

Oct-Dec 2004
Volume 1 Issue 3

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Seascape

Maritime Safety Queensland



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Queensland Government
Maritime Safety Queensland



Hon Paul Lucas MP
Member for Lytton
Minister for Transport and
Main Roads

With more than one in every 22 Queenslanders owning a boat, it's easy to understand why Queensland is the premier boating state in Australia.

Boat ownership in Queensland has grown at more than twice the rate of our population and it's not surprising to hear manufacturers reporting record sales. The number of registered recreational vessels has grown at a rate of 5% over the past 12 months with more than 184,000 recreational boats registered in Queensland. While this is good news for manufacturers and the industry generally, it means added pressure on Queensland's wonderful waterways.

Therefore, boating safety awareness remains a constant challenge.

The Queensland Government recently updated marine safety legislation to balance safety and efficiency in our maritime sector. The Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Regulation introduced 10 years ago, has undergone major changes in response to administrative and industry requirements.

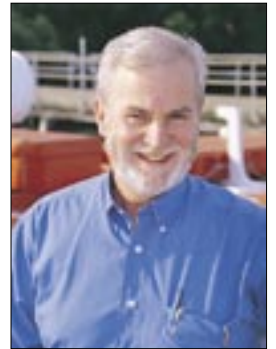
Commercial fishing industries and recreational boating organisations, together with federal and state government maritime authorities and the boating public participated in reviewing of the previous legislation.

This extensive consultation gave direction to Maritime Safety Queensland to fine-tune areas of legislation to be more flexible and innovative. These became effective on Monday 16 August. This includes new improvements for recreational boat licence requirements. We've closed the loophole where someone could have privately owned the equivalent of a Brisbane Citycat or big reef catamaran and not need a licence to operate it. The new requirements are now much simpler: a licence is required to operate any recreational boat powered by a motor greater than 4.5 kilowatts, or six horsepower.

We recognise the development of a safety culture on our waterways is a multi-faceted strategy and one way that we're achieving this through BoatSafe. This licensing initiative is modelled on nationally-recognised guidelines to ensure there's a consistent, statewide assessment for all applicants to undergo a uniform course to obtain their recreational boat licence.

These new safety measures keep Queensland at the forefront of safe maritime practices and we're proud to be leading Australia with better, more efficient and clearer safety regulations.

Captain John Watkinson
General Manager
Maritime Safety Queensland



This edition of Seascape features a range of articles highlighting some of the issues facing the "big" end of shipping in Queensland along with all your regular favourites.

An interview with Captain Chris Thompson, the Director of Pilotage Services for Maritime Safety Queensland, provides some insight into the day in the life of a marine pilot in Queensland ports. Marine pilots are responsible for safely guiding more than 6600 ships in and out of Queensland's 15 trading and three community ports every year. The number of ships visiting Queensland is increasing by 2.6% per annum, making port pilotage a highly demanding and growing profession. This essential service was one of the major reasons behind Queensland Government's decision to establish Maritime Safety Queensland as an agency back in October 2002.

Another highlight in the marine calendar has just been and gone in the annual Brisbane Boat Show and Fishing Expo at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre early in September. Maritime Safety Queensland was once again a major sponsor of the show and just one of more than 200 exhibitors. The show was well attended which reflects the growth and popularity of recreational boating in Queensland. Agency representatives who volunteer to work on the stand always tell me how much they enjoy the opportunity the boat show provides to talk informally to the boating public.

Another major maritime event recent held in Queensland was the 10th Spillcon, Australia's premier marine environmental pollution prevention and response conference. It is attended by representatives from across Australia and overseas.

One of the highlights of Spillcon was the on-water display of a full scale response to a simulated oil spill. The display demonstrated the high level of cooperation needed between agencies to launch an effective response. Along with Maritime Safety Queensland, officers from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, the Port of Brisbane Corporation and the oil industry all played their parts in the display.

In case you haven't heard, the latest issue of Beacon to Beacon, our "must-have" guide for boaties in southern Queensland, is available. It's selling well, and I urge those who haven't updated their old copy to do so, and anyone new to boating in Southern Queensland to consider buying one as a priority.

Profiling

Shipping is big business for Queensland – and Maritime Safety Queensland ensures it runs as smoothly as possible.

