

Minister for Energy and Renewables
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16th December 2025

Ms Jen Butler MP
Labor Member for Lyons
via Clerk of the House of Assembly
haprocedure@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Butler

I am writing in relation to a question raised in Parliament in relation to the VMRT.

I can confirm the following:

- a. On 20 November 2025, the State Government entered into a three-year funding agreement with Volunteer Marine Rescue Tasmania (VMRT) providing a total of \$240,000 (\$80,000 per annum) to support the operations of VMRT's affiliated units. The funding agreement expires 30 June 2028.
- b. The \$20,000 annual funding provided to each of the VMRT units is to contribute towards operational costs. It is expected that this will be used to assist VMRT members undertake appropriate training and development opportunities.
- c. Since 2018-19, the Tasmanian Government has provided a total of \$1.35 million to upgrade marine rescue vessels, trailers and vehicles. This included \$1 million in 2024-25 allocated equally amongst the seven volunteer marine rescue units in the State (\$142,857 each). There is no ongoing funding for this purpose.
- d. The training and development needs for Tasmanian marine rescue service providers are up to the individual units to determine. The Tasmanian Government does not play a role in directing the training and development activities that should be undertaken.
- e. The \$20,000 annual funding provided to for each volunteer marine rescue unit, through VMRT, is to cover operational expenses and insurance is an eligible expense under this funding.
- f. The Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management has advised that:
 - VMRT members are considered as 'volunteer emergency management workers' under the *Emergency Management Act 2006* at Section 56 "participation in emergency management or rescue or retrieval operations as a volunteer" (for the purposes of Workers Compensation).

- The *Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements* (Issue 2) refers to Emergency management volunteers at 3.11.3 and recognises they are extremely important contributors in the management of emergencies.
- *The State Special Emergency Management Plan – Tasmanian Search and Rescue Plan* also recognises volunteer groups, and that can provide a skilled workforce and resources.

g. The Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management has advised that VMR service providers are recognised as a valuable resource to assist emergency services in maritime search and rescue incidents. They are included as a resource along with Surf Life Saving Tasmania but hold no formalised responsibility.

Search and Rescue (SAR) Operations (Emergency assistance)

- A resource to assist Tasmania Police in providing assets to respond to maritime distress incidents for vessels and persons within Tasmanian coastal waters.
- Work in partnership with Tasmania Police, Surf Life Saving Tasmania, and Tas Maritime Radio for coordinated larger scale search activities.

Non-Emergency Assistance

- Provide assistance for non-life-threatening situations such as mechanical breakdowns or towing vessels to safety.

Marine Safety Support

- Promote boating safety, education, and awareness within the community.
- Assist with expired flares and EPIRB disposal and advise on compliance with safety regulations.

Support to State Emergency Services

- Provide a support role to Tasmania Police for marine search and rescue responses in coastal waters.

The Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management advise:

- VMRT hold no formal responsibility for marine rescue but provide a valuable service that can assist with functions as above.
- VMRT is not included under the definition of a Statutory Service under the *Emergency Management Act 2006*, and therefore not formally recognised by the Tasmanian State Government in the same way as SES volunteers, volunteer firefighters, or volunteer ambulance officers.
- VMRT operates as a community-based volunteer organisation, providing marine rescue services to support Tasmania Police Marine and Rescue Services.
- Their role is acknowledged operationally and supported through collaboration, but they do not have the same legal status or entitlements as state-recognised emergency volunteers, with the exception of Workers Compensation entitlements.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink. It begins with a stylized 'N' and 'D' on the left, followed by a large, loopy 'U' and 'I' that are circled together. The signature ends with a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line extending to the right.

Hon Nick Duigan MLC
Minister for Sport