



Transport
for NSW

Maritime Management Centre

Boating Safety Communications and Education Strategy 2015-18



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1. Overview

The Maritime Management Centre (MMC) leads in the strategic, policy, campaign direction and key stakeholder relations for boating in NSW. MMC works closely with Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) which is the operational delivery agency. MMC is responsible for this Boating Safety Education and Communication Strategy and RMS assists in operational delivery. The Strategy follows a three-year cycle and underpins education, communication, regulatory and compliance activities that promote a culture of safe and responsible boating state-wide.

Recreational boating is a popular pastime for hundreds of thousands of families in NSW. Each year around 2 million people go boating on NSW waters. There are almost 500,000 people who hold a licence to operate a recreational powerboat and almost 250,000 people with a registered recreational vessel.

Whilst boating is a relatively safe activity, an average of 14 lives are lost in boating incidents each year on NSW waters (over past decade). Whilst the loss of a single life is tragic for families and friends, the cost to the public of each fatality is estimated at \$4.2 million (ref. Federal Office of Best Practice Regulation).

Of the total number of fatalities the most common denominator is the failure to wear a lifejacket. Drowning is the major cause in the majority of boating fatalities, of which nearly all were not wearing a lifejacket. The vast majority of these fatalities involve males, aged 35-55, in small boats. See further statistics on the MMC website.

Incident statistics, analysis and anecdotal evidence point to the complacency of experienced skippers and boat owners, and a lack of water-safety awareness amongst the general public as important issues which will be considered across all elements of this Strategy.

A principal focus of this Strategy is to reinforce the key message of skipper responsibility - with secondary themes related to lifejacket use, safe navigation, trip planning, and alcohol restrictions. Lifejacket wear will continue to be a central campaign given its effectiveness and importance in drowning prevention. The Strategy aims to find the right balance between an emphasis on education and encouraging personal responsibility, and the need for regulation.

The Strategy identifies a range of sub strategies (section 5) to promote the key messages. These are targeted at varying boating demographics, delivered using a range of communication and education tools (section 6).

This is an evolving document. The Strategy is subject to regular review for both cost effectiveness and success in delivering safety messages.

Comments and suggestions are welcomed and should be forwarded to the Maritime Management Centre, PO Box K659 HAYMARKET NSW 1240 or email maritime@transport.nsw.gov.au.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Strategy are to **save lives** and prevent serious injury through the following:

1. encourage a culture of safer boating in NSW;
2. improve boating safety;
3. improve the reach of safety messages through technology, media and partnerships; and
4. support RMS Boating Safety and Education Officers in their duties, by ensuring the boating community is well-informed regarding boating rules and requirements.

3. Key Messages and Priorities

To be effective, safety messages must be clear and easily remembered, with a focus on acceptable behaviour. The overarching safety message of this Strategy is **You're the Skipper – You're Responsible**. The skipper, according to international maritime safety conventions, is responsible for the safety of their vessel and all on board. This message underpins the approach of this strategy which is to encourage personal responsibility by ensuring those who use NSW waters are aware of appropriate rules, requirements and codes of conduct. This is supported by the following sub- messages: These messages underscore the central priorities of this strategy.

1. Wear Lifejackets

- 1.1. Don't risk your life, wear a lifejacket
 - 1.1.1. especially in craft under 6m in length.
- 1.2. Chose a modern lifejacket
 - 1.2.1. one that can be worn in comfort for the duration of a typical day out on the water.
- 1.3. Make time for the proper care, maintenance and (for inflatables) servicing of lifejackets
 - 1.3.1. inflatable lifejackets must be serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

2. Navigate Safely

- 2.1. Keep a proper lookout at all times.
- 2.2. Keep to the right side of the waterway.
- 2.3. Keep to a safe speed for the conditions
 - 2.3.1. slow down at times of reduced visibility like at night or on a busy waterway
 - 2.3.2. watch your wash; the waves your vessel generates can cause a nuisance, annoyance and danger to others.
- 2.4. Tow safe when waterskiing or wakeboarding
 - 2.4.1. keep the boat and person towed well clear of other vessels and the shore.
- 2.5. Take care be prop aware
 - 2.5.1. particularly anytime there are people in the water.
- 2.6. Paddle safe
 - 2.6.1. do not cross in front of larger vessels and
 - 2.6.2. make sure you can be clearly seen.
- 2.7. Dive Safe
 - 2.7.1. skippers to watch out for and keep clear of divers (SCUBA, spearfishers and snorkelers).
- 2.8. Divers to make themselves visible to skippers.

3. Plan and Prepare

3.1. Blue water safety

- 3.1.1. Make sure your vessel and crew are up to the challenge.
- 3.1.2. Study the conditions and only go offshore when it is safe.
- 3.1.3. Log on and off using your marine radio.

