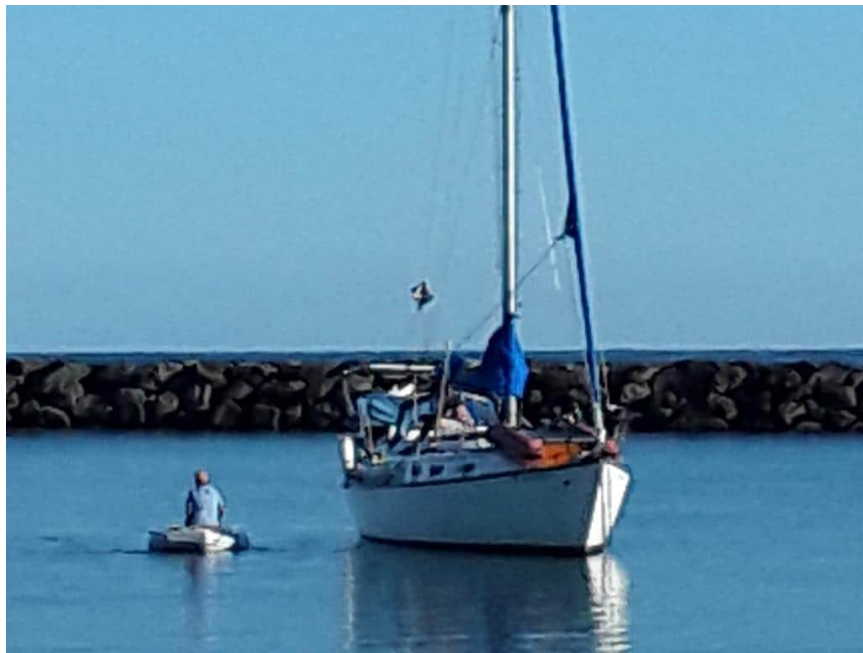

Friends heartbroken after adventurer's shock Qld death

The body of Greg James, 57, was found about 800m off Maroochydore Beach on Monday after his yacht [ran aground at Mooloolaba that day](#).

The experienced yachtsman had been sailing solo from Hawaii to Australia via the Marshall Islands when he fell overboard just short of his final destination.



Greg James aboard his dinghy in Hilo, Hawaii (photo: John V Juliano)

Fellow sailor John Juliano remembered his friend as someone who thought outside the box.

“He was a clear thinker ... not terribly bound by convention. And this allowed him to see things a bit differently and see through some problem solving. If you're a blue-water sailor you do a lot of problem solving,” Mr Juliano told *The Courier-Mail* from his home in Hawaii.

“He was a very nice man with quite an interesting history.”

Mr James' solo trip to Australia embodied his adventurous spirit, he said.



The Alcobri yacht washed up on the rocks at Mooloolaba.

The former firefighter from Idaho had initially set out to Mexico before heading to Hawaii where he caught up with Mr Juliano and his partner Jennifer Severin.

Mr Juliano had to leave and on return found Mr James had sailed to the Marshall Islands – a journey of nearly 4000km.

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“He was there until about the beginning of April and decided to sail to Australia, just like that,” Mr Juliano said.

“He didn't know whether he would be allowed in, he was just going to go and find out.

“There's a lot of the essence of him in that. Most people spend a lot of time examining things and coming to decisions that they don't change easily and Greg wasn't like that.”

Mr James knew he didn't have COVID-19 having been at sea alone on his 12m yacht Alcobri for about a month prior to arriving in Australia.



Police at the scene of the shipwreck at Mooloolaba.

But the question remained what would Australian authorities say when he showed up unannounced.

As his friends followed his journey via a satellite tracking site they saw Mr James' vessel reach the shore at Mooloolaba.

"At that point we start looking for articles about an American showing up unannounced," Mr Juliano said. "Instead we found an article that he had died.

"To go from the bemusement of the situation, of this is an odd thing that he's doing, to then find out he is dead is very difficult."

Mr Juliano said it showed how just a momentary mistake "can quite literally kill you".



The Alcobri yacht washed up on the rocks at Mooloolaba.

It's understood Mr James was wearing a safety harness but it had not been tethered to the boat as required. Whether he had unhooked to make a small adjustment or because he was so close to shore will never be known.

"Every sailor wants to live to be old and die in bed surrounded by family. This is a tragedy and it's nothing he would have wanted or expected," Mr Juliano said.

"He was a good human being, and a good sailor and an enjoyable person to spend time with."