



THE HON. JOE TRIPODI MP
MINISTER FOR FINANCE
MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE
MINISTER FOR REGULATORY REFORM
MINISTER FOR PORTS AND WATERWAYS

M E D I A R E L E A S E

New beginning for volunteer marine rescue in NSW

July 1, 2009

Ports and Waterways Minister Joe Tripodi today ushered in a new era in volunteer marine rescue services with the official launch of Marine Rescue NSW.

Mr Tripodi presented a cheque for \$3 million to assist with establishment costs and said a new constitution for the organisation is expected to be adopted and registered this week.

“This new body will become the maritime equivalent of the SES when it comes to the delivery of front line rescue services.

“I congratulate all those involved in helping to establish Marine Rescue NSW,” Mr Tripodi said.

Until now, volunteer marine rescue activities in NSW have been carried out by the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard (AVCG); the Volunteer Rescue Association, Marine Branch (VRA Marine Branch) and the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol (RVCP).

Emergency Services Minister Steve Whan said the official start of Marine Rescue NSW was a milestone for the State’s boating community and rescue services.

“There has been widespread consultation on the creation of this new service, which has attracted strong support from throughout the volunteer marine rescue community,” Mr Whan said.

“The members of these services are recognised for their skill, experience and commitment to the safety of people on our waters. I thank them all and look forward to their continuing contribution through Marine Rescue NSW.

“Members of all three organisations have worked together to meld a single organisation for the future. Almost 1900 of their members have registered their interest in joining the new body, which they can do from today.”

Mr Tripodi said the history of volunteer marine rescue can be traced back to 1937 when a volunteer coastal patrol was first trialled by the Royal Australian Navy as a support unit.

After World War II, the unit developed into a Water Police reserve known as the Volunteer Coastal Patrol (VCP) which was given a royal charter in 1974.

In 1961 the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (AVCGA) was formed. With the implementation of the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989*, elements of the existing organisations affiliated with the land based Voluntary Rescue Association (VRA) to create the third rescue body, the VRA Marine Branch.

Mr Tripodi said in August 2007, the Government announced a review of the adequacy and long-term viability of the volunteer marine rescue organisations.

“The resulting report by John Price in 2008 indicated the previous structure of three separate volunteer groups had limitations and that the volunteers were ready to form a single, coordinated group.

“The review consulted widely and found the ability of each organisation to recruit and raise funds was being over-run by the cost of their operations and training as well as the replacement of vessels and communication equipment.

“Radio overlaps, the location of bases, competition in fundraising activities, as well as vessel maintenance and fuel costs were other factors influencing the decision to rationalise volunteer activities and resources with the formation of Marine Rescue NSW.”

Police Minister Tony Kelly said spending time on the State’s ports and waterways is a favourite pastime of many in New South Wales and marine rescue volunteers often risk their lives to keep boaters safe.

“These members deserve thanks from the community for their commitment and hard work,” Mr Kelly said.

Mr Tripodi stressed the three existing organisations will retain control and ownership of their club houses, boats and equipment.

In addition to annual funding from the Government, the “one off” payment of \$3 million will help meet establishment costs such as uniforms and the purchase of new vessels and equipment.

Last year the Government, through NSW Maritime provided \$1.35 million to fund a range of operational costs including five replacement vessels, search and rescue communication upgrades, money to support competency based training, vessel repairs and upgrades to navigation equipment.

This year, the State Government will allocate \$1.39 million for operational activities in addition to the \$3 million establishment grant.

Over the last 12 months, NSW rescue groups have carried out 68 per cent of all search and rescues along the NSW Coast and have attended to 1374 rescues.

For more information go to www.marinerescuensw.com.au