

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

13 & 14 November 2008

Introduction by Chair

The chair of the Council, Mr John Young (AMSA) welcomed the delegates and observers to the 32nd meeting. John then introduced Chief Police Officer Michael Phelan to open the meeting.

Welcome by Chief Police Officer Michael Phelan, Australian Federal Police

Mr Phelan welcomed the delegates to the 32nd National SAR Council meeting in Canberra. He noted the topics presented for discussion, placing emphasis on the need for compatibility of expanding technology, as well as maintaining the human side of SAR, which includes the sometimes overwhelming responsibility to meet public expectations. Chief Police Officer Phelan cited the recent ACT example of a 30 year old woman out for three nights in adverse circumstances and how the local authorities had come together to achieve a positive outcome. Having thanked all delegates for taking the time to attend and encouraging them to make the most of the sessions, he declared the meeting open.

John Young thanked Mr Phelan for his words and embarked on the business of the meeting. Given there were a number of new delegates, the Chairman asked delegates to briefly introduce themselves and he explained the changes made to the AMSA delegates following the retirement of David Baird and his own confirmation in the role of General Manager, Emergency Response Division. Alan Lloyd is currently filling the role of SAR Operations Manager. Steve Langlands has been replaced by Amanda MacKinnell, following Steve's return to the Royal Australian Navy.

The Council decided that a vote of thanks for the service of David Baird and Steve Langlands be entered into the record.

The Chairman also presented Chris Wright's (AMSA) apologies and indicated that Chris's contribution to the work in the revision of Chapter 1 of the National SAR Manual would be presented by Colin Barr.

National SAR Award

The National SAR Award is traditionally presented at the SAR Council meeting however, the voting this year indicated that whilst all the nominees were worthy of recognition, there were none from outside the group of SAR professionals that represented an *outstanding* contribution to Search and Rescue. The council reaffirmed its view that the award is primarily intended to recognise non-professional contributions to search and rescue, rather than those who make a living in the field. The voting process also indicated that there was very strong support for presenting a Certificate of Commendation to Constable Frank Raab of the Western Australia Water police. It was agreed that a letter requesting the Commissioner of Western Australia Police to present the Certificate to Frank Raab would be composed.

ACTION: The Council Chair to write to the Commissioner of Western Australia Police, requesting his assistance in presenting the Certificate.

AGENDA ITEM 1: ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

WP31/1/1- Provisional Agenda

The Agenda was accepted with some alterations to be made to the schedule of events to accommodate the early release of one or two delegates.

AGENDA ITEM 2: SECRETARY'S REPORT

WP31/2/1- Secretary's Report

The Secretary's report was accepted.

AGENDA ITEM 3: SAR OPERATIONS

WP31/3/1 – Jurisdictional reports

AMSA Report - Alan Lloyd

Alan Lloyd, the new Acting SAR Operations Manager, presented the report for AMSA, highlighting response times for 121.5 MHz distress alerts and how much this is likely to change after February. Alan also went on to outline changes to response procedures for any 121.5 MHz activations post 1 February 2009, noting the lowered probability of detection for a person who activates a 121.5 MHz beacon after that date.

Alan highlighted a number of cases: firstly, November 2007 an incident in Victoria (VH-CHU) with no flight plan filed and no supplementary details. The resolution of this incident proved conclusively the vital role that Intelligence gathering plays and its uses in SAR.

Alan also raised the recent case of the yacht *Blessed Be*. This was a major search that placed a high level of stress on the Rescue Coordination Centre's (RCC) systems' ability to respond. With 200-250 aircraft taskings, the search was resource intensive (in terms of accommodation, food, survival equipment drops) however inter-agency cooperation was nothing less than outstanding. Alan specifically wished to thank NSW and QLD for their involvement in the *Blessed Be* case, and VIC for the VH-CHU incident. All delegates agreed that these were good examples of the national SAR system at work.

Malicious distress beacon activations were shown to be on the rise across Australia during 2008. Further discussions regarding these resource intensive searches is to be found in the Distress Beacon papers.

Alan reported the increasing tendency of pilots to carry Personnel Locator Beacons (PLBs) and that activation of a PLB in an aircraft incident tends to indicate that there are survivors. PLBs also feature most frequently in inadvertent activations, as the units may sometimes be bumped or snagged when carried on the body.

The AMSA Disaster Recovery Facility, recently dedicated as the *Ted Anson Centre* proved its worth when, in the middle of a major search, power was lost to the RCC. The operators successfully transferred to the Recovery Facility in Mitchell.