The throughput at Queensland ports is significant for the state's economy: total commodity exports through the ports in 2002-03 were worth \$21 billion.

Queensland has 15 trading ports, among them two of the largest exporting facilities in the world - Hay Point near Mackay, and Gladstone. Ships weighing up to 180,000 tonnes and more fully laden are a common sight under the loaders or making their way through the inner route of the Great Barrier Reef. The largest ship to have visited Gladstone and Hay Point, for example, is the Iron Pacific which is 315 metres long

and has a beam of 56 metres, a deadweight of 231,851 tonnes and a whopping draft of 18.20 metres.

Maritime Safety Queensland's responsibility is to make the passage and berthing of all ships in Queensland waters, including huge vessels such as the Iron Pacific, safe and sustainable. From tidal predictions to hydrographic surveying, navigational aids to pilotage, the agency's task requires absolute precision.

Maritime Safety Queensland's Tidal Unit calculates the daily tides for the port and the surrounding areas. The unit pays particular attention to three other points ships pass through while entering and leaving the port. For example the port of Gladstone, at the fairway leads 20 nautical miles out, along the fairway itself and at the wharves. A daily tidal range of up to four metres can often leave as little as one metre clearance under the keel when coal ships leave port fully laden.

The agency surveys port and entrance channels each year to ensure clearances are maintained. Tidal predictions and surveying have assisted ports such as



Safety first for Queensland's billion dollar commercial shipping industry



From tidal predictions to hydrographic surveying, navigational aids to pilotage, the agency's task requires absolute precision

Gladstone and Hay Point to accommodate ever-larger ships and their efficient turnaround.

Maritime Safety Queensland monitors and manages the movement of all commercial ships travelling along the coastline. The all-important Ship Reporting System (SRS), operated in conjunction with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, helps to protect one of the world's great natural wonders and marine icons, the Great Barrier Reef. While the agency's Vessel Traffic System keeps ship movements safe in port.

The inner route of the reef is essential for the passage of trading vessels in and out of the state's deepwater ports. There are some 7000 ships each year that transit through the 350,000 square kilometre Great Barrier Reef; the majority of them enter the state's ports and the number of visiting ships is increasing at a rate of 2.6% per annum.

Reefcentre, the ship reporting base at Hay Point, is the centre of a technological network which helps to improve the safety

of navigation. Operators can monitor deviations from recommended routes, provide constantly changing ship traffic information, including weather and general navigation advice.

The state government has committed more than \$1.5 million over the next two years to the development of technology feeding into the Ship Reporting System, and is also undertaking a three-year \$1 million program to extend the Vessel Traffic System.

The tracking and reporting network and management of vessel movements is an essential service provided by Maritime Safety Queensland and highlights the state government's acknowledgement of the economic importance of our ports and coastal waters.

Maritime Safety Queensland also has a discrete commercially-focussed port pilotage service that operates as a dedicated business unit.

For a detailed look at port pilotage see the article on page 11 of this edition of Seascope.



Getting to know you

Sam Smalley provides a professional link between agency and volunteers

Maritime Safety Queensland officer and Brisbane Coastguard volunteer Sam Smalley has become a personal link between the agency and volunteer marine rescue groups.

With 120 volunteers the Manly operation is one of the largest in Queensland. While primarily established to provide a ship-to-shore radio base and help for boaters in trouble, it also plays an important education role.

Volunteers can be regularly seen on boat ramps handing out boating safety information and offering useful advice to boaters, a function they have performed since the Manly Coastguard began in 1973.

"The Brisbane Coast Guard station at Manly was started by a group of keen offshore recreational fisherman who, after a fatality on the South Passage Bar, saw the need for a Search and Rescue base in Moreton Bay. As experienced boat operators, they had the experience to conduct rescue efforts for their fellow boat operators," Sam said.

"This group put together their own money to purchase a boat and engines and secured a favourable agreement for fuel and supplies. They managed to get a piece of land and built their own station from scratch; an enormous effort which would be difficult to repeat today," he added.

The State Government later assisted with some finance, and this effort has now resulted in a premier rescue facility; one of the first in Queensland. The story is not unique. Many other Coast Guard bases have similar stories to tell.

