



NATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE COUNCIL

Forty-fourth meeting of the Australian National Search and Rescue Council

7 & 8 September 2020
Microsoft Teams, Video Conferencing



“The mission of the National Search and Rescue Council is to develop and maintain an effective, efficient and integrated national search and rescue system that meets international obligations and domestic requirements”



Executive Summary

The 44th meeting of the National Search and Rescue (NatSAR) Council was held via video conferencing on the 7th & 8th October as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The meeting was Chaired by Julian Mitchell, Acting General Manager Response, Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA). AMSA's acting Chief Executive Officer, Sachi Wimmer formally opened the meeting highlighting the importance of collaboration and cooperation through the national search and rescue (SAR) response arrangement, during such demanding times.

The meeting was attended by 24 delegates from the 10 SAR authorities that provide the comprehensive Australian SAR system, across more than 53 million square kilometres, and represent each of the eight state and territory police forces, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and AMSA. Observers from our SAR partners, including the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and New Zealand Search and Rescue Council (NZ SAR Council) joined the meeting to share experiences and developments. Representatives of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and Cobham Aviation Services also joined the meeting to provide an update on areas of specific SAR capability.

The meeting followed a common theme of 'adaptability, planning and preparedness' which is reflective of the unprecedented challenges presented by the 2019/20 bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic. The Council reviewed its achievements in the 2019/20 financial year against the Business Plan and conducted a national analysis on trends and themes from the jurisdictions SAR Activity Reports. These trends informed strategic development discussions, such as the impacts on training throughout the 2019/20 period, largely due to the cancellation of the 2020 National SAR Managers Course. Although there is a need to prepare for online learning for future SAR training, the Council discussed whether online learning delivers the same training outcomes as face-to-face training.

Other topical discussions addressed during the meeting included developments in Australia's broader emergency management context and the possible implications for national response coordination arrangements, and how it may impact the approach to the Complex Maritime Emergency Framework (CMEF). The Council also finalised a biennial review of the Inter-governmental Agreement (IGA) on national SAR response arrangements and confirmed the IGA reflects current arrangements and does not require amendment.

The Chairs of the SAR Technology Working Group and Dive Working Group presented their annual meeting reports, including work plan progress. Of particular note, the Council supported the Dive Working Group's 'Volunteer Guidance for first on scene responders' as a Council initiative. Both working groups will continue into 2021.

Overall, the meeting resulted in 79 outcomes that will be jointly progressed over the next 12-24 months.

Each year the Council recognises outstanding contributions to search and rescue through the SAR awards program. The awards program highlights the collective achievements of the national SAR system and is key in increasing the NatSAR Council profile. The Deputy Prime Minister (DPM), Michael McCormack recognised 14 award recipients for their dedication and extraordinary efforts. Full details of the Awards can be found on the AMSA website.

The NatSAR Council annual meeting is hosted by the state/territory SAR authorities on a rotational basis over an eight year cycle. VIC Police is due to host the 45th meeting, in 2021.

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List of attendees

NATSAR Council Members		
Sachi Wimmer	Acting CEO, AMSA	Day 1, 12 noon
Julian Mitchell (Chair)	Acting General Manager, Response	AMSA Response
Louise Proctor	Manager, Response Policy	AMSA Standards
Mike Wytcherley	Principal Advisor, Assets and Capability	AMSA Response
Jo Fisher	NatSAR Council Secretariat	AMSA Standards
Lucena Deakin	NatSAR Council Secretariat	AMSA Standards
Chris Duryea	SAR Officer, JRCC	AMSA Response
Chris Ambroz	Squadron Leader	Australian Defence Force
Mark Travers (Delegate)	Sergeant	Australian Federal Police
Andy Craig	Sergeant	Australian Federal Police
Paul Farquharson	Sergeant	NSW Police Force
Michael Smith	Senior Sergeant	NSW Police Force
Stefan Herold	Sergeant	Northern Territory Police
Jim Whitehead (Delegate)	Senior Sergeant	Queensland Police
David O'Donovan (Delegate)	Superintendent	South Australia Police
Phil Gear	Senior Sergeant	South Australia Police
Bernard Peters	Sergeant	Tasmania Police
William Grierson	Senior Sergeant	Tasmania Police
Gregory Barras (Delegate)	Inspector	Victoria Police
John Cooke	Superintendent	Victoria Police
Mark O'Rourke	Senior Sergeant	Victoria Police
Victor Velthuis	Senior Sergeant	Victoria Police
Paul Gatty	Senior Sergeant	Victoria Police
Neville Patterson	Acting Inspector	WA Police
Paul Crawshaw	Sergeant	WA Police
Observers		
Duncan Ferner	Senior Advisor	NZ SAR Council
Neal Moodie	Presenter	Bureau of Meteorology
Lucie Blom	Presenter	Bureau of Meteorology
Adrian Pettifor	Observer	Cobham (day 1 only)
Glenn Chapman	Observer	Cobham (day 1 only)
Damien Fing	Presenter	CASA (day 2 only)

Agenda Day 1 Wednesday, 7 September 2020 (12 – 4pm)

