

Marine Incidents Annual Report

2003



**Queensland
Government**

Maritime Safety
Queensland

May 2004

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Cover and title page photograph – collision between two commercial passenger vessels – Pride of Airlie and Sun Paradise in the Whitsunday Passage on 18 November 2001.

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Director-General's Foreword

It is encouraging to see further improvement in Queensland's maritime safety outcome in 2003. While there has been continuing improvement over the past 25 years, the outcome for 2003 is commendable.

Queensland's population continues to grow faster than any other state in Australia, vessel registration numbers continue to grow, and on-water boating activity continues to grow as do retail boat sales. Despite increasing exposure and added pressure, boating in Queensland is safer today than at any time in the last three decades.

However, the challenge is ongoing and the boating community, both commercial and recreational, needs to be vigilant in embracing 'safety' as a culture—as a core boating value.

For its part, Maritime Safety Queensland since its establishment in October 2002 has demonstrated its commitment to the safe, efficient and environmentally sound use of Queensland's waterways. The agency's safety programs and education campaigns continue to play a vital part in making boating activity safe—as do the activities of external agencies such as the Queensland Water Police, the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol and volunteer marine rescue organisations.

Reports like the Marine Incidents Annual Report help us to better understand why and how incidents occur on our waterways. Our objective in preparing the annual report on marine incidents is to assemble and analyse incident data in order to inform future decisions about maritime safety initiatives.

As Director-General of Queensland Transport, I am pleased to formally report on Queensland's maritime safety performance in 2003 and I look forward to the continued cooperation between Maritime Safety Queensland, commercial, fishing, and recreational boating communities and our partner agencies, the Queensland Water Police, the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol and volunteer marine rescue organisations in 2004 to further improve safety on our waterways.



Bruce Wilson
Director-General
Queensland Transport

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Year in review

Queensland's good performance in terms of marine safety continued in 2003, with the best marine safety outcome for many years.

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, Queensland's maritime fatality rate per million of population has fallen over the last ten years by more than 62 per cent from 5.14 in 1990-1994 to 1.93 in 2000-2002. This compares with the rate for all of Australia for the same period that shows a decline from 7.68 to 2.07. Queensland improved from being ranked sixth of the eight Australian jurisdictions in the period 1990-1994 to second overall in the period 2000 - 2002, despite registered vessel numbers in Queensland increasing by more than 38 per cent.

In 2003, 645 marine incidents were reported in Queensland—a decrease of five incidents from the 650 incidents reported in 2002.

The most frequently reported types of marine incidents in 2003 were collisions between ships and unintentional groundings—each with 125 such incidents reported. Commercial passenger vessels and recreational sailboats were the most frequently involved vessels in reported marine incidents. 162 commercial passenger vessels and 101 recreational sailboats were involved in the 645 reported incidents during the year.

There were 28 incidents resulting in fatalities or serious injuries in 2003. The number of fatalities resulting from these incidents fell again in 2003—from 10 in 2002 to seven in 2003. This fatality outcome is well below the previous four-year average of 11 fatalities per annum. Five of the fatalities in 2003 resulted from incidents involving recreational vessels and two from incidents involving commercial vessels.

Queensland's maritime fatalities per million of population and per 100,000 registered vessels also reflect this downward trend.

There were 22 serious injuries requiring hospitalisation reported in 2003, down from 61 in 2002. The most frequent fatal and serious injury incident type in 2003 was 'person overboard', with six such incidents resulting in four fatalities and two serious injuries.

The major defining characteristics of incidents resulting in fatalities or serious injuries in 2003 included:

- good visibility (71.5 per cent)
- clear weather (71.5 per cent)
- daytime period (67.9 per cent)
- no damage (67.9 per cent)
- smooth waters (53.6 per cent)

Recreational speedboats, with 11 boats involved, were the most frequently involved vessel type in incidents that resulted in fatality or serious injury in 2003. Nine commercial passenger vessels were also involved in these more serious incidents in 2003.

A series of profiles later in this report examine a number of these incident characteristics and attributes in more detail.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report provides an account of the health of Queensland's maritime safety environment as reflected by the number and nature of reported marine incidents for the year 2003. The report is made in accordance with section 127 of the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994* (the Act).

