

Seascape

Maritime Safety Queensland

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In this edition:

- Boaties guide to cyclone survival
- Noosa River speed limit changes
- Getting to know you: Ross Lloyd of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
- Commercial fishing trial designed to catch safety answers
- The law and you
- Learning from marine incidents

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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

As we head further into summer, more and more Queenslanders are taking to their boats to enjoy the natural beauty of the state's waterways. However, with so many people on the water, good times have the potential to turn into tragedy. With this in mind, Maritime Safety Queensland has launched its summer safety campaign to coincide with the peak season for marine accidents.

The "Real Boaties, Real Lives" campaign tells the stories of actual people who have experienced for themselves just what it really means to be prepared when a situation on the water suddenly becomes dangerous. They all know how close they came to losing their lives and therefore, they offer the best possible examples of that instinctive safety mentality. Please listen to what they have to say – it could save your life.

I would like to thank all those who volunteered to share their stories, including Australian Test Cricketer Matthew Hayden, and to the dedicated team who devised and put the project together. This is such an important issue, and the "Real Boaties, Real Lives" campaign will continue to be a focus for Maritime Safety Queensland throughout the coming year.

As well as implementing strategies to save lives on our waterways, the government is also committed to protecting the marine environment and preventing pollution originating from vessels. To this end we will continue to build upon the legislative advances made in the last year.

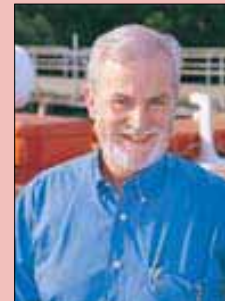
Maritime Safety Queensland has developed new draft provisions for the management and disposal of ship-sourced sewage that provides a number of options for ships to comply with the legislation and encourage greater compliance. The unlawful discharge of sewage from ships reduces the quality of our waterways for all users and jeopardises the health of people and our marine environment.

In 2007 the government will also press forward with legislative reviews to help keep pace with the astounding growth of recreational boating in Queensland and the emergence of new activities on the water. This will include remaking safety standards to include activities such as parasailing and the use of jet skis.

The marine safety and pollution laws now in place also show how serious we are about targeting the derelict and abandoned vessels that blight our waterways and impose significant costs on the entire community. The removal of a rotting trawler from Mooloolaba Harbour late this year is only the latest step in a program that is building momentum for the year ahead to act early and act decisively against vessels that are a safety or pollution hazard. Where we can we'll identify and prosecute the owners of these vessels.

Our waterways are precious and something that we need to treasure and protect, and in the year to come this will remain a major focus for the government and Maritime Safety Queensland.

Captain John Watkinson,
General Manager, Maritime
Safety Queensland



2006 started with a milestone. In January, a young couple from Redland Bay registered their 5.5 metre bow-rider, becoming the owners of Queensland's 200,000th registered recreational vessel.

The milestone set the tone for the year. Growth in commercial and recreational boating in Queensland is booming and throughout 2006 Maritime Safety Queensland demonstrated a commitment to responding to this growth.

Knowing that more people will be using Queensland waterways for more purposes, the agency is determined to ensure that the safety of all, and the sustainable use of the marine environment is not just a good idea, but becomes a way of life.

One of the biggest oil spills ever in the state tested this resolve in January when a tug collided with, and ruptured the hull of the Global Peace in Gladstone Harbour.

The efforts of a multi-agency team coordinated by Maritime Safety Queensland reduced the effect on the environment of the 25-tonne of oil released to virtually nil. The speed and effectiveness of the response demonstrated the immense value of Australia's national oil spill contingency planning arrangements.

In March, the wearing of PFDs in certain high risk situations became compulsory. Children under 12-years-old in a boat under 4.8m that is underway must now wear an approved PFD. Everyone on a boat less than 4.8m, crossing a declared coastal bar, is also required to wear a PFD.

A number of fatalities and near misses clearly demonstrated the need for these changes, and further changes may eventuate from upcoming public consultation.

Community engagement is the key to fostering safety in commercial boating as two ground-breaking initiatives which gained momentum in 2006 clearly show.

