

# Bunbury volunteers get into the spirit

The Bunbury Sea Rescue Group did not have to wait long before taking to the water in their new \$500,000 vessel *Spirit of Bunbury III*, with the vessel performing its first rescue the day following handover.

Commander Eliot Fisher said a call was received for assistance to recover an unmanned 12 metre ketch that had broken her moorings off Quindalup.

“The empty craft was drifting north towards the port of Bunbury anchorage area where a number of ships were present,” Eliot said.

“It was a hazard to navigation, and needed to be boarded and recovered in seas that were up to one and a half metres high.

“We accomplished our mission and the vessel fulfilled all our expectations.”

Officially commissioned in April by the Mayor of Bunbury Mr David Smith, *Spirit of Bunbury III* has become the group’s main rescue vessel for major incidents at sea, joining the existing fleet of four.

At the event the Mayor recalled launching the Bunbury Sea Rescue Group strategy five years ago, and welcomed the fact that the name *Spirit of Bunbury* had been retained.

“The traditional name reflects the dedication and commitment of the volunteers to this vital marine rescue service,” Mr Smith said.

“It is truly outstanding that a small group of people have developed such an ambitious and comprehensive strategic plan and achieved all their objectives.”

Eliot said the new boat provided a modern rescue platform designed to work in all weather conditions.

“It combines crew comfort with high performance and state of the art equipment,” he said.

“The design incorporates electrical, electronic and power management systems, plus fire suppression and bilge pumping systems, making for a very safe operational platform.

“It also carries the latest radio equipment, GPS, radar, infrared cameras and auto pilot equipment, along with computer, internet and telephone communications.

“At 11 metres, the boat also has a cruising range of 350 nautical miles and can travel at a speed of up to 34 knots.



Bunbury Sea Rescue Skipper Noel Smith and Commander Eliot Fisher on board the new sea rescue boat *Spirit of Bunbury III*. Photo courtesy of Bunbury Herald/WA Newspapers.

“Its many features, including improved response capability in both capacity and equipment, the backup it offers adjoining groups, the crew friendly design and much enhanced training ability, all represent a great benefit to the local community.”

The Bunbury volunteers also constructed two pontoon jetties, concrete abutments, and replaced the slipway to support the group’s vessels.

This was part of the overall plan providing three additional vessels, a towing vehicle and a large storage shed to accommodate the new assets.

Eliot said the complexity and size of the new vessel will require Bunbury volunteers to undertake extensive training to ensure they can operate all equipment safely and effectively.

“The challenge now is to match the volunteer skills to the vessel’s capabilities, and a comprehensive induction and training program has been designed and is being implemented to achieve that objective,” he said.

The project is the result of years of community fundraising by the dedicated volunteers, complemented by funding from FESA, Royalties for Regions and Lotterywest grants, Local Government and business donations.

On average, the Bunbury crew respond to around 30 incidents per year, saving numerous lives in the process.