



# The Hon Duncan Gay MLC

## Minister for Roads and Ports

### Deputy Leader of the Government Legislative Council

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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12 December 2011

### MARITIME MEDAL WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Three individuals and one group were today awarded the highest of accolades in the State maritime community, with the presentation of a Maritime Medal.

NSW Roads and Ports Minister Duncan Gay said of the four that had been judged as having made outstanding and sustained contributions to the maritime community, two hailed from Ballina, one from Port Stephens and one from Sydney.

“A panel of independent representatives from the boating community joined Maritime to judge the nominations and selected the four winners,” Mr Gay said.

“Since the inaugural presentation of State Maritime Medals, 39 individuals or groups have been recognised for their outstanding contributions to boating.

“These medals are an opportunity to recognise special individuals or groups who through their dedication, passion and toil are delivering benefits to a countless number of people.

“They have enriched our community through their self-less commitment.”

The four recipients were presented with individually engraved cast bronze-alloy medallions with lapel pins in a hand crafted timber case at an awards presentation at the Cruising Yacht Club, Rushcutters Bay.

Maritime Medals are presented in three categories of Safety and Community and judged by an independent selection panel.

2011 Maritime Medal recipients are:

**Rear Admiral (ret) Tony Hunt AO (Community Medal)**

Tony, who is Sydney-based, is the current President of the Sydney Heritage Fleet, a not-for-profit organisation where he has volunteered his time and expertise for 15 years.

Tony is highly regarded for his leadership skills, notably, but not limited to, the restoration of iconic Tall Ship the *James Craig*.

This award-winning Tall Ship is now based in Sydney Harbour and gives thousands of people each year a rare and unique opportunity to experience sailing aboard a piece of working history. In 2003 the *James Craig* was awarded the World Ships Trust Medal for authentic restoration. She joins a select band of restored ships throughout the world, including the *Mary Rose* (UK 1510), *Vasa* (Sweden 1627), *USS Constitution* (USA 1797), *Great Britain* (UK 1843) and *Cutty Sark* (UK 1869), which have received this honour.

### **Michael (Mick) O'Connor**

Mick, from Ballina, a hardworking teacher for 37 years, established the Marine Teachers' Association – of which he is President - where he has grown membership from two to 120 statewide.

The Association is responsible for establishing and offering Marine Studies as a subject, which includes boating safety education, to more than 8000 students each year.

Mick is known as a Marine Studies syllabus writing expert to the Department of Education and Communities. He is responsible for establishing an agreement with Maritime that has resulted in the recognition of the boating component of the Marine Studies course as appropriate for students to attain a licence to drive a powerboat, thereby encouraging the next generation of boaters to attain a solid foundation in safe and responsible behaviour on our waterways.

Additionally, he has a related side project which sees him busy building the Ballina Marine Discovery Centre - with his own hands – which will stand as an ongoing legacy to support marine education on the North Coast for years to come.

### **Ballina Jet Boat Surf Rescue Inc**

This stand-alone volunteer-run maritime rescue group has been an institution in Ballina for 40 years.

The group, through their own fundraising efforts, operate and staff a rescue jet boat which is often first at the scene of a maritime emergency - including assistance in coastal bar crossing incidents, rock fishing mishaps and general boating distress situations.

The Ballina Jet Boat Surf Rescue Inc is unique in its set up and operation, highly regarded and operates with the support of the local Surf Life Saving Club.

### **Peter Phillipson**

Peter has for 22 years volunteered his time as a tireless and passionate advocate for volunteer marine rescue in NSW (based in Fingal Bay, Port Stephens).

He was an early supporter and instrumental in encouraging his fellow volunteers in realising the benefits of the formation of one central marine rescue organisation, which is now in operation as the State Government- supported Marine Rescue NSW.

Due to commitment and drive of people such as Peter, Marine Rescue NSW is now providing vital rescue services up and down the coast of NSW.

With a current total of [56 Units and Bases from Eden to Point Danger](#), Marine Rescue NSW supplies three core services:

- [Search and rescue for marine emergencies](#)
- [Boating safety education and training](#)
- Radio coverage along NSW coastline

There were also three highly commended nominations:

- Charlie Weir
- Peter Hunter
- Avoca SurfCom

More details at <http://www.maritime.nsw.gov.au/wh/medal.html>