

Houseboats on NSW Waterways

New waterway management arrangements for houseboats in NSW

October 2021

The Maritime Branch in Transport for NSW regulates a range of boating activities and aquatic events to promote safe and responsible boating practices on NSW waterways. We work with the community to consider competing needs and ensure safe use of our waterways.

As a waterway regulator we can restrict or prohibit certain activities if they are considered unsuitable e.g. increased safety risk or navigational hazard in a certain area.

NSW Houseboat Access Policy

The NSW Houseboat Access Policy (the Policy) introduces a statewide waterway management strategy for houseboats in NSW, including, operation, access and mooring arrangements for vessels, floating objects, structures or other apparatus that are defined as a houseboat.

The Policy guides best practice houseboat operations in NSW waters, to promote appropriate use and enjoyment of our waterways; improve boating safety, navigation and visual amenity; and to protect the aquatic and surrounding environment.

The Policy is not designed to introduce additional restrictions on the use of houseboats in NSW waterways, unless there is a safety or navigational risk, an impact on the local environment, or if there is a breach of marine legislation and/or planning instruments such as the State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007 and Local/Regional Environmental Plans.

Aim of the Policy

- help Maritime officers assess the operation, access and/or mooring of houseboats in NSW waterways
- reduce safety risks associated with the operation of houseboats for the benefit of all aquatic users, vessels and property
- reduce concerns about navigation
- improve environmental outcomes
- maintain the visual amenity of a waterway and surrounding area
- consolidate the application of marine safety strategies and legislation related to the use of houseboats in NSW
- provide a standard way to monitor houseboat activities and identify if improvements can be made regarding people/vessel safety and environmental outcomes
- provide clear information to the boating public about houseboat activities and arrangements in NSW waterways.

Local focus with a statewide approach

Local waterway arrangements for houseboats will continue to be managed by Maritime field-based officers. The NSW Houseboat Access Policy and the associated operational procedure guides authorised maritime officers (officers) in North, South and Greater Sydney regions to identify suitable houseboat operations, as well as access and/or mooring arrangements for existing and proposed houseboat activities across all NSW waterways.

Responsibilities for houseboat owners

The owner of a houseboat may need to apply for approval from Transport for NSW to operate on NSW waters. It is important for houseboat owners, operators of houseboat hire businesses and/or related commercial mooring licensees to stay up to date on existing waterway management arrangements and issues in their area of operation.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), as the National body, provides relevant domestic commercial vessel approval, endorsement or exemption (certificate of survey, certificate of operation etc) for a houseboat. However, the Maritime Branch is responsible for assessing and approving activities on waters within the boundaries of NSW. Decisions made will consider relevant State and Local Government legislation and plans relating to the protection and use of our waterways.

AMSA approval (such as for a Domestic Commercial Vessel) does not guarantee a vessel can be operated on NSW waters.

Relevant marine legislation

- Legislation such as the *Marine Safety Act 1998* and Marine Safety Regulation 2016 guide Maritime Branch to support public safety and enjoyment of our waterways.
- Marine Pollution legislation assists efforts towards protection and conservation of the environment.
- Part 6C of the Ports and Maritime Administration Regulation 2012 regulates issues relating to mooring licences in NSW.

Planning Instruments

Management of our waterways is also overseen by State, Regional and/or Local Environmental Plans administered by the Department of Planning, Industry & Environment (e.g. State Environment Planning Policy 2007) or the relevant local council to ensure development and use of the waterways is suitable for the area.

Commercial and Private Mooring Licence Conditions

In line with legislative requirements, Transport for NSW places conditions for Private Mooring Licences and Commercial Mooring Licences to ensure the acceptable use of moorings in NSW. The conditions are reviewed and adapted to suit our changing marine environment as required.

Transport for NSW arrangements for commercial and public mooring licences do not allow a person or persons to permanently reside on any vessel, floating object, structure, or other apparatus in NSW waters.

NSW vessel mooring arrangements

Transport for NSW's [Moorings Online](#) provides an interactive map to display real time private mooring availability and wait list information for individual bays in NSW. This tool reduces administrative processes and allows customers to lodge Private Mooring Licence applications.

Further Consultation

Please consult with other agencies, including the Department of Planning, Industry & Environment and/or relevant local councils and the local community to understand likely impacts of houseboat arrangements.