Time	Topic	Speaker	Paper
1200	Formal Opening	AMSA CEO	
	1. Administration		
	1.1 Welcome and apologies	Chair	Paper
	1.2 General housekeeping for video conferencing	Secretariat	Verbal
	2. Meeting Agenda		
	2.1 Order of business and any other items	Chair	Paper
	3. SAR Operations		
	3.1 Review of National SAR Activity & Performance 2019/20	Secretariat	Paper
	4. Strategic Developments		
	4.1 IGA Review Outcome	Multiple	Paper
	- Cost of SAR for State Support Agencies	VIC Police	Verbal
	- Australian Defence Force	ADF	Verbal
	4.2 National Coordination Arrangements	AMSA	Paper
	- Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements		
	- Complex Maritime Emergencies Framework Update		
	4.3 COVID-19 Complex SAR Response Case Studies	WA, NSW	Present
	4.4 SAR Training	All	Verbal
	- Impact of COVID-19 on SAR training		
	- Remote training opportunities		
	- National SAR Managers Course update	QLD	Paper
	4.5 SAR Response to high-risk groups	All	Verbal
	- Despondents (autism, dementia)		
	- Lost person behaviour database	QLD	Verbal
	- Preparedness		
	- Jurisdictional programmes		
	4.6 National Data Collection	QLD	Paper
1400 – 1415	Meeting break		
	5. SAR Capability & Technology		
	5.1 National Capability Snapshot	Secretariat	Paper
	5.2 SAR Asset Capability Equipment update	AMSA	Verbal
	5.3 SAR Technology Working Group Report	NSW	Paper
	5.4 Dive Working Group Report	NSW	Paper
	5.5 SAR Maritime Communications	AMSA	Paper
	5.6 BOM update	BOM	Present
	5.7 Other		
	- Mapping system standardisation for SAR	QLD Police	Paper
	- Night search capability for airborne assets	AMSA, Cobham	Verbal
	- Use of flares in SAR incidents	Secretariat	Verbal
1550 - 1600	6. Day 1 wrap up and summary of Day 2	Chair	

Agenda Day 2 Thursday, 8 September 2020 (12 – 4pm)

Time	Topic	Speaker	Paper
1200	7. Day 2 Welcome and Overview		
	8. Regulation impacting SAR operations		
	8.1 CASR Part 138 presentation	CASA	Present
	9. Public Engagement and SAR Profile		
	9.1 Australian SAR Awards	Secretariat	Verbal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary of 2020 Awardees - Review of 2020 approach, including DPMO involvement - Broadening the profile of the SAR Awards 		
	9.2 National SAR engagement	Secretariat	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land SAR and beacon data analysis - ANZSBEG and national campaign update 		Paper Verbal
	9.3 National SAR Conferences	All	Verbal
	10. Council Planning and Development		
	10.1 Business Plan update	Secretariat	Verbal
	- Business Plan 2020/22		Paper
	10.2 Charter review	Secretariat	Paper
1400 - 1415	Meeting break		
	10.3 NatSAR Manual amendments for endorsement	Secretariat	Paper
	10.4 Unlocated victims of violent crimes	QLD	Verbal
	10.5 NatSAR Council Action Table	Secretariat	Paper
	11. Any other business		
	12. Meeting wrap up	Chair	Verbal
	12.1 Outcomes and next steps		
	12.2 Meeting schedule 2021		
1550 - 1600	13. Meeting Closure	Chair	

44th NatSAR Council Annual Meeting Outcomes

Outlined below is a summary of the agreed outcomes and actions from the 44th NatSAR Council annual meeting. Subsequently, a formal letter is sent to police commissioners outlining the most significant outcomes. A full meeting report is provided to the Council for review and feedback, ahead of the report being published.

National SAR performance and annual activity

1. Reviewed the Council's achievements against the 2019/20 Business Plan objectives, as well as national trends and themes identified from the jurisdictional SAR Activity Reports. Discussed the usefulness of the SAR Activity Reports for a national perspective of SAR activity and agreed the value in conducting this same level of national analysis in future.

Action: Secretariat to continue the preparation of a national review of trends and themes identified from the jurisdictional SAR Activity Reports for annual meetings to inform strategic discussions within the agenda.

2. Endorsed the NatSAR Council Performance Report, which summarises the Council's achievements against the Business Plan objectives during the 2019/20 FY period. This included an update of the key action items from the previous NatSAR Council meeting and the progress made against significant NatSAR initiatives. Agreed for members to provide further input by Friday 16th October, to ensure it properly reflects a national view.

Action: Members to provide jurisdictional input on Council achievements against the Business Plan strategic objectives to form a national view of performance across the 2019/20 period and finalise the Council Performance Report.

3. Supported the continuation for the Secretariat to circulate the NatSAR Council Performance Report to police commissioners/Chief of Joint Operations with the Statement of Meeting Outcomes from NatSAR 44.

Action: Secretariat to include the Council's Performance Report within the Police Commissioner / Chief of Joint Operations 'letter of outcomes' as the reporting mechanism following the annual meeting.

4. Discussed important national trends identified in the *Analysis of SAR Activity paper*. Highlighted the growing use of unmanned search assets in SAR operations and the extensive impact of COVID-19 on SAR training in 2020, including the potential impact on SAR operations. Agreed to strengthen wording in the report to ensure the two topics are clearly represented.

Action: Secretariat to strengthen wording within the Analysis of SAR Activity paper to highlight the growing use of unmanned search assets in SAR operations and the extensive impact of COVID-19 on SAR training in 2020.

