

Sikorsky S76 extends service's speed, range and capacity



BIGGER AND BETTER: The RACQ Capricorn Helicopter Rescue Service crew (not in order) Dan Millar, Brad Nagy, Matt Cook, Chris Manns, Scott Salisbury, Matt Brandon and engineer Sean Best line up outside the new Sikorsky S76 helicopter at the official launch on Friday night.

PHOTO: SHARYN O'NEILL, SOT/0510-19

Helicopter breaks past limits for rescue crew

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IT'S bigger, better and lasts longer.

A trip to Longreach to search for a missing couple in floodwaters would not have been easy before for the RACQ Capricorn Helicopter Rescue Service.

But now it's a breeze.

One of Central Queensland's most important emergency recourses now has a new helicopter and the possibilities for rescues are now endless.

Senior pilot Vince Corcoran said when the crew was tasked to Longreach earlier this year for the search, they covered 548km without a fuel stop.

He said in the old chopper they would have had to fuel up in Emerald before heading further west, as it could only cover about 418km in one trip.

"It was never able to



MORE ROOM: Brad Nagy shows the inside of the new rescue helicopter, which can fit a lot more in it than the previous aircraft.

PHOTO: SHARYN O'NEILL, SOT/0510-18

do that before and no other aircraft in Queensland could do that trip - it allowed us to be on scene 45 minutes early," Mr Corcoran said.

The new helicopter, a Sikorsky S76, was officially launched on Friday night at the

CHRS base on Canona Road.

The helicopter itself, although looking almost brand new from the outside, is actually 25 years old, but it's the only one of its kind dedicated to emergency medical services and search and rescue.

It has already been in operation for a few months.

On February 26 the crew travelled to Biloeila to transport a three-year-old girl post overdose, and it took only 25 minutes to get there - it arrived before the ambulance team had

the patient ready for transport.

"This helicopter is surprisingly quick; it would usually take 35 to 40 minutes to get there," he said.

Rescue crewman Matt Brandon said other rescues included trips to Emerald, Glad-

stone, Mt Larcom and Heron Island.

He said the new helicopter also gave them more room inside to operate and transport more equipment, and was more stable for hoists.

Mr Brandon, an ex-army man, said he was really looking forward to using the night vision goggles when they got clearance in the next few weeks.

He said CHRS would be the first emergency medical service to use them.

Other members of the CHRS rescue team include pilots Chris Manns and Scott Salisbury, crewman Dan Millar, Brad Nagy and Matt Cook and engineer Sean Best.

CHRS executive officer Kay Becker said the new helicopter was very exciting and rewarding for all the staff.

"We're servicing areas we've never been to before," she said.