

PORT CHATTER

SPRING 2025

MARINE RESCUE NSW PORT STEPHENS UNIT

'Volunteers Saving Lives on the Water'



OUR PRIMARY FOCUS
Volunteers Saving Lives on the Water

MARINE RESCUE NSW – PORT STEPHENS UNIT SERVICES PROVIDED



Category One Marine Search and Rescue Co-ordination Centre (SARCC). Located at the former Inner Light and now Heritage Site at Nelson Head, 32°42.632 S; 152°09.667 E (overlooking Shoal Bay and looking out through the entrance to Port Stephens). Accredited by the State Rescue Board.

Communications Centre, Nelson Head - VMR217. Operated by trained and qualified volunteers, 24 hours a day; 7 days a week; 365 days a year. Monitoring 27MHz, and VHF marine frequencies, emergency and calling channels.

Apart from radio coverage generally to the local boating community, the Communications Centre offers:

- Emergency support to vessels in trouble
- A Marine Radio Safety (MRS) service – Boat Register
- A checkpoint and radio coverage for recreational vessels transiting up and down the coastline adjacent to Port Stephens.
- Weather readings and local conditions observations and
- Current Bureau of Meteorology weather forecasts and tidal information. (These can be obtained by contacting the Comms Centre by phone or radio and are also offered in regular radio skeds).

Accredited Rescue Vessels : Available on a 24 hr. call-out basis, subject to Police tasking. (See 'Rescue Vessels' page).

Gift Shop : Marine Rescue Port Stephens operates a unique gift shop on the ground floor of the Marine Rescue Communications Centre at Nelson Head Reserve, Nelson Bay. The shop offers gifts with a nautical flavour and a range to suit every budget. Without income from the Gift Shop, the Unit would find it very difficult, if not near impossible, to operate. Open to the public, 7 days a week from 9am to 3pm.

Nelson Head Reserve: Marine Rescue Port Stephens Unit of which Marine Rescue NSW is the responsible entity to the State Government for upkeep of this Crown Land heritage precinct "Reserve".

A small museum is operated by volunteers and is open to the public, 7 days a week from 9am to 3pm.

A portion of the Historic Lighthouse Keepers Cottage is leased to a private operator "Inner Light Tea Rooms" for breakfast, lunch, morning and afternoon teas/coffee, from 8.30am to 3.00pm.

Wedding Ceremonies: Bookings can be made to hold weddings on the reserve (see Lighthouse Weddings page).

UNIT COMMANDER'S REPORT



Going Solo

My early sailing dreams were in no small part inspired by that pioneer of recreational sailing, Joshua Slocum – the first man to complete a solo circumnavigation in 1896.

However, reading his adventures, 'Sailing Alone Around the World' can now no

doubt serve as a cautionary note to all those who wish to imitate Joshua and brave the deep blue alone – even in this age of SatNav, EPIRBs, and modern rescue services on the water and in the air.

These thoughts came to mind after the latest search



and rescue undertaken by Marine Rescue Port Stephens in August.

This was a search for a fishing boat with a sole occupant who had not returned home after leaving Swansea Heads.

We joined in what turned out to be a typical three-day search of the ocean in collaboration with AMSA fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft, the Water Police, and Marine Rescue vessels from Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, and Lemon Tree Passage.

Early on the boat was found and towed ashore, but sadly, despite all the resources thrown at the task and the associated technology involved, the lone fisherman was never found.

We can only assume what happened.

This was not an unusual outcome.

Over the last year we have been involved in three other similar searches.

Only the one inshore search resulted in a good outcome, although the poor weather and prevailing strong wind made that a lucky recovery of a man overboard.



Capt Slocum's 'Spray'

So unless you have Joshua Slocum's genes, you might read on...

Let's look frankly at the risks you take going fishing or sailing alone.

- It's easy enough for even the most experienced sailor or fisherman to fall on board or overboard (I speak from experience) – slippery surfaces, freak waves, unexpected tasks in weather changes, cleats, booms, ropes and lines on deck, striking flotsam or jetsam, and large uncooperative fish being among them and any combination of the above.
- How good is your phone or radio if you're unconscious or overboard?

(Continued on page 5)



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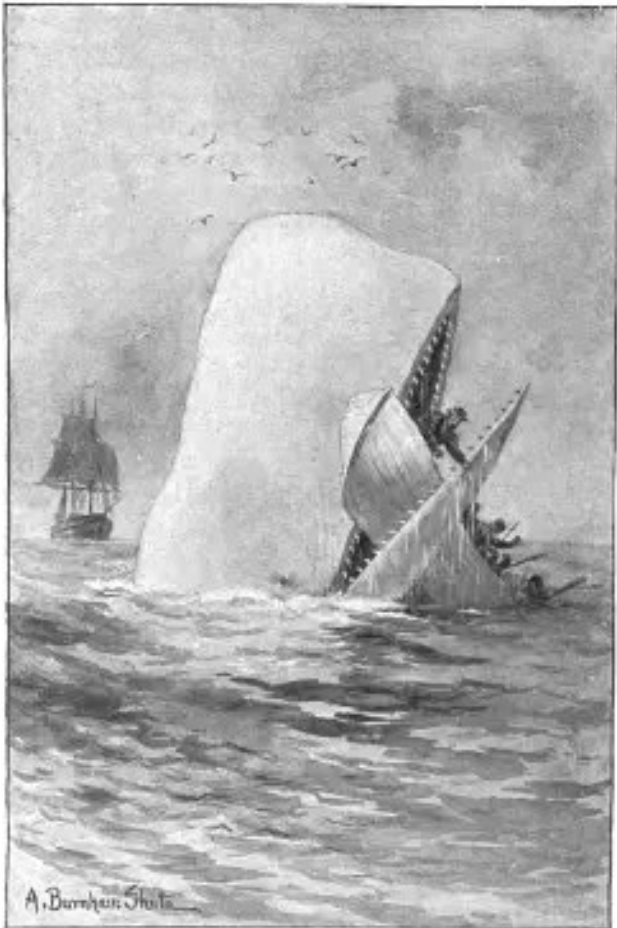
We are open **7 days a week** (weather permitting) from **8.30am to 3.00pm**.