High-risk and causative factors for SAR

5. Confirmed that dementia/cognitive decline, mental health and other high-risk groups involving those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) was a key theme across most jurisdictions, noting that despondency, suicide and self-harm related incidents increased throughout the COVID-19 period.

6. Discussed the common trend of patients (classified as high risk), leaving hospitals before being discharged, resulting in delayed reporting from hospitals to the police. Agreed the need for positive engagement with the state/territory Department of Health agencies to manage high-risk groups identified by SAR Authorities.

Action: Jurisdictions to explore ways to increase positive engagement with the state/territory Department of Health agencies to manage high-risk groups identified by SAR Authorities in that region and to report progress at NatSAR Council convenings.

7. Noted the joint awareness and safety programmes currently underway with jurisdictions and third-party organisations such as, Alzheimer's Australia, Dementia Australia and Autism Swim.
8. Noted that the Lost Person Behaviour guidance in the National SAR (NatSAR) Manual had a 90% success rate in its application to SAR planning, highlighting the value in jurisdictions continuing to contribute data to evolve its integrity as a national database.

Action: Jurisdictions to continue their contribution of valuable land SAR data to the Lost Person Behaviour database to support the continued development of operational guidance within the NatSAR Manual.

9. Noted the risk factors associated with COVID-19, including economic conditions that may lead to reduced maintenance of vessel fleets and subsequent non-compliance with safety regulation, challenges with crewing resulting in fatigue and lessened safety assurances, and shipmasters pushing limits to meet targets and operational requirements.

Action: Secretariat to incorporate the risks associated with COVID-19, including safety regulation and compliance within the maritime industry within the next edition of the NatSAR Council Business Plan.

IGA review

10. Noted the recent biennial IGA review process and confirmed the Council's unanimous position that the IGA reflects current arrangements, and therefore does not require amendment.
11. Agreed for the Chair to write to the police commissioners to report the outcomes of the IGA biennial review, noting that police commissioners are invited to onward brief their respective ministers (signatories) of the Council's decision for the IGA to remain in place for the next two years.

Action: NatSAR Council Chair to write to the police commissioners to report the outcomes of the IGA biennial review, noting that police commissioners are invited to onward brief their respective ministers (signatories) of the Council's decision for the IGA to remain in place for the next two years.

12. Agreed to update the IGA review process documented in the NatSAR Council Charter to describe the steps involved 'when no amendment is required' for future reviews.

Action: Secretariat to update the IGA review process documented in the NatSAR Council Charter to describe the steps involved 'when no amendment is required' for future reviews.

National coordination arrangements and COVID-19 impacts

13. Discussed the unprecedented challenges of 2020 relating to bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic. Highlighted the importance for strong national arrangements to ensure effective planning and preparedness, and emphasised the importance of collaboration between government and the private sector as key contributors during times where resources are stretched.
14. Noted the role of NatSAR Council as a key platform to achieve this national collaboration, as evidenced by all jurisdictions committing to NatSAR 44, despite the virtual meeting arrangements.
15. Discussed the Interims Observations document on the Royal Commission into the National Natural Disaster Arrangements and its implications for Commonwealth and state/territory SAR arrangements.
16. Noted the connection of the Royal Commission with the CMEF currently under development by AMSA.
17. Discussed the different COVID-19 impacts on SAR operations, including the complexities and logistical challenges experienced by NSW and WA regarding cruise ships, as well as response assets transiting between jurisdictional borders.

Action: Secretariat to incorporate the risks associated with COVID-19 within the next edition of the NatSAR Council Business Plan, including complexities and logistical challenges experienced by NSW and WA regarding cruise ships, as well as response assets transiting between jurisdictional borders.

18. Discussed possible resourcing challenges for Cobham if crew are required to quarantine following a deployment that involves landing in international borders e.g. to Papua New Guinea, Indonesia or in the Pacific. Noted that jurisdictions may be approached to assist with exemptions if required.
19. Agreed that, overall, SAR authorities have successfully adapted to the challenging circumstances without significant impact on the outcomes of SAR operations and the saving of lives. Members will continue to monitor within their jurisdictions and discuss at the next Council meeting.

Action: Jurisdictions to monitor any challenging circumstances presented by COVID-19 on SAR operations within their jurisdictions for discussion at the next Council meeting.

National SAR training

20. Discussed the impact on national SAR capability due to the cancellation of the 2020 National SAR Managers because of COVID-19, and noted that the SAR system has 22 fewer trained SAR managers across all jurisdictions as a result of the course not occurring.
21. Discussed online/remote training opportunities that some jurisdictions have adopted as an alternative to in-person training and SAR exercises. Noted that online training was suitable for some types of learning but agreed there are challenges for 'skills development training', which relies on practical, in-person learning to achieve a high level of competency.

22. Discussed issues in maintaining appropriate levels of SAR capability should remote arrangements continue, and agreed the need to measure and monitor the future impacts on the SAR system to emphasise the disparity between face-to-face training and online/remote training for SAR.

Action: Members to monitor and measure the future impacts of remote training arrangements both within their jurisdictions and from a national perspective, in maintaining appropriate levels of SAR capability to emphasis the disparity between face-to-face training and online/remote training for SAR for discussion at future NatSAR convenings.

Action: Secretariat to reflect within the Business Plan, Council's concerns associated with remote/online SAR training as a mean of monitoring its risk.