The Australian Volunteer Coastguard consists of national and state boards, regional squadrons and, at the business end, flotillas. All positions are unpaid, except one overseeing position funded by and located at Emergency Services.

Volunteers are provided with plenty of opportunities to learn. At the very least, members are expected to have a certain level of seamanship through in-house qualifications. This ensures volunteers operating Coastguard boats have adequate skill levels.

The Coastguard's certificate system is similar to the commercial licensing system, the only difference being sea time requirements. For example, the highest level in Certificate IV is loosely the equivalent of a Master Class Five commercial ticket.

Maritime Safety Queensland officially recognises the Coastguard training system which is due to change to the Transport and Distribution (Maritime) TDM training package from 18 November 2004.

Sam has been involved with the Coastguard for five years.

It was because of this experience that Maritime Safety Queensland asked Sam to assist with the handover of the national emergency radio communications from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority to the states and territories.

Sam called on his 25 years' experience in the army and his experience in the yachting arena to co-ordinate the changeover of the continuous monitoring of VHF and HF emergency channels from the federal government to the volunteer marine rescue groups.

His knowledge of how the Coastguard worked helped make the project a success.

"I was in an ideal position to understand what this job involved," he said.

"As a boat operator I knew what level of service was required and from my work at the Coastguard I knew what was possible to offer.

"The trick was to match costs and expectations from the government's perspective."

After completing that project, Sam has committed himself to building the relationship between Maritime Safety

Queensland and the volunteer marine rescue groups who operate the coastal radio service. This is a key liaison role that extends to volunteer groups throughout Queensland.

"There is so much potential for volunteers to help the agency to spread the boating safety message," he said.

Sam believes the highlight of his time with the Coastguard so far is the successful implementation of competency-based training.

"It does what it promises," he says. "People have to prove they can do the job, not just know about it in theory."

Volunteers wanting to become involved in the Coast Guard can specialise in seamanship, administration and/or training – a fine achievement for an organisation existing in the main on fund-raising and community donations. The Coast Guard is always looking for volunteers, especially those with maritime experience. Interested members should contact their local flotilla who can arrange induction into the organisation. Contact details are available at www.coastguard.com.au.

There is so much potential for volunteers to help the agency to spread the boating safety message



“Must-have” issues now on sale



The latest issue of the Beacon to Beacon Directory and the Official Tide Tables and Boating Safety Guide, two sought-after publications from Maritime Safety Queensland, came out in August and are now on sale.

Widely regarded as a “must have” for boaties, *Beacon to Beacon*’s detailed, up-to-date information assists people in travelling around southern Queensland’s diverse waterways.

The new 6th edition has been expanded to include coastal chartlets and maps from Tweed Heads to Gladstone and inland to Charleville and Emerald. It also contains information about MSQ’s new, competency-based recreational boating licensing scheme ‘BoatSafe’, and the options available to boaties to comply with new marine sewage legislation.

An essential guide for all boaters and anglers, the *Official Tide Tables and Boating Safety Guide 2005* is considered to be the ultimate reference source for recreational boating activities on Queensland’s waterways.

The guide contains comprehensive tidal predictions for 28 locations throughout Queensland and information on how to calculate tides elsewhere; sunrise, sunset and moon phase times; and an explanation of weather, including forecasting.

The guide’s 2005 tidal predictions section has been expanded to include a new section on king tides.

Beacon to Beacon is published bi-annually and is available from the following outlets: Queensland Transport Customer Service Centres and Maritime Operations Bases, Australia Post, boat dealers, chandleries, newsagents and book sellers. The new edition is available for purchase for the same low price of \$29.95.

The *Official Tide Tables and Boating Safety Guide* is published annually and is available from the following outlets: Queensland Transport Customer Service Centres and Maritime Operations Bases, Australia Post, boat dealers, chandleries, newsagents and book sellers. The new edition is available for purchase for \$7.30.

Judge awards record fine for fuel spill

The owner of a supply vessel working with a fishing fleet in the Gulf of Carpentaria has been fined \$23,000 for spilling fuel in Weipa Harbour.

The magistrate also awarded professional costs of \$1500 against the owner, \$1830.40 for costs towards dealing with the discharge and \$64.10 in court costs.

