

PORT CHATTER

SUMMER 2025

MARINE RESCUE NSW PORT STEPHENS UNIT

'Volunteers Saving Lives on the Water'



Photo credit: Phillip craig

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



Whither the Weary Walls?

For some months now we have closed off to the public the pathway to the old WWII bunker and Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol Hut on the north face of Nelson Head.

The reason for that has been the increasing deterioration of the old retaining walls and an

excess of caution to protect the public.

The heavy wet seasons in 2023 and 2024 have seen additional pressure placed on these unreinforced concrete walls constructed during WWII.



A series of engineering reports and test boring have determined that the best solution is to inject a grouting slurry into the sandy ground behind the walls that will effectively turn that sand into a deep sandstone inner wall, thus stabilising the hill.

The old outer wall will remain in its present condition with all pressure removed, essentially as a veneer.

As you can imagine, this work will not be cheap, and we are in the process of submitting a Crown Reserves Improvement Fund grant to pay for it.

The approval of the grant relies heavily on demonstration of the community value of the work and support from a broad sector of the community.

I thank all those community groups who have been approached and have responded positively with letters of support.

They will be a great help in securing the money to fix the wall.

I would like to stress that none of any donations to Marine Rescue Port Stephens is ever spent on anything other than paying for our operations that support our mission of saving lives on the water.

This grant won't be resolved until May 2026.

Remediation work on the wall can then commence and we will be able to reopen the northern pathway to the visiting public.

New Base Facilities v2-0

In previous editions over the last two years I have referred to efforts we have made and plans developed to replace the current aging Base facilities at Nelson Head.

An initial plan to rebuild over the old bunker on the north side of the hill came to nought once the costs and challenges of building in that location were identified.

We are currently working on building a new facility on the current site.

This would require the removal of the current buildings, including all those very unattractive antennas and using the full footprint of this area for a modern Marine Rescue Communications and Command Centre as well as space for our Gift Shop.



We have contracted SHAC architects to provide concept drawings which will need to be submitted for Crown Lands approval.

After that we will need to develop detailed plans and undertake a heritage assessment, geo-tech survey, quantity survey, and consultation with the Worimi Land Council.

Still early days, but at least we have started the process.

10th Anniversary of 6/7 January East Coast Low Rescues

For those who were around the Bay over 6 and 7 January 2016, you will likely recall the atrocious weather brought on by an East Coast Low.

This weather resulted in the largest and most dramatic Marine Rescue event on record in NSW.

(Continued on page 5)

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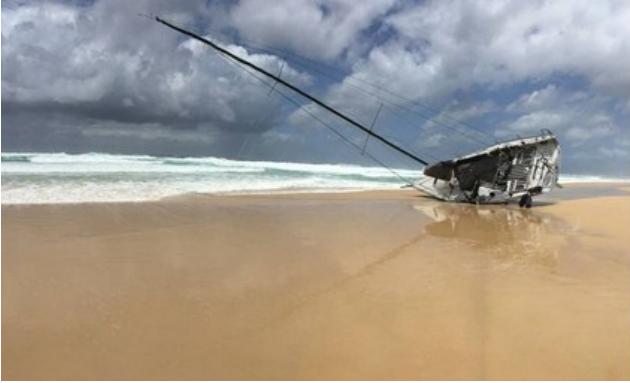
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UNIT COMMANDER'S REPORT CONT'D

(Continued from page 3)

Multiple sequential MAYDAYs over two days involved dramatic rescue efforts for four vessels - Out of Sight, Amante, Gem, and M3 - which resulted sadly in the loss of one life at sea.

The rescue efforts by Marine Rescue Port Stephens and other rescue agencies were equally dramatic and resulted in a number of bravery and other awards.



We felt that the 10th anniversary of this unique and tragic event deserved to be commemorated and have for this reason started planning arrangements for a Bravery and Commemorative Breakfast at the 2317 Restaurant on Soldiers Point Marina on 6 January 2026 for those involved on both sides – the rescuers and the rescued.

Planning involves replaying recordings of some of the drama, short panel chats with survivors and crew, and an informal breakfast followed by an opportunity for attendees to inspect our vessels.



We hope to be sending out invitations soon.

That Season is upon us again, already

The Boating Season has again arrived, although starting somewhat hesitantly with the on and off weather we have been experiencing.

You may be assured that our radio operators and boat crews will be ready to look after you if you get into trouble.

But do help us by logging on with Marine Rescue, by radio, mobile app, or phone.

I wish all our readers and their families a safe and relaxing summer and a Happy Christmas season.

Ben van der Wijngaart
Unit Commander

Merry Christmas
MARINE RESCUE
NSW

MARINE RESCUE NSW
Volunteers saving lives on the water

Happy Christmas from us all!

Stay safe on the water this festive season

DEPUTY UNIT COMMANDER

Float Our Boats 2025: A Night of Community, Celebration and Remarkable Generosity

The Port Stephens community proved once again that when we come together, we create magic.

The inaugural Float Our Boats Fundraising Dinner was a resounding success, with all 130 seats selling out within just a couple of weeks. The room buzzed with excitement, gratitude, and community pride as supporters gathered to champion Marine Rescue Port Stephens (MRPS) and the volunteers who keep our waterways safe.

We were honoured by the presence of three distinguished guests—Federal Member for Paterson Meryl Swanson, Member for Port Stephens Kate Washington, and Port Stephens Mayor Leah Anderson—who joined us to celebrate the lifesaving work done by our incredible volunteer team.

