

Australasian Rescue Organisation (ARO)
Australasian Water Rescue Challenge (AWRC) 2025
Australasian Rescue Boat Challenge (ARBC) 2025

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated as at 3 October 2025

1. Do I need to be a current individual ARO member to compete?

Yes. Membership period is 1 March to end of February, each year. Individual membership is included in the entry fee this year.

2. Does my agency need to be a member of ARO to compete?

Yes.

3. How much is it to enter?

\$5,500 per challenge per team. Participation is not confirmed until payment is received.

4. What is included in the entry fee?

The challenge is approximately half the cost as compared to Road Crash Rescue Challenges and teams participating receive over ~300% more events. They also receive the Professional Development Day and complimentary ARO membership for participants. Venue and pump costs are attributed to a majority of the entry fee to participants and agencies. ARO is working with the venue and partner agencies to support this event to reduce costs to agencies.

5. What does the entry fee get me?

All entry fees and costs include entry to Penrith Whitewater Stadium (PWS) and the lake. Entry to your nominated challenge, up to 8 events per challenge, separate participation in the Professional Development Day, individual membership for all team members and access to ARO's membership benefits.

6. When are the events on?

The AWRC and ARBC will be held on:

- Friday 17 October 2025 – this is a Professional Development Day
- Saturday 18 October 2025 – this is the AWRC and ARBC day. Both events will be run concurrently on this day.

7. Why are there two days?

- Each Challenge is of one day duration. Both AWRC and ARBC will be held concurrently but in separate areas of the Penrith area
- Friday 17 October 2025 is a full Professional Development Day for entrants into the challenges. This will assist participants in their preparations for AWRC and ARBC.

8. What is on the Professional Development Day?

There will be professional development sessions for participants including new, current, and emerging trends in world's best practice for water rescue and rescue boats. Topics include:

- **Tools and Equipment:** Cutting tools, cutting mediums and airbag use in the water environment. Practical door entry skills utilising a variety of tools and latest equipment. Adopting land based heavy lift to the water environment
- **Specialised access:** Using ladders in boats to access areas (UKRO learning)
- **When time counts:** Surf Lifesaving urgent pickups from water
- **Medical:** Latest techniques for person immersion, wet CPR management, tactical first aid in boats whilst underway
- **Swiftwater Rescue Boat Maneuvering:** Latest skills from Australia's best and international learnings
- **EV's and water rescue:** Thermal runaway, risks, laminated 360 glass, and how to manage the latest risk to flood rescuers
- **Rapid extrication Raft Tether Techniques:** Advanced raft techniques with rafts and ARK Nile
- **High Clearance Vehicles:** Utility vehicles, HAZMAT, Rescue, Ambulance, Firefighting, a display of all the latest HCV's and their purposes

- **Drones and RPAS for water and flood rescues:** Heavy lift RPAS, thermal imagery with RPAS and handheld thermal cameras, how to read thermal images, latest uses of RPAS for each agency
- 9. What does ARBC look like?**
The event will feature a series of challenges over one day that will test the team in simulated water rescues using boats in both still and moving water conditions.
 - 10. Who can enter?**
Any government rescue agency or government authorised rescue agency can enter. Spots are limited.
 - 11. Can I have a mixed agency team?**
Yes, mixed agency teams are encouraged.
 - 12. Can we enter multiple teams?**
Depending on the number of entries, agencies may be allowed one spot in the first call. If all spots are not filled, the opportunity may exist for multiple teams. Please indicate how many teams you wish to enter.
 - 13. What does a team consist of?**
 - AWRC teams consist of a maximum of 8: including max of 6 In Water qualified rescuers and 2 Land Based rescuers.
 - ARBC teams consist of a maximum of 3. Members must be trained to their role in the vessel and to their government agency levels for operating in the moving water environment.
 - 14. Can we have a reserve member on the team?**
Yes, each team may nominate one additional person which can be interchanged at any time for safety and fatigue management.
 - 15. Can I have a team manager?**
Yes, this is recommended for logistics purposes and as a liaison with ARO officials.
 - 16. Do I need to be physically fit?**
Water rescue is a physically demanding capability. The challenge consists of multiple scenarios over the day in the water environment, so participants need to be able to complete all scenarios.
 - 17. Do I need to be an accredited General Land Rescue Operator to compete?**
No, but it is recommended.
 - 18. Do I need to have an understanding of motor vehicles?**
Yes, rescues from vehicles form a very large part of water rescue in Australasia. It will be assumed that rescuers have knowledge about rescues from vehicles, as well as safe work and entry in and around vehicles.
 - 19. What minimum qualifications do I need to hold?**
 - For In Water rescuer: PUASAR002 Undertake swiftwater and floodwater rescue and recovery, or equivalent.
 - For On Water rescuers: PUASES009 Undertake inland floodboat operations, or equivalent.
 - For Land Based rescuers: PUASAR001 Perform land based swift-water and floodwater rescue and recovery, or equivalent.
 - Evidence of qualifications and a current Fit for Task evolution must be provided upon entry.
 - 20. What if our agency does not use National units of Competency or different training courses?**
Please contact ARO via cmt.water@aro rescue.org
 - 21. Is the water still or moving?**
The challenge will be held in fast- and slow-moving water and some still water environments. Moving water will be up to Class 3 Grade. Participants should be experienced in this environment. The ARBC will be held in the lake and in moving water.
 - 22. What challenges will take place?**
Challenges will recreate actual rescues that water rescue teams have attended in past years. They are designed to emulate time-critical rescues of persons from water. Each challenge scenario is

timed with a large part featuring a water component.

