

## **ON-WATER CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **- Safe On-Water Conduct for Rowing in Australia**

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#### **Introduction**

The safe operation of rowing boats on Australia's waterways is a priority for Rowing Australia (RA). In close consultation with state, territorial and local government authorities, commercial operators, and sport & recreational organizations RA has developed a Safe On-Water Code of Conduct & corresponding guidelines. This code of conduct is based upon the code adopted in Queensland for the Brisbane River and aims to provide guidance to all waterways in Australia. This code of conduct provides direction on several aspects of the safe on-water conduct of rowing boats including general rules of on-water procedures when interacting with other vessels, adapting to environmental factors, participant safety and incident reporting.

The Safe On-Water Conduct for Rowing in Australia applies to **all** rowers on Australian waterways. The Code was written for the benefit of all participants in the sport of rowing and in particular the coaches of crews.

This code of conduct is published and freely available to all waterway users on the Rowing Australia and State Association websites. Rowers, coxswains, coaches, parents, club or school appointed employees, Boat Race Officials and other appointed volunteers must be provided with access to this Code of Conduct.

#### **Application**

Safe on-water conduct is the responsibility of all vessels. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) Marine Orders Part 30 gives effect to the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea 1972 and applies to all vessels operating on Australia's waterways. In particular, all vessels have an obligation to:

- Maintain a proper look out by sight, hearing and all other means available
- Proceed at safe speed (which is determined by prevailing conditions and environmental factors)
- Take all necessary action to avoid a collision
- Overtake safely.

#### *Rowing specific rules*

- a rowing boat should always be navigated on the starboard side (right or bowside) or in accordance with the designated local waterway traffic pattern.
- a rowing boat should stay to the outside parameters of the designated local flow pattern to minimise the risk of a collision with another vessel.
- all rowers & coaches are required to observe the General On-water Safety Guidelines.

Recreational passive craft are often operated by novices learning to paddle, row and to control the craft. Recreational passive craft operated by persons learning or training, usually travel slowly and cannot always be maneuvered quickly. They can be severely impacted by boat wash. All commercial and power driven vessels (including coach/safety boats) other than recreational passive craft are required to take these circumstances into account when in the vicinity of all recreational passive craft. Recreational passive craft are less visible than larger vessels and operators should take appropriate precautions (refer to section 1 and 2 of the code).

Pro-actively, recreational passive craft should endeavour to minimise any operation in and around the traffic patterns of commercial and power driven vessels.

## Definitions

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**Proper lookout** is as defined by rule 5 of the collision regulations and means a look out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.

**Recreational passive craft** are non-power driven vessels (for example, rowing boats, kayaks).

**Recreational power craft** includes power-driven vessels for recreational purposes (for example, jet skis).

**Rowing boats** includes any single, double or quad scull, pair, four or eight sweep oar boat. Sometimes referred to as 'passive craft' in local rules and regulations.

**Rowing crew** includes rowers and coxswains.

**Shipping inspectors** are officers appointed by Maritime Safety Authorities and include State and Territorial Maritime Safety agencies, local Water Police and local Boating and Fisheries Patrol.

**Supervision** within the context of organised on water activity conducted by a club, school or association is taken to include the risk management plan prepared by these entities.

**Vessel** includes every description of water craft.

A **waterway** indicates any navigable waters including but not limited to rivers, estuaries, creeks, lakes, dams.

A **master (captain)** is the person in charge or control of the vessel.

## **1. General Guidelines for Rowing Boats**

The safe operation of a rowing boat by individuals, coaches, crews and coxswains requires knowledge the basic matters listed below:

- The individual, club or school safety procedures and risk management plan
- The location of first aid equipment in the club and the names and contact details of qualified first aid officers
- The protocol for reporting on water incidents to the club or school safety officer, state sporting organisation/ recreational governing body and State/Territorial Maritime Safety Authorities
- The need to use safe and serviceable equipment
- The need for adequate instruction in the safe use of the environment and boatmanship of the equipment
- Simple commands for boat control on and off the water from instructors, coaches and officials
- Rowing boats should be aware of what is around them, maintain a proper look out and if in doubt stop
- Stationary rowing boats should stay as close to the bank as possible, out of the way of passing vessels.
- An understanding of the directions and indications of channel markers
- An understanding of the local on-water safety guidelines for all vessels
- Communication to other waterway users must be concise and professional.