When Pink Socks Become a Hot Auction Item

What would you pay for a pair of pink socks?

For one very keen guest, the answer was: just under \$200—especially when the socks were signed by sporting great Willie Mason. What pairs perfectly with a set of pink statement socks? A Canterbury jersey, of course.



Pluck-a-Duck: A Crowd Favourite

One of the biggest hits of the night was the MRPS Pluck-a-Duck fundraiser. All 67 ducks disappeared within minutes, snapped up by eager supporters looking for their shot at a prize. The energy in the room was electric, and the enthusiasm contagious.



(Picture Federal Member for Paterson Meryl Swanson, Member for Port Stephens Kate Washington, and Port Stephens Mayor Leah Anderson with UC Ben van der Wijngaart and the MRPS Event Management team)

Fashion, Fun, and Fierce Bidding

Among the standout moments of the evening was a spirited bidding war over a coveted Knight's jersey. One guest was overheard declaring, "Ooooooh, but I luuuurve that Knight's shirt too!" But as the bids climbed, it became clear that red and blue weren't everyone's colours. In the end, the jersey found its way to a delighted couple whose smiles were as bright as their new piece of haute couture. A tense and hotly bid live auction thanks to Neil Moore from Raine and Horne.



(Continued on page 7)

DEPUTY UNIT COMMANDER CONT'D

(Continued from page 6)

A Night That Showcased Community Spirit

Beyond the laughter, friendly rivalry, and fundraising excitement, the night highlighted something truly important: the deep appreciation our community holds for Marine Rescue Port Stephens.



The event strengthened our brand, showcased the critical work our volunteers do, and served as a powerful reminder of what can happen when passionate people unite for a cause. The overwhelming support from attendees was a heartfelt endorsement of you—our volunteers—whose dedication keeps the waters of Port Stephens safe year-round.

We overdelivered on all our targets in terms of ticket sales and fundraising, thanks to the great efforts of our newly created Events Team and the generous donations from the many small businesses that donated goods and service for the night. Please go to the MRPS website to see who made the donations. <https://marinerescueportstephens.au/home/social-engagement/>



Thank you, Port Stephens community, for standing with us, celebrating with us, and helping us continue our mission. Float Our Boats 2025 was just the beginning. We look forward to seeing you again for a bigger and better event next year!

This is Marine Rescue Port Stephens Out!

Riko Eguchi
Deputy Unit Commander



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OPERATIONS OFFICER

The story of a very recent incident.

“Smoke on the Horizon”: How a Quiet Solo Sail Turned Into a Morning of Courage off Fingal Light

Just after dawn on 23 November 2025, the horizon off Fingal Light was painted in soft blue-grey. A lone sailing yacht traced a gentle line across the water — a quiet silhouette against the first light. Inside, a solo sailor went about his usual routines, listening to the hum of the engine and the rhythm of the sea.

Then came the sharp sting of burning plastic. Smoke began curling from the yacht’s electrical compartment, and a peaceful morning suddenly shifted into something far more dangerous.



“Just Another Call” — Until I Realised It Wasn’t

The first hint of trouble didn’t feel like trouble at all. The phone rang at the Marine Rescue Port Stephens radio base, I picked it up, and a calm, almost laid-back voice said hello — polite, steady. Nothing unusual.

He told me he was a solo yachtsman sailing toward Sydney. Then, in that same relaxed tone, he added that his vessel had had “a bit of an electrical fire,” and there was “an awful lot of smoke” coming from the electrical compartment.

That got my attention.

He went on to explain that the fire had knocked out his chart plotter, autopilot, radios, and electronic engine controls, leaving him navigating by compass alone. The engine was still running, but without autopilot he needed both hands on the helm — meaning he couldn’t safely shut the engine down.

Then, as casually as if he were asking for directions at a roundabout, he said:

“Should I continue on to Newcastle, or turn back to Port Stephens?”

I told him to head for the nearest safe haven — Port Stephens. He agreed, then mentioned he’d likely need help getting onto a mooring. By that stage, the radio team was moving, calling for a rescue crew to respond.

He told me he’d opened cupboards to help clear the smoke. It seemed to be improving, but he still felt a threat

lingering — “A ticking time bomb”, he called it.

While I gathered more details, he suddenly remembered his compass had a built-in position indicator. With that, he provided an exact location — the final piece we needed.

Before ending the call, I asked gently:

“Do you believe this is a Mayday situation?”

There was a pause — the sound of a man weighing reality.

“Well,” he said evenly, “it’s at that point... yes.”

And the call ended just as calmly as it began.

But by then, we all knew: this was no ordinary morning.