Training in commercial marine operations took a giant step forward with the introduction of a pilot scheme for Master Class 5 students in the Brisbane area.

Industry, private and public training institutions combined to create the scheme, the first of its type in Australia, which gives students an unprecedented range of on-the-job training, minimising classroom learning. A decision to expand the program throughout the state now depends on results of the trial.

And MarineSafe, a safety program driven by marine industry operators and businesses in the Whitsundays continues to set new standards for the development of a "safety culture" throughout Queensland's commercial boating industry.

From a family boarding a tinnie in Torres Strait, to a captain piloting a ship into Australia's busiest port at Hay Point, the importance of safety is never to be underestimated. In 2007 Maritime Safety Queensland will continue its multitude of programs and initiatives (too numerous to list here) to ensure Queensland continues to move towards safer and cleaner seas.

Contingency plan prepares for cyclone



People living in north Queensland are well acquainted with the dangers posed by the unpredictability of tropical cyclones.

Each year between November and February, Queenslanders living north of Mackay – and sometimes as far south as Gladstone – prepare for the threat of extreme winds, harsh seas and tidal surges associated with cyclones.

Maritime Safety Queensland has developed plans to reduce the damage caused by cyclones and tidal surges in coastal waterways throughout the state. Obviously those most at risk are in the northern half of the state, although harbours well south have also had their scary moments.

Boat owners can prepare by referring to the Cyclone Contingency Plan for the area in which they operate to make sure they know what action to take if a cyclone warning is posted.

When a cyclone approaches the coast, a maritime control centre is established at Maritime Safety Queensland's regional marine operations base.

Depending on the state of the cyclone, the Regional Harbour Master will activate a series of intensifying warnings, rising from yellow to blue and then red. Cyclone warnings issued for harbours are associated with, but separate from, land-based cyclone warnings: boat owners should be familiar with their responsibilities under each level in order to maximise safety precautions for vessels and boating infrastructure.

The Regional Harbour Master will control the relocation of vessels in the harbour to more sheltered moorings and also the movement of larger commercial vessels to sea.

Planning and preparation are the keys to limiting cyclone damage to boats. Boat owners should:

- explore the assigned shelter inlet before the cyclone season commences, to determine where to moor in a cyclone;
- update their contact details for relevant authorities;

Change to northern weather forecasts

Boaties in Far North Queensland can now access coastal waters weather forecasts via their VHF radio.

The service began on 1 December 2006 replacing the Seaphone network which ceased on 30 November 2006.

The forecasts, a joint initiative of Maritime Safety Queensland and the Bureau of Meteorology, are broadcast twice daily at 0633 and 1633 EST from the following locations and channels:

- Moa Island (Torres Strait) Channel 19
- Darnley Island (Torres Strait) Channel 18
- Lockhart River Channel 18
- Cooktown Channel 19

Marine wind warnings will be broadcast on the above channels from the above locations when issued by the Bureau.