The AMSA presentation is attached.

South Australia – Peter Hoadley

Peter Hoadley reported on the number of operations for the last 12 months; indicating that a marked decrease in Marine SAR operations had been seen; however a slight increase in Land SAR has been experienced. This could be partially explained as the Volunteer Marine Rescue organisations may not report all minor cases.

Peter highlighted a couple of incidents: firstly, in June 2008, a 58 year old male was missing for a period of 48 hours. This SAR was particularly challenging due to the missing person's deafness, that he had had a recent stroke, and, was also illiterate. The search consumed a great deal of resources in its resolution.

The second example presented occurred in July 2007, when students on a kayaking expedition in Victor Harbour were pushed out to sea. Multiple reports were received and four persons were located in the water, a further 11 missing. Rotary wing aircraft were deployed and after a short search all students were found. This was an incident that had the potential to have far more tragic results, had resources not been available or the incident not reported as quickly.

Thirdly, three people were shark fishing in heavy weather off Stansbury (Yorke Peninsula) when their boat sank due to net entanglement on an underwater obstruction. One deceased person was recovered, one person remained unaccounted for. Victoria police utilising sidescan sonar came to the assistance of the South Australian SAR teams. The sunken fishing vessel was located in four hours and was later found to be out of survey. A number of additional issues were identified that contributed to the sinking.

Peter Hoadley wished to publicly thank Victoria Police for their assistance in this incident, one of many examples of inter-state liaison.

The SA report is attached.

Queensland – Jim Whitehead

Jim Whitehead presented the QLD report. Land SAR Statistics were noted as increasing each year, however the annual Marine SAR statistics are on par. The number of Medical Evacuations was also identified as being on the rise.

Recent Coronial findings have raised the question 'when to cancel a SAR operation'. This issue will be addressed at the Discussion paper on SAR Termination Timings. Queensland's SAR community is still awaiting the Coroner's findings relating to the Department of Immigration vessel *Malu Sara* incident.

Some emerging issues with personnel were raised, with the poaching of trained operators identified as being particularly significant. There are also issues with skills maintenance of SAR and refresher training. To remedy the situation, a SAR Skills Booklet has been devised, with exercises to be completed every two years. This has the dual purpose of ensuring that common standards are met and will go some way towards satisfying questions during Coronial inquiries.

Notable SAR Occurrences for Queensland in 2008 included: two scuba divers located after spending some 19 hours in the water, the *Kaz II* Coronial Findings were handed down and two recent bushwalking incidents in Queensland were cited, one being a 68 year old bushwalker who went missing and was found deceased on Day 7, close to the point of origin. This was a Multi agency search providing many learning points. There has been an education process to encourage volunteer groups to maintain their log books for record-keeping purposes during SAR reporting.

Finally, Jim cited the case of a 62 year old man who was reported missing, believed to have been taken by a crocodile. The suspect crocodile was caught and forced to regurgitate its stomach contents, with human remains recovered.

The QLD report is attached.

Australian Defence Force – LCDR Garry Lewis, RAN

LCDR Garry Lewis provided an introduction of his role and responsibilities and outlined the conduct of Military SAR in the Australian Defence Force. On the training front, two MILSAR courses, producing 14 qualified SAR Mission Coordinators, have been conducted this year.

Garry Lewis reflected on some major initiatives within Defence, noting that the ADF possesses a robust SAR capability with vessels maintained at a high Notice To Move and the tasking of Operational Readiness Vessels. The Joint Headquarters will be relocating from Sydney to the Colocated Headquarters at Bungendore in early 2009 and the Defence Instruction (General) on Search and Rescue is currently being reviewed, by the new Defence SARO: Squadron Leader Jim Collisson, a graduate of the recent Military SAR course. Jim was introduced to the Council during the Friday session.

Garry noted that Beacon Management is an issue within Defence, with registration and emplacement details not having been captured during distribution. Liaison is in progress with the AMSA Beacon Database Manager to streamline the Registration process and an eForm has been constructed to facilitate the management of the ADF beacons.

The ADF report is attached.

New Zealand – Carl Van Der Meulson

The New Zealand report was presented by Carl Van Der Meulson and Geoffrey Logan who noted that during 2008, there were four or five prolonged SAR operations, lasting for three or more weeks, however a steady decrease in the required search time overall has been noted.

The 406 MHz awareness campaign targeting media and websites has met with a fair level of success. A number of examples of beacon activations leading to rescues have been reflected in the annual statistics; aviation figures particularly, have seen a significant downturn in false alerts.

Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) forms part of SAR in NZ. Work is ongoing with Australian input to develop standards and the New Zealanders are looking to maximise cross-pollination opportunities, especially on training courses. Recent incidents necessitating DVI included a canyoning excursion when flash flooding overwhelmed a school group; seven people were drowned as a result. During the recovery of victims, the use of underwater cameras to conduct reconnaissance greatly reduced the resources ultimately required to locate bodies and plan the recovery.

The New Zealand report is attached.

Northern Territory – Kris Evans

Kris Evans commenced his report by outlining the specific geographical and demographical concerns of the NT, noting especially the high percentage of recreational fishermen and that licensing or registration for boating is not required. He highlighted the repeated lack of trained people for operations, citing his experiences as the Commander at Tennant Creek for the Peter Falconio case.

Kris reported that most searches are resolved within 13 hours, usually with a positive result however, this is heavily reliant upon persons recording their trip intentions, whether entering the National Parks or sailing.

The Northern Territory report is attached.

Tasmania – Ross Paine

Ross Paine made the report on behalf of Tasmania noting that the reliance on the Tasmania Police Westpac Rescue Helicopter is increasing. The move to dedicated and scheduled training dates for police air crew has had positive benefits with as duties as air crew duties are a secondary role for the majority of police air crew members. The rescue helicopter is fully night vision compliant with pilots and aircrew now trained. The indications are that the use of night vision equipment enhances rescue capability in terms of aircraft and crew safety and scope of operations.

Tasmania Police are in the final fit out stage of their new 16 metre ocean going vessel, which will replace an aging vessel of similar size.

The State's Rescue statistics show an increased response to EPIRBs/PLBs with improved reaction times. Tasmania has the distinction of having had the first SPOT beacon activation in Australia. A delay was caused by the circuitous route the SPOT Control Centre took in contacting authorities.

Ross detailed some specific SAR cases, noting the recent loss of a fishing vessel with fatalities, due to freak weather conditions. An additional task that the SAR forces are called to participate in is the removal of treesitters in the National Forests. Whilst not specifically SAR, the techniques required for locating and extricating the protestors are challenging and the learning outcomes have been valuable when translated into the evacuation of casualties from similar terrain.

The Tasmanian report is attached.

AFP – Trevor Coutts

Trevor Coutts presented the report for the Australian Federal Police.

Trevor identified that the significant increase in SAR was due to people getting lost in the bushland after relying upon locally produced booklets. These booklets and maps have been rendered inaccurate with the January 2003 bushfires having destroyed the recorded trails. The typical pattern of Land SAR for the AFP was a time span of seven to eight hours, with persons having been reported missing in the evening, usually located the next morning.

The AFP report is attached

New South Wales – Mick Smith & Glenn Finniss

Glenn Finniss - Marine SAR – Glenn Finniss led the report for NSW, identifying one factor that posed a weakness in SAR operations as being the Distress and Calling Network. The limitations in monitoring and radio practices were observed, when a 65 foot prawn trawler became hooked up on an underwater pinnacle near Brunswick Heads. The vessel rolled to port and the three men escaped the hull. One swam to shore, a rescue helicopter spotted one man clinging to a fishbox, the third man was lost at sea.

Debriefings from the survivors indicated that they were passed by vessels and saw the search helicopters. Of concern was that not many fishing vessels were monitoring Channel 16 and tend to call on their own company working channels, meaning that distress calls may not be heard.

The prawn trawler in this incident was not fitted with a float-free distress beacon, and the question as to whether Float Free Beacons should become mandatory on Trawlers and other similar vessels is expected to be raised in the Coroner's report. Life raft carriage requirements are also expected to be considered.

Mick Smith reported on NSW Land SAR, noting a slight decrease in the number of cases. This was attributed to the nature and geographical location of areas where people are active and a more experienced pool of volunteers, therefore able to make more effective contribution to searches. Asset attendance on searches was also noted as a contributing factor in resolving incidents quickly. The Westpac helicopter is available usually on Day 2 due to the required transit time and the notification point. The introduction of Night Vision Goggles (NVG) into service is expected to make a significant difference to operations, noting the recent case of the downed Metroliner: floating mailbags and other debris were spotted by operators wearing NVG in the assigned Seahawk helicopters.

NVG are also to be adopted by the Dornier observers. Anecdotal evidence from NZ usage suggested the importance of educating bushwalkers and similar interest groups that taking some sort of light source that can be spotted via NVGs (eg. a mobile phone with the screen on can be seen from 5 kilometres away) greatly improves the chances of being found.