UNIT COMMANDER'S REPORT

(Continued from page 3)

- You can expect to remain conscious for between 2-7 hours in 20°C water¹ providing your fellow swimmers are friendly and not hungry.
- If you're not logged on with us, it will most likely be well beyond that time before anyone starts looking for you.
- If you fall overboard, you will likely get separated from your boat - even if your boat is not under power or sail, it will drift away as it has windage and your boat is the best chance of us getting to you before that 7 hours lapses.
- Stuff happens!



So how can you mitigate those risks and raise your life expectancy?

These are some things to be considered:

1. Don't sail or fish solo!
2. If 1 is inconceivable, consider the following (even if you don't go solo):
 - a. Seriously assess your boat as suitable for the open sea – we see many that do go out that are clearly not so. Inside waters can be rough and dangerous too, but the open sea is another prospect altogether for small boats that are only designed for enclosed waters. Finding small craft and people in the water without a known position is difficult in the open sea in even the best conditions.
 - b. Check the weather forecast – call us at Marine Rescue (CH 16 VHF or 4052 2300) any time. We have the latest forecast and have a good view of prevailing conditions on inside waters and through the Heads. Remember 'YEAH, NAH' applies on the water too, if the weather looks even slightly iffy. It may not improve. Ask yourself "Does my life depend on me going out today?"
 - c. Carry a VHF fixed radio on the boat – mobile phones are not always reliable at sea – they are principally landlubber devices.
 - d. Carry the requisite safety equipment including boat flares, pencil flares, boat EPIRB, and personal SART device or EPIRB. We monitor and respond to SART signals 24/7.
 - e. Wear your life jacket at all times – imagine the frustration of falling overboard and your lifejacket with your personal EPIRB or SART silently drifting away from you.
 - f. AND, finally, of course take out our 'free insurance policy' by logging on with Marine Rescue before you leave, by radio, mobile app or phone. If you don't return on time we will immediately start trying to contact you by all means. After 30 mins your absence will be declared an incident and will be acted upon.

So all you Joshuas and wannabes, please give some thought to the above.

We will always do our utmost to rescue you, but don't unwittingly stack the odds against it.

Ben van der Wijngaart
Unit Commander

¹ According to a hypothermia chart by maritime survival experts Westpac Marine Services. The chart says "expected time of survival" in 20°C water is between "two and 40 hours".



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DEPUTY UNIT COMMANDER

As a recipient of Port Chatter, you are more than likely supporting our unit either as a volunteer, MRS member, advertiser and or through donations. Thank you!

You're invited to join us for a fun night at the Nelson Bay Golf Club on the 25 October to our inaugural fundraising dinner, "Float Our Boats".

It costs the unit circa \$100,000 per annum just to keep our rescue vessels, PS31 and PS30 on the water.

All up, our shortfall after government funding is \$254,000 p.a.

By supporting the dinner, you will be contributing to help Float Our Boats and keep them on the water, enabling

our volunteers to continue their work as first responders – saving lives on the water.

Tickets are \$120 per person, or \$1,200 for a Sponsor's table of 10.

The Sponsor's table package includes acknowledgment on our Facebook promotions for the dinner and projection of your corporate logo and details on the TV screens on the night.

There will be prizes and games, including Best Dressed Table.

(Continued on page 8)



Float Our Boats

Marine Rescue Port Stephens Fundraiser



25 October 2025

Nelson Bay Golf Club

\$120 per person - 3 course meal

Doors open 17:30 - Drinks on arrival

Sponsorship Tables Available - \$1200 for a table of 10

Dress Code - Dress Up or Dress Down

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Dancing

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Lucky door prizes

Raffles and fun!



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Supporting Marine Rescue Port Stephens. Volunteers saving lives on the water.

DEPUTY UNIT COMMANDER

(Continued from page 7)

So why not treat your clients and employees to fun night, all the while supporting an emergency service?



Please feel free to call me if you would like to discuss sponsorship opportunities.

Keep an eye on our Facebook page for developments over the coming months.

We hope to see you on the night, dressed to party!



E: sponsorship.portstephens@marinerescuensw.com.au

Ph: 4052 2300

Mob: 0428 233 290

Riko Eguchi
Deputy Unit Commander

Marine Rescue Port Stephens needs your support to stay afloat each year

\$1k

Essential safety equipment

\$10k

Major search and rescue
over a number of days

\$25k

Regular vessel maintenance
to ensure we are ready 24/7

Our capabilities



**Rescue vessel
operations**



**24/7 marine radio
coverage**



Volunteer training

OPERATIONS OFFICER

Over the past few months, Marine Rescue Port Stephens has been asked to respond to four separate incidents — each one involving a fisherman falling overboard.

On three of those occasions, the fishermen were alone. Just one person, one vessel, and the vast, open water. Tragically, only one of the four fisherman that fell into the water was found alive.

Now, these aren't just numbers or statistics. These are members of our community — our neighbours, our mates, someone's father, someone's friend. And every time our rescue crews launch, they do so with one goal: to bring someone home.



Port Stephens 31 transiting to search area

Marine Rescue volunteers are some of the most dedicated people you'll ever meet. They respond day or night, in calm or storm. But even with all their skill and commitment, time and again we're reminded: the sea is unpredictable. It doesn't play favourites. And it doesn't always give second chances.



Crew of Port Stephens 31 in rough seas

That's why we need to have a serious conversation about safety on the water — especially for those heading out alone.

Here's what we know: in each of these recent incidents, the difference between life and loss comes down to two things — a life jacket, and a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB).

The one fisherman that was found went over board on inside waters. Fortunately he was wearing a life jacket and was able to make it to one of the islands in the Port where he was found safe.

We cannot confirm if the other three fisherman were

wearing a life jacket but we are positive that they did not have a Personnel Locator Beacon on them.

