



# 2005

## Marine Incidents IN QUEENSLAND

May 2006



**Queensland  
Government**

Maritime Safety  
Queensland



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# Director General's Foreword



As Director-General of Queensland Transport, I am pleased to formally report on Queensland's marine safety performance in 2005, as measured by marine incident numbers and outcomes.

Throughout 2005 Maritime Safety Queensland has continued to work at encouraging and fostering safety as a core value and culture within the commercial, fishing and recreational sectors of the boating industry and community. As I mentioned in last year's report, such a task is not without its challenges, but it is certainly worth pursuing.

In 2005, Queensland maintained the general trend of continuous improvement in marine safety outcomes seen over the past 25 years. While recorded marine incident fatality numbers did not fall in 2005, neither did they rise. This was in an environment of continuing strong growth in both population and registered vessel numbers and associated on-water boating activity.

Queensland's strong marine safety record is due in no small part to a range of key boating safety initiatives that Maritime Safety Queensland has introduced over recent years.

Some of the more notable initiatives in recent years have included the Know, Know, Know Your Boat and Boat Smart education campaigns, the extension of recreational boat licensing requirements to include displacement hull vessels and jet skis, the introduction of the BoatSafe recreational boat licence training and assessment scheme, the government's jet ski management plan and most recently the introduction of the 'Under 12-under 4.8m-underway' mandatory lifejacket wearing initiative. But it doesn't stop there. There a number of important marine safety initiatives currently being progressed including the introduction of the Torres Strait Marine Safety Program and the National Standard for Commercial Vessels, a suite of uniform commercial vessel safety standards Australia-wide.

It is pleasing to again be able to publish such a comprehensive set of statistics on marine incidents in Queensland. The report, Marine Incidents in Queensland 2005, is one of the tools available to maritime safety stakeholders to better understand why and how incidents occur on our waterways and to inform decisions about future maritime safety initiatives and about individual boating behaviour.

It is not just Maritime Safety Queensland that carries the responsibility for driving and maintaining Queensland's marine safety performance. It's a joint effort between a range of maritime stakeholders and interested parties. The challenge for government, industry and the boating community alike lies in working together to ensure that boating is both safe and enjoyable and continues to meet Queensland's maritime transport, tourism and recreational needs.

I want to take this opportunity to again thank Maritime Safety Queensland's partner agencies, the Queensland Water Police and the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol for their assistance and support throughout 2005. I look forward in 2006 to continued cooperation between Maritime Safety Queensland, commercial, fishing, and recreational boating communities and our partner agencies to further improve safety on our waterways.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruce Wilson', written in a cursive style.

**Bruce Wilson**  
**Director General**  
**Queensland Transport**

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According to the most recently available Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) water transport fatality data, Queensland's marine fatality rate per million of population fell by nearly 30 per cent from 2.59 in 1995 to 1.83 in 2000 to 2004. The overall Australian water transport fatality rate for the same periods fell from 4.48 to 2.03 fatalities per million of population. Queensland is currently ranked third overall of the eight Australian jurisdictions in terms of its water transport fatality rate per million of population.

While Queensland recorded the same number of marine incident fatalities in 2005 as in 2004 and a small rise in the number of reported serious injuries, Queensland can reasonably anticipate, based on outcomes over a rolling five-year period, that its marine safety performance will continue the overall positive trend experienced over the past 25 years. Queensland's marine fatality trend per million of population and per 100,000 registered vessels is flat-lining if not trending slightly downwards.

By way of an annual snapshot for the calendar year 2005:

- There was a 'sameness' about 2004 and 2005—the same number of reported incidents and the same number of recorded fatalities.
- There were 633 marine incidents reported in Queensland—equal to the number of reported incidents in 2004 and marginally below the four-year average of 638.25.
- On average more than 65 per cent of all reported marine incidents occurred in the daytime, on a clear day, with good visibility.
- The most frequently reported types of marine incidents were collisions between ships (138) and unintentional groundings (116).
- There were 49 incidents reported as resulting in fatalities or serious injuries—five more incidents than in 2004, and higher than the previous four-year average of 44.25 reported incidents.
- Ten of these incidents resulted in 12 fatalities—the same number of fatalities as recorded in 2004. This fatality outcome is marginally over-represented when compared with the previous four-year average of 10.25 fatalities per annum.
- There was a significant over-representation of recreational vessels in fatal incidents in 2005. Ten of the 12 fatalities resulted from incidents involving recreational vessels, including four recreational speedboat incidents and two recreational PWC incidents. The remaining two fatalities involved commercial fishing vessels.
- 45 persons suffered serious injuries requiring hospitalisation—seven more than in 2004 and marginally above the previous four-year average of 41 serious injuries per annum.
- Human factors were identified as contributing to 75.5 per cent of the incidents involving fatality or serious injury. Inattention was identified in 38 per cent of these more serious incidents.
- While recreational vessels were over-represented in fatal incidents, commercial vessels accounted for 51 per cent of the vessels involved in both fatal and serious injury incidents.

## 1.1 Why report on marine incidents

According to a national study of marine fatalities commissioned by the National Marine Safety Committee, boating fatalities and serious injuries cost the Australian community in excess of \$350 million annually (O'Connor, 2004). This report provides an objective assessment of the condition of Queensland's maritime safety environment as reflected by the number and nature of reported marine incidents for the year 2005. The report is made in accordance with section 127 of the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994* (the Act).

