



Submission:

SA Recreational Boating Safety Strategy

ISSUE: SA Recreational Boating Safety Strategy

SUBJECT: BIA input to the inaugural Strategy

INTRODUCTION:

The Boating Industry Association Ltd (BIA) is the peak industry body in Australia representing the interests of boating including designers, manufacturers, importers, brokers, insurers, retailers, charters, yacht and boat clubs, marinas, events, surveyors and trades from boat builders to riggers, and more. BIA is an advocate for boaters and the boating lifestyle, and supports safe, responsible, and enjoyable boating. BIA has over 650 members in all States and Territories, of which 50% are in NSW.

The boating economy generates significant benefits. The BIA this year reported the industry had a national turnover of \$9.64 billion and directly employed more than 25,000 people (with more than 7000 additional contractors). Seventy-five per cent are in small family businesses, employing local workers and supporting local communities.

With more than 85 per cent of the population living within 50km of the coast, it is little wonder that almost 1 in 5 households have a boat or watercraft and that approximately 5 million Australians go boating each year. People of all ages, gender and ability participate in boating across paddle, power and sail for leisure and sport.

Boating delivers social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits, and spans metropolitan, rural and regional Australia.

SUBMISSION:

BIA acknowledges Marine Safety SA within the Department of Infrastructure and Transport, and welcomes the invitation to provide input to development of a Recreational Boating Safety Strategy to guide decisions and actions over the next five years to improve safety on SA waterways. BIA understands the aim of the Strategy is to help the Government deliver on its commitment to the Water Safety in South Australia: State Water Safety Plan 2021-2030.

BIA has completed a soft version of the Marine Safety SA survey with comments embedded (see **Attachment A**).

In addition to the attachment BIA would make the following high-level comments:



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Marine Safety SA is to be congratulated for making a commitment to develop the State's first recreational boating safety strategy. Such an approach has the potential to support safe, responsible and enjoyable boating into the future, and to promote boating as a family activity that delivers social, economic and environmental benefits to South Australia. It also establishes a measurable framework by which to focus on continual improvement on key priorities.

BIA supports policy work based upon robust and relevant long-term data (ideally a consistent past 10 years to enable statistical confidence in development and assessment of trends) that is objectively analysed in a way that can withstand independent peer review. Furthermore, any policy changes arising must have a clearly defined public need and benefit and only after consideration of:

- stakeholder impacts such as economic, environmental, cultural and social implications; and
- alternatives to legislative measures such as education and, where appropriate, compliance to existing requirements.

BIA notes the Background Paper references Fatalities and statistics provided by Royal Life Saving Australia taken from the National Fatal Drowning Database August 2022. This is a valuable source of information, however, for total context it would seem to focus only on 'fatal drowning'. Boating fatalities can also include non-drowning deaths by other causes such as impact or fatal blow.

BIA would invite Marine Safety SA to consider using the BIA Data service¹ to provide insights into behaviour on the water based upon real-time and historical data points from boaters on the water. When added to existing government data such as registration, licence and its own incident data, this real-time boating activity data can build a far more complete picture of boating activity and use in the State. This can only enhance the ability to develop and deliver robust policy outcomes.

Whilst this is the development stage of a Statewide strategy it is worth ensuring that any resulting thoughts of regulatory change consider the following principles:

- The need for government action should be established. Government action should only occur where it is in the public interest, that is, where the benefits outweigh the costs;
- The objective of government action should be clear;
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- The impact of government action should be properly understood, by considering the costs and benefits (using all available data) of a range of options, including non-regulatory options;
- Government action should be effective and proportional;
- Consultation with business, and the community, should inform regulatory development;
- The simplification, repeal, reform, modernisation or consolidation of existing regulation should be considered; and
- Regulation should be periodically reviewed, and if necessary reformed, to ensure its continued efficiency and effectiveness.

BIA recommends the Department consider incorporation of a Safe Systems approach that is simple, coherent, easily communicated and long lasting. It is also currently applied to road safety in South Australia, so consistency across the portfolio makes additional sense.

The Safe Systems approach to road safety in Australia has been described as a set of initiatives to ensure safer roads, speeds, people and cars need to be implemented together so the road system not only keeps us moving, but safe and protected. It would seem well worth considering for application on our waterways as well.