We can't control every wave, every slip, every unexpected gust of wind. But we can control how prepared we are.

So let this be the message we carry forward — not just in memory of those we've lost, but as a commitment to ourselves and our families:

Wear your life jacket. Not just having one on board. Wear it. Every time. A life jacket keeps you afloat. It buys you time. It gives you the chance to be found.

Attach a Personal Locator Beacon. Not in your bag. Not tucked away in a storage hatch. Attach it to your life jacket. If you fall in and drift away from your vessel, that beacon can be the only voice you have. It tells rescuers where to look. It turns hours into minutes. It saves lives. It's small, simple, and one of the most effective tools you can have if things go wrong.

This is my message to every solo fisherman, every weekend angler, every person who finds peace in the open sea: Don't bet your life on experience alone. Bet on safety. Bet on the people who want you to come home.

Because in the end, this is not just about rules or gear. It's about respect — for the ocean, for those who rescue us, and for the loved ones waiting on shore.



Rescue vessel conducting a search in the area

At the end of the day, we all want the same thing — to enjoy the water, and to come home safe. So let's make that choice before we leave the dock.

Over the next few months, the days will grow longer and start to warm up making it far more inviting to go fishing. This will see the increase in fishing vessels going to sea, which always increases the number of rescues Marine Rescue will be requested to conduct.

From all of us at Marine Rescue Port Stephens: stay safe, be prepared, and look out for one another.

Because one life saved is worth everything.

Please enjoy the rest of your summer and stay safe.

Cheers

Mick Duggan
Operations Officer

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COMMUNITY RELATIONS OFFICER

Wow it's been wet! So it's such a relief to see the sun shining as we move into Spring 2025 and the boating season begins to heat up. Whilst boating activity has been a bit slower through the winter, the Community Relations team at MRPS have taken the opportunity to beef up our profile in the community to help us recruit new volunteers and help us increase fundraising. One of the biggest impacts has been through sharing some of our major activities and also by highlighting major milestones for some of our people.

The event that generated the most interest was a medical emergency on a yacht 25 nautical miles off Port Stephens on Sunday 27th July. The yacht was competing in a Sydney to Gold Coast Yacht Race, with a crew of 11 aboard and was in serious difficulty with torn sails. A 77 year old male had collapsed, was unconscious, and then became delirious and disoriented. Our live articles [on social media](#), which updated throughout the day for the 4 hour rescue by our crew on PS31, attracted around 40,000 views, over 1,000 reactions, and hundreds of positive comments.



This high level of engagement by the community is wonderful to see. And it seems that the interest has helped flow through to our recruitment activities with over 80 people indicating an interest in attending our next [Information Night](#) for new members. We might have a seating shortage problem if they all turn up!

The [other post](#) that really saw the community react strongly was the profile on long serving member Peter Bliss who, over 19 years, racked up 8,600 hours. Many of those hours were spent in the radio room on the night shift, to help us deliver our 24/7 service to the boating community. His contribution to the community was

acknowledged with many complimentary comments like this one from one of his colleagues:

"Even though I've only had the privilege of working alongside you for a year, it didn't take long for me to see how much knowledge, calm and good humour you brought to the radio room.

Wishing you all the best as you hang up the mic and enjoy some well-earned downtime without Log Ons, call signs, or weather updates.

Thanks for everything I learned from you (you would be surprised how much you can learn in a 5/10 minute handover) - you will definitely be missed."



Comments like this one really illustrate the respect and camaraderie members have for their crewmates and its this challenging but fun work environment which keeps us enjoying our work. If you or someone you know would enjoy this type of volunteering please [contact us](#) to find out how you can get involved.



Another [socials post](#) on one of our female members Riko Eguchi, our Deputy Unit Commander, achieving her Restricted Coxswain rating, caught the eye of people at The Examiner and they subsequently interviewed Riko

(Continued on page 12)

COMMUNITY RELATIONS CONT'D

(Continued from page 11)

and published this wonderful article, featuring her on the front page.

The article did however mis-state that Riko was our first female Deputy Unit Commander. We were fortunate enough to have a female DUC once before Riko, making Riko our second. Our first was the wonderful Louise Moore who held the position back in 2011.

She was a long time volunteer with Marine Rescue Port Stephens alongside her husband Geoff Moore who held the Unit Commander role. They are seen here together in the below pic.



Louise and Riko have both made enormous contributions to MRPS and serve as excellent role models and

examples of how women can contribute to our mission of saving lives at sea. We have seen a significant uptick in the number of women joining us in roles from boat crew and radio room to Gift Shop, weddings, event management, and fundraising.

So if you think you might like to help us please make contact and come along to an [Information Night](#) to find out more.

SMALL GROUP CRUISE, LUNCH AND LEARN ABOUT MARINE RESCUE PORT STEPHENS

You are invited to a [special lunch cruise](#) on the Original Tea Gardens Ferry!

If you're looking for a fun day out on our beautiful waterways that's got a Marine Rescue flavour to it, we have a special event scheduled for Monday September 29th. We will be providing the guest speakers on a special lunch cruise on The Original Tea Gardens Ferry.

Skipper Laurie Nolan will be providing insights on some of the more memorable rescues around the bay and I will be giving some perspectives about how the radio room reacts to some of the more notable incidents that have happened at Marine Rescue Port Stephens. Hopefully we will both inform and entertain the cruising guests.

For [booking details](#) please contact The Original Tea Gardens Ferry on 0412 682 117.

Frank van Druten
Community Relations Officer

The Original Tea Gardens Ferry

CRUISE INTO THE WORLD OF MARINE RESCUE – A PORT STEPHENS FIRST!

Locals and visitors – ever wondered what really happens when someone calls for help at sea?
Step aboard The Original Tea Gardens Ferry for a special cruise with Port Stephens Marine Rescue

When: Monday 29 September
Time: 10am Departs from Nelson Bay Wharf
Cost: just \$59 – includes delicious morning tea

What's on board?

