

South Africa's National Sea Rescue Institute wins two coveted international awards



South Africa's National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) has won two coveted international awards at the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) Awards ceremony held on 14 September 2021. Stories of dedication, selflessness, bravery and innovation dominated the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) Awards ceremony. The NSRI won awards in the following categories:

- IMRF Award for Innovation and Technology awarded to South African JetRIB, by Admiral Powercats, Droomers Yamaha and the NSRI
- IMRF Vladimir Maksimov Lifetime Achievement Award awarded to Patrick van Eyssen, Station 3, Table Bay

"We are thrilled that the NSRI's JetRIB Team has won the IMRF's Innovation and Technology Award that recognises new products and technologies developed that improve the work and success of Search and Rescue (SAR) organisations. The NSRI operates in an austere and

resource constrained environment and so innovation is a continuous process to ensure that we adapt and flex to the demands for our rescue services in South Africa. We are overjoyed at being recognized by the international SAR community and with our partners to be able to make a contribution. The JetRIB is an amazing tool for surf rescue," said Dr Cleve Robertson, NSRI CEO.

"We are also absolutely delighted that NSRI stalwart, Pat Van Eyssen of NSRI Station 3 Table Bay has won the IMRF Vladimir Maksimov Lifetime Achievement Award that recognises outstanding service to search and rescue (SAR) by an individual or organisation. There must be very few SAR coxswains in the world that can boast 50 years of operational service without a break. Pat Van Eyssen has been a crew member at NSRI Station 3 Table Bay since the age of 19 years and a rescue coxswain for almost as long! His service is exemplary and it is a true honour to have such a remarkable individual as a volunteer. We are extremely proud of Pat who

remains an active coxswain and serves as a mentor to future crews and continues to make a substantial contribution to the service. He carries our very best wishes to himself, his wife, Jill and children, Patrick, Tracey, Karen and Candice, a truly inspiring family," said Dr Robertson.

The IMRF Awards were established to recognise search and rescue (SAR) professionals around the world for their outstanding actions, skills, expertise and commitment or an innovation/technology that transforms SAR activities.

IMRF Vladimir Maksimov Lifetime Achievement Award: Patrick van Eyssen

The National Sea Rescue Institute of South Africa was founded in 1967. The first two volunteers used a small Zodiac inflatable craft named Snoopy, driven by a 15hp Johnson outboard engine which was based in Cape Town, which they sometimes transported on their personal Kombi to where they needed to launch for a search or rescue operation.

Four years after the first NSRI volunteers started operating their Zodiac from Three Anchor Bay in Cape Town, 19-year old Patrick van Eyssen, known as Pat, put his hand up and was accepted as a volunteer at the NSRI's Station 1 in Cape Town harbour.

Pat had been involved in boating and fishing from a young age with much of his free time spent on small craft. He is one of those people who has a natural feel for the ocean. Some might say that he has salt in his veins. Pat's brother in law was involved as one of the NSRI's first volunteers and it was not long before Pat was introduced to the organisation; which he took to like a duck to water. Two years after joining, he qualified as a coxswain, a position that he still holds on Sea Rescue's Class 1 off-shore rescue boat.

In the early days of the NSRI the Sea Rescue vessel with the call sign Rescue 1, based at Cape Town, would fairly regularly be asked to respond to incidents at the edge of her range. Sometimes as far as 90 nautical miles off-shore.

It was these long distance rescues, which required precision navigation, well before modern GPS technology, as well the Air Sea Rescue missions for which he volunteered that kept the young coxswain on his toes. Pat is an exceptional coxswain who has led many successful rescue missions in the treacherous conditions off the coast off Cape Town, South Africa infamously known as "The Cape of Storms."

This year, at the age of 69, Pat van Eyssen is the only NSRI volunteer with an awe inspiring 50 years' active service who is still operational as a duty coxswain.

Pat has twice served as Station Commander of Cape Town's flagship station in the V&A Waterfront. His first stint at the helm of Station 3 was from 2001 to 2010 and after a short break he was re-elected Station Commander in October 2012 to 2016. Pat ran a tight 'ship' or station with great care and kindness. If not actually at the helm of Rescue 1

The BR 800 has an excellent power-to-weight ratio and an anti-vibration system as well



or Rescue 3, Pat always endeavoured to be in the rescue base mentoring and advising those who were at sea and waiting for the rescue crews to return safely to the station. During Pat van Eyssen's time in command, Station 3 carried out 214 operations, rescued 417 persons, towed 61 vessels to safety and assisted a further 261 craft; an indication of the vital part played by this station in assisting persons in trouble off the City of Cape Town.

