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Volunteer Marine Rescue
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SEPTEMBER 2025

FREE ISSUE

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

PRESIDENT: Glenn Norris

2024 - 2025

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – As presented to the VMR Southport AGM

Here we are again, with another Management Committee year coming to a close, and once again it seems as though the 12-month period has gone by in a blur. As the saying goes, 'time flies when you're having fun', and I really have enjoyed my Presidency this past year, although it has come with its challenges, and frustrations at times.

At time of writing VMR Southport are still not in a position to transition to the new Marine Rescue Queensland entity, and although we are wanting to finalise this, matters such as ongoing insurance coverage for members, and the unknown of what is on the other side if we do transition, given that a lot of what we are seeing from other transitioned Squadrons is simply change bought about for the sake of change, and not change because it is necessary.

Additionally, we are cautiously optimistic about Marine Rescue Queensland's selling point of a free waterside assistance service for mariners in the State, as nothing is ever free, and will the associated problems a free service could create hinder the first class service that VMR Southport already provides, and will this also place a greater burden on our already time poor, hardworking volunteer workforce.

Only time will tell.

While the transition process is a work in progress, until this happens, it will be business as usual, and we will make every effort to continue to provide the best possible marine assistance to the Gold Coast boating community

VMR Southport observed a dramatic increase in workload in the latter part of 2024, and it has not really declined so far though 2025, and we are on par to date, to have a very substantial tally of activations come year end. The Christmas / New Year period, with fantastic Gold Coast weather to blame, saw weeks within excess of 35 activations, for all sorts of requests for marine assistance, and Rescue Crews and Radio Operators worked exceptionally diligently both day, and night, to ensure all tasks were completed.

Sadly, only 9.5 hours into the New Year, our Crews were tasked to a tragic diving incident at Wavebreak Island, which resulted in a female requiring Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation to attempt to save her life, however, despite the best and most professional efforts of VMR Southport First Responders, Police Officers, and Emergency Paramedics, the lady passed away.

Activations assisting the Queensland Ambulance Service have been steady throughout the year, and as these callouts can happen at any time, be it the middle of the day, or the middle of the night, we are always prepared.

There has been a very notable increase in vessels coming into contact with the sea

bottom over the period, and generally these are avoidable, however, a great number of vessels now traverse the area, with Skippers and Crews who may not generally know the area, and running aground can be a lesson learned for both the experienced, and less experienced.

Still, vessels out of fuel account for the highest number of VMR Southport's callouts and having this event occur is not good seamanship.

Mechanical breakdown activations were also prolific, and many of these requests could have been avoided, with just a little extra TLC being afforded to their vessels by some boat owners.

Assistance provided to submerged, and semi submerged vessels also appears highly in activation tallies.

Early in 2025 the Gold Coast was presented with an out of the ordinary Tropical Cyclone, named Alfred, which put a dampener on any outside activities for a week or more, and our Crews played a very substantial role, mostly in the aftermath of the cyclone, as many vessels were washed up on beaches, and foreshores around the region, and we were tasked with returning these to the water, when the weather conditions abated.

Typically, many of our volunteers graciously manned the Rescue Base during the most substantial period of the worst weather conditions of the event, in lieu of being in the protection of their own homes, and whilst many would say the Gold Coast dodged a bullet with damage from the cyclone, this type of commitment by members, in making themselves available to help others in their time of need is extremely commendable.

Another great event that occurred towards the end of 2024, was the construction and installation of the second pontoon at VMR Southport. Whilst we waited a lengthy time for this, the wait was worthwhile, and we now have an additional two mooring positions for our vessels, which assist in eliminating damage. I sincerely thank all people who assisted in seeing this project through.

Just recently we also commenced some extensive beautification works in the back area of the VMR facility, with rock areas beside the boat ramp being replaced with concrete, and the untidy, unsafe, and unsightly paved area around the fuel bowser being ripped up, and re-paved, and re-concreted. This area now looks fantastic.

continued page 4 -

A re-mulch of our well-maintained gardens is next on the agenda.

We take great pride in our facility, and the efforts of the few members who spend hours on end providing Base maintenance is very much appreciated, as commonly acknowledged by the attendees at the many and varied functions held at VMR Southport during the year.

On the Rescue vessel front, we welcomed another addition to our fleet in mid-2025, with a Queensland Government supplied Noosa Cat 3000 Series Rescue asset. Powered by 250hp Mercury Sea Pro engines, this beast, full of all the latest rescue and electronic technology will be utilised in the Gold Coast marine community for many years to come, and already this vessel has been commissioned to conduct some long distance tows, and its first activation was actually that of an unwell gentleman, with the Queensland Ambulance Service, and the patient politely made the comment that the vessels stretcher bed was actually more comfortable than his own bed.

