

Boating safety in Gladstone



Marine safety contact information

Maritime Safety Queensland

Regional Harbour Master's office: 4973 1200

Office hours: 8.30 am–4.30 pm, Monday to Friday
10 am–4.30 pm, Wednesday

After hours emergency: 4973 1208 (report marine incidents, marine pollution and navigation aid faults after office hours).

Marine emergencies including search and rescue, call 000.

Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol: 4972 0699

Queensland Water Police: 4971 3222

Volunteer rescue organisations

Call sign	Hours	Frequencies monitored			Telephone contact
		27 MHz	VHF	HF	
VMR Gladstone	8 am–6 pm weekends and public holidays	88	16, 80, 82	2182	4972 3333
Coast Guard Keppel Sands	6 am–6 pm Tues–Thurs	88	16, 21, 22, 67, 81, 82	2524, 4125, 6215, 8291, 12290	4934 4906

Recreational boat registration and licensing enquiries: 13 23 80.

Produced with input from
Maritime Safety Queensland
Department of Transport and Main Roads
GPO Box 2595 Brisbane 4001
Website: www.msq.qld.gov.au

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This book should only be used as a guide and the legislation is determinant. You should review the law if you have any doubts. The information in this edition is current at the time of printing. Check the Maritime Safety Queensland website for the most up-to-date information.

Introduction

Gladstone harbour and the surrounding areas are great places for boating and on-water activities. With the increase in commercial traffic during construction activities on Curtis Island, this booklet provides boating safety information for the local area. The rules and regulations are also included as a handy reference.

Recreational marine driver licence

In Queensland, a marine licence is required to operate a recreational boat which is powered by a motor greater than 4.5 kilowatts (kW) (over six horsepower (hp)) and you must have a personal watercraft (PWC) licence to operate a personal watercraft.

Valid marine licences

Licences are issued by Maritime Safety Queensland in accordance with the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994* and include:

- recreational marine driver licence
- recreational ship master's licence
- speed boat driver's licence
- current commercial marine licence as master – for example, coxswain.

Equivalent licences

Licences issued by other safety authorities within the Commonwealth of Australia or other entities recognised by Maritime Safety Queensland include current boating licences issued in other states (excludes junior licences).

Overseas licences

Overseas licences can be recognised in some situations. See the Recreational Licensing section of the Maritime Safety Queensland website for information.

Obtaining a licence

To obtain a Queensland recreational marine driver licence you must:

- be aged 16 years or older
- demonstrate you are competent to navigate and manage a recreational boat by successfully completing an approved BoatSafe licence training course
- complete the Medical Fitness Disclosure Statement and present it to the BoatSafe training provider at enrolment for the BoatSafe course – if you are unable to complete the Medical Fitness Disclosure Statement due to concern about your medical fitness, you should contact Maritime Safety Queensland
- provide satisfactory evidence of identity – a photographic Queensland driver licence (current or expired less than two years) is acceptable.

After you have successfully completed an approved BoatSafe training course, you must present the statement of competency (copies are not accepted), a licence application form and acceptable evidence of identity in person at a Department of Transport and Main Roads customer service centre. If your original statement of competency is lost, you must get a replacement from your training provider.

Personal watercraft licence

To operate a personal watercraft or jet ski, you must hold a personal watercraft licence. You must hold a current and valid marine licence before being able to get a personal watercraft licence.

Interstate personal watercraft licences

If you move from interstate, you will be required to obtain a personal watercraft licence unless you hold an equivalent current personal watercraft licence issued by another state. Short-term visitors can use their boat licence equivalent if that is all that is required to operate a personal watercraft in their home state.

Registration

In Queensland, all boats with a motor or auxiliary of three kilowatts or more (over four horsepower) must be registered when on the water. A completed Recreational Ship Registration Application form must be lodged at a Department of Transport and Main Roads customer service centre. Fees are calculated on the length of your boat.

Third party insurance

Third party insurance is not included in the cost of registering your boat. Independant advice should be sought about insurance if required.

