

# Seascape

Maritime Safety Queensland

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

In this edition:

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

## From the helm



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

Christmas holidays are now over for another year and we are in the middle of the summer boating season. This means more boats on the water and more people to look out for.

As we head into 2009, the challenges for Maritime Safety Queensland are, as always, keeping our boaties safe and our waters clean.

During these tough economic times, people often tend to skimp on what they see as 'luxury items'. This can sometimes include boating gear such as safety equipment. Some boaties are trying to economise by not replacing expired flares or not having the outboard motor serviced as often as recommended. Others are making do with worn life jackets or putting off buying that new EPIRB.

Maritime Safety Queensland is aware of this alarming trend, and cannot stress strongly enough that skimping on items such as these is jeopardising safety and risking lives. How much is a life worth? If you can't afford to keep your gear up-to-date and functioning, don't go out on the water. Carrying the right safety equipment could mean the difference between life and death in the event of a marine incident.

Courtesy on the water is another Maritime Safety Queensland priority and was the theme for the Christmas 2008 campaign. Courtesy is just as important on the water as it is on the road. Being courteous is not just good manners – it can be the difference between a safe trip and a serious injury to a fellow boatie.

Be a courteous skipper. Don't go speeding past anchored boats creating excessive wash – this can result in a person being thrown down or knocked overboard. Observe speed limits just as you would on dry land.

Pay attention at all times. A distracted skipper is a dangerous skipper, and puts everyone on the boat at risk. Observing a few simple rules can make boating the pleasant experience it is supposed to be.

To assist boat owners and fishers, the 2008 edition of *Guide to Recreational Boating & Fishing in Queensland* is now available, ready for the new boating year. Boaties will find this edition has been streamlined to make it more user-friendly, and some new sections have been added including Marine Pollution and How to Avoid Marine Incidents.

The new section on Marine Pollution emphasises the damage that discarded objects such as plastic bags and cans can do to marine animals and sea birds. Don't throw anything overboard – bring your garbage to shore and dispose of it properly.

Over 600 marine incidents are reported annually. With this in mind, the section on How to Avoid Marine Incidents has some rules and advice that can assist boaties to have a safe and happy day on the water. Maritime Safety Queensland is confident that this edition of *Guide to Recreational Boating & Fishing in Queensland* is the best yet.

Other publications available include *Beacon to Beacon*, *Queensland Tide Tables*, *The Small Ships Manual* and *BoatSafe Workbook*. There is also a range of free publications with all the rules and regulations for safe boating.

In addition, the Maritime Safety Queensland website [www.msq.qld.gov.au](http://www.msq.qld.gov.au) covers a range of boat-related topics such as tides, licensing, navigation lights, safety equipment and life jackets.

Safe boating

**Captain John Watkinson**  
General Manager

## Courtesy on the water

Summer holidays in Queensland mean warm weather, blue skies and water activities. Being out on the water should be a fun day for boaties, and following the boaties' courtesy code can make it even better. Watching your speed and wash, keeping a proper lookout and carrying the correct safety equipment are all part of being a courteous boatie.

When your boat is anchored for a spot of fishing or just to enjoy the scenery, you should be able to relax without worrying about excessive wash from other boats. Wash can create serious safety hazards, especially in marinas and anchorages where there is an expectation of calm conditions.

Speed limits are in place to minimise the wash created by boats. Therefore it is essential as a boat owner or skipper to maintain a speed that creates minimal wash. When you are coming into a marina or where other boats are moored, it is part of the courtesy code to give them the same consideration. People on board their vessels may be knocked down or possibly knocked overboard as a result of unexpected wash.

Carrying the right safety equipment could mean the difference between life and death in the event of a marine incident. When you are on the water anything can happen. The weather can change quickly and accidents can happen when you least expect them.

The General Safety Obligation requires all boat owners and operators to make sure the boat is safe, appropriately equipped and crewed, and operated in a safe manner. When deciding what to take on board, remember your obligation – if you fail to carry a piece of equipment that could have helped to prevent an accident, you could be prosecuted.

As skipper, it is your responsibility to look after those you have on board. Give them the best chance of survival and teach them where safety equipment is kept and how to use it.

Boating is fun but a distracted skipper can turn a day out on the water into a disaster. 60% of marine incidents occur because of human actions such as inattention, unsafe operation or navigation error, and failure to keep a proper lookout. Watch out for other boaties – boats, jet skis, sea kayaks, outrigger canoes and sailboarders all share the same waterways.

Remember, as skipper, you have the most important job to do. You're in charge of the safety of your boat and everyone on board. Lead by example, wear your life jacket and practise being a courteous skipper.

Our cover this month:  
Chris Scott competing at the Beijing Paralympics.  
See story page 4.