- Gripping rescue stories from Marine Rescue volunteers
- Live safety demos
- Scenic highlights of Port Stephens along the route
- Boating safety tips and wildlife info
- Q&A session + interactive trivia
- Meet the volunteers and find out how YOU can support their vital work

A portion of all ticket sales will be donated directly to Marine Rescue Port Stephens to help keep our waterways safe.

Book now: <https://theoriginalteagardensferry.com.au/> or call Kerrie on 0412 682 117

Limited seats – don't miss the boat!

Proudly presented by The Original Tea Gardens Ferry in partnership with Marine Rescue Port Stephens.

GIFT SHOP

We have had a fairly quiet winter with lots of rain, road damage, and shop closures.

Four new ladies have joined the gift shop, which is exciting. All are in training for shop duties. We now have 26 staff all ranging from ages of 58 to 94.

Our ex-manager Sandra has left after 16 years. Denise, our treasurer of 18 years, has also resigned. It has been very sad to see them both go.

A big thank you for the contribution you have both given to the Gift Shop over many years.

Our secretary Dianne has given her role up after many years, but is still working in the Gift Shop, which is excellent. A big thank you to Dianne.

A few staff members are on the "sick list" but looking towards better health.

We are hoping the school holidays and Fathers Day will boost our sales.



We currently have some nice stock in the shop so come in for a friendly chat and look at newly arrived goodies.

Don't forget 10% discount to all staff.

Sharon Barry
Gift Shop Manager

Local volunteers supported by local business

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We'd love to talk to you through our sponsorship packages.



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A smartphone displaying the Marine Rescue app interface. The screen shows the app's logo, a notification for 4 Maritime Alerts, and options to log on, view a pre-launch checklist, and emergency procedures. The background is a blue ocean with a rescue boat.

Log On
before you head out.

If things don't go to plan, we'll start searching for you

Download the app today

A photograph of a person in a red life jacket being rescued from the water. A hand is reaching out from the side of a boat to help them. The background is a blue ocean.

MAYDAY
Help save a life.

TSUNAMI WAVE HEIGHTS

Scientists define a tsunami as a wave generated by a single force. And while we typically think of that force as being applied by an earthquake, it can be applied by landslide. It's similar to when a rock is thrown into the water: you get a ring of waves travelling outward.

Melting glaciers are triggering the world's biggest tsunamis with 10 of 14 tsunamis higher than 50 metres in past century being from landslides in glaciated mountains.

In October 2015, a powerful 150-metre wave crashed through Taan Fjord in Alaska, stripping the mountainsides of trees and dirt, and leaving behind bare rock and debris, flattening huge trees and scattering boulders as big as SUVs.

The tsunami at Taan Fjord was triple the height of the tallest earthquake-triggered tsunamis that devastated Thailand and Indonesia in 2004 and nearly four times taller than the one that caused widespread destruction in Japan in 2011, badly damaging the Fukushima nuclear plant.

The Taan Fjord landslide was one of the biggest tsunamis in the world in the past 50 years. Those huge waves were caused by 180 million tonnes of rock hitting the fjord. But no one was there to witness it.

While tectonic tsunamis typically have periods in the tens of minutes and peak runups extending up to around 30 metres, the best studied landslide tsunami, which occurred in 1958 in Alaska's Lituya Bay, had a period of about 76 seconds and peak runup of 524 metres.

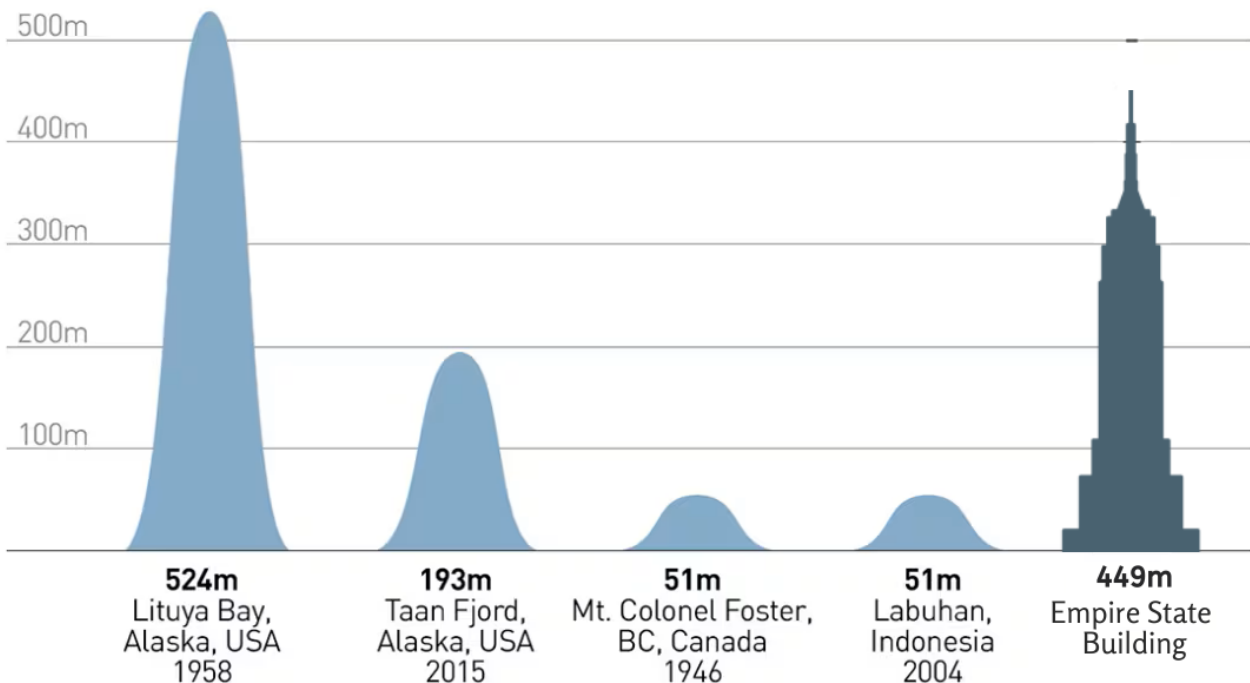
The period of the Taan Fjord tsunami was likely similar to the 90 seconds it took the slide to do most of its acceleration and deceleration. The resulting tsunami reached elevations as high as 193 m, one of the highest tsunami runups ever documented worldwide.

