



Transport for NSW

Get to know your interstate boating rules

New South Wales and Victoria





Lifejackets

Lifejackets are the most important safety equipment on any vessel. In both NSW and Victoria, appropriate lifejackets must be carried for everyone on board, and they must be worn in a range of situations on different types and sizes of vessels and at times of heightened risk. Inflatable lifejackets must be serviced regularly or in accordance with the manufacturers instructions.

There are some differences in the specified situations where lifejackets must be worn in each state. For example:

NSW:

Children aged under 12 years must wear a lifejacket on all vessels up to 4.8 metres long at all times, and in open areas of all vessels up to 8 metres long when the vessel is underway.

Everyone aged 12 or older must wear a lifejacket on vessels less than 4.8 metres when boating alone, or at night, or on alpine or open (ocean) waters.

Everyone on recreational and commercial vessels must wear an appropriate lifejacket when crossing designated coastal bars.

Victoria:

Children under 10 years old must wear a lifejacket at all times when in an open area of a vessel that is underway.

Everyone must wear a lifejacket on powered vessels up to and including 4.8 metres at all times when underway.

Everyone in an open area of a power-driven recreational vessel less than 12 metres in length and yachts, must wear an appropriate lifejacket at times of heightened risk, such as when crossing coastal bars, or when boating alone, or at night.

Additional rules apply for the use of lifejackets on NSW and Victorian waters. To find out more please visit roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au or wearalifejacket.vic.gov.au.





Safety equipment

In both states, safety equipment must be carried on board. The requirements depend on the vessel type and waterway. In NSW, waterways are defined as enclosed or open, while in Victoria they are defined as inland, enclosed, coastal inshore or coastal offshore.

Vessels visiting from interstate are exempt from carrying the required safety equipment, providing they conform with the safety equipment carriage requirements of their home state.



Boat driving licences and registration

In both states, individuals are eligible for a full licence from 16 years of age and certain types of vessels must be registered.

NSW:

You must have a current boat driving licence to drive a powered vessel at 10 knots or faster. A current personal watercraft licence is required to drive a PWC at all times. Restrictions apply to licence holders from 12 to under 16 years of age.

Registration is required for vessels with an engine power rating of 4.0 kilowatt (5 horsepower) or more, all vessels 5.5 metres or longer, all vessels on moorings, all commercial vessels and all PWC.

Victoria:

A marine licence is required to operate any registered vessel. A restricted marine licence is available to individuals from 12-16 years of age, allowing them to operate at up to 10 knots by day but not to tow. Restricted licence holders will no longer be issued with a PWC endorsement on their restricted marine licence.

All vessels equipped with a motor capable of propulsion require registration in Victoria and must display a registration label. Some exemptions apply.



Speed limits and safe distance requirements

In both states, all vessels must travel at a safe speed for the prevailing conditions and keep a safe distance from people in the water, other vessels, structures and the shore at all times. You must also observe any signposted speed limits.

NSW:

When travelling in a powered vessel at six knots or faster, you must keep at least 30 metres from other vessels, structures and the shore. When driving any vessel, you must keep at least 60 metres from people in the water and any dive flag.

Victoria:

Unless otherwise signposted, a five knot speed limit applies to all vessels including PWC within 50 metres of a person in the water, another vessel, a fixed or floating structure or inland shoreline. The five knot rule also applies within 100 metres of a 'diver below' white/blue alpha flag, and within 200 metres of coastal and enclosed shorelines.



Tow sports

In both states, everyone being towed must wear an appropriate lifejacket and no more than three people may be towed simultaneously.

NSW:

Observers must hold a boat or PWC driving licence or be 16 years of age or older.

Safe distance requirements (see above) apply at any speed to both the vessel and the person being towed in NSW.

Towing is prohibited between sunset and sunrise.

Victoria:

Observers must be at least 12 years old.

Safe distance requirements (see left) apply at speeds greater than five knots.

Towing is prohibited from one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise.



Personal watercraft operation

In NSW you must hold a PWC licence to drive a PWC. In Victoria the licence holder may allow another person to drive the PWC provided the licence holder is in a position to take immediate control and is over 18 years of age. Operators and passengers must wear approved lifejackets at all times.

PWC use is prohibited between sunset and sunrise in NSW, but permitted in Victoria provided appropriate navigation lights are used.



Safe navigation

Both states follow international practice for safe navigation. This includes maintaining a safe speed, keeping a proper lookout at all times, using appropriate navigation lights at night and staying to the right in rivers and channels.

On lakes, the direction of travel is anti-clockwise unless otherwise stated. If in doubt, consult the relevant waterway manager and follow authorised signage.



Go easy on the drink

Both states have strict limits on blood alcohol levels for recreational boat operators. Don't go boating under the influence of alcohol.

NSW:

The blood alcohol limits are 0.00 for operators aged under 18 years and 0.05 for those over 18 years.

When engaged in tow sports, alcohol limits apply to drivers, observers and everyone being towed.

Victoria:

The limits are 0.00 for operators under 21 years and 0.05 for those over 21 years.



Boating is regulated by state governments, so different laws apply in different states. When it comes to the Murray River, which borders Victoria and New South Wales, the laws of NSW apply.

This guide outlines some of the differences between the laws of NSW and Victoria.

Additional restrictions and regulations may apply. Make sure you check out all the regulations before you head out on the water.

For more information on NSW maritime regulations, please refer to the NSW Boating Handbook or visit roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au.

For more information on Victorian maritime regulations, please refer to the Victorian Recreational Boating Safety Handbook or visit transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv.

New South Wales

For more information:

roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au

13 12 36

Victoria

For more information:

transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv

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