

PERFORMANCE REPORT 2026



OUR PURPOSE

**WE ARE THE
CHARITY**

**SAVING
LIVES ON
THE WATER**

Whether it's sharing all we know through our education programmes, giving a tow back home or coming to someone's rescue, we're here to help boaties so they can fully enjoy the beautiful oceans, lakes, and rivers of Aotearoa - whatever their waka.

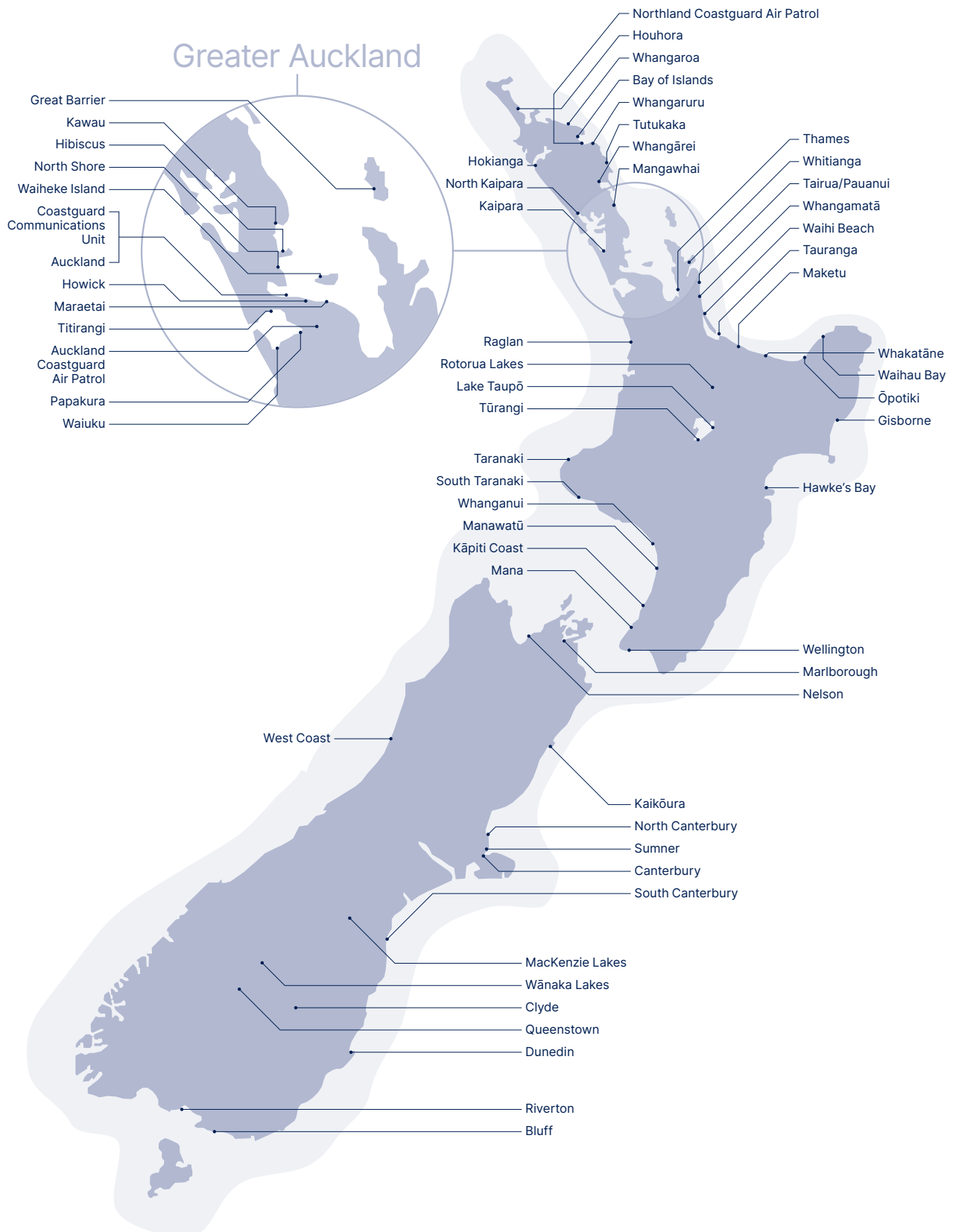
Powered by our volunteers and dedicated support staff, we save lives by:

- ✓ **Having the right people, in the right place, to respond to a call for help.**
- ✓ **Giving our people the support they need, to enable them to focus on the mission.**
- ✓ **Having the right tools and equipment, to complete the mission safely and effectively.**

We're built on strong foundations. This means:

- ✓ **We're sustainably funded.**
- ✓ **We have effective governance in place.**
- ✓ **We have the skills we need to shape our business.**

WHERE WE ARE



CONTENTS

HAERE MAI

6

RESCUE READY - EVERY DAY

8

Our network 9

The difference we've made 10

Exploring new technology to enhance search and rescue 11

Enhancing Coastguard's footprint capability 12

Investing in rescue watercraft (RWC) 14

Establishing swift water rescue capability 16

Rebuilding rescue capability on the West Coast 18

Advancing the communication systems behind emergency response 20

Investing in the capability behind every rescue 21

PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF THE MISSION

22

Our volunteers 23

Recognising the people behind the mission 24

Removing barriers so skilled volunteers can contribute faster 26

Advancing connection across Coastguard 27

Supporting volunteers when they need it most 28

Building safer foundations for our people 29

Developing volunteer teams 30

Building capability through connection & leadership 31

SAFER BOATING, STRONGER COMMUNITIES

32

The difference we've made in education 33

Building the future of boating education 34

Embedding safer boating conversations where they matter most 36

Suddenly in Charge 37

Reaching communities traditional safety messaging often misses 38

Shaping safer boating through advocacy and sector leadership 40

FUNDING THE MISSION

42

Evolving one of Coastguard's most important revenue streams 43

Growing a community of supporters 44

Shared value through community fundraising 45

Financial highlights 46

Our operating funds 47

Supporting our units - the highlights 48

Our sector partners 49

Making impact possible 50

HAERE MAI



Carl McOnie
CEO



Bennett Medary
National President

Tēnā koe,

Every day, Coastguard volunteers answer the call to help people on the water. Whether responding to emergencies, delivering boating education, supporting local communities or advocating for safer boating, their commitment helps save lives and keeps New Zealanders safer on the water.

This year has been one of both transformation and progress.

Across Coastguard Tautiaki Moana, we have continued investing in the capability, systems, infrastructure and people that will strengthen our organisation for the future. At the same time, we have undertaken significant organisational change, reshaping how we work together to better support our volunteers, our communities and the mission we exist to deliver. Change of this scale is never easy, and we want to acknowledge the commitment, resilience and professionalism of our staff and volunteers who have embraced this journey while continuing to deliver for New Zealanders.



As we reflect on FY26, we also celebrate a significant milestone. While community organisations started saving lives on the water in New Zealand a century ago, 2026 marks 50 years since local maritime rescue organisations came together to form the national Coastguard organisation we know today. Building on more than 100 years of volunteer service, generations of Coastguard volunteers have created an organisation trusted by communities across Aotearoa to provide lifesaving assistance whenever it is needed.

That legacy continues today.

Over the past year, our volunteers responded to 2,800 incidents, assisted 6,698 people and contributed 270,082 volunteer hours in service of their communities. Behind every one of those numbers is a person helped, a family supported, and a volunteer willing to step forward when others need them most.

This report reflects the many ways Coastguard is strengthening its impact - investing in rescue capability, modernising education, supporting volunteers, advocating for safer boating, expanding operational readiness, and building the sustainable funding needed to support our mission for the next 50 years.

None of this happens alone.

We are grateful to our volunteers and their families and employers who support them, as well as our staff, members, donors, partners, sponsors, iwi, government agencies and funders whose support makes our work possible. Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient Coastguard that is ready to meet the changing needs of New Zealand's boating community.

As we celebrate the achievements of the past year and reflect on 50 years of service, we remain focused on the future - ensuring Coastguard continues to evolve, innovate and stand ready to save lives on the water for generations to come.

COASTGUARD NEW ZEALAND BOARD

Bennett Medary	President
Jerry Bardon	Elected Board Member
Jacqui Paterson	Elected Board Member
John Quinn	Elected Board Member
Carolyn Tapley	Elected Board Member
Susan Doughty	Appointed Board Member
Pengbo Jiang	Appointed Board Member
Tim White	Appointed Board Member

LIFE MEMBERS

Alan Haddock
Allan Daines
Harold Mason
Michael Grace*
Brooke Archbold
Kevin O'Sullivan*
Ian William Coard
John Cowan

*Sadly, we have lost two of our Honorary Life Members.



RESCUE READY EVERY DAY



OUR NETWORK



62

Units



1

National Operations
Centre



13

13 locations providing
radio watch



86

Rescue Vessels



19

Rescue Watercraft
(jet skis)



2

Search Aircraft

THE DIFFERENCE WE'VE MADE

2025/26

2024/25

INCIDENTS

Category 1: Locally coordinated operations usually involving resources & people familiar with the area

392

388

Category 2: Operations usually involving national or international resources

16

16

CGOPS: Events reported which are not CAT 1 or 2 e.g. assistance or towing

2,392

2,381

TOTAL INCIDENTS

2,800

2,785

PEOPLE BROUGHT HOME

Total number of people we've brought home from both urgent and non-urgent incidents

6,698

6,792

PEOPLE ALIVE BECAUSE COASTGUARD WAS THERE

Total number of people who would have lost their life if we had not been there to help

29

61*

TRIP REPORTS

National Operations Centre and units

200,687

201,585

App

58,541

57,156

TOTAL TRIP REPORTS

259,228

258,741

*Includes one incident involving 14 people.

EXPLORING NEW TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE SEARCH & RESCUE

Innovation helping crews respond safer, faster and smarter.

Search and rescue operations often take place in unpredictable and challenging environments where every minute matters and operational decisions must often be made quickly with limited information.

Throughout FY26, Coastguard continued exploring how emerging technology can strengthen operational capability, with local units trialing innovative drone solutions designed to improve search effectiveness while reducing risk to crews operating in complex environments.

Underwater Drones

In Queenstown, local teams began trialing underwater drone technology to support search and recovery operations in environments where traditional underwater searches can be difficult, time-consuming, and place additional demands on crews.

The technology allows teams to assess underwater environments more quickly, identify submerged hazards or search targets, and gather critical information before committing divers or operational resources into potentially challenging conditions. This has the potential to significantly improve efficiency in underwater search and recovery operations while reducing unnecessary exposure to risk.

Aerial Drones

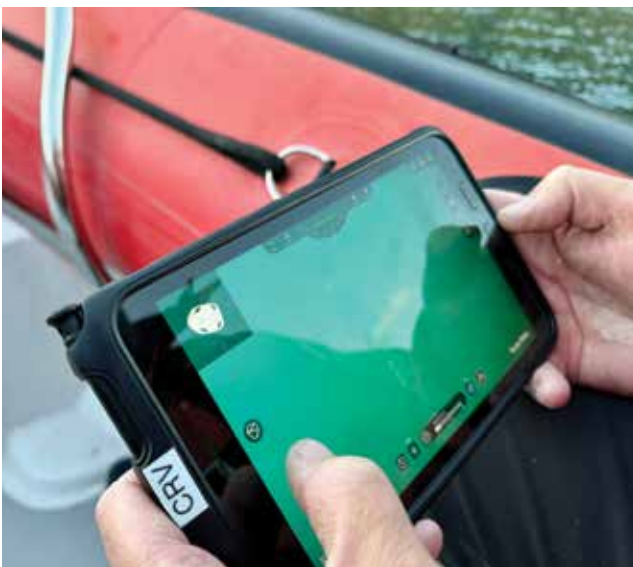
At the same time, Coastguard Sumner developed and operationally deployed an aerial drone capability specifically designed to support coastal search and rescue operations.

Providing real-time aerial intelligence and thermal imaging capability, the programme gives incident teams an immediate “eye in the sky”, allowing crews to quickly assess difficult environments including cliffs, surf zones, rocky shorelines, and low-visibility search areas before deploying responders into potentially hazardous conditions.

Early operational use has already reduced search times, improved coordination across response teams, and strengthened overall situational awareness during complex incidents. In some environments, drones are allowing crews to scan areas in minutes that would previously take significantly longer using traditional search methods alone.