The report and the data and investigative systems underpinning reported incidents together contribute to the following objectives outlined in section 3(2) of the Act:

- (a) *To allow the Government to have a strategic overview of marine safety and related marine operational issues; and*
- (b) *To establish a system under which:*
  - (i) *Marine safety and related operational issues can be effectively planned and efficiently managed; and*
  - (ii) *Influence can be exercised over marine safety and related marine operational issues in a way that contributes to overall transport efficiency; and*
  - (iii) *Account is taken of the need to provide adequate levels of safety with an appropriate balance between safety and cost.*

## 1.2 What are marine incidents


Section 123(1) of the Act defines a marine incident as an event causing or involving -

- (a) *The loss of a person from a ship; or*
- (b) *The death of, or grievous bodily harm to, a person caused by a ship's operations; or*
- (c) *The loss or presumed loss or abandonment of a ship; or*
- (d) *A collision with a ship; or*
- (e) *The stranding of a ship; or*
- (f) *Material damage to a ship; or*
- (g) *Material damage caused by a ship's operations; or*
- (h) *Danger to a person caused by a ship's operations; or*
- (i) *Danger of serious damage to a ship; or*
- (j) *Danger of serious damage to a structure caused by a ship's operations.*

This report looks closely at marine incidents involving fatalities and serious injuries. Serious injury incidents refer to marine incidents in which a person involved in the incident suffered any injury requiring admission to hospital.

## 1.3 Marine incident data management

Section 125 of the Act requires marine incidents to be reported to Maritime Safety Queensland. All reported incidents are examined to some degree—with more serious incidents undergoing more comprehensive investigation by trained investigators. Data from marine incident reports and subsequent investigation reports is recorded in Maritime Safety Queensland's marine incident data management system (Caseman). The data elements recorded are largely consistent with the national marine incident data set developed and endorsed by the National Marine Safety Committee. All Australian maritime jurisdictions are progressively moving toward full systems compliance with the national marine incident data set requirements.



The analyses included in this report draw on data from ‘reported’ marine incidents. While the level of reporting of marine incidents is generally considered robust, there is an acknowledged level of underreporting of marine incidents in any given year. Anecdotal evidence suggests that underreporting may be more prevalent in relation to incidents occurring in remote areas such as the Torres Strait and to incidents involving certain types of vessels such as jet skis. Maritime Safety Queensland continues to look for ways to improve incident reporting levels.

Some incidents occurring in the maritime environment fall outside the scope of the earlier definition of a marine incident. These include incidents such as workplace health and safety incidents that are not directly related to the operation of a vessel, collisions involving international trading vessels that are covered for reporting and investigation purposes under the *Navigation Act 1912 (Cwealth)* and incidents involving death from natural causes. To present the fullest picture possible of safety outcomes within the maritime environment in Queensland, Maritime Safety Queensland maintains information on any such out-of-scope incidents involving a fatality that come to its attention. A brief review of out-of-scope fatal incidents is included later in this report.

## **1.4 What’s in the report**

The focus of the report is on reported marine incidents as a measure of public safety in the maritime environment. The report identifies the most frequently occurring incident types and their characteristics. It also identifies those incident types and characteristics showing significant change in 2005. This information provides a sound basis for determining priorities and shaping future maritime safety strategies and interventions.

The report includes a high-level comparative analysis of interstate marine fatality rates and more detailed intrastate trend analyses. These analyses are made using both population and the size of the registered vessel fleet as surrogate measures of potential exposure. Specific exposure data is not readily available for many aspects of commercial and recreational boating activity.

An examination is included of comparative regional performance within Queensland and of fatality and serious injury (FSI) incidents. These latter incidents carry a significantly higher social cost for the people concerned and for the community.

Subsequent sections rank incident characteristics according to the extent of their involvement in incidents. This enables the identification of groupings of major incident characteristics and assessment of significant changes in the extent of their involvement in marine incidents over a five-year period.

The report also focuses on selected features of marine incidents for more detailed analysis. Interspersed among these selected profiles are a series of incident case studies. These studies outline marine incidents that actually occurred in Queensland in 2005, highlighting lessons to be learnt from each incident. The cases presented here are representative only, and have been selected for the learning points that may benefit mariners confronted with similar circumstances.

To enable readers to gain further insight into marine incident trends and characteristics, time-series data for many characteristics of reported marine incidents are included in the Appendix to the report.

Unless otherwise stated, all the data presented in the report is sourced from the Maritime Safety Queensland’s Caseman marine incident data management system.

The aim in this and future reports is to accurately represent the major features of marine incidents in Queensland, to identify areas where safety performance has improved, and to pinpoint hotspots for subsequent management.

In reading this and previous years’ reports, it should be noted that at any given time, data and/or case details relating to reported marine incidents might be outstanding or incomplete. Consequently, marine incident data for recent years is subject to updating in subsequent years’ reports.

It is also worth noting that when disaggregated, incident, fatality and serious injury numbers



are often small and random variations can be large. For this reason, Maritime Safety Queensland generally assesses marine incident trends in terms of their rate of occurrence in the year under review compared with the average of the previous four years of data.

### **1.5 Marine boards of inquiry**

Under section 126 of the Act the Minister for Transport may on the recommendation of the chief executive, establish a board of inquiry into a reported marine incident. There were no marine boards of inquiry convened during 2005.