

Subject: Melbourne Bushwalkers: Review of Personal Locator Beacons (PLB) and Recommendation

Personal Locator Beacons (PLB) are a sub-set of Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRB). PLB are smaller, lighter and have shorter operational endurance, but are significantly cheaper. PLB are commonly carried by bushwalkers as a means to alert rescue authorities of a life-threatening emergency in remote areas that are beyond the reach of the mobile telephone network.

MBW has two PLB which are nearing the end of their warranted lives and are no longer available. MBW wishes to consider options for replacing the PLB.

PLB & EPIRB operate by transmitting 2 radio signals which can be received by satellites for forwarding to emergency control centres, and directly by search parties. Later (and preferred) variants also incorporate a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver which calculates the beacon's position accurately. The GPS data is attached to the main PLB distress transmission and reduces the apparent location of the beacon from a circle of about 3 km radius to a circle of about 100 m radius or less.

All PLB sold in Australia must conform to an Australian Standard (AS/NZS 4280.2:2003) which makes comparison of different PLB straight forward. Weight, warranty and reputation remain the principle considerations. The main additional technical feature to be considered is the inclusion of a GPS receiver in the PLB. Only GPS-enabled PLB are described here.

Prices quoted below are AUD at 11 October 2015

CH Smith is located at 16 Langridge st. Collingwood

<http://www.chsmith.com.au/>

Johnny Appleseed is at 92 St Kilda rd. St Kilda

<https://www.ja-gps.com.au/>

Rays Outdoors is at 195 Nepean Hwy Gardenvale

<http://www.raysoutdoors.com.au/>

Fishing Tackle Shop is at 3/144 Shellharbour Road, Warilla, NSW <http://www.fishingtackleshop.com.au/>

Adventure Safety is at 6 Arthur St Sandringham

<http://www.adventuresafety.com.au/>



McMURDO FAST FIND 220



Battery life is 6 years, statutory 1 year warranty. It is available from Adventure Safety for \$399. (or eBay for \$550).

ACR RESQLINK



At 130 g and 3.3x4.8x9.9 cm it is the second smallest and lightest PLB evaluated. It is made in USA and has a 5-year warranty. It is available on eBay for \$345 inc. postage or \$339 from CH Smith Marine.

GME MT410G



This PLB weighs 240 g & measures 3.8x7x13.5 cm. It is a robust unit designed and manufactured in Australia and has a proven track record here. It has a 7-year warranty. It costs \$313 from Johnny-Appleseed, \$299 from Rays Outdoors or \$289 from CH Smith Marine

rescueMe PLB1



Touted as the World's smallest PLB at 116 g (164 g in pouch) and 3.3x5.1x7.7 cm. It is made in the UK and has a 7-year warranty. It costs \$357 from Johnny-Appleseed or \$354 from CH Smith Marine, \$345 from Skippers Mate, Tasmania and \$343 from Adventure Safety. (CH Smith will match any advertised price)

KTI SAG2



This PLB weighs 140 g and measures 3x6.4x8.8 cm (4.5x8.5x11 cm in case). It is designed and made in Australia and has a 10-year warranty. It costs \$299 from Adventure Safety and currently \$259 from Fishing Tackle Shop see <http://www.fishingtackleshop.com.au/products/plb-personal-locator-beacon-gps-kti-plb.html> .

Recommendation

MBW should buy two KTI SAG2 PLB from Fishing Tackle Shop for \$518 including pack & post.