

Speed limit changes for Noosa River

Flowing through an internationally renowned tourist destination and a haven for marine focused holiday makers, the Noosa River is a magnet to many people for many reasons.

A new speed restriction has been imposed on the busiest section of the Noosa River for the popular boating period over Christmas.

The six-knot seasonal speed limit applies from 1 December to 31 December and again from Good Friday, until the end of the Easter school holidays. The six-knot speed limit applies from the "T" Boats jetty opposite Weyba Road to where the river flows out into Laguna Bay.

Anyone who has visited Noosa at peak boating times such as this, and even just at weekends throughout the year, will know how congested the river can get.

Under the Noosa River Plan, new maximum speed limits apply permanently to some other sections of the river and they will be complemented by these temporary speed restrictions at peak periods.

These changes are part of a carefully considered and balanced program to minimise the safety hazards caused by the increased boating traffic on the river and help protect the marine environment without ruining anyone's fun.

The speed limits have been lowered in areas of high risk to users, or in narrow channels affected by constant wash. The changes followed several years of extensive public consultation, initiated by the Noosa River Plan Implementation Group established by the Noosa Shire Council.

Maritime Safety Queensland has installed new signs showing the speed limit changes along the river, and all river users should make sure they get familiar with the particular speed zones.

For its part, Maritime Safety Queensland has published a *Recreational Boat Operator's Code of Practice* that discusses marine safety issues on the Noosa River and explains the reasons for the speed zone changes. This quick reference guide is available in boating and fishing retail outlets throughout the region.

Detailed maps of the affected areas are also available on the Maritime Safety Queensland website at www.msq.qld.gov.au.

Let's talk about recreational boating issues

A discussion paper covering a broad range of contemporary marine safety issues relating to recreational boating will be released to the public early in 2007.

With recreational boating in Queensland growing at an average annual rate of over 5%, and the nature of boating continually evolving, Maritime Safety Queensland is seeking the public's opinions on key safety-related issues.

To avoid "consultation overload" several ideas will be canvassed at once. Specifically the paper discusses the following topics:

- Compulsory wearing of personal flotation devices (PFDs) in high risk boating activities – following on from an NMSC discussion paper and law changes regarding the compulsory wearing of lifejackets made in 2006
- The need for further regulation of recreational vessels over 15 metres
- A review of age requirements for marine licences
- The carriage of safety equipment by personal watercraft (PWC)
- Compulsory carriage of EPIRBs on bar crossings.

When released, the discussion paper and a corresponding response form will be available for download in early 2007 from the Maritime Safety Queensland website under the "What's New" link.

Revisiting pollution laws

The law requires that Queensland regulations be reviewed and remade every ten years to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate for the future. In 2007 the *Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Regulation 1995* will be required to be remade.

As part of this process, Maritime Safety Queensland will be releasing a draft of a new regulation along with a discussion paper (Regulatory Impact Statement) outlining the changes from the old regulation to the new, and exploring the possible costs and impacts for industry associated with the regulation.

Widespread consultation will be undertaken on the draft new Regulation and submissions will be invited from the community and industry prior to the Regulation being finalised and remade before September 2007.



Don't jump to collisions

On a sunny Sunday afternoon a personal watercraft (PWC) sped across the water. The unlicensed rider of the PWC steered the craft under the direct supervision of the licensed owner who sat directly behind.

Travelling between 18-20 knots, well within the speed capabilities of the craft, the driver steered the PWC to the starboard of an oncoming powerboat, and then decided to "get some air" by jumping the starboard wake of the boat at 90 degrees.

The rider applied the throttle, sending the PWC to about 30 knots. At the same time a 6.4 metre runabout attempted to pass the powerboat. A chance of a collision became a distinct possibility, but the licensed PWC driver had no time to resume control of the craft.

With the PWC only 20 metres away, the master of the runabout turned hard to starboard in an attempt to avoid collision. Despite his attempt at evasive action, the unlicensed PWC rider failed to adjust course accordingly.

