

Seascape

Maritime Safety Queensland

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Volume 4 Issue 4



Fire evacuation drill – Whitsundays

In this edition:

- Getting to know you: Bruce Harris, the inventor of the shark cat
- Have your say: Recreational Discussion Paper and Marine Industry Survey
- Pasha Bulker tests oil spill response teams
- DVD to address fire risk for commercial passenger fleet

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Queensland Government
Maritime Safety Queensland

From the helm



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

The recent spate of fatal marine incidents including the collision between two recreational boats near the mouth of the Brisbane River, resulting in the death of four people, vividly illustrates how, when on the water, a fun day out can quickly turn to tragedy.

These incidents should serve as a reminder of the importance of playing it safe on the water: to watch your speed, watch your wash, watch what you drink, and watch out for what is going on around you. Following these simple rules can save lives.

The exceptional and continuing growth of recreational boating in Queensland (now 214,000 registered recreational boats in the state) undoubtedly brings with it challenges for marine safety.

About 10,000 extra boats each year (around 5% per annum) represents a considerable challenge for those entrusted with the on-going safety and long-term health of our waterways.

Not only are there more boats, but advancements in boat building and technology mean that many are faster, bigger and capable of longer trips. The number of boats over 10 metres is growing faster than any other market segment, currently increasing by an average of 10.8% per annum.

Regardless of the size of the boat you own, whether a three-metre tinny or a 20 metre motor cruiser; the boating experience is one that can be enjoyed by anyone in this state.

Why not then have your say in the future shape of boating?

Two initiatives are currently underway, giving everyone with an interest in boating the opportunity to have active input into the future direction of how Maritime Safety Queensland goes about our work, and ultimately to shape the future of boating in this state.

The first of these initiatives is the Recreational Boating Discussion Paper released in September. This paper covers a wide range of topical marine safety issues from the compulsory wearing of lifejackets to the safe operation of recreational vessels over 15 metres.

The development of this paper is the result of months of research and evaluation of marine safety issues and boating trends both in Queensland and across Australia. As the premier boating state, it is important that Queensland continue to lead the way in reviewing and updating its marine safety programs and initiatives.

Turn to page six for more details of what topics are covered, how you can obtain a copy, and where to send your responses.

The second initiative is the Commercial Marine Industry Survey, circulated as an insert with this issue of Seascope. As the name suggests, this survey is targeted at those people who work in the marine industry, for example, fisherman, surveyors, trainers or crew to name a few.

The focus of this survey is to help Maritime Safety Queensland gauge the effectiveness of communication between the agency and the marine industry. For example, if you are a member of the marine industry, how do you like to find out about new developments? What are your thoughts on this magazine? Have you ever attended an industry forum or visited our website?

This survey is also being circulated through various industry associations throughout the state and is available for download from the Maritime Safety Queensland website.

Canvassing ideas and options from the broader community is an integral part of the agency's process of review. Your input is important. I would encourage recreational boaters and members of the marine industry to have their say.

Safe boating.

Upcoming events - 2007/08

2007

OCTOBER

15 Marine Safe Committee Meeting, Brisbane

NOVEMBER

15 Maritime Safety Queensland Industry Forum, Hervey Bay

DECEMBER

11-13 Natship '07 (National Ship Industry Conference), convened by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, Brisbane

2008

APRIL

24-27 Tinnie and Tackle, RNA Showgrounds, Brisbane

MAY

22-25 Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show, Sanctuary Cove
27-29 National Marine Safety Conference, Adelaide

Contacting Maritime Safety Queensland

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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

DVD to address fire risk



Above: Filming of fire evacuation drill off Airlie Beach.

Fire on board a commercial passenger vessel is a high risk situation. Flammable materials coupled with panicky passengers in an open sea can easily lead to trouble. The risk can intensify when the vessel is manned by new or inexperienced crew, unfamiliar with the procedures and dynamics of fire evacuation.

