

# Personal Watercraft Handbook

A guide to the key PWC rules and requirements



Transport  
Roads & Maritime  
Services



**YOU'RE THE SKIPPER  
YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE!**



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Special thanks to multi PWC World Champion Kylie Ellmers (featured on the cover) and multi World Surfing Champion Tom Carroll (pictured on pages 7, 11, 17 and 19) for their assistance with this PWC safety campaign.



# Introduction

A Personal Watercraft (PWC) is a device with a fully enclosed hull that may be driven standing up, sitting astride or kneeling, and includes jet powered surfboards. PWC are fast, powerful and provide a recreational boating alternative. They are lighter and more manoeuvrable than traditional powerboats and their popularity is increasing with the development of better engine technologies and quieter operations.

The popular choice of PWC for boating activity means that it is important for people to know how to drive them safely and with courtesy at all times.

The majority of PWC drivers act in a responsible manner but there are some whose actions adversely affect the reputation of all PWC drivers.

This handbook contains information about the rules and requirements for driving a PWC and provides tips on how to operate your PWC safely and reduce conflict with other people around the waterways. Always apply care, courtesy and common sense when riding your PWC.

## You must have a PWC Driving Licence

In NSW it is compulsory for every person driving a PWC to hold a current PWC driving licence. There are two types of PWC driving licence:

1. PWC driving licence for those aged 16 years and over.
2. Young Adult PWC driving licence for people aged from 12 to less than 16 years.

A Young Adult PWC driving licence is subject to the following restrictions:

- Be accompanied on board the PWC by the holder of a PWC driving licence when travelling at 10 knots or more.
- Never exceed 20 knots.
- Never travel at 10 knots or more when towing a person.
- Do not drive in any aquatic event without Roads and Maritime Services approval.



# Licensing

## Licence period

A PWC driving licence is available for either one (1), three (3) or five (5) years.

Young Adult driving licences are only available for one year.

All PWC driving licences are issued as plastic photo identity cards.

**Note: A PWC driving licence includes a General Boat driving licence.**

### ON THE SPOT FINE

- ▶ Driving a PWC without a PWC driving licence:
  - \$500 first offence.
  - \$750 second offence.
  - \$1500 third or subsequent offence.

And includes automatic disqualification from holding or obtaining any boat licence.

## Remember...

It is a requirement for every PWC driving licence holder to carry their PWC driving licence when driving a PWC and be able to produce it to an authorised officer.

### ON THE SPOT FINE \$100

- ▶ If a PWC driving licence is not produced when requested by an authorised officer.

Owners of the PWC must be able to identify the person driving their vessel at all times, even if the owner is not onboard the PWC at the time.

PWC owners can be found guilty of an offence if they are unable to provide the



identity of a person in control of their PWC under the Marine Legislation. PWC owners may also be guilty of an offence if they allow an unlicensed person to drive the PWC.

Licence holders and owners of PWC must promptly notify Roads and Maritime Services of any changes to their personal details or address. Licences sent to the wrong address can be cancelled and a re-instatement fee charged. If your licence has not been renewed within five years of its expiry date you will need to complete the licence process (except the practical experience) and pass the licence test again.

**Holders of a PWC driving licence are permitted to drive other recreational vessels (certain restrictions may apply), but holders of a General Licence are NOT permitted to drive a PWC at any speed. The owner of a PWC can also be fined for permitting an unlicensed person to operate a PWC.**

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# Registration

## Registration numbers

PWC registration letters and numbers must be no less than 100 mm high; displayed clearly on both sides of the PWC, well above the normal waterline and in a position that can be seen when you are underway. The numbers cannot be displayed on the control arm of your PWC.

The registration numbers displayed must be in a contrasting colour to the hull, solid characters (not outlines), in a clear font or style and displayed in upper case so they can be clearly identified.

If the PWC has many decals it may be necessary to mount the numbers onto a 'blockout' sheet and apply this to your vessel.