A collision resulted with the two PWC riders thrown into the water, but fortunately uninjured. The runabout sustained damage.

King of the world

After a boozy Saturday spent at an island pub, a man in his late 30s decided to head home to the mainland aboard a water taxi.

The man was so drunk, his common sense abandoned ship. Despite plenty of signs on the boat and warnings from the master and other passengers, the man felt compelled to stand on his seat and feel the wind through his hair. In the tradition of the movie Titanic the man spread his hands out as a bird.

The master repeatedly warned the man to sit while other passengers tried to restrain him. Finally after much coercion, he reluctantly returned to his seat with another warning from the master about the potential for injury.

After a brief time the man once again stood up just as the master began decelerating the vessel. Unbalanced, the man fell over the bow plunging into the water.

Lessons

- When an unlicensed person operates a PWC, the master needs to maintain direct supervision and be in a position to resume immediate control.
- The master could not assess the risk of collision as his view was impeded by the rider in front. More vigilance is required when supervising a new rider.
- Instruction on operating a personal watercraft, particularly at high speed, should be undertaken with an accredited trainer. More difficult manoeuvres should be attempted at slow speed and without other boats about, before they are attempted at high speed.
- Always be aware of blind-spots caused by other boats on the water and maintain vigilance appropriate for the speed you are travelling. If you are inexperienced or not confident, slow down.

Hoping to minimise harm to the passenger, the master immediately stopped the boat. Despite this, the man sustained major lacerations to his face, head and arms and required major emergency surgery.

Lessons

- Alcohol and boats do not mix even if you are just a passenger. Small mistakes or indiscretions can become large and even life-threatening when on the water.
- A prudent master assesses risks inside his own boat, and if necessary takes drastic action to minimise the risks.
- Boats can move in any direction unexpectedly, even on clear, calm days. When moving on a board ensure you have a hold of a railing or other secure points.

Let's get real about boating safety

People who have survived to tell a tale are the focus of Maritime Safety Queensland's Christmas Boating Campaign for 2006-2007.

This year's campaign, titled "Real Boaties, Real Lives", highlights the stories of individuals who survived serious marine incidents and learned valuable lessons about marine safety as a result.

These real boaties will be heard telling of their ordeals and the lessons learnt will feature in radio, TV and print materials produced for the campaign, which was launched by the Acting Minister for Transport, the Honourable Desley Boyle, MP, in December.

The campaign, which will run throughout 2007, continues with the theme of a national boating safety campaign featuring Australian cricketer Matthew Hayden promoting the wearing of PFDs. Matthew was more than happy to be involved with the campaign because not wearing a PFD almost cost him and his mates their lives.

Recreational boaties are encouraged to learn from other people's mistakes rather than their own.

**Real boaties
Real lives**

Trial designed to catch some answers

Commercial fishermen sign-on for ground-breaking safety equipment trial

Imagine working in a hostile, life-threatening environment that can change radically within moments. At times you are away from loved ones for weeks and communication can be difficult. Sometimes, you must still go to work, braving dangerous elements, expecting the unexpected.

Sounds like going to war, but it's life as a commercial fisherman. Within Australia, only forest logging currently records a higher incidence of workplace fatalities based on the all industries rate.

Bill Henebery knows the industry well, having worked on trawlers since he was 12 and spending half-a-lifetime at sea without major incident. But he knows enough mates, and mates-of-mates who have lost the battle with the elements, and as a result lost their lives.

Operating out of Mooloolaba, on his newly purchased trawler the She'bimie, he is one of 24 skippers of commercial fishing boats in south-east Queensland taking part in a special trial coordinated by Maritime Safety Queensland. The trial involves a number of commercial fishermen in south-east Queensland working as normal over a period of three to four months wearing a variety of inflatable PFDs and personal EPIRBs.

"We have lost a lot of our friends who might still be alive today if they had these things on," said Bill, commenting on the inflatable PFDs he and his decky are now using.

"I wanted to be part of the trial so if and when decisions are made, we get the right gear for the right boat and the right application. Why should someone behind a desk make a decision about something that is used out there in the elements without our input?"