In NSW for example, the approach is applied to achieve the ultimate goal of zero deaths and serious injuries on NSW waterways, the Centre for Maritime Safety has adopted a Safe System Approach. In their case, the Safe System Approach is underpinned by these principles:

- People are human and sometimes make mistakes – a simple mistake shouldn't cost anyone their life;
- People are vulnerable;
- Boating safety is a shared responsibility – everyone needs to make safe decisions on and around the waterways to prioritise safety; and
- Consider strengthening all parts of the system.

A Maritime Safe System Approach can be made up of four parts:

1. **Safe Systems** – Legislation, governance, strategies, policies, data, innovation, research and analysis.
2. **Safe People** – Considers peoples' habits, education, capacity, compliance and behaviour.



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3. **Safe Vessels** – Making vessels safer with features that reduce the likelihood and severity of incidents.
4. **Safe Waterways** – Infrastructure designed and built to be more forgiving and reduce the severity and likelihood of human error.

BIA would suggest that the Strategy should also incorporate Responsible Boat Ownership which is a campaign theme already with the backing of the ARBSC and ANZSBEG for development into a sustained national education and behaviour change campaign.

The Responsible Boat Ownership campaign will encompass operational use (the old You're the Skipper, You're Responsible) along with care and maintenance, storage and purchase/ disposal. This issue of care and maintenance would appear particularly relevant to South Australia where the Strategy's background paper identified 'breakdown' as a major contributing factor when it comes to total boating incidents in the State. Responsibility is also a key issue when considering the Background Paper revealed Marine Safety Officer inspections of 12,000 vessels between March 2020-22 returned 40% non-compliance with safety regulations and requirements.

In conclusion, BIA appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this important policy development in SA and to further enhance boating as a standout choice in leisure for all Australians as it is safe, responsible and enjoyable. Boating genuinely matters as for example, in addition to economic benefits, it delivers social benefits including mental and physical health benefits (see **Attachment B**).

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Neil Patchett, General Manager Government & Public Relations, e. neil@bia.org.au or m. 0418 279 465 for more information or further discussion on this matter.

Issue date: 12 January 2024

ⁱ [BIA Data - Boating Reports, Research and Insights for Australia](#)

SA RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY STRATEGY SURVEY

1. **Ask all:** Do you have a South Australian boating licence? **Single select** (my entries are highlighted in green)

1.	Yes
2.	No
3.	Not sure

2. **Ask all:** Which of the following vessels do you own? **Please select all that apply**

1.	Powered boat (less than 4.8m in length)
2.	Powered boat (over 4.8m in length)
3.	Personal watercraft (commonly known as a jet ski)
4.	Canoe/ Kayak
5.	Sailing vessel
6.	Paddleboard/ surf ski
7.	Houseboat
8.	Do not own a vessel
9.	Other (specify)

3. **Ask those who own a vessel :** Which of the below options best describes how often you use your vessel? **Single select**

1.	Daily
2.	Several times a week
3.	Once a week
4.	Every few weeks
5.	Once a month
6.	Every few months
7.	Once a year or less often

4. For how many years have you been operating or using a vessel/s?

1.	Less than a year
2.	1 - 3 years
3.	4 - 6 years
4.	7 - 10 years
5.	More than 10 years

6. **Ask those who own a vessel:** What regions in SA do you generally boat in? (I.e., Robe, Yorke Peninsula, Encounter Marine Park, etc).

(If you do not have a typical location, please list the last location you boated)

Location	Gleneig was the last location that I 'boated' in SA but many other locations in a range of paddle/ power/ sail vessels across Australia since 1968
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7. **Ask those who own a vessel:** Do you use/ have on board any of the following emergency marine communications options when operating your vessel? **Select all that apply**

1.	VHF marine radio
2.	28 MHz marine radio
3.	HF marine radio
4.	Electronic Positioning Indicator Radio Beacon (EPIRB)
5.	Personal location beacon (PLB)
8.	Mobile phone
9.	Flares
10.	None of these
11.	Other (specify) Torch

8. **Ask all:** Please indicate how safe you perceive recreational boating to be in SA. Please rate on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents 'Very unsafe' and 5 represents 'Very Safe' **Single select**

1.	1 - Very unsafe
2.	2 - Unsafe
3.	3 - Neither safe nor unsafe
4.	4 - Safe
5.	5 - Very safe

9. **Ask all:** Why do you feel this way? (please be specific)