Volunteers Who Run Toward Trouble

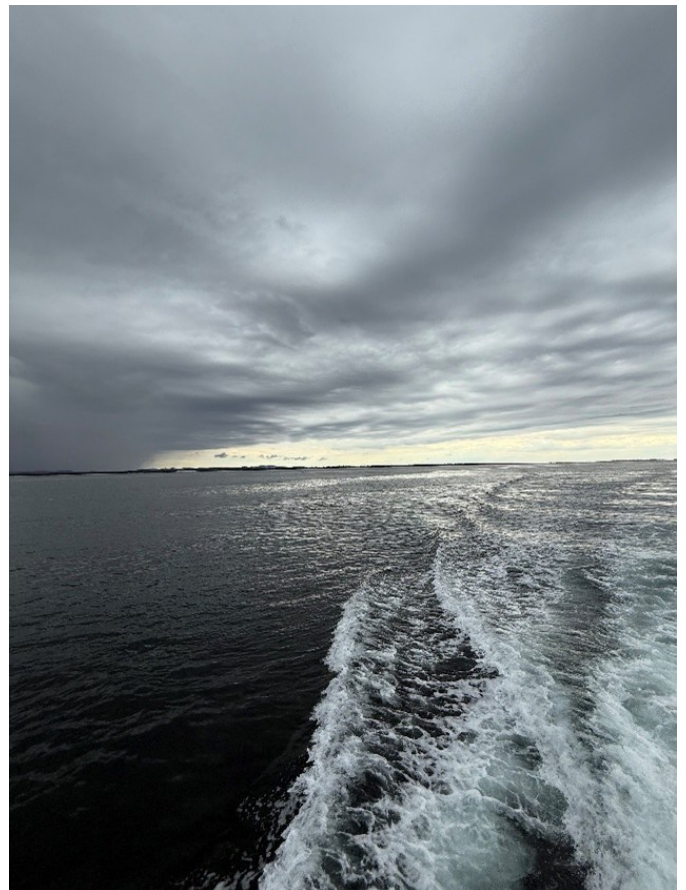
Within minutes, the crew of PS31 was underway, pushing through morning squalls and shifting visibility. The urgency was clear: electronics melted, radio dead, engine controls compromised, smoke only recently cleared — and a solo sailor out there navigating by compass alone.

A volunteer crew member remembers the atmosphere aboard PS31: focused, steady, and professional.

“One Coxswain was focused on getting us offshore fast and safe,” the crew member said.

“The second was running through every possible scenario — fire, evacuation, tow, engine issues — and assigning roles. It’s exactly what we train for.”

Training became instinct. Instinct became action.



(Continued on page 10)

OPERATIONS OFFICER CONT'D

(Continued from page 9)

Smoke Stains and Determination

When PS31 finally located the yacht, the damage was clear even from a distance — scorched wiring, melted plastic, and a skipper who had fought the flames alone and won. He was soot-stained, tired, but composed.

Because the electronic engine controls were compromised and the engine stuck in gear, approaching the yacht required precision. After assessment, the crew confirmed the vessel could still make way under its own steam.



PS31 took position ahead and to the side, forming a protective escort as the yachtsman guided his damaged vessel toward safety.

The Long Ride Home

The sea softened as they approached the entrance to Port Stephens, and the early tension began to ease. Once inside protected waters, conditions were right for the next step.

PS31 carefully came alongside, secured tow lines, and transitioned the yacht into a controlled tug tow for the final approach. With slow, deliberate movements, they guided the sailing vessel to the emergency mooring buoy, ensuring it was safe, secure, and no longer at risk.

For the first time since the fire began, the solo sailor could take his hand off the helm.



Quiet Heroes of the Coast

Marine Rescue NSW Inspector Andrew Harding later praised the skipper's quick thinking and firefighting efforts, noting that his calm response likely prevented catastrophe. He also commended the Marine Rescue crew and radio operators, whose coordination and readiness transformed a potentially life-threatening situation into a controlled rescue.

For the volunteers at Marine Rescue Port Stephens, the morning ended as many do: vessels secured, gear packed away, and the quiet satisfaction of knowing they had made the difference.

For the solo yachtsman, the memory will linger: the acrid smoke, the sudden loss of navigation systems and engine controls, the growing helplessness — and then the unmistakable sight of PS31 emerging from the grey.

On a quiet Sunday off Fingal Light, courage didn't shout. It arrived in calm voices, disciplined actions, and the unwavering commitment of volunteers who run toward trouble when others cannot.

Our operations so far this year:

For the year up to 24 November 2025 Marine Rescue Port Stephens has managed 209 incidents involving 415 people on board the vessels. The December/January period is expected to increase these numbers substantially.

Please enjoy your summer and stay safe.

Cheers

Mick Duggan
Operations Officer



FROM
MARINE RESCUE NSW

COMMUNITY RELATIONS OFFICER

Leading into the busy summer boating season Marine Rescue have received wonderful support from the community to help us keep our rescue boats ready to save lives at sea.

From the inaugural Float Our Boats fundraiser dinner, to substantial donations from fundraising activities by the Sunrise Village residents in Anna Bay and the Pearls of Port Stephens we have been pleasantly surprised by the generosity of the residents and businesses in the community, who have so obviously dug deep to help us. So thank you all, we appreciate it, and be assured the funds are being put to good use.

We feel a responsibility to the community to share back with them how that money gets spent, what work we are undertaking, what rescues we are completing and basically how we are serving the community in our mission of saving lives at sea.

We do this by trying to capture key moments and stories from our major activities milestones and events and publishing them in various channels.

Traditionally that has been the media of print, radio, and even television for major searches and rescues. Then with the internet came the need to present on websites.