Maritime Safety Queensland’s General Manager, John Watkinson, said, “The penalties showed courts were prepared to punish pollution of the marine environment, especially where it was predictable and preventable.”

The court heard the incident occurred while the vessel was moored at a fuel transfer wharf in Weipa. The overflow occurred when fuel continued to pump into an already full tank because a valve had been left open. Crew had not fitted precautionary anti-pollution booms to forward ports on the vessel through which the fuel escaped overboard.

Maritime Safety Queensland said the overflow caused a slick about 2km long and 200 metres wide. The agency rapidly deployed absorbent booms and the slick eventually evaporated.

The magistrate told the court he took into account the owner’s early plea of guilty and co-operation, and the fact the spill caused no perceptible damage.

“The spillage of fuel is a worldwide problem. . .and prosecutions will be brought whenever possible when the facts support it,” he said.

He described the potential for damage in areas such as Weipa, with its mangroves, intertidal areas, seagrass and dugong, as “serious”, saying “it could threaten recreational and commercial interests, and the indigenous community’s reliance on the waters for sustenance”.

“In spite of the apparent dispersal, there are going to be lingering amounts of fuel in biosystems,” he said.

More than half of all oilspills in Queensland waters are from small commercial, recreational and fishing vessels.

New legislation: what you need to know

Boaties who operate larger recreational boats, such as motor cruisers and yachts, will have to have marine driver licences for the first time under a new Queensland marine safety regulation.

This is just one change introduced as part of new marine safety legislation introduced in August.

The changes to recreational licencing corrected an anomaly where boaties operating most “tinnie” runabouts had to have licences while some boaties with much larger vessels did not.

The new requirement, to be phased in over 12 months, will increase skills and safety awareness for this previously unlicensed group.

The old criteria targeted speed as the main factor in why a person needed a licence to drive a boat. Displacement hull vessels were seen as ‘pluggers’ and knowledge of navigation, markers, channels and safety was picked up on the run. With today’s congested waterways catering for a far wider variety of vessels, it is essential all operators have a thorough knowledge of rules, responsibilities and safety obligations.

The new regulation fixes an anomaly where someone could have a privately owned equivalent of a Brisbane Citycat or a big reef catamaran and not need a licence to operate, while someone with a 10-foot tinnie with a 10 horsepower motor was required to have a licence.

Many boaties who own or operate larger recreational vessels already have marine driver licences. It is estimated that up to four per cent of Queensland boat owners will have to obtain licences under the new Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Regulations 2004.

Many of these operators who don’t have a licence have years of experience and will have no problem in meeting the competency criteria. This new licensing regulation will be phased in over the 12 months up to June 30, 2005.

DID YOU KNOW...

As a result of new regulations, if you are convicted with a drink-driving charge on the road, you can potentially have your marine driver’s license suspended or cancelled as a result.



Above: Many visitors at August’s Brisbane Boat Show asked about Queensland’s new marine safety regulations.

An outline of some of the other key changes to the commercial and fishing operations follows:

• **Deckhand induction**

The regulation recognises while there are certificates of competency issued for mates, masters and engineers, there has been no formal training requirement for deckhands.

New shipboard safety training requirements will require deckhands of a commercial or fishing ship to complete the training course on Occupational Health and Safety at Sea if the person remains a crew member for more than six months.

The regulation also requires short-term crew members to complete a safety induction course approved by Maritime Safety Queensland.

These new safety training requirements will be mandatory from September 1 2005, and are intended to improve the confidence of the deckhand and provide skills to assist the safe operation of a vessel.

• **Crew competencies**

The regulation tightens the rules about the qualifications of crew.

The owner must ensure the master is appropriately qualified for the boat type and operating conditions – in the same way the owner and/or master must ensure the ship has an appropriately qualified crew and engineer if required.

If the propulsion power of the commercial or fishing vessel is less than 750kW, it is permissible for a master who holds a ship engineer’s licence to act as both master and engineer of the vessel.



- **Radio monitoring**

Fishing vessels must be fitted with a loudspeaker to the after deck as an aid to monitoring VHF radio transmissions and maintaining a proper lookout

Recreational boaters should note the following changes:

- **Licensing criteria and attainment**

After July 2005 people applying for a marine driver's licence will have to successfully complete a BoatSafe competency-based training and assessment program or provide a Recognised Prior Learning Assessment from an approved BoatSafe training provider. By July 2005 private testing officers will cease operating.