23. Noted that planning is underway for the 2021 National SAR Managers Course (NatSARMC) and agreed for the NatSARMC Directing Staff to meet again in the first quarter of 2021 to determine the possibility for a face-to-face course or to commence arrangements for a contingency plan if required.

Action: Secretariat to schedule another NatSARMC directing staff catch up in the first quarter of 2021 to determine the possibility for a face-to-face course, or to commence arrangements for a contingency plan if required. Directing staff to report back to Council on their recommendations going forward.

National SAR data collection

24. Noted the significant differences in data collection reported within the jurisdictional SAR Activity Reports as a reflection of the different systems, definitions and inconsistencies, and further noted the challenges in drawing valuable insights from the data for strategic decision-making from a national perspective.
25. Noted the value of meaningful and consistent national data, as presented in the NZ SAR Council annual reports, and discussed the possible benefits for the Council in having similar data, including the ability to increase the Council's profile as per the strategic objectives.
26. Discussed the use of a national SAR database as a possible solution, noting the success of jurisdictions contributing information into the Lost Person Behaviour (LPB) database.
27. Agreed to establish a working group, consisting of nominated Council members, to make recommendations to the Council on a suitable national approach for SAR data. Noted the group will firstly need to determine whether a national database is required and how jurisdictions would progress commitment to this initiative through their respective agencies.

Action: Jurisdictions to nominate suitable Council members to establish a National SAR Data Working Group to determine whether a national database is required and how jurisdictions would progress commitment to this initiative through their respective agencies. Working group members will make recommendations to the Council on a suitable national approach for SAR data.

28. Agreed to report the national SAR data collection discussion within the 'Letter of Outcomes to Commissioners', emphasising the importance of national data for the Council to achieve its objectives.

Action: Secretariat to include the national SAR data collection discussion within the 'Letter of Outcomes to Commissioners', emphasising the importance of national data for the Council to achieve its objectives.

SAR capability and technology

29. In regards a previous Council action to look at opportunities for 'mapping national SAR capability', the Council discussed the value of maintaining a national view of certain types of SAR capability, and the practical use of this information for SAR planning and response.
30. Agreed that all Council members have a sound understanding of their respective jurisdictional capability and there would be little day-to-day benefit in mapping all national SAR capability.
31. Agreed any further mapping would be developed on an as needs basis, noting the capability information already available to jurisdictions including:
 - a. AMSA and ADF airborne asset capability maps (available on the Members' area)
 - b. Dive Capability Register (initiative of the Dive Working Group)
 - c. State/territory emergency services online asset databases
32. Noted the finalisation of AMSA's tender to seek alternative sources of Direction Finding (DF) Units and Self Locating Datum Marker Buoys. Noted a panel arrangement has been put in place to allow federal, state and territory government agencies to procure replacement DF Units, based on the four models identified from the tender process.
33. Noted developments in the Challenger Jet capability including work underway through Cobham's Range Extension Programme, which aims to increase range capability to Antarctica, as well as facilitating long range SAR off the Australian west coast.

Night Circle Search technique

34. Noted the positive results reported by Cobham on Night Circle Search techniques for airborne assets and the applications for Search Mission Coordinators currently underway. Noted Cobham's movement away from traditional 'last light' search restrictions with several successful searches now continuing into the night by applying this methodology.
35. Noted AMSA's progress in collating relevant information on Night Circle Searches from jurisdictions and in support of work already underway with Cobham, will develop subsequent guidance for publishing within the NatSAR Manual for operational reference.

Maritime communications

36. Noted the updates and developments within the maritime communications field, with specific reference to the cessation of high frequency voice monitoring and the consultation review finalisation in 2019, with a formal announcement to occur in 2020. Further noted the intended launch of the Global Maritime Distress Safety System (GMDSS) Iridium, late 2020.

Mapping system standardisation for SAR

37. Noted the international change in mapping system standards to recognise the GDA2020 standard adopted by the Intergovernmental Committee of Surveying and Mapping.
38. Agreed to endorse the GDA2020 as the preferred mapping system utilised by Australian SAR authorities and for the relevant updates to be reflected within the NatSAR Manual for operational reference.

Action: QLD Police to submit to the Secretariat, relevant amendments to the NatSAR Manual that reflect the GDA2020 mapping system changes as the preferred mapping system utilised by Australian SAR Authorities.

Use of flares in SAR

39. Discussed the intention of the Australian and New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group (ANZSBEG) to review the mandatory carriage requirement of flares and the introduction of Electronic Visual Distress Signals (EVDS). Noted this review was triggered following the Australian Maritime College's (AMC) recent decision to cease pyrotechnic flares collection and disposal, resulting in concerns of excess expired flares in TAS.
40. Noted a consistent view across jurisdictions that there is currently not enough evidence to suggest that EVDS operate or replicate the same standard as pyrotechnic flares, and therefore, the Council could not endorse EVDS as a suitable replacement.
41. Agreed for jurisdictions to provide relevant information and data over the past five years to collate a national picture of the frequency in which pyrotechnic flares are used in SAR to assist ANZSBEG in their review. Information to include:
 - a. Total number of incidents involving flares (previous five years, if possible)
 - b. Number that resulted in a rescue (real distress)
 - c. Number that did not result in a rescue (non-distress/inadvertent)
 - d. Any other relevant information on the topic
 - e. Jurisdictional position on the introduction of EVDS.