Recreational boats 15 metres (m) and over

Applications for new registration, transfer of ownership or change of boat particulars for boats 15 m and over must be endorsed by Maritime Safety Queensland before they can be processed by a Department of Transport and Main Roads customer service centre.

Registration symbols

Your boat will be allocated registration symbols. These must be clearly visible in plain characters in a contrasting colour to the hull of your boat. The size of the characters depends on the type of boat and must be able to be read from a distance of 30 m away:

- boats not capable of planing must have characters a minimum of 75 millimetres (mm) high on both sides or on the stern
- boats capable of planing must have characters a minimum of 200 mm high on both sides
- personal watercraft registration symbols must be:
 - displayed on both sides
 - at least 100 mm high
 - easily seen while the craft is underway.

Registration label

When you register your boat or personal watercraft a registration label will be issued. For a boat the registration label must be placed on the exterior of the boat

in a conspicuous place above the waterline on the port (left) side. The registration label on a personal watercraft must be displayed on the port (left) side of the craft adjacent to the registration symbols.

Australian Builders Plate

An Australian Builders Plate is required for new and imported recreational boats built from 1 July 2006. It provides essential safety information on the uses and limitations of most new and imported recreational vessels. The Australian Builders Plate should be permanently fixed and readily visible to the boat's operator. If it can not be seen from the steering position, a capacity label should be affixed.

Capacity labels

All registrable recreational boats, with the exception of sailing boats, must have one or more capacity labels attached unless the boat is fitted with an Australian Builders Plate in the correct position. Capacity labels should be placed near the boat's control area/s where they can be seen by the operator at all times. A penalty could apply if a capacity label is not attached, unreadable or located in the wrong position on the boat.

There are three different capacity labels available:

- powered boats under six metres
- powered boats six metres and over
- powered boats with a flybridge.



The operator must keep in mind that the label indicates the number of people the boat can safely carry in good conditions and smooth waters. When using the boat in partially smooth or open waters or in rough conditions the operator should consider reducing the number of people taken on the trip.

Insurance

Legislation requires all boats over 15 m (for example 15.01 m) in length to have insurance sufficient to pay for potential pollution clean up, salvage and wreck removal.

The insurance policy must meet the following requirements:

- All recreational boats more than 15 m but less than 35 m in length must have an insurance policy that provides \$250 000 for pollution clean up and \$10 million for salvage and wreck removal.
- All commercial boats more than 15 m but less than 35 m in length must have an insurance policy that provides \$500 000 for pollution clean up costs and \$10 million for salvage and wreck removal.
- All boats 35 m or more in length must have a policy that provides \$10 million for pollution clean up costs, salvage and wreck removal.

Boats visiting Queensland coastal waters are also required to comply with the legislation. Temporary insurance cover may be necessary if existing insurance coverage does not meet the above requirements.

A current certificate of insurance must be carried onboard and be available for inspection by compliance officers. Penalties apply for non-compliance.

Navigation lights

By law, boats operating from sunset to sunrise, whether at anchor or under way, must display the correct lighting. A boat is deemed to be under way when it is not at anchor, made fast to the shore or aground, or if it is drifting.

Navigation lights must also be used in daylight hours during periods of restricted visibility, or in other circumstances when it is deemed necessary.

Lights must be placed and displayed appropriate to the size and class of the boat. These lights tell other operators about the boat and what it is doing, whether it is at anchor or under way.

Navigation lights must be positioned so they are not obscured by the boat's superstructure, or interfered with by the deck lights. They should be fitted by the manufacturer or an authorised person.



The masthead and/or all-round white light must be fitted (if practical) on the centre line of the boat (bow to stern).