3.2. Cold Water

- 3.2.1. Exposure to cold conditions can be fatal.
- 3.2.2. Ensure your boat is suitable.
- 3.2.3. Wear appropriate clothing and a lifejacket.

3.3. Night safety

- 3.3.1. Be bright at night.
- 3.3.2. Make sure your navigation lights are working appropriately.
- 3.3.3. Take time to understand the system of nav lights.
- 3.3.4. Keep a proper lookout.

3.4. Weather and conditions

- 3.4.1. Always check the weather before heading out.
- 3.4.2. Learn to understand and read weather patterns and be alert to changes.
- 3.4.3. A marine radio can help you stay in touch with weather updates and you can let other's know where you are.

4. Limit Alcohol

4.1 Go easy on the drink

- 4.1.1. The skipper must keep under the 0.05 limit.
- 4.1.2. Random breath testing applies to skippers underway.
- 4.1.3. When at anchor, appoint a designated driver in case the conditions become adverse and you need to move.

4. Target Audience

The boating community is diverse in age and background, and may have limited contact with professional boating organisations or peak bodies. Each of the key messages will be supported by various strategies targeting particular boating demographics:

Target audiences for the Strategy include:

- Boat licence holders.
- Registered boat and personal watercraft (PWC) owners.
- Other boaters not requiring vessel registration or a boat licence:
 - o esp. kayakers, paddlers, dragon boaters, rowers, off-the-beach sailors
 - e.g., catamarans and kite boarders.
- Family and friends of boaters:
 - o esp., partners and children.
- School children and younger boaters:
 - o primary and secondary school age.
- Commercial vessel operators:
 - o Including people who hire and drive.
- Older, experienced boaters; and
- Industry bodies and retailers.

Attention needs to be targeted towards non- traditional boat users, such as people from non-English speaking backgrounds and tourists hiring a vessel on rare occasions.

5. Strategies

Outlined here are four key strategies to engage and educate the public on boat safety. These categories complement and work across each other. These are:

i. Education and Awareness Campaigns

Education and awareness campaigns are crucial to ensuring rules and regulations are understood, and central to **changing attitudes** and **encouraging personal responsibility**. Campaigns ensure that the public is aware of rules and regulations, codes of conduct as well as new safety equipment, technology, and any forums that provide additional exposure to safety messages.

What does this strategy involve?

Identifying knowledge gaps: Research and analyse statistics and meet with stakeholders to identify how best to get messages through to the target audience.

Targeting campaign messages to at risk groups: Determine which groups are at risk and develop campaigns to hone safety messages.

Promoting rules and regulations and codes of conduct: Promote messages through campaigns, community service announcements, signage, online and advertisements.

Reinforcing messages and changing behaviour: Continue campaigns that resonate and drive changes to outdated attitudes and inform the inexperienced.

What are the proposed programs or actions?

- **Lifejacket wear campaign:** Educate boaters on lifejacket wear rules, availability of modern lifejackets and how to maintain, and service where necessary, lifejackets to encourage increased and consistent use.
 - Supported by Lifejacket Loan, Old4New and Retail Partnership.
- **Staying Safe Campaign:** Campaign on key boating safety messages as outlined in section 3 of this Strategy.
- **Youth Education Campaign:** Educate young boaters, especially in schools, with a focus on speed, alcohol, and weather conditions. Development of education and awareness mentoring roles involving safety partners. Supported by:
 - Boating Education Centres;
 - Marine Teachers;
 - Boating Industry; and
 - Yachting NSW.

ii. Outreach and Engagement

Reaching out and engaging key target groups at point of use sites is an effective strategy to directly communicate safety messages and advance specific campaigns to the public. Maintaining a physical presence at key sites at high use times captures key target groups that may not be captured by traditional education and awareness campaigns. Boating Safety Officers (BSO) and Boating Education Officers (BEO) bring valuable experience and “presence” to progress this strategy.

What does this strategy involve?

Engaging at the right locations at the right times: Identify high use sites where engagement with target audience has the biggest impact.

Maintaining a front-line presence: Be available to answer questions on site and build confidence between staff and the public.

Actively demonstrate and educate: Being involved in the direct education of the public on location and engaging in a less formal but more practical manner.

What are the proposed programs or actions?