Tsunamis with a peak height of more than 50 metres in past century

- Year: Location (Wave Height, Cause, Water body)*
- 1958: Lituya Bay, Alaska, USA (524m, Subaerial landslide, Fjord)
 - 1980: Spirit Lake, WA, USA (250m, Volcanic landslide, Lake)
 - 1963: Casso, Italy (235m, Subaerial landslide, Reservoir)
 - 2015: Taan Fjord, Alaska, USA (193m, Subaerial landslide, Fjord)
 - 1936: Lituya Bay, Alaska, USA (149m, Subaerial landslide, Fjord)
 - 2017: Nuugaatsiaq, Greenland (90m, Subaerial landslide, Fjord)
 - 1936: Nesodden, Norway (74m, Subaerial landslide, Fjord)
 - 1964: Cliff Mine, Alaska, USA (67m, Delta-front failure, Fjord)
 - 1934: Tafjord, Norway (62m, Subaerial landslide, Fjord)
 - 1965: Lago Cabrera, Chile (60m, Subaerial landslide, Lake)
 - 1967: Grewingk Lake, Alaska, USA (60m, Subaerial landslide, Lake)
 - 1946: Mt. Colonel Foster, BC, Canada (51m, Subaerial landslide, Lake)
 - 2004: Labuhan, Indonesia (51m, Earthquake displacement, Open coast)
 - 2000: Paatuut, Greenland (50m, Subaerial landslide, Fjord)

Source: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/landslide-tsunamis-climate-change-1.4811707>

Tsunami height comparison



WINTER FESTIVAL FOOD VAN

On Saturday 12 July, from 5pm to 8pm, Port Stephens Winter Festival hosted their Family Fun Night in Apex Park and Marine Rescue Port Stephens was there to feed the crowds.

The night saw a dance performance by The Collective Dance Academy and roving illuminated puppets from Curious Legends.

There was live music, a magician, face painting, and local food stalls. MRPS brought the usual good honest tucker to the hungry festival goers, including perennial favourites like the sausage sandwich, steak sandwich, bacon and egg rolls, hot dogs, and meat pies.

(Continued on page 17)



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WINTER FESTIVAL FOOD VAN CONT'D

(Continued from page 15)

Before the entertainment in Apex Park began the Port Stephens Car Show participants completed their “super cruise” journey up to Nelson Bay, right past the MRPS food truck!

The procession included a Batmobile and a Ghostbusters Ectomobile! The Car Show was on Sunday 13 July 2025.



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DOLPHIN CENSUS

On Sunday, August 17, Marine Rescue Port Stephens proudly took part in one of the region's most valued citizen science events—the annual dolphin census coordinated by ORRCA (Organisation for the Rescue and Research of Cetaceans in Australia).

Held on the third Sunday of August each year, the census plays a vital role in monitoring the resident population of Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins in our waters.

Originally launched by the Marine Parks Association, the dolphin count is now under the expert stewardship of ORRCA, whose team coordinates a wide network of volunteers across Port Stephens, from both land and water based locations.

Between 11:00am and 12:00 noon, volunteers scan the waters, counting, recording and photographing dolphin sightings and behaviours.

This snapshot-in-time approach gives researchers critical insights into the health, distribution, and population trends of our iconic local dolphins.

This year, Marine Rescue vessels Port Stephens 30 and Port Stephens 31 provided logistical support by transporting ORRCA volunteers to strategic observation points within the Port.

Their presence on the water allowed for greater coverage of key dolphin habitats, helping ensure accurate and comprehensive data collection.

At the conclusion of the count, all observations were submitted via a dedicated mobile app developed by ORRCA.

The data is now being reviewed by ORRCA's research team, with final results to be shared with all participants in the coming weeks.



Marine Rescue Port Stephens is proud to support this important community initiative.

By assisting in the dolphin census, we contribute to a broader understanding and protection of one of Port Stephens' most beloved marine species.

It's also a meaningful way to collaborate with like-minded organisations such as ORRCA, and to strengthen community engagement with marine conservation efforts.

We look forward to continuing our involvement in the dolphin count for years to

ORRCA volunteers being inducted onto both Marine Rescue Port Stephens vessels.

Grant Leddie
Facilities Officer



NPWS SHOREBIRD SURVEY

On 24 July, Marine Rescue Port Stephens joined forces with National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) Shorebird Conservation to conduct a shorebird survey.

Marine Rescue Port Stephens lent a hand to NPWS conservation efforts by supporting them in their annual Port Stephens Shorebird Survey—an important initiative tracking the health of local and migratory bird populations.

This year, Port Stephens 30 (PS30), the Shirley Clark, was assigned to Bravo Sector, an expansive and ecologically rich stretch from Jimmys Beach to Barnes Rocks, up the Myall River to Winda Woppa, and back to Pindimar through to Fame Cove.

This vital area forms part of a wider survey footprint that has been monitored annually since 2004.

A briefing was held at 8:30 am on board Envision at d’Albora Marina, where NPWS coordinators outlined the day’s survey objectives, safety protocols, and sector assignments.

Volunteers and crew from participating vessels gathered to review maps, confirm radio communication procedures, and synchronise plans to ensure consistent data collection across all zones. The session set a collaborative tone for the day and ensured all teams were well-prepared before heading out to their designated survey areas.

(Continued on page 21)



NPWS SHOREBIRD SURVEY CONT'D

(Continued from page 20)



Commanded by Marine Rescue skipper Grant Leddie, with crew Anthony “Batch” Bachelor and Riko Eguchi, PS30 provided critical logistical support to NPWS volunteers Neil Fraser and Andrew McIntyre, enabling safe and efficient access to key observation points along the survey route. The operation required careful coordination, with the timing of the survey designed to coincide with the high tide to maximize bird visibility across mudflats and sandbanks.

