council also supported the development of a physical memento (pending budgets), a 50-year timeline/history, and a contemporary promotional video to showcase the Council's work and the broader SAR community. A coordinated communications and media campaign was also supported, encouraging collaboration across jurisdictions.

#### **Agenda item 10.2 Teleconference 1 - 2026**

77. The first teleconference for 2026 was agreed for 17 February 2026.

#### **Agenda item 11: Any other business**

78. Nil

#### **Agenda item 12: Wrap up & meeting closure**

79. Agreed for the Chair to write to Police Commissioner/equivalent to request release from duty for the 2026 annual meeting within the letter of invitation as per previous years.

#### **Australian SAR Awards program**

80. The Council reflected on the new awards evening format (i.e. a shorter event rather than a sit-down dinner as had been held in previous years). Possible improvements were noted for consideration for the 2026 awards event.

## Presentations

81. The following presentations were provided to the meeting.
82. **How marine rescue services in Australia must adapt to new boating technologies** – a presentation exploring the emerging impact of alternative propulsion technologies such as electric, hybrid, and hydrogen-powered vessels and artificial intelligence on marine search and rescue.
83. **The Bureau of Meteorology** presented an overview of Australia’s evolving climate and its implications for search and rescue operations.
84. **International Maritime Rescue Federation** - presented on IMRF’s role in supporting maritime SAR through seminars and involvement with the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Noting IMRF’s involvement in training, standards, policy influence, and knowledge sharing, Council agreed the benefit in NATSARMC Directing Staff exploring IMRF resources and training modules, noting the potential benefit for the 2026 Manager Course.
85. **Mental Health in SAR** – The Council noted a presentation on Mental Health in SAR, highlighting the importance of educating both operatives and their families about mental health, stress management, and the distinction between the brain and the mind.

## 2025 Australian Search and Rescue Awards

The Australian Search and Rescue (SAR) 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 recipients who were instrumental in saving the lives of many people, conducting extensive operations or contributing to search and rescue over their extended careers. The 2025 recipients across the four search and rescue categories are:

### PROFESSIONAL

**Award: Ambulance Tasmania, Tasmania Police, Surf Life Saving Tasmania, Rotor-Lift Aviation - Franklin River, Tasmania** – in recognition of an extremely challenging rescue in the Franklin River National Park in November 2024.

*Commendation (joint awardees):*

- Tasmania Police, Ambulance Tasmania and SES Tasmania – for a rescue from the Twin Spires, Tasmania in July 2024.
- New South Wales Police Marine Area Command – for the rescue of two crew from a yacht in the Tasman Sea 185 km east of Nowra, New South Wales in September 2024.

### PROFESSIONAL VOLUNTEER

**Award: Climbers Club of Tasmania Vertical Rescue Team** – in recognition of a complex and high-risk rescue operation from Tasmania's 65-metre-tall Totem Pole Sea Stack in February 2025.

*Commendation:* Marine Rescue Port Macquarie, NSW – for their significant assistance to a cruiser in distress crossing Port Macquarie Bar in May 2025.

### NON-PROFESSIONAL

**Award: Louie Greenland and Remy Roberts – Noosa Heads Queensland** – in recognition of their assistance to passengers and crew onboard boat in distress while crossing the Noosa Bar in July 2024.

*Commendation (joint awardees):*

- Port Phillip Sea Pilots, Point Lonsdale, Victoria – for the rescue of a swimmer in distress near Point Lonsdale in April 2025.
- Professor David Widdowson & Captain Suzanne Rogers, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory – for the rescue of passengers from a sinking charter vessel on Lake Burley Griffin in December 2024.

### LONG-STANDING CONTRIBUTION TO SEARCH AND RESCUE

**Award: Darryl Wright – South Australian State Emergency Service** – in recognition of over 30 years of contribution to public safety, marine search and rescue, and volunteer advocacy.

*Commendation:* Southern Peninsula Rescue Squad, Victoria – for 58 years of service to the Port Phillip Bay community, established following the disappearance of Harold Holt in 1967.

[Read the media release and incident summaries on the NATSAR Council website.](#)



Figure 2: The 2025 Australian SAR Award recipients at QLD Parliament House, Brisbane, QLD