2004

Marine Incidents Annual Report

May 2005

Queensland Government

Maritime Safety Queensland

For copies of the report or enquiries

Marketing and Education Unit
Maritime Safety Queensland

Level 22 Mineral House
41 George Street
Brisbane Queensland 4000

GPO Box 2595
Brisbane Queensland 4001

Facsimile: 07 3120 7494

E-mail: maritime.safety@msq.qld.gov.au

Web: www.msq.qld.gov.au

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or by e-mail at maritime.safety@msq.qld.gov.au

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Director-General's Foreword

It is encouraging to see Queensland's maritime safety outcome in 2004 maintaining the general trend of continuous improvement set over the past 25 years. While during 2004, marine incident fatalities were up on the number recorded in 2003, the overall marine safety outcome reinforces the benefits of the safety programs and initiatives set in place in recent years.

I mentioned last year that Queensland's population is growing at a faster rate than any other state in Australia. This trend continued in 2004. In the same period, vessel registration numbers and the associated on-water boating activity has continued to grow as have retail boat sales. In spite of this escalation in risk drivers, boating in Queensland is safer today than ever before.

Throughout 2004 Maritime Safety Queensland has worked at encouraging and fostering safety as a culture—as a core boating value within the commercial, fishing and recreational sectors of the boating industry and community. Such a task is not without its challenges, but it is worth pursuing. One has only to look to Australia's air safety record to appreciate the benefits of embracing a safety culture within the boating industry and community.

It is not just Maritime Safety Queensland which carries the responsibility for driving and maintaining Queensland's marine safety performance. It's a collaboration between a range of stakeholders and partners including port users, vessel manufacturers, the maritime training sector, commercial and recreational vessel operators, boating and fishing industry stakeholders, enforcement agencies, the insurance industry, educationalists, the media and others. The challenge for government, industry and the boating community 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.

The Marine Incidents Annual Report published by Maritime Safety Queensland 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 maritime safety initiatives and about individual boating behaviour.

As Director-General of Queensland Transport, I am pleased to formally report on Queensland's maritime safety performance in 2004. I want to take this opportunity to particularly thank Maritime Safety Queensland's partner agencies, the Queensland Water Police and the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol for their assistance and support throughout 2004. I look forward in 2005 to the continued cooperation between Maritime Safety Queensland, commercial, fishing, and recreational boating communities and our partner agencies to further improve safety on our waterways.

Bruce Wilson
Director-General
Queensland Transport

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Year in review

According to the most recently available Australian Bureau of Statistics maritime fatality data, Queensland's maritime fatality rate per million of population has fallen over the period 2000 to 2003 by more than 31 per cent from 2.59 in 1995 – 1999 to 1.78 in 2000 – 2003. For the same period the overall Australian maritime fatality rate fell from 4.48 to 2.05 fatalities per million of population. Queensland was ranked sixth of the eight Australian jurisdictions in the period 1990-1994 and is ranked second overall in the period 2000 – 2003. Since 1996 Queensland's population has increased by an estimated 15 per cent and registered vessel numbers in Queensland increased by more than 45 per cent.

Despite a jump in the number of recorded marine incident fatalities and serious injuries in the 2004 calendar year, Queensland can nevertheless reasonably expect that its marine safety performance will continue the positive trend of the past 25 years. This expectation is based on Queensland's marine safety performance trend over a rolling five-year period.

By way of an annual snapshot, in 2004:

- There were 618 marine incidents reported in Queensland—a decrease of 4.2 per cent from 2003.
- The most frequently reported types of marine incidents were collisions between ships (127) and unintentional groundings (120).
- There were 43 incidents reported in 2004 that resulted in fatalities or serious injuries, which while representing an increase of 15 on 2003 figures, is well below the previous four-year average of 55.25 reported incidents.
- There were 12 fatalities resulting from these 43 incidents—a sizeable jump from the seven fatalities recorded in 2003. Despite the size of this increase in 2004, the fatality outcome is only marginally over-represented when compared with the previous four-year average of 10.25 fatalities per annum.
- Seven of the fatalities resulted from incidents involving commercial vessels, including four from commercial fishing vessel incidents. The remaining five fatalities, including three in one incident, resulted from incidents involving recreational vessels.
- Marine incident reports indicate that 37 persons suffered serious injuries requiring hospitalisation.
- Human factors were identified as contributing to 90 per cent of the incidents involving fatality or serious injury. Inattention was identified in 42 per cent of these more serious incidents.
- Recreational vessels accounted for 56.6 per cent of the vessels involved in fatal and serious injury incidents.
- While the most frequently involved vessels in fatal and serious injury incidents in 2004 were recreational jet skis (24.5 per cent), no fatalities resulted from jet ski incidents.

Even with the spike in marine incident fatalities in 2004 and the state's annual growth in both population and vessel ownership, Queensland's maritime fatality trend per million of population and per 100,000 registered vessels is flat-lining if not trending slightly downwards.

A series of profiles later in this report examine a number of these incident characteristics and attributes in more detail.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report provides an account of the health of Queensland's maritime safety environment as reflected by the number and nature of reported marine incidents for the year 2004. 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 Marine incidents defined

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.

Consistent with the nationally endorsed data model for reporting marine incidents, a serious injury incident is defined as a marine incident where a person involved in the incident suffers any injury requiring admission to hospital.

1.3 Marine incident investigative and data systems

Section 125 of the Act requires marine incidents to be reported to Maritime Safety Queensland. All reported incidents are investigated—with more serious incidents undergoing more comprehensive investigation by trained and authorised shipping inspectors. Data from marine incident reports and subsequent investigation reports is recorded in a marine incident data management system. 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 data set requirements.

Some incidents occurring in the maritime environment fall outside the earlier definition of a marine incident. These include workplace health and safety incidents that are not directly related to the operation of a vessel, and collisions involving international trading vessels that are covered for reporting and investigation purposes under the *Navigation Act 1912 (Cwealth)*. To present a fuller picture of safety management within the maritime environment in Queensland, Maritime Safety

Queensland maintains information on any such incidents involving a fatality that come to its attention. A review of out-of-scope fatal incidents is included in section 2.3.2 of this report.

1.4 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 boards of inquiry convened during 2004.

1.5 Structure of the report

As the report title implies, the focus is on marine incidents as a measure of maritime public safety. The report identifies the more significant incident categories and characteristics, and those showing significant change in 2004. This provides not only a sound basis for the determination of factors requiring further analysis, but also a sharper tool for shaping future maritime safety strategies.

The first section of the report includes a high-level Australian and interstate analysis 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 to marine incidents. Detailed 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 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 then focuses on selected aspects of marine incidents for more detailed analysis. Interspersed among these selected profiles are a series of incident studies. These studies summarise marine incidents that actually occurred in Queensland in 2004. The reports highlight the 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 each characteristic of reported marine incidents are included at Appendix 1.

A review of the boating incidents and breakdowns reported by volunteer marine rescue organisations in 2004 is also included.

Regional volunteer marine rescue organisations perform an important role in the promotion and preservation of maritime safety in Queensland. They attend thousands of calls from boat operators for assistance each year and play a vital role in the practical handling of both marine incidents and boating breakdowns.

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.