Western Australia – Michael Wear

Michael Wear reported good results in SAR for Western Australia during 2008 and provided some specific examples of SAR incidents including a vessel which struck a pylon with eight personnel on board. In another incident, the master of the vessel *Moon Star* activated an EPIRB 85 nautical miles southwest of Fremantle. The owner refused to get off the vessel and on the second night, in poor conditions, the vessel was unable to be located via aircraft. *Moon Star* was located by a Royal Australian Air Force P3-C Orion en route from Adelaide, sailing under jury rig. Investigations found that the owner had a previous history of raising the alarm but then refusing to abandon the vessel.

Of particular note was an incident in Dampier where a Mayday call was received in the early hours indicating a vessel, with five personnel on board, was on fire. A search was conducted by Water Police and RAN units, as well as support from the offshore oil rigs. This was a large scale search for an entire day with nothing found. Further enquiries found two men had instigated a hoax and were charged with having caused “false belief”. They were convicted and ordered to serve 200 hours community service and to pay restitution of \$87,000.

John Young expressed his gratitude for the efforts by the WA police in prosecuting the malicious activations which may serve as a deterrent against future nefarious actions by persons wishing to abuse the SAR system.

There appears to be no common thread linking the malicious activations. In some instances they are relatively sophisticated in terms of lengths that the perpetrators had gone to in order to hide the activated beacon. The prevalence of the hoax activations in the Fremantle/ Mandurah areas was noted but no particular group has been identified as responsible. Additionally, Mandurah water police will be opening in December, ramping up in the New Year.

The townships of Karratha and Dampier are experiencing significant growth as per the effects of the resources boom and now have the highest number of recreational vessels and 4 wheel drive vehicles per head of population. This has had a flow-on effect seen as a perceptible increase in the number of incidents in the region. Some 1200 people are now working on offshore platforms and the possibility of a large scale (Piper Alpha style) disaster should be considered.

The Western Australia Marine and Land SAR reports are attached.

Victoria -Stephen Guilmartin

Steve Guilmartin presented the report for Victoria, opening with a discussion of the state’s Geographical Information System, allowing the Marine Coordinators to receive data as a live feed. Steve went on to provide some notable examples of SAR cases including a suicide/homicide attempt and a crash involving a party ferry in 2007. Also raised as a potential hazard was the current channel deepening operations in Port Melbourne. Steve outlined the risks associated with dredging and the potential for a serious incident to occur.

Further examples of recent SAR activity included an incident at Pier 35 where a petrol-driven Halverson boat exploded whilst being refuelled. A number of safety precautions had not been taken and the Coroner remains interested in the circumstances.

The newly acquired Victoria Police vessel represents an increase in efforts to improve capabilities, there is also a request in to replace the Police vessel Fearless. The new vessel was involved in a small accident when deployed in a 48hour fishing competition under heavy conditions. The police craft struck another vessel, which was at anchor. Despite taking on water, the fishing vessel was able to return to harbour.

The Victorian Marine report is attached.

SUMMARY

The chair thanked all delegates for their reports and recognised the comprehensive nature of the discussion as well the reports themselves. He reiterated the usefulness of these presentations in sharing information and the learning points arising from the sample cases.

WP 32/3/5 – Beacon Issues

Colin Barr presented the paper updating issues relating to the 'Switch to 406' campaign. He indicated surges in beacon registration due to state legislation and the prevalence of inadvertent activations in QLD as well as the number of malicious activations in WA. The online registration process has now matured, with a significant percentage of registrations occurring online, and the direct mail process of issuing letters and registration stickers is now considered world's best practice. The transfer of ownership of vessels with beacons fitted and the sharing of beacons remains part of the ongoing education process. The future campaigns will include reminding vessel and beacon owners to maintain the currency of their registration details when moving house or onselling their equipment.

This education programme has now been underway for eight years with extra messages included as required i.e. Switch, Register and Disposal. Some of this has been achieved through the Australian and New Zealand Small Boats Education Group, passing the message through the state marine authorities as well as the use of printed material and community advertising. Of concern to AMSA and to the Council is the second-hand market in 121.5 MHz beacons, with beacons being sold on eBay and similar avenues, without any warning to the hazards associated with their use.

An ongoing challenge was put out to the meeting: *suggest good methods of getting the message out to those who need to hear it.* Suggestions can be emailed to the Secretary (natsar@amsa.gov.au).