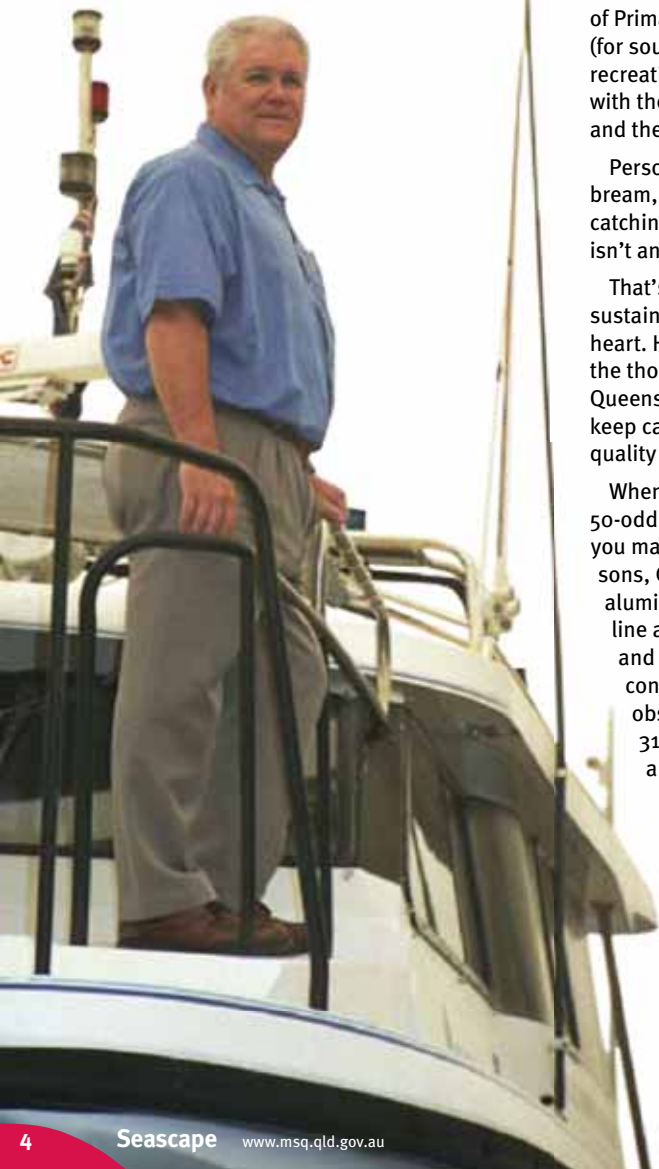
- make alternative arrangements for the movement of their vessel if they're going to be away during the cyclone season, for example by leaving a key with a reliable person or by leaving a key and a completed *Authority to board and move* form with the Coast Guard;
 - ensure there's plenty of line to secure the vessel;
 - take down and stow all sails, loose articles and furniture; and
 - co-operate with all directions from the Regional Harbour Master and agencies acting under the direction of the Regional Harbour Master in these circumstances such as the Port Authority, Water Police and the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol.
- No vessel should leave its assigned cyclone mooring until the Regional Harbour Master gives the all-clear.
- Cyclone Contingency Plans for regions from Mackay to Karumba are available on the Maritime Safety Queensland website under the "Waterways" link or on application at regional offices.



Getting to know you

Fish minder and finder

Ross Lloyd, Regional Manager (South), Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries, Fisheries Resource Protection.



Ross Lloyd is the first to admit, it's tempting to break a fishing bag limit. Excitement takes hold when bait is proving irresistible to hungry schools of fish, and rods are bending. Why not fill the esky with sweet-tasting trophies?

"A lot of people only go fishing a few times a year, so they see it as a real hindrance that they are only allowed to catch specific bag limits," Ross observed.

As a Regional Manager for the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (for southern Queensland), and a keen recreational fisher himself, Ross is familiar with the adrenaline rush of landing a big one and the pride of showing the catch to mates.

Personally, Ross loves catching and eating bream, flathead or whiting, and wants to keep catching them well into his retirement, which isn't any time soon.

That's why promoting and practising sustainable fishing is near-and-dear to Ross's heart. He believes it is the only way he and the thousands of other people who fish in Queensland waterways for enjoyment, will keep catching fish of a descent size and quality through future decades.

When he's not overseeing the work of 50-odd Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers, you may find Ross and one of his grown sons, Cameron or Scott, in their 3.9 metre aluminium dinghy. They'll be dropping a line at Jumpinpin, the bar between North and South Stradbroke Islands, enjoying conversation, catching fish, and of course, observing bag and size limits. His wife of 31 years, Lyn will later cook the catch for a family nosh-up.

"I thoroughly enjoy the area around Jumpinpin," he said, proof being the distance he travels from his home in Brisbane's northern suburbs.

"My sons and I have had some good trips together – two or three people in a small dinghy is a real good way to talk and spend time together.

"I've always been a very keen recreational fisher. The first licence I earned was to drive a speedboat which I got the weekend after I turned 17, before my car licence. I've been involved both work wise and recreationally ever since," he said.

After finishing a plumbing and drainage apprenticeship and a brief stint in sales, Ross landed his dream job in 1978 – a field officer for what was then the Department of Harbours and Marine, based in Pinkenba, Brisbane. What could be better for a keen boater than spending every day on the water?

