



NMSC Media Release

19 December 2008

Boaters Urged to Keep a Proper Look-Out

Australian Test cricketer Matthew Hayden reckons that keeping a proper look-out should be the "first rule of the water."

Matthew has volunteered his services for the third year in a row to be spokesperson for the Australia New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group's public awareness campaign, which this year urges skippers to "keep their eye on the ball".

"Keeping your eye on the ball is obviously a catch cry back to cricket, but on the water, it's significant because there are so many things that do change every time you go out," he explained.

"That can be a slight adjustment in the sand bar, reading navigation beacons correctly, avoiding boats in half light or where you can't see because you are blinded by sun or salt on the window.

"Things can change in an instant, another boat can come out of nowhere, a wave can swamp you and suddenly you can be in real trouble."

He emphasised how important it is to maintain awareness at all times "because in a lot of ways we can take for granted how well we know the water."

According to the latest National Marine Safety Committee statistics*, of the 47 boating related deaths reported in 2007, 85% involved at least one recreational vessel.

Acting NMSC CEO John Henry revealed that the "keep your eye on the ball" slogan was coined from the latest national research.

"In 2007, collisions with vessels and collisions with a fixed object accounted for 35% of all incidents and a collision of vessels was the most common incident type in 2005 and 2006."

He explained that the *National Assessment of Boating Fatalities in Australia Report* released earlier this year tracked fatalities from 1999 to 2004 and studied 196 incidents where 241 people died. It found that failure to keep a proper lookout was the primary factor in one in ten of these fatalities.

"It's such a simple thing, yet it could save your life."

"I would like to thank Matthew for donating his time to the campaign to ask boaters to keep a proper look-out and expect the unexpected when you are out on the water."

Matthew went on to say that speaking from experience, it only takes a split second to suddenly make you vulnerable, and then you are in scenario that you don't want to be in.



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“And that can happen so quickly,” he said, harking back to the fateful day a few years ago when his boat was hit by waves, capsized and sank off North Stradbroke Island. It took Matthew, fellow cricketer Andrew Symonds and friend Trent Butler an hour to reach the shore, battling currents, waves and eventually, shock and exhaustion.

But he pointed out that he felt the initial mistake was made before the trio was even out on the water.

“We took on the conditions ahead of time, a bit too early in half light, and we came a cropper that way.”

The public awareness campaign will run from 22 December 2008 – March 2009 and features magazine advertising, radio advertising, television community service announcements and promotional material.

For further details on the campaign, go to www.safeboating.org.au or www.nmsc.gov.au. Please contact your local marine safety agency for information about boating regulations in your state.

Ends

**National Marine Safety Committee National Incident Data Base*

Media contacts

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