



Transport for NSW

# Get to know your interstate boating rules

New South Wales and Queensland



## Lifejackets

Lifejackets are the most important safety equipment on any vessel. In both NSW and Queensland, lifejackets of the appropriate size and type must be carried for everyone on board, and they must be worn in a range of situations on different types and sizes of vessels and at times of heightened risk. Some exemptions apply in QLD. Inflatable lifejackets must be serviced annually or in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

There are some differences in the specified situations where lifejackets must be worn in each state. For example:

### **NSW:**

Children under 12 years old must wear a lifejacket at all times on vessels less than 4.8 metres and in open areas of vessels under 8 metres while underway.

Everyone aged 12 or older must wear a lifejacket on vessels less than 4.8 metres when boating alone, or at night, or on alpine waters or open (ocean) waters.

Everyone on recreational and commercial vessels must wear an appropriate lifejacket when crossing designated coastal bars.

### **QLD:**

Children aged over one and under 12 years must wear an appropriate lifejacket in open vessels less than 4.8 metres in length, when the vessel is underway. Everyone on open recreational vessels less than 4.8 metres in length must wear an appropriate lifejacket when crossing designated coastal bars.

Additional rules apply for the use of lifejackets on NSW and QLD waters.

To find out more please visit [roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au](https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au) or [msq.qld.gov.au/Safety/Life-jackets](https://msq.qld.gov.au/Safety/Life-jackets).





## Safety equipment

In both states, safety equipment must be carried on board. The requirements depend on the vessel type and waterway. All safety equipment must be in good working condition, meet the appropriate standards or specifications and be stored for quick and easy access by everyone on board.

In NSW, waterways are defined as enclosed or open, while in Queensland they are defined as smooth, partially smooth and beyond partially smooth waters.

QLD vessels travelling to NSW are exempt from carrying the required safety equipment of NSW, providing they conform with the safety equipment requirements of the equivalent waters in QLD. NSW lifejacket carriage and wear requirement still apply.

NSW vessels travelling to QLD are required to carry the safety equipment for the QLD waters they are operating in and vessel type.

Additional rules and exemptions apply.



## Boat driving licences and registration

In both states, individuals are eligible for a full licence from 16 years of age and equivalent interstate, commercial or foreign licences are accepted. Certain vessels must be registered.

### NSW:

A current boat driving licence is required to drive a powered vessel at 10 knots or faster. A current personal watercraft licence is required to drive a PWC at all times. Restrictions apply to licence holders from 12 to under 16 years of age.

Registration is required for vessels with an engine power rating of 4.0 kilowatt (5 horsepower) or more, all vessels 5.5 metres or longer, all vessels on moorings, all commercial vessels and all PWC.

### QLD:

A Recreational Marine Driver Licence (RMDL) is required to operate any vessel powered by more than 6hp. To operate a personal watercraft, you must have an RMDL and a personal watercraft licence.

All vessels powered by a motor or auxiliary of more than 4hp including PWC require registration unless exemptions apply.



## Personal watercraft operation

In NSW you must hold a PWC licence to drive a PWC. In QLD, the licence holder may allow another person to drive the PWC provided the licence holder is in a position to take immediate control and is wearing a safety lanyard.

Operators and passengers must wear appropriate lifejackets at all times, however the lifejacket level requirements differ between NSW and QLD.

PWC use is prohibited between sunset and sunrise in NSW, but permitted in QLD provided the required navigation lights are used.



## Safe navigation

Both states follow international practice for safe navigation. This includes maintaining a safe speed, keeping a proper lookout at all times, using the required navigation lights at night and staying to the right in rivers and channels.

On lakes, the direction of travel is anti-clockwise unless otherwise stated. If in doubt, consult the relevant waterway manager and follow authorised signage.



## Speed limits and safe distance requirements

In both states, all vessels must travel at a safe speed for the prevailing conditions and keep a safe distance from people in the water, other vessels, structures and the shore at all times. You must also observe any signposted speed limits.

### NSW:

When travelling in a power-driven vessel at 6 knots or faster, you must keep at least 30 metres from other vessels, structures and the shore. When driving any vessel, you must keep at least 60 metres from people in the water and any dive flag.

### QLD:

A speed limit of 6 knots exists within 30 metres (60 metres for PWCs) of boats anchored, moored to the shore or aground, any jetty, wharf, pontoon or boat ramp and people in the water.

PWCs must also not travel above 6 knots within 60 metres of the boundary of a bathing reserve or the shore and above 10 knots if within 30 metres of another moving vessel.

A 6 knot speed limit applies within all boat harbours, marinas and canals. Gazetted speed limits also apply through particular areas.



## Tow sports

In both states, everyone being towed must wear an appropriate lifejacket.

### NSW:

Observers must hold a boat or PWC driving licence or be 16 years of age or older. Safe distance requirements (see above) apply at any speed to both the vessel and the person being towed.

Towing is prohibited between sunset and sunrise. No more than three people may be towed simultaneously.

### QLD:

Observers must be 13 years of age or older and be competent to act as the observer. The driver of the boat or PWC used must be appropriately licenced.

Although there are no restrictions on the number of persons that can be towed by a licenced operator at any one time, the activity must be conducted safely.



## Go easy on the drink

Both states have strict limits on blood alcohol levels for recreational boat operators. Don't go boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

### NSW:

The blood alcohol limits are 0.00 for Recreational operators aged under 18 years and under 0.05 for those over 18 years. When engaged in tow sports, alcohol limits apply to drivers, observers and everyone being towed.

### QLD:

Skippers must remain under 0.05.





Boating is regulated by state governments, so different laws apply in different states.

This guide outlines some of the differences between the laws of NSW and Queensland.

Additional restrictions and regulations may apply. Make sure you check out all the regulations before you head out on the water.

For more information on NSW maritime regulations, please refer to the NSW Boating Handbook or visit [roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au](https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au).

For more information on QLD maritime regulations, please refer to the Queensland Recreational Boating and Fishing Guide or visit [msq.qld.gov.au](https://msq.qld.gov.au).

## **New South Wales**

**For more information:**

[roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au](https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au)

13 12 36

## **Queensland**

**For more information:**

[msq.qld.gov.au](https://msq.qld.gov.au)

13 23 80

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