

4. Boating incidents

4.1 Introduction

Boating incidents are those incidents which involved calls for assistance from volunteer rescue authorities for problems such as mechanical breakdowns, running out of fuel and fouled propellers.

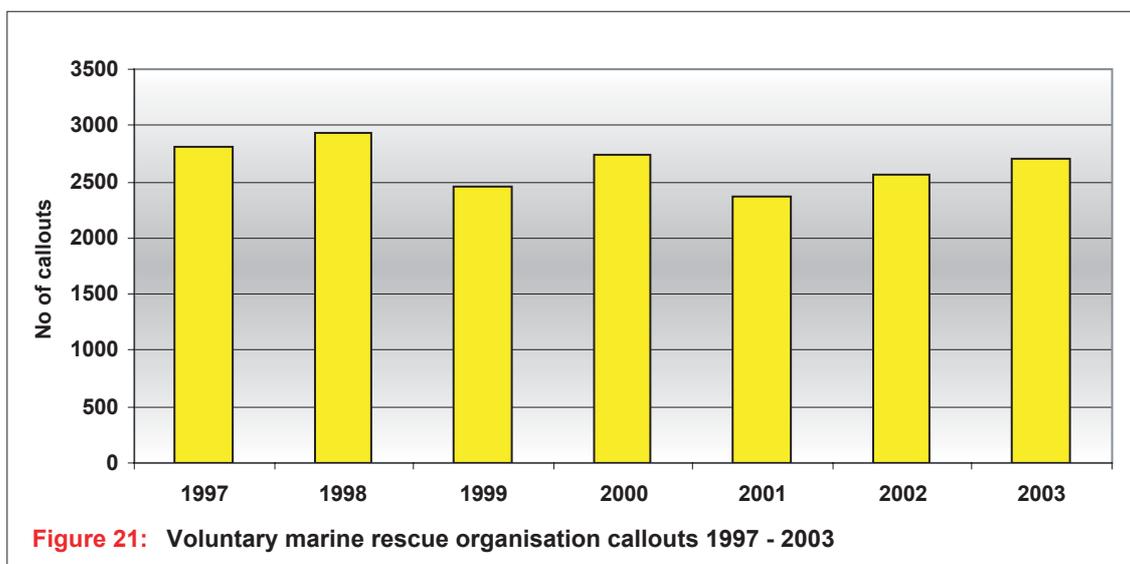
While boating incidents are not counted as marine incidents (unless their severity qualifies them as such), boating incident data provided by regional volunteer marine rescue organisations has been included to supplement the analysis of marine incidents contained in this report. Boating incident reports also provide a useful tool for validation of the level of marine incident reporting by highlighting incidents that might have escaped the normal marine incident reporting process.

In 2003, regional volunteer marine rescue organisations including the Australian Volunteer Coastguard Association and the Queensland Volunteer Marine Rescue Organisation combined to provide a strong safety net for the professional and recreational maritime community in Queensland. As well as attending callouts for assistance, they continue to perform an important extension role for Maritime Safety Queensland in its administration of maritime safety programs.

4.2 Callouts for assistance

Voluntary marine rescue and coastguard flotillas reported responding to 2697 callouts for assistance state-wide in 2003—138 more callouts than in 2002 and marginally up on the previous four-year average of 2623 callouts.

