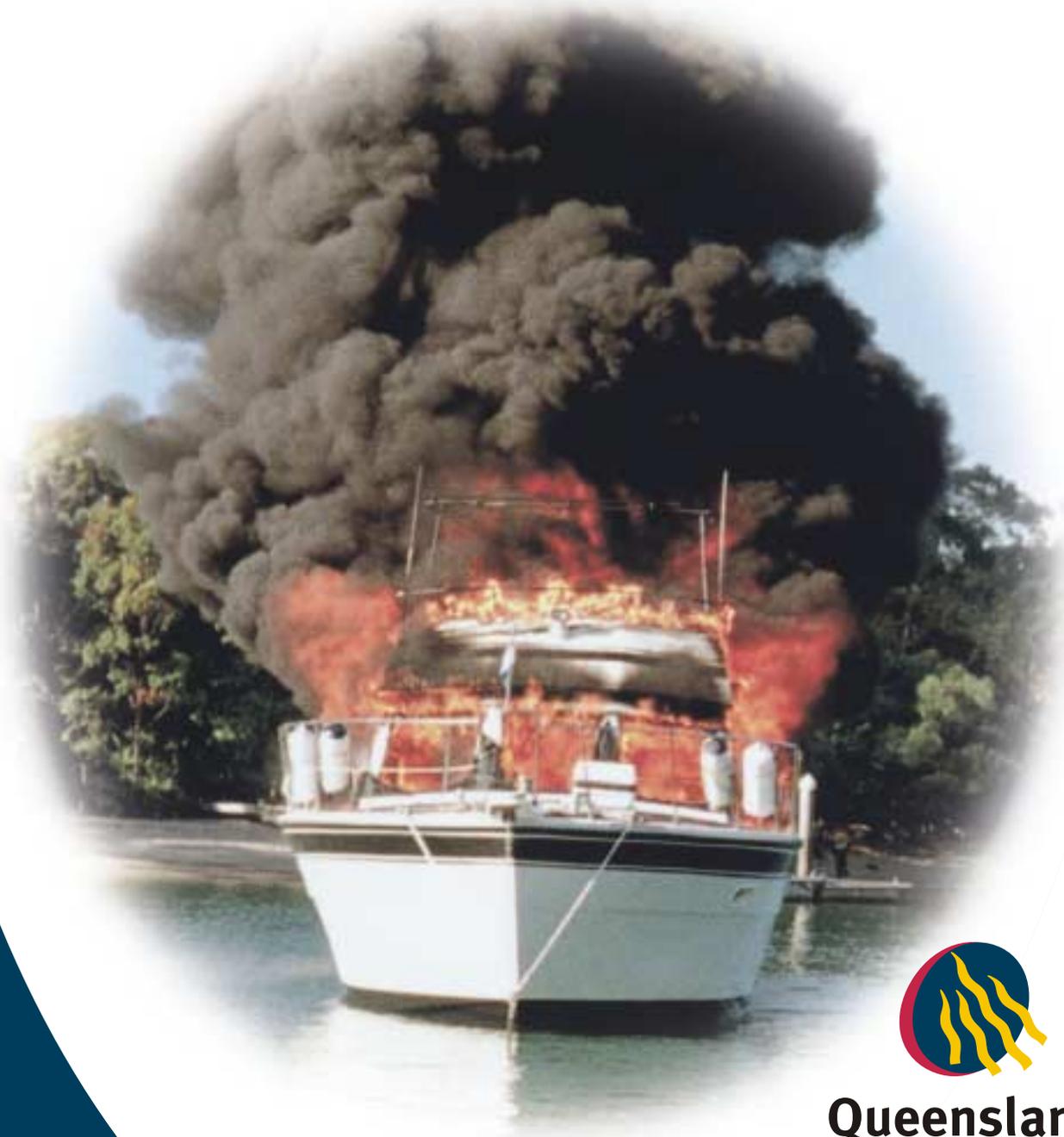


# Marine Safety Incidents Annual Report

2002



**Queensland  
Government**

Maritime Safety  
Queensland

May 2003

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Government**

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Queensland**

**May 2003**

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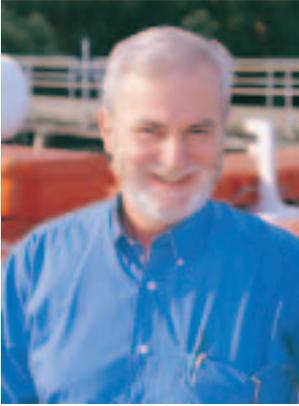
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## General Manager's Foreword



Over the past 25 years, Queensland's maritime safety record has improved significantly.

In the last five years, Queensland's population has risen by more than ten per cent and the number of registered vessels by a staggering 31 per cent. Despite this significantly increased exposure on our waters, serious marine incidents have been trending downwards.

There is nonetheless no room for complacency in the ongoing management of maritime safety. Even if we could ignore the personal and emotional trauma resulting from fatalities and serious injuries in the maritime environment, we cannot quickly or easily dismiss the social and economic costs of marine incidents to our State's economy.

