

Part 11
Royal Volunteer
Coastal Patrol



In March 2007, the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, Australia's first volunteer marine rescue organisation, celebrated 70 years of service to the marine community as well as continuing membership growth to a new record total approaching 1,500.

During this anniversary year, the Coastal Patrol rescued or assisted 3,362 persons in 1,281 vessels with an estimated value of \$64.22 million. Seventy-eight of these vessels were more than 12 metres in length. However the vast majority 80 percent of these assists, were for vessels up to 9 metres, with 54 percent of these involving small craft up to 6 metres and the remaining 26 percent for vessels between 6-9 metres. 35 percent of all assists occurred offshore, with 65 percent in enclosed waters.

These incidents included 16 Mayday calls, 110 Pan Pans, 45 sinkings, 8 fires on board, 167 searches, 52 medical events, 40 capsizes and more than 1,000 adrift, stranded, out of fuel or with flat battery or mechanical breakdowns.

The Volunteer Coastal Patrol is the largest volunteer marine rescue organisation in NSW with 25 bases from Eden to Byron Bay, providing a fleet of 46 lifeboats for emergency response to the needs of the ever-growing boating community. In NSW, there are more than 210,000 registered boats and almost 450,000 boat driver licence holders.

In addition to emergency search and rescue operations, the Coastal Patrol undertakes an extensive public education program to increase the knowledge and skills of those who enjoy boating on NSW waterways. Courses provided include Boat Licence Seminars, Using 27MHz Marine Radios, Marine Radio Operator's Certificate of Proficiency (MROCP) for VHF and MF/HF Marine Radios, Trailer Boat Handling, Coastal Navigation and Marine Meteorology.

The Coastal Patrol's public education courses are showing a positive effect, with the number of incidents requiring help remaining static, in an environment of ever-increasing boat ownership and use.

Coastal Patrol has the only volunteer marine rescue fleet in the State that includes eight ocean-going, self-righting marine rescue vessels that were designed to save lives in the notorious North Sea, North Atlantic and Arctic Ocean off the UK and Northern Ireland coastlines.

These rescue lifeboats have been strategically deployed along the coast of NSW to maximise resources in high population areas. Two 52-ft Arun class lifeboats are stationed in Port Stephens and Ulladulla while six 44-ft Waveney class lifeboats are at Coastal Patrol bases in Bateman's Bay, Botany Bay, Broken Bay, Narooma, Sydney Harbour and Trial Bay.

These lifeboats have regularly demonstrated their capability to handle the offshore conditions of Australia's east coast, while still providing a safe workplace for their crews.

In September 2006, Commodore Peter Phillipson, long-time member of Coastal Patrol, Port Stephens Division, with a lifetime of professional maritime experience, was appointed Officer Commanding. Commodore Phillipson has led a program of continuing development of the Coastal Patrol's activities which has included the roll-out of its comprehensive Competency Based Training (CBT) program and completion of a strategic plan to implement the Coastal Patrol's policy, supporting the government's position on a unified volunteer marine rescue structure for NSW.

Another senior officer, Commodore Mike Stringer OAM, ESM, was honoured in the 2007 Australian of the Year Awards as the NSW Local Hero (Metropolitan), recognising over 33 years with the Coastal Patrol and participation in almost 900 rescue missions, as well as his service on the Volunteer Marine Rescue Council of NSW, of which he is currently Chairman.

The Coastal Patrol has established a close working relationship with many organisers of major marine events. These include the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia and other yacht clubs responsible for organising and conducting major offshore yacht races. Services provided are the mandatory radio checks required for the Sydney to Hobart, Sydney to Mooloolabah, Pittwater to Coffs Harbour and Gosford to Lord Howe races as well as radio relay duties on the latter two events. Divisions involved are Newcastle, Coffs Harbour and Eden.

Coastal Patrol Divisions in all areas are active in community events, such as crowd control and coordination at the start of the annual Sydney-Hobart race and Australia Day celebrations on Sydney Harbour.

Hawkesbury Division is a vital participant in the successful conduct of the annual Hawkesbury Canoe Classic, the Bridge-to-Bridge Water Ski Race and other high-powered events on the Hawkesbury River. This Division's thorough Risk Assessment Process has become the model for risk assessment of marine events throughout the state.

New rescue lifeboats have been commissioned for Coffs Harbour, Central Coast and Forster-Tuncurry, where the lifeboat is now a Category 3 vessel, which increases this Division's area of operation up to 15 nautical miles offshore. Forster-Tuncurry also has a new boat on order to serve the needs of the area's extensive inland lakes and waterways system. New vessels are also scheduled for Hawkesbury, Broken Bay and Narooma.

Major renovations or new Division bases have been completed or commenced during the year at Hawkesbury, Port Stephens, Jervis Bay, Sussex Inlet and Tuggerah Lakes and webcam bar watching equipment has been installed at Forster-Tuncurry and Narooma.

The Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol has a strong ongoing program of public education, member training and community participation and will continue to provide timely emergency responses as required for the future.

The Coastal Patrol's recent television community service announcement, funded by the National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund continues to increase awareness of the organisation and attract new members to enjoy the satisfaction and rewards of making a positive, life-saving difference to the boating community in NSW.

Contact Details

Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol
Head Office
239 Spit Road, Mosman, NSW, 2088
Tel: 02 9960 3311
Fax: 02 9969 5214
Website: www.coastalpatrol.com.au
Officer Commanding 2006–07:
Commodore Peter Phillipson
Chairman of the Board 2006–07: Ron Cole



Statistical Snapshot July 2006–June 2007

Sea Duty

Vessels Rescued or Assisted	1,281
Persons Rescued or Assisted	3,362
Estimated Value of Vessels Rescued/Assisted	\$64,225,000
Incidents in Inside Waters	64.9 percent
Incidents in Outside Waters	35.1 percent

Incidents attended

MAYDAY	16
PAN PAN	110
Sinking	45
Fire	8
Searches	167
Medical	52
Capsized	40
Stranded	132
Adrift	95
Mechanical	660
Out of Fuel	89
Flat Battery	121
Vessels Towed to Safety	720

Performance of Lifeboats on Incidents

Duty Crew-Hours	349,435
Hours Steamed	5,524
Litres of Fuel used	99,743
Cost of Fuel	\$138,791
Vessels Rescued or Assisted	
Under 6 m	695
6 m–9 m	310
9 m–12 m	198
Over 12 m	781

Shore Duty

RADIO WATCH - Listening Hours	201,996
RADIO CONTACTS - All Frequencies	278,647
Offshore Tracking (Vessels)	6,082
Day Trips Logged on	46,720
Persons on Board Day Trips	163,347
Maintenance, Personnel-hours	24,558
Administration, Personnel-hours	83,010
Fundraising, Personnel-hours	36,963
Education Courses Conducted	592
RVCP Students	2,276
Public Students	1,030