

# **LORD HOWE ISLAND BOARD**

## **Business Paper**

### **OPEN SESSION**

#### **ITEM**

Marine Rescue NSW – Lord Howe Island Marine Rescue Unit Concept

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Lord Howe Island Board:

- 1) support the Marine Radio Communications enhancement;
- 2) provide in principle support for the Marine Rescue Unit establishment;
- 3) undertake further community consultation regarding the establishment of a Marine Rescue Unit on Lord Howe Island, and;
- 4) The CEO provide a written response to Marine Rescue NSW advising of the above

#### **BACKGROUND**

Over the past three years Marine Rescue NSW (MRNSW) has been in discussions with the Board regarding a number of proposals concerning Lord Howe Island. In March this year a number of representatives including Commissioner Tannos, Andrew Cribb and Dean Storey from MRNSW and Commander Hutchings and Brett Prentice from NSWPF Marine Area Command came to the island to look at the operating environment and logistics that any future project would face.

#### **CURRENT POSITION**

The Board is now in receipt of a letter from Dean Storey, Deputy Commissioner of MRNSW (Attachment A) providing more detail about the framework and requirements of any future Radio Communications project and Marine Rescue Unit on Lord Howe Island.

MRNSW has requested that from a marine/boating safety perspective that it be approached and considered as two independent but related projects, being;

- 1) Marine Radio Communications enhancement
- 2) Marine Rescue Unit establishment

### ***Marine Radio Communications Enhancement (Intermediate Hill)***

A simple marine radio installation is proposed at Intermediate Hill. Although there would remain a level of 'shadowing' directly behind Mt Gower, this site appears to provide effective coverage across other areas and is feasible from an access/installation/maintenance standpoint.

Initial scoping activity has focused on working in conjunction with Air Services Australia who we believe are also pursuing an installation at the site, however, following recent correspondence it appears that MRNSW may need to progress independently.

The installation at Intermediate Hill would:

- Be low impact from an environmental and visual perspective.
- Be restricted to a 25m pole with antennas, a solar-based charging system and small enclosure (on concrete footing) to house the radios and batteries.
- Be restricted to VHF Ch16 (accessible locally, and also linked to Sydney) and a local VHF Working Channel (likely Ch19) which would not be linked to the mainland.
- Require a line-of-sight link to a 'base' with consistent internet access

Any Future Marine Rescue Unit on LHI would require a Radio-over-Internet-Protocol (RoIP) VHF Ch16 link to the 24/7 State Operations Centre in Sydney as a mandatory requirement. This would provide consistent monitoring of VHF Ch16 (only) for the local and extended waters around the island.

All costs associated with the establishment, maintenance, repair and future replacement of the radio installation and links would be borne by Marine Rescue NSW.

### ***Marine Rescue Unit Establishment***

The establishment of a Marine Rescue Unit on LHI would require the following matters to be addressed, Unit Governance/Management, Unit Base (building), Rescue Vessel (including mooring/berthing), Volunteer Personnel/Members, Training and MRNSW/NSW Government Approval.

The attached letter provides detailed requirements for all of these matters and answers many questions that members may have about this proposal including all costs to be borne by MRNSW and the preferred location of the Unit's building being a simple shed beside the Oil Spill/Marine Parks shed.

MRNSW is now seeking formal advice from LHIB about whether it believes the projects are viable and wishes to progress planning.

The marine radio enhancement appears to be a logical and good idea to support. The establishment of a Marine Rescue Unit may be a little more complex with the potential having more impact on the island which broader community consultation required. However in principle seems to provide good outcomes for the island, community and broader regional and international boating community.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Lord Howe Island Board:

- 5) support the Marine Radio Communications enhancement;
- 6) provide in principle support for the Marine Rescue Unit establishment;
- 7) undertake further community consultation regarding the establishment of a Marine Rescue Unit on Lord Howe Island, and;
- 8) The CEO provide a written response to Marine Rescue NSW advising of the above

**Prepared:** John Teague, Manager Infrastructure & Engineering Services

**Endorsed:** Peter Adams, Chief Executive Officer

**Attachments:**

Attachment A: Marine Rescue NSW – Introduction Letter

**MARINE  
RESCUE  
NEW SOUTH WALES**



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March 16 2019

Peter Adams | Chief Executive Officer

Lord Howe Island Board

*Via email:* [peter.adams@lhib.nsw.gov.au](mailto:peter.adams@lhib.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Peter

**RE: Lord Howe Island - Marine Rescue Unit Concept**

Thank you for the recent hospitality shown to Commissioner Tannos, Andrew Cribb and myself from MRNSW, along with Commander Hutchings and Brett Prentice from NSWPF Marine Area Command.