While both programmes focus on different operational environments, together they demonstrate how innovation is helping Coastguard think differently about the future of search and rescue.

By testing new technology and developing practical operational capability, Coastguard is developing its ability to respond more effectively while improving safety for the crews delivering life-saving services in increasingly complex conditions.



ENHANCING COASTGUARD'S FOOTPRINT CAPABILITY

Expanding rescue capability where communities need it most.

Ensuring Coastguard remains rescue ready requires more than maintaining existing search and rescue capability. It also means continually assessing where operational gaps exist and identifying opportunities to strengthen marine rescue coverage in communities where timely access to help can make a critical difference.

Throughout FY26, Coastguard continued a strategic programme of work focused on expanding operational capability into underserved coastal communities, testing new approaches to creating volunteer-led rescue services in areas experiencing growing marine activity and limited local response capability.

Three communities - Mangawhai, Havelock and Akaroa - became important examples of this work in action, demonstrating both the opportunities and complexities involved in enhancing Coastguard's national operational footprint.

One of the year's most significant milestones was the formal establishment of Coastguard Mangawhai, following a successful operational trial launched in late 2025. Mangawhai had long been identified as a search and rescue coverage gap, with increasing boating activity, challenging local conditions, and the well-known risks associated with the Mangawhai Bar highlighting the need for stronger local rescue capability.

Following strong community support, successful volunteer recruitment, and a positive operational trial, Coastguard Mangawhai was officially recognised as a Coastguard unit in April 2026. In its first months of operation, the unit responded to nine incidents and assisted 22 people - immediately reinforcing the value of establishing rescue capability closer to communities where demand exists.

In the Nelson-Marlborough region, Havelock followed a similar pathway. After two successful summer operational trials, the Coastguard national Board approved the establishment of Havelock as a satellite base of Coastguard Marlborough, expanding rescue capability across the wider Marlborough Sounds and demonstrating how trial-based approaches can successfully build long-term operational presence in high-need communities.

Further south, Coastguard undertook a summer weekend-only operational trial in Akaroa to assess whether stronger local rescue capability could improve response coverage in an area where the nearest Coastguard units are more than an hour away by sea in favourable conditions.

Over the summer period, volunteers from neighbouring Coastguard units successfully delivered both urgent and non-urgent assistance in Akaroa as part of an operational trial designed to assess the viability of a permanent Coastguard unit in the area.

The trial also attracted strong support from the community, with organisations and locals stepping forward to help back the initiative and contribute to testing the model.

The experience provided valuable insight into both operational demand and what is required to establish a sustainable Coastguard presence. As a volunteer-powered organisation, long-term viability depends not only on operational demand, but also on having sufficient population scale, volunteer capacity, leadership capability, and local infrastructure needed to sustain a specialist operational service over time. While the trial demonstrated community support, findings showed that a permanent unit is not currently feasible, with existing regional and community rescue capability continuing to support the Akaroa community.

Together, these three case studies demonstrate how Coastguard is taking a proactive and evidence-based approach to advancing national rescue readiness - carefully identifying communities where additional operational capability may be needed while testing whether long-term sustainability exists to support volunteer-led rescue services.

As a volunteer-powered organisation, Coastguard recognises it cannot directly provide dedicated rescue capability across every part of New Zealand's coastline. Instead, it operates as part of a wider marine safety system alongside other organisations, agencies, and community-led initiatives working collectively to help keep people safe on the water.

Expanding Coastguard's operational footprint therefore requires more than identifying where demand exists. It means making deliberate decisions about where sustainable volunteer capability can be built over the long term, ensuring communities have access to life-saving services that are resilient, effective, and able to respond when they are needed most.

BUILDING OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY TAKES MORE THAN RESCUE VESSELS

- ✓ **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**
- ✓ **VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT**
- ✓ **TRAINING & READINESS**
- ✓ **SUSTAINABLE LOCAL CAPABILITY**



INVESTING IN RESCUE WATERCRAFT (RWC)

Expanding Coastguard's operational toolkit to respond in complex and challenging environments.

No two rescue environments are the same. While Coastguard's rescue vessels remain the backbone of search and rescue operations, some incidents require a different response. Shallow waterways, surf zones, rocky shorelines, river bars and areas with limited vessel access demand a level of speed, manoeuvrability and agility that larger rescue vessels cannot always provide.

Recognising this, Coastguard has continued investing in specialist rescue watercraft (RWC) capability, progressively expanding the use of jet skis as an important addition to its national search and rescue toolkit.

With 19 RWC now positioned across Aotearoa, this growing capability is increasing Coastguard's ability to respond safely and effectively in environments where every minute counts.

Rather than replacing traditional rescue vessels, RWC complement existing capability by allowing volunteers to reach people in difficult-to-access locations more quickly, improving response options for incidents close to shore, in shallow water, across sandbanks, within surf zones and in other challenging operating environments.

Throughout FY26, Coastguard continued developing this capability in several regions, with each unit tailoring its approach to the unique risks faced by its local community.

On the **Manukau Harbour**, Coastguard Titirangi completed the successful introduction of two RWC following months of intensive volunteer training. Positioned at Little Huia to improve access to the Manukau Bar and surrounding harbour, the new capability strengthens response in an area recognised as one of New Zealand's highest water safety risk locations. The jet skis provide access to shallow waters and sandbanks that larger rescue vessels cannot safely reach, working alongside Coastguard's existing rescue vessels to provide faster, more flexible responses where they are needed most.

19

RESCUE
WATERCRAFT
NATIONWIDE

22

OPERATORS
TRAINED AT THE
NATIONAL RWC
TRAINEX

3

UNITS
DEVELOPING OR
INTRODUCING
RWC DURING FY26

8

COASTGUARD UNITS
REPRESENTED AT
THE 2026 NATIONAL
RWC TRAINEX



On the **West Coast**, RWC form an important part of Coastguard West Coast's long-term operational rebuild. Two rescue watercraft have been purchased to support future response capability on the challenging Grey River Bar and surrounding coastline. While not yet operational for call outs, volunteers are undertaking specialist operator training and developing the skills needed to safely deploy the capability in one of New Zealand's most demanding marine environments.* The investment reflects Coastguard's deliberate approach to rebuilding capability that is fit for purpose and tailored to local operating conditions.

Further south, **Coastguard Queenstown** is progressing work to introduce rescue watercraft capability across Lake Whakatipu.* Once operational, the jet ski will strengthen response in shallow water, along rocky shorelines and in areas where their larger rescue vessel can face access limitations. The additional capability will also enhance support for local partners and water-based events, improving preparedness for incidents where rapid access to people in the water is critical.

Building this capability extends beyond equipment. Throughout FY26, Coastguard continued investing in the specialist training, leadership and national standards needed to support rescue watercraft operations safely and consistently across the organisation.

In June, 22 rescue watercraft operators from eight Coastguard units gathered in Raglan for Coastguard's largest national rescue watercraft training exercise to date. The intensive programme brought together operators from across the country to refine technical skills, share operational experience, strengthen leadership capability and improve consistency under Coastguard's evolving national maritime operating framework. By creating opportunities for volunteers to learn from one another, Coastguard is enabling a connected national network of specialist operators ready to respond wherever this capability is needed.

As Coastguard continues to expand rescue watercraft capability, investment is being matched by robust training, operational governance and national standards. Together, these initiatives are ensuring volunteers have the specialist skills and equipment needed to respond safely and effectively across New Zealand's increasingly diverse marine environments.

Rescue watercraft are becoming an increasingly important part of Coastguard's operational toolkit - enabling operational readiness, improving volunteer safety, and ensuring Coastguard can continue adapting to the changing needs of the communities it serves.

*RWC became operational after the FY26 reporting period.

ESTABLISHING SWIFT WATER RESCUE CAPABILITY

Equipping volunteers with the skills needed to respond in increasingly complex environments.

Coastguard volunteers operate across some of Aotearoa New Zealand's most diverse and unpredictable environments, where rescue situations often require highly specialised skills beyond traditional on-water response.

As climate events, changing environmental conditions, and increasingly complex incidents continue to shape search and rescue demand, ensuring volunteers have the capability to safely operate across a wider range of emergency situations has become increasingly important.

In North Canterbury and across the wider Canterbury Plains, flood risks have been increasingly reassessed in recent years as changing weather patterns, intensified rainfall, and shifting river systems continue to alter the region's risk profile.

As these environmental conditions evolve, Coastguard recognised the need to strengthen specialist capability so volunteers are prepared to respond safely and effectively in more complex river-based rescue environments.

During FY26, Coastguard North Canterbury strengthened its operational capability through the development of specialist swift water rescue capability, equipping volunteers with advanced training and equipment specifically designed for operating in fast-moving and hazardous river environments.

On 30 June, Coastguard North Canterbury was announced as a 2025 recipient of a Higgins & Langley Memorial Award, receiving the Program and Team Development Award for its sustained work to build world-leading swift water and flood rescue capability.

Coastguard North Canterbury swift water rescue 09/05/26.



The international recognition followed the team's completion of training to international swift water standards and underlined the level of skill, discipline, and operational capability developed by Coastguard volunteers.

The new capability was designed to improve response speed, expand operational reach, increase search effectiveness, and support volunteer safety when responding to incidents where traditional rescue methods can be limited by difficult access, poor visibility, and rapidly changing water conditions.

Once volunteers had completed the required training and were formally signed off as operational, the value of this capability was quickly demonstrated in real-world operations.

In one incident on the Waimakariri River, Coastguard volunteers successfully rescued four people after a jet boat became stranded in difficult river conditions.

In a separate incident, crews safely rescued a person and two dogs stranded on a ute after rapidly rising river conditions left them trapped.

These incidents demonstrated how specialist capability allows Coastguard crews to operate safely and effectively in environments that present unique operational challenges, while reducing risk for both those requiring assistance and the volunteers carrying out the rescue.

This work reflects Coastguard's broader commitment to ensuring volunteers have the right tools, training, and operational capability needed to respond to the evolving risks faced by the communities they serve.

As emergency environments continue to change, investing in specialist capability like swift water rescue helps ensure Coastguard remains rescue ready - with volunteers equipped to respond safely and effectively whenever and wherever they are needed.

**“THESE INNOVATIONS MEAN
OUR CREWS CAN MAKE FASTER,
SAFER DECISIONS WHEN IT
MATTERS MOST.”**

Callum Alexander

NORTH CANTERBURY SWIFTWATER RESCUE TEAM

Higgins & Langley Memorial Award for swift water rescue.





REBUILDING RESCUE CAPABILITY ON THE WEST COAST

Taking a deliberate and sustainable approach to restoring operational readiness in one of New Zealand's most challenging marine environments.

Maintaining rescue capability in remote and high-risk operating environments requires more than vessels and equipment. It depends on having the right people, specialist skills, sustainable operating models, and the resilience to adapt when local operational challenges emerge.

During FY26, Coastguard continued significant work to rebuild and strengthen operational capability across New Zealand's West Coast, following a period of major disruption that highlighted the challenges of sustaining volunteer-led rescue services in one of the country's most demanding marine environments.

The loss of rescue vessel Ivan Talley Rescue during a bar crossing incident in 2023, combined with ongoing challenges maintaining sufficient qualified skipper capability, left Coastguard West Coast temporarily unable to conduct operational taskings or undertake on-water training from late 2023. In the interim, emergency response coverage continued through coordination with other agencies, vessels of opportunity, and support from the wider maritime safety network.

Rather than simply replacing lost capability with a like-for-like solution, Coastguard used this period as an opportunity to take a more deliberate and long-term approach to rebuilding rescue readiness in the region, with a particular focus on the unit's primary operational area - the Grey Bar. The Grey Bar is a lethal and unforgiving environment, having claimed multiple boats entering Greymouth against the surging Grey River. A monument stands beside the bar as a testament to its fatal history. In recent years, the growing popularity of bluefin tuna fishing among recreational boaties has created a surge of activity on the Grey Bar, increasing local risk and reinforcing the need for a more sustainable rescue solution.

Working alongside Coastguard national support office and local partners including the Mayor, Talley's, Westfleet and the Greymouth Boating Club, Coastguard West Coast developed a staged strategic rebuild plan focused on creating a more resilient and locally appropriate operational model.