Earlier this year, Maritime Safety Queensland began production of a DVD designed as an introductory tool for new crew of commercial passenger vessels – many entering the maritime industry for the first time. The DVD will focus on what to expect in the event of an on board fire, and the basic roles and responsibilities of crew.

Filming took place in June on two different vessels from within the industry – three-time Sydney to Hobart winner *Maxi Ragamuffin*, and the 37-metre wave piercing catamaran *Seaflight*, operated by Cruise Whitsunday. Both boats operate out of Airlie Beach.

As part of the exercise, an open-reversible life raft capable of holding up to 65 people was deployed from *Seaflight*. Marine studies students from Proserpine State School, who were enlisted as extras for the day, were amongst the passengers who donned life

jackets, evacuated *Seaflight* and boarded the raft.

The exercise on *Seaflight* simulated likely procedures in the event of a fire under the helm's dash. Passenger mustering techniques, a critical skill for crew working on a vessel capable of carrying over 250 people, was a major focus of the filming.

Filming on *Ragamuffin* simulated emergency procedures in the event of an engine fire. After carlie floats were deployed, crew and about 20 passengers abandoned ship, and were 'rescued' by members of the Airlie Beach Coastguard.

Several skippers and crew from passenger vessels throughout the region were interviewed as part of the production.

Once available, the DVD will be distributed to commercial operators throughout Queensland. The DVD will not replace mandatory shipboard safety training (required completion after six months of service), but support commercial operators in their crew induction and will highlight the need for continued education and training in safe marine operations.



Issues paper addresses skills shortage

Attendees developed action plans to address the skills shortage gripping the marine industry at a major Marine Skills Industry Forum held during July in Brisbane.

The 130 delegates workshopped ideas to produce a range of strategies to tackle skills issues for the seafood, passenger and non-passenger vessel, ship, boat building and repair sectors.

Short term action plans agreed at the Forum include:

- the recognition of defence qualifications
- promoting the industry's image and careers
- reviewing the National Record of Practical Experience and Sea Service (ROPES), and
- co-ordinating industry skills committees.

A longer term plan is the review of the National Standard for Commercial Vessels, in particular Part D which specifies the minimum number of crew members and their certification level (both deck and engineering) for commercial vessels and eligibility criteria for the issue of certificates of competency.

The issues paper details the competencies required for each grade of certificate, standards for evaluating competence, and maintaining the currency of qualifications.

A copy of the Issues Paper is available from the NMSC website (www.nmsc.gov.au). Public comments for the paper close 5 November 2007.



*The Cuddles Cruisers became popular in the late 70s.
Bruce named the boat after his wife Daphne.*

Getting to know you

Between the hulls of his latest creation – a 46-foot powered catamaran – is a space where Bruce Harris can eat his lunch.

The catamaran, a towering three-deck construction with a curvaceous hull, fills almost every other part of the shed. Dust hovers and the smell of fibreglass resin fills the air – the perfect place for a boat builder to enjoy a home cooked meal.

Bruce, regarded in many circles as a legend in boatbuilding, is creator of the original ‘shark cat’, the powered double-hulled designed boat that is synonymous with rescue authorities and offshore fishing. Today, most rescue authorities in Australia still use a boat of similar design to the original shark cat.

In many ways Bruce owes a lot to his make-shift lunch room – the space between the two hulls. Discovering that space and its affect on a boat’s rough-water handling ability – set him on a path to success and becoming one of the most respected boat builders in the country.

Sharks, cuddles and tippy willy

The life and times of shark cat inventor Bruce Harris

In keeping with his reputation for innovation, Bruce started his current project – building the power cat in the industrial shed near Yatala – with a specific ground-breaking goal in mind.

“At 12 knots I only want this boat to burn 12 litres of fuel – one litre for every nautical mile – that’s my dream,” he states with the quiet confidence of someone who’s dared and won before.

