17 December, 2024

**MARINE RESCUE NSW POWERS BACK INTO ACTION WITH ISUZU GEN SET**

Australia’s coastline is both picturesque and perilous at times.

It also spans around 34,000 kilometres, with approximately 50 per cent of the entire population of Australia (around 14 million people) residing within [seven kilometres of a coast or port](https://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/marine/coasts-estuaries#:~:text=Coasts%20and%20estuaries%20form%20a,includes%20more%20than%201000%20estuaries.).

It’s no wonder then that a day out on the water is an activity favoured by many.

Ensuring the safety of private vessel users is an undertaking that understandably spans beyond the reach of government and port authorities, so it’s volunteer organisations such as [Marine Rescue NSW](https://www.marinerescuensw.com.au/) that are the eyes and ears on watch.

Playing a key role in its local community, [Marine Rescue NSW Port Stephens](https://marinerescueportstephens.au/marine-search-and-rescue/) not only assists with the safety of local watercraft and smaller vessels that travel along the New South Wales coastline, but also thousands of tourists that use the waterways.

The branch has two rescue vessels, a fast 12-metre Flybridge Steber used out in the ocean and a smaller 10.5-metre boat for the bay area and surrounding rivers and lakes.

**Centre of operations**

All activities are coordinated from a Radio Communications Centre based at the stunning Nelson Head Lighthouse Reserve heritage site. From here, the team monitors and provides support for an area 30 nautical miles north to Seal Rocks and 30 nautical miles south to Stockton Beach on the New South Wales coastline.

The Marine Rescue Radio Communications Centre houses a range of cellular networks and 27 MHz and VHF marine radio systems. Additionally, it is home to a weather station that contributes to the Bureau of Meteorology network, providing vital information on weather monitoring and forecasting.

Although their main task is to monitor privately used watercraft, Marine Rescue NSW Port Stephens are called on to help during larger scale rescue operations. In these cases, the training building at the site can easily transform into a disaster command post as required.

“Larger scale vessels such as container ships and freighters are managed by ports authorities and the like, so our job is to ensure the safety of personal watercraft for those who enjoy boating as a lifestyle,” said Operations Manager, Mick Duggan.

“Primarily we aid on the water, provide weather information and updates on conditions, and monitor for safety as a checkpoint for boaties.

“Importantly, we have our Radio Communications Centre staffed every hour of every day to keep the waterways safe.”

**Lightning strikes**

Marine Rescue NSW Port Stephens is prepared for any, and all, emergency situations: from people getting lost or running out of fuel, through to breakdowns, collisions and major incidents.

Their funding is raised largely through donations—and being staffed by volunteers generously donating their time and expertise—ensuring that things run smoothly can prove a challenge at the best of times.

When the unexpected hits, it’s a whole different kettle of fish.

On 30 April 2024, a massive lightning strike on the Nelson Head Radio Communications Centre devastated operations at Marine Rescue NSW Port Stephens.

“We believe it hit the lightning rod, but it was so big, it set off an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) that left a hole in the side of the building,” Mick said.

“Due to the EMP, every circuit breaker in the building popped and half the equipment was fried.

“We had to go through all the equipment over the next month to really understand what the total damage was.”

**Powering through**

A key asset destroyed by the strike was the centre’s back-up power generator which had been used heavily over its operating life due to power network outages and the isolated location of Nelson Head.

“We are situated in a beautiful spot, but we are definitely ‘up the road’ from the township,” Mick said.

“A fallen branch on the power line on the driveway, local power maintenance or bush fires down the line can affect the entire area and see us switching to back-up power.

“We must have reliable back-up power generation to keep everything operational.

“As quickly as we assessed that we needed a new gen set, the wider community came to our assistance,” Mick continued.

“Thanks to the fantastic support of [Gilbert & Roach](https://www.gilbertandroachisuzu.com.au/) at Hexham, we have a brand-new 20 kVA gen set from Isuzu Power Solutions that has more than replaced our old unit.”

Isuzu Australia Limited National Dealer Sales Manager, Murray O’Dea, said Isuzu was pleased to support “a great example of the Australian volunteer spirit” in the Marine Rescue NSW Port Stephens operation.

“The crew are a wonderful group of volunteers who go above and beyond when they’re called upon,” commented Murray.

“Once the call came out from them about needing a new generator, Joel MacDonald (Parts Manager) and the team at Gilbert & Roach stepped up to assist, with IPS engineering support to ensure further capabilities could be achieved for their needs.”

**All-weather support**

The [GS020-PTY generator set](https://powersolutions.isuzu.com.au/solutions-range/generator-sets/) has a rated output of 20kVA/16kWe (Prime) and is powered by the turbocharged four-cylinder Isuzu 4LE1 engine. The unit is supplemented by three 240-volt (15-Amp) single phase outlets and a 415-volt (20-Amp) three-phase outlet.

Encased in a sturdy housing, the unit also includes sound-suppressant technology with a rated sound output of 51 decibels at seven metres—equating to the level of a conversation between two people.

“I have been around plenty of diesel-powered pieces of equipment in my time on sea and land, and the day we tested it for the first time, I could not believe how quiet it was,” Mick said.

“As is evident from the lighting strike, the weather can be extreme here, so having a high-quality casing on the gen set is essential to withstand the elements.

“We have a lot of equipment that is coming back up to speed, but the gen set has in effect put as well ahead in far more areas than anticipated.

“It now provides stand-by power to all the buildings, including the Radio Communications Centre and training building, plus the cafe and restaurant, which are key money earners for us.”

With the re-building process continuing, Marine Services NSW Port Stephens has geared up for the warmer months and expects the need for its services to be as high as ever.

“We are one of only four Marine Services locations that are classed as a Category One Marine Search and Rescue Coordination Centre (SARC), which means we can be involved in up to seven callouts per day over the summer period,” Mick explained.

“Like we have done for 40 years, we will have your back if you’re out on the water in our area—all hours, every day.”

**ends**

**For further information, please contact:** **For Isuzu Power Solutions releases and photos:**

Troy Lawson                                                      Arkajon Communications

Isuzu Australia Limited                                      Phone: 03 9867 5611

Phone: 03 9644 6666                                          Email: isuzu@arkajon.com.au