Most sign writers who use computerised vinyl lettering can do this task for you at a reasonable cost. It is an offence not to have your registration numbers clearly shown on your PWC.

**ON THE SPOT FINE \$100**

- ▶ If registration numbers are not properly displayed on your PWC.

## Registration label

The registration label that is sent to you annually on the payment of your registration fee should be applied to the port side, that is, the left side of your PWC, adjacent to the letter 'N' of your registration.

## PWC Behaviour Label

The owner of a PWC must ensure that the PWC is not driven by any person unless it has a PWC Behaviour Label firmly affixed to it that is clearly visible from the steering position at all times and is not defaced, obliterated or concealed.

The label is designed to ensure the basic rules are clear to the driver. It also ensures that anyone who uses your PWC will be immediately aware of the basic rules and that the PWC can only be driven by a person holding a current PWC licence.



## PWC behaviour label



### When driving a personal watercraft:



#### BE PWC LICENSED

- Carry your current PWC licence at all times.



#### WEAR A LIFEJACKET

- Type 1 or 2 offshore.
  - Type 1, 2 or 3 on enclosed waters.
- Applies to everyone on board.  
DON'T wear an inflatable lifejacket.



#### OBSERVE PWC RESTRICTION ZONES

No irregular driving (ie. weaving; driving in a circle or other pattern; wave/swell jumping) within 200m of the shore.



#### OBSERVE OTHER AREAS WITHIN 200M FROM SHORE NEAR VISIBLE RESIDENCES

No irregular driving.



#### KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

Stay under 10 knots (about 18.5kph) when:

- 60m from people, canoes/kayaks, surf or swimming zones.
- 30m from other vessels, objects, structures or shore.

#### OBEY SPEED RESTRICTIONS

**KEEP SAFE, STAY RIGHT**  
**DRIVING A PWC BETWEEN SUNSET AND SUNRISE IS PROHIBITED**  
**OBSERVE EXCLUSION ZONES WHERE DRIVING A PWC IS PROHIBITED**

#### Boat responsibly

Info Line: 13 12 56

[www.rms.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au)  
RMS 12 277 MARWWSLAB040 09/12

# Safety equipment

## Lif jackets

When on board a PWC it is essential that all persons (both driver and passengers) wear an 'approved' and 'appropriate' lifejacket, in order to comply with NSW regulations.

**ON THE SPOT FINE \$250**

- ▶ \$250 for each person not wearing a lifejacket.



## Approved lifejacket

An approved lifejacket (Type 1, 2 or 3) is one that complies with relevant Australian, European, Canadian, New Zealand or Underwriters Laboratories Standards. Level 150, 100, 50 and 50S must comply with Australian Standard AS4758.

Approved lifejackets are:

### Lifejacket Type 1 or Level 150 or Level 100

Offers protection from drowning by maintaining a person in a safe floating position in the water, with buoyancy behind the head.

### Lifejacket Type 2 or Level 50

Has less buoyancy than Type 1 and does not have a collar. For safety reasons, they are always bright in colour. Should you become separated from your PWC, you will be much more easily seen in high visibility colours, which means your chances of rescue are greater.

### Lifejacket Type 3 or Level 50S

Often used by skiers and has sophisticated fastening systems able to withstand high impact. The only problem

with these jackets is their colour, which is often not very visible and therefore may present a problem in search and rescue situations.

## Lifejacket selection

On open waters (surf beaches, oceans or what is referred to as 'offshore' or 'coastal' waters) a lifejacket Type 3 is not acceptable. When offshore a lifejacket Type 1 or a lifejacket Type 2 MUST be worn.

While using your PWC on enclosed waters (rivers, lakes or dams) any type of lifejacket may be worn.

Inflatable lifejackets are not recommended to be worn on PWC.

PWC are exempt from carrying other safety equipment.

