

# Seascope

Maritime Safety Queensland

January-March 2008  
Volume 5 Issue 1



**YOU'RE THE SKIPPER  
YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE!**

**Maritime Safety Queensland**  
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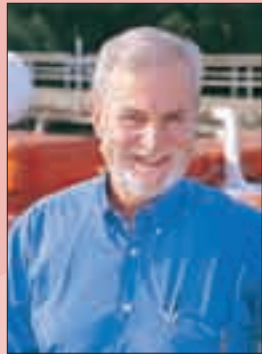
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- Results of Recreational Boating Survey
- Learning from marine incidents



**Queensland Government**  
**Maritime Safety Queensland**

## From the helm



**Captain John Watkinson,**  
**General Manager,**  
**Maritime Safety**  
**Queensland**

2007 was a big year for Maritime Safety Queensland, with our focus clearly on the future and the challenges presented by the continuing growth in boating.

There are now over 216,000 registered recreational vessels, 6000 commercial vessels and over 13,500 trading vessel movements in Queensland ports each year.

At the predicted growth of 5% per annum, it is expected that Queensland will have 300,000 recreational and commercial vessels by the end of 2013 – in just six years time. At the same time it is expected that annual trade shipping movements will have increased to 19,000.

With this growth in mind, Maritime Safety Queensland dedicated much of its 2007 work program to conducting reviews and canvassing public and industry opinion about appropriate ways of dealing with the obvious flow-on affects associated with increased waterway usage.

Four major reviews were launched in 2007:

- Review of speed limits on the Gold Coast
- Release of the Recreational Boating Discussion Paper

- Commercial fishing safety pilot project
  - Release of the Boat Share Discussion Paper
- Findings from these reviews will guide the agency in developing policy and legislation to ensure the ongoing safety of all waterways users.

2008 will see Maritime Safety Queensland undertake further consultation with the maritime industry and the boating community, addressing specific proposals that have emerged from these reviews.

We will once again be looking to boaties and industry to get involved in consultation programs, and provide us with feedback on how best to implement changes to marine safety legislation.

Sadly 2007 also highlighted the dangers of boating with September being a horror month for marine incidents. Six people lost their lives and a further six people were seriously injured.

I urge everyone who takes to the water to be prepared, take care, keep a good lookout, obey the rules of the road at sea, and most importantly, act responsibly.

Boating should be a relaxing and enjoyable past time. Don't risk your life or those of your family and friends by being careless on the water. Let's all strive to make 2008 a fatality free year.

Safe boating.



## Community consultation

Maritime Safety Queensland is committed to community engagement and consultation. Current projects under way include:

- **Marine Industry Survey – closing end January 2008**
- **Boat-share Information Paper – closing date 29 February 2008**



## New Marine Information Bulletins

Marine Information Bulletins cover important information for the maritime industry, and are also available on the Maritime Safety Queensland website under 'Publications', or by contacting your local Maritime Safety Queensland office. The latest bulletin is:

- **Request for comment on the Issues Paper of the NSCV Part C Subsection 6B, Buoyancy and Stability After Flooding**
- **Request for comment on the Issues Paper – NSCV Part D, Crew Competencies**

## Upcoming events - 2007/08

### APRIL

24-27 **Tinnie and Tackle Show,**  
**RNA Showgrounds,**  
**Brisbane**

### MAY

22-25 **Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show,**  
**Sanctuary Cove**

27-29 **National Marine Safety Conference, Adelaide**

## Contacting Maritime Safety Queensland

To contact the editorial team of Seascope either email us at: [seascope@msq.qld.gov.au](mailto:seascope@msq.qld.gov.au) with 'Dear Editor' in the subject line, or post your letter to:

The Editor, Seascope,  
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Office of the General Manager 07 - 3120 7462

### Regions:

Southport \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 5539 7300  
Brisbane \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 3860 3500  
Mooloolaba \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 5477 8425  
Hervey Bay \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 4194 9600  
Bundaberg \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 4131 8500  
Gladstone \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 4973 1200  
Port Alma \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 4934 6929

Mackay \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 4944 3700  
Whitsundays \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 4946 2200  
Townsville \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 4726 3400  
Cairns \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 4052 7400  
Weipa \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 4069 7165  
Karumba \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 4745 9281  
Thursday Island \_\_\_\_\_ 07 - 4069 1351

## Log-off please

Logging-on and leaving your trip plan details with rescue authorities is a great safety tool, but please remember, if you've logged-on, you need to log-off.

