



# NMSC Media Release

15 December 2009

## Australian First Boating Usage Report Released

The National Marine Safety Committee has released an Australian first, the *National Boating Usage Study Preliminary Survey Report* that provides statistical information on boating behaviour and attitudes to safety.

The NMSC's *National Boating Usage Study* recruited 3 800 boaters from across Australia to participate in the survey and fill in a trip diary from October 2008 to March 31 2010. The *National Boating Usage Study Preliminary Survey Report* is the first stage of the study and analyses survey data, which 2818 boaters opted to fill in.

NMSC CEO Ms Margie O'Tarpey explained that this type of report on boating usage is vital, considering that there are approximately 1 million recreational craft using Australia's waterways.

"The large number of craft that we have in Australia increases the potential for accidents and our data shows that 346 people lost their lives in Australian waters since 1999 and thousands more were injured.

"This study will better inform the NMSC and its stakeholders such as marine safety agencies, boating industry associations and the NMSC's Australia New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group when developing marine safety policy and education materials."

The study found that –

### 1. YOUR BOAT

- The most popular types of boats are the cuddy/half cabin cruiser and open runabouts with 29% and 26% of responses.
- 57% of respondents indicated they had a boat between 5 and 9.9 metres in length.
- 30% of respondents indicated they operated a boat less than 5 metres in length.

### 2. ABOUT YOUR BOAT USAGE

- Fishing is the main activity for 60% of participants and other activities included cruising and water skiing, racing, diving and live aboard.
- Almost half of respondents mostly operate their boats in bays and sheltered waters and almost one third of boaters mainly operate their boats in open waters.
- Almost half of participants have a boat less than 5 years old.
- 95% of boaters use their boats in December and January. Only one third of boaters use their boats in June and July.
- Almost 40% of boaters use their boats 2 – 3 times per month. Almost half of respondents spend 3 – 5 hours on the water when they use their boats.



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## 3. YOUR BOATING EXPERIENCE

- 95% of boaters had a recreational boat licence.
- 39% of boaters have held their boat licence for more than 15 years.
- Almost half of respondents have owned a boat for more than 15 years.
- Half of the respondents indicated they have undertaken a boating education course.

## 4. YOUR BOATING BEHAVIOUR

- PFDS are worn occasionally by 62% of boaters.
- 29% of participants wear a PFD when in poor weather. A further 29% of participants have children under the age of 12 wear a PFD.
- PFDs are carried on board 98% of boats.
- Almost 40% of boaters never test their EPIRB; 10% of boaters test their EPIRB before each trip.
- Expiry dates of safety equipment are regularly checked by 94% of boaters.
- 5% of boaters had experienced a boating incident in the previous twelve months.
- 26% of these incidents involved a collision with another boat or object; 24% of the incidents involved the boat being grounded, flooded or capsizing.

“These figures bring up a myriad of safety and usage issues and in relation to PFD usage, even though PFDs are carried by 98% of boats, PFDs are only worn occasionally by the majority of boaters,” explained Ms O’Tarpey.

“ PFD wearing regulations vary from state to state, however this may be an issue for our Australia New Zealand Safe Boating Education Group to look at in relation to PFD wearing education.

“It is also interesting to note that the information on boating incidents reported in the study as to the prevalence of collisions, groundings and capsizes is similar to information that we have from our National Incident Database.”

In relation to information on boaters, 94% of boaters were males and the biggest single age group was 35 – 50 years old, with 21% of participants falling in the 61 years and over age group.

To obtain a copy of the full report please contact the NMSC Secretariat on 02 9247 2124 or download it from [www.nmsc.gov.au](http://www.nmsc.gov.au) and click on research and policy/manual and reports.

*The NMSC aims to achieve nationally uniform marine safety practices and is made up of an Independent Chair and the CEOs of Australia’s marine safety agencies.*

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