Boats underway

The minimum requirements for lights are:

- power
 - less than 7 m in length with a maximum speed not exceeding seven knots requires a white light visible all round and if possible, separate or combined side lights
 - less than 12 m in length requires separate or combined sidelights, a masthead light and stern light; or separate or combined sidelights and an all round white light
- sailing boats
 - less than 7 m in length are the same as those over seven m. If not, a torch or lantern showing a white light ready to be displayed to avoid a collision
 - more than seven m in length and less than 20 m in length requires a combined lantern at or near the top of the mast that incorporates side lights and stern light; or separate side lights and stern light.

Boats at anchor

These boats must show an all round white light placed where it may be best seen. Anchor lights must always be shown from sunset to sunrise.

If you are at anchor or in an area subject to a high volume of passing traffic, then show additional deck lights (not navigation lights) to ensure you are seen, and keep a good watch.


















Commercial high speed passenger ferries

Ferries capable of speeds greater than 20 knots, must display an all round yellow light when underway or making way in Gladstone Harbour.

Other visible warning signals (including flags, day shapes and lights)

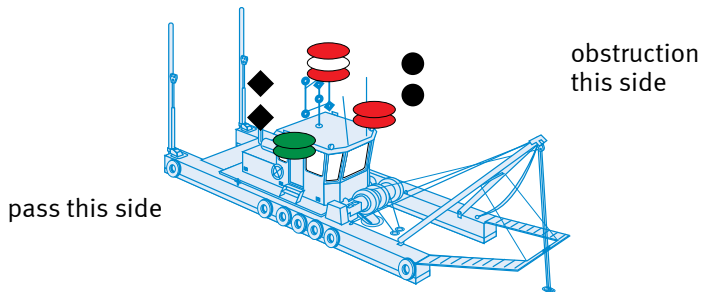
There are many other signals, or combination of signals, used on commercial boats that relate to a specific operational work activity like fishing, dredging, not under command, towing and diving.

These signals are in addition to the standard navigation lights indicating port-hand, starboard-hand and anchor lights. A simple rule for small boats is to stay clear of any other boats exhibiting warning signals in the form of flags, day shapes and lights.

	Vessel	Day shapes	'Signature lights'	Notes
Keep out of the way	Not under command *			Replaces masthead light(s)
	Restricted in ability to manoeuvre *			
	Constrained by draft			
	Engaged in fishing *			
	Engaged in trawling *			
	Sailing		No masthead light	
	Power-driven		Masthead light	
* displays sidelights and stern light only when making way				
	Towing		 *	Up to 200 m
			 *	Over 200 m
		* replaces one masthead light (same arcs as masthead)		
		** stern		
	At anchor			
	Aground			

Examples of commercial boats commonly encountered exhibiting such warning signals are:

- Construction and maintenance work boats – these craft often go unrecognised by passing boat traffic as they are stationary beside a wharf. The effect of wash on this work platform can pose a considerable risk to workers who move between the moored platform and the operational site (navigation aid). These flags mean to proceed at a slow speed when passing so as to create no wash.
- Dredging plant – these boats display the signals that they are restricted in their ability to manoeuvre and also indicate which side the obstruction is, and on which side they can be safely passed.



Additional caution should be exercised around this boat as it is generally associated with either a floating or submerged pipeline marked by buoys that is connected to an onshore pump-out spoil basin.

Water limits

Because the conditions experienced on Queensland's waterways are so diverse, three designated water limit areas have been established. These affect the types of regulated safety equipment required to be carried on board:



smooth waters – include rivers, creeks, streams and lakes; waters within breakwaters or revetments; and within half a nautical mile from land within partially smooth waters and other waters specified in legislation.