VMR Southport are very grateful to those staff in Marine Rescue Queensland, the Queensland Government, and our own volunteers who also saw this project to fruition.

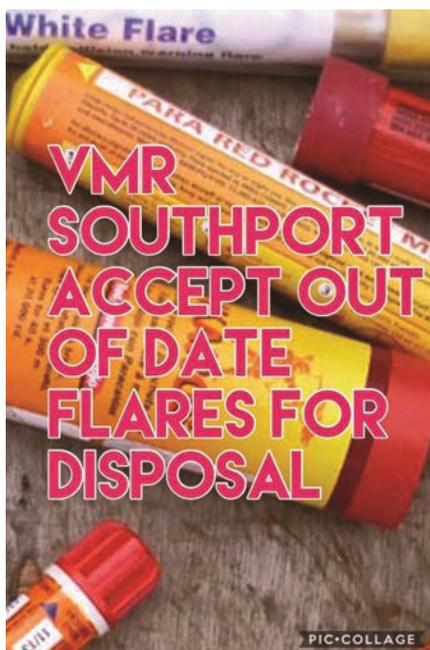
The vessel has been named *Marine Rescue 6*.

The additional four VMR Southport Rescue vessels have continued to perform favourably, with only minimal downtime due to breakdowns, or operational problems. We continue to maintain sponsorship arrangements with several Companies in the Gold Coast City Marina precinct, and the services these Companies provide ensure our vessels are always in a pristine looking condition, which in turn reinforces the professional image which we present to the boating community. Our outboard motor servicing Technicians also keep the vessel engines purring in tip top condition, and we have been able to ensure confidence that these start first time, every time.

2025-2026 will be an expensive time for our vessels, as all will need new outboard engines during the next twelve months, to maintain maximum warranty benefit, and deliberations are underway to begin the journey of replacing an ageing *Marine Rescue 1*.

The 2024 - 2025 Management Team have once again represented our members extremely well, and there are still several projects that are progressing, that Committee members are involved in, all of which will enhance VMR Southport. I appreciate these people wholeheartedly for their contribution to the betterment of our Organisation. The job can be thankless, and difficult at times.

VMR Southport continues to maintain a healthy number of volunteers giving up their time to assist the local marine community, although, for many and varied reasons, recruitment has been very difficult, and our attrition rate has been higher than normal, however, we will soldier on with our efforts in attracting new members.



Regardless, more than 75,000 volunteer hours have still been generously contributed over the past 12 months, across a whole range of activities within our operation, including performing radio operation roles, crewing on our Rescue vessels, administration duties and gardening, maintaining our IT systems, public relations and marketing, and everything else that we know happens, but don't often see going on in the background. The morale amongst everyone is very high and the team effort has been exceptional.

As usual, we have continued to see some magnificent training achievements from our members this year, both with internal and external Commercial qualifications being gained, and I personally congratulate all those who have achieved, in whatever form. Your efforts in studying, with assessments, and then putting your knowledge to work in the field is exemplary, and your hard work is noted favourably, by your peers, and by those you assist on the water.

The Seaway Tower has continued to operate efficiently, ensuring the boating public are protected whilst at sea, however, again it has continued to be difficult, with efforts to have the building and its surrounds beautified by its current Queensland Government landlord not progressing, indecision on the future management of the facility, and a lower-than-normal number of Radio Operators being available for shifts.

It is also very noticeable of the declining number of Skippers logging on with the Seaway Tower for their journeys, however there are several possible reasons for this not related to the Seaway Tower operation.

To all those Radio Operators who have put their hand up for additional shifts, some at very short notice, I thank you.

Advertising, marketing, and public relations of VMR Southport is still scaled back at present, due to uncertainty with transitioning to Marine Rescue Queensland.

As has been undertaken annually over the last 25 plus years, the Squadron again attended the Sanctuary Cove Boatshow, for yet another fantastic result, and if anyone is going to get their business name and product out in the general community, Sanctuary Cove is the place to do it. The Boatshow team have always been great supporters of VMR Southport.

VMR Southport's Associate Membership numbers are declining slowly, but remain in the high 4000's, however, rest assured, we have some Committee Members working on a program to again boost these numbers.

Regardless of what happens to free membership benefits under a Marine Rescue Queensland regime, VMR Southport will continue to offer some sort of Supporters Club, and we want to be able to continue to keep in touch and have a program that enables the community to keep supporting our Organisation, as they have done for the past 55 years. Watch this space!!