	Recreational boating is a relatively safe activity when compared with some other modes of transport such as road vehicles, however, every loss of life or serious trauma in boating is painful to friends and family of that person. This especially so, as more often than not, a person goes boating for leisure and recreation. Boating matters because is can deliver social benefits that includes mental and physical health benefits.
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10. **Ask all:** When considering recreational boating safety, are you concerned about any of the following? **Select all that apply**

1.	Speeding/ speed limits
2.	Lack of public awareness of boat safety
3.	Limited access to digital and live information (i.e.- webcams, marine safety apps, etc.)
4.	Limited training for boaters
5.	Lack of boating safety knowledge for boaters
6.	Access to local navigation and safety information
7.	Signage at boat ramps
8.	I have no recreational boating safety concerns

9. Other (specify) personal responsibility when boating ie., Responsible Boat Ownership (which spans purchasing the right boat for the intended use and ability, through to maintenance and repair to ensure the vessel is kept 'safe' or fit for purpose, and responsibility in use spanning safe navigation especially relevant to how it impacts on others (eg., speed and distance, and 'wash') and environmental consequence such as waste and sewage management.

I believe SA should consider a Safe Systems approach to boating; ie., a focus on three key themes: Safe People; Safe Vessels; and Safe Waterways. NSW has adopted this approach and it provides a simple, clear framework with which to approach the key areas of safe boating.

I am also concerned about data. That is a boating safety strategy much be framed around long-term (ideally a consistent approach of 10 years) data to provide the evidence base to support robust objective analysis that is able to withstand independent peer review.

11. Ask all: How confident are you in your understanding of the following.

Confidence in understanding	1 Not at all confident	2 Slightly confident	3 Moderately confident	4 Confident	5 Very confident
What lifejackets are required when operating vessel	1	2	3	4	5
Types of safety equipment required when operating vessel	1	2	3	4	5
Rules to operate vessel safely on the water	1	2	3	4	5
Judging safe speeds on the water and the range of speed limits	1	2	3	4	5
How to use a marine radio	1	2	3	4	5
How to use flares	1	2	3	4	5
How to use Emergency Positioning Indicator Radio Beacons (EPIRBs)	1	2	3	4	5

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12. **Ask all:** We will now ask you a series of questions to assess your level of support to increase recreational boating safety in SA.

Please indicate your level of support for each of the below statements regarding increasing boating safety knowledge and experience in SA through improvements to licensing and training.

Statement	1 Strongly oppose	2 Oppose	3 Neutral	4 Support	5 Strongly support	Don't know
Online refresher courses around safe vessel operation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Development of digital boat licence testing with associated training modules to help increase knowledge of safe vessel operation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Provision of practical courses for operating a motorised boat	1	2	3	4	5	6
Provision of specific personal watercraft (commonly known as a jet ski) practical courses for safely operating a personal watercraft	1	2	3	4	5	6
Provision of specific personal watercraft (commonly known as a jet ski) theory courses and testing for safely operating a personal watercraft	1	2	3	4	5	6

13. **Ask all:** Thinking about the topic of increasing recreational boating safety in SA and potential improvements to licensing and training, is there anything else you would like to add?

The NSW model of learning (with options for self learning or use of an RTO, practical logbook and testing has merit. Options for 1, 2, 3 and 5 year licences has merit ie., provide the public with choice as to what best works for them. The fee **must** be modest and the revenue **must** based on a hypothecated structure whereby all the revenue is ploughed back into the products (eg., education, App etc), programs (eg., education and compliance) and services (eg., infrastructure, signage, online services etc) to support recreational boating.

14. **Ask all:** Now thinking about recreational boating for younger individuals (aged 12 to 15 years), which licencing model do you support for making boating safer for young boaters in SA?

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1.	Not allowing anyone under the age of 16 to obtain a boat licence
2.	Allowing 12 to 15-year-olds the opportunity to gain a special permit to operate under the supervision of a full boat licence holder with restrictions until they turn 16 years old (requiring a theory test)
3.	Allowing 12- to 15-year-olds the opportunity to gain a special permit to operate unsupervised with restrictions until they turn 16 years old (requiring a theory and practical test)
4.	Don't know/ not sure

15. **Ask all:** What operational restrictions would make boating safer for individuals aged 12 to 15 years?