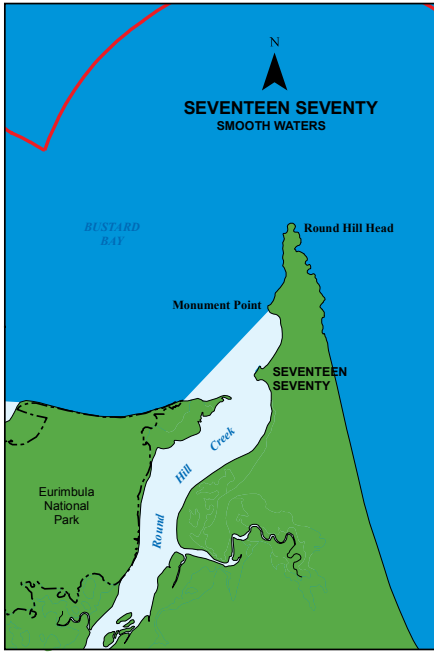
partially smooth waters – are determined by Maritime Safety Queensland and are specified in legislation.



beyond smooth and partially smooth waters – areas beyond these limits.



the red line designates limits beyond which an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) must be carried.



Safety equipment for recreational vessels and personal watercraft (PWC)

All equipment must be in good working order, and not past the expiry date for replacement or service (EPIRB, fire extinguisher).

- Boats not requiring registration means recreational boats with an engine or auxiliary under 3 kW (4 hp). Required means otherwise.
- Boats requiring registration means recreational boats with an engine or auxiliary of 3 kW or more (over 4 hp). Required means otherwise.
- Tenders do not require registration if operated within 2 nautical miles (nm) of the primary boat. Tenders that do not require registration should consider equipping a tender with safety equipment appropriate to the location of operation.
- PWC means personal watercraft for example a jet ski.
- Required means equipment that must be carried. Recommended means equipment that is suggested to be carried.

Item	Smooth water		
	Not requiring registration	Registered*	PWC
EPIRB(406 MHz) Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon. When operating more than 2 nm from land. Must be registered with AMSA. Registration must be renewed every two years.			
Signalling device for example a torch, or fluorescent light, or lantern or cyalume stick. Required when operating between sunset and sunrise.	required	required	required
Personal flotation devices (PFDs)/life jackets[#] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the appropriate size for each person (12 months and over) on board, except if a person is wearing an inflatable diver jacket and the vessel is engaged in diving activities. • Children under 12 must wear the PFD when underway in an open boat under 4.8 m. • Skiers or people being towed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – PFD type 2, 3 or level 50 or level 50 special purpose, or wetsuit with inbuilt flotation approved as PFD type 3 in smooth waters. – PFD type 2 or level 50 in partially smooth waters. 	PFD type 1, 2 or 3 or level 275, 150, 100, level 50 or level 50 special purpose recommended	PFD type 1, 2 or 3 or level 275, 150, 100, level 50 or level 50 special purpose required	PFD type 1, 2 or 3 or level 275, 150, 100, level 50 special purpose recommended
V sheet			
Flares two red hand flares and two orange smoke flares.			
Fire fighting equipment all boats over 5 m. Must be capable of extinguishing a fire quickly and effectively.	recommended	required	
RideSmart sticker must be visible from steering position.			required
Capacity label except sailing ships. Must be visible from all steering positions.		required	required
Navigation chart and a liquid damped compass appropriate to the operational area, or other directional finding or positioning equipment. For a PWC without a chart or compass, an electronic navigation device appropriate to the operational area.			
Anchoring For boats less than 5 m, the cable can be chain or rope. For boats over 5 m, the cable can be chain of at least 2 m attached to anchor and rope. Length of chain/rope should be appropriate for the depth of water you are anchoring in. For a PWC, an anchor and cable appropriate to area of operation.	recommended	recommended	
Pumping/bailing equipment			
Manual propulsion oars or paddles (boats under 6 m)	recommended	recommended	
Drinking water enough for everyone onboard for the trip	recommended	recommended	

extinguisher, flares and inflatable life jackets).

Requirements or recommendations listed also apply to international or interstate boats operating in Queensland.

Requirements or recommendations listed also apply to international or interstate boats operating in Queensland. Boats that do not require registration are not required to carry safety equipment other than a light for signalling. Operators

are required to carry to meet the general safety obligation.