That's the message from Queensland Water Police to boaties who do the right thing and log-on with a local rescue authority when they head out to partially-smooth or open water.

Senior Constable Paul Hubbert of Queensland Water Police said when a person fails to log-off, they are reported as overdue. In due course, Water Police will initiate a search. He emphasised that while boaties 'will not get into trouble' for failing to log-off, it can lead to expensive and unnecessary searches.

"In summer or on a long weekend, it's quite common to have 10 or 12 overdue boaties," Senior Constable Hubbert said.

"We have, on occasions, started a search and rescue, because we have been unable to locate the boatie at home, in the car park, or anywhere else.

"Sometimes we'll find the boat and they'll be in genuine trouble, but often we have to send someone around to a house early in the morning, wake them up, and find they've been home for several hours."

When you log on, make sure you leave your home or a mobile phone number so volunteer rescue authorities or Water Police can check your whereabouts in case you do forget to log off.

If you are to be unexpectedly late in returning to the ramp or marina, advise the rescue group, Water Police or family so arrangements can be made for when you do arrive. The number of Police Headquarters is 3364 6464 (24 hours).



Maritime Safety Queensland officer Tony Dorante inspects a tinnie for seaworthiness.



## Over 1000 boats inspected in Torres 'census'

By early 2008, the first boating safety census of its type will be completed in all 21 communities of the Torres Strait. At its conclusion, local Maritime Safety Queensland officers will have inspected well over 1500 boats for seaworthiness - almost every boat in the remote region.

The inspection scheme is part of the ongoing Torres Strait Marine Safety Program, which also includes a range of training and community-based initiatives, designed to improve marine safety in one of Australia's most treacherous and remote marine zones.

As the project leader, Frank Thomson, Maritime Safety Queensland's acting manager for the region, said a theme emerging from the census is the strength of materials used in hull construction, and their suitability for the area's conditions.

Besides inspecting boats, Maritime Safety Queensland officers have also taken the opportunity to discuss the importance of safety equipment and trip planning.

"A boat that survives well in Cairns, will not survive here," Mr Thomson said.

"The people here are travelling between islands all the time, and with tides, currents and weather, its 'rough-as-guts' here most

of the time. Boats with thin bottoms – for example tinnies made from 2mm metal – can develop stress fracture cracks."

Mr Thomson said that besides sea conditions, wear-and-tear from travelling being moored over coral or being left on the beach, also impacts the integrity of hulls. Boats with cheaply made fibreglass hulls can also be subject to cracking.

"All the boats we have inspected that are unseaworthy are out of the water until they get repaired. There's a boat repairer here that has about 40 dinghies in his yard – they'll be getting new bottoms using four or five millimetre plate," Mr Thomson said.

The census has revealed there are many more boats than anticipated throughout the islands of the Torres Strait, possibly up to one vessel for every three-four people (compared to Queensland overall where there is about one boat for every 20 people).

Data gathered from the census will be compiled, and analysed giving a detailed picture of vessel quality in the region, the extend that safety equipment is carried, and a better understanding of the ways the vessels are used, including travel behaviour and trip planning.

Stephen Bull (Vessel Traffic Services Operator and marine enthusiast)

# Mr Maritime of Cairns

The latest in marine technology surrounds Stephen Bull at his work station.

As one of several Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) Operators for the Cairns region, Stephen's workplace buzzes with radar, satellite and multi-media technology.

Computer screens flicker, instantly identifying incoming ships by name, position and speed, while the radio crackles with the voices of captains and pilots.

Stephen, and his colleagues at the Cairns VTS centre, monitor and control the movement of ships in eight ports at the top end of Australia – from Karumba in the Gulf of Carpentaria, around Cape York, and south to Mourilyan.

The technology behind Queensland's VTS centres, such as Cairns, is cutting-edge, a necessity to maintain safety as the number of shipping movements within the state's ports increase.

But don't be fooled by the keyboard and computer screen. Stephen is more than a desk jockey and button-pusher.

A third-generation marine enthusiast, Stephen can spin many watery yarns – some funny, some interesting and some disturbing. He can perform staggering feats in rope work, owns a collection of maritime artefacts and dabbles in several maritime pursuits that are truly unique.

Following in his father's footsteps, Stephen worked as a marine mechanic for over 15 years. A legacy of his trade is a collection of 30 antique outboard motors, many fully restored, stowed at his home garage. A 1948 British Seagull is the oldest and a favourite. Outboards bearing the brand names British Anzani, Scott-McCulloch, Villiers, Victa and Archimedes Penta are also represented, each in working condition.