For a boat that will ultimately weigh about 11.5 tonnes, powered by twin 119 kW (160 hp) motors, it’s a formidable challenge to tackle, and one that many have told him is impossible.

But by combining the design features of Canadian canoes with the efficiency of twin hulls, Bruce remains confident he can achieve his fuel efficient targets.

Breaking new ground and innovation is almost a habit for 70-year-old Bruce. After pioneering the hull design of the shark cat, Bruce has successfully operated a variety of marine-based businesses, including building the first marina in Coomera (now the site of the Gold Coast Marina Precinct), and bringing the famous Cuddles Cruisers from Europe to Australia.

Bruce began his life-long association with boats as a trawler man in the 1950s, operating mostly out of Bundaberg, before

he successfully tendered for a two-month shark fishing contract with the Queensland Government – another first.

He caught over 100 sharks off the Gold and Sunshine Coasts during the two months, and continued on as south-east Queensland’s official shark fisherman for the next 10 years.

During this time Bruce earned the nickname of “the mad barman” for his ability to negotiate the notorious Southport bar (before it became the Seaway) in his trawler. Rather than bravado, Bruce said there was a method in his bar crossing ‘madness’.

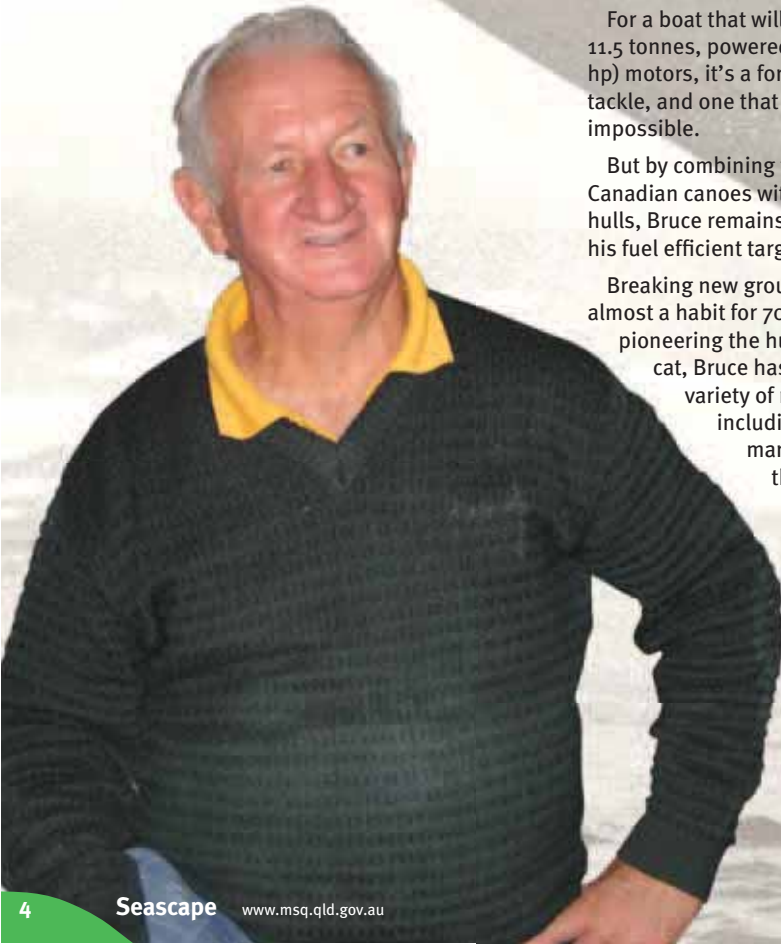
“We’d just sit there and watch the waves before we went out. You could count the sequences of about eight or nine waves, big waves following the small ones.

“In seven years I crossed bars with my trawler, I only knocked out about six or seven front windows in the wheel house, but never even came close to a serious incident. Just as well – I can’t swim and in those days we didn’t wear lifejackets.”