As part of this work, two rescue watercraft (jet skis) were purchased to support future rapid-response capability in surf and near-shore environments, particularly for incidents involving capsized recreational vessels, surf zone searches, and emergencies in the challenging Grey River Bar environment. While not yet operational for tasking, the vessels are playing an important role in developing future capability.*

Seven volunteers, many from the local Kahuna Boardriders Club, have begun progressing through specialist jet ski operator training, with intensive training weekends with other units helping build advanced search and rescue competencies while also testing future fleet options suited to local operating conditions.

At the same time, Coastguard were required to make another difficult but necessary operational decision in the region. In March 2026, Coastguard Lake Brunner formally closed after an extended period where volunteer capacity and skipper availability meant the unit could no longer operate safely and sustainably.

While the closure marked the end of a long-serving local unit, rescue coverage remains in place. Coastguard West Coast's operational area now extends to Lake Brunner, Lake Kaniere and the Arnold River, ensuring continued support remains available for communities using these waterways.

Together, these decisions reflect an important principle that underpins Coastguard's national operational model: maintaining rescue capability is not simply about having assets in place, but ensuring services can be safely sustained over the long term through strong volunteer capability, appropriate training, and resilient operating structures.

The work underway on the West Coast represents a significant long-term investment in restoring operational readiness - ensuring future rescue capability in the region is built deliberately, sustainably, and in a way that best reflects the unique challenges of the communities Coastguard serves.



*RWC became operational after the FY26 reporting period.

ADVANCING THE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS BEHIND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Critical infrastructure supporting faster, more effective rescue coordination.

When major maritime emergencies happen, effective communication between responding agencies can make the difference between a well-coordinated rescue and critical delays when time matters most.

Behind every search and rescue operation sits a complex communications network that allows Coastguard to coordinate incidents, share critical information, and work seamlessly alongside partner agencies responding to emergencies on the water.

During FY26, Coastguard achieved a significant operational milestone with the successful deployment of a new communications platform within the Coastguard National Operations Centre (CNOC), replacing ageing infrastructure that had reached end-of-life and introducing a major upgrade to one of the organisation's most critical operational systems.

The new platform has significantly strengthened how Coastguard communicates during complex multi-agency incidents by creating a seamless connection between CNOC, Coastguard units, and the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand.

For the first time, operators within CNOC now have direct integrated access to VHF Channel 16

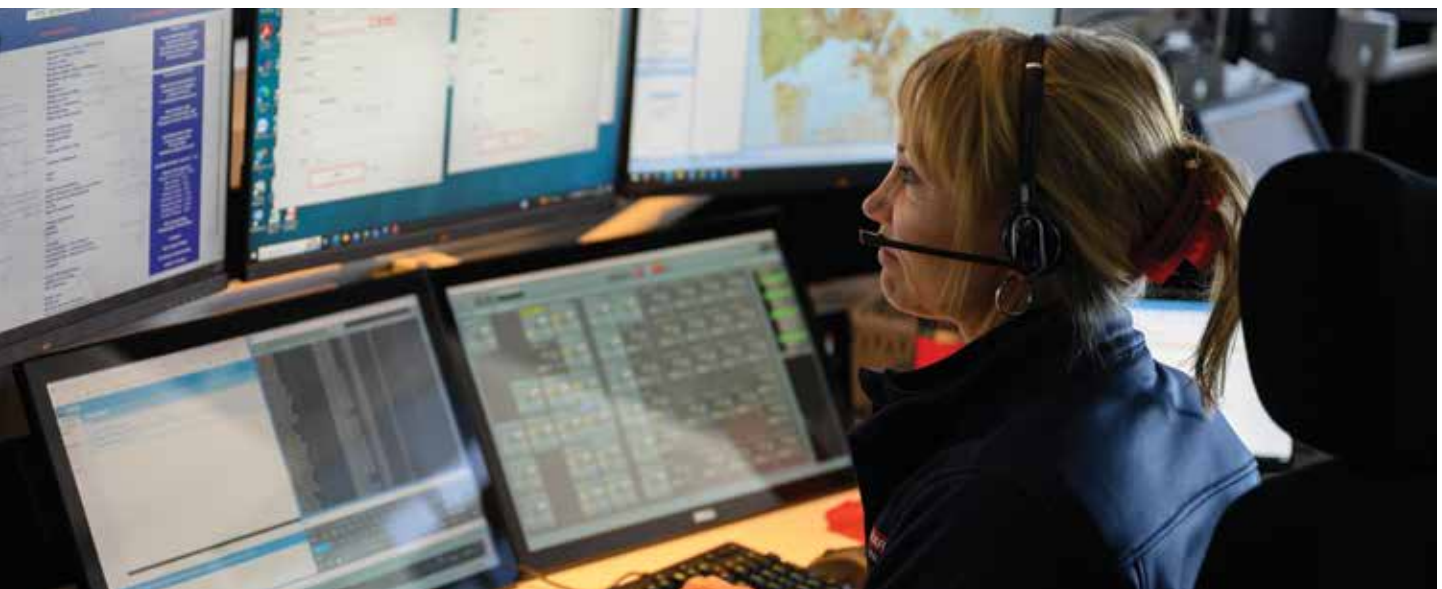
- the national maritime emergency channel - while partner agencies can communicate directly through Coastguard operational channels, removing historical communication barriers that previously slowed coordination during high-pressure incidents.

The result is faster information sharing, fewer communication delays, and stronger coordination during incidents involving multiple responding agencies.

Importantly, the new system strengthens Coastguard's ability to manage large-scale or high-risk search and rescue events where multiple organisations must work together quickly and effectively under pressure.

The upgrade was fully funded through central government investment, ensuring this critical operational infrastructure could be modernised without placing additional financial burden on Coastguard's wider operational budget.

While largely invisible to the public, investments like this play a vital role in ensuring Coastguard remains rescue ready - enhancing the systems that allow crews, partner agencies, and emergency responders to coordinate effectively when lives are at risk.



INVESTING IN THE CAPABILITY BEHIND EVERY RESCUE

Building the vessels, equipment and infrastructure that enable volunteers to save lives on the water.

Every rescue Coastguard undertakes relies on more than highly trained volunteers responding when help is needed. Behind every callout sits a network of vessels, vehicles, communications systems, operational bases, safety equipment and infrastructure that enable volunteers to carry out their mission safely and effectively.

Maintaining and strengthening that operational capability requires ongoing long-term investment. During FY26, Coastguard continued to make significant capital investment across its national rescue network, ensuring volunteers across Aotearoa have access to the assets, equipment and facilities needed to respond whenever communities need help on the water.

Across the year, Coastguard's capital investment programme supported approximately **\$19.8 million in total project value**, including **\$9.7 million in direct Coastguard investment**, made possible through the generous support of government funding, Lottery Grants Board funding, and other funding partners across New Zealand.

This investment programme plays a critical role in enabling frontline operational capability. Many projects are large, complex and beyond what individual Coastguard units could fund independently.

National investment helps bridge that gap, ensuring units can replace ageing assets, maintain critical rescue capability, improve volunteer safety, and continue delivering reliable services to their local communities.

The largest area of investment during FY26 focused on rescue vessels and marine assets, including new vessel builds, vessel refurbishments, engine replacements and specialist rescue watercraft (jet skis). These assets directly support Coastguard's ability to operate safely and effectively across a diverse range of environments, from rivers and lakes through to exposed coastal waters and challenging bar conditions.

Alongside marine and aircraft assets, Coastguard continued investing heavily in the infrastructure that supports day-to-day rescue operations.



Unit bases, pontoons, launching ramps, building upgrades and operational fitouts all play an essential role in ensuring volunteers have safe, fit-for-purpose facilities to train, prepare and respond from when incidents occur.

Technology and operational equipment also remained a major priority, with investment supporting upgraded communications systems, marine electronics, power systems, safety equipment and other specialist operational technology that helps improve reliability, situational awareness and volunteer safety in demanding operating environments.

For volunteers, these investments provide far more than physical assets. They ensure crews can respond with confidence, knowing they have dependable equipment, safe facilities and the operational tools needed to carry out increasingly complex rescue operations safely and effectively.

This work reflects a broader commitment to giving Coastguard volunteers the support they need to focus on the mission. By continuing to invest in the infrastructure, assets and operational capability that sit behind every rescue, Coastguard is reinforcing its ability to remain rescue ready - ensuring communities across Aotearoa can continue to rely on a capable, trusted and sustainable marine rescue service for years to come.

PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF THE MISSION



OUR VOLUNTEERS

The heart of Coastguard Tautiaki Moana.

Volunteers are at the centre of everything we do - making up all of our search and rescue crews and providing their time and skills across Coastguard units throughout Aotearoa. Every rescue, every training session, every call for help answered starts with their dedication.

2,057

Total volunteers

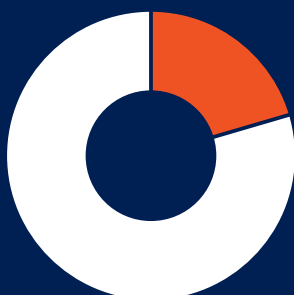
343

New volunteers

270,082

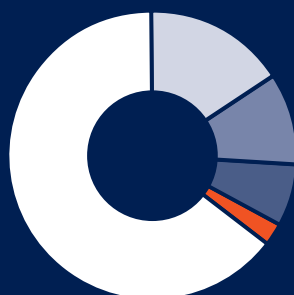
Total volunteer hours

GENDER



- 78.3% Male
- 21.7% Female

ROLES



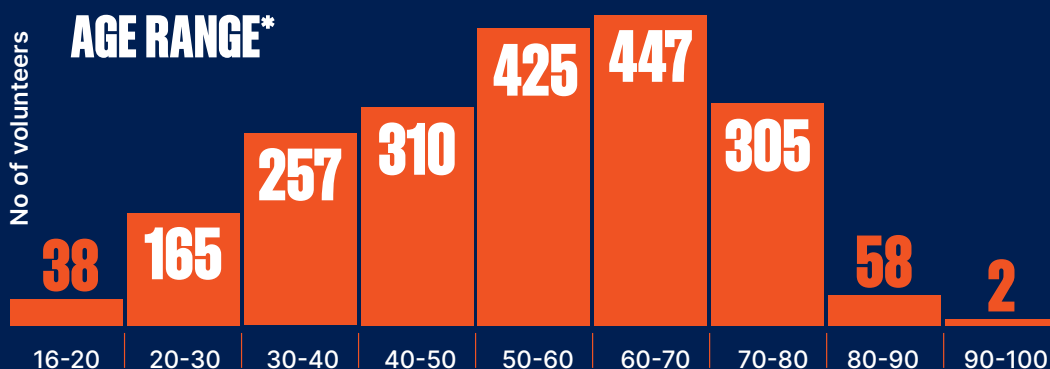
- 64.5% Rescue Vessel Crew
- 15.9% Radio Operators
- 10.2% Support Crew
- 7.0% Incident Coordinator
- 2.4% Air Patrol Crew

RESCUE VESSEL QUALIFICATIONS



- 32.1% Qualified Crew
- 18.1% Deckhand
- 17.7% Master
- 14.4% Recruit
- 12.6% Senior Crew
- 5.1% New (no qualification)

AGE RANGE*



*Some data may be incomplete or missing.

RECOGNISING THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE MISSION

Celebrating the volunteers whose leadership, service and commitment strengthen Coastguard communities across Aotearoa.

At the heart of every rescue, every training exercise, every education programme and every community initiative are Coastguard volunteers - people who give their time, skills and commitment to helping keep others safe on the water.

Recognising and celebrating that contribution is an important part of reinforcing Coastguard's volunteer network and acknowledging the extraordinary impact volunteers have in the communities.

Throughout FY26, Coastguard volunteers were recognised nationally and internationally for their leadership, operational excellence, governance contribution, community service and long-standing commitment to search and rescue. Together, these recognitions reflect the depth of talent, expertise and dedication that exists across Coastguard's volunteer network.

Several volunteers received significant honours for their service and leadership.