The purpose of the trial is to evaluate the performance of the lifesaving equipment in the working environment at sea. While there is no doubt the wearing of this

equipment will improve the survivability of commercial fishers who end up in the water, it is important that factual information is gathered to ensure the wearing of the equipment does not increase their risk of exposure to workplace accidents.

The trial represents a clear commitment from industry and government to work together to identify practical solutions that improve and protect the safety of life at sea.

The trial serves to evaluate the performance and comfort of the lifesaving equipment within the variable range of work, weather, and sea conditions that commercial fishers face on a daily basis.

Maritime Safety Queensland recognises the commercial fishing industry comprises a number of different fisheries and as such "one size may not necessarily fit all" when it comes to determining the right safety solution. The trial is geared accordingly and will evaluate the equipment in all industry sectors to ensure the right safety outcomes for the industry as a whole. Another trial will commence in April 2007 in the Northern East Coast and Torres Strait to take account of variations in climatic and working conditions.

Through gathering and analysing feedback from participants like Bill, and studying the wear and tear on the equipment itself, the trial also lays the groundwork for innovative developments in the design and use of safety equipment, specifically for the fishing industry.

Ken Baker, a former trawler operator and now running a fishing boat brokerage, successfully encouraged several colleagues to sign-up for the trial. He said that fishermen with close association to fatal incidents on fishing boats are often the ones keener about improving safety outcomes in the industry.

He said the wives and partners of fishermen, many who live with constant concern about their partner's or children's safety, are also enthusiastic advocates for the trial.

"We have a couple of staunch fishermen on board with this trial – one who lost his son and another who lost two family members. It doesn't really strike home until you've had a circumstance when you've been sitting at home wondering if your kids are alive."

Ken cited the fatal incident involving a good friend as a stark example of when the wearing of inflatable PFDs could have made a life-saving difference. His friend, George went down with his trawler after it capsized eight kilometres off Moreton Island. George's son was left in the ocean for several hours, with only a bamboo pole barely keeping him afloat. He was eventually rescued with severe bruising on his legs where he balanced on the pole.



Because George was in the wheelhouse at the time of the sinking, a PFD may not have saved him, but an inflatable PFD would have relieved the survivor of much physical and emotional trauma. After many other fatal accidents involving fishing vessels, coroners around the country have recommended the use of inflatable PFDs and personal EPIRBs.

Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) Martin Hicks welcomed the trial as an important step in addressing safety concerns raised by the State Coroner.

“The potential benefits may include identifying new equipment suitable for commercial fishing or identifying more appropriate places to store safety equipment.”

“It is good to see the trial incorporating different fisheries and working through and identifying any problems that arise through the trial. I think the trial will give reliable and practical results if the program is implemented across the state.”

Currently, PFDs carried on board commercial fishing ships need to comply with Universal Shipping Laws (USL) standards. Compliant PFDs are not designed for commercial fishing, and due to their bulk, are not suitable for wearing while at work. Most are too hot for use during the Queensland summer.

In the case of marine incidents involving the sinking of fishing boats, the speed of events sends many PFDs to the bottom with the boat, still in stowage hence Coroner’s recommendations for using wearable, inflatable PFDs.

The inflatable PFDs and personal EPIRBs being used in the trial are in excess of the lifesaving equipment that is required to be carried in order to satisfy the regulation. The reason being that the current regulation does not provide for the use of inflatable PFDs on commercial vessels, however the outcomes of the trial could pave the way for a fresh approach.

Peter Campbell-Burns from marine equipment wholesaler, MarineSafe,

coordinated the supply of the Stormy Seas range of inflatable PFDs and personal EPIRBs for the trial.

He acknowledged that financial costs and design issues currently limited the uptake of both types of equipment in commercial fishing operations, but this may change as a result of the trial. Manufacturer Stormy Seas whose motto is “Don’t Stow it, Wear it” is keen to assess and if possible adopt recommendations from the fishermen in the trial, he said.