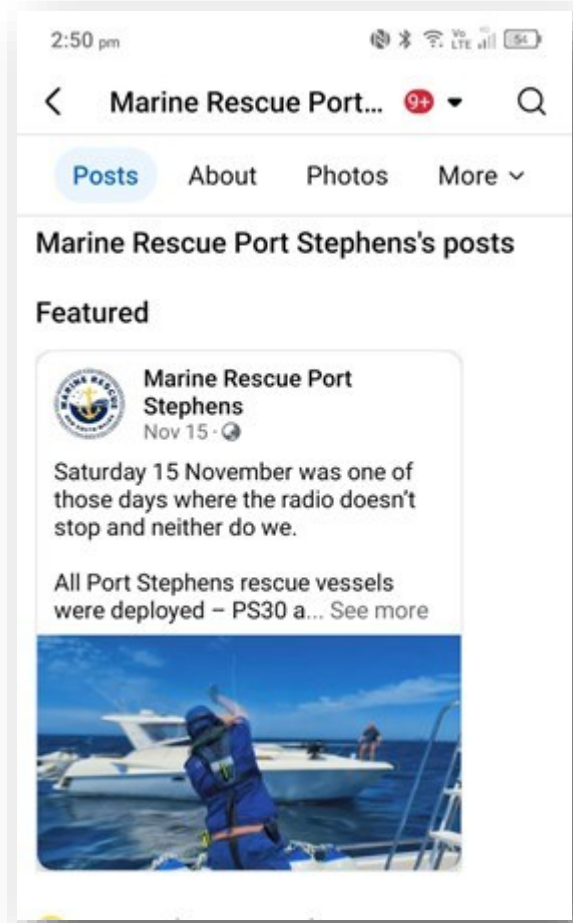
Today of course the younger generations increasingly consume their news and information through social media channels and so we have had to challenge ourselves to be increasingly proactive about planning for and managing the building and publishing of key content on social media platforms like Facebook.

As many of you would realise social media can be a difficult environment to navigate, as everyone has an opinion and negative comments and criticism are easily made.

Nevertheless we have bitten the bullet and pushed to share more with the community and tried to make the content both informative and entertaining so people can keep abreast of our activities. If they enjoy the content they will continue to like and follow us and they will continue to receive the content in their feed.

Recently we posted a reel about a rescue which attracted over 50,000 views, the most we've ever had!

Here's a pic of the post:



Here's the text from that post:

“Saturday 15 November was one of those days where the radio doesn't stop and neither do we.

All Port Stephens rescue vessels were deployed – PS30 aborting training to punch up the Myall, PS31 heading 15 nautical miles offshore NE of Broughton Island to a 42-foot cruiser dead in the water with a hydraulic failure, drifting and unable to steer.

One perfect first throw of the heaving line later (to be fair, if you miss a 42-footer we do start asking questions Batch), she was under tow and headed for home. By the time we were back

(Continued on page 13)





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COMMUNITY RELATIONS CONT'D

(Continued from page 11)

inside, the wind was up and the crew were working hard in tight quarters outside the breakwall, rafting up and nursing her alongside.

Huge thanks to the skippers and crews of Moonshadow – TQC Cruises, MV Osprey, Ynot and Imagine for working with us over radio to keep the harbour entrance clear, and to d'Albora Marina for dispatching three dockmasters to help berth in the breeze.

Sometimes the unknown and unavoidable will happen, no matter how well you prepare. When it does, 24 hours a day, every day of the year, your crew in blue are standing by."

I wish I could share the music from that post too, it was a Star Wars mix which really helped make the post more theatrical, and really complimented the heave of the throwing line, adding to the drama and interest in the post.

Once people view and enjoy and perhaps comment or share a post like this, their followers may also get visibility of the post and so our content can fan out past our 8,500 odd current followers.

This fanning out or "halo" effect helps get the views out to those 50,000 who ended up viewing this post.

Posts like this also draw some really favourable comments from the community, from something as simple as:

"Well done, great throw with the line though"

to some really effusive and colourful commentary like:

"Academy award performances...best Director! best action packed sequence! best photography! best actor!!! best rope throwing sequence! best costuming!!! best co-acting performance! I could go on but you got the drift...so to speak!"

We've received over one thousand comments in the past four-and-a-half months and sentiment is overwhelmingly positive (≈95%+), with strong community pride, volunteer recognition, and trust in our operational capabilities.

It highlights that comments significantly strengthen community connection, support our recruitment of new members and enhance the visibility of our fundraising efforts.

Here's a couple of other comments to give you a bit more flavour of the community response:

"Legends...shared on my timeline here in Shoal Bay"

and

"Think I might retire early and volunteer"

and finally

"Great work guys, thanks for your service to the marine community"

Obviously we appreciate the favourable comments but be assured our focus is not to get a slap on the back but on gaining ongoing valued support to attract new members and assist with our fundraising. Thanks again for that support.

Frank van Druten
Community Relations Officer



MARINE RESCUE NSW
Volunteers saving lives on the water

Volunteers saving lives on the water

Your donation will help us fulfill our mission
to protect & assist boaters in trouble
on NSW waterways.

We thank you for your generous support.



GIFT SHOP

Nestled in the heart of stunning Port Stephens our Gift Shop offers a range of thoughtful gifts for young and old.

Whether you're a local or a visitor, our shop is the perfect place to find that something special.

Our Gift Shop members will celebrate Christmas with a night out at the Nelson Bay Golf Club on the 11 December.

Instead of a Kris Kringle we have decided to donate necessary gifts to the Yacaaba Centre.

All our Marine Rescue Port Stephens members celebrated Christmas together with a lunch at Mumms Restaurant, going over on the Tea Gardens ferry.

It was a great day out.

As the holiday season approaches we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our wonderful community and supporters.

Merry Christmas from Marine Rescue Port Stephens Gift Shop.

Don't forget 10% discount to all staff.

Sharon Barry
Gift Shop Manager



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RAFFLE DRAWN 26 JANUARY 2026

The Marine Rescue Port Stephens raffle will be drawn on Monday 26 January 2026 at Fly Point Park during the Australia Day celebrations!

You can come along and buy tickets on the day and enjoy the festivities. Our ticket sellers will be on site from 8am until 2pm, along with our food truck.