WC	Partially smooth waters			Beyond smooth and partially smooth waters		
	Not requiring registration	Registered*	PWC	Not requiring registration	Registered*	PWC
				required	required	required
	and be replaced or serviced by the manufacturer (or authorised service agent) by this date; must comply with the manufacturer's instructions and must be registered in the name of the owner/master with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.					
required	required	required	required	required	required	required
type 2 or level 100 or level 50 special purpose required grab bars required in retained tender km of positive form.	PFD type 1 or 2 or level 275, 150, 100, or level 50 recommended	PFD type 1 or 2 or level 275, 150, 100, or level 50 required	PFD type 2 or level 50 required	PFD type 1 or level 275, 150 or 100 recommended	PFD type 1 or level 275, 150 or 100 required	PFD type 2 or level 50 required
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PFDs must be worn when crossing designated bars in open boats under 4.8 m. PFD not required for a registered* tender to a recreational boat if used within 1 km of the primary boat and tender has a positive flotation statement** in the approved form. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PFDs must be worn when crossing designated bars in open boats under 4.8 m. PFD not required for a registered* tender to a recreational boat if used within 500 m of the primary boat and tender has a positive flotation statement** in the approved form. 		
	recommended	required	required [^]	recommended	required	required [^]
	recommended	required	required [^]	recommended	required	required [^]
	recommended	required		recommended	required	
required			required			required
required		required	required		required	required
	on Builders Plate or a label issued by Maritime Safety Queensland. Not required for international or interstate					
	recommended	recommended	recommended [^]	recommended	recommended	recommended [^]
	recommended	recommended	recommended [^]	recommended	recommended	recommended [^]
able e each	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> less than 5 m, one anchor with 27 m cable 5-8 m, one anchor with 27 m cable over 8 m, two anchors with 37 m cable each 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> less than 5 m, one anchor with 27 m cable 5-8 m, one anchor with 27 m cable over 8 m, two anchors with 37 m cable each 		
	recommended	recommended		recommended	recommended	
ity acy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> under 5 m: suitable bailing equipment 5-8 m: bilge pump 45 L/minute capacity over 8 m: bilge pump 70 L/minute capacity 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> under 5 m: suitable bailing equipment 5-8 m: bilge pump 45 L/minute capacity over 8 m: bilge pump 70 L/minute capacity 		
	recommended	recommended		recommended	recommended	
	recommended	recommended	recommended [^]	recommended	recommended	recommended [^]

Further information to accompany safety equipment table:

* Also includes boats/tenders that are required to be registered but are not.

** A positive flotation statement is a certificate, in the approved form, from a manufacturer or an accredited marine surveyor. It is not required to be carried on board, but an enforcement agency may ask the owner to provide proof of its existence.

^ Does not apply to a PWC operating in an approved aquatic event or beyond partially smooth waters and within 0.5 nautical miles from land.

Owners/masters must give each person on board information about where the safety equipment is kept. PFDs (or life jackets) must be clearly visible to passengers or readily accessible and indicated by a clearly visible sign with a white background marked with the word 'life jackets' in red letters or vice versa.

The following table compares the types of life jackets and PFDs under the Australian standards.

Under standard AS 4758	Under previous standards
Level 275 Level 150	Coastal life jacket
Level 275 Level 150 Level 100	PFD type 1 (AS 1512–1996)
Level 50	PFD type 2 (AS 1499–1996)
Level 50 special purpose	PFD type 3 (AS 2260–1996)

Speed limits

In boating areas maximum speed limits apply. There are penalties and on-the-spot fines for exceeding a speed limit. For safety reasons, it may be necessary to stay well below these limits depending on the conditions.

Before boating in unfamiliar areas, find out if there are any special speed restrictions. Contact the Gladstone Maritime Safety Queensland regional office, local authorities or marine parks and obey speed restriction signs.

The following restrictions apply throughout Queensland whether signs are present or not.

A speed limit of six knots:

- within 30 m of
 - boats anchored, moored to the shore or aground
 - a jetty, wharf, pontoon or boat ramp
- within 30 m of people in the water
- in boat harbours and marinas.



