

Seascape

Maritime Safety Queensland

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Queensland Government
Maritime Safety Queensland

From the helm



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

In Queensland, almost one in every 15 people aged 15 years and older owns a boat, and incredibly around one in every five people in the same age group hold some form of marine licence. We also passed the 200,000 mark for registered recreational vessels in January 2006.”

With more and more people using Queensland’s waterways every year, it is important that Maritime Safety Queensland ensures that its marine safety programs are current and assesses trends in boating to ensure a continued high level of marine safety into the future.

Maritime Safety Queensland has implemented a number of safety initiatives in recent years including the introduction of the BoatSafe recreational boat licence training and assessment scheme, the Queensland government’s jet ski management plan, and most recently, the introduction of the Under 12-under 4.8m-underway mandatory lifejacket wearing initiative.

But it doesn’t stop there. A number of important marine safety initiatives are also currently being progressed including the introduction of the Torres Strait Marine Safety Program.

As part of this program, the first 14 participants recently attained their recreational marine drivers licence after successfully participating in a two-day ‘pilot’ BoatSafe delivered on Hammond Island in the Torres Strait. This course is unique because it has been written specifically for Torres Strait communities and addresses their particular boat safety issues.

Students were given practical and theoretical information with an emphasis on specific boat safety concerns identified for the Torres Strait including motor maintenance and breakdown prevention, safety equipment and its use, emergency procedures at sea, vessel stability, and pre-trip planning

Maritime Safety Queensland has also been working to encourage and foster safety as a way of life for operators — as a core boating value within the commercial, fishing and recreational sectors of the boating industry and community.

It is not just Maritime Safety Queensland which carries the responsibility for driving and maintaining Queensland’s marine safety performance. It’s collaboration between a range of stakeholders and partners including port users, vessel manufacturers, the maritime training sector, commercial and recreational vessel operators, enforcement agencies, the insurance industry, the media and others. The challenge for government, industry and the boating community lies in working together to ensure that boating is both safe and enjoyable while meeting Queensland’s maritime transport, tourism and recreational needs.



Captain John Watkinson,
General Manager, Maritime
Safety Queensland

Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show is widely-recognised as the biggest event of its type in the southern hemisphere.

Once again I was amazed and inspired by the diversity of recreational boats and associated products and services on display.

This year’s show again broke attendance records, with visitors exceeding 50,000 for the first time. The number of exhibitors (456) was 33 more than last year, with the expanded marina at the Cove allowing for the biggest display of ‘on water’ boats ever seen in Australia (421 at final count).

I congratulate Barry Jenkins, General Manager of the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show, and his team for creating an event that showcases the marine industry on such a scale.

The crowds, the boats, the activity and the increasing levels of interest ... this event, I believe, can be seen as a “barometer” by which we can look into the future of Queensland’s burgeoning maritime community.

Ever-increasing vessel numbers, larger vessels, new people becoming interested in boating, associated on-water traffic issues, expanding marine and eco-tourism markets in Queensland, and the development of waterfront residential precincts – these are reality. Growth is inevitable, and with it comes associated challenges.

A cooperative, strategic approach is needed and Maritime Safety Queensland is continuing its work of encouraging and fostering safety as a core value and culture within the commercial, fishing and recreational sectors of the boating community.

Boat shows present an ideal opportunity for public cooperation. If you missed “Sanctuary Cove”, I encourage you to attend the Brisbane International Boat Show at the Brisbane Convention Centre (29 August – 2 September), and visit the Maritime Safety Queensland display. What better place to ask questions about marine safety?

One of the themes for the Maritime Safety Queensland stand this year is the servicing, stowing and wearing of lifejackets and the standards that apply to their manufacture.

It is critical that boaties don’t take their safety equipment for granted, and lifejackets are a good example. Looking at marine incidents that led to fatalities in 2006, the most common cause was person overboard.

There are new lifejacket products on the market, many displayed throughout boat shows. Look for our staff at the Brisbane International Boat Show and ask them about manufacturing standards that apply to lifejackets and the laws introduced last year about when and where to wear them. Safe boating.

BoatSafe island-style

An adapted version of BoatSafe, Maritime Safety Queensland's recreational boat licensing scheme, is set to boost boating safety in the Torres Strait.

Torres Strait islanders rely primarily on marine transport for the supply of goods, access to local services and facilities and connections to mainland centres. The remoteness of the region means that residents have only two transport choices – boat or aeroplane.

Small boats play a vital part in everyday life for the residents of the Torres Strait. The most common boat is an open dinghy which is usually less than six metres in length. Extreme weather can often make boat travel hazardous and at times life-threatening.