## Tow-in surfing

A Lifejacket Type 1 or Level 150 or 100 or Type 2 or Level 50 must be worn by the driver and a Lifejacket Type 2 or 3 or Level 50 or 50S by the surfer.

For further details regarding tow-in surfing, see page 11.

# Safety on the water

## Know the rules

### Approaching vessels head on

Each vessel alters course to starboard (right) and passes port to port (left). This applies in both narrow channels and open waters.



### Overtaking

Keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken and pass safely either side.

### Give way (powered vessels)

Give way to vessels approaching from your starboard (right) side, they have right of way.



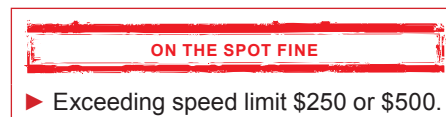
### Give way (non-powered vessels)

Give way to sailing vessels, canoes and other passive craft.

### Speed

All vessels must travel at a safe speed at all times. A safe speed is one at which the vessel can be stopped in time to avoid any danger which may suddenly arise. When judging a safe speed, you must consider a number of issues – visibility, other vessels, navigation hazards, wind, waves and currents and the manoeuvrability of your vessel.

For your safety and the sake of everyone else using the water, **do not exceed set speed limits.**



### Lookout

Keep a good lookout by sight and hearing. Be fully aware of the boating environment, especially in bad weather or restricted visibility. Look all around – even behind you.

Don't confuse the lookout duties of the driver with those of the observer when the PWC is towing a person. The driver is responsible at all times for keeping a lookout for danger.

## Distance off

A PWC towing a person or travelling at 10 knots or more must remain:

- 60 metres from any person in the water (including a surfer or boogie boarder), sailing vessel or passive craft.
- 30 metres from another power driven vessel, the shore, any moored/anchored vessel, or any structure or object.

- A “safe distance” from any other vessel towing someone. *Note: If the 60m or 30m rule is not possible to follow and the rule is breached, the vessel must remain at a “safe distance” from the other vessel/object, and the obligation is on the vessel operator to prove that the reduced distance was in fact “safe.” Accordingly, “If in doubt, keep your distance.”*

- 200 metres from vessels and people in the water when tow-in surfing.

**ON THE SPOT FINE \$250**

- ▶ If distance off rules are not adhered to.

## Obey the signs

In some areas, PWC activity may be prohibited or have restrictions placed on the speed at which they may operate. These areas may be appropriately marked by signs or notices either in, or in the vicinity of, the area concerned eg, in Gunnamatta Bay (Port Hacking).

**ON THE SPOT FINE \$500**

- ▶ Failure to obey speed restriction signs \$250 or \$500.

**Note: PWC may not be driven on Sydney Harbour even though signs may not be in evidence. Penalties range from \$500 (first offence) to \$1500 for third and subsequent offences for breaches.**





# PWC operating restrictions

PWC may be prohibited or have restrictions placed on their speed and/or driving pattern as follows:

## 1. PWC Exclusion Zone

**PENALTY \$500 1st offence**

The operation of PWC is prohibited in Sydney Harbour, including the waters of all tidal bays, rivers and their tributaries (includes Parramatta River, Middle Harbour and the Lane Cove River).

## 2. No driving in an irregular manner

**PENALTY \$250**

PWC are not permitted to be driven in an irregular manner in:

- A PWC Restriction Zone (see diagram far right) or;
- Elsewhere within 200 metres of the shoreline where one or more dwellings are located within 200 metres of the shoreline and visible from the water.

Examples of driving in an irregular manner are:

- Driving in a circle or other pattern.
- Weaving or diverting.
- Surfing down or jumping over or across any swell, wave or wash.


This means that PWC are required to be operated generally in a straight line within 200m of the shoreline.




**Note that driving in an irregular manner does not apply when a PWC is towing a waterskier or aquaplaner. However, as soon as towing activity is finished, the “no irregular driving” rule comes into effect.**

## PWC Restriction Zone



 Irregular driving not permitted within 200 metres of the shoreline (shown above) (except Sydney Harbour, which is a PWC Exclusion Zone).