You are also invited to visit the Base and purchase tickets in the Radio Room or Gift Shop any day leading up to the draw!

Another place our food truck will be out and about is for the Christmas Carols at Fly Point Park on Sunday 7 December from 3pm to 9pm. So pop in and say Merry Christmas if you see us!



MARINE RESCUE PORT STEPHENS

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GHOSTS OF THE HEADLAND

Ghosts of the Headland: The Haunted History of Nelson Head Lighthouse

There's something about Nelson Head that lingers with you. Maybe it's the wind sweeping off the sea, the panoramic view that seems to stretch into memory, or the quiet sense that you're standing in a place where the past never quite let go.

For more than 150 years, the Nelson Head Inner Lighthouse has kept watch over Port Stephens, offering safe passage to sailors and shelter to those who served there.

But if you listen closely—beneath the echo of seabirds and the crash of the surf—you may hear whispers of another kind. Whispers of those who never left.

A Light Born of Tragedy

The Nelson Head Inner Lighthouse began service in 1872, guiding vessels safely into the bay long before the modern comforts of radar or GPS.

The current Lighthouse and Cottage was built four years later in 1876. Built without a tower, its lantern room sat atop a sturdy timber cottage, home to generations of lighthouse keepers and their families.

It is here, on the winding climb up Lighthouse Road, that one of the most enduring legends of Nelson Head begins:

The ghost of Mrs Margaret Glover.



Mrs Margaret Glover

She was the wife of the first lighthouse keeper, Mr William Glover, who was stationed there in the late 19th century.

On a return journey up the steep incline toward the Cottage, Mrs Glover's horse-drawn buggy overturned—a tragic accident on what is now Lighthouse Drive.

She died from her injuries on that very road, and ever since, her presence has been reported both in the Cottage and along the drive.

Staff and visitors alike tell of an older woman seen in period dress, gliding past doorways, disappearing through walls, or lingering by the windows that look east to the sea—perhaps still waiting for her husband to return.

There was a strange coincidence in the death of her husband, William Glover, in 1892.

He dropped dead within a few yards of the spot where his wife was killed.

It is said the old gentleman had not gone on that road since, until the day of his death.



The Cottage in 1920

The Keeper Who Never Left

While Mrs Glover is the most talked-about spirit, she's not alone.

Over the decades, strange occurrences have kept the legend of Nelson Head alive among paranormal enthusiasts and volunteers alike.

Lights flickering with no electrical cause, the faint smell of tobacco where no one smokes, and the sound of footsteps pacing the timber floors when no one is above—many believe one of the old lighthouse keepers may still be performing his nightly rounds.

One former volunteer recalled locking the building one evening, only to hear the latch lift again moments later. "No one was there," he said, "but I could feel someone watching from the shadows. Not threatening—just... watching."

Echoes of Wartime

During World War II, Nelson Head served not only as a lighthouse but as a military lookout and signal station.

The strategic position made it a valuable asset, with soldiers stationed at a small bunker just below the Cottage.

(Continued on page 18)

GHOSTS OF THE HEADLAND CONT'D

(Continued from page 17)

Some say the restless energy of wartime lingers here too.

Visitors to the bunker have reported sudden chills, disembodied voices, and a heavy silence that presses on the air.

There are stories of soldiers seen on the path—uniformed men with blank expressions who vanish as quickly as they appear.

Whether residual memories or something more, these ghostly sightings have become part of Nelson Head's tapestry, adding a deeper layer to its history.

A Living Station With a Haunted Past

Today, the Nelson Head Lighthouse and Rescue Station is a place of community, education, and marine safety.

Maintained by the dedicated volunteers of Marine Rescue Port Stephens, the site hosts tens of thousands of visitors each year who come for the view, the history—and sometimes, the haunting.

Inside the museum, you'll find maritime relics, historic photographs, and perhaps even the lingering scent of salt and kerosene from another era.



The first Lighthouse keeper Mr William Glover

But ask around quietly, and you'll find that the most enduring stories aren't always in the display cases—they're in the walls, the floorboards, and the spaces in between.

Fact or Folklore?

Are the ghost stories real? It depends who you ask. For some, they're simply part of the charm—local legends passed down like sailor's tales.

For others, the strange experiences are undeniable.

Whatever you believe, one thing is certain: Nelson Head is a place where history is not just remembered—it's felt.

So next time you visit the Inner Lighthouse, take a moment.

Stand still.

Listen.

You might just hear the past calling out across the bay.

Visit the Nelson Head Lighthouse and Rescue Station—if you dare.

Open daily, with panoramic views, a maritime museum, café, and stories that refuse to stay buried.

Grant Leddie Facilities Officer



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MARINE RESCUE NSW
Volunteers saving lives on the water



SPOOKY BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

When customers ask Alison Rogers for recommendations on ghost stories, she has a few favourites on the shelves at Readers Retreat that she pulls out for them to peruse.

Join her as she explains how several of those books have come to reside in the store.

