

Leeman volunteers make waves with new boat

The addition of a new purpose built rescue boat has put a smile on the faces of Leeman Volunteer Sea Rescue members who will now be able to respond quicker to emergencies, and travel more safely.

Leeman President and Commander Merry Hide said the *Abey-Lee* is an 8.5 metre rigid hull inflatable Naiad craft fitted with the latest communication and electronic equipment.

“We now have an increased capacity with a vessel that can reach speeds up to 50 knots, allowing us to attend maritime emergencies along the coast from Dongara in the north to Jurien Bay in the south,” Merry said.

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During the last two years the Leeman volunteers have undertaken rescue operations during extreme and hazardous weather conditions, saving nine lives.

“The local area has a large boating community and this can put high demands on our emergency volunteers, especially during holiday periods when the number of recreational boats increases,” Merry said.

“Many incidents involve boats that have broken down after fishermen have gone far out to sea targeting large fish.

“Stranded boats usually can’t anchor and this means they can drift towards reefs, providing another reason why we need a fast response rescue vessel.”

Merry added that the group has already handled two of these incidents since acquiring the *Abey-Lee*, and volunteer crews are very impressed with her performance.

Chief Executive Officer Mr Wayne Gregson APM was on hand to officially christen the new vessel at a recent ceremony.

The *Abey-Lee* is valued at almost \$300,000 and the purchase was made possible through a \$236,000 FESA Volunteer Marine Rescue Services grant, plus contributions from the Shire of Coorow, Lotterywest and the local Coorow community.



L-R: Volunteer Marine Rescue Services Manager Paul Kimber, Leeman Marine Rescue President/Commander Merry Hide, Chief Executive Officer Mr Wayne Gregson APM and Hon. James Chown MLC, Member for Agricultural Region. Photo courtesy *Central Midlands Advocate*.