## Cyclone Awareness Week

Like most of north and far north Queensland, the city of Cairns is prone to tropical cyclones, usually between November and May. Notable cyclones that have affected the Cairns region have included Cyclone Larry in 2006, Cyclone Abigail in 2001 and Cyclone Steve in 2000. Cyclone Larry is considered to be the worst cyclone to hit the coast of Queensland since 1931.

Tropical cyclones can cause major damage over a significantly large area and have affected Australians since the earliest days of settlement. They develop over the warm oceans to Australia's north and can produce destructive winds, torrential rains, storm tides and phenomenal seas, dangerous both for vessels out at sea and those moored in harbours.

To provide the public with information on staying safe during the cyclone season, a Cyclone Awareness Week is held every year in Cairns. Organised by Emergency Management Queensland, this event is particularly important to Maritime Safety Queensland because of the many ports in the Cairns region.

A regular participant in Cyclone Awareness Week, Maritime Safety Queensland focused on the boating public, offering Cyclone Contingency Plans, a Cyclone Survival Guide, information on the new 406MHz Emergency Positioning Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), general boating safety tips and a key-ring to keep boat keys afloat.

Potentially, the most destructive phenomenon associated with tropical cyclones that make landfall is the storm surge. This is a raised dome of water about 60 to 80 kilometres across and typically about 2 to 5 metres higher than the normal tide level. If the surge occurs at the same time as a high tide then the area inundated can be quite extensive, particularly along low-lying coastlines, causing serious erosion of foreshores, swamping houses and severely battering boats.

Many boats come to grief during a cyclone, mainly due to incorrect or insufficient moorings. Due to the devastating nature of a cyclone, it is imperative that the boating public is made aware of the dangers of not securing a vessel adequately. The result can be a boat smashed against rocks or the shore and completely destroyed.

The Cairns office of Maritime Safety Queensland plays a major role in keeping the public informed, providing Cyclone Contingency Plans for Cairns, Cooktown, Innisfail, Mourilyan, Thursday Island, Cape Flattery, Half Moon Bay, Karumba, Port Douglas and Weipa.

Cyclone Awareness Week is a valuable community engagement exercise, and from a Maritime Safety Queensland point of view, is an excellent platform for promoting safety education in our tropical waters.

For additional information on cyclones visit [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au). Information on contingency plans can be found on [www.msq.qld.gov.au](http://www.msq.qld.gov.au).



MSQ display – The Esplanade, Cairns.

## 2008 in review

Maritime Safety Queensland had a busy and productive 2008, promoting safety messages, and informing recreational and commercial operators of legislative changes that affect them on the water.

By far, the most talked about issue at community events and boat shows was the upcoming switch to digital EPIRB. For over two years Maritime Safety Queensland has been promoting the 'Switch to 406' campaign in readiness for the shut down of the 121.5 MHz analogue frequency. Legislation was introduced in 2008 to mandate the carrying of a digital 406MHz EPIRB in designated waters in Queensland.

The overarching theme 'You're the skipper – You're responsible' was popular with boat owners across Queensland. Boaties remarked that the tag line says it all. It is a simple message that sums up the many aspects of being a good boat owner.

Maritime Safety Queensland also continued providing training for staff in pollution prevention and incident management. The importance of this type of training, and its relevance in real-life incidents, was proven to the whole of Australia in July 2007, when Maritime Safety Queensland took a major role in pollution prevention at the refloating of the *Pasha Bulker* when she was forced ashore by cyclonic winds and grounded on a Newcastle beach.

Of interest to the boat building sector, involving a partnership with Lloyd's Register and the NMSC, was training for Accredited Designers, Builders and Surveyors to assist them to understand and apply changes to the USL Code, including the new National Standards for Fast Craft, Engineering, and Fire Safety.

Fishing and commercial operators benefited by Maritime Safety Queensland's involvement in several events in support of regional fishing fleets.

Commercial operators took an opportunity while visiting the Maritime Safety Queensland displays to grab a free copy of the *Commercial and Fishing Ships Operational Handbook*. The handbook was reintroduced in 2008 in response to requests from commercial boat owners who wanted a simple but comprehensive reference guide for their crews and new skippers.

For a copy of this handbook or any other Maritime Safety Queensland publication contact your local regional office or visit [www.msq.qld.gov.au](http://www.msq.qld.gov.au).

# Paralympian Chris Scott



Source: Serena Corporate Photography

Australia finished fifth in the medal tally with Queensland bringing home 19 medals including four gold, seven silver and eight bronze.

In addition to his Beijing medals, Chris has three gold medals from Athens, a gold and bronze from Sydney and gold and silver from Atlanta.

He has participated in six Paralympics – Seoul 1988 (CP football seven-a-side and athletics), Barcelona 1992 (athletics), Atlanta 1996, Sydney 2000, Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008 (cycling).