Maritime Safety Queensland has recognised the need for competent and safe boating practices and has been working with Torres Strait communities over a long period to improve the safe boating culture in the region through its targeted safety campaigns.

Recent community engagement activities

in the region found Torres Strait communities calling for greater access to marine training and education. In response to this, Maritime Safety Queensland in conjunction with Tropical North Queensland TAFE has developed a Torres Strait-specific BoatSafe training package which will be delivered across the Torres Strait.

Maritime Safety Queensland General Manager, Captain John Watkinson said the Torres Strait BoatSafe training will be rolled out across the Torres Strait communities.

“Traditionally those wanting to attend training courses have had to come to Thursday Island which can be quite an expensive exercise when considering the costs of flights, accommodation and living expenses while away from home.

“Under this new scheme the trainers will be coming to the community rather than the other way around.

“More importantly, the course has been designed to reflect the unique cultural and boating environment of the Torres Strait and to

specifically address safety concerns raised in recent community engagement activities.

“Participants will not only learn about better boat safety but will also learn how to undertake basic motor maintenance and how to manage motor failure at sea.

“Students who successfully complete the two-day BoatSafe training will be eligible for a recreational marine driver's licence which will be issued as part of the training package,” said Captain Watkinson.



Reeling in illegal activity

Customs officers are on the frontline protecting Australia's borders every day, but boaties can also play an important role in helping Customs protect Australia's borders.

In the past six years, more than 30,000 calls to the Customs Hotline, 1800 06 1800, have resulted in significant drug, wildlife and illegal fishing seizures.

You might see some unusual activity on a remote section of the coast, come across a suspicious fishing vessel or notice signs of animal and bird trapping.

Your information could be the missing clue needed for Customs to complete another successful operation.

You can call the Customs Hotline 24 hours a day. All reports are quickly assessed and passed on to Customs operational areas for a response.

What you can do

- report any unlawful, unusual or suspicious border activities
- don't get involved - simply report what you see or hear
- do not disturb or remove anything as this could destroy vital evidence
- act as soon as possible – your prompt action could make a difference.

What to tell Customs

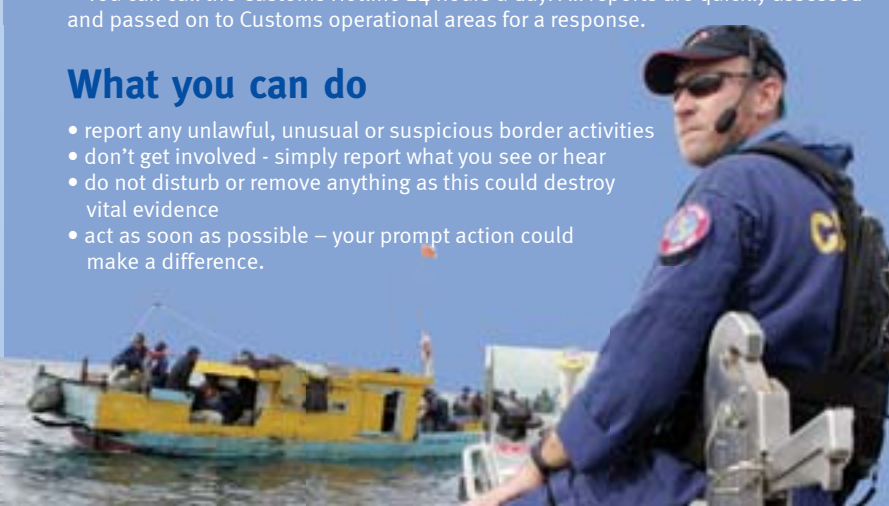
- the time, date and place of the incident
- what you saw or heard
- a description of the people and the transport involved (e.g. planes, boats, trucks)
- registration numbers or call signs you saw or heard.

What to look for at sea

- possible unauthorised landings by foreign vessels
- merchant ships at anchor unusually close to land, islands or other vessels
- vessels outside normal shipping lanes
- ships signaling or being met by small craft
- yachts and pleasure craft in remote or unusual areas
- anyone making landings in remote areas
- unusual objects at sea or ashore (e.g. buoys, rubbish, signaling devices)
- salvage operations on shipwrecks.

Each of these could be a sign that someone is trafficking drugs, weapons, flora, fauna, or other prohibited items.

Be alert and report any suspicious activity to the **Customs Hotline immediately on 1800 06 1800.**



Robin Hansen – member of the Marine Board

Turning the tide for the fishing industry

The Marine Board of Queensland's newest member, Robin Hansen, brings not only a new face, but a new perspective to the Board.

