



**Department of
Education**

APPENDIX M: POWER BOATING

EFFECTIVE: 21 JULY 2025

VERSION: 3.1

POWER BOATING

This document contains specific requirements related to power boating activities and must be read in conjunction with *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures*.

1. BACKGROUND

Students participating in power boating activities learn practical boat handling skills and develop understandings about safety, marine regulations, boat maintenance, the use of safety equipment and emergency procedures.

Commercial operators in Australian waters are governed by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and are therefore held to different operating standards and requirements than those outlined for recreational operators of water vessels. If your planned activity involves the use of a commercial vessel (for example, a ferry) and participants will not be operating the vessel then these procedures do not apply.

DEFINITIONS

ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR

Assists the Qualified Supervisor and or Department Teacher-in-charge. Must have recent and relevant experience in the activity, at the level being offered to the students.

CALM WATER

A still or slow-moving water environment with no to low swell, within **400 meters** of a safe landing point. These areas may include a sheltered or protected coastal area or river, dam, waterhole or inland water body.

DEPARTMENT TEACHER-IN-CHARGE

The member of the teaching staff employed by the Department of Education (or an Approved Provider) and managing the school activity. For information relating to Approved Providers refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements*.

FIXED LOCATION

Within **1000 metres** of the initial launching point.

KNOT

Refers to the speed of travel undertaken by a water vessel and is a measurement of time required to travel a nautical mile. 1 knot equals one nautical mile per hour (equivalent to 1.852 kilometres).

LOW SWELL

Shore breaking waves that are on average less than 0.5 meters and have a times wave gap of greater than 8 seconds.

NAVIGABLE WATERS

All waters that are considered to be deep, wide and calm enough for a water vessel to pass safely.

NON-FIXED LOCATION

Any area beyond **1000 metres** from the initial launching point.

OPEN WATER

An unprotected water environment that may be fast flowing or turbulent, such as a surf beach, flowing river or waterway, tidal coastal water, or areas affected by swell and/or strong currents. This also applies to calm water areas greater than **400 meters** from a safe landing point.

POWER BOAT

Any watercraft that has a motorised propulsion system.

PROTECTED WATERS

Includes rivers, lakes, estuaries, harbours and waters within 400 meters from the shore in unprotected waters but excludes the Cambridge Gulf and Lake Argyle (refer Department of Transport).

QUALIFIED SUPERVISOR

Has the required qualifications, skill, experience and technical knowledge to instruct the activity.

SAFE LANDING POINT

Where a person can safely enter and/or exit the water unassisted. This excludes areas unsuitable for landing that may include but are not limited to, vertical cliffs, low lying reefs, or areas affected by rebounding waves.

SHORE

An area of land adjacent to the water. These areas may include low lying land, a beach, wharf, jetty or similar rigid structure attached to land.

SKIPPER

The person in charge of operating the vessel. They are responsible for the safety of their vessel, passengers and other water users and must comply with Department of Transport marine laws.

UNPROTECTED WATERS

Waters beyond 400metres from the shore.

2. ENVIRONMENT

Each aquatic environment is unique, and open/unprotected water environments can be more hazardous.

When assessing the suitability of a location, access to resources, services and facilities also need to be considered (for example, toilets, drinking water, external communication and assistance).

Students must only be exposed to environments or locations that have been assessed and deemed appropriate by the Department Teacher-in-charge, for the students' capacity, skills and experience, the planned activities, and the supervision required.

The Department Teacher-in-charge must ensure that research and/or a reconnaissance trip is conducted around proposed locations well in advance, to confirm sites are suitable for the group size and competency levels.

The Department Teacher-in-charge must ensure that weather conditions are assessed and monitored, in the days leading up to the activity, on the day of the activity and throughout the activity. The supervisory team may need to modify or cancel the activity at any time. Check the Bureau of Meteorology for up-to-date conditions and weather warnings. If weather

conditions deteriorate and become unfavourable, all participants must return to the launching point or identified safe landing point immediately.