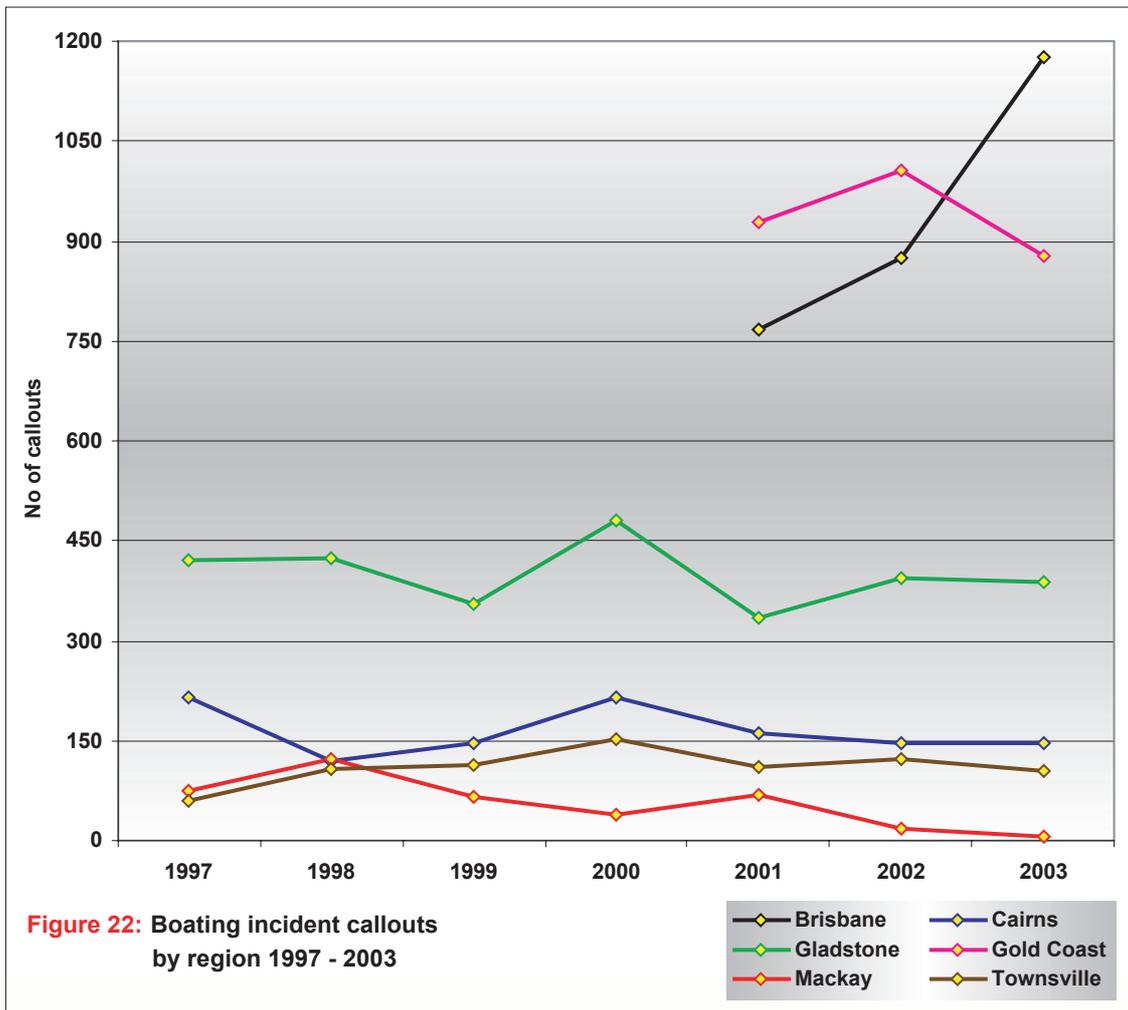
Figure 21 shows comparative boating incident callout numbers for the past seven years.



South-East Queensland (Brisbane and Gold Coast regions) with more than 56 per cent of the state's registered vessel fleet, reported 2053 (76.1 per cent) of the state's callouts in 2003. This is significantly higher than this region's corresponding proportion of marine incidents (41.7 per cent), and well above the combined region's four-year average number of callouts of 1797 callouts. After the combined South-East Queensland region, the next most significant number of callouts occurred in the Gladstone region with 388 callouts (14.3 per cent)—in line with the region's four-year average number of callouts of 391.5.

Figure 22 provides a comparative regional breakdown of boating incident callout numbers over the last seven years. Disaggregated data for Gold Coast and Brisbane region boating incident callouts was not available to Maritime Safety Queensland until 2001.

It is noted that boating incident callout numbers in the Brisbane region have been increasing since 2001. It is not clear whether this is the result of more comprehensive reporting by volunteer organisations in the Brisbane region or whether there has been an increase in real terms in the number of boating incidents occurring. Reporting of boating incidents is voluntary. It is also noted that reported boating incidents in the Mackay region continue to be low relative to other regions. It is understood that this may be the result of under-reporting by volunteer organisations in the region.



Incident study 6 - Recreational boating incident

The vessel

3.8 metre aluminium recreational dinghy fitted with an old outboard motor

The incident

The 26 year old male owner of the dinghy went fishing in Moreton Bay by himself intending to return before dark. The vessel was not fitted with radio or any other communications device. Nor did the operator have any flares on board, as he intended to return during daylight. When he hadn't returned by 8pm his family contacted the local Coast Guard station to report him missing. The family did not know where he launched his boat or where he was intending to fish. The Water Police were contacted and a search of local boat ramps and an on-water search was commenced. At about 10:30 pm, the dinghy and its owner were located after he had rowed ashore. The dinghy owner was suffering exhaustion after rowing for some five hours following mechanical problems with the old outboard.

Safety insights

- There is significant risk associated with single person operation of a vessel. Extra care is required to ensure proper operation of equipment like engines and batteries
- Always tell family or friends on land where you are going and when you expect to return
- If you have radio equipment, advise your local Coast Guard/VMR stations of your movements
- Plan and prepare for the worst - carry emergency signalling devices like flares, V-sheets and torches so you can attract attention

4.3 Reasons for callouts

During 2003 the predominant reasons for the assistance provided by volunteer organisations included:

- breakdowns—1547 callouts (57.3 per cent)
- fuel problems—271 (10 per cent)
- grounding of the vessel—194 (7.2 per cent), and
- vessel sinking (taking on water)—169 (6.2 per cent)

Fuel problems mentioned above included contaminated fuel, leaking fuel lines and running out of fuel.

Figure 23 shows the top ten reasons for callout. These reasons for callout reinforce the ongoing need for marine safety education and awareness programs to address basic operational boating issues. Maritime Safety Queensland uses this data to inform initiatives like the BoatSMART campaign and other boating safety educational campaigns.

Tables 29 and 30 in Appendix 1 of this report provide further data relating to boating incidents.