In closing I would like to thank everyone who has been in the past or currently is a supporter or member of VMR Southport.

In 2024-2025, we have performed our role in the community very admirably and navigated a business that poses daily challenges, a business that is very professional, and one that has the utmost trust and respect of those we are called upon to provide service to.

We have sadly seen several of our dearly admired members pass away over the past twelve months, and their memories will always remain with us, and their contributions will never be forgotten.

Thank you one and all, you are all a part of Team VMR Southport, and you are the reason we are so successful, year after year.

Here's wishing for another great year ahead.

Please stay safe on the water.

Glenn Norris
President 2024 - 2025



NOTEABLE JOBS

by Glenn Norris

A VMR Crew was recently tasked to transport Emergency Paramedics to Tipplers, after a young male received a nasty laceration to his upper arm.

The boy had been fishing off the beach, and had caught an eel, which when pulled up on to the shore, had somehow latched onto his arm, making quite a nasty gash in the skin, with significant bleeding. On arrival, the Paramedics bathed the wound, and bandaged it up, to prevent further bleeding, and the patient was then transported back to VMR, where he was conveyed to hospital for additional treatment. Given these marine creatures have very sharp teeth, a break in the skin from one of these can also result in a nasty infection, so medical assistance should always be sought as a precaution.

The Gold Coast Water Police contacted VMR Southport on a recent cold and windy night to advise that they had received reports of a car entering the water in the vicinity of a bridge on Sovereign Island. A Crew who were already on the water on a training exercise responded, assisting Police to locate the vehicle, of which the driver had already freed themselves from, and was safely on shore.

All reports indicated a wrong turn was taken, hence the incident occurring.

Tow Trucks were able to retrieve the vehicle the following day. Given the weather on that particular evening, it certainly wasn't conditions conducive for swimming.

A man contacted VMR Southport recently to advise that his vessel had broken down, and needed towing to the Coomera Marina.

When questioned what was wrong with the vessel, the man advised he wasn't sure, just the engine wouldn't start, but it possibly had a cracked manifold.

When asked about when he wanted the vessel towed, the man replied, anytime.

When asked if a lift had been arranged at the Marina, the man said he was waiting for a call back for confirmation of a time.

When asked if he was going to be with the vessel when it was towed, the man replied he couldn't be.

When asked if anyone could be with the vessel if it was towed, the man replied probably not.

VMR declined to have any further interest in towing the vessel, given this uncertainty.

The following day, another man contacted VMR claiming to be the owner of the above mentioned vessel, and he wanted it towed to a different Marina at Hope Island.

His response to questions asked by VMR, was very similar to the first persons.

Again, red flags were a plenty.

To cut a long story short, the vessel is still in the location it was originally quoted to be, and now there is a third person claiming to be the owner, and he has advised VMR the other two would be owners are not to touch the vessel.

One thing is for sure, VMR Southport won't be the fourth party involved in whatever the circumstances are.

A man fishing offshore of the Gold Coast Seaway recently advised of a small inflatable tender floating unattended in his vicinity.

A latitude and longitude was taken by the VMR Radio Operator, which was about four nautical miles east of Main Beach.

The Gold Coast Water Police were advised, and after some enquiries by them, they asked if a VMR vessel was able to attend the location to retrieve the vessel, as it was believed the inflatable had separated from a houseboat which was anchored behind Wavebreak Island, sometime during the previous night, and the run out tide had swept it out through the Gold Coast Seaway.

A VMR Crew did so, and the Water Police later attended the VMR Base, where they collected the goods, and returned them to their rightful owner.

A very sketchy phone call was received recently in the VMR Radio Room, by the Skipper of a yacht, who indicated he was 22 nautical miles south of the Gold Coast Seaway, and his 32ft vessel had been dismantled in some very uncomfortable offshore winds.

As the call was received just prior to sunset, a VMR Southport Senior Skipper and another very experienced Senior Crew member were tasked to the activation, as weather conditions were below average.

After a six hour round trip, the yacht was safely towed back through the Gold Coast Seaway, albeit in very difficult circumstances, as the mast laying damaged across the deck created all sorts of stability problems for the yacht, given the weight distribution couldn't be evened out by the lone sailor.

One of the more challenging VMR jobs in recent times.

Last but not least, the winners of this editions 'Lucky' award goes to the two blokes who were rescued from the eastern side of Wavebreak Island after their canoe floated off the beach, with them inside, minus any paddles, on a run out tide, on a recent windy day.

The only two things that saved these guys from an uncomfortable imminent Seaway crossing were firstly, that VMR were going past at the time, and could return them to shore, and secondly a good supply of rum and coke cans eased any pending stress or care of the nasty situation this pair could have endured.