However, work was not without its dangers as he discovered after just three months on the job.

"We had been doing some filming on the other side of Peel Island (Moreton Bay) and a very strong wind came through – so heavy that I was unable to transfer off the vessel.

"There was myself and another probationary officer who had to bring this small vessel – about 4.8 metres – across the bay at night.

"In about 10 minutes we had taken so much water on board that we lost radio communications. The waves were so steep that when we ran down we'd bury the nose and bring all this water with us. One of us was using the manual bilge pump and the other was driving.

"When we pulled into Manly I thought to myself, 'what type of job have I let myself in for'. It was a good learning experience."

Stints working in Mackay and Bundaberg gave Ross further insights into regional on-water enforcement issues, before he started in the position he holds today. He said changes during his 28 years of working for "Fisheries" are many.

About three times as many people use Queensland's waterways today, and their expectations of on-water officers are now much higher. According to Ross, field officers today need to ensure compliance with legislation without being authoritarian.



Then there are the detailed, and often complex, size and bag limits. Recent changes relating to flathead are an example of the challenge confronting both officers and recreational fishers.

Different size and bag limits apply to bar-tailed and sand flathead than to dusky (mud) flathead. Ross said that fishermen need to be familiar with subtleties in the appearance of each species to avoid being fined for exceeding the limits.

“To assist fishers in the process we developed some identification cards with some easy tools to help identify the species,” Ross said.

“There’s no doubt that in recent times the legislation is more complex and the knowledge that recreational fishers are required to pick up is increasing.

“Recreational fishers need to see it as their responsibility to have that knowledge before they undertake a fishing activity. Without identification skills it is very hard to comply with some size and bag limits.”

But then as Ross has observed over the years, there are always those who know, but choose to exceed limits or disregard the need for safety equipment on board their vessel.

“As a field officer, I’ve come alongside a vessel and asked, ‘what’s in the bag?’ and the

fisher would say it was fishing tackle. Then you’d see the bag start wriggling around.

“Or when they are short of safety equipment they often talk about the costs associated with it. But in comparison between the cost of safety equipment and the cost of their whole boat and set-up, including fish-finders and other expensive technology, it’s such a small price to put on personal safety.”

Ross’ employer, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, is an education and compliance partner of Maritime Safety Queensland. Field officers monitor both recreational and commercial boats for compliance of laws made by both departments.

“I think it blends very well, and the relationship between the two agencies has always been strong,” said Ross. “Most of our district officers have close working relationships with the managers of marine safety and marine safety officers.

“That relationship ensures we are working in the areas they want us to focus on. For example Maritime Safety Queensland may feel there is a need for closer monitoring of documentation on commercial fishing vessels or charter vessels, so we’ll set that as a primary focus and try and deliver on that.”

Of the 14 regional bases that Ross oversees, three are inland – Roma, Longreach and

Wondai. Ross is a proud advocate of the highly successful stock impoundment program, managed by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. Through this program the department works with local stocking groups to ensure inland waterways and dams are regularly stocked with fingerlings so that fishers can continue to enjoy high catch rates.

To help fund the stocking program, fishermen must buy permits to fish in these stocked impoundments of which there are 30 throughout the State.

“This program is taking fishing pressure away from a finite resource on the coast and putting it into inland dams and impoundments, in which we maintain the stock levels,” he said.

“And there are also benefits for local councils, businesses and communities as it is generating business and industry. There are even professional tour guides who operate out in these areas now, and there’s been increase in boat sales, repairs and all associated boating and fishing business.”

Despite spending more time in the office than on the water these days, Ross says he still enjoys his work. Considering his personal enthusiasm for the sport of fishing and his love for the waterways of southern Queensland, there’s nothing fishy about that.

Go boating with an official

When was the last time you took an “official” on board your boat? Well, the Official Tide Tables and Boating Safety Guide 2007 is now available to go cruising.



The book provides all tidal predictions for the 2007 calendar year, covering all Queensland ports as well as instructions for calculating tides at many other locations.