Further to the initial 2016 invitation from the Lord Howe Island (LHI) Board to consider establishing a Unit on the island and subsequent discussions, our recent visit was constructive in helping further clarify and understand local needs, operating environments and the logistics (including challenges) that any future project would face.

**Purpose**

This letter aims to provide yourself and your Board more detail about the framework and requirements of any future Radio Communications project and Marine Rescue Unit on Lord Howe Island.

**Project Framework**

From a marine/boating safety perspective we are best to approach any future progress as two (2) independent but related projects, being;

- 1) Marine Radio Communications enhancement**
- 2) Marine Rescue Unit establishment**

These projects would progress alongside each other, but should the development of a Marine Rescue Unit on Lord Howe Island be deemed as not viable, then we can still progress with enhancing marine radio monitoring on the island regardless.

**Marine Radio Communications Enhancement (Intermediate Hill)**

A simple marine radio installation is proposed at Intermediate Hill. Although there would remain a level of 'shadowing' directly behind Mt Gower, this site appears to provide effective coverage across other areas and is feasible from an access/installation/maintenance standpoint.

Initial scoping activity has focused on working in conjunction with Air Services Australia who we believe are also pursuing an installation at the site, however, following recent correspondence it appears that MRNSW may need to progress independently.

The installation at Intermediate Hill would:

- Be low impact from an environmental and visual perspective.
- Be restricted to a 25m pole with antennas, a solar-based charging system and small enclosure (on concrete footing) to house the radios and batteries.

- Be restricted to VHF Ch16 (accessible locally, and also linked to Sydney) and a local VHF Working Channel (likely Ch19) which would not be linked to the mainland.
- Require a line-of-sight link to a 'base' with consistent internet access (but only needing a low bandwidth draw – 15kb per second (RoIP)).

Please note: Any Future Marine Rescue Unit on LHI would require a Radio-over-Internet-Protocol (RoIP) VHF Ch16 link to our 24/7 State Operations Centre in Sydney as a mandatory requirement. This would provide consistent monitoring of VHF Ch16 (only) for the local and extended waters around the island.

#### Costs

All costs associated with the establishment, maintenance, repair and future replacement of the radio installation and links would be borne by Marine Rescue NSW.

### **Marine Rescue Unit Establishment**

#### **Unit Governance/Management**

- The operation of a Marine Rescue Unit on LHI would be undertaken in line with all other units in NSW.
- A unit would be formed/accredited as per State Rescue Board requirements and the MRNSW Constitution. Appropriately interested local volunteers would become 'members' of Marine Rescue NSW.
- The unit and its members would be responsible to the MRNSW Commissioner and MRNSW Board.
- Per the Constitution, Unit members would elect their own Unit Commander (UC) and Deputy Commander, and the UC would establish a small Unit Executive (people in key roles). Unit members would be responsible to the Unit Commander. During the initial set-up and accreditation phase a Unit Commander/Administrator would be appointed by the Commissioner in consultation with the LHI Board/interested members.
- Ongoing support would be provided to the Unit by MRNSW staff based in Sydney and also regionally (Mid North Coast). This support would encompass finance, training, administration, communications, operations etc, and would be very much enhanced in the early stages of a unit.

#### Costs

MRNSW covers all costs associated with running a unit, including insurance, equipment, resources, uniforms, authorised travel, training etc.

#### **Unit Base (building)**

A simple but effective base of operations would be required for the Unit. This would provide:

- A point of Marine Rescue SAR coordination / marine radio monitoring (a radio room)
- A pre/post operation ready-room and briefing/debriefing room for crew
- Storage of a small tender/trailer with quick access to the boat ramp
- Storage of additional training/operational equipment
- A location for unit meetings and training

A small shed on a portion of the open grassed area next to the existing RMS/Marine Parks shed at the boat ramp has been identified as the most suitable location. A basic 25m pole would need to be erected alongside it (radio linking antennas). Please note: the advised future joint SES/FRS site would not be a viable location.



#### Costs

All costs associated with the establishment, fitout, maintenance, repair and future replacement of the shed would be borne by Marine Rescue NSW.