ACTIVE MEMBER PROMOTIONS/AWARDS

Active Members who have achieved higher ranking

Congratulations to:

RADIO OPERATOR

Peter Blackburn
Faith Dempsey
Janet Scott
Melissa Muller

CREW

Darrian Brown

SENIOR CREW

Laurie Tsamuras

COXSWAIN

SOME STATS

ACTIVATIONS	MAY 2025	JUNE 2025	July 2025
Towed Vessels	31	49	61
Jump Starts	2	3	3
Pump Outs	1	2	1
Transporting			
Fire			
Standby			
Medical	5	3	4
Searches	1		1
Dispersals	3	2	3
Public Relations	7	3	3
Crew Training	88	70	75
Groundings	12	7	10
Other	2	3	5
Investgate	4	7	3
TOTALS	156	149	169

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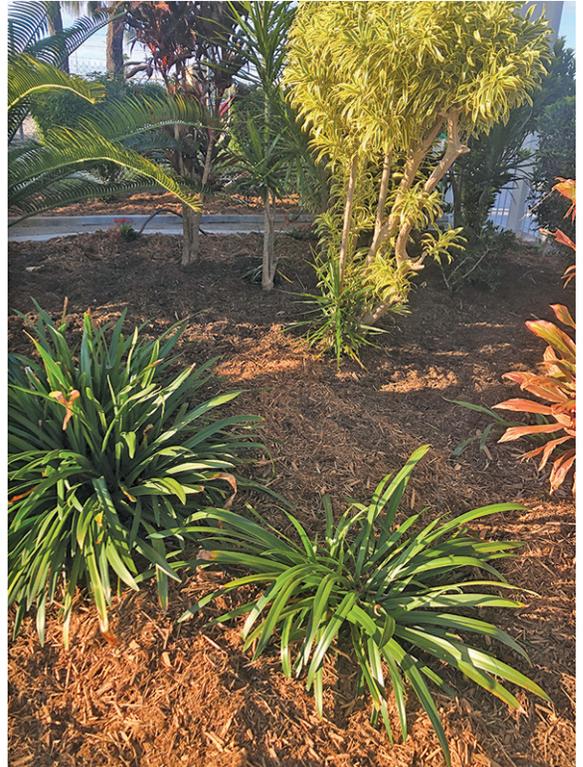


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Portrait of a VMR Volunteer

DAVID CAM

SENIOR CREW MEMBER

JOINED VMR SOUTHPORT

August 2023

Tell us about yourself

I am really just a midlife (or maybe just slightly over) guy that has worked far too hard, for far too long, and I am now working on a better work / life balance.

I grew up and spent most of my life in Sydney.

I am married to wife Lisa, and we have 2 daughters, one granddaughter, and a dog called Bean (the favourite).

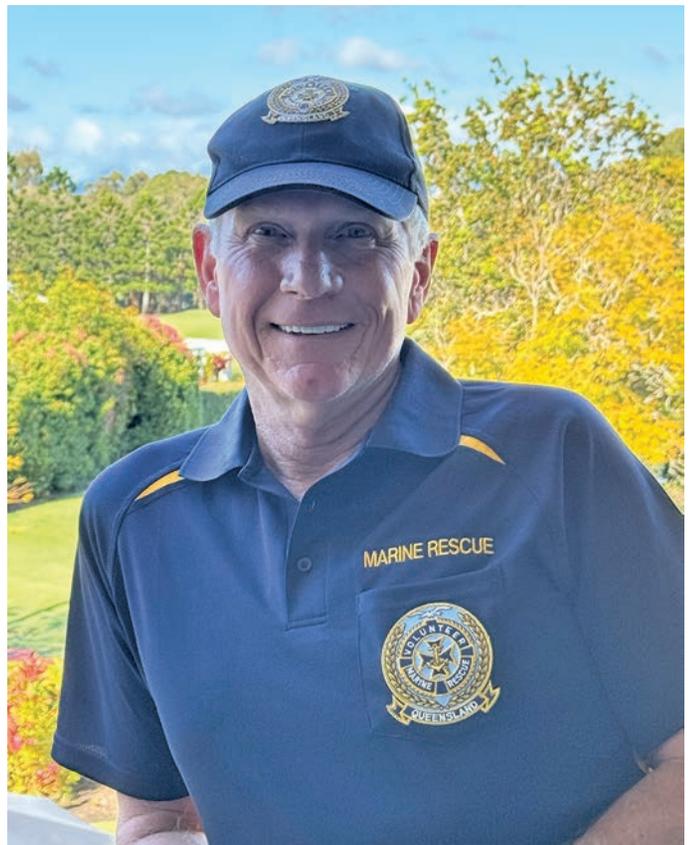
Lisa and I lived in Houston, Texas for 7 years until Covid brought us home, and we're now very much settled on the Gold Coast.