Prior to conducting the activity, the Department Teacher-in-charge should access information regarding wave height, weather and coastal conditions:

- Surf Life Saving WA (SLSWA) website or SLSWA X (*previously Twitter*)
- [Beachsafe](#)
- [Bureau of Meteorology](#)
- [Weatherzone](#)
- [Seabreeze](#)
- [Swellnet](#).

Care must be taken when operating in areas with reefs and sandbars as these can cause freak waves that have the potential to swamp boats. The Qualified Supervisor must have first-hand knowledge of the area. Consideration must be given to rocks, shallows and other navigational hazards. Changes in depths of the sea, river or estuary floor must be monitored and where possible, any stopping of vessels should be avoided in these areas.

If activities are in ocean or estuarine environments, checks must be made directly prior to the activity regarding shark sightings or alerts in the area of use. In the event of a shark sighting the activity may need to be postponed or modified. Information is available from the [SharkSmart](#) website.

If the power boating activity is not being conducted through an external provider, the Department Teacher-in-charge must contact Department of Transport [Marine](#) or the local council to determine whether there are any restrictions on the use of the selected location.

Guidance

Sources of information regarding the venue may include:

- *the venue manager*
- *the local ranger or land manager*
- *experienced power boaters, with knowledge of the location*
- *books, guides, articles*
- *other schools that have conducted similar activities in that location.*

Selected areas are defined by on-shore marker buoys, flags, natural features or other nominated craft.

3. CAPACITY OF STUDENTS

Power boating activities are considered appropriate for students from Year 9 upwards who have been assessed by the Department Teacher-in-charge and deemed to have the capacity and required swimming and water safety abilities/skills to participate safely.

The Department Teacher-in-charge in consultation with the Qualified Supervisor, determines whether the students will need to develop additional skills to safely participate in all activities.

Students over 14 but under 16 years of age are restricted to operating during daylight hours at a speed less than 8 knots.

The Department Teacher-in-charge and relevant supervisors must be aware of health care maintenance and/or any intensive health care needs of students, particularly allergic reactions to stings or bites in a marine environment. Students who have a medically diagnosed condition that may impact their safety must be cleared by a medical practitioner before they can participate.

Students with a disability or impairment, or who have had limited exposure to water, may participate in power boating activities provided adequate safety, control and modification measures are implemented. Specific consideration is given to:

- the impact of the student's ability to safely participate in the activity
- supervision levels
- providing curriculum adjustments so the student can access the activity on the same basis as their peers
- availability and suitability of the craft
- on-shore assistance and supervision.

Alternative or adjusted activities must be provided for students who do not have the capacity to participate.

A reassessment of students' capacity is undertaken if any circumstances surrounding the activity change. This includes any change in the condition of the aquatic environment, their medical fitness, or their capacity to undertake the activity.

Guidance

The Department's Swimming and Water Safety Continuum and the Safety Survival Sequence (refer to Swimming and Water Safety Activities document) within the Swimming Instructors Handbook and Guidelines and Royal Life Saving Swim and Survive Instructor Assessment Guide are useful resources for gauging students' swimming and water safety skills. They are only indicative of student skills at the time of assessment and their use does not guarantee students' safety, nor reduce a teacher's duty of care responsibilities.

Prior to engaging in power boating activities, students should be able to:

- swim 200 metres in less than seven (7) minutes
- support themselves in water for a minimum of fifteen (15) minutes without the aid of a flotation device.

Students are able to complete a Recreational Skipper's Ticket, Power Boat Handling (PBH) certificate or units of competency that relate to boat handling through various training providers.

Students need to be at least 14 years of age to complete the Recreational Skipper's Ticket.

4. STUDENT HEALTH CARE

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements for further requirements.

5. ACTIVITIES

Activities conducted in aquatic environments require a high degree of risk analysis and management. The full range of proposed activities is assessed before final decisions are made about activities and environments to be used.