Action: Jurisdictions to provide relevant information and data over the past five years to collate a national picture of the frequency in which pyrotechnic flares are used in SAR to assist ANZSBEG in their review, including a jurisdictional position on the introduction of EVDS.

Bureau of Meteorology update

42. The BOM presented to Council on developments in forecasting and public information in relation to maritime weather. The Council noted several website and mobile application updates to assist SAR coordinators in analysing recent weather patterns during the initial search area intelligence gathering stages.
43. Noted that jurisdictions continue to report weather as a causative factor, mostly due to lack of preparedness for different types of weather conditions. Further noted the BOM's extensive efforts to promote SAR prevention through collaborative education and campaigns on the impacts of weather, including in the recent National Safe Boating Week campaign.

NatSAR Council Working Groups

Dive Working Group

44. Noted the outcomes and progress reported by the Dive Working Group Chair, Ray Busby (NSW Police) on the group's second annual meeting, and highlighted the value of the working group in developing consistent best practice techniques, standardisation of police dive capabilities, better visibility of national capability, and opportunities for potential resource sharing.
45. Council supported the 'Volunteer Guidance for first on scene responders' as a key outcome of the working group. Agreed for jurisdictions to provide comment on the guidance by 21 October 2020, before its finalisation on the member's areas. Agreed for jurisdictions to progress the communication of the guidance through their respective volunteer channels as an endorsed initiative of the Council.

Action: Jurisdictions to provide comment on the 'Volunteer Guidance for first on scene responders' paper submitted for Council endorsement by the Dive Working Group, by 21 October 2020, before its finalisation on the member's areas for jurisdictions to progress the communication of the guidance through their respective volunteer channels as an endorsed initiative of the Council.

46. Supported the continuation of the Dive Working Group in 2021, noting that dive capability is an important SAR response capability for marine incidents. Agreed that remote meetings were preferred but requests for face-to-face convenings would be considered for initiatives that require in person participation.

SAR Technology Working Group

47. Noted the SAR Technology Working Group convened for its fifth year since it was established in 2016. The meeting endorsed a revised Terms of Reference and discussed and reviewed several new and emerging technologies that may impact Australian SAR operations.
48. Noted an update provided by the Australian Federal Police regarding the National Police Remotely Piloted Aviation Systems (RPAS) Working Group, advancements to the SARMAP platform and BOM website and associated marine user services.
49. Supported the ongoing work of the SAR Technology Working Group for 2021 and endorsed the revised Terms of Reference to align with the Council's 2020/22 Business Plan Strategic Objectives.

Action: Secretariat to finalise the SAR Technology Working Group Terms of Reference for working group members' reference.

Regulation impacting SAR operations

50. Noted the presentation provided by CASA on the implications of CASR Part 138 for the SAR system. Discussed the application of the 'carve out clause' for SAR operations noting the option for SAR authorities to task non-compliant air assets based on their own risk assessment procedures.

Public engagement and SAR profile

Australian SAR Awards

51. Discussed the approach taken this year to broaden the audience for the National SAR Awards programme, including collaboration with the Deputy Prime Minister's Office (DPMO) to make the formal announcements and provide greater overall recognition of recipients.
52. Noted the presentation from AMSA's Media Officer on the increased media activity and audience reach that was achieved this year, resulting from new initiatives such as the DPMO announcement, the introduction of the long-standing contribution to SAR category and increased and targeted online media activity.
53. Noted that although the DPMO involvement in the awards announcements increased the awards reach to the general public and other government departments, there was limited media coverage in the capital cities as a result of not having an in-person event.
54. Agreed for the Secretariat and AMSA's Media Team to continue exploring options in broadening the profile of the awards program in future.

Action: Secretariat and AMSA's Media Team to continue exploring options in broadening the profile of the Australian SAR Awards program in future for consideration by the Council.

Safety engagement and campaigns

55. Discussed the value of information provided in the land SAR and beacons data analysis paper to inform beacon education activity, trends and problem areas in the land environment.
56. Agreed for members to encourage their respective media teams to utilise this information for safety education and campaigning, particularly noting land SAR is the responsibility of the Police.

Action: Members to encourage their respective media teams to utilise information for safety education and campaigning supplied by the Secretariat, particularly noting land SAR is the responsibility of the Police.

57. Noted AMSA's national safety campaigns currently underway, in particular the National Safe Boating Week campaign. This involved a collaborative approach across the Police agencies, the state/territory marine safety agencies and AMSA through the ANZSBEG.

NatSAR Council Annual Meeting report

58. Discussed ways to grow the profile of the Council and noted previous interest in developing a communications piece to reach a wider audience. Noted the annual report produced by the NZ SAR Council and noted the level of resources required to produce this document, and its dependency on data to support the promotion of the NZ SAR system.
59. Agreed for the Secretariat to consider ways for the Annual Meeting Report to be used as a communications piece such as the Royal Life Saving Report and Maritime NZ reports, noting there are limitations in achieving this without the depth of SAR data.

Action: Secretariat to consider ways or the Annual Meeting Report to be used as a communications piece such as the Royal Life Saving Report and Maritime NZ reports, noting there are limitations in achieving this without the depth of SAR data.