Why did you join VMR?

I joined VMR as I am working towards semi, (or slightly more retirement). This means I will be able to spend more time in my areas of interest, and some of these are those that give back to our community. My family has a long maritime history, with my grandfather having a fleet of coastal traders plying the NSW coast, until all 16 ships were requisitioned by the Commonwealth Government, and converted into mine sweepers in the Second World War. All 16 ships were sunk in service of our country, thereby ending the family shipping business. My joining VMR was therefore an easy decision, with my attachment to the sea, interest in all things maritime, and knowing the great community service VMR provides, it was a simple decision, and one that I am thankful for, in every crew I attend.

What do you enjoy most about being a member of VMR?

I really enjoy the team spirit in getting jobs done, safely and professionally at VMR. The help we provide to the boating community is vital, and the camaraderie and banter throughout each crew, the mate ships we create, along with the training, and the support and encouragement we give to each other to develop skills and competencies along the way is endless.



What is the most memorable activation you have been involved in?

I haven't been at VMR long enough to have a wide range of memorable activations, however probably the most memorable was in 2023, not long after I started as an Active crew member, and there was a medical evacuation of a person on South Stradbroke Island. The weather was atrocious, the patient was in a bad way with broken bones, however, the worst of the event was endured by other VMR crew who toiled for several hours in the pouring rain with QAS Paramedics, trying to extricate the patient.

I was at the VMR Base in a support role. This activation was probably more memorable to others, but it is also one at the top of my list.

What do you do in your spare time?

At present I don't seem to have much spare time. My day job is all encompassing. Whilst I am working on my retirement plans, I spend as much free time as I have with my wife Lisa, Bean and more often than not we are out on our boat, or at the beach, or with friends, or all three combined.

What are your future Intentions with VMR

I'd like to continue to develop my skill set, and as I wind down my work life, become more engaged in midweek VMR crews.



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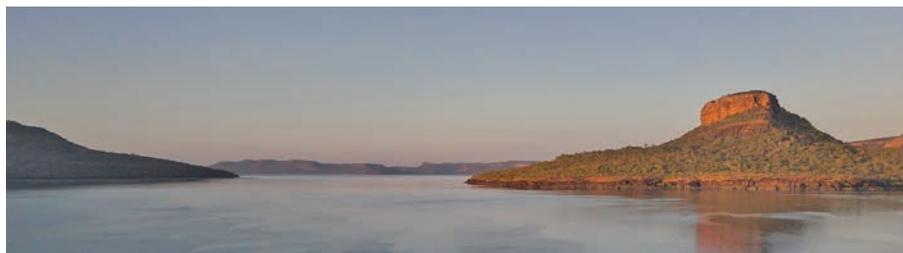
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Cruising with Purpose: From the Gold Coast to the Kimberleys



LEFT: Discovery One glides into St George Basin



ABOVE: Horizontal Falls at high tide - Nature's power in full flow



LEFT: Threading the Tides at Montgomery Reef

Discovery One and the Kimberley's Wild Heart

After 26 years exploring the remote coastlines of Australia's northwest, Discovery One has become more than a vessel — she's part of Kimberley cruising history.

With over 11,000 guests welcomed across nearly 400 expedition voyages, this Australian-owned and operated ship offers something rare: low-impact, soul-stirring journeys through one of the world's last great wilderness frontiers.

"Out here, it's not about flashy luxury," says Erle Astrup, Discovery One's new CEO and Partner. "It's about depth — of connection, of purpose, of experience. We travel light, respect deeply, and bring people face-to-face with the ancient heartbeat of the land."

A Small Ship with a Big Mission

Originally built on the Gold Coast in 1984 under the name Matilda II, Discovery One was designed for shallow-draft exploration. Refitted and renamed, she's become a familiar silhouette in the Kimberley — a small ship with a big story to tell, famously hosting David Attenborough and the BBC on his first expedition to the region over two decades ago.

Carrying only 22 guests per voyage, this 25-metre catamaran is equipped for true expedition cruising: twin tenders, 360° viewing deck, and the redundancy systems needed when you're 200 nautical miles from the nearest town. Air-conditioned comfort meets rugged functionality

— and a team whose deep local knowledge turns each day into something unforgettable.