For additional information to support planning for an extended coastal expedition, contact Department of Transport Marine and other relevant agencies (for example, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions).

6. EQUIPMENT

Prior to the activity, the Department Teacher-in-charge must provide students with information regarding suitable clothing and protection including:

- enclosed footwear suitable for use in aquatic environments
- protective clothing appropriate for the environment (including sun safety) and potential weather conditions
- change of clothes and towel for use after the activity.

It is recommended that students wear brightly coloured, highly visible clothing that suits the activity weather conditions and supports identification (for example, brightly coloured thermal rash shirts).

Students must be protected from excessive exposure to sunlight increasing the risk of sunburn (for example, using hats, protective clothing, sunblock and sunglasses).

Appropriate first aid equipment must be readily accessible. The first aid kit must include items appropriate for the activity, environment, size and needs of the group, and duration of the activity.

Powerboats must:

- be of a suitable design and construction for the environmental conditions
- be appropriate for the students' skills, size and experience
- be constructed or fitted with additional aids so that they remain buoyant when swamped
- not carry more participants than the design recommendation
- be licenced and carry all mandatory safety equipment in accordance with the Department of Transport *Marine: Recreational Boating*.

Lifejackets

Each participant must wear a minimum level 100 lifejacket at all times on or near water. Lifejackets approved for general use must bear the relevant Standard or stamp (currently AS 4758 or ISO 12402). Whistles must be attached to lifejackets.

All lifejackets must be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's advice. The supervisory team must confirm that the condition of the life jackets is checked prior to use, to ensure there are no cuts or tears and straps and buckles are in good condition.

For further information about lifejackets, refer to *Department of Transport Marine*.

A powered safety or support craft must be available for instruction and supervision and ready to respond in the event of an emergency. The craft must comply with Department of Transport *Marine: Recreational Boating* or *Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Act 2012* requirements.

A safety tether lanyard must be worn by the power boat drivers at all times.

In case of emergency, appropriate communication equipment must be readily available. Mobile phones must be available for use in an emergency situation (with allowance made for the fact that they do not operate in all localities). Where there is no mobile phone coverage, MHz, MF/HF or VHF radios should be used (27- MHz radios are being phased out and will no longer be compliant from 1 September 2028). A satellite phone is an alternative option. Consideration should be given to carrying a GPS enabled EPIRB and/or the viability of participating in water-based activities in locations where access to emergency services and communication is limited. Communication equipment (whistles, phones, radios etc.) must be waterproofed, secure and readily accessible at all times.

For all powerboating activities in all waters the Qualified Supervisor must confirm that students know how to operate and that the boat carries, a:

- bilge pump/bailer
- fire extinguisher
- level 100 (or higher) life jacket for each person on board.
- fresh water
- first aid kit
- torch
- rope

- heliograph mirror
- tool kit
- alternative power, oars or paddles.

In open waters, additional items must be carried including:

- an anchor and line
- a registered GPS enabled 406MHz EPIRB or PLB (PLB must be worn)
- two red and two orange flares (in date)
- an Electronic Visual Distress Signal.

All safety equipment must be:

- in good working condition and meet appropriate standards or specifications
- maintained or services according to the manufacturers specifications
- replaced before the manufacturers expiry date
- easy to access
- secured or stowed in the craft.

The Department Teacher-in-charge must, through their risk management, plan for all reasonably foreseeable circumstances including confirming access to an emergency vehicle if it should be required.

Students must be restricted to a maximum engine size of 6hp (4.5kw) unless accompanied in the craft by a Qualified Supervisor, when completing Recreational Skipper's Ticket training.

For more information relevant to per boating activities refer to Department of Transport Marine for safety equipment, rules and WA regulations.

7. THE SUPERVISORY TEAM

Refer to [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) for further requirements.

8. EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

External providers acting as the Qualified Supervisor must hold one of the following:

- a [Australian Sailing Powerboat Handling \(PBH\) certificate](#)
- a [Recreational Skipper's Ticket](#) assessor (RST) endorsement
- a recognised commercial qualification or
- an equivalent qualification, as recognised by the Director General. The qualification must include current rescue and resuscitation components.