Coastguard Canterbury volunteer and Board member Carolyn Tapley received the **2026 New Zealand Search and Rescue Gold Award for Support Activity**, recognising more than a decade of contribution spanning governance, fundraising, volunteer wellbeing, community partnerships and water safety education. Her leadership played a critical role in securing \$2.5 million to rebuild Coastguard Canterbury's earthquake-damaged base in Lyttelton, investing in operational capability for future generations of volunteers.

Coastguard Wānaka Lakes volunteer Jonathan Walmisley was recognised in the **King's Birthday Honours** for his long-standing contribution to volunteer leadership and operational capability development. His leadership helped drive more than \$1 million in fundraising to establish the Wānaka Marine Rescue Centre, significantly enabling local rescue readiness.

Coastguard Kaikōura volunteer Richard Craig received the **King's Service Medal** in recognition of nearly 40 years of service, reflecting decades of contribution across operational response, governance, leadership and volunteer mentoring. His commitment has helped shape the long-term capability and resilience of Coastguard within the Kaikōura community.

Coastguard Auckland volunteer Sarah Psaila received international recognition through the **International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) Patron Award**, recognising her inspirational leadership and commitment to promoting greater inclusion within maritime search and rescue. Through co-leading New Zealand's first national #WomenInSAR event and helping establish an ongoing mentoring programme, Sarah has played an important role in developing capability, leadership development and gender equity across the wider search and rescue sector.



Carolyn Tapley with Hon James Meager



Jonathan Walmisley



Richard Craig



Sarah Psaila

Awards of Excellence 2025

Coastguard's Awards of Excellence celebrate exceptional achievement across operational response, leadership, innovation, communications and community engagement, recognising volunteers and units who exemplify Coastguard's values.

SCAN THE QR
CODE TO READ
MORE ABOUT
OUR WINNERS.



Supreme Volunteer of the Year	TREVOR FARMER, COASTGUARD MANA
Outstanding Leadership Award of the Year	TREVOR FARMER, COASTGUARD MANA
Operational Crew Member of the Year	PETER HERRICK, COASTGUARD NELSON
Communications/Incident Management Volunteer of the Year	BO BAINES, COASTGUARD MARLBOROUGH
Unit Support Volunteer of the Year	JEFF BENSON, COASTGUARD LAKE TAUPŌ
Emerging (Young) Volunteer of the Year	LEAH SINTON, COASTGUARD NORTH SHORE RYAN SPENCE, COASTGUARD MARLBOROUGH
Rescue of the Year	COASTGUARD SUMNER
Unit of the Year	COASTGUARD SUMNER
Unit Innovation of the Year	COASTGUARD QUEENSTOWN
Community Engagement Unit of the Year	COASTGUARD NELSON

Long Service awards

During FY26, Coastguard recognised 467 volunteers for long service milestones ranging from three years through to 50 years, reflecting the enduring commitment behind our national rescue network.

AWARD MILESTONE	GRAND TOTAL
3 years	191
5 years	116
10 years	64
15 years	49
20 years	21
25 years	15
30 years	9
40 years	1
50 years	1
TOTAL	467

Honouring 50 years of service to maritime search and rescue

In 2026, Aotearoa New Zealand marks 50 years of national maritime search and rescue. As Coastguard reflects on this milestone, we also acknowledge the volunteers whose service spans that history - people who have dedicated five decades or more to protecting lives on the water and developing the rescue network Coastguard relies on today.

58 years	ALAN HADDOCK QSO
56 years	MICHAEL WILSON
55 years	KEVIN O'SULLIVAN*
55 years	MICHAEL DRAKE
54 years	PAUL SCOTT NEWMAN
53 years	NOEL ANDERSON
52 years	RICHARD JOHN UDY
50 years	ANTHONY (TONY) MONK

*Sadly, Kevin passed away this year.

REMOVING BARRIERS SO SKILLED VOLUNTEERS CAN CONTRIBUTE FASTER

Not every volunteer joins Coastguard as a beginner.

An increasing number of new volunteers are arriving with extensive maritime experience, including commercial qualifications, international licences, and years spent working on the water. Yet until recently, there was no consistent national process for recognising those existing skills within Coastguard's training framework.

This created an unnecessary challenge for both volunteers and the organisation. Experienced mariners were often required to repeat foundational training they had already completed elsewhere, slowing their pathway into operational roles and creating frustration for volunteers ready to contribute from day one.

In some cases, duplicated training requirements risked disengagement, with Coastguard potentially losing highly capable people before they had the opportunity to become fully integrated into operational teams.

To address this, Coastguard introduced a formal **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** pathway designed to assess existing maritime qualifications and map them against Coastguard operational competency requirements.

The new framework established a nationally consistent approach for recognising prior capability, enabling trainers to validate commercial qualifications and sea-going experience through structured assessment and sign-off processes rather than requiring volunteers to complete full retraining pathways.

The impact has been significant.

Over a six month period, Coastguard received between 20 and 25 RPL applications nationally, with approximately 85 percent successfully recognised for operational roles.

Importantly, volunteers progressing through the RPL pathway reached deployable status 30 to 50 percent faster than those following standard training pathways.

By reducing duplication and removing unnecessary barriers, Coastguard has been able to integrate experienced skippers and crew into operational teams more quickly, increasing the availability of skilled personnel for taskings while improving the volunteer experience.

The introduction of RPL reflects a broader commitment to recognising the value volunteers bring, ensuring existing expertise is respected, capability is mobilised faster, and people are supported to contribute where they can have the greatest impact.

“THE USE OF RPL WAS THE IDEAL PATHWAY, WITHOUT IT, I DOUBT I WOULD HAVE PERSEVERED. ALL IN ALL, RPL IS THE REASON I AM NOW AN ISC MASTER AGAIN.”



ADVANCING CONNECTION ACROSS COASTGUARD

Bringing our information together to better support our people.

Behind every rescue is a team of people who rely on timely information, clear communication, and easy access to the resources they need to support Coastguard's mission. As the organisation has grown, ensuring staff can quickly find information and stay connected has become increasingly important to enabling people to focus on the work that matters most.

Over time, Coastguard identified an opportunity to improve how information was shared across the organisation. Important news, policies, and operational resources were spread across multiple Microsoft Teams channels and document libraries, making information harder to locate and increasing the risk that important updates could be missed among the volume of day-to-day communications.

To address this, Coastguard launched the **Staff Hub** - a modern intranet designed to become the central home for the organisation's internal news, resources and documentation.

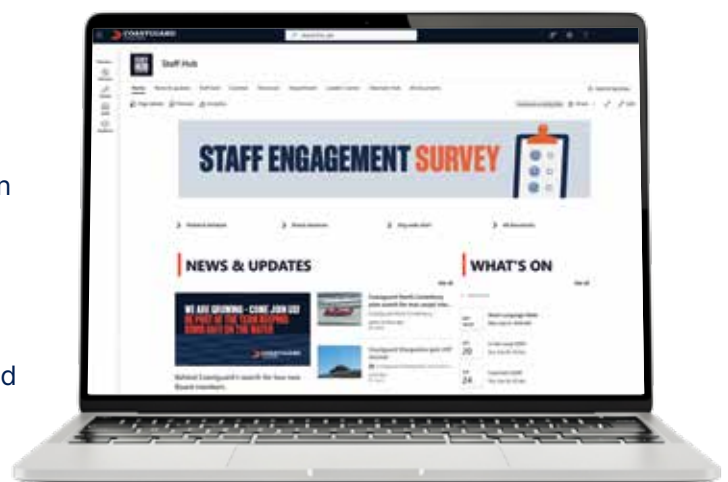
The Staff Hub brings together information previously stored across multiple locations into one easy-to-navigate platform, making it simpler for staff to access the tools, documents, and updates they need. The new platform also provides greater visibility for important organisational announcements, ensuring key messages are easier to find and less likely to be lost within everyday communications.

Beyond improving access to information, the Staff Hub has created a new space to strengthen connection across the organisation by celebrating people, recognising achievements, and sharing stories from across Coastguard. Built-in analytics also provide valuable insight into how staff engage with content, helping continuously improve internal communication and ensuring information reaches the people who need it most.

The Staff Hub generated strong early engagement, recording more than 10,000 homepage views in its first month, alongside positive feedback from staff who welcomed having a more intuitive and accessible place to find information and stay connected.

The Staff Hub represents an important investment in Coastguard's people and organisational capability. By making information easier to access and communication more effective, it helps reduce administrative friction, strengthens organisational connection, and gives staff more time to focus on supporting volunteers and delivering Coastguard's mission.

The work also lays the foundation for the next stage. Building on the lessons learned through the Staff Hub, work is now underway to develop a dedicated **Volunteer Hub**, planned for launch in FY27. The new platform will provide volunteers with a similarly centralised and accessible digital experience, making it easier to access information, resources and updates while further enabling connection across Coastguard's nationwide volunteer network.



SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS WHEN THEY NEED IT MOST

Investing in a stronger culture of wellbeing through peer support.

Coastguard volunteers routinely respond to challenging and emotionally demanding incidents. While technical training prepares crews to carry out search and rescue operations safely, maintaining volunteer wellbeing is equally important to ensuring people can continue serving their communities over the long term.

Recognising that volunteers often understand the unique challenges of the role better than anyone, Coastguard began developing its first nationally consistent Peer Support Programme during FY26, creating a structured approach to volunteer wellbeing that strengthens support following difficult operational experiences.

The programme was designed to provide volunteers with timely, practical support from trained peers who understand the realities of frontline search and rescue. Alongside immediate wellbeing support following incidents, the programme also establishes clear pathways for escalating volunteers to professional assistance when additional care is needed.

Development began with a nationwide engagement programme involving volunteers and leaders across six Coastguard units and the National Operations Centre. These conversations helped identify local wellbeing needs, build support for the programme, and ensure the model reflected the realities of Coastguard's volunteer environment.

Following this work, 28 volunteers from metropolitan, regional and rural units, together with the National Operations Centre, were recruited to become Coastguard's first trained peer supporters. The strong response reflected both the need for the programme and volunteers' commitment to supporting one another beyond operational response.

When fully established, around 40 percent of Coastguard units will have access to a dedicated peer supporter, providing a consistent network of trained volunteers who can help colleagues navigate the personal impacts that can accompany search and rescue operations.

The programme represents an important step in investing in Coastguard's wellbeing framework. By embedding peer support into the volunteer experience, Coastguard is helping create an environment where volunteers feel supported not only to perform their role, but also to look after themselves and each other.

Investing in volunteer wellbeing is ultimately an investment in operational readiness. When volunteers know they have support before, during and after challenging incidents, they are better equipped to continue serving their communities with confidence and resilience.



BUILDING SAFER FOUNDATIONS FOR OUR PEOPLE

Improving the systems that support safe and sustainable operations.

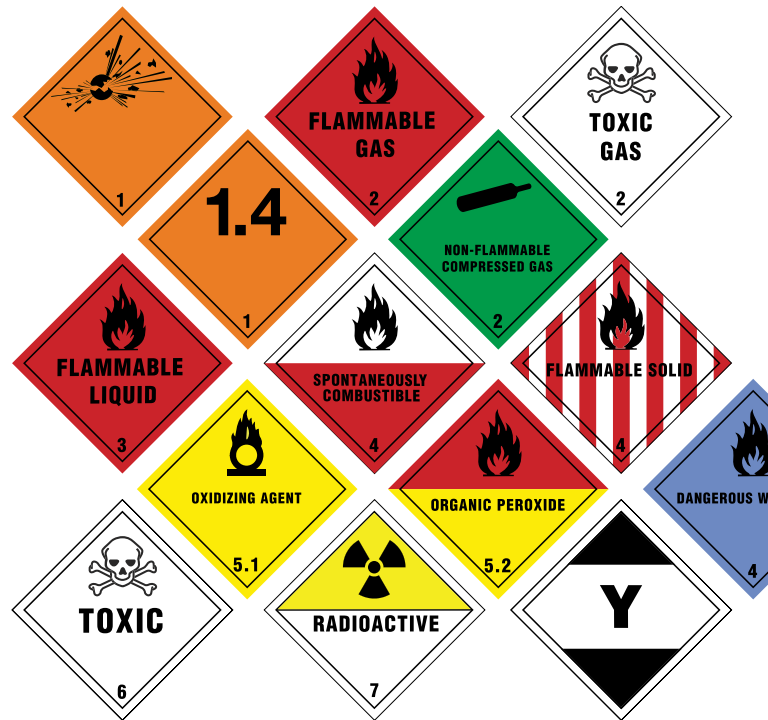
Behind every Coastguard rescue is a network of systems, equipment and operational environments that must function safely and reliably to support the people delivering the mission.

