

Life saving drones Queensland trials



They may be great fun when you race them and indispensable when you need aerial imagery but drones have another highly practical application that's reaching new heights

Surf lifesaving drones have been around for a while now and the Little Ripper has been in use since February last year.

The Westpac 'Little Ripper' has been used on Queensland's beaches following a recent spate of shark attacks. The unmanned drone is able to drop flotation devices directly over swimmers in distress. Equipped with cameras and alarms, the drones were designed by multi-millionaire businessman Kevin Weldon, a former lifesaver. SLSQ Chief George Hill said that 'lifesavers were keen to trial the drones but there were concerns about safety with drones flying over crowded beaches'.

Mr Weldon said although there was resistance to new technology in lifesaving, he believes that drones will save lives.

"My goal is to have a drone in every surf club in Australia within three years," he said. Gold Coast chief lifeguard Warren Young said the jury was out on the value of surf lifesaving drones but he supported the trial.

"It's good to try all the new technology but if the first responder doesn't get to a drowning person within seconds, people die," he said.



How it works

The Ripper Group Marine Rescue Pod is the world's first invention, developed by Little Ripper Lifesaver as a member of The Ripper Group company. It consists of a small parcel (or Pod) containing water rescue and safety devices for deployment from under the Mini Ripper UAVs from operators on the beach.

From a hovering position above the person/s in distress, the UAV operator is able to use the attached microphone to calm the patient and, if needed, explain that a Pod is about to be deployed containing: a self-inflating flotation device capable of supporting 3-4 people with attached sea anchor to keep the tube stationary; an EPIRB signalling unit to keep track of them in the event vision is lost; a shark repellent device capable of keeping sharks at bay for up to 8 hours; and a light and a whistle.

The UAV-deployable, self-inflating, water-activated flotation device is a world first and the SharkShield® is the only scientifically validated shark deterrent device available. The Rescue Pods called (ULB's) designed by SOS Marine-ULB stood for 'you little beauty' something would say when they see the rescue pods. They are ready-to-go for rapid deployment.



Westpac Mini Ripper Features

- An Advanced Multi-rotor UAV with Multiple Payload Options Military-standard quality
- Anti-wing and waterproof design for working in difficult weather conditions
- Battery powered UAV with long endurance up to 60 minutes
- Equipped with 3-axis gimbal delivering stable 360-degree vision
- Auto return and landing
- Versatile payload configuration with maximum 3.5 kg capacity incorporating optional drop-mechanism and multiple camera, sensor and other payload device options