The Shorebird Survey is a collaboration between NPWS and the Hunter Bird Observers Club. It plays an essential role in monitoring the distribution and abundance of several threatened resident shorebirds,



as well as the seasonal presence of migratory species protected under international agreements such as the JAMBA, CAMBA, and ROKAMBA treaties. The data collected contributes to long-term research and management efforts aimed at preserving critical coastal habitats and their avian inhabitants.

Following the survey, all participating agencies and volunteers gathered at NPWS headquarters in Anna Bay for a debrief and data collation session. Discussions focused on species sightings, habitat changes, and observations that will help inform conservation planning into the future.

Marine Rescue Port Stephens is proud to assist in this important environmental work, highlighting how marine safety resources can also contribute to protecting the natural treasures of our region. It's another example of how teamwork between rescue services, government bodies, and passionate volunteers can make a real difference for local wildlife

Grant Leddie
Facilities Officer



THE NUMBERS

MAY

Marine Rescue NSW volunteers experienced reduced demand in May, with unfavourable boating weather leading to fewer boaters heading out on the water and requiring assistance.

After completing 369 rescues in April, volunteers across the state performed 202 search and rescue missions in May, including 65 emergency responses, safely returning 406 people to shore. Volunteer crews responded to 12 capsized vessels in May, while 10% of missions were to assist grounded vessels.

Volunteers kept watch over almost 12,000 people on board Logged On vessels last month, with radio operators managing 13,626 calls, including two MAYDAYs.

Hunter/Central Coast (across all 8 units): 62 search and rescue missions including 15 emergency responses with 120 people safely returned to shore.

Search and rescue missions in locations of highest demand: Lake Macquarie 26, Brisbane Water 11, **Port Stephens 9**



JUNE

Marine Rescue NSW volunteers completed 268 missions in the second busiest June on record.

Improved weather conditions across New South Wales in June saw large numbers of boaters take to the state's waterways, with Marine Rescue NSW radio operators keeping watch over 22,100 people on board vessels that had Logged On with the Service.

Marine Rescue NSW volunteers experienced their second busiest June on record, completing 268 search and rescue missions — a 16% decrease from the record 316 missions undertaken in June 2023. Of the month's 268 missions, 112 were emergency responses, with volunteers safely returning 487 people to shore.

Marine Rescue NSW radio operators handled 19,521 calls in June, including five MAYDAYs and five Pan Pans.

"Whales also pose a navigational challenge for our crews and boaters at this time of year," Marine Rescue NSW Commissioner Alex Barrell said.

"Marine Rescue NSW reminds all boaters to exercise extra caution during whale migration season. When whales are present, boaters must stay at least 100 metres away — or 300 metres in the case of a whale with a calf. If a whale surfaces near your vessel, it is important to cut your motors and reduce to a safe speed."

Hunter/Central Coast (across all 8 units): 85 search and rescue missions including 27 emergency responses with 177 people safely returned to shore.

Search and rescue missions in locations of highest demand: Lake Macquarie 38, **Port Stephens 15**, Brisbane Water 13

JULY

Marine Rescue NSW volunteers completed 237 search and rescue missions in July, including 82 emergency responses, safely returning 450 people to shore.

Thirty-eight per cent of incidents statewide were due to engine failure, which Commissioner Barrell said was too high.

Marine Rescue NSW radio operators received almost 20,000 calls last month, with the majority managed by the Marine Rescue Sydney State Communications Centre and Marine Rescue Port Macquarie. Volunteer radio operators also kept watch over 27,192 people on board more than 6,000 Logged On vessels.

Hunter/Central Coast (across all 8 units): 71 search and rescue missions including 13 emergency responses with 109 people safely returned to shore.

Search and rescue missions in locations of highest demand: Lake Macquarie 33, **Port Stephens 14**, Brisbane Water 8



FAREWELL TO NIGHT OPERATOR PETER BLISS



After 19 years of steadfast overnight duty, Marine Rescue Port Stephens recognised long-serving volunteer Watch Officer Peter Bliss, a dedicated night operator, on his stepping down from Communications Centre duties.

Peter completed more than 8,600 hours on watch and 1,323 shifts, most of them when the rest of the country was asleep. He often logged eight to ten full night shifts each month.

Peter provided a unique and essential role at the unit. His experienced voice in the radio room provided reassurance to volunteer crews and boaters.

His service was recently recognised with a Unit Commander's Citation, honouring his extraordinary contribution to safety on the water over nearly two decades.

Peter is moving to Maitland to be closer to family, but is not leaving the Service.

COMMISSIONER ALEX BARRELL STEPS DOWN

Marine Rescue NSW Commissioner Alex Barrell ESM will step down from the role next month after accepting a position as Executive Director, Response, at the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

As Marine Rescue NSW Commissioner, he has overseen the growth of the Service's membership to more than 3,500 volunteers and driven significant improvements in search and rescue response and capability across Marine Rescue NSW's 46 units.

At the request of the Marine Rescue NSW Board, Deputy Commissioner Todd Andrews will take on the role of Acting Commissioner on 15 September, while a recruitment process is undertaken to appoint the next Marine Rescue NSW Commissioner.



NATIONAL MEDALS FOR LEE RYMAN AND LAURIE NOLAN

Rescue vessel skipper and Watch Officer Laurie Nolan, and IT Systems Lead and Watch Officer Lee Ryman, were presented with the National Medal for 15 years of operational service by the Member for Port Stephens, Kate Washington MP.

Marine Rescue NSW Commissioner Alex Barrell, Deputy Commissioners Darren Schott and Todd Andrews, Central Zone Commander Dan Duemmer, and Marine Rescue Port Stephens Unit Commander Ben van der Wijngaart also attended the ceremony to acknowledge the pair.