NatSAR Council governance

Business Plan

60. Reviewed the agreed outcomes from the last two days and agreed the alignment with the Council's strategic objectives and goals in the Business Plan.
61. Agreed to circulate a revised copy of the 2020/22 Business Plan for Council endorsement prior to the next teleconference.

Action: Secretariat to update the 2020/22 Business Plan to incorporate key outcomes from the annual meeting for delivery in the next 2 years, and to circulate a revised copy of the 2020/22 Business Plan for Council endorsement prior to the next teleconference.

NatSAR Council Charter

62. Noted the purpose of the NatSAR Council Charter in formalising the Council's key operations and business processes, and discussed a number of proposed changes related to the Australian SAR Awards program. Agreed the following outcomes for inclusion in the Charter:
 - a. Agreed for Jurisdictions to continue reviewing jurisdictional nominations through a vetting process to ensure they are appropriate and suitable for Council recognition. Confirmed that unsuitable nominations (e.g. subject to a criminal investigation) will be pulled from the nomination pool and not considered for the national awards.
 - b. Agreed for the Charter to include clear guidance to determine a successful recipient within the voting process, when a nomination is subject to a discretionary vote. A nomination can be awarded when two-thirds (supermajority) of agencies vote in favour of the nomination.
 - c. Agreed for AMSA to be recognised as a voting agency in future.
 - d. Agreed when a tie breaker exists, jurisdictions will be required to revote between the tied nominations to ensure an overall winner is recognised.
 - e. Confirmed that if the Council does not agree an appropriate nomination is worthy of national recognition, the category will not be awarded.
 - f. Agreed for jurisdictional police agencies to contact the recipients or people affected by a sensitive nomination being awarded, such as incidents involving fatalities, serious injury, etc. This will avoid any implications or insensitivities following the media announcements.
63. Agreed for jurisdictions to provide any further feedback or input to the Charter review, by 16 October 2020 before finalisation.

Action: Secretariat to update the NatSAR Council Charter to include the suggested changes agreed at NatSAR 44 and the additional changes regarding SAR Awards

program, before the document is finalised and published within the Members' area for future reference.

NatSAR Manual

64. Discussed the NatSAR Manual amendments as submitted during previous 10 months in the lead up to the annual meeting. Summarised the key amendments including new/updated appendices on guidance resulting from the LPB annual review and text updates suggested by Cobham regarding 'Search by RADAR'.
65. Agreed for members to further review the schedule by 16 October 2020 before the 2021 manual edition is finalised and published.

Action: Members to review the NATSAR Manual amendments schedule by the 16th October, 2020 for finalisation and inclusion within the 2021 February NATSAR Manual edition.

66. Noted progress made by QLD Police in the 'victims of violent crime' research project and confirmed that the outcomes of this project will form an additional appendix within the NATSAR Manual in the coming year.

Volunteer engagement

67. Discussed the benefit of police engaging with their volunteer organisations to maintain good relationships and important SAR capability services, such as drone operators, search dogs, etc.
68. Discussed the logistical challenges associated with spontaneous volunteers, including work health and safety when training and qualification requirements are not met. Noted the effective volunteer programmes within VIC and NSW and agreed for VIC Police to share their newly developed policy in managing the risks associated with spontaneous volunteers.

Action: VIC Police to send their newly developed policy for managing risks associated with spontaneous volunteers for onward sharing with the Council for consideration within their respective jurisdictions.

69. Noted the Australian Government Spontaneous Volunteers Resource Kit available on the Department of Human Services website and agreed for the Secretariat to circulate the link for Council awareness.

Action: Secretariat to circulate the Australian Government Spontaneous Volunteers Resource Kit available on the Department of Human Services website link to Council members for awareness.

National SAR conferences

70. Discussed the change in structure for the 2021 Australia and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference, which will no longer have a dedicated day for SAR. As such, it was agreed there is no longer a need for the Council to represent the SAR system as a member on the Conference's organising committee and confirmed both the QLD Police and Secretariat's withdrawal. The NZ SAR Council also confirmed their withdrawal.

71. Noted the conference will still provide a valuable opportunity for SAR Authorities as the generic emergency management themes remain relevant for SAR, particularly those relating to leadership, coordination and emerging technology.
72. Noted that Council members will evaluate attendance each year based on the relevance of the agenda for SAR.

Succession planning

73. Discussed the need for Council succession planning as a result of Senior Sergeant Jim Whitehead's (QLD Police) impending retirement in 2022. The Council noted Jim's extensive commitment to several national SAR initiatives including:
 - a. the NATSAR Manual and its continual development;
 - b. training and qualifications of police SAR managers as Course Director of the NatSARMC
 - c. engagement and participation in SAR research initiatives
 - d. contribution to the NatSAR Council annual project plan through drafting of papers, provision of SAR advice and input.
74. Noted a structure that exists within the Australia New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee where national committees are supported by dedicated capability advisors from the police jurisdictions. Their role is to chair the respective capability forums, drive the business for the capability, submit funding bids as required, and organise courses and reporting to higher level committees.
75. Agreed for the Secretariat to look into options for succession planning, noting planning is already underway for the 2021 NatSARMC.

Action: Secretariat to review options for succession planning for NatSAR Council initiatives when key delegates retire or move onto new roles and to report back to Council with suggestions for consideration.