The report and the data and investigative systems underpinning the report together contribute to the following objectives outlined in section 3(2) of the Act:

- (a) *to allow the Government to have a strategic overview of marine safety and related marine operational issues; and*
- (b) *to establish a system under which:*
 - (i) *marine safety and related operational issues can be effectively planned and efficiently managed; and*
 - (ii) *influence can be exercised over marine safety and related marine operational issues in a way that contributes to overall transport efficiency; and*
 - (iii) *account is taken of the need to provide adequate levels of safety with an appropriate balance between safety and cost.*

1.2 Marine incidents defined

Section 123(1) of the Act defines a marine incident as an event causing or involving -

- (a) *the loss of a person from a ship; or*
- (b) *the death of, or grievous bodily harm to, a person caused by a ship's operations; or*
- (c) *the loss or presumed loss or abandonment of a ship; or*
- (d) *a collision with a ship; or*
- (e) *the stranding of a ship; or*
- (f) *material damage to a ship; or*
- (g) *material damage caused by a ship's operations; or*
- (h) *danger to a person caused by a ship's operations; or*
- (i) *danger of serious damage to a ship; or*
- (j) *danger of serious damage to a structure caused by a ship's operations.*

Consistent with the nationally endorsed data model for reporting marine safety incidents, a serious injury incident is defined as a marine incident where a person involved in the incident suffers any injury requiring admission to hospital.

1.3 Marine incident investigative and data systems

Section 125 of the Act requires marine incidents to be reported to Maritime Safety Queensland. All reported incidents are investigated—with more serious incidents undergoing more comprehensive investigation by trained and authorised shipping inspectors. Data from marine incident reports and subsequent investigation reports is recorded in a marine incident data management system. The data recorded is largely consistent with the national marine incident data set developed and endorsed by the National Marine Safety Committee. All Australian maritime jurisdictions are progressively moving toward full systems compliance with the national data set requirements.

Some incidents occurring in the maritime environment fall outside the earlier definition of a marine incident. These include workplace health and safety incidents that are not directly related to the operation of a vessel and collisions involving international trading vessels that are covered for reporting and investigation purposes under the *Navigation Act 1912 (Cwealth)*. To present a fuller picture of safety management within the maritime environment in Queensland, Maritime Safety Queensland maintains information on any such incidents involving a fatality that come to its attention. A review of out-of-scope fatal incidents is included in section 2.3.2 of this report.

1.4 Marine boards of inquiry

Under section 126 of the Act the Minister for Transport may on the recommendation of the chief executive, establish a board of inquiry into a reported marine incident. In 2002, the Minister convened a board of inquiry into the collision in the Whitsundays between two commercial passenger vessels, the *Pride of Airlie* and the *Sun Paradise*. A report on the board of inquiry was tabled in the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 13 November 2003. The report contains 41 findings of fact in relation to the collision and makes 13 recommendations. Maritime Safety Queensland is committed to implementation of the inquiry recommendations over the coming year with a view to preventing similar incidents from occurring and improving safety on our waters. A copy of the board of inquiry report is available at the Maritime Safety Queensland website: www.msq.qld.gov.au.

1.5 Structure of the report

As the report title implies, the focus is on marine incidents as a measure of maritime public safety. The report identifies the more significant incident categories and characteristics, and those showing significant change in 2003. This provides not only a sound basis for the determination of factors requiring further analysis, but also a sharper tool for shaping future maritime safety strategies and interventions.

The first section of the report includes interstate and intrastate trend analysis. These analyses are made using both population and the size of the registered vessel fleet as measures of potential exposure to marine incidents.

An examination is then made of comparative regional performance within Queensland before examining fatality and serious injury (FSI) incidents that carry a significantly higher social cost for the community.

Subsequent sections rank incident characteristics according to the extent of their involvement in incidents. This enables the identification of groupings of major incident characteristics and assessment of significant changes in the extent of their involvement in marine incidents over a five-year period.

The report then focuses on selected aspects of marine incidents for more detailed analysis. Interspersed among these selected profiles are a series of incident safety reports. These reports summarise marine incidents that actually occurred in Queensland in 2003. The reports highlight the lessons to be learnt from each incident. The cases presented here are representative only, and have been selected for the learning points that may benefit mariners confronted with similar circumstances.

To enable readers to gain further insight into marine incident trends and characteristics, time-series data for each characteristic of reported marine incidents are included at Appendix 1.

A review of the boating incidents reported by volunteer marine rescue organisations in 2003 is also included. Boating incidents represent an important early-warning barometer of safety performance in the maritime environment.

Regional volunteer marine rescue organisations perform an important role in the promotion and preservation of maritime safety in Queensland. They attend thousands of calls from boat operators for assistance each year and play a vital role in the practical handling of both marine and boating incidents.

The aim in this and future reports is to accurately represent the major features of marine incidents in Queensland, to identify areas where safety performance has improved, and to pinpoint hotspots for subsequent management.

In reading this and previous years' reports, it should be noted that at any given time, data and/or case details relating to reported marine incidents might be outstanding or incomplete. Consequently, marine incident data for recent years is subject to updating in subsequent years' marine incidents annual reports.