

VMR Whitsunday Coronavirus/COVID-19 Activation Contingency Plan

As approved by VMRW Management Committee 30th March 2020

Background

Following discussions between VMR Headquarters and Queensland Water Police Headquarters we have been advised by VMRAQ that VMR volunteers have been categorised as an “at risk group” and QWPS will be the first responders to COVID-19 related medivacs. If QWPS assets are not available in an appropriate time, then VMR assets may be tasked. In this instance, all previously specified precautions should be followed—including direct QAS supervision and subsequent decontamination. Further discussions have been held with the Whitsunday Regional Harbour Master, Jason Britton (RHM), Whitsunday Water Police Regional SAR Controller, Graeme Pettigrew, and Queensland Ambulance Officer In Charge, Stephen Thurtell.

As a result:

Any subsequent isolation of our members as a result of an activation will depend on advice from health professionals.

VMRW has the only deep-water rescue craft specifically designed for Medivacs in the region. It is possible that QWPS may not have available vessels, in which case VMRW may be called on to assist.

Radio Operators and 24-hour emergency phone holders (VMRW operators) are to be briefed on the COVID-19 Medivac procedure.

If a VMRW operator receives a call for assistance which is related to COVID-19, this includes persons who have been positively diagnosed, have COVID-19 symptoms, contact with a positively diagnosed person, and persons who are, or should be, in self-isolation (e.g. recent contact or arrival from overseas etc.). The COVID-19 Medivac procedure shall apply.

COVID-19 Medivac procedure

1. All aspects are to be recorded in detail in Radio Room or Phone Holder logs.
2. The VMRW operator shall establish the identity and current location of the person calling. If it is NOT QAS or QWPS, the person is to be told to “**please hang up and call 000**”. VMRW will only take COVID-19 related enquiries or requests directly from QAS or QWPS.
3. Calls from QAS or QWPS; Please take full details including their name and call back phone number, also include details of – QAS or QWPS reference number, number of Paramedics proposed, requested departure time, evacuation location and the reason why VMRW involvement has been requested. If an estimated departure time is needed, advise the caller that it may take 45 minutes (this allows us to activate crew with longer travel times if necessary) after approval by VMRW Executives as outlined below.
4. VMRW will, under no circumstances, be activated for a COVID-19 Medivac without a QAS Paramedic on board.
5. Before assembling a crew, the VMRW operator must call Mal Priday (VMRW President) on 0412 638 579 or Roger Wodson (VMRW Secretary) on 0419 647 519 and give them the full details that you have obtained and to get approval to proceed.
6. Mal and Roger shall discuss the situation with RHM Jason Britton and QPWS to ensure that VMRW involvement is appropriate. If either Mal or Roger is not available, another VMRW SARCO shall be contacted.

7. Assuming that RHM and QPWS approval is given, Mal or Roger will contact the VMRW operator with approval and any conditions that may apply. In particular, *Coral Sea Marina VMR1* shall operate with its surveyed minimum number of crew (2 crew members, comprising a Skipper and a Senior Crew member) to minimise the impact on Active Volunteer crew members.
8. The VMRW Operator shall make all crew aware of the possible COVID-19 presence and each crew member may decline the call-out.
9. The VMRW Operator shall advise the QAS/QWPS operator and arrange a proposed departure time and commence assembling a crew as discussed with Mal/Roger.
The VMRW Operator shall advise QAS/QWPS that the Ambulance should go to the Water Police gate in Shingley Drive (between the boat ramp car park and Hawkes Boat Yard) and call QWPS for access. VMR1 will pick up the Paramedics at the Water Police jetty.
10. VMRW shall maintain four sets of protective gowns and masks and sanitising materials on board and the QAS Paramedic will bring a full kit on each activation.
11. In the event of a government decreed total lockdown, if a radio operator or crew member is questioned in transit as to their authority, they should advise the police officer that they are attending to emergency duties as authorised by a senior QFES official - **“I can confirm that travel and movements for the purposes of Marine Search and Rescue (including assists) and maintenance of marine radio monitoring services would be considered emergency and response services”**
12. Upon arrival and berthing at the destination, all VMR staff shall put on PPE (over life jackets) to the QAS Paramedic’s satisfaction and move to the flybridge. They shall take the VMR1 phone, sanitiser gel or wipes and logbook with them.
13. Whenever possible, the Skipper shall recommend to the QAS Paramedic that the patient should stay on the rear deck of VMR1.
14. The Paramedic and Patient shall board VMR1 and enter the cabin – always at a distance of at least 1½ metres from a crew member, with the patient fully protected by face mask, gown and gloves. If weather conditions permit, it is recommended that the patient and Paramedic remain outside the cabin on the rear deck. Any conversation between VMRW crew and the Paramedic shall be between the flybridge and deck. Should the Skipper or Paramedic deem it preferable, mobile phone numbers should be exchanged to allow communication on the return journey.
15. When the Paramedic and Patient are settled, 2 VMR crew members (wearing Protective equipment) may leave the flybridge to release the dock lines. They must take care to sanitise any touch points, such as ladder, Samson post, door and door handles, VMR1 deck door and fittings. After removing and stowing the lines and fenders, they must return to the fly bridge.
16. Upon departure, the VMR1 Comms Officer must call the VMRW operator with an ETA at the Police dock, and the operator will advise QWPS accordingly.
17. If at any time there is a need to check on the welfare of patient and Paramedic a VMR crew member (designated by the Skipper) may go down to the deck to check that all is OK in the cabin (via cabin windows) and return to the fly bridge until arrival at the Police Dock at CSM.
18. After berthing at the Water Police wharf, the VMRW crew must return to the fly bridge and all parties are to remain in their positions (Paramedic and patient in the cabin) until QAS or QWPS arrive. The Paramedic and patient may then disembark.

19. The VMR crew shall then proceed to disinfect any touch points and interior surfaces of the cabin in accordance with the separate SOP for on-vessel COVID-19 requirements, before removing protective PPE. PPE will be removed on the dock and stored carefully in the plastic disposal bag provided, taking care that potentially contaminated materials do not touch the exterior of the bag. The bag and its contents shall be taken by a crew member and delivered to QAS at 7 Schnapper St, Cannonvale where it will be disposed under controlled conditions by QAS.
20. The possibilities of any VMR crew or Patient cross-infection must be reviewed with the Paramedic. A decision will be made at that time whether self-isolation or any future care is required, however VMR crew are to monitor their health closely.
21. The Skipper's report is sensitive and should be distributed to MANCOM, Emergency Phone Holders and all skippers. It is not to be forwarded or copied to any other party, under any circumstances, except as noted below. It will not be posted on Facebook.

All Skipper activation reports are forwarded to QWPS, MSQ and the RHM as standard practice. **COVID-19 Medivac** activation reports will be forwarded to QAS and VMRAQ as well.

Authorised by: VMR Whitsunday Management Committee



Roger Wodson, Secretary

Date: 30th March 2020