23. Can a participant be excluded from the challenge?

Safety is paramount during this challenge. An ARO Assessor or Safety Officer may choose to halt any scenario for any breaches of safety. Participant's proficiency in and around water will also be constantly monitored for participant's safety. Participants who do not display the ability to work safely in an aquatic environment will be removed for their safety.

24. Will the challenge allow innovation?

New, innovative, and safe techniques are encouraged and will be scored appropriately.

25. Is Personal Protective Equipment / Clothing (PPE/PPC) supplied?

- No, agencies are required to bring their own PPE/PPC for their roles, i.e., In Water PPE/PPC, On Water PPE/PPC, and Land Based PPE/PPC.
- Land Based rescuers will not be allowed to wear In Water PPE/PPC (i.e., wetsuits).

26. Can I bring a new tool/device etc.?

Yes, however controlled equipment is used at ARO challenges so that all teams have fair and equal use of equipment.

27. Will rafting be a part of the challenge?

Yes.

28. What types of boats will be used and do agencies have to provide the boat?

- Inflatable rescue boat style up to 4.4m in length and must be of tiller steer outboard propulsion.
- Outboards can be up to 40hp. 2st or 4st. Environmentally friendly products, including oils, must be used at PWS.
- Contact ARO if your agency does not or is unable to have a boat present.

29. What is different about this event?

The ARBC is designed to be real life and includes multi-agency responses to the same incident. In a world first for rescue challenges, the ARBC will have some events where two teams compete either in a mirror fashion at the same event, or both compete extricating persons from the same entrapment. This emulates more real-life experience and enables assessing of new components of rescue such as interagency workings, communication and skills.

30. How will the ARBC be run in the moving water?

The ARBC will host a number of events in the still water lake area and then transition into moving water in the Penrith Whitewater System. This will enable assessment of boat teams in aerated and moving water.

31. What extra safety is in place for ARBC in moving water?

ARO has assessors, setters and safety officers that have placed first in international water rescue events and also seeks reference from the World Rescue Organisation (WRO). It has Churchill Fellows and world leaders in the water rescue and boats space. These leaders place the highest levels of safety on each event. Furthermore, when powered vessels are in the water there are no live persons in any water.

32. What if I have any concerns about safety?

Please contact ARO immediately if you have any concerns about safety and ARO can meet and discuss with you the risk assessments and experience and qualifications of ARO members. ARO understands that water rescue is not for everyone, and agencies should consider if they are realistically trained and able to undertake rescue in the moving water environment.

33. Why are some boat events timed?

Water rescue involves a small window to effectively rescue a person and provide adequate airway and first aid. Immersion can kill in minutes. Practice and demonstration of skills that effectively and efficiently rescue persons from water to save their life are encouraged and scored appropriately.

34. Will the team be filmed during the events?

Yes, teams and the competitors will be filmed to promote their respective agencies and their skillsets.

35. Is it just NSW teams attending?

No, teams are coming from state, interstate and internationally this year.

36. Why is heavy lift equipment being shown on the Professional Development Day?

Recent events in water rescue in Australia have shown the need for skills sets that combine water rescue and general land rescue techniques such as hydraulic tools and airbags to save life and limb. ARO has taken these rescues and developed professional development instruction along with challenges that reflect real life rescues.

37. What is a puddle rescue, and will this be part of the AWRC?

A puddle rescue is a term used by water rescuers in Australia when a person requires rescue from a very shallow water environment. Whilst these rescues need to be treated with the seriousness and risk assessment of high-volume high velocity rescues, rescues in AWRC and ARBC will involve serious levels of water movement and volume to challenge participants.

38. Our agency has extra people who wish to participate, can they?

Yes, please keep extras as we encourage multi-agency teams to participate. Please provide these names to admin@arorescue.org

39. Will the AWRC stands be different or the same as last year?

ARO AWRC 2024 provided the world's first in class 3 water door entry, pipe prop, hydraulic tool prop along with the usual car and roof props scenarios. Feedback from agencies and their leaders was that this initiative and exposure best prepared rescuers for real life rescues. Many of the props will return, however the team has developed further props to challenge rescuers resulting from real word experiences.

40. What levels of safety are there at stands?

Noting that each team that enters is a qualified and state certified water rescue team. However, in the unlikely event that an agency member is in distress the risk assessment and procedure provided to teams is:

- Self-rescue as trained
- Team rescue and assistance by own agency
- Assistance and direction from ARO Safety Officer
- Assistance and direction from ARO Assessor
- Assistance from onsite mobile rescue team
- Water off and assistance to victim
- 000 call and water rescue team dispatched as per state arrangements

41. What briefings regarding safety do I get as a participant?

Participants receive a number of briefings along with the ability to self-exclude at any time.