‘I medalled in the last four Paralympics in cycling – and that’s something I would never have dreamed possible,’ said Chris.

He has won World Championship gold to go with his Paralympics gold, and in fact won three gold medals at the World Championships in Germany in 2002.

He was Australian Senior Male Paralympics Athlete of the Year in 2002, Sporting Wheeliee of the Year in 2002 and 2005, Australian Male Disabled Cyclist of the Year from 2002 to 2005, and 1997 Queensland Cyclist of the Year.

At the 2002 Australian Track Nationals, he won a gold medal and set a world record in the 3000m pursuit and won the same event at the 2007 National Track Titles.

Chris has also been awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his sporting achievements.

The veteran performer, who announced his retirement in the Chinese capital, described being the state’s highest Paralympic achiever as pretty awesome, and not bad for his swansong.

It is also no mean feat for a competitor who contested his first two Paralympics at Seoul in 1988 and Barcelona in 1992 in track and field before a broken ankle prompted a switch to cycling. Chris said it was the broken ankle that sparked his interest in cycling.

‘I did cycling during my rehabilitation period and it turned out that I liked it more than running and I felt I was more competitive. Cycling felt natural, as if it was the sport I was supposed to be doing from the start but it just took me 24 years to work it out,’ Chris said.

It’s not every Government department that can boast having a local and national hero as an employee, but Maritime Safety Queensland proudly claims Paralympics cyclist Chris Scott as its most famous staff member.

At the Beijing Paralympics in September last year, Chris was Queensland’s most successful competitor. He won medals in the CP4 men’s individual pursuit (gold), individual time trial (silver) and 1km time trial (bronze), reaching speeds up to 57km/h.

At a staff afternoon tea to welcome Chris home, General Manager of Maritime Safety Queensland Captain John Watkinson presented him with another gold medal, this one from his peers. In response, Chris presented Maritime Safety Queensland and Queensland Transport with two framed Australian Paralympic tracksuit jackets.

Chris was also the star of a welcome home celebration parade through the Queen Street Mall in Brisbane. The 30 Queensland athletes from Australia’s Paralympic Team were honoured by Premier Anna Bligh and Acting Lord Mayor Cr Graham Quirk at a reception where they were handed the keys to the city.





Source: Serena Corporate Photography

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Chris, who was born with cerebral palsy, said instead of finding his disability a hindrance in life, he preferred to think of it as an advantage. He said it has always been a positive for him.

‘I like to say my disability has been more of an ability, because it has enabled me to achieve a lot of things I never would have if I hadn’t had it,’ he said.

Chris was born in Gympie and now lives in Brisbane. Nicknamed ‘Gecko’ by his team mates, he is respected for his discipline and dedication. When Chris was away competing, his colleagues and friends at Maritime Safety Queensland followed his races closely, and a daily email update was sent around to staff with news on his race results and medal presentations.

Chris considered retiring after the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games but first wanted to win a gold medal at the 2002 World Championships, the only prize that had eluded him.

After winning not one gold medal but three at the Championships, and with Athens looming, Chris still felt strong and was a firm medal chance.

In Athens, Chris took gold in both the three kilometre individual pursuit and the time trial road race. He led his team through to the finals of the team sprint but gave his place to Peter Hormann, who came second to Chris the day before.

‘It wasn’t a huge decision to give my place in the final to Peter. He deserved his chance on the podium and I already had my gold medal. It’s what you do in a team. I actually got a gold medal when they won so in the end everyone’s efforts were acknowledged.’

The highlight in Athens for Chris though, was being named male captain of the Australian Paralympic Team. ‘That alone beat all the gold medals,’ he said.

So what does it take to reach the excellence required to compete at this level?

Chris detailed his schedule when he is in full training mode. This is in addition to his ‘day job’ at Maritime Safety Queensland.

‘On weekends I complete an 80 to 90 kilometre ride on Saturday and then on Sunday a 90 to 100 kilometre ride.

‘Then on Monday I do a light ride in the morning of about 30 kilometres and then weights for about an hour and a half in the afternoon.

‘Tuesday morning I do an hour on the ergo at home with specific strength efforts and sometimes I ride to and from work which is a good 30 kilometres.

‘Wednesday I go for a 30 kilometre ride in the morning and then weights in the afternoon.

‘Thursday is a 20 kilometre ride in the morning and then a track session in the afternoon and on Friday, I do a 30 kilometre ride in the morning and weights in the afternoon.’

Does he ever get time off during training?

‘Every three weeks I have an ‘easy’ week with one day off the bike.’

So what is Chris going to do with all his spare time now that all those hours of training are over?