The National Medal recognises long and diligent service

by members of recognised government and voluntary organisations who risk their lives or safety to protect or assist the community in times of emergency or natural disaster.

Commissioner Barrell said Laurie and Lee are both valued and trusted members of Marine Rescue Port Stephens.

"The local community is privileged to have such highly skilled and dedicated volunteers ready to assist them in their time of need. We congratulate them on their diligent service," the Commissioner said.



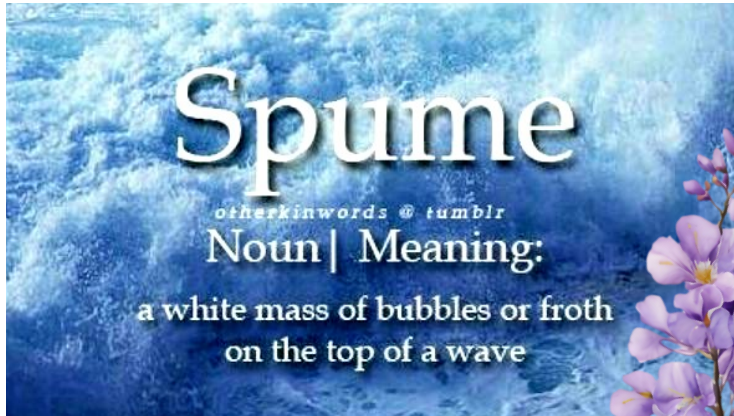
BEAUTIFUL EVOCATIVE WORDS

It's estimated that there are 171,146 words in use in the English language, plus around 47,156 obsolete words.

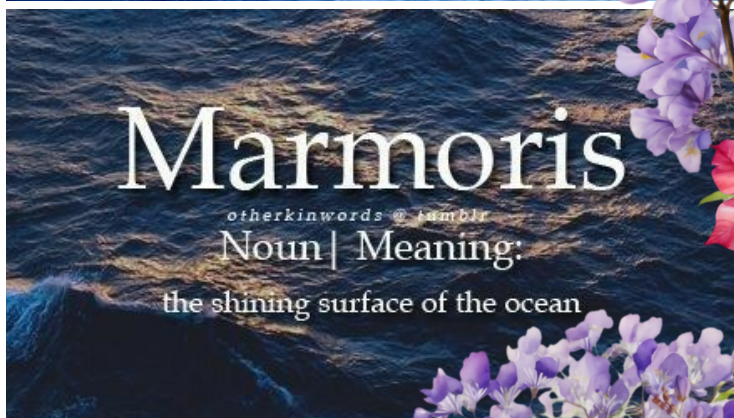
There are so many interesting words in the English language, but people tend to use the same ones over and over when they're having conversations. Why not impress (or confuse) your friends with something different?

As we leave winter behind and enter spring please enjoy a few of the most unique and evocative words that relate to the experience of coastal living at this time of year.

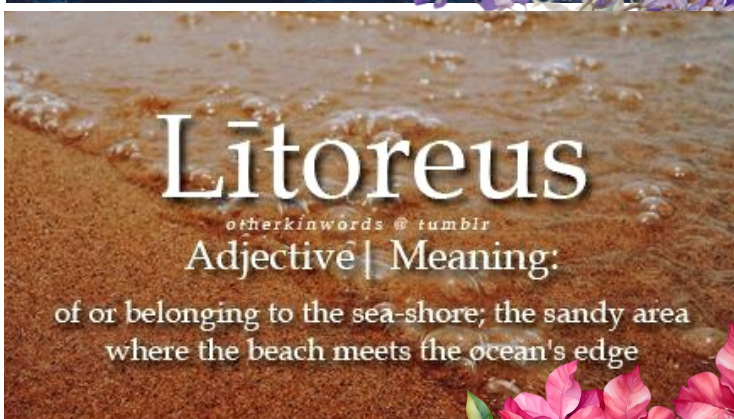
Some of them are ones you may have heard before but never knew what they meant, and others may be words you never knew existed.



Spume
otherkinwords @ tumblr
Noun | Meaning:
a white mass of bubbles or froth
on the top of a wave



Marmoris
otherkinwords @ tumblr
Noun | Meaning:
the shining surface of the ocean



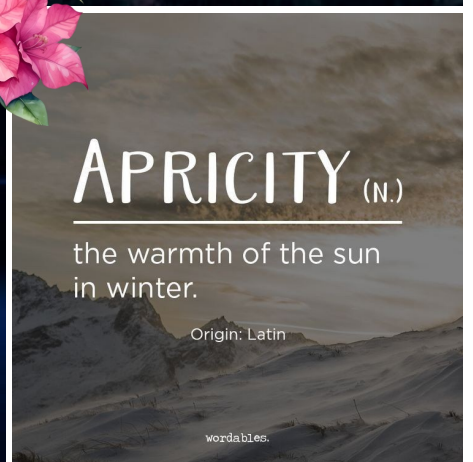
Litoreus
otherkinwords @ tumblr
Adjective | Meaning:
of or belonging to the sea-shore; the sandy area
where the beach meets the ocean's edge



GUMUSSERVI (N.)
MOONLIGHT SHINING ON WATER.
pronunciation | gU-mU-'sAr-vE
Origin: Turkish



MOONGLADE (N.)
the track of moonlight on
water
Origin: Latin



APRICITY (N.)
the warmth of the sun
in winter.
Origin: Latin



SILLAGE (n.)
The scent that lingers in the air,
the trail left in the water, the
impression made in space after
something or someone has been and
gone; the trace of someone's perfume.
pronunciation | 'sE-yazh
Origin: French



BRUMOUS (ADJ.)
Of grey skies and winter days;
filled with heavy clouds or fog;
relating to winter or cold, sunless weather.
pronunciation | 'brUm-us (BROOM-us)
Origin: English

WEDDINGS

Hello Readers!

Nelson Head has hosted two weddings for August.

Simone and Kevin

1 August 2025

When Simone and Kevin tied the knot the weather was unforgiving at our beautiful venue but all was not lost.