These changes provide consistency for licensing requirements and will enhance safety on the state's waterways through improved levels of operator competency and safety awareness.

- **Capacity labels**

Capacity labels are designed to alert operators to the number of people a boat can safely carry in good conditions. These have

been available for four years and most boats already have them displayed. They are available from Customer Service Centres and will become compulsory from 1 September 2005.

Fact sheets available now

Fact sheets (pictured below) with more information are available for commercial operators, fishing operators, bareboat charter operators and recreational boaters. These have been distributed widely and copies are available from Maritime Safety Queensland offices or the agency's website at www.msq.qld.gov.au.



Four years ago, off Evans Head, New South Wales, the skipper of a prawn trawler and his deckhand were sorting their catch on the after deck. The ship was cruising on autopilot as bright deck lights assisted the men in their work.

The trawler suddenly lurched as it was struck on the port side by a southbound bulk carrier. The skipper ran into the wheelhouse, attempting to take control of the trawler as it rolled over to starboard before capsizing. The deckhand climbed over the side of the trawler and jumped clear before the trawler sank. He was rescued the next night by another trawler. The skipper's body was recovered from the wheelhouse by police divers several weeks later.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau reports that since 1991 21 incidents between trading ships and small fishing or pleasure craft have been reported or investigated. Many 'near-miss' situations are common, some of which are never reported.

One of the new marine safety regulations introduced by the Queensland government in August makes a

Afterdeck speakers could save lives

speaker on the after deck of fishing ships compulsory. The speaker must be of sufficient quality and volume to allow crew members working on the afterdeck to monitor VHF radio communication with other ships. This measure is specifically designed to reduce the risk of collision, often increased by a number of factors.

The number of crew typically employed on fishing boats is often insufficient to fish and maintain a proper lookout. As a result, it has been common practice to place the ship on autopilot when returning to port or travelling to another fishing ground, while crew sort fish or perform other duties on the afterdeck. If this work is done at night, bright deck lights can reduce visibility at night to virtually zero.

While maintaining a proper lookout is still required and the best prevention, the continual monitoring of VHF radio transmissions and radar can assist in effective vigilance.

Boat modifications must be reported

Safety is often compromised by non-approved changes



Modifications and other structural changes to commercial and fishing ships can often compromise stability and seaworthiness and must therefore be reported to Maritime Safety Queensland.

Modifications can affect a ship's registration which, if not reported and validated, can negate insurance claims. It is an operator's obligation to ensure that alterations or modifications comply with current standards, making the ship as safe as possible to operate and occupy.

An operator is required to report modifications to the:

- hull
- superstructure
- electrical systems
- gas systems
- pumping systems (bilge/sea water)
- engine systems

It is also necessary to report the installation of new or extra equipment such as:

- extra tanks and associated plumbing (fuel or water)
- extra refrigeration space
- increased engine power
- auxiliary engine

The installation of live fish holding tanks and sewage holding tanks are common modifications that change the stability of a ship. The considerable weight of the water held by these tanks can compromise the freeboard of the boat, the worst case scenario being a capsize. For this reason, these modifications should be designed or

assessed by an accredited ship designer and installed by an accredited builder.

Marine Safety Officers randomly monitor commercial and fishing ships, and if a ship is found with modifications or alterations affecting seaworthiness, the owner will be stopped from using the boat for work until an accredited marine surveyor verifies the modifications or alterations.

A statement from an accredited marine surveyor confirming the modifications or alterations are safe and have not affected the ship's stability or watertight integrity may be needed before the ship can be re-registered.

In the interest of being appropriately insured, operators should be careful to appoint accredited persons to conduct repairs.

Take for example a ship suffering engine room flooding while at sea resulting in all machinery and the electrical system being "drowned".

In effect, this damage to the ship's machinery nullifies the vessel's compliance certificates issued on construction.

If repair work is carried out by non-accredited persons, no evidence will exist to verify that the vessel complies to regulatory requirements, building codes, standards or practices. Therefore the ship remains in a state of non-compliance, and as a consequence does not meet regulatory requirements necessary for successful insurance claims.



