

MEDIA STATEMENT

13 September 2024

MSQ ramps up efforts to improve boating safety in Torres Strait

- Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) representatives will be visiting Mer (Murray), Masig (Yorke), Ugar (Stephens) and Erub (Darnley) Islands in the Torres Strait.
- The visits will focus on providing practical safety advice including how to plan safe voyages and how to maintain safe vessels.
- The initiatives reinforce MSQ's commitment to improving the safety of seafarers under the Torres Strait Marine Safety Program (TSMSP).

Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) representatives will be visiting Mer (Murray), Masig (Yorke), Ugar (Stephens) and Erub (Darnley) Islands in the Torres Strait from 24 to 26 September as it ramps up efforts to improve safety for the region's seafarers.

The visits will focus on providing the community with practical advice around boating safety, from how to plan safe voyages to maintaining safe vessels.

As part of MSQ's Torres Strait Marine Safety Program, officers will be looking to engage as many islanders as possible on topics including:

- Safety events at sea and how to avoid them
- What makes a boat safe and other safety matters
- How to use and maintain equipment
- Trip planning
- Emergency procedures
- TSMSP Grab Bag management
- Vessel maintenance challenges.

The visits will help MSQ better understand the needs of the community, with officers keen to consult with islanders about how and when these sessions could be run in the future, including ideas for areas of focus, as well as the interest in dedicated sessions run by women, for women, to provide a safe and supportive learning environment.

These sessions might include vessel maintenance and mechanical trouble shooting, safety gear and how to use it.

The initiative emerged from a review of the Torres Strait Marine Safety Program, which serves a region where travel by sea is the main means of travel.

The program began in 2006 in response to the alarming number of search and rescue incidents, some with tragic outcomes, in the region.

It is chaired by MSQ, in partnership with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, the Torres Strait Regional Authority, the Queensland Police Service Water Police (Thursday Island) and the National Marine Safety Authority of Papua New Guinea.

The visits to Mer, Masig, Ugar and Erub follow similar discussions already held at Warraber, Poruma and Iama islands in late June to better understand their needs and challenges.

MSQ encourages everyone on Mer, Masig, Ugar and Erub to attend the meetings and tell MSQ what they think the community needs and discuss how everyone can play an important role in maintaining marine safety.

The meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Mer – 24 September 2024, 10.30 am – 12.30 pm, Community Hall
- Masig – 25 September 2024, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm, Community Hall
- Ugar – 26 September 2024, 10.00 am – 12.00 pm, Community Hall
- Erub – 26 September 2024, 1.30 pm – 3.30 pm, TSIRC Meeting Area

For more information, or to talk with MSQ about the visits, Torres Strait islanders can email TSMSP@msq.qld.gov.au and leave a name and phone number so that MSQ's officers can contact them.

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

“Nothing is more important than seafarers and boaties coming home at the end of their journeys.

“That’s why MSQ is ramping up efforts to improve the safety of some of our most vulnerable communities.

“It’s just one more way Maritime Safety Queensland is creating safer boating practices and trying to make a positive difference in this region.

“Boating may be a recreational activity for most Queenslanders—a matter of choice—but for many Torres Strait Islanders it’s a daily necessity.

“It’s how they go shopping, see medical practitioners, attend school or work, or visit family members.

“The sea is sometimes a dangerous environment. We can’t eliminate its dangers, but we can reduce the risks and increase the chances of surviving if things go wrong.

“That is what this pilot project is about, and I encourage the people of Mer, Masig, Ugar and Erub to take advantage of this opportunity to meet with MSQ’s officers.”

ENDS

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