The prototype of the ‘shark cat’ started as a retirement present for Bruce’s father-in-law. Roughly based on the design of the ‘quick cats’ Bruce often watched sailing off Kirra while tending the shark nets, the first shark cat was crude, but its agile capabilities in rough water soon became obvious.

“I built two hulls and put a 12 x 8 box on top of it and a door on the side. My daughter saw it under the house and said, ‘Dad, that looks like a Tippy Willy’, so that’s what we called it.”

Bruce’s father-in-law’s first reaction to his retirement present was, “You must think I’m mad to get into that”, but the next day he



The prototype of what eventually became the shark cat. Bruce is driving, with the township of Labrador in the background.



offered Bruce a 5.5 hp Johnson to attach to the stern.

After taking the boat for its first powered voyage Bruce's father-in-law changed his view, "That's the best fishing platform I've ever had," he said, marvelling at the craft's stability and visibility from the deck.

With a 40 hp Johnson outboards fitted, "Tippy Willy" became Bruce's boat of choice for the shark net run, cutting the return trip from Southport Bar to Coolangatta by up to three hours. The association with shark fishing launched the name shark cat, and while the design showed undoubted benefits, the construction material needed attention.

"Tippy Willy was built out of ¼ inch ply, and it was getting a pounding so I decided to find out about fibreglass," said Bruce.

The reputation of the first fibreglass shark cat grew, and despite many requests, Bruce resisted becoming a boat builder.

"I would lend people the masonite mould I had built myself and asked them for 50 pounds for its use.

"Then Harbours and Marine asked me to build a survey boat for them, and that was virtually the start of Shark Cat the company."

When he sold the Shark Cat business seven years later (now known as Noosa Cats), the company was building up to 300 cats a year and had a staff of 42. Bruce believes the very first shark cat he manufactured is now buried as a play gym in a kindergarten's sandpit somewhere in Queensland.

While Bruce regards the development of the 'shark cat' as his greatest achievement, he says he gained more personal satisfaction from building Cuddles Cruisers.

He discovered the double-ended hull design in Denmark during a European holiday, and immediately 'fell in love' with the hull design's simplicity. For a relatively small price he purchased a cruiser and the rights to manufacture them in Australia. Over the next three-and-a-half years the Cuddles Cruiser Company built about 40 boats, selling them to owners throughout Australia.

"You probably wouldn't sell a lot today," said Bruce. "People want something with a bit more speed today.

"I sold most of them uncompleted – people would buy them cheaper and love finishing them off themselves.

While building a Cuddles Cruiser which boasted a top speed of eight-nine knots, Bruce would often 'unwind' with his favourite past-time, racing off-shore power boats at up to 90 mph.

Winning the 1980 Class Two Offshore World Title is without doubt his proudest achievement on the water.

"I learnt how to build cats through racing – how to make them light and strong. At the world titles in Melbourne, the Italian boat was faster, but couldn't keep up in the rough water."

In 2001, Bruce was honoured by the Royal Institute for Naval Architecture for "world leading" achievements in boat design.



Moreton Bay servant honoured

The life of a valued servant of the Moreton Bay boating community was celebrated recently by the naming and dedication of the "Crawford Pattison" Beacon.

Crawford Pattison's contribution to the safety of the Moreton Bay marine community spanned almost 60 years, including 39 years' involvement with the Waterloo Bay Rescue Association. During that time he was involved in numerous search and rescue operations on Moreton Bay, many during nights and weekends.

The north cardinal beacon off Green Island was officially named during a ceremony on 14 September attended by Mr Pattison's family and friends and the Deputy Premier the Hon Paul Lucas who was representing the Minister for Transport.

In his speech the Deputy Premier praised Crawford's life time of passion for the sea and all things boating and recognised his contribution to the local community.



Above: Sons of Crawford Pattison – Allan and Bruce Pattison – accept a certificate from Deputy Premier the Hon Paul Lucas.