Across Coastguard's national network, hazardous substances and dangerous goods are an unavoidable part of maintaining vessels, facilities and operational readiness. Over time, however, these materials had been managed locally by individual units, resulting in inconsistent storage practices, documentation processes and varying approaches to compliance across the organisation.

Recognising that volunteers and staff can only focus fully on the mission when the environments they operate in are safe, supported and well managed, Coastguard launched a national **Dangerous Goods Compliance Programme** to strengthen how hazardous substances are identified, managed and controlled across its operational network.

The programme is being rolled out progressively across Coastguard's national network, with around one-third of units assessed to date and further work planned over the next 12 months. This first phase is helping establish something Coastguard had not previously had - a nationally verified baseline of dangerous goods compliance. Independent specialist assessments are giving participating units a clear understanding of current risks, compliance gaps, and the practical actions required to strengthen safety systems.

The programme is focused not only on identifying issues, but on building long-term capability. As units move through the process, hazardous substance inventories, safety data sheet management systems, training resources and practical support are being introduced to help them implement safer, more sustainable day-to-day practices.



While the programme is still underway, the work completed so far is already supporting the operational environments volunteers rely on every day. Coastguard is beginning to build a clearer organisation-wide understanding of dangerous goods risks, alongside defined pathways for units to improve compliance and manage hazardous substances more safely and consistently.

As this work continues, the impact will extend well beyond regulatory compliance. By improving how dangerous goods are managed, Coastguard is reducing unnecessary risk exposure for volunteers and staff, enhancing day-to-day operational safety, and ensuring the systems behind frontline operations are better equipped to support safe and effective mission delivery.

This programme reinforces an important principle: operational readiness depends on more than rescue capability alone. It also relies on strong systems behind the scenes that protect the people delivering Coastguard's life-saving services.

Over the next 12 months, Coastguard will continue extending the programme across remaining units, supporting implementation of assessment recommendations, and embedding consistent national systems that help protect the people delivering its life-saving services.

DEVELOPING VOLUNTEER TEAMS

Strong operational capability starts with strong teams.



Across Coastguard, volunteers work in environments that require trust, clear communication, shared accountability, and the ability to perform effectively under pressure. While volunteers across the organisation remain deeply committed to the mission, feedback from several units highlighted that experiences of support, connection, and team culture could vary significantly - creating an opportunity to strengthen the day-to-day environments that directly influence volunteer experience, engagement, and long-term retention.

Recognising that high-performing operational teams rely on healthy team culture as much as technical capability, Coastguard introduced the **High Performance Essentials Workshop** - a facilitated programme designed to strengthen team dynamics and build more resilient volunteer environments.

Delivered by the People and Culture team, the workshops provided structured opportunities for volunteers to openly reflect on what was working well within their units, where challenges existed, and how teams could work together more effectively moving forward.

Using anonymous pre-workshop surveys and highly participative facilitated sessions, volunteers explored themes including trust, communication, belonging, team strengths, and opportunities for improvement.

The impact extended well beyond the workshop itself. Teams reported stronger alignment around expectations and behaviours, increased willingness to engage in honest conversations, and a greater sense of trust and connection within their units. Importantly, each workshop concluded with practical action plans designed to strengthen team culture over time and support more effective unit performance in operational environments where teamwork is critical.

In some cases, the impact was deeply personal.

As volunteers reflected following the workshop:

“IT WAS A REALLY GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR US AS A UNIT TO COME TOGETHER AND HAVE SOME REALLY CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS”

MATT, TARANAKI

“I FOR ONE FOUND IT VERY ENGAGING, IF YOU HAVE A UNIT WANTING TO IMPROVE OR TWEAK ITS CULTURE I CANT RECOMMEND THIS WORKSHOP ENOUGH”

JOHN, QUEENSTOWN

The High Performance Essentials Workshop reinforced an important lesson: operational readiness depends not only on technical capability, but also on the strength of the relationships, trust, and team culture that allow volunteers to perform effectively together when it matters most.

By strengthening teams from within, Coastguard is building more consistent volunteer experiences across the organisation, improving engagement and retention, and creating stronger operational teams that are better prepared to work effectively together under pressure.

Ultimately, investing in the volunteer experience strengthens the operational capability that communities across New Zealand rely on when emergencies happen.

BUILDING CAPABILITY THROUGH CONNECTION & LEADERSHIP

Creating opportunities for women volunteers to grow, lead and strengthen operational capability.

Strong operational capability relies on more than technical skills alone. It also depends on creating pathways that enable volunteers to build confidence, develop leadership capability, and see a future for themselves within Coastguard.

As part of the Women in Coastguard Strategy 2024–2027, Coastguard hosted its third annual Women in Coastguard training event during FY26, bringing together 17 women volunteers from units across Aotearoa for three days of operational training, leadership development, and peer connection.

Designed to support women progressing through operational and leadership pathways, the programme combined practical on-water exercises, search and rescue planning, leadership workshops, operational briefings, and networking opportunities in an environment intentionally designed to build confidence and strengthen capability.

Participants developed practical skills in areas including search planning, radio communications, multi-vessel coordination, and operational decision-making while working alongside experienced instructors and senior leaders from across the organisation. The programme also provided opportunities to build relationships across units, share experiences, and learn from volunteers working in different operational environments.

The impact extended well beyond technical training. Every participant said they felt welcomed, included, and safe throughout the event, while all agreed the programme met their expectations and would recommend it to others. Many also reported increased confidence to pursue senior crew and skipper qualifications, reinforcing the importance of creating visible leadership pathways within Coastguard.



The event highlighted the value of learning in an environment where participants could challenge themselves, ask questions, and build confidence alongside peers with shared experiences. By bringing together women from across the country, the programme also strengthened networks that participants can continue to draw on long after the training concluded, helping reduce isolation and encourage ongoing progression within their local units.

This work reflects Coastguard's broader commitment to ensuring every volunteer has opportunities to develop, lead and contribute throughout their Coastguard journey. By investing in inclusive leadership development alongside operational training, Coastguard is developing volunteer capability, supporting retention, and building a more diverse and resilient rescue service for the future.

SAFER BOATING, STRONGER COMMUNITIES



THE DIFFERENCE WE'VE MADE IN EDUCATION

		2025/26	2024/25
	LEARNERS ENROLLED in courses (in-person, online and distance)	4,786	5,587
	PROGRAMMES DELIVERED	17	19
	MĀORI, PASIFIKA & CHINESE LEARNERS reached through drowning prevention programmes	233*	465
	LEARNERS ENROLLED on the Certificate in Domestic Maritime Operations programme	36	45
	CHILDREN LEARNERS enrolled on our Safe Boating courses across pools and aquatic centres nationally	113,531	100,355

*There were no Pasifika learners in FY26.

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF BOATING EDUCATION

Investing in the systems and learning experiences that will help keep more New Zealanders safe on the water.

Education plays a critical role in reducing boating incidents by building the knowledge, confidence, and decision-making capability people need to make safer choices on the water. As demand for Coastguard's boating education programmes continues to grow, ensuring those programmes are supported by modern, efficient systems has become increasingly important to delivering high-quality education at scale.

Over time, Coastguard identified an important challenge. Existing education systems and course delivery models were becoming increasingly fragmented, creating inefficiencies behind the scenes while limiting opportunities to expand access and evolve how boating education can be delivered to learners across Aotearoa.

Recognising the opportunity to strengthen both operational capability and learner experience, Coastguard undertook significant work during FY26 to modernise the future foundations of its education platform and redesign how digital learning experiences can better support learners.

Alongside this work, Coastguard expanded its education portfolio by introducing tutor-led online courses, creating more flexible learning pathways for people who may not be able to attend traditional in-person classes. Delivered live by qualified tutors in real time, the courses allow learners to access the same expert guidance and interactive support from home, removing barriers associated with travel, time, and location while making boating education more accessible to a wider range of learners across New Zealand.

A major focus this year was significant planning and solution design work to support the future implementation of the SELMA Student Management System and its integration with Moodle (Coastguard's existing Learning Management System). Together, these systems will create the foundation for a more modern, scalable and efficient education platform, improving how courses are managed, administered and delivered while better supporting future growth.

Alongside this work, Coastguard continued evolving how boating education is delivered by redesigning course content to create more engaging and accessible digital learning experiences that better reflect how people learn today. Rather than simply shifting traditional course materials online, the work focused on creating more interactive and practical learning experiences that improve how learners engage with boating safety education.



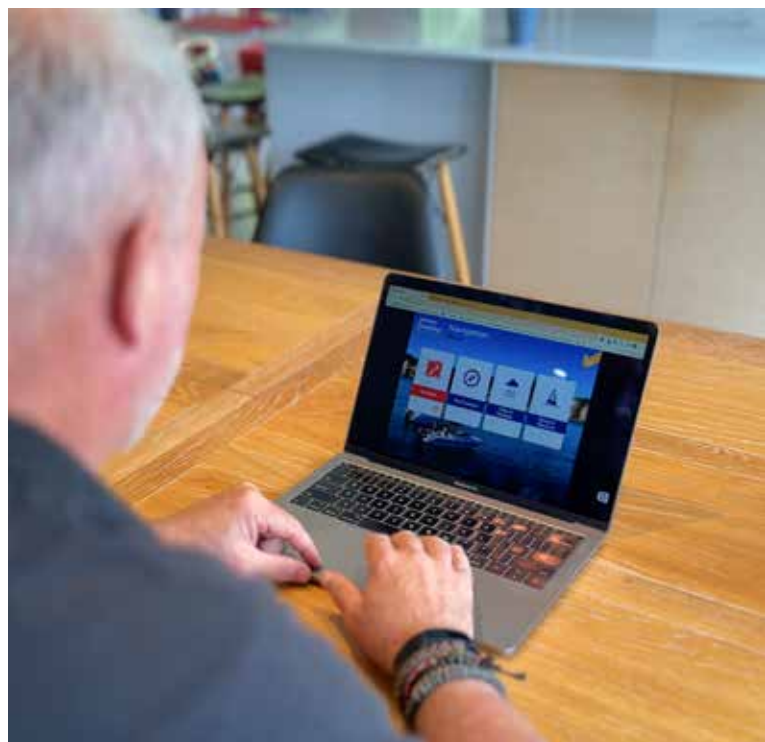
New digital learning experiences now include simulated chart plotting tools that allow learners to practice navigation exercises online, alongside simulated VHF radio exercises designed to replicate real-world communication scenarios in a safe learning environment. These enhancements are helping shift boating education toward more immersive and practical skill development that better prepares learners for real-world decision-making on the water.

Early results demonstrate strong demand for this evolving approach. During FY26, Coastguard's education website recorded more than 165,000 sessions and over 335,000 page views, with strong interest across flagship courses including Day Skipper and Boatmaster. Following the launch of the new online Boatmaster course in January 2026, monthly sessions increased from 422 to 1,614, reflecting strong learner engagement with more flexible digital learning options.

Modernising education delivery is also helping Coastguard broaden access to boating safety education, particularly for learners in regional communities who may not otherwise be able to attend traditional in-person courses. Early feedback suggests more flexible and interactive digital learning is also resonating strongly with younger audiences, helping ensure Coastguard's education programmes remain relevant for future generations of boaties.

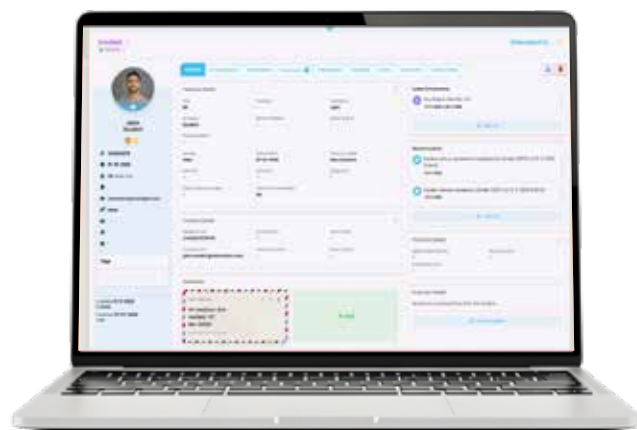
Expanding access has also remained a strong focus across Coastguard's wider education strategy. During FY26, Coastguard increased its presence within secondary schools, with Day Skipper and Maritime VHF courses now being delivered to Year 11 and Year 12 students in schools across the country. Strong uptake throughout 2026 reflects growing demand for practical boating education among younger New Zealanders, helping equip the next generation with the knowledge, confidence, and communication skills needed to make safer decisions on the water and respond effectively in emergency situations.