The Virago Book of Ghost Stories by Richard Dalby

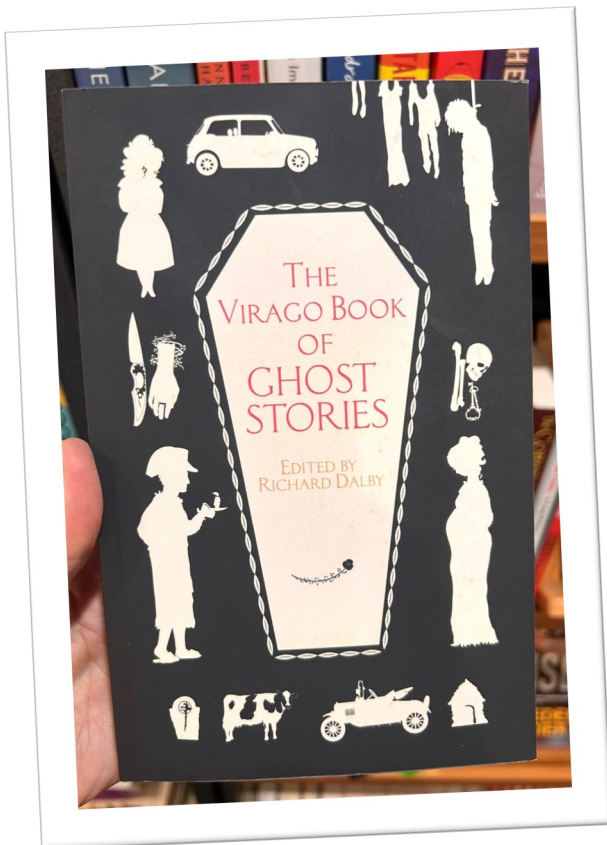
My first recommendation is The Virago Book of Ghost Stories edited by Richard Dalby.

This Virago collection is jammed packed with classics.

I love collections of short stories from different authors.

It contains stories written by authors such as Ruth Rendell, A.S. Byatt and Edith Wharton.

I can only imagine the time taken by the editor to make this considered and thrilling selection.



Night Side of the River by Jeanette Winterson

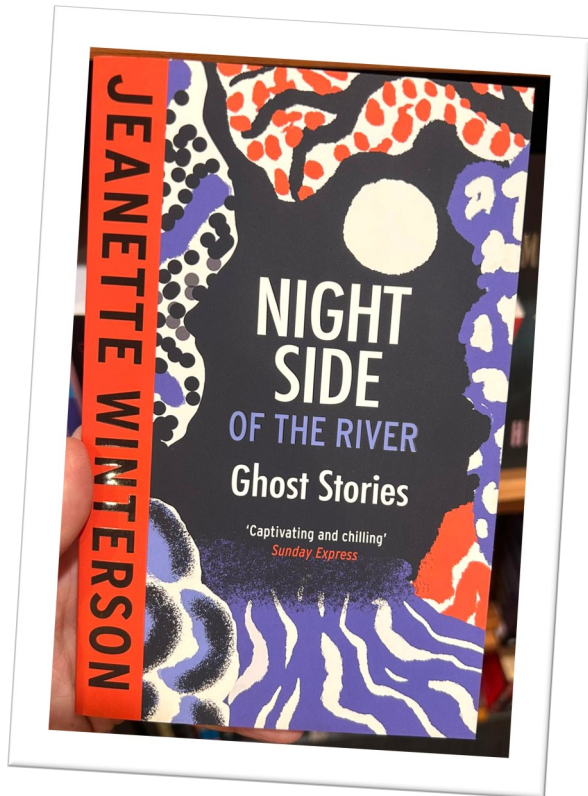
For my next suggestion, I would guide the customer straight to Jeanette Winterson's Night Side of the River.

Jeanette is one of my favourite authors and I love the way she writes.

Many of her novels give us a hint of a world that lies just beyond, but in this collection of short stories she takes it to the next level.

I listened to [an interview with Jeanette](#) where she recounted some of her personal real world experiences with the other side and she actually said that some of the stories in the book are fiction and some may not be fiction.

Chilling!



A Sunny Place for Shady People by Mariana Enriquez

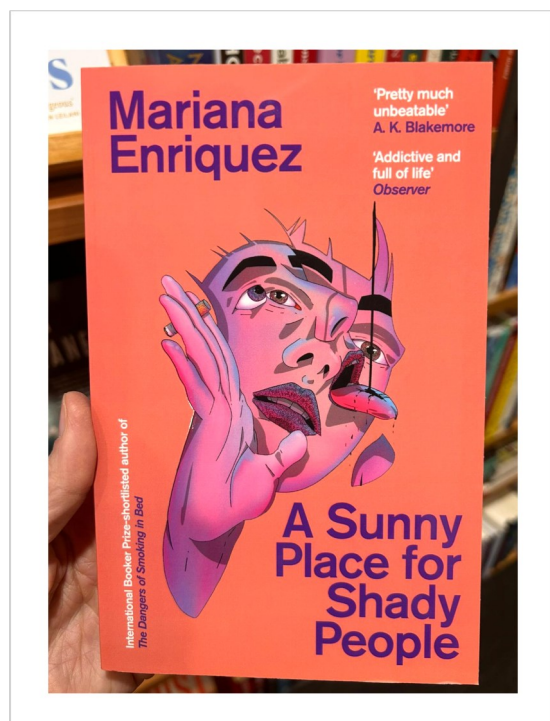
My third choice is also a book of short stories called A Sunny Place for Shady People by Mariana Enriquez.

Mariana is an Argentinian Australian living in Melbourne.

She was a guest at the Sydney Writers Festival and [her conversation](#) was hilarious.

These stories are scary and funny in equal measure. One of my favourites is when she weaves horror through a story about a woman going through perimenopause.

Mariana takes everyday issues and adds a level of spice.