### **Rescue Vessel**

- A fit-for-purpose rescue vessel that could effectively operate in the conditions regularly experienced around Lord Howe Island and safely transit to adjacent high-activity areas would be provided, along with a suitable tender vessel/trailer.
- Any future vessel is ear-marked to be a heavy-displacement monohull in the vicinity of 14-16m in length. As is a requirement for all MRNSW vessels, it would be built/maintained in 2C survey and fitted with the full array of SAR and safety equipment in line with AMSA, State Rescue Board and MRNSW requirements.
- Initial discussions are underway with the NSW Police Force regarding the acquisition and refit of a retiring 16m Police Vessel. Time is of the essence however, as these vessels are already listed publically for sale. Confirmation as soon as possible of the desire and intent by both parties to progress with a Rescue Unit on Lord Howe Island would be advantageous if this ex-Police vessel is to be an option.

### **Costs**

All costs associated with the establishment, fitout, fuelling, maintenance, repair and future replacement of a rescue vessel would be borne by Marine Rescue NSW.

### **Vessel Mooring/Berthing**

It would be the preference of MRNSW to have any rescue vessel berthed alongside the jetty/wharf. MRNSW is willing to scope options for a basic addition to the existing jetty that meets this need. However, the indicated mooring location on sheltered waters inside the Northern Channel appears to be a suitable mooring location.

### **Training**

Indications are that there are a large number of highly qualified and experience mariners on the island, which would provide a strong starting point for any unit.

- MRNSW training and qualifications frameworks sit under those minimum requirements set by AMSA, with additional requirements set by MRNSW and NSWPF MAC. MRNSW as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) delivers its own AMSA recognised and aligned training framework. Standard Operating Procedures are developed in consultation with NSWPF MAC.
- All current qualifications which local members hold and which align to MRNSW requirements would be recognised (RPL'd), with additional 'rescue' units of competency and training required (gap-fill). All crew members would be required to undertake an Operational Assessment.
- Common qualifications used across emergency services (SES/RFS/MRNSW etc) such as First Aid Certificates would be recognised and not required to be duplicated.
- Significant and ongoing training support would be provided by the MRNSW Training Department – including on site on Lord Howe Island.
- It would be the likely intent to identify 2 x experienced and capable LHI personnel to fast-track with training/assessment and potential CertIV provision (for at least 1), who would then take a lead role with local training, inductions and exercises.

### **Costs**

All costs associated with training courses, resources and equipment provision, authorised travel for the purposes of any training/assessment etc would be borne by MRNSW.

### **Volunteer Personnel/Members**

- There are roles in Marine Rescue for any interested persons. Boat Crew, radio operators, administration support etc. Any persons interested in any capacity could join the unit and participate in line with their interest/skill-set and available time.
- From a viability perspective, a minimum of 6 interested and committed experienced mariners would probably be required from a minimum total membership of 10 to form a unit (as per Constitution).

### **MRNSW/NSW Government Approval Process – Marine Rescue Unit**

Should the LHI Board support/approve the principle of a Marine Rescue Unit, and should sufficient local volunteers be interested, then the following approval/accreditation processes would be pursued:

1. A final paper and budget would be tabled with the MRNSW Board for consideration/endorsement, outlining validated need, LHI Board and public support, and financial implications of a Unit.
2. In line with the State Rescue Policy a multi-staged approach would be taken through local, regional and state committee levels proposing the establishment of a rescue unit. Pre-accreditation would be provided to enable further investment/training/procurement etc, finalised with a full accreditation inspection and endorsement in time by the State Rescue Board.

#### **Summary of Next Steps (general)**

1. MRNSW seeks formal advice from the LHI Board whether after consideration of the items outlined in this letter, it believes the project/s (marine radio installation / Marine Rescue Unit) are viable and wishes to progress planning.
2. Planning on a marine radio installation at Intermediate Hill to be finalised, included the identification and commencement of the appropriate approvals/licences/technical aspects. Advice and on-island support from the Board/Staff would be required.
3. A communication to the residents of LHI and potential release of an EOI regarding membership of MRNSW to be progressed, followed by a public meeting/presentation by MRNSW. Advice and direction on the best method/s and process for engaging with the public would be required.
4. Planning on the erection of a basic shed on an area of land next to the RMS/Marine Parks shed at the boat ramp to be finalised, including the identification and commencement of the appropriate approvals/licences/technical aspects. Advice and on-island support from the Board/Staff would be required.
5. Planning on the procurement of a fit-for-purpose rescue vessel to be finalised, noting that the acquisition/build timeframe of a vessel will be 12-18 months at the earliest. In addition, planning re wharf/jetty berthing or mooring to be progressed. Advice and on-island support from the Board/Staff would be required.

Whilst there is a lot more detail to go into across the many aspects of the projects, the above summary should provide a solid basis covering the core items from which to make an informed 'in principle' decision. Should you have any questions though, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you again and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Regards



Dean Storey | Deputy Commissioner  
**Marine Rescue NSW**

*CC Jim McFadyen*