The Official Tide Tables and Boating Safety Guide is available for \$8.50 from Australia Post, some newsagents, marine chandlery stores, tackle shops, specialty bookshops, Queensland Transport customer service

centres, Maritime Safety Queensland regional offices and by mail (the order form is on the Maritime Safety Queensland website).

The latest issue of the Guide to Recreational Boating and Fishing in Queensland is also available. This free publication is the definitive guide to boating safety and fishing laws for boaters in Queensland. It’s available from Queensland Transport customer service centres, Maritime Safety Queensland and regional offices and numerous marine chandlery stores.

The law and you

Readers' question

Question: I own a 7.3 metre boat and go fishing off-shore whenever conditions allow. I know by law I need to have an EPIRB on board when I go further than two kilometres offshore. Would it be OK to use just my personal EPIRB?

Answer: in the event of an emergency a personal EPIRB (pictured below) can definitely save your life, but it can't replace the EPIRB required by law. There are a number of reasons why EPIRBs made to the approved standards are superior and why personal EPIRBs should only be regarded as a very good *additional* item of safety equipment.

Approved EPIRBs are carefully designed to float in an upright position once they are in the water. They are physically larger and have ballast at the bottom. Most have a length of cord, so it can float beside. Floating upright causes the aerial to point directly upwards, ensuring easy detection by satellites or rescue craft.

On the other hand, unless someone physically holds it or puts it in a pocket of some sort, a personal EPIRB will tip on its side when in the water, significantly reducing the chance of the signal being detected.

Holding EPIRBs by hand can become almost impossible after several hours in the water due to cold and exhaustion. Most lifejackets do not have pockets for EPIRBs.

Both types of EPIRBs can have similar battery life and signal strength, but in the event of an emergency, approved EPIRBs are required by law for good reason.



Check the standard of lifejackets and personal flotation devices

Many locally made and imported lifejackets and personal flotation devices (PFD) are available for sale throughout Queensland, but buyers need to be aware that not all are legally acceptable for use.

Boaties need to make sure the lifejackets and PFDs they keep on board and wear are appropriate for their area of operation (open water, partially smooth or smooth water), will fit the people on board, and are manufactured to standards acceptable in Queensland.

Maritime Safety Queensland has published a Marine Information Bulletin (MIB) listing the Australian Standards and equivalent international standards accepted in Queensland.

The SAI-Global "five ticks" symbol and the compliance marks of other certification

bodies provide an easy way to identify locally manufactured PFDs that are compliant with Australian Standards. Lifejackets and PFDs manufactured to the international standards listed on the MIB should have markings identifying the standard, manufacturer, make and model, and information about donning and care.

Lifejackets manufactured under international standards not listed in the MIB are not legally acceptable. Maritime Safety Queensland has approved some international standards for Coastal Lifejackets and PFD Type 1s, however PFD Type 2 and 3 must comply with Australian Standards.

The MIB is available on the Maritime Safety Queensland website under the "Publications – Marine Information Bulletins – General".



Master jailed for fatal mistakes

The death of a young tourist in north Queensland, and the subsequent conviction of an experienced former naval seaman once again proved emphatically that alcohol and boating are a deadly mix.

Heikki Ilmari Vaisanen, 59, a former member of the Finnish Navy and now resident of the Gold Coast was jailed for nine months in November 2006 over the incident in Horseshoe Bay at Magnetic Island which occurred in October 2005.

His sentence represents one of the most significant penalties ever handed out for the unsafe operation of a ship.

What started as alcohol-fuelled fun ended with a young English tourist, 22, being run over by a rigid inflatable boat, with a propeller strike killing her instantly.

Vaisanen was using the inflatable, a tender to a larger vessel, to return the English tourist to shore. After a series of high-speed manoeuvres both were thrown from the boat, which was powered by a 60 hp outboard. The boat continued to turn, eventually running over the tourist.

The court found that the master's intoxication and his failure to connect the "stop engine safety lanyard" or ensure his passenger was wearing a PFD were major contributing factors to the young person's death.

Vaisanen faced two charges of unsafe operation of a vessel under the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act, one of which could have earned him two years in jail.