While Board members are appointed as individuals and not as industry representatives, Robin is the first member to have a background in commercial fishing and as such, he brings a different understanding and view of the issues facing the maritime industry in Queensland.

As a new member of the Marine Board, part of Robin's role will be travelling throughout the state, listening to the concerns of Queensland's maritime industry.

As a commercial fisherman with 35 years experience, travelling up and down the Queensland coastline is nothing new to Robin. In fact throughout his career Robin has fished or travelled from the top of Cape York to the Tweed River.

Fishing runs in his blood. As a proud third generation fisherman, Robin's knowledge of the industry – its history, progress and current challenges – is broad and laced with the experience of many days and nights at sea.

Robin first drove a boat at about seven-years-old. As soon as he could start the crank motor of his father's fishing dory, Robin would take it up the local creek, go fishing and play around with mates.

"You wouldn't do that now – but in those days it was the way of learning how to drive a boat," he said.

After dabbling briefly with line fishing in his youth, Robin has worked as a trawlerman for over 30 years. With the thrill of the chase, fishing is more than an occupation for Robin; it's also a source of enjoyment.

"My favourite day on the water would be catching banana prawns," Robin said. "You can spend weeks chasing them, and when you find them you have so much fun because you catch them in such huge quantities.

"When you catch banana prawns there's no fish in the nets – just pure prawn because you're shooting into this dense aggregation of prawns.

"Catching other types of prawns, if you're getting 300-400 kilos a night you're doing well. With banana prawns you can get 2000-3000 kilos in five minutes – and they taste beautiful."

Despite his love for the open water and smell of the catch, Robin's 17-metre fibreglass trawler based in Yeppoon has spent most of the past year tied at the dock. Instead Robin's active concern for the future of Queensland's fishing industry these days keeps him land-locked, often in meetings and offices.

Besides his position on the Marine Board, Robin also serves as trawl chairman and senior vice-president of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association.

Robin suggests that his home port of Yeppoon is a perfect example

of why the fishing industry needs a strong voice, particularly in the government policy development arena, to ensure its future viability.

"When I started fishing in the '70s, in one year we had an exceptional season and probably half of the Australian prawn production came out of Yeppoon.

"There were 80 or 90 trawlers based there and now we have two or three including mine. And one other fella doesn't go out to sea either. This sort of thing is repeated up and down the coast."

Robin said a raft of political issues and environmental factors have combined to decrease the profitability of the fishing industry in the state. Twenty years ago there was almost a 'gold-rush' mentality. Professionally built and home-made boats fished together with minimal restriction. Queensland's generous fish stocks beckoned those looking for quick profit.

"I can remember working on the back deck with two young fellas, thinking that each of us, in one day, would make enough to buy a motorbike each. The average crew member would earn more in a day than the average council worker would in a week.

"Many people assume that its overfishing that has had the biggest impact on fishery resources," said Robin.

"In estuarine based species like prawns, environmental factors and a whole series of water quality issues are major problems. And this hasn't been helped by extensive drought periods."

Robin believes that with a balanced, rational voice within the government decision-making process, the fishing industry can return to a vibrant, sustainable industry. Queensland's seafood consumers will benefit and so will the many families and individuals whose livelihood depends on putting seafood on people's plates in Australia and throughout the world.

In regard to safety outcomes, Robin said the increased competitiveness and regulation of the industry has had some benefits, but commercial fishing by its nature will always have some level of risk.



“If you look at the fishing industry over the past 30-40 years it has evolved from a group of interested individuals into a more professional, focussed operation. Back in the ‘70s there were probably 1600 trawlers – now we have 350 active vessels.

“There will always be safety concerns for commercial fishermen. You’ve got people working on a moving platform, water everywhere and handling heavy equipment.

“At the same time, you have the chance of collisions at sea with larger ships or hook-ups – there’s a range of different issues for different fisheries.



Celebrating 100 years of heroes

This year represents the 100th anniversary of Surf Life Saving in Australia, the first community-based organisation to reach this milestone.

Maritime Safety Queensland congratulates Australia’s major surf rescue authority, which now boasts 305 surf life saving clubs around the Australian coastline and over 113,000 members of all ages. Australia’s surf lifesavers have saved more than 520,000 lives and provided first aid to over one million others.

In 1970 modern motorised equipment began to replace the iconic belt-and-reel as the preferred rescue equipment

Over the years Maritime Safety Queensland has worked proactively with Surf Life Saving Queensland to assist with their transition to the use of powered watercraft for rescues, making access to stranded swimmers safer and faster than ever before.