Coastguard also broadened access to its education programmes by expanding eligibility for overseas residents living in New Zealand. Following approval from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, eligible visa holders can now enrol in a range of short recreational boating courses, creating new opportunities for more people living in New Zealand to access boating safety education and further extending the reach of Coastguard's prevention efforts across increasingly diverse communities.



The work undertaken this year represents a long-term investment in advancing Coastguard's prevention efforts by building the systems, tools and learning experiences needed to reach more people and deliver boating education more effectively into the future.

By investing in stronger education foundations today, Coastguard is creating the capability needed to equip more New Zealanders with the knowledge and confidence to make safer decisions on the water tomorrow.



EMBEDDING SAFER BOATING CONVERSATIONS WHERE THEY MATTER MOST

Connecting with boating communities in new ways to strengthen prevention.

Creating a safer boating culture requires more than simply sharing safety information. It means finding new ways to connect with boaties through the communities, networks and environments they already trust, making safety conversations a natural part of the wider boating experience.

Over the past year, Coastguard has continued growing a community-based engagement approach focused on meeting boaties where they already are - through fishing clubs, marine retailers, boat shows, competition briefings, online sessions and community venues - helping make boating safety more accessible, practical and relevant to the people spending time on the water.

Through these programmes, Coastguard reached close to over 5,000 people nationwide this year through bar crossing and bluefin tuna seminars designed to build confidence, improve preparedness and help more people make safer choices on the water.

A major strength of this work has been collaboration. Coastguard's partnership with the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council has created a highly effective way to engage recreational fishers by combining practical fishing advice with boating safety conversations, rather than relying on traditional safety education alone. The fishing content helps bring people into the room, while safety messages become part of the wider conversation in a way that feels natural, credible and immediately relevant.

This approach has been particularly valuable through Coastguard's Southern Bluefin Tuna pre-season seminar series, where more trailer boats are increasingly travelling further offshore during winter months in pursuit of Southern Bluefin Tuna. These longer offshore trips often involve more challenging conditions and require careful trip planning, fuel management, reliable communications, appropriate safety equipment, and a crew prepared to respond if conditions deteriorate unexpectedly.

The same community-led approach has also supported Coastguard's nationwide Bar Awareness Roadshow, which reached more than 3,000 people across 58 seminars in 43 locations, helping boaties better understand the risks associated with crossing bars safely and prepare appropriately before heading offshore.

Importantly, Coastguard is beginning to see encouraging signs that this education is influencing behaviour on the water. Increased use of Bar Watch trip reporting following bar crossing seminars is providing early evidence that more boaties are adopting safer trip planning practices before heading offshore - a critical step in reducing risk in some of New Zealand's most hazardous boating environments.

This work continues to demonstrate that safety messages are often most effective when delivered through trusted relationships. By working alongside fishing clubs, retailers, harbourmasters, local Coastguard units and sector partners, Coastguard is helping make boating safety part of everyday conversations within the communities it serves.

As boating activity continues to grow across New Zealand, initiatives like these are helping build a stronger culture of safety on the water - ensuring more people are better informed, better prepared, and more capable of making safe decisions whenever they head out boating.



SUDDENLY IN CHARGE

Building safer boating communities before emergencies happen.

Saving lives doesn't begin when a distress call is made - it begins long before an emergency happens.

While Coastguard is best known for responding when people get into trouble on the water, prevention remains one of the most effective ways to reduce harm and keep communities safer.

For many New Zealanders, getting out on the water is second nature. But research shows boating culture can sometimes lead risk to be underestimated, particularly in familiar environments where experience is often mistaken for competence and safety decisions are left largely to a single person - the skipper.

This creates an important gap in how safety is managed onboard. While skippers hold responsibility for decision-making, other passengers often play a far more passive role. Adult passengers may feel reluctant to challenge decisions, while young people have little ability to advocate for their own safety, despite the important role friends and whānau can play in influencing safer behaviours.

That vulnerability becomes critical when things don't go to plan. If the skipper becomes injured, incapacitated, or unable to act, those around them are suddenly faced with making decisions they may not feel prepared to handle.

To address this gap, Coastguard re-launched Suddenly In Charge - a community engagement programme designed to equip those who regularly spend time on the water, but often take a back seat, with the skills and confidence needed to act when it matters most.

Over the past year, eight Coastguard units across Hokianga, Kawau, Nelson (2), Waiheke Island, Rotorua Lakes (2), Tauranga, Gisborne and Queenstown piloted the programme through locally delivered workshops tailored to their communities.

The impact was immediate.

Beyond the measurable outcomes, participants reported feeling more empowered, more confident using marine safety equipment, and more willing to actively engage in conversations about safety onboard.

Importantly, the programme demonstrates the unique value Coastguard volunteers bring beyond emergency response.

Across the nine workshops:

120

participants completed the programme

95%

improved their understanding of boating safety procedures

85%

reported increased confidence managing emergency situation

70-80%

indicated they would now step into leadership roles during emergencies



"I LEFT EMPOWERED TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY OWN SAFETY ON BOARD."

Delivered by local units, the workshops combine operational expertise, trusted community relationships, and practical real-world experience to create learning environments that are both highly credible and deeply relevant to local boating conditions.

The success of the pilot has validated both the need for the programme and Coastguard's ability to deliver preventative safety education at scale, with plans already underway to roll out a further 20 workshops nationwide.

By investing in programmes like Suddenly In Charge, Coastguard is supporting community capability, reducing preventable incidents, and helping ensure more New Zealanders return home safely.

Sometimes the most important rescue is the one that never needs to happen.



REACHING COMMUNITIES TRADITIONAL SAFETY MESSAGING OFTEN MISSES

Boating safety information can only save lives if the people who need it receive it, understand it, and trust it enough to act on it.

Partnering with Tongan communities to make boating safety more accessible

Recognising that traditional boating safety messages were not always resonating with New Zealand's Tongan community, Coastguard continued its work during FY26 to develop community-led approaches that better reflected the values, experiences, and trusted voices of the people they were designed to reach.

Building on insights gathered over the previous two years, Coastguard worked alongside Tongan families to co-design and test practical initiatives that reframed wearing a lifejacket not as a rule to follow, but as an expression of love, pride, and responsibility for family. The project placed community leadership at its centre, recognising that lasting change is most likely when messages come from trusted voices within the community itself.

This partnership approach created multiple new pathways for boating safety conversations. Through the **Safe Seas Sundays** initiative, 51 Tongan church ministers invited Coastguard to deliver boating safety messages directly into their congregations, while Pacific media interviews led by Reverend Ifalame Teisi connected boating safety with faith and family values. Tongan youth also launched a Tongan Boat Safety Instagram page, helping create content that reflected their own community and encouraging younger generations to become advocates for safer boating.

The work extended beyond New Zealand, with a lifejacket hub established on the island of Matamaka in Tonga. Forty-six lifejackets were delivered to support safer travel for people making regular boat journeys between islands for school, work, and everyday life, reinforcing the strong connections between Tongan communities in Aotearoa and their homeland. Coastguard also partnered with Coastguard Auckland to introduce Tongan youth to local rescue vessels and volunteers, helping build trust and stronger relationships with the organisation.

The project is already demonstrating encouraging signs of impact. Pacific Media Network platforms reached more than 45,000 people, campaign content generated strong engagement, and 51 Tongan congregations are now positioned to continue boating safety conversations within their own communities. Perhaps most importantly, trusted community leaders have emerged as advocates for safer boating, creating new avenues for life-saving messages to reach people in ways that are authentic, culturally relevant, and more likely to influence behaviour.

This work demonstrates Coastguard's commitment to partnering with communities to improve boating safety outcomes. By combining operational expertise with community leadership and cultural insight, Coastguard is creating stronger, more trusted pathways for prevention messages to reach the people who need them most, helping keep more New Zealanders safe on the water.

Tea Talks to Action: Engaging Chinese Boating Communities

For New Zealand's growing Chinese boating community, traditional boating safety messaging has not always landed in ways that feel accessible, culturally relevant, or connected to the channels people use every day. When critical safety information fails to reach communities effectively, the risk of preventable incidents on the water increases.

Recognising this challenge, Coastguard set out to better understand how it could engage Chinese boating communities in more meaningful and effective ways.



Rather than relying on simple translation of existing safety information, the project took a community-led co-design approach, recognising that effective engagement requires trust, cultural understanding, and communication methods shaped around the communities being served.

The project began with a series of informal community **"Tea Talks"** in late 2025, creating space for open conversations around barriers, behaviours, and the ways boating safety information is shared within Chinese communities. Insights gathered through this discovery phase informed a co-design workshop in early 2026, bringing together community stakeholders to develop practical solutions.

What followed moved well beyond consultation.

Across the project, eight new initiatives were developed and tested, including Chinese-language social media campaigns, culturally tailored safety storytelling, ambassador-led community engagement, event-based activations, boating safety advocacy support, and tutor capability development.

In the process, Coastguard gained valuable insight into what effective multicultural safety engagement requires.

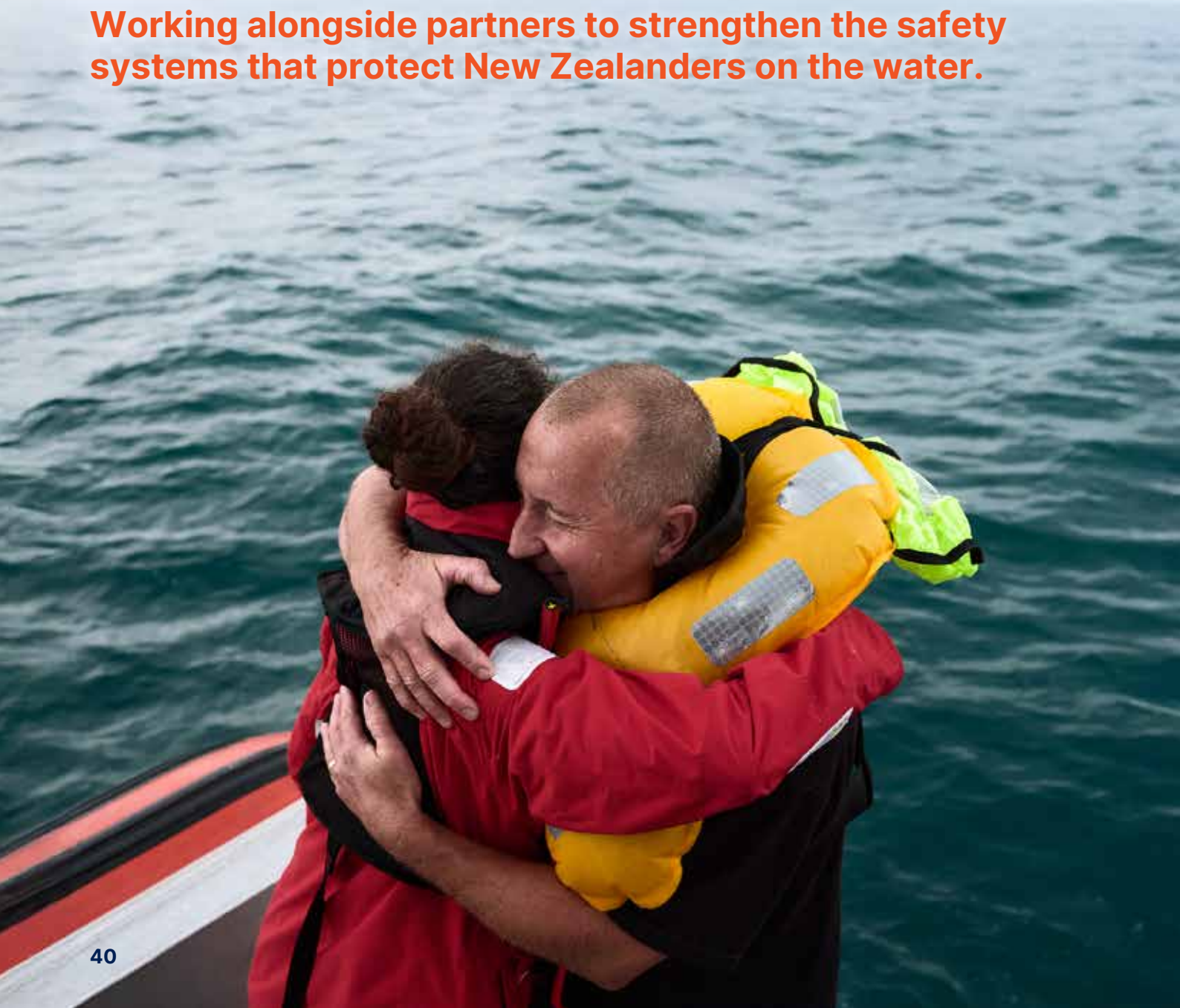
The project confirmed that successful prevention work depends on more than simply translating information. Trusted community voices proved essential to building credibility, video-based content consistently outperformed static communications, and in-person engagement remained one of the strongest drivers of trust and participation.