"My grandfather was in the merchant navy during World War I, sailing on the Russian arctic convoys, and dad was a marine mechanic. We had our own business in Cairns, and he taught me my trade," said Stephen.

"I've got a photo of my father when he was 20, surrounded in his workshop by all these outboards. It's a precious photo and it's what prompted me to start collecting and restoring the outboards."

Stephen displayed the collection at a recent open-to-the-public Marine Safety Day at the Cairns Maritime Operations base at Portsmith, attracting attention from old salts and young boaties alike.

Next to the antique outboards in Stephen's garage is a 14-foot (4.2 metres) Whilly sailing boat, another piece of marine history. While Stephen regularly visits the outer reefs off Cairns in his five

metre centre-console for a spot of fishing, the Whilly, provides relaxation.

"It's a very traditional type of boat and not something you see a lot of these days. The hull design goes back to the Viking days in the Shetland Islands, and it's got a fairly unusual sailing rig – a standing lug-sail. Its a double-ended dory, and rows as well as it sails.

"It was this boat that inspired me to get more serious about knots and rope work – turks-heads, whippings and lashings – in keeping with the type of boat. And I learnt quite a bit more about ropes from an old salt called Len Foxcroft when I worked on the Cairns wharf as head linesman (responsible for tying and untying ships on the wharf)."

Stephen followed his 15-year stint as a marine mechanic with nine years working for the Cairns Port Authority, trying his hand at almost everything. He also worked on the Torres Strait pilot launch transferring pilots to and from ships traversing through the Torres Strait region.

"At the Cairns Port Authority I was launch master, port officer, did general workshop duties, a bit of dredging, and assisted with hydrographic and land surveying – all sorts.

"When I was a port officer I looked after the berthing of ships, so I had a fairly big interaction with pilots and masters, making sure the vessels went in the right place along the wharves.

"For a time I was also in charge of pile moorings, and looked after the yachties.

"When I left, I became Mr Mum for seven years, with my wife Sandy going back to work as a teacher and me looking after the kids, Caitlin and Peter. It gave me a chance to return to my trade – as a marine mechanic – and work from home. I also took on the job of head linesman on a casual basis – which suited my new life style."

For someone with such a rich history of service around the local port, Stephen's next





Above: Stephen Bull's father, a marine mechanic, pictured as a young man with some of the outboards Stephen has now restored to working order.



Above: A full restored 1948 British Seagull is the pride of Stephen Bull's collection of antique and restored outboards.

career move to the VTS centre at Cairns – the hub of marine activity in the area – was a natural progression.

While not approaching the hectic pace of air traffic control centres, Stephen said that working in the VTS centre presents its own set of challenges.

“With eight ports to monitor we have a lot of different things happening in an area the size of Europe. Weipa is especially busy with commercial activity – they’ve got the bulk bauxite carriers coming and going.

“We’ve got 18 different radio channels with transmissions always coming in, and just keeping up with all the scheduling for the different ports can be quite a juggle.

“When putting together the ship schedules we liaise with pilots, agents, masters of ships and some of the port services. You need knowledge of tides and port procedures – there’s a lot to know and my experience on the waterfront definitely helps.”

Regardless of the pace of work, Stephen finds time for one more maritime hobby

– scrimshaw, the fine art of engraving the bones of marine mammals.

“Whale bones are hard to get, so I mostly use beef bone. But I’m always on the lookout for old whale or dugong bones.

“It’s a traditional marine craft, so I engrave sailing ships, dinghies, fish or whales. I stick to marine images because that’s my interest.”

Throughout his career Stephen has recorded various unusual events he encountered during the course of a work day. One day he may publish his salty tales featuring the many characters he met on the waterfront.

Regardless, Stephen Bull himself is certainly part of maritime history in Cairns.

## Giving consultation sea-legs

Unlike their port-based cousins, many commercial fishermen in northern Queensland spend most of their lives at sea. Months can pass without returning to home base. This presents all kinds of challenges to Maritime Safety Queensland when trying to engage with the fishing industry.

So staff of Maritime Safety Queensland recently took consultation straight to the fishermen’s own ‘backyard’, testing sea legs in the process.

Important safety changes are looming for commercial vessels in Queensland. In a high risk occupation that has a 16-times higher fatality rate than the average job, Maritime Safety Queensland is taking its role seriously to minimise fishermen’s risk of exposure to injury or death.