Potentially lethal modifications

'Life-threatening': this was the assessment of unreported, 'home-made' changes to the sewage system on a ferro-cement commercial ship operating in the Whitsundays.

With the sewage system (pictured above) breaching Australian Standards in at least 13 points, the main risk in the system came from two 205 litre blue plastic chemical drums used as sewage holding tanks. These tanks, designed to stand up, were laying on their side, significantly increasing the risk of rupture or leakage.

The bubbling, hissing system was discovered by Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers during an in-service check of the vessel registered to carry 50 people.

Marine Safety Queensland officers who later inspected the vessel concluded that if the tanks ruptured or leaked, loss of life or serious injury could have resulted from hydrogen sulphide inhalation which can cause respiratory failure in seconds. An insidious poison can often go undetected while being inhaled.

Additionally, insurance claims would be void due to the absence of a Certificate of Compliance for the modification.



Learning from marine incidents

Jet ski prosecution

On a fine clear afternoon, two friends each rode a personal water craft (PWC) or jet ski through the Gold Coast Seaway.

On the return journey both men were travelling on the south side of the Seaway. Due to an incoming tide, the swell had increased since the outward journey, reaching about two metres.

Because his new PWC required 'running in', one of the riders rode slowly at between 10 and 15 km/h. The other rider pulled alongside the slower PWC before accelerating to be some distance ahead. The faster rider then turned 180°. Without being aware that the other rider was travelling behind a swell, the rider of the outbound PWC rode over the same swell at speed, becoming airborne.

The airborne PWC landing on top of the other, striking the rider on the left hand side and connecting with the PWC. Seeing that the rider from the slower PWC had been thrown into the water, the rider from the outbound PWC jumped into the water, assisting his friend onto his PWC before they both rode back to shore.

The injured rider was taken to a Brisbane hospital where he received medical attention for a broken left collar bone and other minor injuries. Substantial damage was done to both craft.

The rider of the faster PWC, who had no prior marine convictions, was prosecuted for contravening the general safety obligation as outlined in the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act.

The lessons:

- Large swells on the day of the incident prevented the two riders from maintaining visual contact with each other at all times. Skippers of all craft should be continually aware that large swells can obscure visibility.
- The offending rider failed to proceed over a large swell at a safe speed and did not maintain a proper lookout. A safe speed should be maintained when riding PWCs, particularly when large swells can obscure vision and the rider is not 100 per cent certain that other craft are in the area.

Check out more safety reports at www.msq.qld.gov.au.

On course for collision

A 13 metre steel prawn trawler had finished its last shot. This was the crew's seventh day of the current voyage and each of the crew had averaged four to five hours sleep per day.

On a calm, clear morning the master set a course for the anchorage near the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal, south of Mackay. The master checked the intended course by radar and GPS Plotter, then, after pointing his ship towards landmarks on the coast, engaged the autopilot. He then sat in the helm seat while the deckhand reclined in a deck chair.

About 0700 the crew awoke to a sudden impact. The trawler had collided with the wharf structure of the Coal Terminal. The master had apparently fallen asleep at the helm.

There was moderate damage to the trawler and little damage to the wharf. Fortunately no injuries or pollution occurred. The trawler returned to its home berth under its own power.

The lessons:

- Rule 5 of the International Convention for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 states that a proper lookout must be kept at all times, by all available means. If the master had kept a proper lookout in this case the collision would not have occurred.
- Fatigue was the major contributing factor. The culmination of six nights of working with only four to five hours of sleep per day resulted in fatigue which can not only impair the judgement of masters, but cause uncontrollable micro sleeps and longer naps. A fatigue management plan should be part of every commercial ship's operational documents.
- The master failed to use his electronic navigational aids effectively. He had disconnected the watch alarm on the autopilot and did not know how to set the proximity alarm on his radar unit. Either of these aids, had they been engaged, would have alerted the master that he had fallen asleep.
- A strong tidal course is caused by the flood tide in this area. The master may not have allowed for the set to his ship that this would have caused when setting his course. Always check navigation charts and tide tables to ascertain the expected tidal current speed and direction so ship's courses can be adjusted accordingly.



Torres Strait tragedy highlights safety concerns

A recent tragedy in the Torres Strait region in which three people died after a dinghy overturned has highlighted the need for everyone to be vigilant when boating.