 Irregular driving not permitted within 200 metres of the shoreline where one or more dwellings are within 200 metres of the shore and visible from those waters.

This zone encompasses the bays, rivers and other waterways within the Sydney basin area which lies between Port Hacking, Wamberal and the Blue Mountains but does not include waters off the coast.

### 3. No Go PWC Areas



There are some areas where PWC use is prohibited and they will be indicated by signs. PWC driving is not permitted in these areas at any time.



### 4. After sunset and before sunrise

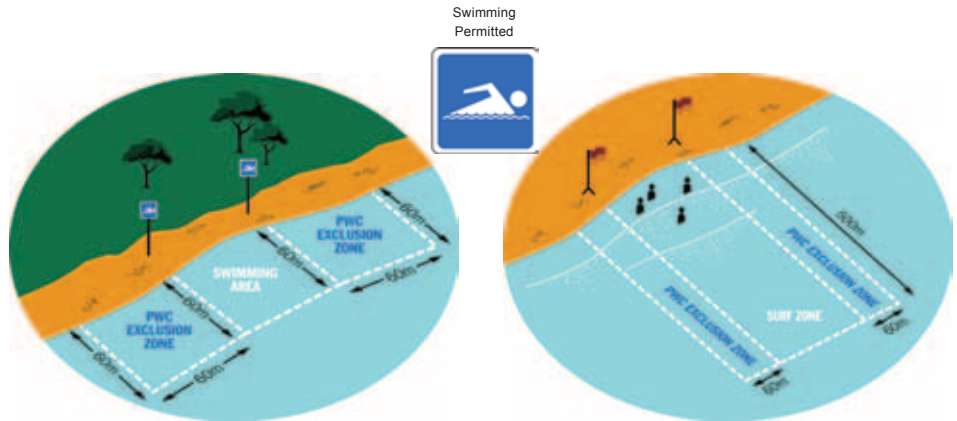


Driving a PWC between sunset and sunrise is prohibited, regardless of whether navigation lights are fitted.

### 5. In a designated swimming area

A designated swimming area in a surf zone is defined as the area extending 500 metres out from shore between surf patrol flags or signs. In other locations a swimming area is defined as the area extending 60 metres out from shore between signs for swimmers.

A PWC must not be operated in these zones or within 60 metres either side of the flags or signs marking such zones.



# Towing

## Responsibilities

When towing someone, **the driver** of the PWC must:

- Hold a current PWC licence.
- Ensure the PWC has current registration.
- Have an observer on board who is either 16 years of age or older, or the holder of a Young Adult licence.

The driver of the PWC is responsible for the safety of the PWC and people being towed and for maintaining the appropriate distances off applicable to the PWC and the skier(s).

### The observer must:

- Not suffer hearing, sight or other disabilities which could affect the performance of observation duties.
- Not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Observe the people being towed and report all matters affecting them to the driver.
- Tell the driver about all vessels approaching from behind.
- Be familiar with the standard hand signals.

## Distances off when towing people

When towing, the driver must keep both the PWC and the people being towed at a minimum distance of:

- **30 metres** from power-driven vessels (including other PWC) not towing skiers, land and structures (including jetties, bridges, moorings and navigation markers) or, if that is not possible a safe distance.
- **60 metres** from people or non-powered vessels (sailing and passive) or, if that is not possible, a safe distance.
- A safe distance from any vessel towing people.

If towing people using aerial equipment (eg, paraflying) keep the vessel, the people being towed and the aerial equipment a minimum of 300 metres from any bridge, cable, wire, pipeline or structure.

No more than three (3) people can be towed at once. Towing may also be prohibited in some areas and signs may be displayed. In other areas, towing may not be possible because of the location of hazards, or if safe distances off cannot be maintained.