- **Old4New:** Continue season three of the Old4New program during 2015/16 to educate the public on new generation lifejackets.
- **Take it Easy:** Continue the Take It Easy program in 2015/16 to promote safe and responsible use of personal water craft (PWC). The program has provided an opportunity to engage with family and friends of PWC users.
- **Watsons Bay Boating Safety Education Centre:** The Pilot Station (which officially opened in June 2015) is a valuable resource to reach out and educate the public on boating safety. The Centre will ensure that children from across the state get the boating safety message at a safe and convenient site on Sydney Harbour.
 - The Pilot Station forms part of a network of Marine Teacher Boat Smart Hubs across NSW that are now also located at: Ballina, Port Macquarie, Central Coast, Menai High and the Illawarra. These Hubs are providing a pathway for school students to learn marine knowledge and skills that includes safe and responsible boating as part of the Marine Studies curriculum in NSW High Schools.
- **Boating Safety Officers and Boating Education Officers:** The role and visibility of BSO and BEO can improve boating education and safety for the boating public. There is scope for a greater BSO and BEO presence at boat ramps especially at night, during high risk weather and at peak use times. There is potential for BSO/ BEO to play an important role in skill sharing and face to face education – particularly at boat ramps.
 - Deliver best practice public engagement at community events.
 - BEO to lead by example on shore through public engagement.
 - BSO to lead by example on-water safety.

iii. Build Partnerships and Support Industry

Engaging with safety partners and industry can further government priorities and promote boating safety. Building partnerships and supporting industry improves consistency of messages, allows for engagement in joint activities, sharing of resources and creates additional avenues to promote safety messages to a wider audience.

What does this strategy involve?

Engaging with safety partners including national and international organisations: Participating in committees to seek perspectives on new and existing safety trends and using these networks to ensure priority messages are reaching the right networks.

Engaging with industry partners: Identifying industry's specific roles and opportunities in the delivery of the priority messages in this strategy; identifying gaps in industry, and advocating and supporting industry innovation and education.

Building networks and developing joint strategies: Build and expand where possible the network of safety partners. Work together with partners to develop and deliver messages and actions to communicate and educate the target audience.

What are the proposed programs or actions?

- **Sydney International Boat Show:** Continue partnership with the BIA to advance the Show as a central forum to promote safety messages to a highly qualified audience.
- **The Lifejacket Retail Partnership program:** Support industry in development and promotion of priority safety messages.
- **Committee work:** Continue to engage in committees to identify national safe boating priority issues, address them through coordinated public education strategies and provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and knowledge; such as:
 - o NSW Water Safety Advisory Council;
 - o Safer NSW Waters Committee;
 - o NSW Education and Compliance Committee; and
 - o Australia New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group (ANZSBEG).
- **Marine industries and stakeholder groups:** Working with peak boating groups, boating clubs and associations, commercial vessel, particularly hire and drive sector, to reinforce boating safety messages throughout their networks of members and supporters.
- **Build network of Safety Partners:** Liaise with existing safety partners and build this network to support priority message outreach. Develop 'champions' of boating safety and extend the reach of traditional campaigns opportunities. An example of relatively untapped potential is the Fishcare Volunteers coordinated by DPI Fisheries; there are some 300 of these volunteers located statewide who are well placed to help promote water safety at ramps, schools and community events.
- **Aquatic Events:** Explore options to support aquatic events that bringing together a range stakeholders and the public that provide tactical opportunities to promote priority safety messages.

iv. Regulation and Compliance

Boating safety education is considered to be a more effective approach than an overreliance on enforcement strategies. However, regulation does play a part in informing the public on accepted safety practices and priority safety issues. This strategy seeks the right balance between education and regulation. Finding this balance goes towards encouraging personal responsibility.

What does this strategy involve?

Developing evidence-based regulation: Analyse statistics on boating incidents to identify where regulation is required, using evidence to communicate rationale.

Ensuring regulation is simple and up to date: Overall, boating safety regulation needs to be reasonable, practical, easy to understand and meet the needs of the modern boating environment.

Regulation as education: Utilising the regulation formation process to engage and educate the community on the reasons why regulation is needed.

What are the proposed programs or actions?

- **Marine Safety Regulation 2015:** These new regulations provide an opportunity to consult with the boating public and communicate key safety messages.

- **Engaging with other jurisdictions:** Continue collaboration with other state and international jurisdictions to identify and encourage best practice in the regulatory space, and open channels of communication with wider boating audience.
- **Boating Safety Officers** in partnership with Maritime Area Command have a key role in ensuring compliance with safety regulations. This has the dual function of educating the public on safety priorities.