A speed limit of six knots, no wash applies to all boats operating in and out of the Gladstone Marina and its associated waterway Auckland Creek.

Even at slow speeds your boat will create a wash. Look behind at your wash and be aware of the impact this can have on other boats, people in the water or the shore. Travelling at the speed shown on a speed restriction sign does not guarantee you are not creating excessive wash.

When navigating near, in or through a mooring area drive slowly and keep wash to a minimum and keep a lookout for people in the water, small dinghies and trailing ropes.

A six knot speed limit applies to vessels of all sizes in these areas:

Auckland Creek

All waters of Auckland Creek from an imaginary line drawn across the creek from approximate latitude $23^{\circ} 50.413'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 14.071'E$ to approximate latitude $23^{\circ} 50.468'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 14.071'E$ then seaward to an imaginary line commencing from approximate position latitude $23^{\circ} 49.905'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 15.233'E$ across to the flashing green marker at approximate position latitude $23^{\circ} 49.878'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 15.137'E$ continuing then to approximate position latitude $23^{\circ} 49.875'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 15.049'E$.

Boyne River

The waters of Boyne River commencing at the John Oxley bridge at latitude $23^{\circ} 56.83'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 21.44'E$ then north along the western shore to the mouth of the river at latitude $23^{\circ} 56.16'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 21.29'E$ and across the river mouth to latitude $23^{\circ} 56.17'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 21.45'E$ then south along the eastern shore to the bridge at latitude $23^{\circ} 56.79'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 21.5'E$ and across the bridge to the starting point.

Lake Awoonga

The waters of Lake Awoonga commencing at the easterly point of Coomal Bay at latitude $24^{\circ} 4.48'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 18.3'E$ and extending approximately 250 metres out into the waters of Lake Awoonga in a south westerly direction to latitude $24^{\circ} 46.02'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 18.18'E$ and then extending approximately 2000 metres in a north westerly direction to a position on shore latitude $24^{\circ} 3.85'S$, longitude $151^{\circ} 17.34'E$.

Personal watercraft distance off rules

When riding a personal watercraft you must remain under 6 knots within 60 m of:

- people in the water
- anchored or moored boats, boat ramps, jetties or pontoons
- the shore
- the boundary of a bathing reserve.

Remain under 10 knots within 30 m of another moving vessel unless the personal watercraft is involved in an approved aquatic event or where doing so would endanger the driver or another person.

Freestyling is prohibited to outside 200 m of the shore near residences.

The rules for operating safely

Collision rules

The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea are the traffic laws of the sea. They give clear indication about passing, approaching, giving way, overtaking, and avoiding collisions with other boats. The regulations apply uniformly to all boats and PWC, and all operators must thoroughly understand and apply the rules in all situations.

An operator must do whatever is necessary to avoid a collision, with actions that are clear and deliberate, so that other operators can see and understand your intentions.

Keeping a proper lookout

A good lookout, through sight and sound, must be kept at all times. Be aware of other boats, especially in bad weather, restricted visibility and darkness.

Travel at a safe speed

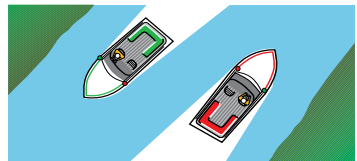
Always travel at a speed at which you can safely manoeuvre to avoid a collision. This will vary depending on prevailing conditions like water depth, visibility, traffic density, proximity to hazards, and background lighting. Keep a safe distance from other boats. The faster the speed, the greater the safe distance must be.

Assessing risk of collision and taking action

Use all means available to assess whether another boat poses a risk of collision. One early indicator is to see whether the bearing of a closing boat is virtually steady. If it is, a risk of collision exists and early positive action (changing course and or speed) can be taken to eliminate the risk.