Accidents happen, despite the best precautions and safety preparedness.

The people involved in the well-publicised Torres Strait incident, in which three members of the one family died, were experienced boaters.

Dinghies are used like cars in the Torres Strait. The community is close-knit. Most people know each other and family members are spread out throughout the islands. Travel by dinghy between the islands for family and cultural events is common, with people sometimes travelling distances of 40 nautical miles.

The waters between the islands are exposed to the weather and given the distances involved, operators must be prepared for any changes in conditions.

The Torres Strait has some of the most variable tides in Queensland. This, combined with the effect of coral reefs, makes for extremely strong current flows in different directions.

Dinghies are the main form of transport in the area. There are more than 700 registered recreational dinghies, and many more are used for traditional and commercial fishing. The average dinghy is between four and five metres and is powered by a tiller-steered outboard motor.

Breaking down or running out of fuel is the most common type of incident.

This can become life-threatening if the dinghy is overloaded, increasing the risk of capsize or swamping when drifting with no power. Overloading compromises the freeboard, that is, the sides of the boat above the waterline, making the boat unstable. If lifejackets have not been put on, the risk of fatality is even greater.



Above: Maritime Safety Queensland have used a Torres Strait Safety Map and a Pocket Guide as part of education programs throughout the Torres Strait.

Recent programs have concentrated on making sure boats have the correct safety equipment on board

Maritime Safety Queensland recognises the importance of boating safety education in the Torres Strait and has been running programs in the region since 1992, assisted by some prominent people with ties to the region including footballers Artie Beetson and Wendell Sailor, and singer Christine Anu.

Programs have concentrated on making sure boats have the correct safety equipment on board, people are familiar with the correct use of that equipment, and more recently, warning about the dangers of boating while under the influence of alcohol.

Earlier programs explained the importance of carrying – and how to use - Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) which reduce the length of search and rescue operations, and always having spare fuel on board.

Future programs will look at buoyancy issues including inbuilt flotation, and the use of lifejackets. Maritime Safety Queensland will explain how the risk of fatalities will be reduced if everyone on board dinghies is wearing lifejackets, and they use signalling equipment to let others know when they are in trouble.

Pilots guide ships safely

An interview with the Director of Pilotage Services, Captain Chris Thompson

Marine pilots guide the thousands of ships visiting Queensland's 15 trading ports every year.

Captain Chris Thompson (*pictured right*), the Director of Pilotage Services for Maritime Safety Queensland, answers some questions about this specialist profession.

What does a pilot do?

A pilot provides expert professional advice to a ship's master to assist safe navigation and manoeuvring within a port or other confined waterway.

The use of a pilot dates back to ancient times, when expert mariners were employed on sailing ships and galleys to ensure the safe passage of vessels through shallow and uncharted waterways.

A port pilot boards the ship by boat or helicopter at the pilot ground which is usually close to the harbour approaches. The pilot, in conjunction with the ship's master and bridge team, is then responsible for the safe navigation of the vessel until the ship is "all fast" alongside the berthing or mooring facility. The reverse occurs for an outbound vessel.

Who becomes a pilot?

Anyone can become a pilot, although it has been said you have to be rather unusual.

It is open to both males and females. We presently have two female pilots in Maritime Safety Queensland's pilotage service.

Usually a future pilot is someone who has a love of the sea and a desire to travel and see the world.

Pilots must have the same qualification as the master of the ship - for example a Master Class 1 certificate (MC1) for the largest vessels. Gaining an MC1 requires at least five years at sea on ocean-going vessels, attending a maritime college or university to complete a nautical science diploma or degree, and serving for a substantial period as a ship's officer, attaining at least the rank of Chief Officer.

Most future pilots join a shipping company as a trainee deck officer at the age of 18 after leaving school. Once sea training starts, it takes about 10 years before it is possible to sit for the MC1 examinations. As a result, the minimum age that a person can apply for a pilotage position is usually 29 or 30. Pilots are therefore more mature people because of the extended training time.

Where do they work?

Their work is essentially performed on the bridge of the ships they are piloting. These ships can arrive, depart or be moved at any time, weekends and public holidays included.



Away from the ship, an on-roster pilot might be on call at home or at the pilotage services offices. Like all professions some administration

is required. Because of the 24-hour nature of the service, pilots operate under a fatigue management program to ensure they are always fit and well rested.