6. Education tools

Tools to reach the various target audiences include:

- **Internet** – to maximise potential reach to an ever expanding public through tools such as:
 - social media including Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr, Instagram and Soundcloud
 - link to Social Media Management Plan; and
 - mobile phone apps, such as Boatwise.
- **Email and SMS** – explore opportunities to maximise the reach and effectiveness of these tools.
- **Direct Mail out** – via the ongoing renewal mail service to the RMS client database which has almost 500,000 licence holders and almost 250,000 people with a registered vessel.
- **Traditional media outlets** (TV, radio, print & indoor/outdoor ads):
 - Best used for broader safety messages, where the same theme applies to an entire community and to reach friends and family of regular boaters. More cost-effective in summer (peak boating season) and in regional media outlets in boating areas;
 - Work with other agencies (e.g., Fisheries and Police) where appropriate to maximise reach and impact of safety messages;
 - Support a network of regional spokespeople capable of promoting campaigns and general boating information in the media; and
 - Community Service Announcements.
- **Maritime publications** – including specialist marine publications and maritime mail outs and newsletters. Most effective at reaching commercial operators and boat licence or registration holders, and capable of conveying a more detailed or technical message than traditional media.
- **School curriculum** – working with the Department of Education to promote priority safety messages and training in Marine Studies courses, as well as formal marine safety advice for primary school children in areas with high boat ownership and recreational boating activity.
 - Support the Marine Teachers Association of NSW to deliver and expand, where appropriate, a network of Marine Studies ‘hubs’ in High Schools across NSW.
- **Accredited Training Providers** – ensuring safety messages are included in all formal training materials and courses, for TAFE (provider of commercial boating qualifications) and boating colleges (providers of basic boat licence training).
- **Refresher Courses** - Encourage boating organisations to deliver boating skills and knowledge refresher courses to members.

7. Measuring success

The Strategy will be evaluated annually by MMC in conjunction with RMS to ensure effectiveness. Where changes are required, these will be published as updates to the Strategy.

The following should be considered when reviewing the Strategy:

- Current research activities at RMS and TfNSW;
- Emerging technology in liaison with RMS and TfNSW; and
- Input from other agencies esp. RMS and TfNSW and key stakeholder groups such as RVAG.

Evaluation methods will include the following:

- Analyse key performance indicators such as incident rates and causes, fatality rates, lifejacket wear rates, complaints and penalty notices against specific campaigns and messages;
- Analyse the number of hits of safety websites, participation in online polls/SMS-email alerts, online subscriptions to services and public feedback and enquiries regarding safety campaigns;
- Consider national and international boating safety trends;
- Benchmark and monitor awareness levels of safety rules and regulations;
- Monitor on-water compliance check statistics against registration rates; and
- Public feedback.

NOTE: KPI to be based on 10-year periods to align with TfNSW systems.

In addition to specific campaign evaluations, the overall direction of the Strategy may be reviewed tri-annually by the Maritime Advisory Council.

8. Partnerships

Industry Partner and Community Stakeholder opportunities

- Boat shows and conferences, community events, festivals and aquatic events
- Schools, both primary and secondary
- Boating industry networks
- Water safety networks (e.g., Marine Rescue NSW, Surf Life Saving etc)
- Boating clubs and associations
- Maritime and boating media
- Local councils.

National and international organisations

- Australia and New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group
 - Dept. of Transport Western Australia
 - Transport Safety Victoria
 - Marine and Safety Tasmania
 - Maritime New Zealand
 - Australian Maritime Safety Authority
 - Bureau of Meteorology
 - Boating Industries Alliance Australia
 - Royal Life Saving Society
 - Yachting Australia
 - Surf Life Saving Australia
 - Dept. of Planning, Transport & Infrastructure South Australia
 - Maritime Safety Queensland
 - Australian Maritime Safety Authority

- o Australian Communications and Media Authority
- o Dept. of Transport Northern Territory
- Australian Water Safety Council
- US Coast Guard
- Canadian Safe Boating Council
- US National Safe Boating Council
- Royal National Lifeboat Institute (UK).

State Organisations

- Marine Advisory Council
- Recreational Vessels Advisory Group
 - o Australian Power Boat Association
 - o Boating Industry Association of NSW
 - o Boat Owners Association of NSW
 - o Department of Primary Industries - Fisheries
 - o Marine Rescue NSW
 - o NSW Police - Marine Area Command
 - o NSW Rowing Association
 - o PaddleNSW
 - o Personal Watercraft - PWC sector
 - o Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW
 - o Seaplane Pilots Association Australia
 - o Scuba Clubs Association of NSW
 - o Surf Life Saving NSW Inc
 - o Yachting NSW
 - o Marine Rescue NSW.

9. Budget

The 2015-18 Strategy budget is \$8.4 million over three years.

Note: This allocation is from the Waterways Fund which is derived from revenue raised through boating service fees for licences, registrations and moorings, and does not rely on funding from Treasury.

Prepared by:

Maritime Management Centre
18 Lee St
PO Box K659 HAYMARKET NSW 1240
Email: maritime@transport.nsw.gov.au