It is possible that a new range of inflatable PFDs and personal EPIRBs designed specifically for commercial fishermen be developed and marketed.

“The best possible outcome we could have from this trial is a drop in fatality statistics among commercial fishermen – those being lost overboard or going down with sinking boats and never being seen again,” he said.

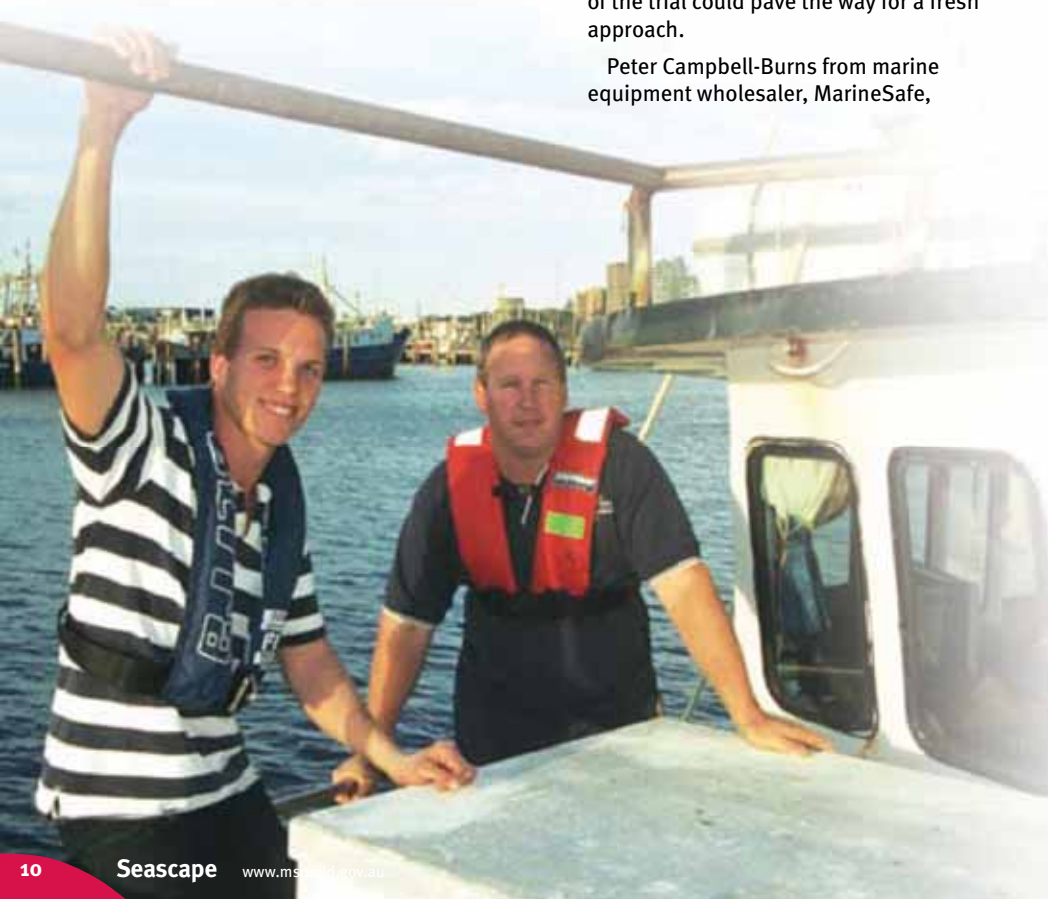
“Inflatable jackets are becoming more prevalent in our marine industry because they are such a wearable piece of equipment, and they are becoming more affordable.”

Current statistics reveal only half of reported persons overboard from commercial fishing vessels are ever found alive. Commercial fishermen continue to be over-represented in maritime fatalities.

Any improvement to safety outcomes caused through the use of on-person safety equipment will be a step forward. The trial is intended to make sure fishermen’s productivity and livelihood will not be affected.