## **2. General Guidelines for All Commercial Vessels and Power Craft**

There are a number of basic on-water safety guidelines which, if observed, will minimise the risk of incident. The matters listed below are reflected in the collision regulations:

- Every vessel is to maintain a proper look out by sight and hearing listed in Rule 5 of the collision regulations
- Every vessel is to operate at a safe speed determined by factors listed in Rule 6 of the collision regulations
- Every vessel is obliged to take measures to avoid a collision listed in Rule 7 of the collision regulations
- Every vessel operator is to ensure that the vessel is safe to operate and equipment is in working order
- Every vessel is to be operated safely within the limitations created by weather (for example, fog, mist, rain, lack of light). Refer to Rules 5 and 6 of the collision regulations
- Vessels on Australian waterways must not cause a wash that creates a marine incident. Refer to section 7
- Every vessel operator is to be aware of local hazards and environmental conditions
- Commercial vessels and recreational power craft should consider their size, speed and wash when operating near passive craft
- Communication to other waterway users must be concise and professional.

### **3. General Guidelines for the *Operation* of Rowing Boats**

Care must be taken by individuals or crews of all recreational passive craft on and around pontoons and boat ramps. Individuals and crews should consider the skill level and physical fitness of all participants when lifting and carrying craft and adjust accordingly. As a general rule, there should be a person carrying a boat for every seat. For example, for a rowing boat-quad there should be a minimum of four people.

Individuals and crews should cross a river, waterway traffic pattern or rowing course in a straight line perpendicular to the bank. As a general rule rowing boats should aim to be in the centre third of a river or local waterway traffic pattern for the minimum amount of time when crossing.

Individuals and crews should not attempt to cross any waterway in areas of poor visibility, including but not limited to river bends, near bridges, moored boats and commercial pontoons.

### **4. Guidelines for All Vessels Crossing a River**

When crossing a waterway, all vessels are to proceed to the opposite side via the shortest possible route and are to proceed with extreme caution whilst maintaining a proper lookout.

All vessels are to ensure unobstructed visibility in both directions before crossing. As a guide, vessels should cross where they can be seen at a distance of 500 to 1,000 metres clear line of sight.

### **5. Environmental Considerations**

Prevailing environmental factors will require all vessel operators to modify on water conduct.

#### **5.1 Lighting**

Rowing boats should take particular care when in low light conditions, such as before and just after sunrise and just before and after sunset.

Subject to local regulations, RA recommends that all vessels must display a flashing white all-round light visible for two nautical miles. Also, it is highly recommended to display a red stern light (e.g. Bike light).

#### **5.2 Fog or Mist**

Visibility on water can be radically reduced by fog or mist. In such circumstances, rowing boats should take particular care on the water. During times of fog or mist, appropriate lighting must be used, even if it is outside normal times of low light conditions.

If visibility is down to less than 1000 meters prior to departure, rowing boats should not go on the water. If visibility is reduced to less than 1000 meters whilst a rowing boat is on the water the crew should proceed with extreme caution back to their pontoon or identified safe locations as per their Club Safety Plan. RA also recommends that where training venues are prone to fog, as part of a motorboat's emergency items, a simple compass is also carried.

#### **5.3 Noise**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has published a number of guidelines on nuisance and noise. In line with RA's Clean and Green Policy, rowing community members agree to act responsibly and with due consideration towards residents and other users on and around waterways.

Local restrictions and/or policies may exist pertaining to the use of amplifying devices and it is the responsibility of all rowing clubs and coaches to determine their local regulations prior to any activity utilising such devices.

#### **5.4 Tides**

Individuals, crews and coaches must be aware of tidal movement of the particular waterway they are operating on. All rowing crews and coaches must be aware of their environmental conditions and must take the tidal flow into consideration when stopping, in the vicinity of commercial vessel pontoons, launching or docking and crossing

waterways. All rowing crews and coaches should also be aware of effect of the tidal flow together with other environmental conditions such as strong wind and proceed with due care.

RA recommends that where relevant up to date tidal charts are displayed in the Boatshed.

### 5.5 Natural Hazards

Waterways often have natural hazards which may be submerged or may not always be visible or marked with buoys. Low tide or other environmental water level fluctuations can expose sand or mud banks and deadheads. Individuals, crews and coaches should be aware of specific hazards which may include:

- pontoons and pylons in the water
- moored or anchored vessels
- bridge footings
- aids to navigation (buoys and beacons)
- shallow water
- submerged rocks
- debris.

In addition to natural hazards, there are many other factors that may pose a risk to the safe operation of vessels. All waterway users must familiarise themselves with their local surroundings and in particular any area(s) of specific hazard before commencing any on-water activity:

### 5.6 Bridges

It is common occurrence to encounter bridges spanning many of Australia's rivers, lakes and harbors. On approach to a bridge be aware of the location of pylons/bridge footings and consider the current and other waterway users. Rowing boats should stay on the designated local on-water traffic pattern to navigate under the bridge.