(Continued on page 20)

SPOOKY BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'D

(Continued from page 19)

Wuthering Heights

By Emily Brontë

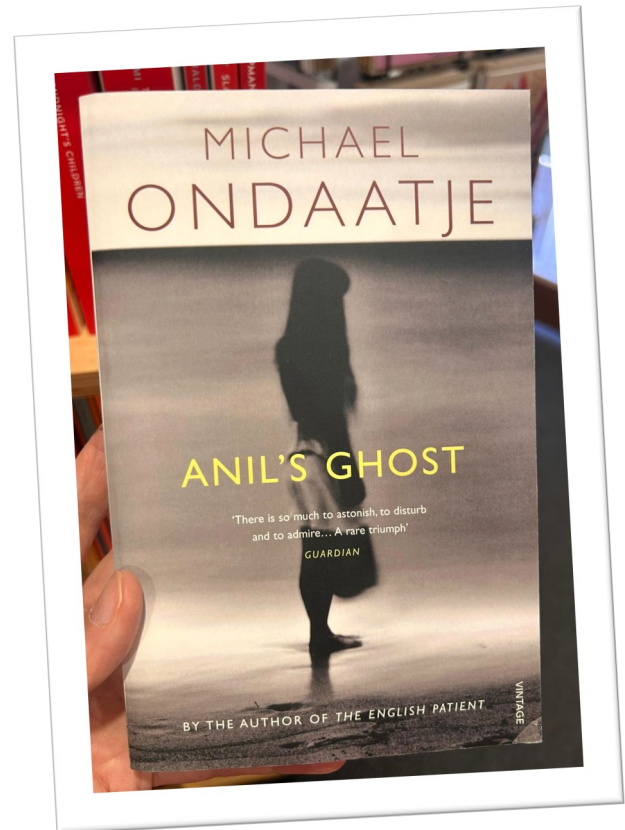
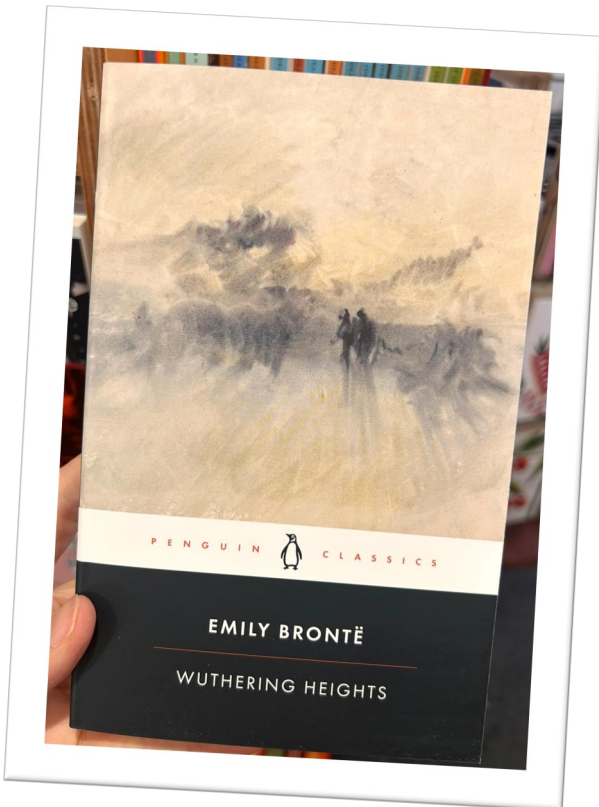
Before I leave the customer to thumb through the books and make their selection, I will gently remind them about Emily Brontë's classic *Wuthering Heights*.

I read this in high school and it has stayed with me ever since.

But it was a recent episode on the [Backlisted Podcast](#) that made me think again about this novel as a masterpiece.

The podcasters explained the amount of work that the Brontë sisters devoted to their craft.

The discussion also delved into some questions about the darker undercurrents of Emily's imagination.



More suggestions?

Other books featuring spooky stories scattered about the shop include:

- The House of Spirits by Isabel Allende
- Anil's Host by Michael Ondaatje
- We Have Always Lived in the Castle by Shirley Jackson

Alison Rogers
Readers Retreat bookshop

Editors note: Find these titles at [Readers Retreat](#), Unit 2/9 George Road, Salamander Bay NSW 2317, 0447 904 286. Avoid the rush and pre-order books for the festive season.

REAL GHOST SHIPS

MARY CELESTE

(1872, Atlantic Ocean)

Found adrift with cargo intact and lifeboat gone. The captain, his family, and crew vanished without a trace — one of the ocean's most enduring mysteries.



MV JOYITA

(1955, South Pacific)

Discovered half-submerged and deserted. Food still on tables, radio tuned to distress — 25 people gone, leaving only questions and conspiracy theories.

HIGH AIM NO. 6

(2003, Indian Ocean)

Engine running, ten tons of tuna on ice — but no crew. One sailor later confessed to a mutiny, yet the true motive remains lost at sea.



KAZ II

(2007, Great Barrier Reef)

Yacht found drifting with coffee cups still warm and newspaper open. Calm seas, no distress call, and three men who simply vanished into thin air.

"MUMMY" GHOST SHIP

(2016, Philippine Sea)

A drifting yacht discovered with its lone sailor mummified at the desk, radio in hand. He'd likely been dead only a week — a haunting modern mystery.



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THE NUMBERS

AUGUST

Volunteers across the state experienced their quietest August since 2019. Boaters heeded vital weather warnings, yet crews were tested with significant missions. There were 191 search and rescue missions during the month, including 75 emergency responses, with 317 people safely returned to shore.

