

Hon Stephen Mullighan MP

Minister for Transport and Infrastructure

Friday, 1 December 2017

New lifejacket laws to improve safety for all out on the water

South Australian lifejacket laws are changing to improve safety on the water and reduce the risks of drowning on South Australian waterways and coastal waters.

The changes coincide with a new voucher system to encourage boat users to replace old lifejackets with new more modern ones.

New regulations will come into effect from today but will only be enforced following a 12-month education campaign before the laws are enforced.

The new laws make the wearing of lifejackets mandatory on vessels and in water activities more often than is currently required.

For vessels less than 4.8 metres in length fitted with an engine

All persons on-board must wear a lifejacket suitable for their area of operation, at all times when underway or at anchor.

For vessels 4.8 metres to 12 metres in length

Children aged 12 or younger must wear a lifejacket at all times when on an open area of a vessel, at all times when underway or at anchor.

Anyone over the age of 12 must wear a lifejacket when on the open deck during times of heightened risk, which include:

- When operating alone
- When operating after sunset or before sunrise
- When the boat is disabled
- When crossing an ocean bar
- At times of restricted visibility
- When in an area subject to a gale, storm force, hurricane force, severe thunderstorm or severe weather warning from the Bureau of Meteorology

The laws also require a lifejacket to be worn, if directed by the operator of a 4.8 metre to 12 metre vessel, if reasonable to do so in the circumstances.

Lifejackets must now also be worn for users of paddleboards (including stand-up paddleboards) and surf skis when operated more than 400 metres from shore.

These changes are in addition to the existing requirement to wear a lifejacket on inland waters and on dragon boats.

The new laws aim to reduce the chance of drownings, after 168 drownings in South Australia over the past decade, with approximately one fifth involving boating and watercraft activities.

The State Government will also conduct an Old4New lifejacket upgrade program, offering \$20 vouchers in exchange for old, unsuitable, obsolete or damaged lifejackets, with a limit of two vouchers per person.

This was a popular and effective way of getting people to upgrade their lifejackets and learn about the new laws when New South Wales implemented similar changes.

The vouchers can be redeemed when purchasing a new lifejacket at participating retailers.

More information about the voucher scheme, and boating and marine safety, will be available at the [On Deck](#) website.

Background

The changes follow extensive consultation with industry, community groups and the public, including a survey.

Whether lifejackets are worn, or carried aboard they must be in good condition, of a suitable type for the area of water and the correct size for each person aboard.

For protected waters a lifejacket must be a level 50S (formerly type 3), level 50 (type 2) or level 100 (type 1, SOLAS or Coastal) or greater.

For semi-protected waters it must be a level 100 or greater.

More information on lifejackets can be found at the State Government's [Boating and Marine](#) website or by calling the Boating Safety Unit on 1300 183 046.

Quotes attributable to Transport and Infrastructure Minister Stephen Mullighan

Getting out on the water is one of our most popular pastimes in South Australia, especially in regional communities along the coast and the River Murray where boating is an important contributor to local economies.

We want all South Australians to be able to enjoy our spectacular coastline and river system, and we want to make sure that everyone is as safe as possible while out on the water.

Too many people lose their lives unnecessarily because they don't wear lifejackets and, while we don't want to stop people enjoying themselves, we want to make sure that we're doing what we can to reduce serious injuries and deaths out on the water.

Already boaties are required to have enough lifejackets for everyone. These new rules will make it clearer when people should be wearing them and will bring South Australia into line with other states such as Victoria and Queensland.

To make sure we've got these changes right, we'll spend the first 12 months educating people and giving everyone the opportunity to ensure they have the proper lifejackets.

Quotes attributable to Boating Industry Association Chief Executive Howard Glenn

The Boating Industry Association welcomes the government's initiatives to make boating even safer, and to get boaters into better life jackets.

We'll monitor the effect of the new laws over the next 12 months and discuss any fine-tuning that might be needed.

Quotes attributable to RecFish SA Executive Officer Danny Simpson

RecFish SA is supportive of all practical approaches to make boating safer for recreational fishers and their families.

The approach being proposed to educate rather than prosecute in the first year of the transition is sensible.

The Old4New lifejacket program is an excellent approach to facilitating transition to the new legislation.

It means that recreational fishers and other boaters will receive financial support for upgrading old and obsolete equipment and will continue to safely enjoy their favourite pastime.

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