To safely navigate the bridge, it may be necessary to move into the middle of the local on-water traffic pattern (staying on the correct side) to pass under the bridge. If this is the case, individuals or crews should move back to the outer edge of the local on-water traffic pattern once it is safe to do so.

There potentially will be exceptions to this situation on specific waterways that individuals or crews should be apprised of prior to embarking on the water.

## 6. Rowing Boats in Harmony with Commercial Vessels

*What Rowers Need to Know?*

- When entering and exiting the local on-water traffic pattern, commercial vessels and recreational power craft are required to exercise additional vigilance to detect other small craft, **however** it is every rower's/coach's responsibility to think 'defensively' in this situation.
- All vessels have a legislated responsibility to ensure their vessels do not operate at a speed greater than six knots within 30 meters of a person in the water, a ship at anchor, moored or made fast to the shore or aground and a jetty, wharf, boat ramp or pontoon.

### 6.1 Docking and Departing Pontoon Procedures

The size and design of larger commercial vessels may create blind spots which limit the visibility of masters to see other small craft. A number of safety procedures have been adopted to minimise the likelihood of an incident or close quarters situation:

#### 6.1.1 Docking

- If a rowing boat is within a 100 metre radius of a ferry terminal or pontoon, then the commercial vessel must wait for the rowing boat to depart the 100 metre zone.

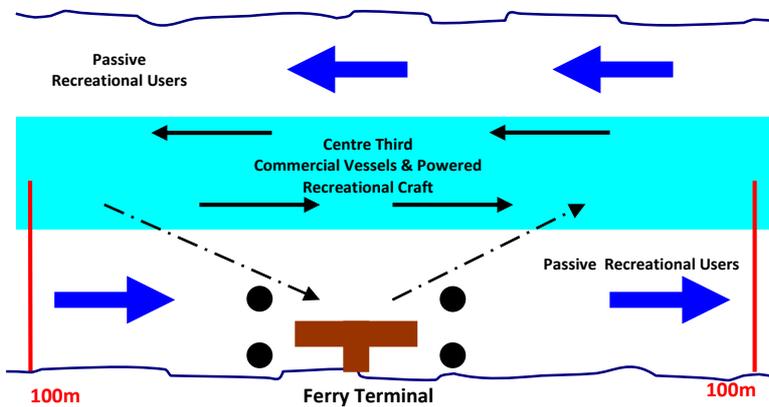
- If a commercial vessel is within a 100 metre radius of a ferry terminal or pontoon, rowing boats must stop outside this 100 meter zone and wait for the commercial vessel to dock. The tidal flow should be taken into consideration by all rowing boats in this instance.
- Once the commercial vessel is docked rowing boats can progress through the safety zone as quickly as safely practicable.

### 6.1.2 Departing Pontoon

- Commercial vessels will give way to rowing boats currently within the 100 metre zone.
- If a rowing boat is approaching the 100 metre zone and sees a commercial vessel departing, the rowing boat must stop at the 100 metre mark and allow the commercial vessel to depart. If the rowing boat has any uncertainty at all, then they should remain outside of the 100 metre zone until the commercial vessel has safely departed.

Diagram 1.1 indicates a typical passage of navigation for commercial vessels docking and departing from terminals. Rowing boats should note the angle of entry and exit into the terminal and observation of approaching commercial vessels should be from this angle. When passing all pontoons or terminals individuals and crews should navigate so as to allow for a safe passing distance from terminal.

**Diagram 1.1**



## **7. Incident Reporting**

RA defines an incident or near incident as an event causing or involving:

- the loss of a person from a boat
- the death of, or grievous bodily harm to, a person caused by a boat's operations
- the loss or presumed loss or abandonment of a boat
- a collision with a boat
- the stranding of a boat
- material damage to a boat
- material damage caused by a boat's operations
- danger to a person caused by a boat's operations
- danger of serious damage to a boat
- danger of serious damage to a structure caused by a boat's operations

The reporting of unsafe conduct of all water users and incidents on and off water is critical to the safe use of Australian waterways. Therefore, any incident or 'near incident' are to be recorded in a club's 'Incident Reporting Logbook' and reported directly to the Club Safety Officer. It is the Club Safety Officers' responsibility to ensure this information is forwarded to the Club board and State Safety Officer - and local marine authorities (if required under the local waterway safety procedures).

RA will collate and publish all information reported by the State Safety Officers to keep all clubs apprised of incidents and near incidents, in an effort to encourage clubs to utilize the statistics provided in developing safer practices.

## **8. Endorsement of the Code of Conduct**

It is expected that all State Associations as members of Rowing Australia will adopt the 'On-Water Code of Conduct' and related Safety Guidelines, recognising that where applicable and relevant state and local regulations, may override the RA Code or guidelines.