Maritime Safety Queensland also acknowledges the support that a number of lifesaving and safety equipment manufacturers have lent in the lead up to the trial in order to showcase the diverse range of equipment that is currently available to industry. Specific mention also needs to be made of the important contribution that Nick Bryne of Performance Floatation Developments and Dale Thompson of Chemring have made through the provision of inflatable life jackets and personal EPIRBs that ensure commercial fishers have access to the most current technology.

Left: Bill Henebery and son Elijah wearing inflatable PFDs ... Bill and his crew are testing the PFDs and personal EPIRBs on board the She’bimie.



Professional **crabber** tests the water

Right: Crab fishermen Tony and Lionel are testing inflatable PFDs while crab fishing around Moreton Bay.



Tony Riesenweber is a third-generation fisherman who is trialling inflatable PFDs. From September through to June he goes after mud crabs in Moreton Bay. For the rest of the year it's sand crabs or long-lining for snapper. His son is also part of the operation, but Tony often operates alone.

Several years ago the 6.2 m boat he owned at the time began sinking while long-lining 17 km off Point Lookout. He was shocked to discover that the PFDs he had purchased couldn't fit over his head; he never bothered to check them at the time of purchase. Fortunately the Coast Guard rescued him before the boat went under. Only the PFDs stored in the bow kept the boat buoyant.

"That taught me a lesson that we often stow PFDs out of easy reach, and I'm sure a lot of fisherman have similar stories," he said.

Tony and his son Lionel are trialling two types of inflatable PFDs as they go mud crabbing around Moreton Bay in their five metre tinnie. While he acknowledged the dangers of off-shore fishing, he said working in the smooth and partially-smooth waters of Moreton Bay also has its hazards.

"If you are working in 25-30 knots of wind and pulling crab pots up by hand, the floor can get full of slimy weed. If the crab pot gets caught you can slip and over-balance and then you're in the drink.

"By the time you get to the boat it could be gone, and you can't walk because the mud is so soft. If you've got wet weather gear on to protect the pots from scratching you, what have you got? A disaster! It can happen.

"I fell in the drink when an old pot got caught on the prop. I was leaning over the

stern trying to get it off and the boat rolled, and I speared head-first into the water. I had wet weather gear on which sticks to you, and it took a lot to hang on to the boat. I didn't hit my head, but you could be knocked unconscious.

"Being part of the trial has made me more aware of PFDs. Before it was something you put in the bow and never looked at.

"No one wants to be put at unnecessary risk. It's like the police go to work and might not come home – it's the same with us. So you try your best to make sure you come home. That's one of the reasons why I wanted to do the trial."

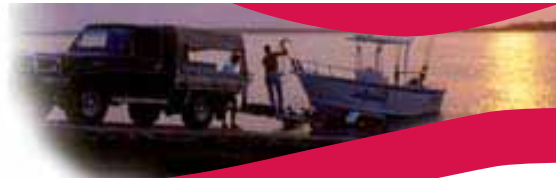
"Every year someone tries different things to make the industry safer. If you don't try, you don't get better."

New **safety requirements** for commercial vessels

Commercial operators should be aware of new safety equipment requirements for their vessels. A new system of National Standards for Commercial Vessels (NSCV) will gradually replace the current Uniform Shipping Laws Code to bring about a single set of standards for the Australian maritime industry.

One element of the NSCV, Part C – Safety Equipment is expected to be introduced into Queensland legislation in the near future. This will involve significant consultation with the industry on the length of the phase-in period and the impact of the removal of grandfathering provisions relating to fishing vessels.

Changes to the existing requirement to carry safety equipment on commercial vessels will be minimal - only requiring a slight change in the type and number of flares to be carried, the requirement for some commercial fishing vessels to fit inflatable liferafts and carriage of PFDs on all passenger vessels operating in smooth waters.



Preparing to protect Torres Strait

In the event of a major marine pollution incident in the Torres Strait, a well coordinated response could mean the difference between long-term environmental damage and preserving the livelihood and cultural backyard of Torres Strait Islanders.

