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After 50 years at the helm marine rescue hero retires

Sue Gardiner | 29th Jun 2013 6:00 AM

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Bernie Gabriel and Glenda Ashby at Marine Rescue head quarters at Point Danger.

Blainey Woodham

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AFTER five decades at the helm of Marine Rescue Point Danger, Bernard Gabriel will hand over the position to his successor Glenda Ashby next month.

Mrs Ashby was elected unopposed as the new unit commander at the rescue's latest monthly meeting and will take over when Mr Gabriel steps down on July 7.

The 79-year-old said he believed it was time for an injection of fresh blood and he would like to spend more time with his family.

But he said he would continue his association with Marine Rescue Point Danger which has 140 volunteers and is based at the Captain Cook Memorial Lighthouse.

He says he has already been given the informal title of "officer for special projects" for post-retirement.

Mr Gabriel predicted Mrs Ashby would continue to steer a steady ship.

“ The 79-year-old said it was time for an injection of fresh blood and he would like to spend more time with his family.

"I have every confidence in her ability to go ahead with the handling of the organisation," he said.

Mr Ashby who has participated in dozens of marine rescues during his 50 years in the organisation said it had become way more formalised and demanding of volunteers.

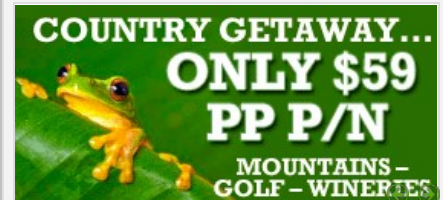
"The pressure on marine rescue is increasing all the time," he said.

"There's more demand on volunteers to get more qualified and to take on more responsibility... before it was a bit more laid back.

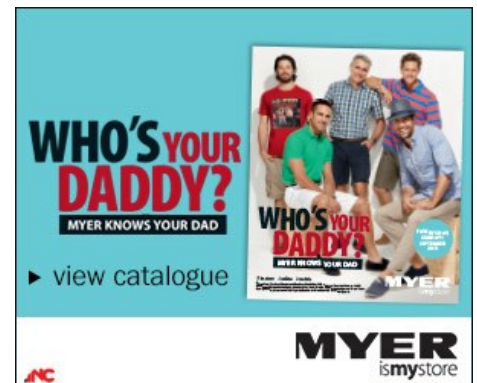
"Our boat skippers for example have qualifications that would allow them to skipper a large boat on Sydney Harbour.

"Even though we are volunteers, we still come under the same strict structures that emergency services operate under."

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Last year Mr Gabriel was awarded the Emergency Services Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours list for his commitment to serving the boating community

Mrs Ashby, who has been a volunteer with the organisation for 14 years along with her husband Gary and currently holds the position of treasurer, said she was looking forward to the challenge.

"It can encroach on some of your personal life... (but) I love it," she said.

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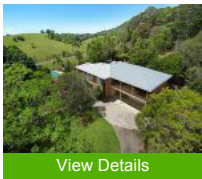
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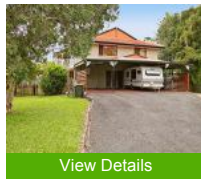
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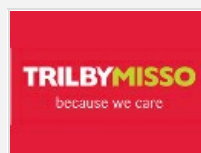
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