



Initial Report of the 34th Meeting of the National Search and Rescue Council

NATSAR REPORT

Date: 5 November
2010

Originator: AMSA

Summary

Executive Summary	This brief summary of outcomes of the 34 th Meeting of the National Search and Rescue (SAR) Council is to inform stakeholders regarding actions arising from the meeting. The full report including working papers will be published in due course.
Action to be taken	For discussion and information.
Related Documents	NATSAR 34 - Working Papers

Council Meeting

1. The 34th Meeting of the National Search and Rescue (SAR) Council was conducted in Darwin, with four sessions programmed during 13-15th October 2010.
2. These annual meetings are intended to foster consistent SAR arrangements and procedures amongst Australian SAR Authorities, i.e. AMSA, State and Territory police and the Australian Defence Force. In the main, representation included both senior officers and operational specialists. Such representation is much appreciated for the depth it brings to discussion. Tasmania was not represented.
3. Observers from the New Zealand SAR Council, the recently formed National Volunteer Marine SAR Volunteer committee, and the Australian Federal Police's International Deployment Group added a useful range of expertise to the meeting.
4. The Council greatly appreciated the role of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services in hosting the 34th meeting. Deputy Commissioner Shayne Maines opened the meeting, emphasising the importance of inter-agency cooperation, the technology now available to police and SAR practitioners (such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) packages) and the roles that volunteers play in search and rescue.

Council Discussions

5. The call for papers and presentations for the meeting is normally issued in August, with each authority submitting their annual report of activities as well as any specific concerns or ongoing matters for consideration and discussion. The 28 papers received for the meeting were posted on the National SAR Council website (www.natsar.amsa.gov.au) and provided in the Working Papers Briefing Pack. The agenda and a description of each paper are



provided at Attachment A. The complete set of papers and a summary of discussions will be provided in the full report.

6. The programmed subjects and wide experience of the Council led to robust discussion around a number of issues. Topics that drew particular interest and generated further avenues for the Council to follow included:
 - a. perhaps the first ever composition of national SAR statistics, albeit still very basic;
 - b. the impact of mental health-related behaviour on the number and type of SAR incidents being experienced by the Police SAR Authorities, and measures that might be considered in response;
 - c. early indications of success in the joint Torres Strait Marine Safety Program with a suggestion to identify other regions that might benefit from similar programs;
 - d. issues regarding completion of core competencies associated with the national Police SAR Managers' Course and succession plans for the police directing staff;
 - e. the number of SAR authorities currently adopting *SARMAP* as their preferred GIS-based decision support system;
 - f. a strategic planning session in which the Council identified potential future initiatives and selected higher priority items for action in the coming year;
 - g. agreement that it is time to bring the existing SAR Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the Commonwealth, States and Territories up to date; and
 - h. developments in distress beacons, other electronic locating devices and satellite phones, with work to monitor their emergence and impact.

Actions Arising

7. Some 17 areas were identified as requiring further action, with members volunteering to take on responsibilities individually, as well as to form working groups over the next year. A complete list of the actions, dates for completion and responsibilities is in Annex A.
8. To monitor progress and facilitate the achievement of the action items, the council members agreed to participate in a teleconference session in March 2011 to review progress. The working groups will also schedule teleconference sessions as required.

Australian SAR Award 2010

9. The National SAR Council's remit includes annual selection and presentation of the Australian SAR Award. The Council selected Mr Bob Kent and Mr David Dodge of Esperance, Western Australia, for the 2010 award. Mr Kent, the owner and pilot of *Esperance Helitours Helicopters*, and Mr Dodge, an SES volunteer, assisted in the rescue of two people off the coast of Esperance in August 2009. The two rescued men, father and son, were thrown into the water approximately two kilometres offshore when a rogue wave capsized their boat. At the Council's invitation Deputy Commissioner Maines presented the 2010 Award to Mr Kent and Mr Dodge. Fremantle Water Police assisted with a testimonial from the survivors.

Familiarisation

10. Some Council members received a briefing on AMSA's Darwin-based Dornier dedicated SAR aircraft followed by a familiarisation flight. AMSA finds such activities to be useful in making senior police officers aware of the capabilities of these aircraft for SAR and other emergency response operations. Observing that Mr Kent has already worked with the Perth-based Dornier in SAR operations, and might well do so again, he and Mr Dodge also attended.
11. The NT Police provided briefings on their maritime capabilities followed by a familiarisation passage around Darwin Harbour in one of their vessels. The rapid growth of the oil and gas industry in north and north-west Australia, offering new challenges and opportunities for the SAR system, was of interest to members of the council.

Conclusion

12. At this meeting the Council reflected upon incremental changes of recent years, in the conduct of SAR operations, in the technology available for SAR, and in those environmental factors beyond the control of the SAR system which must be accommodated. The drivers of SAR in Australia, whether through industry or recreational activity could be seen in the statistics presented for consideration, especially the demand placed on Police SAR by "wanderers" affected by mental illness.
13. Our strategic planning session identified issues for the SAR Council to address through community education and training for SAR operators. Agreement to update the IGA in line with developments in technology, regulation and contemporary operational practices in our highly cooperative Australian SAR environment is timely.
14. The South Australia Police offered to host the 35th meeting in Adelaide in 2011.



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Annex A: List of Actions arising

Attachments:

- a. NATSAR 34 Working Paper 34-1-1 Agenda
- b. NATSAR 34 Working Paper 34-1-3 List of Attendees