‘I got married earlier this year and I’m sure my wife has plenty of things planned to keep me busy,’ he joked.

## Buying a new or used boat

Thoughts of lazy days spent fishing or cruising the waterways shouldn't distract you from considering a few important issues when buying a new or used boat.

Novice boaters will have noticed there are many different designs and styles of boat available so it's worth getting the advice of an industry specialist, like a marine dealer, or even an experienced friend to help find the right boat.

It is important to buy a boat that will handle the conditions in which you plan to operate. For example, don't buy a small dinghy if you intend navigating in partially smooth or open waters.

All new boats require an Australian Builders Plate (ABP) to be fitted by the manufacturer, similar to a VIN plate fitted to cars. This plate contains information including the maximum number of passengers or overall weight rating, the maximum horsepower the hull is designed for and its buoyancy rating.

If you have a second hand boat, you will need a capacity label affixed within one metre of the steering position unless an ABP is attached.

When a registered boat is sold, it is the responsibility of the new owner to lodge an application for transfer of the registration within 14 days.

Level buoyancy is a great design feature to look for, as it ensures the boat will float level in smooth conditions even if it is swamped which will allow you to bail out the water or stay with the boat till rescue. The alternative could mean clinging to the bow of an upturned hull until help arrives.

If you plan to use the boat at night, ensure it has correct navigation lights. For small craft, the standard navigation lights are a starboard (green) and a port (red) light and an all-round white light. The sidelights must be fitted so they are parallel with the centre line of the boat, not aligned with the curve of the bow. The all-round white light must be a metre above the main deck of the boat so that it can be seen from all directions.

A second hand boat should already be registered. Check that the registration numbers are a minimum of 200 millimetres in height and in a contrasting colour to the hull so they are legible from 30 metres. The registration label must be displayed on the exterior on the port side.

Your boat might be fitted with an under floor fuel tank. If so, it is recommended that a water trap fuel filter be fitted, even if portable tanks are used.

Remember, as skipper, you are responsible for everyone on board. For all the information you need for safe and enjoyable boating, go to the Maritime Safety Queensland website at [www.msq.qld.gov.au](http://www.msq.qld.gov.au).

## Are your navigation lights fitted correctly?

All boats must show lights if operating at night or in restricted visibility. Even a boat not travelling between dusk and dawn may still need to show lights, for example during a heavy rain shower or when at anchor.

Navigation lights must be installed in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. They should be mounted so as to minimise damage by contact with other objects under normal operating conditions, and prevent the lights from shining into the operator's eyes.

There are points to note with specific types of lights. An all-round white light shows over a nominal arc of the horizon of 360°. The light fitting must be located at least one metre above the sidelights, and should, as far as practicable, be on the centre-line of the boat.

It should not be obscured by masts or other structures by more than 6° of arc. If that's not possible, or the light shines into the operator's eyes, a masthead light in combination with a stern light is an alternative.

Boats over 12 metres in length are required to have a white masthead light mounted at least 2.5 metres above the gunwale and shining forward over an arc of the horizon of 225°, so that it can be seen from ahead of the boat to just aft of the beam on either side of the vessel. It must be located at least one metre above the sidelights and should, as far as practicable, be on the centre-line of the boat.

A stern light is located near the stern to show a white light over an arc of the horizon of 135° behind the boat. On an outboard craft, it may be necessary to mount the stern light on a mast, or to one side of the boat, to avoid the motor obscuring the light.

Most boats need a port (red) and a starboard (green) side light, each showing an unbroken light over an arc of the horizon of 112.5°. If the design of the boat allows, a combination port and starboard light unit can be mounted on the centre-line of the boat, in place of two individual side lights.

Individual side lights come in two styles, those mounted on a horizontal surface such as a deck and those mounted on a vertical surface such as the topsides or the side of the cabin.



Correct installation – side lights.



Incorrect installation – side lights.

Horizontally mounted side lights generally come with a marked reference line which must be kept parallel to the centre-line of the boat when fitting the light.

Vertically mounted side lights must be fitted with the back of the light parallel to the centre-line of the vessel so that the light will be visible in the correct sector and the lights don't cross over.

This means that when lights are mounted on a vertical or near vertical surface that is not parallel to the centre-line or not vertical, a wedge or similar must be provided to achieve the correct alignment in both planes.

Care must be taken not to mount lights on a horizontal surface if they are designed for a vertical surface and vice-versa, because they will shine in the wrong direction.

Boaters should take note of the following important points.

- It is difficult to judge distances at night.
- Not all navigation hazards will have lights indicating their position.
- Background lighting from the shore can cause confusion.
- Slow down and keep a good lookout.

For further information on navigation lights go to the Maritime Safety Queensland website at [www.msq.qld.gov.au](http://www.msq.qld.gov.au).