Demand for assistance was 27% lower than the same month last year and 33% down on the busiest August on record in 2022.

Radio operators managed 12,421 calls in August, including 12 MAYDAYs, while keeping watch over 12,625 people on board vessels that had Logged On.

Hunter/Central Coast (across all 8 units): 47 search and rescue missions including 12 emergency responses with 75 people safely returned to shore.

Search and rescue missions in locations of highest demand: Lake Macquarie 26, Brisbane Water 9, **Port Stephens 5**

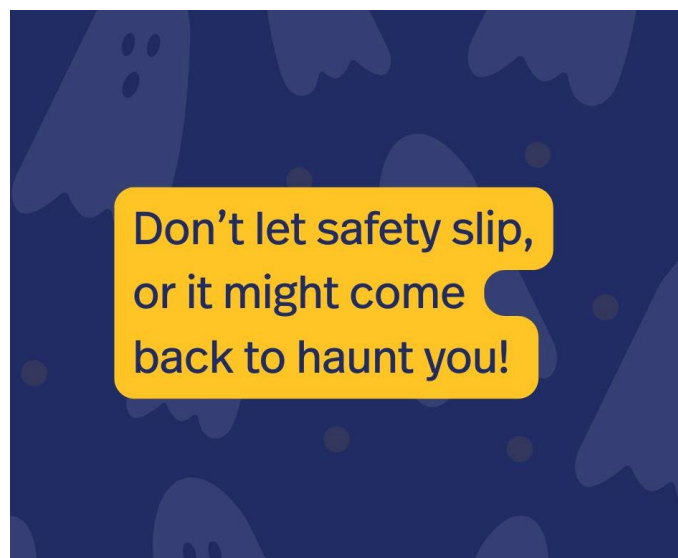
SEPTEMBER

It was a September surge as Marine Rescue NSW volunteers completed a record number of missions. The demand for assistance resulted in our busiest September, exceeding that of September 2023, when crews completed 372 search and rescue missions, including 134 emergency responses, and the safe return of 802 people to shore.

“We would much prefer to be seeing record-low numbers because when demand for Marine Rescue NSW is down, it means boaters are having a safe, enjoyable day on the water and returning home safely,” said Marine Rescue NSW Acting Commissioner Todd Andrews.

“Concerningly, 65% of responses were for engine, battery and fuel issues,” Acting Commissioner Andrews said.

Volunteers managed 21,100 calls in September, including nine MAYDAY and four Pan Pan calls, and kept watch over 26,556 people on board Logged On vessels.



Hunter/Central Coast (across all 8 units): 98 search and rescue missions including 19 emergency responses with 186 people safely returned to shore.

Search and rescue missions in locations of highest demand: Lake Macquarie 40, Brisbane Water 19, **Port Stephens 17**



OCTOBER

Marine Rescue NSW volunteers across the state experienced their busiest start to a boating season on record, performing 460 search and rescue missions in October — including 130 emergency responses — and safely returning 989 people to shore.

Acting Commissioner Todd Andrews said the figures were staggering and follow a record month in September, highlighting the sustained high demand for the Service’s operations.

“We have seen a 19% increase in demand for our services compared with the same month last year, which was previously our busiest October.

The boating season began on 1 October and runs through to ANZAC Day 2026.

“It is concerning that 44% of our responses were for engine failure,” Acting Commissioner Andrews said. “Mechanical problems, battery failure and running out of fuel accounted for almost 60% of incidents last spring holidays.”

“Volunteers on the Mid North Coast, Hunter Central Coast, and Monaro (South Coast, Alpine Lakes & Moama) all recorded their busiest-ever October, while Greater Sydney equalled its record of 177 search and rescue missions, set in 2020.

Radio operators managed 21,050 calls in October, including 15 MAYDAYs and four Pan Pans, while keeping watch over 27,390 people on board Logged On vessels.

Hunter/Central Coast **REGION RECORD** (across all 8 units): 155 search and rescue missions including 34 emergency responses with 310 people safely returned to shore.

Search and rescue missions in locations of highest demand: Lake Macquarie 62, Brisbane Water 29, **Port Stephens 28**, Tuggerah Lakes 16

WEDDINGS

Hello Readers

Inner Light Nelson Head hosted the wedding of Danielle and Matthew on 4 October 2025.

Danielle and Matt had originally planned to hold their wedding in Thailand, but chose our beautiful Inner Light Nelson Head in the end.

The couple celebrated their special day in the presence of sixty guests along with family members.

It was a very emotional day for mother of the bride, seeing her little girl all married.

Danielle is a psychologist; and Matt is a construction site manager. They met online and dated for two and a half years before planning for their special day.



On behalf of the Inner Light Wedding Team, we wish the happy couple all the absolute best for the future.

Bloss Cleary
Weddings Coordinator



WANTED: RAINBOW LORIKEET INFO

Wanted. Locations of evening mass roosts of Rainbow Lorikeets in the Port Stephens Region.

A review of lorikeet numbers in the Hunter Region is being undertaken by a Newcastle researcher and your input is requested.

The roost site at the D'Albora Marina has already been surveyed.

Please provide information to Neil Fraser at neil8fff@gmail.com.

Neil Fraser
Researcher (and MRPS Member)



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.



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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.



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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

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, Alison Rogers, Neil Fraser, Phillip Craig (cover photo), MRPS Facebook.

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Real Estate		Century 21 Paradise Waters, Nelson Bay
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Radio Station		Port Stephens FM 100.9

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Marine Rescue NSW

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Salamander Bay