The couple decided an indoor wedding would be lovely and just as intimate. They then went outside to sign the register and take pictures overlooking the Bay in between showers.

(Continued on page 27)



Inner Light Weddings Nelson Head



What an amazing backdrop for incredible memories!

Tomaree and Yacaaba Headlands together with Port Stephens waters form a unique and amazing backdrop for your wedding ceremony.



Let us prepare the perfect venue for you and your guests.

You are able to style your wedding as little or as much as you wish utilising the items listed in our brochure, including set up by our volunteers, at no extra cost.



Plan your dream wedding ceremony in this idyllic and unique setting.

Prepare in the Charming Lightkeeper's cottage. Then make your grand entrance from this Heritage building.

For all wedding ceremony enquiries and to receive a copy of our information brochure, please contact:

Wedding Coordinator
Mobile 0490 226 399

Email:

weddings.portstephens@marinerescuensw.com.au

WEDDINGS CONT'D

(Continued from page 25)

Katja and Thorsten

9 August 2025

Katja and Thorsten were joined by 70 guests to celebrate their August wedding.

Surrounded by family and friends, they found the weather a little more forgiving on the day. But it was still very much a challenge for the Wedding Team

There were some beautiful pictures of the happy couple with the amazing backdrop of the Bay.

The Wedding Team wishes both couples all the happiness for their future journeys together.

Bloss Cleary

Weddings Coordinator



Dear Bloss,

Thank you so very much for making our wedding so very special.

There was no doubt we had the right venue; the location is just so beautiful!

And you made sure everything was perfect.

Thank you so much for all your efforts and attention to detail.

Thank you for reminding me, before I stepped out, to take it all in. I did, and I enjoyed every moment.

I loved that you even provided white umbrellas. They looked beautiful too!

Thank you again!

We are so grateful we managed to have the ceremony outside. How lucky were we with the weather!

We cannot wait to revisit this beautiful location!

Lots of love,

Katja & Thorsten



MARINE RESCUE NSW PORT STEPHENS RESCUE VESSELS CURRENTLY IN SERVICE

The unit currently has two purpose built, specialised rescue vessels, crewed by motivated and trained volunteers who can be called upon at anytime, day or night, to head to the assistance of those who call.

A response time of 20 mins or less is estimated from alert to heading to sea. Our vessels boast a comprehensive inventory of the latest navigation, communication, safety and rescue technologies on board.

PORT STEPHENS RESCUE VESSEL *PORT STEPHENS 31*

JOHN THOMPSON



Specifications

Make / Model:	Steber International 38' - Category 3 SAR Vessel
Length:	11.46m (38ft)
Beam:	3.84m (12.6ft)
Displacement:	11.6 tonne
Draft:	1m
Fuel:	1350L
Engines:	Twin 420hp Yanmar diesel
Top Speed:	30kn
Crew:	Operational - normally 4
VHF:	Sailor 6222
Radar:	Raymarine Q24C Doppler
MFD's (Multifunction Display):	Raymarine Axiom 9 and 5 x Raymarine Axiom Pro 12 Hybrid Touch
AIS:	Raymarine AIS950
RDF:	Taiyo
27Mhz:	GME GX400B
DCN:	Tait TM9300

Rescue Vessel Port Stephens 31 John Thompson was built by Steber International, Taree, NSW and completed in May 2016. Her single hull is made of glass-reinforced plastic.

Port Stephens 31 is fitted with state-of-the-art radar, direction finding and navigation equipment as well as forward looking infra red search equipment.

John Thompson has been prepared to Marine Rescue NSW specifications with minor customisation at the request of Port Stephens Unit and is capable of covering Port Stephens and anywhere along the coast including Broughton Island, Seal Rocks and 30nm out to sea or further if tasked.

**PORT STEPHENS RESCUE VESSEL PORT STEPHENS 30
SHIRLEY CLARK**



Specifications

Make/Model:	Yamba Welding and Engineering, NAIAD 10M Rescue Vessel
Length:	10 Metres (33 feet)
Beam:	3.22 Metres (10.5 feet)
Displacement:	4.545 Tonnes
Draft:	0.77 Metres
Fuel:	900 Litres
Engines:	2 x 300 HP Suzuki V6 Outboards
Top Speed:	42 Knots
Crew:	Operational – normally 3-4
VHF:	Icom IC-M605EUROB VHF Radio
Radar:	Raymarine Quantum Radar T70416
MFD's (Multifunction Display)	3 x Raymarine Axiom 12" Pro and 1 x Raymarine 9"
AIS:	AIS 4000 Class A AIS
RDF:	Rotheda RDF RT-300
27MHz:	GME GX400B 27Mhz Radio
DCN:	Tait TM 9355 Radio

Rescue Vessel Port Stephens 30 Shirley Clark was built by Yamba Welding and Engineering, Yamba, NSW and completed in June 2023. Her single hull is made of aluminium.

Port Stephens 30 is fitted with state-of-the-art radar, direction finding and navigation equipment as well as forward looking infra red search equipment.

Shirley Clark has been prepared to Marine Rescue NSW specifications with minor customisation at the request of Port Stephens Unit and is capable of covering the area between Port Stephens and anywhere along the coast including Broughton Island, Seal Rocks and 30nm out to sea or further if tasked.

APPRECIATION



Contributors to this issue of *Port Chatter*:

Ben van der Wijngaart, Riko Eguchi, Frank Van Druten, Mick Duggan, Sharon Barry, Bloss Cleary, Grant Leddie, Morgan Bell, MRPS Facebook.

Distributors of the *Port Chatter*: The following people volunteer their time in making deliveries of this newsletter. Distribution Co-Ordinator: Ross Debenham, Peter Merlino, and Marian Chappell.

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Real Estate		Century 21 Paradise Waters, Nelson Bay
Restaurants and Cafes		Inner Light Tea Rooms, Nelson Head
Radio Station		Port Stephens FM 100.9

Give back this year

Volunteer with
Marine Rescue NSW

@marinerescuensw

Salamander Bay