An Assistant Supervisor must hold a [Recreational Skipper's Ticket](#) (RST).

The Department Teacher-in-charge must be satisfied that the external provider has met the minimum qualification and experience requirements and can provide currency in the relevant first aid and aquatic rescue competencies appropriate to the water environment in which they will be operating. (see [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) and [Appendix D: External Provider Checklist](#)).

9. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCIES

The Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team members possess skills in power boating and have the appropriate recent and relevant experience to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during power boating activities. This includes proficiency in rescue techniques appropriate to the type of craft being used and the water environment.

Supervisory team members must also have current knowledge of common injuries associated with the activity and first aid experience in dealing with those injuries.

The Qualified Supervisor must hold a current, activity-specific qualification and/or have attained current, activity-specific competencies through a recognised tertiary institution or Registered Training Organisation (RTO) including one of the following:

- an authorised *Recreational Skipper's Ticket* assessor (RST)
- an *Australian Sailing Powerboat Handling (PBH) certificate*
- a recognised commercial qualification

The Qualified Supervisor must also have recent and relevant logged experience and demonstrated skills in the type of craft being used.

The Qualified Supervisor must hold an appropriate aquatic rescue, resuscitation and CPR accreditation. Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements* for mandated:

- first aid and CPR qualifications
- evidence requirements for all qualifications and competencies.

Safety/support craft

Assistant Supervisors in control of the support or safety power boat must hold one of the following:

- a *Recreational Skipper's Ticket* (RST)
- *Safety Boat Operator*
- an Australian Sailing (AS) *Power Boat Handling certificate* (PBH)
- a *Rescue Watercraft Operator* award
- a relevant commercial ticket.

Assistant Supervisors must also:

- demonstrate skills in handling the craft being used
- be experienced in performing a rescue in retrieving and towing a power craft.

Guidance

It is recommended that supervisors maintain evidence of their currency and experience through the use of a logbook, or similar.

10. MINIMUM LEVELS OF SUPERVISION

The Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team members possess skills in the relevant power boating activities and have the appropriate experience, knowledge and skills to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during the activity.

The level of risk in aquatic environments is dynamic and must be constantly monitored and assessed. The appropriate number of supervisors directly monitoring students in the water must be maintained at all times.

Group sizes and supervision levels are determined by the Department Teacher-in-charge, after considering the:

- type of activity and size of craft to be used
- age, experience and capacity of each student
- qualifications, capacity and experience of the supervisor(s)
- students' medical conditions, disabilities or impairment
- location and nature of the environment.

Students must be within the line of sight of the Qualified Supervisor at all times. A second supervisor is not required in calm water-fixed location environments, provided that there are clear systems in place for the supervisor to quickly summon assistance if required.

For all power boating activities:

- there is a maximum number of six (6) craft permitted per Qualified Supervisor

- each supervisor must be in a separate craft.

Kindergarten - Year 8

Power boating **must not** be undertaken for students in Year K - 8 due to the dynamic nature of the activity.

CALM WATER - FIXED LOCATION (WITHIN 1KM OF INITIAL LAUNCHING POINT)

Year 9 - 12

It is recommended that there are at least two supervisors at all times:

- one Qualified Supervisor for every 18 students or part thereof.

CALM WATER - NON FIXED LOCATION (BEYOND 1KM OF INITIAL LAUNCHING POINT)

AND OPEN WATER

Year 9 - 12

There must be at least two supervisors at all times:

- one Qualified Supervisor for every 18 students or part thereof.

The following table illustrates the minimum supervision requirements for common group sizes. Larger groups are not recommended.