Next NatSAR meeting

76. Discussed the NatSAR Meeting schedule following the annual meeting and agreed to reconvene at the end November 2020 to finalise outcomes from the annual meeting and touch base on progress ahead of the Christmas break.

Action: Secretariat to schedule another teleconference before the end of year break to finalise the outcomes from the annual meeting and touch base on progress.

77. Agreed for the Chair to write to the police commissioners and equivalents to report on the key meeting outcomes and performance of the Council. Noted that correspondence from the Chair represents the Council's position on important initiatives and ongoing business with the aim of broadening the national SAR profile and increasing awareness of the Council.

Action: Chair to write to the police commissioners and equivalents to report on the key meeting outcomes and performance of the Council.

78. Noted the challenges of hosting the annual meeting via online conferencing including impacted engagement and commitment, scaled down agenda and timing, and lost opportunities from further discussions that occur during meeting breaks.
79. Discussed the intention for Council to meet again in person in 2021, noting that Victoria Police is next on the annual meeting hosting rotation. Confirmed the Secretariat will liaise with the Victoria Police representatives to confirm this arrangement as the COVID-19 situation evolves.

Action: Secretariat to liaise with Victoria Police representatives to confirm hosting arrangement for the 45th NatSAR Council annual meeting, taking into consideration any COVID-19 restrictions going forward.

Analysis of National Search and Rescue Activity

Each jurisdiction presented a report on SAR Activity within their state/territory. Below is a summary of key points and trends from these reports, providing a national view of SAR activity.

Trends	Comments
Causative factors	<p>No new causative factors. The following continue to impact SAR across all jurisdictions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dementia/cognitive decline, mental health and other risk groups, including those with ASD. • Increase in despondency/suicide/self-harm incidents linked to COVID-19. • Mental health patients leaving hospital before being discharged. Notable delay between people leaving and report being made to police. • Increase in adventure-based activities e.g. bushwalking, kayaking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ lack of preparedness, including limited knowledge of the area, weather, tides; limited safety equipment; no back up plan ○ reliance on electronic navigation and location devices. • Breakdown/mechanical failure/lack of fuel, limited knowledge of vessel maintenance, boating and navigation. • Overdue vessels. • Collisions, including with navigational markers. • Illegal smuggling, alcohol and drugs. • Small children leaving their residence or getting lost in public places. • Increase in specific mountain bike parks, where the requirement for SAR assistance is proportionately very high.
Enhancing operational SAR capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remotely Piloted Aviation Systems (RPAS) continue to develop, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ significant increase in RPAS assets, with FLIR and thermal imagery capability ○ continued training of RPAS operators. • New Ground direction finding units, to replace existing Titley Units (AMSA). • New Self Locating Datum Marker Buoys, to assist in drift modelling (AMSA). • The introduction of new and upgraded assets continues, contributing to, and building on, SAR systems across jurisdictions. • Difficulty in attracting volunteers continues, particularly in smaller communities with declining populations (National Volunteer Marine SAR Committee). • Integration of the Emergency Service Computer Aided Dispatch System (ESCAD) between Fire, Ambulance TAS and TAS Police (TAS). • Successful use of mobile phone apps eg. Mobile Locate, What3Words (TAS). • Development of a land SAR mobile phone app to assist SMCs and Police Commanders in the initial stages of a land search (WA).

Trends	Comments
<p>Collaboration with other national and international SAR agencies</p>	<p>NSW & Victorian bushfires, and COVID-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 and the NSW/VIC bushfires has seen multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency responses. • In other areas, cross jurisdiction and cross agency collaboration in SAR system development has been limited due to COVID-19 restrictions. • WA EOU has developed a Search Mission Controllers user group on Microsoft Teams (971 members) as a way of remaining connected and allowing SMCs to access up to date SAR information and resources. <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing cooperation between agencies, including volunteer agencies. • ANZSBEG National Safe Boating Week 2020 & a national approach to safety messaging. • AMSA is expected to host the 2021 PACSAR workshop, aimed at capacity building within Pacific Island Countries and Territories. • Surf Lifesaving NSW now recognised by the NSW Government as an emergency service.
<p>Safety Programs, Community Awareness and Social Media</p>	<p>COVID-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 has significantly impacted stakeholder engagement. • Digital communication & social media continue to be a useful mechanism for safety education messaging. • An influx of SAR incidents occurred once COVID-19 restrictions eased. A media campaign was conducted, aimed at preparation, carriage of suitable equipment (TAS). <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared/common messaging continues to be developed (eg NT Water Police & Indigenous Marine Ranger Program, NT Water Safety Advisory Council, TAS District Advisory Committee, ANZSBEG National Safe Boating Week). • Jurisdictions continue to develop programs promoting safety of persons with dementia or autism, to minimise required SAR responses. • Excellent media and education opportunities have arisen from lengthy SAR incidents, pushing beacon and prior preparation messages to the public. • Alcohol and Drug testing of Port Lincoln, SA, commercial fishing fleets. • Ongoing engagement with outdoor recreational community/stakeholders with messaging, media releases and updating of online advice for prevention of, and reaction to, emergency situations (VIC).
<p>Training</p>	<p>COVID-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2020 NatSARMC was cancelled. • Some SAR exercises continue within jurisdictions, however many have been cancelled or significantly delayed. Mixed reports about whether lack of training is affecting capability. • SAR training is expected to commence towards the end of 2020/early 2021.