PWC riding and towing are prohibited between sunset and sunrise.

## Tow-in surfing

Tow-in surfing is a technique where a person operating a PWC tows a surfer onto a breaking wave. In NSW the following conditions apply to tow-in surfing:

- Tow-in surfing is only permitted on open waters at surf breaks only where there are no paddle surfboard riders present.
- Both the driver of the PWC and the surfboard rider must have a current PWC licence, current First Aid certificate, wear an appropriate lifejacket (can be a lifejacket Type 3 for the surfboard rider) when the activity is being undertaken, and have attended any course or passed any examination required by Roads and Maritime Services.

# General information

The driver of the PWC:

- May not tow more than one person at a time.
- Must yield right of way to all other boating or ocean recreation activities.
- Must maintain a distance of at least 200 metres from all vessels and people in the water.
- Must carry dive fins and a safety knife.

The PWC is to be equipped with a:

- Rescue sled.
- Second kill switch lanyard wrapped around the handlebars.
- Two-way communication device.
- Toolkit.
- Quick release floating tow rope with a minimum length of 7 metres.
- Bow tow-line with a minimum length of 7 metres.

**ON THE SPOT FINE \$500**

- ▶ If PWC is found in breach of tow-in surfing requirements.

Only PWC may be used for tow-in surfing. No observer is required on the PWC provided there is compliance with the above conditions at all times.

## Alcohol and drugs

Go easy on the drink. The driver, the observer and any person being towed must remain under 0.05 and all can be subject to random breath testing (RBT). Penalties range from \$1,100 for a first offence in the low range (0.05–0.08) to a \$5,500 fine and up to two years imprisonment or both for a second offence in the high range (0.15 and above).

## PWC maintenance

It is important to ensure that your PWC is in good order by inspecting key features before you leave home or the ramp, mooring or wharf. The major causes of breakdown are engine failure, fuel shortage or contamination, mechanical failure and battery failure.

## PWC checklist

### Check:

- Your registration number and label and the PWC Behaviour Label. Make sure they are properly displayed.
- Your steering control to ensure that it is working properly.
- Fuel and oil supplies. Top up if necessary.

- That the engine compartment is adequately ventilated. Use your nose and sniff for fumes before trying to start your engine.
- That there are no leaks in fuel lines, fuel or oil tanks or the exhaust system.
- Batteries; ensure terminals are safely secured and properly charged with fluid at proper levels.
- The engine hood cover is latched securely.
- That the pump/intake area is free of debris.
- For cracks and other damage to the hull.
- The throttle, making sure that it is in proper working order.
- The lanyard cut-off switch is in proper working order and that it is attached to your wrist or your lifejacket.
- You have enough lines for mooring and towing.
- Choke and fuel reserve controls.

## Preventative maintenance

Keep the hull free of damage, algae and other growth and the engine free of grease and oil build-up. Make sure that the engine is properly tuned.



Check battery fluid regularly and ensure that all of the electrical connections are clean and tight, and all cables are lubricated and working smoothly. Check for loose nuts, bolts and screws.

## Noise annoys

Be considerate, particularly at these times:

- Early in the morning (noise travels further in calm conditions).
- When winds are blowing towards residential areas.

Noise can be annoying not only because of its level, but also because of the type of noise being created. It is important to consider the effects of your activities on those surrounding you and on the local residents.

Even if your vessel is relatively quiet, it becomes offensive noise if you run it early in the morning or stay too long in the same area.

## How to get a PWC driving licence

To get a PWC driving licence, applicants must:

- Complete both the compulsory General Licence Boating Safety Course and PWC Licence Boating Safety Course;
- Provide evidence of practical boating (logbook) experience (note: practical experience cannot be undertaken on a PWC); and
- Successfully undertake the general licence test and PWC licence test.

The above requirements also apply to Young Adult PWC licence applicants.

Both the Boating Safety Course(s) and the practical boating experience requirements must be completed within the 12 months prior to undertaking the licence test.