When is a pilot needed?

Pilots are essentially "risk managers": they are needed when and where the risk is greatest, that is, in close quarters with shoaled water or in the confines of a harbour. Taking a pilot provides protection for the ship, port infrastructure and the environment. Although the pilotage service's primary objective is safety, it is still important to deliver a timely, reliable and value-for-money service.

Pilotage for most vessels over 50 metres in length is compulsory in all Queensland commercial ports. However, Australian masters are able to gain exemption certificates from pilotage by completing a number of voyages and sitting for prescribed examinations.

The pilot's customers are the ship's master, ship's agent or shipper, and the pilot works closely with other port service providers such as tugs, lines, boats and port authority personnel.

How is pilotage done?

Efficient pilotage depends primarily on the effectiveness of the communication and exchange of information between the pilot, the master and the bridge personnel and the expertise and local knowledge of the pilot.

On boarding the ship, the pilot and master ensure all information on navigational procedures, local conditions, tides, currents, tugs, weather and ship's characteristics such as draft, speed, stopping distances and turning circles are fully understood. A special berthing or unberthing and passage plan is then completed by the pilot.

Once the plan is communicated to the bridge team and agreed by the master, the pilot "takes the con" of the ship and gives helm, engine, and tug orders until the ship is safely alongside, at anchor or at the pilot ground. If the master is unhappy at any time about how the ship is being handled he/she is free to challenge and take over control of the ship, but this rarely occurs.

Six month marine incident figures released

An increase in the number of reported marine incidents, and resultant fatalities and serious injuries occurred throughout Queensland in the six months between January and June 2004.

The figures were included in the Marine Incident Report, as part of Maritime Safety Queensland's monitoring and evaluation activities.

There were 320 marine incidents reported for the six month period, up by 16 on the number reported in the same period in 2003. However, this figure is still in line with the four-year average.

Five fatalities and 20 serious injuries resulted from reported marine incidents during the period, up by three on the same period in 2003. Serious injuries were up by 12. Despite these increases, four-year averages have not been exceeded.

While vessel registration numbers continue to grow in Queensland (1.87 per cent for the six months) the rate of growth has slowed when compared with annual growth of around five per cent per annum over the past decade.

Watch out for the Christmas campaign

"Watching" will be the theme for this year's Christmas safety campaign, scheduled for launch in early December.

Through a multi-faceted State-wide campaign, recreational boaties will be urged to:

- **Watch** their wash
- **Watch** where they are going
- **Watch** their speed

The campaign will be designed to reduce the risk of incidents during the busy holiday boating season.

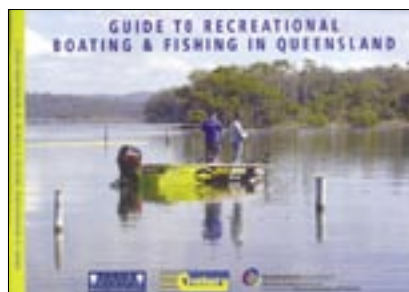
Speeding and wash are the most frequent complaints reported

to Maritime Safety Queensland, Water Police and Boating Patrol officers in Queensland, particularly speeding near anchored/moored vessels.

Excess wash from boats can cause accidents, erosion and complaints by upset residents and other boaters. The simple message of "watch where you are going" may be common sense, but collisions make up the majority of marine accidents.

The campaign will be backed by a co-ordinated "safety blitz" over the Christmas holiday period by enforcement partners Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol and Queensland Water Police. Emphasis will be placed on speeding through the use of laser speed guns and ensuring boaties are making an effort to reduce their wash.

New recreational boating guide out now



It's colourful and contains all the information a recreational boatie in Queensland may need to safely operate and fish anywhere in Queensland. And it's free!

The latest issue of the Guide to Recreational

Boating and Fishing came out in August. A publication published jointly by Maritime Safety Queensland and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, the Guide contains comprehensive information on everything from EPIRBs to fish size limits.

It's available from ship chandleries, bait and tackle shops, Queensland Transport Service Centres and Marine Safety offices throughout the State.

Upcoming event

- 25 - 26 October - Commercial Fishermen's Day, Bundaberg

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