Year Level	Environment	Number of Students	Qualified Supervisor	Experienced Assistant Supervisor	Total Supervisory team
K - 8	All water environments	This activity must not be undertaken for students in Years K - 8			
9 - 12	Calm water: fixed location	1 - 18	1	0	1
	Calm water: non-fixed location	1 - 18	1	1	2
	Open Water	1 - 18	1	1	2

Guidance

The level of supervision may need to be reviewed, depending on the size of the craft used.

The number of craft may be reduced in the early stages of the program, after allowing students time to establish basic operational skills (or example, controlling six students who can drive is less difficult than controlling three who cannot drive), or in less favourable weather conditions.

11. SUPERVISION STRATEGIES

Supervision strategies must:

- confirm that the safety and well-being of students is maintained at all times
- reflect risks associated with the activity
- address circumstances when students are not in clear view of the supervisors
- include students who are not actively participating in the activity.

The appropriate number of supervisors directly monitoring the students must be maintained at all times.

Supervisors must be appropriately attired to provide assistance during the activity.

All supervisors must be familiar with the location of emergency equipment.

All participants must conduct appropriate safety checks prior to the commencement of the activity, and at critical times throughout.

Supervisors must exercise particular caution when students are entering, boarding or near the propellers of a vessel. The use of propeller guards are recommended. [Propeller aware strategies](#) must be used whenever a person is in the water.

Rules must be established before the activity commences to confirm that all power boats in transit remain in close proximity to supervisors, particularly during poor weather conditions. A lead or support power boat must be designated for power boating expedition. The supervisors must be aware of the planned route and be able to provide guidance to or direct the group to scheduled stops.

Guidance

Consideration is given to positioning, scanning and safety check systems (see Swimming and Water Based Activities).

Buddy practices are established so that students can monitor and check the safety and wellbeing of their partner or buddy craft.

12. IDENTIFICATION OF PARTICIPANTS

The Department Teacher-in-charge must employ systems for identifying students that may include:

- the wearing of lifesaver or swimming caps, neoprene armbands or rash shirts, school t-shirts, vests, bibs, sashes
- confining students to designated areas not being utilised by other schools or members of the public.

Refer to [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) for further requirements.

Guidance

Power boats should be clearly marked and easily identifiable.

Where students and supervisors involved in the power boating activity are the sole participants at the venue, the Department Teacher-in-charge may decide that there is no need to introduce an identification system.

13. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Refer to [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) for further requirements.

14. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Refer to: [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) and [Appendix B: Risk Management Plan](#) for further requirements.

15. EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

Refer to: [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) and [Appendix C: Emergency Response Plan](#) for further requirements.

16. BRIEFING STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS

The Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that all participants are briefed about:

- the educational purpose (learning intentions) and the cooperative nature of the activity
- components of the activity (including skills required)
- standards of behaviour, including roles and responsibilities
- hazard identification and safety requirements
- buddy practices and procedures that will be followed if members of the party become lost or separated from the group

- boundaries marked for the activity
- communication signals to gain attention and request assistance
- emergency and evacuation procedures, signals and location of emergency equipment
- how to identify currents, rips, reefs and other potential hazards of the venue, including safe entry and exit points
- minimal impact principles for that location (Leave No Trace principles).

In addition to the above, the Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team have been briefed about the following:

- the role and location of supervisors
- maintaining supervision ratios (including of those students not involved in the activity)
- modified/adjusted activity requirements for students with a disability or impairment
- the system for identifying students and supervisors
- the route to be followed including pre-determined stops and/or meeting points along the way (if applicable)
- student-specific medical requirements
- conditions associated with hypothermia, sunburn and dehydration
- communication strategies that will be used throughout the activity, including designated signals to gain the attention of the whole group, and to identify when emergency assistance is required
- location of first aid kit and emergency/rescue equipment
- appropriate clothing for the activity and weather conditions, including thermal and sun protection
- aspects of the environment and expected weather conditions.

Special briefing sessions must be arranged for students who were absent from preparatory briefings.

Guidance

Changing environmental conditions encountered during power boating activities may require the need to brief students whilst in transit.

17. INFORMED CONSENT

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements for further requirements.