The inflatable rescue boat (IRB) (*below*) is known as the ‘work-horse’ of the surf lifesaving movement with its speed and maneuverability, and is capable of rescuing multiple patients. Rescue water craft (RWCs), better known as Personal Water Craft (PWCs) are also in heavy use today (*above*).

Queensland’s marine safety legislation is geared to afford the marine industry, including the Surf Life Saving movement, the flexibility to determine the risk and safety management strategies and interventions to best suit each organisation.

Maritime Safety Queensland works closely with Surf Life Saving Queensland to support the unique role of the association and its efforts to improve safety at our beaches within the marine safety legislation framework.

More information about the Surf Life Saving Association and their centenary celebrations is available at www.slsa.com.au.



My favourite day on the water would be catching banana prawns. You can spend weeks chasing them, and when you find them you have so much fun because you catch them in such huge quantities

“But by and large new equipment and stronger, more stable vessels are helping to improve safety, and it’s really the professional operators that are remaining, and are contributing to a safer industry.”

As part of a pro-active approach, Robin said the seafood industry has begun a safety program working with an experienced consultant which, when completed, will suggest wide-ranging initiatives to improve on-board safety for commercial fishing operations.

Together with his role on the Marine Board, he said he can see promising signs for improving the safety outcomes for Queensland’s commercial fishing industry.

“In producing a safety improvement program we are looking to put together a workable plan before we are asked to show cause why we should change,” he said.

“Sometimes decisions are made that are suitable for the recreational sector or the charter industry and may not suit the fishing industry. We are happy to have the opportunity to have direct comment into policy development.

“Almost every month decisions are made that affect some part of the fishing industry and if you are part of the process you can deal with things as they arise rather than being confronted with them as a *fait accompli*.”



Readers' question

Question: The other day I copped a serve while I was talking with a mate on my boat's radio. This guy was telling me to get off Channel 16. We were only having a chat for about five minutes, but this guy reckoned we should have switched to another channel. What are the rules about using Channel 16?



Answer: When chatting to a mate on VHF marine radio, even for two minutes, make sure you tune out from Channel 16 and tune in to another channel. Someone's life could depend on it.

Unfortunately, many boaties who use their VHF radio are unaware that Channel 16 is the international distress channel. It is imperative that it is reserved for this purpose.

Channel 16 is monitored by most vessels as a listening watch. It should be used for initial calling only and then as soon as possible, boat owners should switch immediately to a working frequency for further radio communication.

Boat owners should also be aware that a certificate of competency (licence) is required to operate VHF marine radio.

During weekends and school holiday periods, there is a sharp increase in boating activity and the use of Channel 16 for "chit-chat", particularly in south-east Queensland. In the event of a marine incident, the possibility is high that a vital mayday call will fail to be heard over a friendly conversation.

Inexperienced boaties buying boats with a VHF radio already installed should obtain a radio licence, approved by the Australian Communications and Media Authority before operating the radio. Courses for a Marine Radio Operators Certificate of Proficiency (MROCP) are available at most Coast Guards, Volunteer Marine Rescue squadrons and some TAFEs.

Four standards updated

Licensed to hire?

From 15 June 2007, it became compulsory, under certain conditions, to hold a current marine licence before hiring a boat.

The change takes a common sense approach to promoting safe practices on the water, while preserving the flexibility for people holidaying or wanting to experience boating for themselves.

The updated *Transport Operations (Marine Safety - Hire and Drive Ships)* Standard retains the existing licence exemption for hirers of smaller boats in all but four situations of heightened risk. These include hire boats operating:

- at night
- at speeds greater than 10 knots if unsupervised by the provider
- beyond smooth waters if unsupervised by the provider, and
- when boats are towed away from the point of hire.

The changes are part of an overhaul to four expiring marine safety standards, including those for bareboat ships, examining and

training program approvals, parasailing and hire and drive ships.

Final public comment on the remake of the standard ended in March after several months of broad-based community consultation. Other changes include:

- The Bareboat Ship Standard introduces a licence requirement for operation under power at over 10 knots. In all other situations the current licence exemption continues to apply.
- The Examining and Training Program Approvals Standard outlines ways an entity can qualify to provide training and conduct examination for commercial and fishing licences.
- The Parasailing Standard provides ways of dealing with the operation and equipping of a ship involved with parasailing operations.

A copy of the new standards are available online on the Maritime Safety Queensland website at www.msq.qld.gov.au.