Further information was provided from the COSPAS-SARSAT meeting on the actual process of cessation. The shutdown will involve the switching off of relays and the ground stations that carry the signal to the RCCs. John also mentioned the Ministerial inquiries regarding the switch and internal RCC procedures regarding detection and location of 121.5 MHz alerts post 1 February 2009.

WP 32/3/2 State SAR Councils

NSW presented a report, providing an overlay of the mission of their State SAR Council with the key areas that they are currently facing.

QLD reported that they have not held a meeting since December 2007. All the issues have been carried over for further consideration and the subject of tracking vessels along the coast cannot yet be formalised. Lynn Walton (AMSA) will be attending the next QLD SAR Meeting to be held in December 08.

TAS reported their State committee met in mid October, with a number of local issues being resolved. There was some question of how frequently the meetings should occur and the decision was reached that the State committee should meet annually.

The SA SAR Committee meets four times a year, having been now run for the past 10 years. Peter Hoadley reported that the committee is highly energetic at present, reporting to the State Emergency Services Operations Committee. Topics include Standards for Land SAR and reporting on Land SAR incidents. Peter noted that duplication of the volunteer groups means in turn, the doubling up on some very expensive gear which may or may not always be applied in the right areas. The committee plan both independently and jointly, SAR exercises with excellent effect.

Barry Gibson reported that Victoria was in the process of establishing a SAR committee with all emergency services in the state being represented. Barry also indicated that Victoria police have placed emphasis on proactive efforts through Public Relations & Safety Education programmes aimed at equipping bushwalkers with knowledge to avoid hazardous situations arising.

WP 32.3.4 - Report of the Australian Search and Rescue Consultative Forum Meeting

The most recent Australian Search and Rescue Consultative Forum (ACF) meetings were held at Canberra (February 08) and New Lambton (October 08). The purpose of the ACF was described to the meeting. The ACF consists of peak bodies, being the representatives of those who may potentially become SAR “customers” and seeks to provide avenues of two-way communication and information flow between AMSA and the members. Night Vision Goggles and their usage was topical at the recent meeting, as the Westpac Helicopter Rescue Team has gone to some lengths to ensure the smooth introduction of NVGs into service.

WP32.3.5 - Report of ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group

The main subjects addressed by the JWG recently held in Canberra were outlined. One key issue was the discussion about beacon homing and the continued need for 121.5 MHz homing function on 406 MHz beacons. AMSA plans to conduct some trials when resources are available.

WP 32.3.6 - Termination of SAR Incidents

Jim Whitehead raised termination of search as a concern following the recent incident involving the *Kaz II*.

This opened the floor to discuss *what may be the appropriate time to call a search to an end?*

Historically, repeated consultation with experts such as Dr Luckin, in determining when all possibility of survival for persons in distress has passed is regarded as an essential component of establishing when a search should be scaled back.

Such information also gives further advice to justify ceasing a search when family and friends believe the search should go on.



The question was placed before the Council: is there any merit in a unified approach to SAR termination time? This could be in the form of a documented list of factors to consider or a worksheet to assess the appropriate time which could then be presented at a Coronial inquiry or be used as part of a briefing. Further discussion regarding this issue and reference to the National Search and Rescue Manuals indicated that guidelines were already published and it was appropriate to use these in considering SAR termination times.

Resolution: That the Council members note that a unified approach to SAR termination already exists as per the Land Search Operations Manual, Chapter 7 and should be consulted and cited when considering SAR termination times.

WP 31/3/7 – National SAR Manual Amendments

John Young reflected that the changes to Chapter 1 of the National Search and Rescue Manual and the coordination arrangements are substantive alterations with the major focus being to reduce duplication and ambiguity. The meeting was briefed on the changes and rationale behind each change, including some minor amendments to the National SAR Manual, which have arisen from a recent Audit.

The Council agreed the proposed changes with the incorporation of minor editorial changes offered by WA and others. Details of the changes can be found in the discussion papers

WP 31/3/8 – Land Search Operations Manual

Jim Whitehead offered an introduction to the revised Land Search Operations Manual and the processes that the working group had followed in revising the manual. The first issue that had to be resolved was the structure of the Manual and whether it should be a separate entity or have it divided into segments and incorporated into the NATSARMAN.

The Council's consensus was to keep it as a document in its own right rather than as a part of the NATSARMAN. There were concerns that Chapter 1 of the LSOM may get out of step with the NATSARMAN however, references to the NATSARMAN are to be made wherever possible and the working group is to seek to eliminate duplication.

The working group, known as the LSOM WG is led by Jim Whitehead, with Tony Hill, Vic Velthuis, Barney Hutchinson, Darren Hopkins and Jim Collisson. There was further agreement that inviting a representative from New Zealand to participate in the review process would have merit.