With such a shallow draft and decades of experience in tidal navigation, Discovery One accesses places few can — travelling far upriver, hugging remote coastlines, and revisiting hand-built tracks that are worth their weight in gold. You see more of the Kimberley, because

we know how to read it.

"Safety out here is everything," says Erle. "There are no marinas, no backup — we have two of everything on board for a reason. It's remote, it's real, and it's magnificent."

Heart of the Boat

At the centre of it all is Discovery One's crew — seasoned mariners, naturalists, and hospitality professionals who live and breathe the ocean.

"People ask what makes Discovery One different," says Erle. "And the truth is — it's our crew. Without their passion, humour, knowledge, and care, we'd have nothing to offer. They are the spirit of this boat, and every journey we take is a reflection of their love for this place."

For the Bold at Heart

The vessel draws curious, adventurous Australians aged 55+, seeking something beyond the usual cruise fare. No casinos. No crowds. Just wide horizons, deep learning, and a chance to stand barefoot under waterfalls and feel the pulse of this land.

"This boat attracts seekers," says Erle. "They've lived full lives — now they want to experience something meaningful, something wild."

Giving Back to Rescue the Rest

Discovery One's recent donation to Volunteer Marine Rescue Southport reflects its broader commitment to ocean safety and community resilience.

"We know the sea is unpredictable — and we deeply admire the volunteers who keep people safe on the water," says Erle. "If our story inspires someone to explore more responsibly, or to volunteer, or simply to fall in love with nature again — that's the impact we want."



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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF BOSUN'S LOCKER: A GOLD COAST ICON

Tucked away on the marina at Southport Yacht Club, *Bosun's Locker* has been a trusted name in boating since 1975 — making it the oldest continuously operating chandlery and boat brokerage on the Gold Coast. For five decades, Bosun's has proudly supported the local maritime community, including VMR crews, charter boats, and the hardworking trawler fleet.

Despite its charming, compact storefront, Bosun's Locker is a treasure trove for boaters. From hard-to-find fittings to everyday essentials, the chandlery carries an impressive range of stock. Even more impressive is the knowledge behind the counter. The team is steeped in real-world marine experience: Kevin has nine Sydney to Hobart races under his belt and still cruises in his classic timber bay boat. Helen brings a background with top marine brands like Harken and Ronstan, and Tom, the owner for the past 15 years, has a deep well of industry know-how and passion.

What many don't expect is Bosun's modern edge. Their online store — www.bosunslucker.com.au — regularly tops search results for chandlery gear across Australia, offering competitive pricing and efficient nationwide drop-shipping. Whether you're after Musto gear, Harken winches, Johnson pumps or Ocean South boat covers, if it's not on the shelf, the team can order it in fast and direct to your door.

Bosun's Locker is also well-known for its *boat brokerage*, with a refreshingly down-to-earth approach. Specialising in affordable, often character-filled vessels — from trailer sailors and bow riders to offshore racers and cruising yachts — they've helped thousands of locals buy and sell boats across the SYC marina, the Broadwater, and the Nerang River. Their extensive buyer database, trusted marketing reach, and network of shipwrights, surveyors, marine electricians, and tradespeople make the brokerage a one-stop resource.

As Bosun's prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2025, the team is calling out to customers past and present. If you've got fond memories, quirky stories, or even old photos of Bosun's Locker through the years, they'd love to hear from you! You can share them in-store or through their Facebook and Instagram pages.

If you haven't dropped by in a while, now's the time. The store's had a refresh — some spring cleaning, new stock, and a few layout tweaks — but the warm, knowledgeable service remains unchanged. Whether you're after a specific part or just keen for a good chat, the Bosun's team is always happy to help.

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Written by: Helen James



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Vale - Martin Burling

It is with extreme sadness that VMR Southport recently learnt of the passing of former Inshore Skipper and great mate of many, Martin Burling

Martin, aka Marty, joined VMR Southport in November 2002 as a Crew Member, and soon became a household name around the VMR Base, and along with his personal vessel, 'Ballistic', on receiving his Skippers epaulettes, he and 'Ballistic' were also given the honour of being the Squadrons most prolific customers. Marty loved holding that accolade.

Marty had no end of trouble with 'Ballistic', with it either breaking down through engine issues, ceasing to run because of electrical strife, or with its final demise, when it sunk at his residence in Oates Canal, at Runaway Bay.

Marty was also a fantastic fundraiser for VMR Southport, either selling raffle tickets with the Grand Hotel Team, or by organising his array of female friends to help VMR promote themselves at the Sanctuary Cove Boatshow.