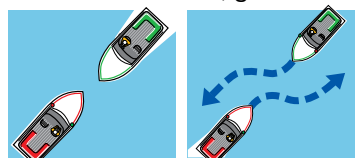
Channels

When navigating in a narrow channel, all boats should travel on the starboard side (right hand side) of the channel in the direction of travel with both boats passing each other along the port (left hand side) side. If plenty of distance separates two passing boats, there's no need to deliberately alter course to pass to the right of the other one. The rule is there to remove doubt in the event of a close situation. Small boats (including sail) should keep clear of larger boats that have limited room to manoeuvre in channels.



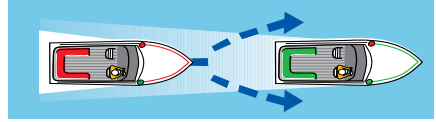
Giving way

The golden rule for powered boats is for the operator to look all around, give way to the right, turn to the right and stay right. When meeting in a head on situation, both boat operators are required to alter their course to starboard (right), with the turn large enough to be obvious to the other boat operator.



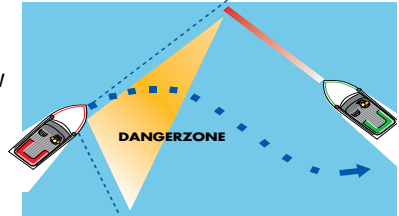
Overtaking

If you are overtaking a boat, you can do so to either side of the boat you wish to pass, keeping well clear during overtaking. Be particularly careful in narrow channels, make sure that you have sufficient distance to complete overtaking, and do not rapidly cut in front of the boat that you have just passed.



Crossing

Powered boats – when two boats are crossing, the boat on your right hand side has right of way. You should keep clear, alter course or slow down to pass astern (behind) of the other boat. If you have the right of way, be predictable and keep your course and speed. However, if the other boat does not give way, the boat with the right of way must take action to avoid a collision.



Sailing boats:

- wind on the same sides – when both sailing boats have the wind on the same side, the boat to windward shall keep out of the way of the boat to leeward
- wind on different sides – when each sailing boat has the wind on different sides, the boat with the wind on the port side shall keep out of the way of the other.

If you are sailing with the wind on the port side and you see a sailing boat to windward and cannot determine with certainty whether it has the wind on the port or starboard side, take action to keep clear.

Sail and powered boats – a powered boat generally gives way to sail unless the sailing boat is in the process of overtaking it. However, don't expect large, less manoeuvrable boats under power to give way. All small boats should give large vessels a wide berth.

Sound signals

Most recreational boats under 12 m in length don't use sound signals (horn or bells), however they are used by larger vessels with restricted manoeuvrability. Be aware of signals and what action you should take when you hear a signal. Sound signals may be accompanied by light signals.

The more common signals used are:

- One short blast means 'I am altering course to starboard'.
- Two short blasts mean 'I am altering course to port'.
- Three short blasts means 'I am operating engines astern (the vessel may be reversing or stopping)'.
- Five or more short blasts means 'I am unsure of your intentions'.

Boats propelled by paddles and oars

Waterways are also home to a variety of non-powered boats such as canoes, kayaks, surf skis and rowing sculls. These boat types create little or no noise/wash and have a very small profile on the water. This makes the detection of such craft very difficult for the boat operator, especially if looking towards the sun when it is low on the horizon, when it is raining, or during fog conditions.

In an endeavour to maintain a degree of separation between powered and non-powered boats, it is generally accepted that all non-powered boats keep close to the bank on the starboard side in the direction of travel, and operate within that one third of the waterway width. This provides for the central one third with deeper water to be available for powered boats.

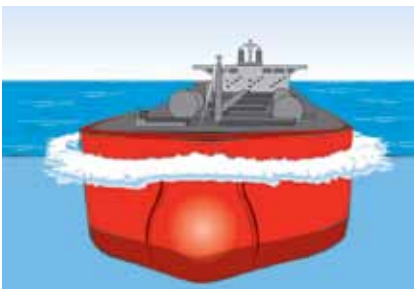
Shipping channels

Interaction between ships and small boats

A combination of increased shipping movements and record numbers of recreational boats is creating more congestion in and adjacent to shipping channels raising the potential for interaction between ships and smaller boats.