1.	Only operating a vessel 4 metres or less with an engine that does not allow the vessel to go more than 10 knots
2.	Limit speed to 10 knots
3.	Limit on the hours of operation (daytime only)
4.	Shoreline restrictions – for example only operating up to 2 nautical miles (3.7 km) from shore on coastal waters NOTE: recommend this permissible distance offshore is reduced significantly as BIA believes 3.7km offshore for a 12 yr old in a small boat is much too far
5.	Increasing the minimum age for vessel operation to between 14 and 15 years
6.	12 to 15-year-olds should not be able to operate a vessel unsupervised
7.	Other (specify)

16. **Ask all:** Thinking about the topic of young person licencing, is there anything else you would like to add? **Single select**

	There is merit in the approaches by TAS and NSW which enables young people to learn the skills of operating a boat with restrictions framed around responsibility ie., limit speed, limit hours of opp ie., not a night, no towing. A young adult licence, with limitations esp., speed, will enable a person to responsibly develop skills in Safe, Responsible and Enjoyable boating respectful of others esp., speed and safe distance.
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17. **Ask all:** We will now ask you a series of questions to assess your level of support for increasing marine safety education about recreational boating. Please indicate your level of support for each statement:

Education	1 Strongly oppose	2 Oppose	3 Neutral	4 Support	5 Strongly support	Unsure/ don't know
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Increased education for the general public around boating safely (including boating safety equipment requirements)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Increased education for school-aged children around boating safely	1	2	3	4	5	6
Increased education about lifejackets to boat owners	1	2	3	4	5	6
Increased education about boat maintenance requirements to boat owners	1	2	3	4	5	6
Increased education to retailers who sell boating safety equipment	1	2	3	4	5	6

18. **Ask all:** Thinking about the topic of recreational boating education, is there anything else you would like to add?

	Such effort must be appropriately funded and sustained to make a real difference. Short-term and inadequately funding education programs almost always fall short in terms of sustained positive outcomes. The BIA also strongly support Education before Regulation.
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19. **Ask all:** We will now ask you a series of questions to assess your level of support related to making boating safer for all users. Please indicate your level of support for each statement:

Reform	1 Strongly oppose	2 Oppose	3 Neutral	4 Support	5 Strongly support	Unsure / don't know
Conducting a speed limit review for coastal and river waters in SA	1	2	3	4	5	6
The Department partnering with a boating safety app to provide simple, easy, relevant safety information to recreational boaters	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consistent signage for coastal and protected waters at boat ramps, reminding users of safe speed and safety equipment requirements	1	2	3	4	5	6

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More web cameras across the state at boat ramps to help boaters assess boating conditions	1	2	3	4	5	6
A review of safety equipment requirements for different vessels	1	2	3	4	5	6
Prioritising compliance activities to reduce risk and promote safer waterways.	1	2	3	4	5	6

20. **Ask all:** Having considered all topics covered in this survey, is there anything else you would like to add? **Single select**

	<p>The Priority must be on education first and then compliance. Education must come before Compliance. Compliance without appropriate education is a failure of process. The two are closely related and when delivered with the appropriate balance, leading with education, there exists a significant opportunity to positive behaviour change in pursuit of a culture of safer boating.</p> <p>BIA would encourage SA to adopt the Deckee boating app. This app arose from an Digital Innovation Challenge in NSW and is now adopted by regulators in TAS, WA and NSW. It also has support from the National Safe Boating Council in the USA. Deckee is by far the most advance, comprehensive boating app in Australia and is already designed to carry information from regulators to its almost 500k users in Australia on matters such as Marine Notices, Aquatic Events, Safety Campaigns and more. Best of all, it is free to the public.</p>
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21. **Ask all:** What is your main interest in this topic? **Single select**

1.	General interest
2.	I am a boater
3.	I live along/ nearby a waterway that is used for recreational boating purposes
4.	I am representing a group or organisation
5.	Other (specify) I represent the Boating Industry and have a long standing commitment to supporting safe, responsible and enjoyable boating. More details on my background at (6) Neil Patchett LinkedIn

22. **Ask all:** Do you belong to a water sports or boating club? **Single select**

1.	Yes, I am part of a club
2.	No, I am not a member of a water sports or boating club

23. **Ask all:** What is the postcode and suburb of where you live?

