



Reef rescues more common

The number of Great Barrier Reef rescue tasks has increased to the point where the Cairns Queensland Rescue (QR) helicopter now responds to at least one job every week.

According to Cairns-based QR pilot, Greg Kempton, 'traffic' on the reef now has a significant impact on the workload of helicopter rescue services in the far north.

"Certainly we are seeing more jobs. Many are dive related, but a growing percentage are related to the Irukandji syndrome, sometimes weekly during peak times," he said.

In the two weeks up to March 2,

2006, Queensland Rescue Cairns retrieved a 72-year-old stroke patient from Moore Reef, a 64-year-old diver from Saxon Reef, a 68-year-old female from Wheeler Reef and a 65-year-old man with chest pains from Michaelmas Cay.

Greg said the increase in tasking had meant Queensland Rescue had a constant dialogue with dive boat operators regarding the use of their pontoons for retrievals.

"We certainly encourage the operators to talk to us and we have a very good relationship with most of the major players," he said.

"Most of the boat operators are

very professional and most are operating with semi-qualified medical officers on board."

Greg said it appeared likely the increasing workload, although seasonal, would continue and he encouraged boat operators to be aware of the likelihood of the helicopter being called in the case of an emergency.

"In most cases we will land on the pontoons however there are occasions where we have to winch directly from a vessel," he said.

"So it's certainly good to be aware of the operators and for them to have an understanding of how we work."

SES crew seeks fundraising support

The lead-up to the annual Variety Club Bash is on again but this year there's a definite orange flavour in the mix.

Goodna SES is busily preparing its entry for the fundraising event and members are calling on the State's

network of volunteers to lend a local hand as they make the trip from Cairns to Birdsville later this year.

While the crew has the funds it needs for the journey, current figures have them falling short on cash for fuel to get to Cairns where

the trip officially begins.

Goodna SES organiser Kevin Dowsett said the crew was hoping SES groups/units between Goodna and Cairns would be able to hold fundraising barbecues to help them meet the costs of fuel.