With the waters of the Torres Strait sustaining 19 local communities and also serving as a major channel for Australian and international shipping, the risks and consequences of a major marine pollution incident in the Torres Strait cannot be underestimated.

A recent pollution response exercise in the area honed the knowledge and skills of emergency responders and underlined Maritime Safety Queensland's continuing commitment to managing the risks of pollution in environmentally and culturally significant waters.

The exercise was called "Waiben", the original name for Thursday Island. It simulated a Tier One oil spill (up to 10 tonnes or 10,000 litres of oil) and included a challenging discussion followed by a field exercise using oil spill containment booms, a skimmer and recovered oil tanks.

Greg Kirk, the Senior Port Supervisor at Thursday Island, assumed the role of incident controller. He managed a team which included locals from the Ports Corporation

of Queensland, Torres Strait Council, TRAWQ community council and Seaswift Pty Ltd.

Ash Titmarsh from Maritime Safety Queensland who organised and coordinated the exercise said that such exercises are necessary to ensure speed and efficiency of response during a real event.

"Training is one thing but putting what you have learnt into practice is another," he said. "The exercise achieved its objectives and everyone involved got something out of it."

As part of its commitment to oil spill preparedness, Maritime Safety Queensland regularly runs oil spill response exercises in ports up and down the Queensland coast.

Mackay's Dutch connection

Hay Point commemorated its own "Dutch connection" when a framed photograph of two special vessels was presented to representatives of Maritime Safety Queensland in October.

The world's largest trailing suction hopper dredge and a replica of a 17th sailing ship, both from Holland, graced Hay Point at the same time earlier this year. The commissioned photo shows these two contrasting vessels together.

The dredge WD Fairway is 232 metres long and led the recently completed upgrading of Hay Point. The Fairway dredged a new 10 kilometre long departure channel at Hay Point and a 500m wide manoeuvring apron, which together with a set of new port beacons, effectively increased the export capacity of the port, already one of the world's largest

coal export terminals (see Seascope July-September 2006).

With the deeper channel, larger coal carriers can now load to their maximum draft and leave on lower tides. This means larger coal volumes and less freight costs, saving millions of dollars.

The replica of the Dutch "Duyfken" visited Hay Point as part of a 12,000 km voyage to mark the first documented European contact with Australia.

International dredging company Boskalis owns and operates the Fairway, and sought approval from Maritime Safety Queensland for a photograph of the two Dutch ships together, which was granted by Mackay's Regional Harbour Master Captain John Ellyett.

Two framed copies of the photograph were created, one presented to Captain Ellyett and the other to be hung on board the WD Fairway.



Above: Gert Jan Peters, the Boskalis Australia Project Manager, presents Captain John Ellyett, Regional Harbour Master for Mackay, with a framed photograph of the two contrasting Dutch vessels.

New Marine Information Bulletins

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

- Life jackets and personal flotation devices complying with international standards.
- Brisbane River – Flashing white all-round light. Boats propelled by oars or paddles must display a flashing all-round white light.
- Servicing of portable fire extinguishers.
- Passenger-carrying on foredecks of ships. Increasing awareness of the possible hazards to passengers while on the foredecks of catamarans when underway.

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Townsville	07 - 4726 3400
Cairns	07 - 4052 7400
Weipa	07 - 4069 7165
Karumba	07 - 4745 9281
Thursday Island	07 - 4069 1351

Upcoming events - 2007

MARCH

- 2 Noosa M.A.S.T. Day
- 26-30 SPILLCON-International Oil Spill Conference 2007, Perth
- 27-28 Maritime Industry Showcase and Forum 2007 Parliament House, Canberra
- 27-28 Maritime Industry Showcase and Forum, Parliament House, Canberra
- 30-APR 1 Tinnie & Tackle Boat Show Brisbane RNA Showgrounds

MAY

- 5-7 Bay-to-Bay Yacht Race Tin Can Bay/Urangan
- 19-25 Fraser Island Fishing Expo
- 24 Australian Marine Awards, Surfers Paradise
- 24-27 Sanctuary Cove Boat Show