Postcode1	4571
Suburb1	Kin Kin

24. **Ask all:** What year were you born? **Enter a number**

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Policy Guide Social Benefit

Introduction

The Boating Industry Association Ltd (BIA) is the peak industry body in Australia that represents the interests of boating which includes designers, manufacturers, importers, brokers, insurers, retailers, charters, yacht and boat clubs, marinas, events, surveyors and trades from boat builders to riggers, and more. BIA is an advocate for the boating industry including marinas/ boatyards, boating public, boating lifestyle and supports safe, responsible, and enjoyable boating across Australia.

The boating industry makes a significant contribution to the social fabric of Australia, an island continent with 35 821km of coastline¹.

Boating delivers benefits for people of all ages, gender and ability; spanning the following: recreational and commercial participation in paddle, power and sail; public health and well-being; employment; tourism; environment; and economic.

Boating is a way of life for many Australian families and it is estimated that 5 million people participate in some form of boating each year. The vast majority of which occurs in family runabouts and small sailing and paddle craft.

Background

Boating in Australia has a connection with the Aboriginal people of this land who were using watercraft such as bark canoes an estimated 8000 years ago². This was for transport, exploration and food gathering. Those themes continue today for boating in all its forms across paddle, power and sail.

Current Situation

As it currently stands, and not to forget those in our community who are less fortunate, Australians are collectively wealthier, living longer and better educated than ever before³; and are settling in coastal areas for the lifestyle benefits which includes being on, in, under and by the water.

¹ Geoscience Australia <https://www.ga.gov.au/home>

² <https://australianmuseum.net.au/blog/science/tentative-chronology-of-indigenous-canoes-of-eastern-australia/>

³ The 2016-17 NSW Intergenerational Report (IGR), titled Future State NSW in 2056



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The Federal Government says more than 85 per cent of the population live within 50km of the coast.⁴ Little wonder almost 1 in 5 households can have a boat or watercraft⁵. Most of these vessels are family runabouts and small sail and paddle craft.

Whilst metropolitan areas across the nation do provide a concentration of population and therefore are areas where boating has a strong foothold, a significant amount of boating activity takes place in rural and regional areas nationwide.

The boating economy generates significant social benefits through employment, much of which is supported by family businesses. Seventy-five per cent are small businesses, employing local workers and supporting local communities.

Boating plays a significant role in tourism in Australia, through recreational and commercial activities ranging from hire boat operations in regional areas through to major aquatic events.

Boating is a vibrant and significant part of the social and cultural fabric of the nation.

Health and Well Being

The award-winning marine biologist Dr Wallace Nichols is internationally renowned for his study into Blue Mind which, though a scientific evidence-based approach, has shown getting out on the water in a boat promotes rest, with significant physiological and psychological benefits. He has found that with our lives getting increasingly busy and stressed, boating is the perfect way to unwind and relax.⁶

On a boat, feel-good hormones (dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin) go up, while stress (cortisol) goes down.⁷

Dr Nichols says: "Being on a boat is one of the best ways to access the wellness benefits of the water".⁸

Through his research work, Dr. Nichols has identified that the mere sight and sound of water promotes wellness by lowering cortisol, increasing serotonin and inducing

⁴ <https://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/1301.0Feature%20Article32004>

⁵ Recreational Boating Participation Executive Summary, Transport for NSW (2018)

⁶ <http://www.wallaceinichols.org/122/bluemind.html>

⁷ <https://www.discoverboating.com/sites/default/files/downloads/YourBrainOnABoat.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.discoverboating.com/your-brain-on-a-boat>



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relaxation. Being on the water promotes physiological and psychological benefits that help manage trauma, anxiety, sleep, autism, addiction, fitness, attention/focus, stress, grief, PTSD, build personal resilience, and much more.

His research includes the vast cognitive, emotional, psychological, social, physical, and spiritual benefits that we can all derive from healthy waters and oceans throughout our lives.

His study has shown that 84%⁹ of parents think their kids would be more likely to unplug on a boat trip versus a road trip.

The waterways give us half of our oxygen, provides people with jobs and food, holds the majority of Earth's biodiversity including species and ecosystems, drives climate and weather, regulates temperature, and is the sole source of hydration and hygiene for humanity throughout history.

The world ocean and all waterways, including lakes, rivers, and wetlands (collectively, blue space), cover over 71 per cent of our planet. Keeping them healthy, clean, accessible, and biodiverse is critical to human health and well-being. Little wonder when you consider our brains are 75 per cent water and our bodies are 60 per cent.

Boating matters.

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⁹ An NMMA study in the United States