

# Safety Report

## Night-time Bingle on the Bay

### Narrative

A 4.5 metre long fibreglass centre-console runabout was anchored in Moreton Bay near a reef known as Harry Atkinson Reef. Two persons including the master were aboard. The boat had anchored there at dusk in mid-May, along with a friend's boat anchored about 20 metres away. There was a third boat anchored about 60 metres away from the other two. This third boat displayed an all-round white anchor light: the other two did not display any lights.

About 1930 hours, a 5.2 metre long aluminium runabout with a forward hard-topped control cabin was proceeding through the Rous Channel at an estimated 20 to 25 knots. The master had his 14 year old son and his son's friend aboard. The master was heading to a waypoint near Mud Island, entered on his GPS. As he approached the reef, he observed a white light ahead, so adjusted his course to pass this light at a distance of 50 metres. A short time later he collided with the anchored 4.2 metre runabout.

Both occupants of the runabout leapt into the water just before impact. No persons were injured, and the badly damaged runabout was able to limp back to the nearest boat ramp escorted by his friend in the other boat. The aluminium boat was not significantly damaged. The incident was witnessed by the occupants of the third boat that was displaying its anchor light.

Weather conditions were calm and clear, with little or no moon. The master of the aluminium boat had good forward vision with no obstructions. He also stated that he was very familiar with the area and knew that boats often anchored in this area for fishing.

### Lessons

- 1. The anchored runabout should have displayed an all-round white anchor light. This vessel did have a working anchor light – it was not switched on. This is a breach of Rule 30 of the *International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972* ("Collregs").**
- 2. This vessel also observed the approaching boat for several minutes. The occupants should have attracted the attention of the approaching vessel by shining a torch or spotlight at it. The anchored vessel did have a "Dolphin" torch aboard, but the occupants did not think to use it.**
- 3. The master of the aluminium vessel was not keeping a proper lookout as required by Rule 5 of the Collregs. He could have placed lookouts on the bow. His estimated speed of 20 to 25 knots was also too fast for the circumstances – dark night, little or no moon, an area where he knew boats often anchored. This is a breach of Rule 6 (Safe Speed) of the Collregs.**

Safety Reports are prepared by the Investigations Unit, Executive Services and Compliance Branch, Maritime Safety Queensland. Safety reports are intended to draw the attention of the marine community to the lessons arising out of investigations into marine accidents. Consequently, the reports do not assign fault or blame nor do they determine liability.

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4. Care should always be taken when voyaging at night that the backlighting of electronic instruments does not impair night vision, or reflection of running lights off shiny surfaces such as stainless steel bow rails. Studies have shown that when a human eye is exposed to light at night, it can take several hours for full night vision to be restored.

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