

Marine Rescue Implementation Update

March 2021

QFES has continued to work closely with Government and its stakeholders to establish a future pathway for the volunteer marine sector and to realise the vision of the Blue Water Review Working Group (BWRWG). We are pleased to be able to now provide you with an update on recent announcements and the future of Government support to the sector.

Government Announcement – New single volunteer marine rescue service to be established

As you may be aware, the Queensland Government recently announced a \$35.38 million investment for replacement vessels and the establishment of a single integrated marine rescue service. This funding includes \$17.383 million over the next four years, for the replacement of volunteer marine rescue vessels, with the remaining \$18 million directed to supporting the transition to an integrated marine rescue service and ongoing operational subsidies to squadrons and flotillas to ensure service continuity in the short term.

Establishment of the Marine Rescue Implementation Working Group

As a part of the Government Election Commitment, the establishment of a Marine Rescue Implementation Working Group (MRIWG) has been achieved with the group meeting for the first time on 2 March 2021. The role of MRIWG is to provide advice regarding the volunteer marine rescue sector in Queensland and assist QFES with planning and delivering the future integrated service.

Participation of volunteers and executives from AVCGA and VMRAQ, and from QPS, QAS and MSQ as members of the MRIWG will be essential as a part of the transition to a single service, focused on the best outcomes for volunteers and the boating public.

We thank all volunteers who took the time to express interest in the MRIWG and hope to invite some of you to be a part of various sub-working groups going forward, including a fleet working group to guide the committed \$17 million investment.

The Honourable Mark Ryan, Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services and QFES Commissioner Mr Greg Leach both addressed the group, extending their appreciation to all sector volunteers and expressing their commitment to increasing support to the sector through this future vision.

The meeting of the MRIWG on 2 March examined the BWRWG recommendations and a draft concept of operations to help chart the way forward for the single integrated service. The group is planning to next meet at the end of the month.



Back row (from left to right): David Thannhauser – Department of Premier and Cabinet, Vince Papale – VMRAQ Vice-President, Charles Linsley – VMRAQ Mackay Squadron, Honourable Mark Ryan – Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, Greg Leach – QFES Commissioner, Graham Kingston – VMRAQ President, Mike Wassing – QFES Deputy Commissioner, Steve Barber – QFES Assistant Commissioner (Northern Region), Jim Whitehead – Queensland Police Service, Peter Tatham – VMRAQ Southport Squadron

Front row (from left to right): Paul Campbell – Maritime Safety Queensland, Matthew Thompson – QFES Director Marine Rescue Implementation, Peter Smith – AVCGA Qld State Manager, Ian Watts – AVCGA Redcliffe Flotilla, Robin Hood – AVCGA Qld State Council Chair, Richard Boulton – AVCGA Townsville Flotilla, Joanne Greenfield – QFES Assistant Commissioner

**MRIWG Member absent from photo: David Hartley – Queensland Ambulance Service*



Resource to Risk Assessment Pilot Project

In December 2020, the Resource to Risk Assessment pilot project was completed. The pilot project was undertaken with the intention of developing a method to assess the level of risk at each of the current operating locations of Flotillas and Squadrons across the state. The six locations selected for the pilot provided the ideal blend of different operating contexts and community profiles.

The assessment will be used to guide and prioritise the \$17 million investment into fleet.



VMR Mackay

The pilot project was an invaluable exercise with several refinements to the assessment process achieved. Following the guidance of a project working group which assisted QFES with the pilot, and the invaluable input of volunteers, the rollout of the project across the remaining 41 Flotilla and Squadron locations will soon begin.

We wish to thank the volunteers at each of the pilot units for their warm welcome and for giving up their time to inform the project and provide feedback. The team looks forward to working with volunteers as the Resource to Risk Assessment project is implemented across the state, with more information to be circulated on the implementation approach shortly.

Marine Rescue Implementation Program (MRIP) Team

The existing QFES Blue Water Review Director, Matthew Thompson and Assistant Commissioner Joanne Greenfield will continue to lead the implementation of the single integrated service. The remainder of the team will remain in place until 31 March 2021 as the transition ramps up and work to expand the team to support the implementation occurs over the coming months. Further announcements will be made as the team is established.

2021 Service Agreement Negotiations

QFES has finalised service agreement negotiations with both VMRAQ and AVCGA to install six-month agreements for the first half of 2021. The agreements continue the State Government support for the sector and the efforts of marine rescue volunteers to watch over the boating public and provide critical support to our state's marine search and rescue (MSAR) capability. The shorter agreements will allow for flexibility in arrangements as the implementation roadmap takes shape.

Key performance outcomes remain:

- Supporting the provision of an effective MSAR and radio communications safety service;
- Fostering community awareness of safety issues in the Blue Water environment.



Honourable Mark Ryan – Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services
 Greg Leach – QFES Commissioner
 Robin Hood – AVCGA Qld State Council Chair



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 Graham Kingston – VMRAQ President



Busy Summer Period

It has been a busy Summer for all emergency service volunteers. Activities on the water have seen significant growth in some areas of the state and more Australians are holidaying domestically and investing in watercraft for recreation due to COVID-19. With the compounding impacts of natural disasters, communities and volunteers have continued to rise to these challenges. We would like to take the opportunity to thank all volunteers and support staff for continuing to deliver services to their communities and saving lives on the water.

COVID-19 continues to challenge our communities and the sector. Per the previous Communique, we encourage you to continue to follow internal advice and guidelines issued by both AVCGA and VMRAQ Executives. You can still also refer to [Queensland Health COVID-19 Health Alert page](#) for the latest advice.

In the maritime context, you can also view and subscribe to Maritime Safety Queensland's (MSQ) regular COVID-19 updates at <https://www.msg.qld.gov.au/About-us/News-and-stories/Coronavirus>, which includes the latest advice on recreational boating.

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

*Thank you for your commitment to communities of Queensland
and stay safe on the water!*

Questions or comments? Email the QFES Marine Rescue Implementation Team at:
marinerescue@qfes.qld.gov.au