Industry opinion sought

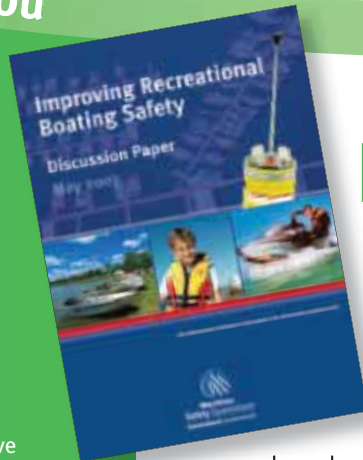
If you're involved in the marine industry in any capacity within Queensland, Maritime Safety Queensland is inviting you to have your say.

About seven minutes is all it will take to let Maritime Safety Queensland know what you think about the information we provide to the industry, how well it is given, and on what issues we consult.

Maritime Safety Queensland is aiming to get feedback from all sectors and vocations within the industry to make sure we are getting these important aspects of our business right.

Without feedback from industry, there is a tendency to approach communication and information dissemination in the same ways we always have. Maritime Safety Queensland wants to make sure it is providing industry with the types of information it wants, when, and in a way it wants to receive it.

The survey, which is inserted in this edition of Seascope, is also available for download from the Maritime Safety Queensland website, from industry associations, or by contacting any one of Maritime Safety Queensland's regional offices.



Have your say: Recreational Discussion Paper released

Maritime Safety Queensland has

released a discussion paper covering a broad range of contemporary marine safety issues relating to recreational boating.

The discussion paper and accompanying response forms are designed to gather public feedback on issues to assist with future policy development.

The sections of the discussion paper cover topics such as the wearing of life jackets, licensing requirements for larger vessels, minimum age restrictions for holding a boat licence, possible "defect" tests for older vessels, and various other initiatives aimed at improving safety for personal watercraft operators.

The discussion paper is in response to the enormous rise in the number of people using the state's waterways and the imperative for marine safety programs to keep pace with emerging trends and issues.

Maritime Safety Queensland has taken the step to include a number of issues into a single discussion paper to avoid "consultation overload".

It is important however to remember the topics contained in the discussion paper are just that – topics for discussion – and are not government policy.

Anyone with an interest in the future of boating and the marine industry in the state is encouraged to get a copy of the discussion paper and pass on their thoughts.

The discussion paper will ask for comment on the following subjects:

Compulsory wearing of personal flotation devices (PFDs) in high risk boating activities - discusses the role of PFDs in preventing fatalities and serious injuries and identifies high risk situations which could be made safer by the compulsory wearing of PFDs.

New marine licence for operators of large recreational vessels - seeks comment on whether people operating recreational vessels over 15 metres in length should have additional skills and knowledge beyond that currently required for a recreational marine driver licence (RMDL).

Review of unlicensed operation of powered recreational vessels - seeks public opinion on whether specific measures should be introduced to address the unsafe behaviour of some small vessel operators.

Safety equipment for personal watercraft - now that some PWC are built to travel greater distances and most include more generous stowage spaces, this paper examines whether these vessels should continue to be exempt from carrying the safety equipment that is required for all other recreational boats.

Safety initiatives for PWC - marine incident statistics point to high risk practices by PWC operators that need closer scrutiny. This paper seeks comment on the best way to deal with high risk PWC activities, and whether additional requirements for operating PWC should be introduced to avoid potential fatalities and serious injuries.

Control of defective vessels - investigating measures to ensure aging recreational vessels are maintained to at least a minimum level of seaworthiness.

Maritime Safety Queensland is urging all boaters to have their say. Comments on the discussion paper are being sought until 2 November 2007.

The discussion paper and response forms are online at www.msq.qld.gov.au under "What's New". Printed copies of the discussion paper and response forms can be obtained from Marine Operations Centres, by telephoning: 3120 7345, or by emailing: recreational@msq.qld.gov.au.

