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M E D I A R E L E A S E

New boating safety regulations come into effect

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NSW Ports and Waterways Minister Joe Tripodi says new marine safety regulations will come into force on Monday (March 30), including increased penalties for dangerous boating and operating a vessel without a licence.

Mr Tripodi said the changes build on major reforms announced last year which provide tougher penalties including big fines and jail terms for dangerous navigation and overloading a vessel.

“These new regulations are part of the biggest reforms to marine safety rules and practices in a decade and will reinforce the culture of safe boating in NSW,” Mr Tripodi said.

“The vast majority of boaters do the right thing and follow the rules but like our roads, any reckless behaviour on the water can be as dangerous. These laws and powers will go a long way to reducing such behaviour.”

Mr Tripodi said the new Marine Safety Regulations will more than halve the number of existing regulations, improving on-water safety and cutting red tape.

Key new elements which will take effect from Monday include:

- Increased penalties for driving while disqualified or operating a boat without proper safety equipment;
- New safety label requirements with expanded safety information to replace the capacity plate on all vessels;
- New requirements to keep inflatable lifejackets properly maintained and serviced;
- New, specific provisions for the offence of ‘wash causing damage or unreasonable impact’ to other vessels or structures, attracting a maximum penalty of \$5500;
- New provisions requiring each new recreational vessel to include, at the point of sale, the Australian Builder’s Plate – detailing each individual vessel’s buoyancy and capacity.

Mr Tripodi said anyone operating a vessel while their licence is disqualified could face a maximum penalty of more than \$13,000 and/or two years imprisonment, compared to the current maximum fine of \$1500.

“The new Marine Safety Regulations include provisions similar to the Road Transport legislation, which views driving while disqualified as a serious offence as it demonstrates a total disregard for the law.”

Mr Tripodi said the new penalties for excessive boat wash replace the existing situation where boaters can only be fined \$40 for disobeying a sign in a “no wash zone”.

“Given the damage that can be caused by excessive wash and the danger it can pose to other boaters, the new regulations provide a \$250 on the spot penalty for excessive wash in any location and a maximum \$5500 fine for violations in a ‘no wash zone’.”

Mr Tripodi said the regulations complement and build on changes which came into force last year which give NSW Maritime and Water Police officers new powers to enforce boating safety laws and direct boaters to act safely.

“For example, Maritime officers and Water Police can now immediately suspend a vessel’s registration or detain a vessel if it’s found to be unsafe.

“This includes boats found operating at night with insufficient navigation lighting.

Under the reforms, boat licence requirements are also being strengthened through a new practical boating component of the boat licensing system.

Mr Tripodi said the requirement to get practical ‘on-water’ boating experience by completing a boating licence logbook will come into effect on June 1.

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