

Jodi McKay

Minister for Tourism
Minister for the Hunter
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister for Women



Friday 15th January 2010

HUNTER BEACH GOERS PROTECTED WITH NEW JET-SKIS

Hunter beaches will be safer this summer with 7 new jet-skis and a squad of elite operators watching over beach goers.

Minister for the Hunter, Jodi McKay, launched the Hunter Water Rescue Craft, at Nobby's Beach today.

Ms McKay, joined by Hunter Water's Managing Director Kevin Young said extra resources would allow the elite fleet to be on standby 24/7 for emergencies and increase capacity during patrol hours.

"Hunter Water has provided \$30,000 to Hunter Surf Life Saving allowing the jet-ski fleet to be on the water every day during patrol hours and on call for emergencies," Ms McKay said.

Ms McKay said the jet-skis, purchased with NSW Government and community grants, would be operated by 20 trained and highly skilled volunteers.

"The 20 volunteers have undergone a rigorous 15 week training course, making them the SAS of Surf Life Saving," Ms McKay said.

"Our Hunter Surf Life Savers are hard working volunteers and the addition of the Hunter Water Rescue Craft fleet will support and compliment the great job they do day after day.

"Last year Hunter Surf Life Savers spent 55,511 hours on patrol, conducted 459 rescues, administered 743 first aid treatments and performed 8,337 preventative actions."

Hunter Water's Managing Director Kevin Young said the Hunter Water Rescue Craft operators were selectively recruited and trained specifically for the job.

"The Hunter Water Rescue Craft operators are trained in first aid, spinal injury management, emergency response, defibrillation, beach management and jet-ski operation, so they're some of the most capable volunteers around," Mr Young said.

Jet-skis have previously been restricted to use on an on-call basis by Hunter Surf Life Saving due to a lack of qualified operators and funding to cover ongoing costs such as fuel.

The new fleet will operate during patrol hours, with one jet-ski covering each of the three Hunter Surf Life Saving areas from Tea Gardens to Catherine Hill Bay.

Hunter Surf Life Saving CEO Rhonda Scruton said Hunter Water's sponsorship provided the financial security to train the operators and operate the jet-skis as a patrol fleet for the first time.

"The Hunter Water Rescue Craft require significant maintenance and fuel to operate and we would simply not be able to have this extraordinary resource without Hunter Water's support. We're very excited about the increased safety these patrols bring to our beaches," she said.

"The jet-ski fleet has been named the Hunter Water Rescue Craft to recognise the support we've received from Hunter Water for the past 28 years," Ms Scruton said.

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Ms McKay said she was working hard to ensure that Newcastle Surf Clubs had a continuous source of funding for years to come.

“Our Surf Life Saving Clubs give so much to the city and its lifestyle, which is why I want to ensure they are supported year after year,” Ms McKay said.

“The NSW Government and Newcastle City Council are jointly funding the development of the Newcastle Coastal Masterplan, which will help guide the future of our coastline.

“This Masterplan will also outline how Newcastle Surf Clubs will receive ongoing funding from the redevelopment and rejuvenation of the coastline.”

Ms McKay said the Masterplan would be placed on public exhibition in February and she encouraged everyone to have their say on the plan.

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