

29 November 2024

MSQ introduces new lifejacket laws and announces summer crackdown on speeding boaties

- New lifejacket laws introduced by Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) will come into effect across Queensland waters on 1 December 2024
- The laws aim to improve safety on the water, with mandatory lifejacket use in high-risk scenarios such as boating alone, crossing coastal bars, or boating at night on smaller vessels
- MSQ will focus on community education around the new laws, with enforcement starting from 1 July 2025
- The summer safety campaign (14 Dec 2024 – 2 Feb 2025) will crack down on speeding boaties and personal watercraft riders.

Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) is urging boaties to embrace the spirit of new lifejacket laws and wear their lifejackets more often these summer school holidays.

From 1 December 2024, lifejackets will be mandatory in high-risk situations, such as:

- Crossing coastal bars on specific vessels.
- Boating alone or at night.
- For all children on open vessels under 4.8 metres in length.

Introduced after extensive consultation, these laws will apply statewide, aiming to reduce boating fatalities caused by drownings and falls overboard.

In the past five years, there have been 64 boating fatalities in Queensland, with only five of those individuals known to have been wearing a lifejacket at the time of the incident.

To ensure everyone understands the importance of these changes, MSQ officers will focus on on-water education and provide a period of grace until 1 July 2025 for boaties to become fully compliant with the new laws.

MSQ's Summer Boating Safety Campaign will target speeding boaties and personal watercraft riders, addressing one of Queensland's "Fatal Five" boating behaviours.

The campaign, running from 14 December 2024 to 2 February 2025, comes as waterways become busier during the holiday season, increasing risks.

Boaties are encouraged to stay informed, prioritise safety, and enjoy Queensland's waterways responsibly this summer.

Quotes attributable to Maritime Safety Queensland General Manager, Kell Dillon:

"Our message is simple – your lifejacket can save your life, but only if you are wearing it.

"There are certain situations in boating when you are at more risk of falling overboard and finding yourself very suddenly in the water and not within easy reach of help.

“Children can be at particular risk because their situational awareness and swimming ability are often not as good as an adult’s.

“That’s why we have introduced changes to the laws about when lifejackets must be worn, and why we are particularly keen to educate boaties about these laws.

“With the busy summer school holidays about to commence there will be more people out on the water.

“They can expect to see MSQ’s officers out there in patrol craft with them, looking out for instances where lifejackets are not being worn when they should be, and having a chat to them about it.

“But if you’re out on the water and you are speeding, expect to be fined.

“Too many boaties are still not understanding that speeding reduces a skipper’s decision-making time to avoid incidents.

“This is a particular problem in congested waterways during the summer holidays, when motorised boats are sharing reduced space with swimmers and passive craft.

“Our message to boaties is to slow down, keep a proper lookout, and avoid accidents that could result in serious injury, or worse.

“Make the summer holidays memorable for the right reasons, not the wrong ones”.

Fast facts/further information:

- From 1 December 2024, it is compulsory to wear a lifejacket when:
 - boating alone, (or only with children under 12 years) on an open boat of that is less than 4.8 metres in length whilst underway;
 - crossing a designated coastal bar on an open boat, and on an open area of a boat, of any length;
 - boating at night, that is between sunset and sunrise, on an open boat that is less than 4.8 metres in length whilst underway.

There are extra protections for children. In addition:

- if you are under 12 years (aged 1 year or more but less than 12 years) in an open boat, or open area of a boat of any length while underway.

Further, wearing a lifejacket will be compulsory when crossing a coastal bar on certain *craft* in the style and risk profile of:

- Small sailing boats (such as funboats, lasers, herons)
- Pedal boats
- Rafts, including inflatable rafts
- Rowboats (excluding Surf Life Saving Australia Club Surfboats)
- Sea and surf kayaks.

This does not include vessels in the style of and with a risk profile of:

- Body or “boogie” boards
- Surf boards
- Wind surfers

- Kite surfers
- Stand up paddle boards.

For more information, visit: <https://www.msq.qld.gov.au/Safety/Life-jackets>

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Media contact: TMR Media Unit – (07) 3066 7060

Supplied Footage: <https://owncloud.tmr.qld.gov.au/index.php/s/ZXqLXRrVBMJY2Vr>

Password: msq