With this in mind, Keith Brightman of the Standards and Safety Branch of Maritime Safety Queensland spent 10 days on commercial fishing boats travelling throughout the Torres Strait, catching up with skippers and their crew.

Keith said that this exercise proved very fruitful, and he gained a new understanding about this unique group of individuals.

“One of the most pleasing findings was that the majority of fishers are genuinely concerned about personal safety and are not too averse, cost considerations aside, to changes that improve their chances of survival at sea,” Keith said.

Keith said that he had many frank and open discussions with captains and crew. He came to understand the extent of

isolation experienced on board, and why many ‘traditional’ methods of communication used by government – meetings, emails, postal communication, websites and teleconferences – have limited or no application for many fishermen.

“Taking time to attend meetings is a luxury for most Queensland trawler operators, particularly at a time when profit margins are so lean,” he said.



## The law and you

Readers' question:

### Bilge Care

**Question:** I have recently purchased a boat charter business. Due to a leak in the gearbox's rear-main oil seal, oil often enters the boat's bilge. Having just purchased the business, my funds are somewhat limited, and fixing the oil seal is a longer-term goal, so I'm looking for other solutions.

Installing an on board separator system is very expensive, and there is no oil disposal facility in my home port.

Are you aware of any affordable solutions or systems that will stop the oil being discharged overboard? The last thing I need at the moment is a fine.

**Answer:** A 'catch-all' below the leak is a low-cost solution. This is a tray, lined with oil absorbent pads which catch the oil directly. Dispose of the absorbent pads ashore as required.

Also, clean your bilge as often as possible. Use absorbents to mop up excess oil or fuel, wash your bilge with biodegradable degreasers or detergents, and keep your oily rags in a metal rubbish bin with a lid to reduce the risk of spontaneous combustion.

Saving your pennies for an on-board separator system is worth considering, as it could save you money if you can gain access to an oil disposal facility. These systems that consist of a sump pump, an 'oil smart' switch, oil indicator and bilge filters, filter all oil from bilge water before it is discharged.

Typically, the bilge water is pumped from the bottom of the bilge through two filters in series, and then discharged. The oil smart switch permits the water layer only to be pumped to the filters. The oil layer remains in the bilge until it can be pumped into the slop tank.

An oil indicator visually indicates when the filters are due to be changed. These filters cost around two cents per gallon.

Some businesses have reported savings through installing such systems, not to mention avoiding a fine.

If oil does spill into the water, despite all precautions, use absorbents to mop it up and report the incident immediately to Maritime Safety Queensland. Do not use dispersants or other cleaning chemicals as these can increase the toxic effects of oil spills.



## Release of Boat-share Information Paper

More people are now enjoying the thrill of boating in high end, luxury vessels thanks to the booming boat-share industry. Shared ownership significantly reduces the cost, but not the responsibility and skill required to navigate large, powerful boats through increasingly crowded waterways.

In response to safety concerns arising from the popularity of these schemes, Maritime Safety Queensland has released an information paper seeking public input on future policy direction.

"In the interest of marine safety, a clear and equitable boat share policy is needed to ensure that boat share scheme vessels are operated safely," Captain John Watkinson, General Manager of Maritime Safety Queensland, said.

"While similar in nature to bareboat or hire and drive operations, boat-share schemes have, to date, escaped the more stringent safety requirements applied to these market segments, because the vessels were in many instances incorrectly registered as recreational vessels.

"On the other hand, Queensland's bareboat and hire and drive industries are subject to commercial registration and operating requirements. This is due to the high level of usage and the relative inexperience of many of the customers of bareboat and hire and drive operations.

"Commercial vessels which provide a service to the public need to adhere to a higher standard of safety so the safety of those on board is not jeopardised," Captain Watkinson said.

The information paper is the first step toward Maritime Safety Queensland developing a consistent and equitable policy position on boat-share schemes. It is intended that this policy position will provide the necessary safety outcomes while encouraging continued strong growth in boating and efficiency for the industry.

It canvasses the application of the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994*; and *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Regulation 2004 (Qld)* to boat-share schemes to identify how the existing legislation should be applied.

Topics addressed include the definition of a recreational ship and a commercial ship; the factors that determine if a ship utilised by a boat-share scheme is recreational or commercial; and regulatory requirements for recreational and commercial ships.

"This is an important issue for the maritime industry and one on which I would encourage anyone affected to have their say," Captain Watkinson said.

For further information, or to access the paper go to [www.msq.gov.au](http://www.msq.gov.au).