Never one to miss the opportunity to dabble in having an alcoholic beverage, Marty was best known for the camaraderie and friendship he offered his VMR mates, with their monthly, and sometimes bi, or tri monthly bush BBQ's and frolicking they got up to at Wavebreak Island.

Although resigning in 2010, due to work and family commitments, Marty never lost contact with any of his VMR mates, and his love of having a big BBQ cook up, always kept him in touch.

Marty was vision impaired, but that never worried him, he lived life to the fullest, he loved every day he lived, and he was a wonderful father to both his son, and daughter, who he idolised, and he never let his two daschound dogs leave his side either.

As a Service Advisor at a local car dealership, a salesman of marine electrical equipment, a Personal Trainer, and everything else he did, Marty knew lots of people, and everyone knew Marty, and there is no doubt that he is now looking down from above on everyone he knew, especially those going through hard times, telling them that 'you can do anything', just put your mind to it.

That was Marty, he had some major health issues during his life, but even up until the day before he passed, he maintained there were many people worse off than him
RIP our friend, we miss you dearly.



Marty and his beloved dogs



Marty certainly loved a good time


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Doug Jennings Park Revitalisation

Doug Jennings Park, located at the top of The Spit, is undergoing revitalization works.

Upgrade works are progressing well at Doug Jennings Park, transforming this iconic destination into a more vibrant and accessible space for everyone to enjoy.

Delivered as part of The Spit Master Plan implementation, these improvements are enhancing the park's natural beauty, accessibility, and functionality for locals and visitors alike.

What's Happening?

- The Seaway Green is nearing completion, with fresh turf, solar lighting, and irrigation now in place. Final landscaping, planting, and seating are underway. This gently contoured open space near the Seaway Kiosk will soon offer stunning views of the Gold Coast Seaway and Broadwater.
- Tree planting is well underway, with 121 of the planned 186 trees now planted. Over the coming weeks, an additional 14,000 plants will be added to enhance shade and natural appeal.
- New seating has been installed, creating inviting spots to pause and soak in the waterfront atmosphere.
- A new promenade shelter is now in place, with groundworks to follow - offering welcome shade and comfortable spaces to sit and relax.
- The new car park, located north-east of Marine Stadium, has been asphalted, with garden beds and landscaping adding the final green touches.

- More than 4,000m² of reinforced turf has been laid across the event space, increasing durability and functionality for gatherings and community events.

Marine Stadium Foreshore Surrounds

Construction work has begun to gently enhance the Marine Stadium foreshore surrounds. As part of The Spit Master Plan implementation, these works will create greener, more accessible spaces for everyone.

Current works include:

- Seating wall preparation and additional picnic tables – creating more spaces for people to sit, relax, and enjoy the waterfront.
- Garden beds and landscaping – enhancing the foreshore with more greenery, shade, and natural shelter.
- All-abilities pathway to the foreshore – providing safe and easy access for everyone to reach the water's edge.

What Remains Open?

-  The Seaway Kiosk – open and accessible throughout construction.
-  Emergency Access Stairs – remains open.
-  Pedestrian access will be maintained to Doug Jennings Park and the water's edge.

However, for safety, fencing will be in place around the work area.

We appreciate your patience while these important works are being carried out.



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2025 MELBOURNE TO OSAKA YACHT RACE – THE OSAKA CUP ROARING FORTY

By former VMR Southport
member Kevin Le Poidevin



The perils of ocean racing -
damaged equipment



'Roaring Forty' in all its glory

The Melbourne to Osaka (M2O) Japan double-handed yacht race was first held in 1987, as an initiative of the City and Port of Osaka, and the Port of Melbourne, to mark the 120th anniversary of the founding of the Port of Osaka. Last held in 2018, the race is run every four or so years and is the longest south-north race in the world.

Seventeen competitors had entered this year's challenging 5500 nautical mile race from Portsea Pier inside Port Phillip Bay, through Bass Strait, the Tasman Sea, the Coral Sea, the Solomon Sea, the North Pacific Ocean and the Philippine Sea, before crossing the finish line at the end of Osaka Bay.

My co-skipper was Air Force mate Darrell 'Daz' Greig from Adelaide. After an average result in the 2024 Rolex Sydney Hobart due to the loss of two key sails on days one and two, we were keen for a stronger performance in the M2O race. *Roaring Forty* remained in Hobart after the race, so our first challenge was the short delivery hop across Bass Strait to the M2O host port, Sandringham Yacht Club.