On completion of the Boating Safety Course, practical boating experience and licence test requirements, the relevant PWC driving licence will be issued to applicants on payment of the licence fee for a one (1), three (3) or five (5) year PWC licence.

**Applicants wishing to upgrade their existing general driving licence to a PWC driving licence are not required to provide evidence of practical boating experience and need only comply with the PWC Licence Boating Safety Course and PWC licence test requirements.**

For more information on how to obtain a PWC driving licence, contact Roads and Maritime Services on 13 12 56 (7 days a week, 8.30am–4.30pm) or visit our website [www.rms.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au)

## How to comply with Boating Safety Course requirements

Boating Safety Course (BSC) requirements can be met by one of the following methods:

1. By viewing the General and PWC licence Boating Safety Course presentations online at **[www.rms.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au)**
2. By purchasing online or at any Maritime Service Centre, a DVD of the course(s) for viewing at home.
3. By attending a Boating Safety Course conducted by Roads and Maritime Services or Marine Rescue NSW.

Regardless of the method selected, a nominal fee applies to both the General and PWC licence Boating Safety Courses.

For online BSC presentations, the applicant at the conclusion of each course prints a BSC Certificate of Completion. For online or counter purchases, a BSC Certificate of Completion is provided for each applicant along with a DVD.

For applicants who attend a Boating Safety Course, the licence tests are undertaken at the conclusion of the course. Applicants who fail the licence test are issued BSC Certificates of Completion.

On presentation of the BSC Certificate of Completion, which is valid for twelve (12) months, applicants can sit the licence test an unlimited number of times at any Maritime Service Centre, Motor Registry or Government Access Centre.

## How to comply with PWC licence test requirements

Both the general and PWC licence tests can only be attempted following completion of the Boating Safety Course(s) and initial PWC licence applicants must pass the general licence test before the PWC test can be attempted.

A fee is payable for each licence test attempt and licence tests can be undertaken at any of the following venues:

- Maritime Service Centres
- Motor Registries
- Government Access Centres

When attending a licence test, applicants must provide the BSC Certificate of Completion and acceptable Proof of Identity. Young adult licence applicants must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian who must also provide acceptable proof of identity.

PWC licence applicants must provide two (2) passport quality photographs.

## How to comply with Practical Boating Experience requirements

Practical boating experience can be gained by completing a Boating Licence Practical Logbook.

Initial PWC licence applicants must undertake, in the company of an experienced skipper, a minimum of three (3) trips in a powered vessel under power (excluding PWC). An experienced skipper is a person who holds, as a minimum, a valid NSW or interstate general licence and has held the licence for a continuous period of at least three (3) years. Young adult licensees are not considered experienced skippers for this purpose.

The vessel used to undertake practical experience must carry the prescribed safety equipment and be fitted with appropriate lights if undertaking optional night-time navigation.

Details of each trip must be recorded in the logbook and be verified by the experienced skipper. The applicant and the experienced skipper must also confirm that all elements relating to practical experience competencies as listed in the logbook have been covered by initialling each element.

Copies of the logbook are available free of charge, from any Maritime Service Centre, Motor Registry and Government Access Centre or download from [www.rms.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au)

**Only trips undertaken within 12 months of the date of applying for the issue of a boat licence will be recognised for the purpose of satisfying practical experience requirements.**

### Alternative methods to get a Boat Driving Licence

The following options are available as alternative methods to obtain a PWC driving licence.



Completion of the General and/or PWC Boating Education and Training Course conducted by a Roads and Maritime Services accredited Recognised Training Provider (RTP). On completion of the course(s) (which includes the licence test/s), successful applicants are issued a Certificate of Completion.

The compulsory practical boating experience requirement can also be undertaken with an RTP or the applicant can choose the logbook option.