Over his time of serving the NSRI, Pat has accumulated thousands of hours as a volunteer at sea. He has taken part in 167 rescue operations, most of which he has led as the Class 1 on-scene commander.

There are not many people in the world who have made such an enormous lifetime contribution to the maritime search and rescue sector. The NSRI is greatly indebted to Pat. Not only for his exceptional service but also for all of the people who he has trained to

follow in his footsteps of a life lived in and for search and rescue at sea.

IMRF Award for Innovation and Technology: South African JetRIB, by Admiral Powercats, Droomers Yamaha and NSRI

Traditional surf rescue vessels that are used world over are either small Inflatables, rigid hull inflatable boats, 3,8 to 4,7 metres in length or jet skis. The National Sea Rescue Institute of South Africa has for a number of years been looking for a replacement for these traditional vessels that would improve crew and patient safety, be as environmentally friendly as possible and still be fast and agile in the surf zone.

They were looking for a vessel that would take propellers out of the water, reducing pollution as well as possible injuries to patients and or crew from prop hits. Ideally the new vessel should have the speed and agility of a jet ski but have better stability and be able to carry more patients.

Cover profile



► In early 2019, Admiral Powercats and Droomers Yamaha approached the NSRI with a design concept for a jet boat, a jet ski with an extension hull and hypalon pontoon permanently attached. It seemed to tick all the boxes for an exceptional surf rescue craft and in July 2019 the prototype, given the Sea Rescue class name JetRIB, was taken on a tour of Sea Rescue stations around South Africa.

Feedback from the NSRI's volunteers was unanimous. The JetRIB was reportedly in a class of its own. The consensus was that it will completely change surf rescue work, making it safer for both crew and patient and, equally importantly better for the environment than the two-stroke petrol engines that are widely in use. The JetRIB is a clever combination of the four-stroke Yamaha VX1050 Jet Ski with an extension hull and hypalon

pontoons. It is an environmentally friendly engine and being a jet drive, there is no propeller danger to patient or rescue swimmers.

The added hull section has made the JetRIB an incredibly stable rescue platform as well as giving it increased flotation. The pontoons are divided into four separate compartments for safety purposes.

There are many advantages to this new craft. Current surf rescue boats are almost impossible to operate in the surf zone with only the helmsman onboard. On the JetRIB this can be done with ease allowing for two rescue swimmers to be deployed and then picking them and their patient up and running to safety even in challenging surf conditions. These sometimes tricky manoeuvres are made safer

by the incredible stability of the JetRIB making the loading of crew and patients a lot less stressful in oncoming surf.

The seating position for a crewman on the new JetRIB is behind the coxswain on a soft padded and very comfortable seat, which eliminates the huge impacts experienced on most surf rescue boats that are currently in use.

There is a wave of excitement with regards to rolling the first ten JetRIBs' out to our Sea Rescue stations operating in surf zones around the country.

Specifications

- Jet Ski : Yamaha VX 1050 (110hp)
- Hull : Extension hull with a Hypalon pontoon permanently attached
- Engine: Three cylinder, four stroke
- Fuel: 70 litre capacity
- Range: Five hours plus two hours reserve
- Crew: Three

Theresa Crossley, CEO, IMRF said, "The IMRF Awards this year are special, firstly because of the global pandemic, the eligibility period spanned two years and our awards ceremony on 14 September 2021 was an online event and secondly because, despite all the challenges search and rescue teams around the world have faced over the last two years, we have received our strongest set of nominations yet. The judges have had a really difficult task selecting the finalists from an outstanding field of candidates, all with compelling stories and all worthy of international recognition and appreciation."

"My hearty congratulations to Patrick and the JetRIB team. I really couldn't ask for a better team, whether it's our volunteers or professional staff, their exemplary dedication, commitment and passion for everything that we do at the NSRI is the reason that we are able to continue to operate as the only maritime search and rescue organisation in South Africa, funded entirely by donors and sponsorships" concluded Dr Robertson. ▲