The LSOM is to be posted as Version 1.0 on the SAR Council webpage and then be open for amendment over the year. The agreement to a change out of session is also an option if required, noting the time lapse between meetings.

The Meeting asked that a Vote of Thanks be recorded for Jim Whitehead, noting the mammoth task he undertook in coordinating the review of the LSOM.

Resolution: That the Land Search Operations Manual is to be one separate publication with duplication of effort to be monitored by the Working Group and avoided. The Manual will be referenced on the SAR Council webpage with a printable A5 format.

Action: (AMSA) A letter of invitation shall be sent to the New Zealand SAR Authorities, requesting the appointment of a representative to the LSOM Steering Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 4: SAR APPLICATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

WP32.4.1 - SAR Aircraft Update

Alan Lloyd presented the paper and highlighted issues to be managed: demand for pilots, regulations regarding the conduct of flights, Dornier Night drop capabilities, and the options to improve over the next 12 months. Additional roles for the Dorniers were discussed with the overarching consideration being the need to have the assets available for SAR as the situation demanded.

WP 31/4/2 – Capabilities of new programmes

Barry Gibson presented the paper authored by Senior Sergeant Vic Velthuis (NATSARMC Course Director). Michael Wear demonstrated the SARMAP system. This demonstration was designed to provoke discussion about rolling out one SAR Decision Support System nationally and was in support of working papers 32/4/4 a, b & c.

The Council was then asked to consider implementing SARMAP nationally? Does the SAR community want one common system? And as a further qualifier, is it appropriate for the Council to try and direct the member States how to do business?

The discussion regarding a nationally implemented Graphical Information System included the questions of funding and the need to develop a requirements specification to fully assess the demands of the users. Two benefits could be seen immediately: the ongoing maintenance package, and standardisation being particularly effective on training courses. The consensus was in order to have the States combine efforts to adopt the one standard application; going through the Commissioners conference to seek support would be an optimal route.

A Requirement Specification was seen as the place to start with all States tasked cooperate on a specification, identifying the features and functions required.

ACTION: Letter to Director of the NATSARMC inviting him to work with the other DS to develop a user requirement document that can be examined to determine the next steps in implementing a common ground. To be ready for the next Council meeting but may be dealt with out of session.

WP 32/4/4/a - Automatic Identification Systems

This was considered as a background paper on AIS, leading to discussion paper 32/4/5 from Al Lloyd. This highlights the priority areas that should be covered when considering AIS Data Display systems.

Kit Marshall, from Hybrid Tracking Systems, was invited by the NSW delegation to demonstrate their system and describe the vessel tracking system they plan to deploy. The system is able to accept multiple feeds including AIS, SMS and manually entered vessel positions.

WP 32/4/5 - Nexus Online

Stuart Ferguson (AMSA) spoke to the paper and gave a presentation on the soon-to-be-launched system, explaining the levels of privilege and access principles. Nexus Online is designed to put AMSA's operational picture online for use by cooperating SAR Authorities.

As an example of SAR operations, Stuart discussed the hypothetical rescue of two well-known media personalities, who had met with heavy weather on their catamaran – *The Banana Split*.

The information that could be disseminated by this portal would see a higher quality of service than is currently offered. Nexus specifically affords better graphics handling, fewer issues with transmission of large files and greater security measures that can be enforced than when data is sent via a fax machine.

AMSA will shortly be requesting points of contact for each State in order to commence training and establish user accounts. Nexus was further demonstrated during the working lunch at RCC Australia on Friday 14 November.



WP 32/4/6 - Long Range Identification and Tracking

The summary of the papers covered the tracking of assets and methods of gathering of track data (SMS, AIS, LRIT). These systems further complement existing vessel reporting systems providing track data and intended routes. The development and introduction of LRIT is an IMO initiative commenced in 2002.

AGENDA ITEM 5: COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION**WP 31/5/1 – SAR Council Website**

The Secretary outlined the recent updates to the SAR Council web page and called for suggestions, with a view to making the site more functional for members. A links page was indicated, unanimously, as being a desirable feature to include.

ACTION: The Council Secretary is to compose a Links page for the Members area with members forwarding links they feel may be appropriate.

AGENDA ITEM 6: DISTRESS AND SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS**WP 32/6/ 1- Coastal Radio station Networks.**

NSW Coastal Radio Report – Glen Finniss spoke to the paper, noting the provision of a “000” service for boats is ad hoc, with three Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) groups and a port authority providing the service. Unfortunately, these are not dedicated centres and the potential for a call to be missed does exist. The Council noted a general decay in standards of Marine Radio proficiency which in turn has been mirrored in most States.