Fees and conditions apply in attending a Boating Education and Training Course and in undertaking the practical component. A list of accredited RTPs and a direct link to the RTP website is available on the Roads and Maritime Services website.

### When applying for a PWC driving licence

An applicant must provide Proof of Identity documentation before sitting for a PWC licence test. Young Adult licence applicants must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian when sitting the test. Proof of Identity of the parent or legal guardian is required.

PWC licence applicants must provide two (2) colour passport acceptable photographs (with a light background). As PWC driving licences are plastic photo cards, two new photos will be required each time the licence is renewed.

When completing the licence application form, the applicant will be required to provide information about any medical conditions which may affect their ability to operate a PWC, meet eyesight standards and pay the appropriate fee.

# Before you go out on your PWC

- Check the weather before you go out. Forecasts are available by phoning Roads and Maritime Services on 13 12 36 or checking coastal bar conditions online at [www.rms.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au)
- Check that your PWC is in good condition and free of weeds and other debris.
- Open the engine compartment and allow any fumes to vent. Sniff for fumes.
- Make sure you have sufficient water and fuel for the duration of the trip.
- Report your trip. Let someone know where you are going, how many people are with you, and when you intend to return.
- Make sure you know how to handle your PWC, especially in the waterway that you're using. If in doubt, get information from locals or contact your local Maritime Service Centre.



## Riding tips

- Always wear your approved lifejacket.
- Always wear a safety lanyard attached to your wrist or lifejacket and to the PWC's lanyard terminal so that it will stop the engine if you fall off.
- Relax when you drive. Do not ride with your elbows locked. Bend your arms and knees slightly when riding to allow for any swells and wakes.
- Do not cut blind corners.
- Use your mirror and check over your shoulder before turning.
- On narrow waterways slow down and travel on the right hand side.
- Avoid travelling directly in the wake of another craft.
- If your PWC has a watertight compartment it may be useful to carry items such as sunscreen, water, a torch and a mobile phone.
- Obey any speed limits and restrictions that may be in force. Follow the nautical rules.
- Keep a lookout at all times and always look behind you before you turn. Be aware that swimmers may be obscured behind the swell, waves and wake.



- Go easy on the drink – waves, wind and weather multiply the effects of alcohol. One third of all boating fatalities involve alcohol. Never ride your PWC under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- If you experience difficulty with your PWC, return to shore. If this is not possible stay with your PWC and do not attempt to swim to shore. A PWC is easier for rescuers to see than a person in the water.
- Exercise care, courtesy and commonsense. Make your ride enjoyable for everyone.



## Know your PWC

Maintain your PWC to the manufacturer's requirements and have the craft serviced regularly.

## Marine pollution

It is an offence to deliberately discharge garbage, oil and other waste into the aquatic environment. Penalties apply.

## Fuelling

It is important to fuel your PWC on land as fuel is dangerous and is a significant source of water pollution. Avoid overfilling – fill the tank slowly to avoid a spill. Watch the vents and use absorbent material to collect any overflow. Never place those materials into the PWC or the water.

## Steering

Most PWC have a directional jet nozzle at the stern through which water is forced, propelling the boat. The direction in which the nozzle is aimed is controlled by the handlebar or steering wheel. The nozzle is located at the aft end of the pump housing and the direction that it is pointed controls the direction of the exiting water. Refer to your PWC owner's manual for more specific operating instructions.

For steering control, power to the pump must be maintained. If the engine is allowed to idle or shut down during a turn all power will be lost and the PWC will continue to move in the same direction regardless of any movement of the steering controls. If you back off the throttle the steering capability of the PWC will lessen. Give yourself plenty of room and be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Some newer PWC models have off-throttle steering capabilities providing enough thrust for steering when the throttle is reduced, while others drop rudders into the water if the jet has been idle for a certain length of time. Again, refer to your PWC manual to determine whether your PWC has these capabilities.