With these challenges before us, and by acknowledging that maritime safety is not just a government responsibility, but a joint government, industry and community challenge, we can together ensure that effective and innovative measures are set in place to continuously improve maritime safety. To do this, we need to better understand why and how incidents occur on our waterways. The compilation of annual marine safety incident reports is foundational to this understanding process. Our aim is not to simply produce a report, but to analyze and use the data that has come at such a high price in terms of suffering and loss, to inform future maritime safety initiatives.

In October 2002, the Queensland government established a new government agency—Maritime Safety Queensland. The creation of this agency was further evidence of the government's ongoing commitment to safe, efficient and environmentally sound use of Queensland's waterways.

As General Manager of Maritime Safety Queensland, I am pleased to formally report on Queensland's maritime safety performance in 2002 and I look forward to working closely with commercial, fishing, and recreational boating communities and our partner agencies, the Queensland Water Police and Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol in 2003 to further improve safety on our waterways.

Captain John Watkinson  
General Manager  
Maritime Safety Queensland





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## Executive Summary

According to recent data enabling interstate comparisons, Queensland's maritime fatality rate per million of population has fallen over the last ten years by more than 66 per cent from 5.14 in 1990-1994 to 1.80 in 2000-2001. This compares with rates for all of Australia for the same period that show a decline from 4.51 to 2.15, respectively. Queensland improved from being ranked sixth of the eight Australian jurisdictions to second overall in 2000 - 2001, despite vessels on register in Queensland increasing by more than 35 per cent.

In 2002, 629 marine incidents were reported in Queensland. This represents an increase of 25 incidents from 2001. There is evidence that much of the steady increase in the numbers of incidents reported in recent years has been due to better understanding of incident reporting requirements and improved levels of reporting of marine incidents.

There were 58 incidents resulting in fatalities or serious injuries in 2002, up 13 (28 per cent) on 2001. While the aggregate number of fatalities and serious injuries resulting from these incidents increased from 55 in 2001 to 69 in 2002, the actual number of fatalities fell from 12 in 2001 to ten in 2002. The 2002 fatalities outcome has fallen below the previous four-year average of 10.50 fatalities per annum.

The major defining characteristics of incidents resulting in fatalities or serious injuries in 2002 included:

- the daytime period (74 per cent)
- good visibility (66 per cent)
- no damage (64 per cent)
- clear weather (62 per cent)
- Brisbane/Gold Coast (55 per cent)
- offshore waters (31 per cent)

There was only a small number of characteristics of incidents resulting in fatalities or serious injuries that showed growth in 2002. Recreational speedboats, recreational motorboats and commercial fishing ships were over-represented in their involvement in incidents resulting in fatalities and serious injuries. Human operational error and inattention were also over-represented in their involvement in incidents resulting in fatalities and serious injuries—being nominated as contributing factors in 23 of the 58 reported incidents in 2002. Combined, these factors support Maritime Safety Queensland initiatives to implement enhanced training and assessment processes for operator competency, particularly for recreational vessels.

Collisions between vessels, after showing a substantial decline in involvement in 2000 and 2001, were marginally over-represented in 2002. There were nine incidents involving collisions between vessels that resulted in fatality or serious injuries—approximately nine per cent above the previous four-year average involvement in 8.25 incidents.

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



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# 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 2002. The report is made in accordance with section 127 of the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994* (the Act).

The report and the data systems from which it has been sourced are consistent with the 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.*

Section 123(1) of the Act defines marine incidents. For ease of reference, the statutory definition for a marine incident together with a definition for a serious injury incident have been reproduced at Appendix 2 of this report.

## 1.2 Data systems and classification

In 2000, Queensland Transport implemented an enhanced marine incidents management system with the agreement and co-operation of Queensland Transport's maritime compliance and enforcement partners—Queensland Police Service (Water Police) and Queensland Boating & Fisheries Patrol. The enhanced management system brought further clarity into reporting arrangements, investigation protocols and incident case management.

Queensland Transport made further enhancements to the marine incidents management system in 2001. The changes related to the classification of marine incidents involving serious injuries—most notably, the more rigorous classification of serious injury incidents. This enhancement is consistent with the agreed national marine incident data set established for reporting purposed by the National Marine Safety Committee in 1998. The national data set defines serious injury incidents as those where a person suffers an injury requiring admission to hospital.

Since 2000, Queensland Transport has also maintained data relating to incidents that occur in the maritime environment, but are not marine incidents as defined in the Act. 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 investigation and reporting purposes under the *Navigation Act 1912 (Cwealth)*. A review of these types of incidents for the period 2000 - 2002 is included in this report to provide a fuller picture of safety management in Queensland's maritime environment.

## 1.3 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 greatest change in 2002. 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.



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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 categories for more detailed analysis. 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 2002 is also included. Boating incidents can be viewed as 'potential marine incidents that were avoided'. They 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—assisting in stabilisation at the scene of incidents and coaching those involved in the requirements for lodgement of boating or marine incident reports.

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 and intervention.

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 safety incidents annual reports.