Importantly, the project has helped establish a stronger foundation for how Coastguard engages with culturally diverse communities more broadly - ensuring more New Zealanders can access life-saving boating safety education regardless of language or cultural background.

The project has created a new blueprint for how culturally tailored safety education can help Coastguard reach more communities, build greater trust, and improve boating safety outcomes over time.

SHAPING SAFER BOATING THROUGH ADVOCACY & SECTOR LEADERSHIP

Working alongside partners to strengthen the safety systems that protect New Zealanders on the water.





Creating safer outcomes on the water requires more than education programmes and emergency response. It also depends on strong safety frameworks, evidence-based policy, and collaboration across the sector working together to reduce harm before incidents occur.

As one of New Zealand's leading voices in recreational boating safety, Coastguard plays an important role in helping shape the wider safety environment that influences how people behave on the water and the protections in place when things go wrong.

During FY26, Coastguard significantly strengthened its advocacy efforts around lifejacket safety, working alongside sector partners to help influence two major policy initiatives aimed at improving boating safety outcomes for recreational watercraft users across Aotearoa.

At a national level, Coastguard worked collaboratively with partner organisations through the Safer Boating Forum to help shape sector guidance and advocate in support of proposed legislation seeking stronger lifejacket safety requirements. Drawing on frontline operational experience, incident data, and collective sector expertise, Coastguard contributed both written and oral submissions supporting stronger protections designed to reduce preventable drownings.

This collaborative advocacy effort has already contributed to significant movement in policy discussions. While the original Member of Parliament Bill focused on mandatory lifejacket wear for children and young people, its scope expanded to consider mandatory lifejacket use for all occupants on recreational vessels six metres and under when underway - a significant development given adult males over 40 continue to represent a disproportionately high proportion of recreational watercraft drowning fatalities in New Zealand.

At a regional level, Coastguard also worked alongside a coalition of water safety organisations through the Wai Ora Tāmaki Makaurau working group, contributing to the review of the Auckland Navigation Bylaw and proposed changes relating to mandatory lifejacket requirements on vessels six metres and under, which previously gave skipper discretion on whether people onboard wore them or not.

Both initiatives reflect the value of sector-wide collaboration in addressing complex safety challenges. By working alongside other organisations across New Zealand's water safety sector, Coastguard is helping ensure policy decisions are informed by operational expertise, real-world evidence, and a shared commitment to reducing preventable harm on the water, while reinforcing Coastguard's role as a trusted and influential voice helping shape safer boating outcomes.

Final decisions on both policy processes are expected later in 2026*, however the progress already made demonstrates the growing influence collective advocacy can have in shaping stronger safety protections for recreational boaters.

This work reflects Coastguard's broader commitment to prevention - recognising that some of the most effective ways to save lives on the water begin long before an emergency response is ever needed.



*On 9 October new nationwide lifejacket rules came into effect where everyone on a recreational craft 6m and under must wear a lifejacket when underway.

FUNDING THE MISSION

EVOLVING ONE OF COASTGUARD'S MOST IMPORTANT REVENUE STREAMS

Investing in long-term sustainable funding.

Delivering life-saving services on the water requires more than rescue vessels, trained crews, and operational capability. It also depends on having sustainable funding streams that allow Coastguard to continue serving communities today, while building resilience for the future.

Membership remains one of Coastguard's most important self-generated revenue streams, contributing approximately 15 percent of total organisational income while providing thousands of New Zealand boaties with access to non-urgent on-water assistance for breakdowns, mechanical issues, electrical issues, flat battery, and other unexpected situations.

For an annual membership fee of \$150, members receive access to services that can otherwise cost non-members \$400 per hour, while a single assist can cost Coastguard between \$600 and \$1,000 per operational hour to deliver. This creates significant value for members while also giving boaties a practical way to directly support the network of over 2,000 volunteers and the services they provide to communities across New Zealand.

As the programme has matured, Coastguard has identified several key challenges that could constrain its future growth. While membership numbers remain strong, long-term member retention and enhanced perceived value have become increasingly important to maintaining membership as a sustainable revenue stream.

Recognising the importance of protecting and evolving this essential funding channel, Coastguard invested in a significant programme of research to better understand what drives membership growth, member retention, and the evolving needs of New Zealand's boating community. These evidence-based insights will help to inform the development and long-term membership strategy.

By December 2025, Coastguard membership had reached a record high of 49,295 members.

However, subsequent retention losses saw this decline to 47,859. This underscores the need to further strengthen the programme and enhance the value delivered to the thousands of boaties who support Coastguard, both now and into the future.

Coastguard also continues to strengthen brand consistency across the organisation, supporting a more cohesive national approach to how the organisation communicates its core messages and value.

The work undertaken during FY26 focused on establishing the long-term strategic foundations needed to safeguard one of Coastguard's most important funding channels and in doing so, ensure that this critical revenue stream continues to support the life-saving services our volunteers and staff provide for communities across New Zealand for years to come.

**“GOOD TO HAVE
SOMEONE OUT THERE
THAT HAS YOUR BACK!”**





GROWING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS

Developing one of Coastguard's most important community fundraising programmes.

Delivering life-saving services on the water depends on more than rescue crews and rescue vessels. It also relies on a community of supporters who choose to stand behind Coastguard's mission and help ensure volunteers have the resources they need to save lives.

The Big Swim is one of Coastguard's flagship community fundraising campaigns, connecting thousands of New Zealanders with the organisation through a shared commitment to keeping people safe on the water. Beyond raising vital funding, the campaign plays an important role in growing awareness of Coastguard's work and building lasting relationships with supporters across Aotearoa.

Recognising the opportunity to enhance the programme, Coastguard introduced a range of improvements during FY26 aimed at expanding participation, increasing supporter engagement, and creating a more scalable campaign model.

A key initiative was the expansion of Coastguard's partner pool programme, with swimming facilities across New Zealand helping promote the campaign, recruit participants, and connect their local communities with the cause. This was supported by enhanced participant communications, improved merchandise fulfilment, new incentives, and greater engagement with swimming communities throughout the campaign.

The results were encouraging. The Big Swim attracted a record 3,127 participants - an increase of 545 people (21 percent) on the previous year - while more than 12,000 donors supported participants as they swam to raise funds for Coastguard.

Although economic conditions continued to place pressure on charitable giving across New Zealand, the campaign still raised more than \$640,000. Just as importantly, the proportion of participants actively fundraising increased from 59 percent to 61 percent, reflecting stronger supporter engagement and a growing connection with Coastguard's mission.

The expanded partner pool programme also demonstrated the value of working alongside community organisations to extend the campaign's reach, creating a scalable model that will help support future growth while enhancing Coastguard's relationships with swimming communities nationwide.

By investing in the long-term sustainability of The Big Swim, Coastguard is building more than a fundraising campaign. It is growing a nationwide community of supporters whose ongoing generosity helps provide the funding needed to keep volunteers rescue ready and continue delivering life-saving services for New Zealanders.



SHARED VALUE THROUGH COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING



A long-standing programme helping sustainably fund Coastguard's mission.

**FY26
LOTTERY**

\$3.18m

raised this
year

184,217

tickets sold
nationwide

46

units participated
in Summer Lottery

\$500K+

returned directly
to local units

8%

of Coastguard
annual revenue

For more than 27 years, Coastguard's Lottery programme has played an important role in helping fund the services that keep New Zealanders safe on the water, while also providing direct financial support to volunteer units delivering frontline services in communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Since launching in 1999 with a single annual Summer Lottery, the programme has evolved into a mature fundraising engine now delivering five lotteries each year. Over its lifetime, the programme has raised more than \$80 million, helping build an increasingly important revenue stream that supports Coastguard's long-term financial sustainability.

In FY26, the Lottery programme generated \$3.18 million in revenue, up significantly from \$2.58 million the previous year, with growth driven by stronger supporter engagement, expanded acquisition activity, increased lottery participation, and continued optimisation across the programme. Contributing approximately 8% of Coastguard's total annual revenue, the programme continues to play an increasingly important role in building sustainable funding for Coastguard's life-saving services. Across the year, more than 184,000 tickets were sold nationally, demonstrating the continued strength of community support behind Coastguard's mission.

What makes the programme particularly valuable is the direct benefit it creates for local Coastguard units.

Each summer, volunteers across the motu actively sell tickets within their own communities as part of Coastguard's flagship Summer Lottery, with funds raised flowing directly back to the units participating in the campaign. In FY26, 46 Coastguard units took part, with the Summer Lottery alone returning more than \$500,000 directly to local units.

These funds provide important local support for training, equipment purchases, operational costs and the day-to-day resources needed to keep units rescue ready.

The success of the programme reflects a highly collaborative fundraising model, combining national campaign capability with the commitment of volunteers who actively support fundraising efforts within their own communities. This year, every lottery campaign outperformed the previous year, reflecting continued improvements in supporter engagement, communications strategy and programme development.

This year also marked the launch of a new Heritage Lottery, introduced as part of Coastguard's 50-year milestone celebrations. Designed both to recognise Coastguard volunteers and provide supporters with a refreshed fundraising offering, the initiative reflects Coastguard's continued focus on evolving its fundraising programmes to remain relevant and sustainable into the future.

The Lottery programme provides New Zealanders with another meaningful way to support Coastguard beyond traditional donations or membership. Through an aspirational prize model, supporters are able to directly contribute to Coastguard's life-saving mission while also having the opportunity to win a range of prizes, creating shared value for both supporters and the organisation.

Coastguard's Lottery programme demonstrates the strength of diversified fundraising done well - generating sustainable income for the organisation, returning critical funding directly to volunteer units, and ensuring the financial foundations remain strong enough to support life-saving services for communities across New Zealand for years to come.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Turning numbers into impact.

Funding is not an end in itself - it is the fuel in the tank, the training in the crew and the vessel that gets there in time. Every dollar in these pages exists to put help alongside someone who needs it.

FY26 was a year of investing in what makes the difference to our units and volunteers - putting more behind the frontline, while keeping a careful watch on our own costs.

In the year ending 30 June 2026, Coastguard New Zealand's total revenue was \$40.4 million and expenses were \$38.2 million, returning a net surplus of \$2.2 million. We spent 13.9% more than in FY25, almost entirely because funding earmarked for units and their vessels was passed straight through to them.

Putting our funding to work

- **Search and Rescue operations** accounted for 88% of our expenses (\$33.7 million), making sure thousands of boaties in distress received help when they needed it most. The biggest shift this year was in assets: units received \$6.6 million for new vessels, buildings and rescue watercraft, up from \$2.1 million in FY25. Keeping our existing fleet of more than 100 rescue assets on the water cost a further \$842,867 in repairs and maintenance, up 20.5% on FY25 - a sign of how hard those assets are working. The rest covered what every callout depends on: fuel, personal protective equipment, volunteer training, and operational support to help units meet their day-to-day costs.
- **Education and community engagement** received \$2.9 million (8%) and is where prevention starts - giving boaties, whānau, children and communities around the motu the skills and confidence to look after themselves and others on the water, and the know-how to act if things go wrong.
- **Marine Communications** made up the remaining 4% (\$1.6 million) and helps keep Coastguard and boaties connected. It funds the radio network that boaties and our crews rely on and the people in our National Operations Centre - the calm voice on the other end of the radio or phone, coordinating assistance when every minute matters.

