

Maritime region profile

Regional statistics

In all regions across the state, vessel registration growth has eased in the last year. Whereas in recent years the regions have experienced annual growth rates of between three and four per cent, now those rates have fallen below three per cent.

On an annual basis, Gladstone experienced the largest percentage gain in vessel registrations (2.8%) of any region, whereas Brisbane had the largest increase in raw numbers (+2400).

Of the 768 reported incidents in 2009, 33 per cent occurred in Brisbane, 16 per cent both in Gladstone and the Gold Coast, 15 per cent in Mackay, 12 per cent in Cairns and 9 per cent in Townsville.

While Brisbane region had a third of the year's reported marine incidents, it should be noted that it has 39 per cent of the state's registered vessels. It should also be acknowledged that a large share of Brisbane registered vessels are operated on the Gold Coast.

In 2009, Brisbane realised 26.7 marine incidents per 10 000 registered vessels, the lowest incident rate for any region (see Table 1) and well under the state level of 32.1. Three other regions experienced incident rates below the Queensland figure, including Gladstone (28.7), Townsville (29.3) and Gold Coast (31.1).

Although the incident rates for Mackay and Cairns were well above that for the state, both regions experienced marked improvements in 2009 with a 20 and 6 per cent change, respectively.

A number of regions experienced significant increases in the number of fatal incidents in 2009. There were five fatal incidents in Brisbane (leading to 6 deaths), three in Cairns (5 deaths), two in Gladstone (5 deaths), two in the Gold Coast (2 deaths) and one each in Mackay (1 death) and Townsville (1 death).

At the state level, 1 in 20 (5%) of reported marine incidents in 2009 were either a fatal or serious injury incident.

This ratio varies markedly across the regions. In this regard, the leading region in 2009 was Gladstone where 1 in 41 marine incidents were a fatal or serious injury incident (2%), followed by Brisbane with a ratio of 1 in 31 (3%), Mackay 1 in 28 (4%), Gold Coast 1 in 14 (7%), Townsville 1 in 13 (8%) and Cairns 1 in 10 (10%).

Type and location of incident

Thirty per cent of the Gold Coast's 122 incidents involved a collision between ships, well above the Queensland number (19%), and almost twice as many as any other region. Just under half of these took place in the often congested waters of the Gold Coast Broadwater.

A third of Brisbane's 250 marine incidents occurred on the Sunshine Coast, including three fatalities and two serious injuries. Half of the state's person overboard incidents took place in Brisbane region, resulting in the deaths of four people.

Almost a quarter (24%) of Gladstone's 124 marine incidents in 2009 were capsizing incidents, which was the highest level for any region in the state. One of these incidents involving a commercial fishing vessel led to a double fatality.

Three-quarters of Mackay region's 112 incidents took place in the Whitsunday area. Of those, 44 per cent involved a grounding incident and the majority (64%) of them occurred on hire and drive vessels.

Townsville also realised a relatively high number of groundings (30% compared to the state level of 18%), one of which led to a single person fatality.

Cairns recorded 27 capsizing and person overboard incidents for the year (14%), the highest proportion for any region. These types of incidents resulted in five fatalities and two serious injuries in the region.

Vessels in incidents

Of the 122 reported marine incidents in the Gold Coast region from 2009, 54 involved a recreational motorboat and 17 involved a recreational PWC. Whereas recreational motorboats made up 83 per cent of the region's registered vessels, they were involved in 44 per cent of the incidents. PWC were involved in 14 per cent of the region's incidents yet represent 12 per cent of the registrations.

In the Brisbane region, 88 incidents involved a recreational motorboat (35%) and 37 a recreational sailboat (15%). Whereas motorboats were substantially under-represented in incident involvement (they constitute 88% of the region's registered vessels), sailboats were significantly over-represented (4% of the registered vessels).

Last year there was a sharp rise in the involvement of commercial fishing vessels in Gladstone's marine incidents. Fishing vessels were involved in 26 incidents in 2009, compared with 11 in 2008 and an average of 18.8 over the prior four years.

Of the 112 marine incidents in Mackay in 2009, 33 involved a commercial passenger vessel (29%) and 30 involved a hire and drive vessel (27%).

About two-thirds of Townsville's incidents involved a recreational vessel. Recreational motorboats were involved in 38 per cent of incidents, even though they made up 92 per cent of the region's registered vessels. Sailboats were involved in 29 per cent of the incidents but represented just 2 per cent of the registered fleet.

For every year in the last decade, commercially registered vessels were involved in the majority of incidents in Cairns, although the number of incidents where commercial vessels were involved had dropped from a high of 81 per cent in 2000 to a low of 60 per cent in 2009.

Table 1 Marine incidents by region

	Marine incidents	Incident rate*	Serious injury incidents	Fatal incidents
BN	250	26.7	3	5
CN	94	44.7	6	3
GL	124	28.7	1	2
GC	122	31.1	7	2
MK	112	60.0	3	1
TV	66	29.3	4	1
QLD	768	32.1	24	14

Sources: CASEMAN, marine incident case management database; TRAILS, recreational registration and licensing database; CIRMS, commercial vessel registration database

*Reported marine incidents per 10 000 registered vessels in the region