Recreational boats and commercial boats operating and fishing in shipping channels place themselves in a high risk situation, particularly those who do not have or use a VHF radio to communicate with large ships and monitor local shipping movements.

Large ships often travel at speeds in excess of 20 knots and fully laden cargo ships or tankers can have a stopping distance equal to 28 football fields (2.5 nautical miles). When travelling in narrower channels, such as entering a port, a ship can have as little as 600 mm under-keel clearance and can neither turn or slow down.



A small boat within several hundred metres of a ship can be unseen from the helm of a ship, with the bow of the ship and sometimes cargo such as containers obscuring the view. This blind spot can sometimes extend for several nautical miles and smaller boats rarely appear on ship radar.



It only takes about 15 minutes from the time a ship is spotted on the horizon by a small boat to the potential time of impact. In the event of engine failure on a small boat this interval can prove fatally short.

Vessels 10 metres (m) in length or greater

The master of a vessel 10 m in length or greater must report to Gladstone Harbour Control (VTS) on VHF channel 13 and maintain a listening watch on that frequency when entering, leaving or moving within the Gladstone pilotage area. Sailing vessels are required to use the safe navigable waterway extending from the recommended small craft course for the South Channel and the waters to the south. After making the crossing of the shipping channel at aids to navigation G1 and G2, then proceed in a similar manner on the northern side of the recommended small craft course to travel to The Narrows or the North Channel, or until the crossing of the shipping channel towards the entrance of Auckland Inlet and the Gladstone Marina.

What precautions should recreational boaties take to increase safety?

- Whenever travelling across or alongside a shipping channel, keep a constant lookout. From water level, large ships travel quietly.
- When near a shipping channel monitor the appropriate VHF channel for the area.
- Cross a shipping channel at 90 degrees behind a ship and never cross in front.
- Avoid travelling within and along a designated shipping channel.
- Avoid anchoring near or fishing in the channels next to navigation aids marking a designated shipping lane.

Skippers of small vessels should, where possible, keep clear of ship navigation areas such as:

- major shipping routes
- pilot boarding grounds
- anchorages
- channels
- swing basins
- berths.

Notices to Mariners

Maritime Safety Queensland circulates marine safety information to mariners, organisations and other interested parties, in the form of Notices to Mariners.

Notices to Mariners for the Gladstone region provide information about activities associated with construction works such as:

- dredging operations
- temporary beacon placements
- exclusion zones
- no wash zones.

You can register to receive Notices to Mariners electronically at the Maritime Safety Queensland website under the Notices to Mariners section.

Marine radios

While it is not compulsory to carry a marine radio as part of your safety equipment, there are advantages in doing so. You can:

- monitor Gladstone Harbour traffic on VHF channels 13 and 16
- contact volunteer rescue organisations
- make contact in the event of an incident or assistance being required.

Mobile phones are commonly carried on boats and should only be considered as a back up device. Mobile phones may be out of range, have low batteries or become water damaged.

Let someone know where you are going

Before you head out for a day on the water, it is a good idea to let someone know where you are going. It can be a family member or a friend or you can advise your local volunteer rescue organisation of your boating trip. They will need details of your boat, how many people on board where you are going and when you intend to return. You will need to 'log off' with them when you return. If an emergency happens, rescue authorities will have information to help find you quicker.

Don't expire

Carrying expired safety equipment is like not carrying it at all. The highest number of marine infringement notices are issued for expired safety equipment being carried. As part of your pre-trip checks remember to look at expiry dates on:

- flares
- EPIRB — must also be registered with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority with the registration sticker affixed to the beacon
- inflatable life jackets — must be serviced in line with the manufacturers' instructions.

A few minutes checking your gear could save you in an emergency.

WARNING FOR ALL SMALL CRAFT NEAR SHIP NAVIGATION AREAS GLADSTONE