- Briefings are provided prior to the event, approximately 1 week out.
- The ARO indemnity waiver is signed upon individual registration
- Another briefing is provided on entry to PWS facility and a PWS waiver is acknowledged and signed for entry
- A further safety brief is provided at the commencement of Professional Development Day
- At the end of Professional Development Day and prior to departure, a Challenge safety briefing is carried out in person, live and with the ability for feedback and questions
- On the morning of the challenges, a safety briefing is provided along with PPE and equipment check
- Prior to each stand a safety brief for that stand is provided.
- At any time if any person sees a matter that is unsafe you MUST notify an ARO official immediately

42. Why is there a 4-person limit in the rescue boats?

Each agency has different capacities for their agency rescue boats. A limit of 4 for the challenge evens out the teams and ensures each team must manage the rescue scenario with the same rules.

43. What if some agencies have 40hp and some have 25hp?

Horsepower is not the defining attribute in rescue. A larger heavier engine takes longer to rise to the plane and slower to decelerate. They are more difficult to maneuver in aerated water and have longer vessel lengths that makes turning in tight confines harder. They may benefit in wide open throttle rescues, but the playing field is levelled out in tight confines.

44. What if my agency doesn't have a boat available or cannot transport on to NSW?

Contact ARO. Many of our NSW partners have made rescue boats available for interstate and international agencies to participate.

45. What safety equipment is required for ARBC?

Agency defined safety equipment.

46. Will there be a boat safety inspection?

- Yes, boats will be scrutineered to ensure safety of all participants. A scrutineering sheet will be sent to ARBC team prior to the event to check off safety items. Further scrutineering will be undertaken for safety on the day.
- ARO utilises scrutineers and information from major rescue boat and racing events such as the Avon Descent (WA) and Surf Lifesaving IRB events.

47. What do we get if we win?

Whilst the first-place teams will receive the title of 'Australasia's Best Water Rescue Team' and 'Australasia's Best Rescue Boat Team' for their agency, the goal is a fun, learning and inclusive participation in a challenge environment.

48. What awards categories are there?

This year we've added new awards to the list for each of the challenges. These include Best Medic, Champions of Safety, Award for Commendation and Capability Excellence.

- First Place - team
- Second Place - team
- Third Place - team
- Best Team Leader - individual
- Spirit of the Challenge - team
- Champions of Safety Award - team
- Best Medic - individual
- President's Award for Commendation - individual or team

49. How do I nominate myself for a role on the Challenge Management Team, support team or as a casualty?

ARO welcomes individuals from member agencies to register their interest in any of the available volunteer roles, including but not limited to:

- **Challenge Management Team (CMT):** Assessors, Safety Officers, Setters, Stand Managers, Facilitators, and Medics.
- **Support Members:** Admin, registration, media, logistics, and peer support.
- **Casualties:** Role players include IWO and LBO casualties.

Some roles may require evidence of qualifications and active ARO membership. Individuals interested in these roles are encouraged to contact admin@arorescue.org and register via the ARO website.

50. How do I register?

- Agencies will need to complete the 'Agency Nominations Form' to register their team, which is available on the ARO website www.AROrescue.org.
- All individuals wishing to attend, whether they're participants, support members, official agency representatives, spectators, or sponsors, must complete the mandatory 'Individual Registration Form', which is available on the ARO website www.AROrescue.org. Individuals who fail to preregister may not be accommodated for.

51. Is catering provided?

Catering will be provided for participants and event organisers who pre-register. However, attendees and participants are encouraged to bring their own snacks, water, and hydration supplements.

52. Is transport provided?

No.

53. Is accommodation provided?

No.

54. Are the events sponsored?

Yes, sponsors will be invited to the event to showcase innovation and best practice in equipment and services.

55. Is the Professional Development Day open to the public?

No, the Professional Development Day is a closed event for participants and purchased ticketholders. ARO members can purchase tickets to the Professional Development Day via the ARO website. The AWRC and ARBC on Saturday 18 October 2025 is open to the public.

56. Are spectators, media and the public able to come and watch?

- Yes, the AWRC and ARBC events have been designed so that the events are very close, and suitable for those watching and the general public. The event is open and free to the public and any non-participating agency member. Due to safety reasons, restricted areas will be in place for certain areas.
- Any Media, agency or industry will be required to register with the ARO Media team via media@AROrescue.org

57. Will the public be notified and allowed to watch?

Yes, an extensive public media campaign to support our emergency services and their capabilities will be undertaken to allow them to see their rescue agencies at work. They will have up close viewing of all the challenges, and we encourage photos and sharing of images.

58. Will there be media?

Internal ARO media will cover the event along with external networks. Social media, television and radio promotion will occur leading up to and after the event. For media partnership opportunities, please contact the ARO Media team via media@AROrescue.org

More questions will be added to this list periodically, please check back to ensure you have the most up-to-date information. To submit a question, share a comment or raise a concern, please contact cmt.water@areorescue.org or admin@aro rescue.org.