All PWC are equipped with a safety ignition cut off key called a lanyard which is designed to stop the engine if you fall off your PWC. Lanyards are an important safety device which can be attached to the driver's wrist or, in some cases, your lifejacket.

## Boarding and re-boarding

When boarding or re-boarding from the water, always approach your PWC from behind. Pull yourself carefully aboard, making sure to keep your weight centered on the boat. Practise getting off and re-boarding in progressively deeper water, close to the shore, until you are always able to re-board when you can't stand on the bottom.

Remember to reconnect the lanyard in order to start the engine.

## Falling off

If you fall off a PWC the lanyard will disconnect once you enter the water, causing the PWC's engine to shut down and the machine to stop. Some older PWC have an automatic idle and self circling capacity. If you fall off, the PWC will circle slowly in the water until you can re-board. In either case, swim to your PWC, re-board carefully at the stern, re-attach the lanyard and re-start your engine.

**Remember: keep a close eye on your surroundings and other vessel traffic that may be in the area.**

If your PWC has stalled and won't re-start, don't attempt to swim to shore. Instead stay with your PWC as you will be easier to spot by rescuers.

If a passenger falls off a PWC, slow down immediately. Manoeuvre the PWC, taking care not to hit the person in the water. Warn approaching vessels and approach the person in the water from downwind or against the current. When trying to pick the person up, turn off the engine or place the engine in neutral.

## Have the right equipment

- Lifejackets – the law requires the driver and all persons on board to wear an appropriate lifejacket.
- Wetsuit – will keep you warm and aid in flotation.
- Helmet – a good idea to wear one to prevent head injury.
- Safety lanyard – this is a must because it automatically cuts off the power should you fall off.
- Fire extinguisher – if you have space it's a good idea to carry an approved fire extinguisher.

## Safety tips

- Wear your lifejacket at all times – it's a legal requirement.
- Watch the weather for any change in conditions.
- Know your limits and capabilities. Avoid risks that could cause personal injury or property damage.
- Make yourself a better and safer rider and familiarise yourself with the way your PWC handles.
- Irregular driving carries various risks. You may forget to be aware of traffic in the vicinity of your vessel, or misjudge speed and distances off. Remember – care, courtesy and commonsense on the water.
- Never allow anyone to place their hands, hair or feet near the jet pump intake. Serious injury or even drowning could occur.
- Wake or wave jumping is not recommended by most PWC manufacturers due to the possibility of back injuries.
- Keep clear of the jet nozzle and never allow jet thrust to enter body cavities as severe injury can result.

## PWC terminology

**Aft:** Toward the 'stern' or rear of the vessel.

**Bow:** The front of the vessel.

**Deck:** Any permanent covering over a compartment.

**Draft:** The minimum depth of water a vessel needs to float in.

**Forward:** Toward the front or 'bow' of the vessel.

**Hull:** The body of the vessel.

**Port:** The left hand side of the vessel when you are looking forward from the stern.

**Starboard:** The right hand side of the vessel when you are looking forward from the stern.

**Safety lanyard:** The cut off switch which must be attached to the driver.

**Steering nozzle:** A device for directing a stream of water to the left or right.

**Steering control:** The device designed for operating the PWC.

**Stern:** The back or rear of the vessel.

**Throttle:** The speed control regulating the amount of fuel deliverable to the engine.

## Emergencies

### Reporting vessel incidents

If a boating incident occurs in any port or navigable water in NSW, it must be reported to Roads and Maritime Services. Where the incident has resulted in the death of, or injury to, a person or damage in excess of \$5000 to a vessel or any other property, a written report must be forwarded to Roads and Maritime Services within 24 hours setting out the

particulars of the incident, unless these have already been given to a Roads and Maritime Services officer or NSW Police Force officer.

Vessel incident report forms are available from any Maritime Service Centre, the NSW Police Force and Marine Rescue NSW. They are also available from our website at [www.rms.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au)





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For further enquiries:  
[www.rms.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au)  
Info Line: 13 12 56

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