Trends	Comments
	<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPAS training continues. • Enhancement of the POLSAR mapping program for land SAR operators and coordinators (NSW). • Remote Area Operations Course (NSW). • Alpine SAR/ Operator skills training (NSW). • 3 Volunteer Marine Rescue SAR Coordination training weekends, including training for NSW and QLD Surf Lifesaving. • Flood/Swift water training (TAS). • Demand for helicopter operations increased substantially, resulting in the need to train more staff (TAS). • QLD Police assisted with providing an instructor to conduct a State Search Coordinators Course during November/December 2019. TAS Police is extremely grateful to QLD Police for their assistance.
<p>Utilising technology for SAR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPAS use in SAR is expanding as confidence in their ability and capability increases, including geospatial mapping, searching for anomalies in the land environment, visual and FLIR tasks and development of RPAS for water operations, both SAR and investigative. • Trail bike training for SAR operational purposes (Jervis Bay, NSW) • AMSA preparing to issue a tender for feasibility of unmanned surface vessels to be used in a research and development activity. • ARC is undertaking testing with Iridium in preparation for the January 2021 launch of their Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) services. Iridium GMDSS services will provide marines and shore authorities with an alternative or additional satellite provider for distress alerting and dissemination of marine safety information. • U Safe Remote-Control self-propelled rescue buoy trials for close off shore water rescue. Trials to date have proved successful (NSW Land). • Struggling to get PolSAR up and running – a few background issues that are being worked through (QLD). • Mobile Locate, What3Words are being used with success. • Field Search Controller Mapping Systems – transition to Google Earth Pro (GEP) from Ozi Explorer. Intention to review and assess feasibility for using GEP as the primary search software (SA). • Lifeseeker Systems – a single piece of hardware that attaches to the outside of an airframe (helicopter/fixed wing) and utilises mobile telecommunication frequency bandwidths to pinpoint a single mobile phone in a rural environment (SA). • Swiftwater Training Program delivered (SA). • Vertical Rescue – new descending devices were trialled to upgrade current aging stocks of Whaletails and Figure 8 descenders. These devices are safer, faster, more versatile, easier to train, with less scope for human error than the outgoing devices (SA).

Trends	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SOT Interoperability – currently conducting interoperability training for vertical rescue training (SA).• Purchase of a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) is being considered to enhance the Police Diving Squad (TAS).• TAS whole of government radio network (TasGRN) project aims to provide an interoperable, sustainable and contemporary radio based communication capability that will improve operational effectiveness and efficiently for all stakeholders.

National Search and Rescue Awards

The NatSAR Australian Search and Rescue Awards are presented by the NatSAR Council in recognition of outstanding contribution to search and rescue within the Australian region.

This year's awards recognise 13 recipients who were instrumental in saving the lives of many people, conducting dangerous operations or contributing to search and rescue over their extended careers. DPM and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development Michael McCormack said it was a great honour to present the awards to recognise the brave actions of the recipients.

The winners of the 2020 Australian Search and Rescue awards are:

Professional Search and Rescue Award – Western Australian Search and Rescue Dive Team - Sergeant Bradley Bell, Senior Constable Alan Trist, Senior Constable Christopher Jacob, Senior Constable Luke McCulloch, Ashley Skinner (Esperance Marine Rescue), David Macmahon (Esperance Surf Life Saving), Jacob Oversby (Esperance Surf Life Saving)

The Dive Team showed remarkable endurance and commitment to their role in responding to multiple consecutive marine incidents across the state of Western Australia.

The WA Police would like to acknowledge all volunteer efforts involved in their busy search and rescue season. Although not everyone can be acknowledge for this award, the efforts of the Dive Team is testament to the collaborative and cooperative nature of the overall national SAR system.

Professional Commendation Award – Aussie Joy, Port Macquarie NSW rescue - 'Westpac 1' Rescue Helicopter Crew - Graeme Anderson (Helicopter Pilot), Sean Flanagan (Air Crewman Officer), Sean Vallance (NSW Ambulance paramedic), Tim Starkey (NSW Health Doctor)

The crew of Westpac 1 showed exceptional skill and teamwork during an incident involving challenging conditions, which were above and beyond most search and rescue taskings. The professionalism and dedication of the well-planned and highly trained crew enabled the successful rescue of two lives.

Long-standing Contribution to Search and Rescue Award - William (Bill) Folder, Tasmanian State Emergency Service (SES).

Bill has played an instrumental role as a volunteer with the TAS SES since 1977. Bill has been involved in many Search and Rescue operations over the years, tirelessly working to save lives, and is an extremely worthy candidate for the National Long-standing contribution to Search and Rescue Award.

Long-standing Contribution to Search and Rescue Commendation - Tony Clitheroe, Rockingham Volunteer Marine Rescue, WA.

Anthony (Tony) Clitheroe's passion for the ocean has driven his dedication to the Volunteer Marine Rescue at Rockingham, WA. Tony is the VMR (Volunteer Marine Rescue) Communications Officer and conducts radio support to rescue vessels, monitoring these vessels which they are conducting search operations. The role includes extensive after-hours callouts.

Read more about the successful nominations in the [2020 Australian Search and Rescue Awards media release by the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack](#).



Figure 1: Recipients of the 2020 Australian Search and Rescue Awards announced by the DPM.