We had a great passage until we exited Banks Strait on the northeast corner of Tasmania. Conditions were sporty, and we were launching off waves as we tight reached toward Melbourne. The sea state was short and steep so the hull would slam as we sped through the night. Then **BANG!** one solid contact had us both looking at each other saying, "damn, that was a big one!" A quick check down below and all seemed ok, however we were sailing a bit slower than expected. At daybreak, we stopped and backed *Roaring Forty* down, and a bunch of kelp floated off the keel. The rudder still felt heavy, but conditions were too rough to go overboard to clear any remaining kelp. We pressed on.

On arrival at SYC, we hauled out and there was a large kelp plant wrapped neatly in a bow around the rudder and a long gouge on the starboard forward bow section of the underwater hull, where we had clearly impacted with an unidentified floating object. The outer hull laminate skin was fractured at the end of the gouge. Ten days later, Stefan and his team had replaced a section of damaged structural core and then laminated us a new carbon fibre outer skin.

We continued pre-race preparations and attended several events. It was great to meet some of the other Skippers and their families. The race has a staggered start over several weeks depending on the vessels handicap rating. We were assigned to the main group starting on 17

March, off Portsea Pier.

A Gale Warning was issued for the start, so the Race Committee delayed the start until the following day. On race day, it was still blowing hard, so we started with two reefs in the main and were second across the line after the gun. On approach to the turning mark off Queenscliff, we entered 'The Rip' to exit Port Phillip Bay. Next stop Osaka.... or so we thought.

We sailed wide around Wilsons Promontory and were mid fleet as we entered the field of oil rigs off the coast of Lakes Entrance. More weather was expected, so keeping closer to the coast was the safe tactic. Once that front had passed, we pushed northeast in pretty rough seas, to find the reverse side of the East Australian Current.

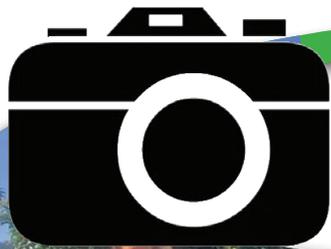
The fleet had split with some opting for a rock-hopping passage closer to the coast. We were sailing around 200nm east of Jervis Bay making good speed in 15 knots of breeze and a nice sea state. Finally, the wind and current were favourable and *Roaring Forty* was making great progress up the NSW coast, until 'Bang', and we thought our race to Japan was over.

It took four hours to wrestle the mainsail and boom and secure these on deck. We sailed for Newcastle, 45min south of my home in Port Stephens. If the boom could be repaired, Joe and his MidCoast Boatyard team were the ones that could get us back in the game. Two days later we arrived at the Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club and removed the boom ready for inspection Monday morning. A repair plan was hatched to sleeve and laminate the boom and unbelievably, we had it repaired and ready to go by Friday!

We worked long hours to put the boat back together hoping for a Sunday restart, but Huey had other ideas. A massive East Coast LOW sat in the Tasman Sea, off Sydney. We had to wait four days until Newcastle Port reopened and the conditions to moderate before we could begin our chase.

On 02 April, *Roaring Forty* crossed the new start line off Newcastle breakwater. The lead boat was already in the North Pacific and the main fleet spread across the north and south of the Solomon Sea. The Sydney Hobart winner *Alive*, was the final starter, and had just departed Melbourne, and we knew they would pass us very soon. Our goal was to pass at least one boat before Osaka.

Stay tuned for what happened next in the December V-Sheet edition!!!



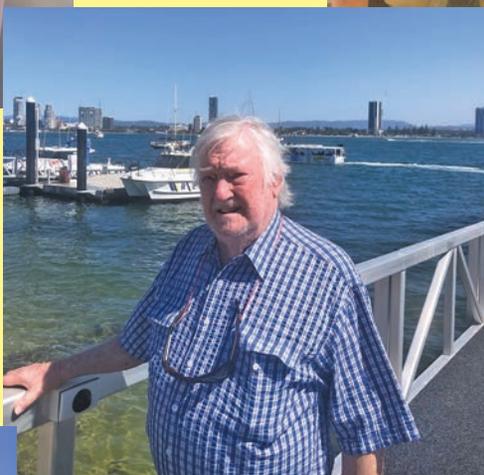
super snaps



New Radio Operators Janet Scott and Melissa Muller proudly displaying their recently received stripes.



An enthusiastic mob at a recent joint AVCG and VMR Southport get together BBQ.



Radio Operator Donald Leslie has also decided to retire after 14 years of dedicated Seaway Tower service



After 14 years of exemplary service at the Seaway Tower, Radio Operator Anne McMurray has decided to retire.



Peter Blackburn recently joined VMR Southport, and very diligently achieved his Radio Operator epaulettes.



There is nothing like the real thing, VMR Southport members undertaking training in Survival at Sea techniques.

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