An issues paper is being prepared in NSW regarding the situation with the establishment of 19 bases to extend the capabilities of the radio network. This programme would also combat the issue of vessels monitoring different frequencies but leads to the requirement for a dedicated communications working channel. A request is being generated to ACMA to have Ch78 dedicated as a VHF working channel.

Michael Wear reported that Coastal Radio Perth and Coastal Radio Hedland are run by Fremantle Water Police public servants. There have been some issues with the coastal stations and cyclone-related damage.

Jim Whitehead reported that he raised Radio Standards at the VMR committee meeting in September. The State’s 15 VMR groups are sometimes collocated and there are a lot of radio black spots on the coast. Another factor to note is that a number of aerials are now coming up to end of operational life and will require replacement shortly.

Peter Hoadley announced that SA’s radio network service, provided by Air Services is performing well with improvements to VHF coverage continuing, and a repeater is now in place on Kangaroo Island. This results in VHF communication now available all the way along the South Australian coast.

In Victoria, Barry Gibson reports that the Coastal Radio network requires a significant overhaul, with the appointment of a responsible body being one of the primary concerns. The existing radio staff standards also need to be improved. The practices of the existing system have been created by the users of the VHF, which has led to duplication of effort in some areas. A single control centre in the state, with remote outlets was proposed as a more efficient model than the VMRs. However, noting that the VMRs are a free service to the state, being reliant upon donations and the costs associated with establishing a cohesive network could be prohibitive.

Carl Van De Meulson reported that the New Zealand Coast Guard is responsible for running the VHF network with Channel 16 operating as the primary distress frequency. The single National Maritime Jurisdiction was noted as being 1.5 – 2 years from commissioning. Overheads of running the systems (costs: people, replacement, assets) and the responsible authority still need to be confirmed before this can become a reality.

The Chairman put it to the meeting: *Is the organisation of Coastal Radio Network an issue for the Council? Are the members going to be better placed to formulate a position, working together or independently?*

Some discussion followed and it was noted that the National Marine Safety Council might be an appropriate coordinating body, noting that normally State marine authorities have responsibility for managing communications for vessels within their jurisdiction. There was some support for additional VHF frequencies to be dedicated as calling and working channels, noting that very few channels are licensed to one particular body.

Action: AMSA to coordinate a Correspondence group with the intent to produce an agreed letter to the National Marine Safety Committee (NMSC) requesting a coordinated national approach to VHF radio marine development.

WP 32/6/2 - SPOT and Tracme handheld devices



Colin Barr spoke to this paper, prompted by a couple of recent incidents, including a visiting kayaker in Tasmania, the first Australian use of the distress function of the device. The chain of events that followed from raising the alert to the resolution of the incident has provided many improvement opportunities and a Memorandum Of Understanding (currently in draft form), between GEOS Alliance and AMSA, is aimed at preventing a reoccurrence.

One of the services offered by SPOT is provision of coverage of costs incurred during a rescue. The level of coverage and for what costs in particular was debated. The concern was this opened the possibility of private agencies chartering assets that an authority may be relying upon for SAR. Some States reported that some people who are carrying SPOT believe that they have satisfied the EPIRB requirements. Members of the meeting were asked to get the message out that the SPOT Tracking device is not a substitute for a 406 MHz Distress Beacon.



The Tracme communicator was also covered, noting that the operating characteristics of this device involve transmitting CB Radio only; it therefore has limited uses as a SAR alerting device.

AGENDA ITEM 7: TRAINING

WP 30/7/1 – SAR School

Murray Brissett presented the report of the National Search and Rescue School's achievements and activities for 2008. He stated that thirty-two SAR professionals have attended formal training in the School in the last year.

He then reported that the Workshop for National Police SAR Managers Course Directing Staff (DS) was of great benefit to the course as well as the DS. It allowed the staff to prepare presentations, talk through exercises and finalise their own accreditation. As part of the workshop, it was agreed that the time frame for the submission of required post course work has been extended to two years. Granting

of the extension for completion of the post course requirements not only allows reasonable time for the completion of submissions, but also has the potential to provide a greater pool of instructors. The extension is retrospective to 2004. Murray noted that next year's DS workshop should only take two days.

