

2 July 2025

Community Media Alert

Winter holiday boaties urged to take the helm on lifejackets and speeding

Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) is urging Queensland boaties to turn the tide these winter school holidays, after a worrying number of skippers were found flouting the rules on speeding and lifejacket requirements over Easter.

During the Easter break, more than one in three boats intercepted by MSQ's compliance officers were caught speeding, while one in four weren't complying with lifejacket laws – despite new lifejacket rules having been in effect since 1 December 2024.

Despite the cooler weather, thousands of Queensland families are expected to be out on the water over the winter holidays and MSQ is reminding skippers there is a clear need for them to do better to ensure family fun does not turn into tragedy.

MSQ's data has consistently shown that most boating fatalities involve boaties who drown, or are never seen again, after falling overboard while not wearing lifejackets.

Over the five years between 2019/20 and 2023/24, 64 people drowned in boating accidents in Queensland. Only five were known to have been wearing lifejackets.

Following extensive consultation, MSQ introduced new laws from 1 December 2024 requiring that lifejackets be worn by all skippers and passengers operating vessels in certain high-risk situations.

Boaties were given a six-month period of adjustment to understand and comply with the new requirements, before Maritime Safety Queensland began enforcing them from 1 July. Fines for non-compliance with lifejacket rules start at \$333.

MSQ is also reminding skippers that speeding is always dangerous, but is especially so during holiday seasons, when many more boaties are out on the water and waterways become congested.

Speeding reduces a skipper's ability to respond and adjust to developing or unexpected situations on the water and increases the chances of a marine incident occurring.

Queensland laws require that lifejackets must be worn when:

- boating alone, (or only with children under 12 years) on an open boat 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
- 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 is compulsory when crossing a coastal bar on certain craft in the style and risk profile of:

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



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