Some of the ways our work was funded

- **Lottery ticket revenue** rose 23.2% to \$3.18 million and Membership revenue lifted 2.1% to \$6 million - and because units earn a commission on what they sell, \$1.67 million (up 11.2%) went straight back to them.
- **Course and examination fees** grew to \$1.38 million as more boaties chose to build their skills before heading out - an investment in their own safety that also helps fund our education work.
- **National grant funding** - from the Government, the Lottery Grants Board and a range of other funders - remained our main source of income at \$24.7 million (61.3%). It gives us a foundation to build on, with the rest raised through other income streams. Most of this year's increase was earmarked for specific projects and initiatives.

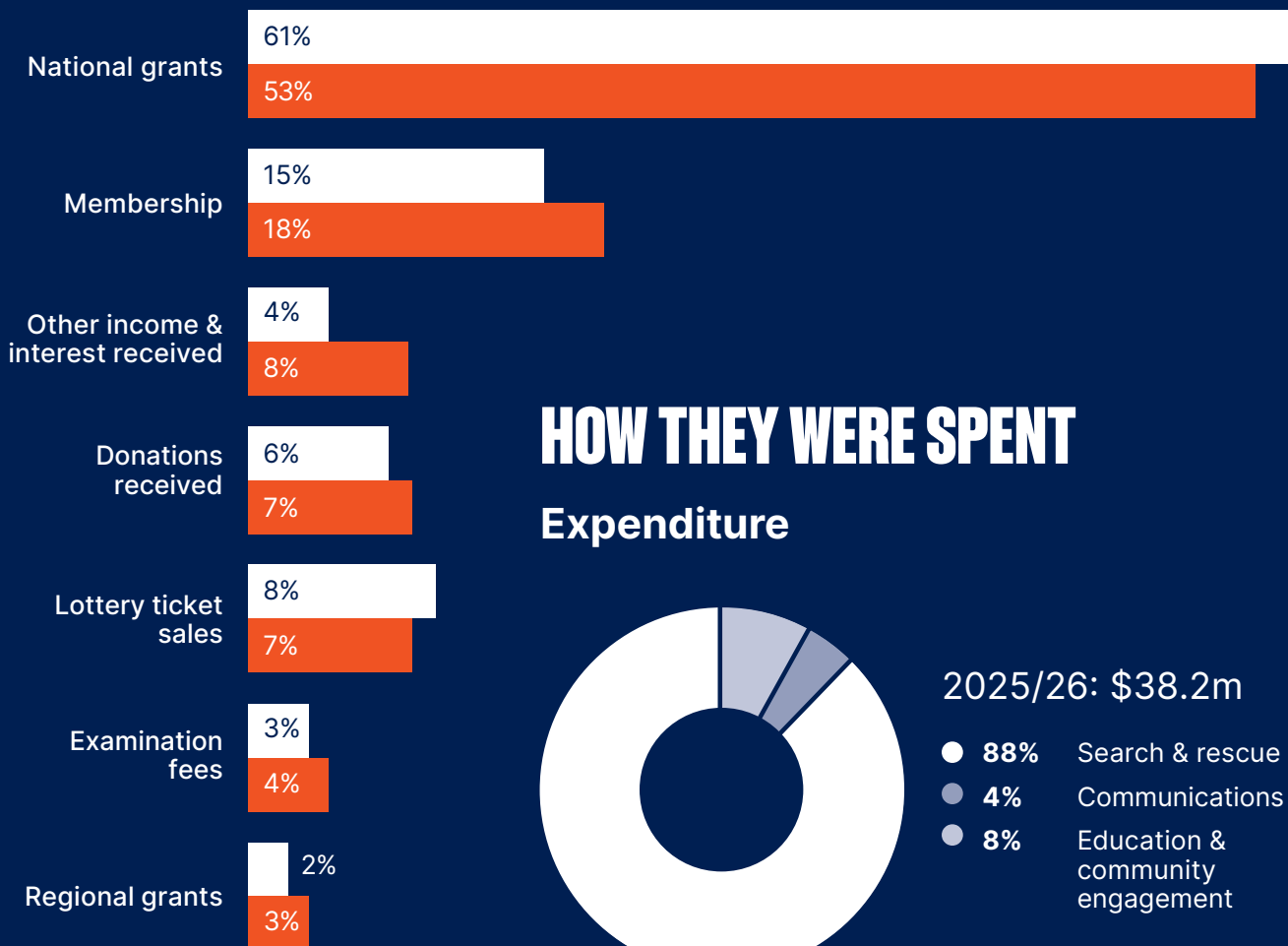
FY26 did what we set out to do. We put more into the vessels, people and support our units depend on, helped more boaties learn the skills to stay safe, and kept boaties connected through our radio and communications systems. None of it happens without our funders, members and supporters - and every dollar counted on these pages ends up in the same place: alongside someone who needs help.

**BEHIND EVERY
NUMBER IS
A PERSON, WHĀNAU
OR COMMUNITY
WE HELPED**

OUR OPERATING FUNDS

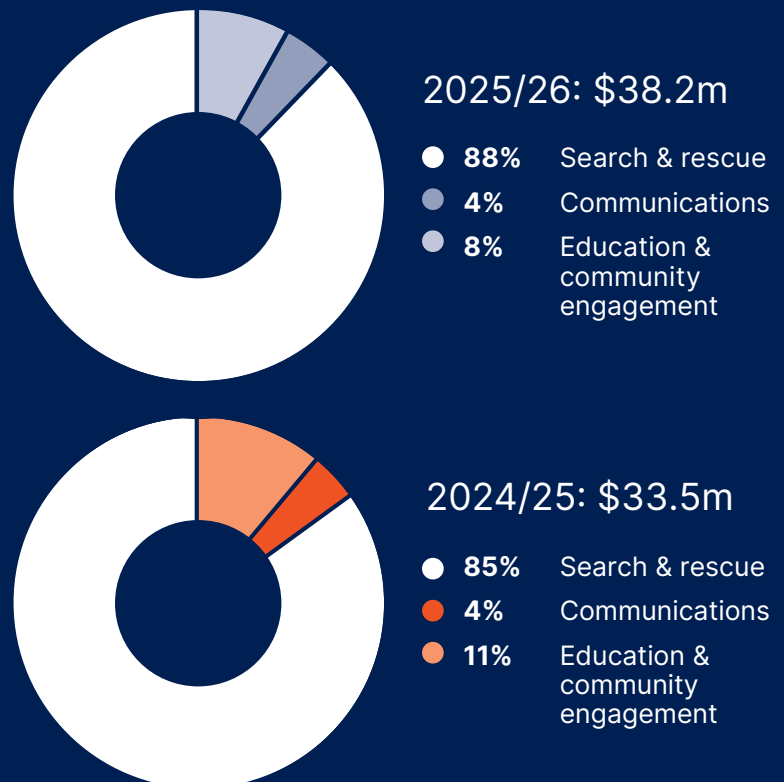
WHERE THEY CAME FROM

Income • 2025/26: \$40.4m • 2024/25: \$33.6m



HOW THEY WERE SPENT

Expenditure



SUPPORTING OUR UNITS

THE HIGHLIGHTS

	2025/26	2024/25
ADDITIONAL PPE Getting volunteers the right equipment	\$705,744	\$663,038
OPERATIONAL SUPPORT Covering some of the day-to-day costs	\$1,368,916	\$795,855
LOTTERY & MEMBERSHIP COMMISSION The benefit of new members and lottery ticket sales	\$1,666,695	\$1,498,249
REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE Ensuring we're ready to deliver the mission	\$842,867	\$699,541
TRAINING SUPPORT Allowing more time on the water	\$735,568	\$935,287
INSURANCE CENTRALISATION In case of something going wrong our units are covered	\$764,071	\$707,801
ASSET SUPPORT Capex provided by WSNZ and the Lottery Grants Board to units	\$6,603,502	\$2,140,809

OUR SECTOR PARTNERS



Hon James Meager

Associate Minister for Transport

Kiwis' connection to the water is part of who we are. From our coastlines and harbours to our lakes and rivers, these are places where we work, travel, recreate and spend time with family and friends.

While time on the water brings enjoyment and opportunity, it can also present unexpected challenges. When emergencies occur, New Zealanders take comfort in knowing that Coastguard personnel and volunteers stand ready to respond. More than 2,000 volunteers across the country give their time, expertise and commitment to keeping people safe and bringing them home.

Their contribution is extraordinary. Coastguard volunteers willingly step away from their families, workplaces and personal commitments to help others, providing a service that many of us hope we never need, but are grateful to know is there. Through their professionalism, training and commitment, they save lives, support communities and help ensure people return home safely.

The Government remains committed to supporting Coastguard's vital work. Through ongoing investment, we help ensure Coastguard can maintain its lifesaving operations by training personnel and volunteers, maintaining rescue assets and infrastructure, operational communications and partnerships that support effective search and rescue services across New Zealand. This support ensures Coastguard can continue to respond when and where it is needed most.

Alongside recognising your achievements, it is important to acknowledge the challenges that come with this work. Not every callout has the outcome we hope for, and the impact of these events can be significant. I want to recognise the resilience of Coastguard personnel and volunteers and thank those who support you in carrying out this important role.

On behalf of all New Zealanders, thank you for your service, your professionalism and your unwavering commitment to helping others on, in and around the water.



Kirstie Hewlett

Director, Maritime New Zealand

It has been another successful year of partnership between Coastguard and Maritime NZ, and as Maritime NZ's Director, I could not be prouder of what we have accomplished together.

I would like to start by welcoming Carl McOnie as Coastguard's Chief Executive and acknowledge his leadership and energy throughout his first year in the role. It is reassuring to know Coastguard remains in such capable hands.

For me, one of the highlights of our collaboration over the past 12 months has been working alongside our Safer Boating Forum partners to develop the Recreational Craft Harm Prevention Strategy 2026–2031. I believe it is our strongest strategy yet and I am excited to see the difference it will make over the coming years.

The strategy was launched at this year's Safer Boating Forum, where, as always, Coastguard made a valuable contribution. It was encouraging to see so much expertise and energy in one room, reflecting a shared commitment to preventing harm on our waters and to the partnership required to achieve it.

Another highlight was the bluefin tuna seminar series, which Coastguard led this year. Delivered at boating and sports fishing clubs across the motu, these seminars equip boaties with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to fish safely. We are thrilled to support Coastguard with this essential work.

Finally, congratulations to everyone at Coastguard on your 50th anniversary of being a national maritime search and rescue service. The commitment of your staff and volunteers over the past five decades is greatly appreciated by our Rescue Coordination Centre NZ and partner organisations, as well as, I'm sure, the countless boaties whose lives you have helped save. I look forward to continuing this important work together in the decades ahead.

MAKING IMPACT POSSIBLE

The outcomes highlighted throughout this report are made possible by the volunteers, supporters, funders and partners who stand behind Coastguard's mission. Together, they help ensure more people return home safely and more communities benefit from rescue-ready capability, education and prevention initiatives.

SEARCH & RESCUE PARTNERS

Coastguard works alongside search and rescue agencies, emergency services and maritime organisations across New Zealand to help keep people safe on the water. These partnerships strengthen coordination, operational readiness and emergency response capability, ensuring help is available when and where it is needed most.



FUNDING PARTNERS

Funding partners help make Coastguard's impact possible. Their investment supports search and rescue capability, volunteer development, boating education, community outreach programmes and the infrastructure needed to deliver lifesaving services across Aotearoa.

Government agencies, grant funders, regional councils and community funding organisations all play an important role in ensuring Coastguard can continue supporting people on the water today while investing in the capability needed for the future.



CORPORATE PARTNERS

Our corporate partners provide vital financial support, services, products and expertise that help extend Coastguard's reach and impact. Their contribution enables investment in volunteer support, education initiatives, public awareness campaigns and operational capability that benefits boating communities across Aotearoa.



**WE'RE THERE WHEN
YOU NEED US**