He also went on to state that the Military Search and Rescue Coordinators Course (MilSAR) has been restructured to reflect an 18 day student commitment, which is a more agreeable timeframe to the ADF for the release of participants. The MilSAR formerly held national recognition status through the SAR School RTO accreditation; however, due to the short training timeframe and the difficulty faced by the students attempting to complete post course work, this accreditation was removed in accordance with a request from the ADF.

John noted the significant load that has been on the SAR School with the Indonesian Transport Safety Assistance Package (ITSAP). The SAR School has been involved heavily in the design and conduct of an SMC course and a SAREX in Indonesia. He asked Murray to give a brief verbal report on the project to date. Murray reported that a generic SAR system was being taught to the SMCs and that the Course has pass/fail criteria attached. He went on to note that the top four students from the SMC Course would travel to Merauke to participate in the 2008 AUSINDO SAREX as SMCs. Throughout the course there were some difficulties with interpersonal communications, due to the language barrier. As a result, the SMC Course members phoned the RCC on a daily basis, not only to establish rapport and confidence between Australian and Indonesian operators, but to also improve the confidence of the Indonesian operators when communicating in English via telephone.

WP 30/7/2 – National Police SAR Managers' Course

The presentation of the paper submitted by SGT Victor Velthuis was led by Murray Brissett and Michael Wear. Five actions for consideration by the SAR Council were noted, with Jim Whitehead (QLD) confirmed to the position of Director for the SARMC 2009.

The next course is scheduled for 2 August 2009, to run for a fortnight. The subject of nomination dates was discussed offline between QLD, VIC and the SAR School delegate.

National Police SAR Managers' Course Dates 2009

Calls for nominations will go out Monday 2 February 2009 and the returns must be into the SAR School (with a reserve if possible) by 04 May 2009.

Course will commence Monday 3rd August 2009.

ITEM 8 – OTHER BUSINESS

WP32/8/1 Vessel buoyancy issues from Victoria.

A Coroner in Victoria has raised questions regarding seaworthiness and checks for vessels offered for sale. Three recent incidents (a Halverson that exploded during refuelling; a sunken vessel found with levers that had been reversed and a man's body found washed up at Werribee, with the vessel not recovered) have led to questions being raised as to seaworthiness standards and if there is any form of inspection process when selling vessels, especially in the recreational market.

The meeting highlighted the National Marine standards that such vessels are built to, and discussed the possibility of regulations that the Coroner could refer to, and also could be enacted to bring Victoria into alignment with other States. The position was reached that the commercial standards should be reviewed with the intent to developing such a practice.

Next Year's Meeting

Michael Wear (WA) advised that the next Council meeting would be held in Fremantle, 12-13 November 2009, with a venue to be announced at a later date.

Meeting Close

In closing, the Chairman reviewed the discussions regarding the cessation of monitoring of the 121.5 MHz frequency and reflected on the education processes and public relations aspects of the shift. On the operational front, the poor monitoring of VHF Channel 16 and how this has manifested during incidents was noted as a nationwide issue. The introduction into service of Night Vision Goggles and other technologies in the past year represent significant achievements in strengthening the SAR system in Australia and all those who were instrumental in these initiatives were to be commended for their efforts.

The Chairman also placed an emphasis on the cooperative nature of the Australian SAR system and how these relationships are repeatedly demonstrated to good effect NSW deploying *Nemesis* to complement other state's assets, and reciprocal assistance between Victoria and South Australia were good examples.

The achievements of the 2008 meeting were summarised and included: an agreed new version of Chapter 1 of the NATSAR MAN, clarifying the relationships between the authorities, putting all in a stronger position should they find themselves called upon to defend a decision made in the course of a SAR operation. The members have agreed to adopt the new version of the LSOM and created the LSOMWG to continue the review process. A correspondence group was created to initiate discussions aimed at resolving existing Coastal Radio network issues and to provide possible direction for the future.

This meeting has also established a succession plan and a nomination schedule for the NATSAR Managers' Course as well as the NATSAR Managers' Course Director tasked to develop a national approach to Graphical Information Systems.

The Chairman thanked all the delegates for their patience during the meeting and took the opportunity to identify and thank those members who will not be returning next year: Garry Lewis, and Geoffrey Logan from New Zealand. The members of the Council wish them all well in their future endeavours.

Finally, the Chairman paid special thanks to the AFP for their hosting of the event at the Barton College, especially the coordinator, Sgt Mark Usback whose considerable efforts had made this Council meeting a success. In closing the meeting, the Chairman invited the members to tour and lunch at the Rescue Coordination Centre and to attend the next meeting in Western Australia 12-13 November 2009.

The meeting was declared officially closed at 1145.