

OCTOBER 2025

Newsletter

KIA ORA

Welcome to the spring edition of the Safer Boating Forum newsletter.

Well done to all of us for making it through what was a particularly wet and, at times, cold winter. It's been fantastic to see how active Safer Boating Forum members have been across the motu, with initiatives such as the Bluefin Tuna Roadshow, various safety campaigns, course delivery, and bylaw advocacy all taking place.

While we did experience several recreational boating tragedies over the winter months, the toll was significantly lower than the 11 deaths recorded last year — a step in the right direction. I hope you all saw the excellent winter boating segment that Maritime NZ and NZ Sport Fishing produced with *Seven Sharp*, to highlight the winter safer boating marketing campaign we ran as a Forum.

It's been a busy year for the Safer Boating Forum Leadership Group, with several meetings held and work now underway to develop a new **Recreational Craft Strategy**. We look forward to advancing this with you all at the Forum meeting on **21 October**. This will be a chance to both celebrate all we have achieved as a group, and to look at what we need to change so that we can step up our impact in saving lives in the future.

We're also gearing up for the launch of **Safer Boating Week** on **20 October**. While we won't be holding an in-person launch event this year, we've been working on a campaign activation that highlights the risks associated with small craft — particularly dinghies. This aligns with our strategic focus on harm occurring in nearshore areas and will lead into the broader safer boating behaviour change campaign to launch this summer. Later in the newsletter we talk about how we can all help support this significant event.



Please read on to explore the fantastic work happening around the country. I look forward to seeing you all at the October meeting.

Ngā mihi nui,

Sharyn Forsyth

Chair - Safer Boating Forum Leadership Group (SBFLG)



Kia Mataara Winter Campaign - Better your Odds

Following the tragic winter on the water last year, where 11 people died, the forum developed and ran a targeted winter safer boating campaign, as always under the banner “Kia Mataara”.

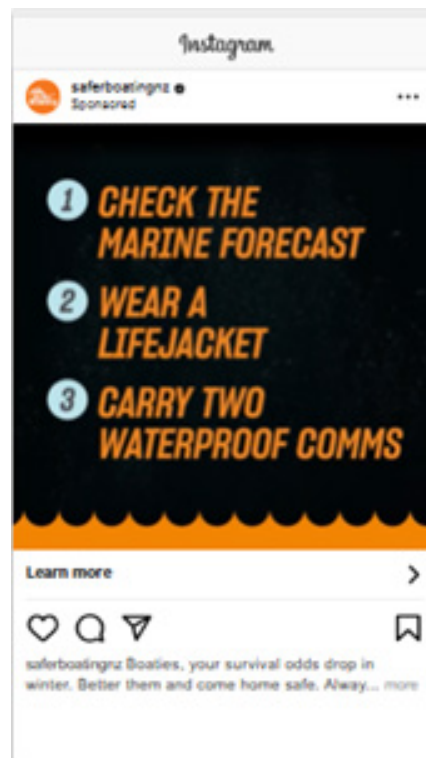
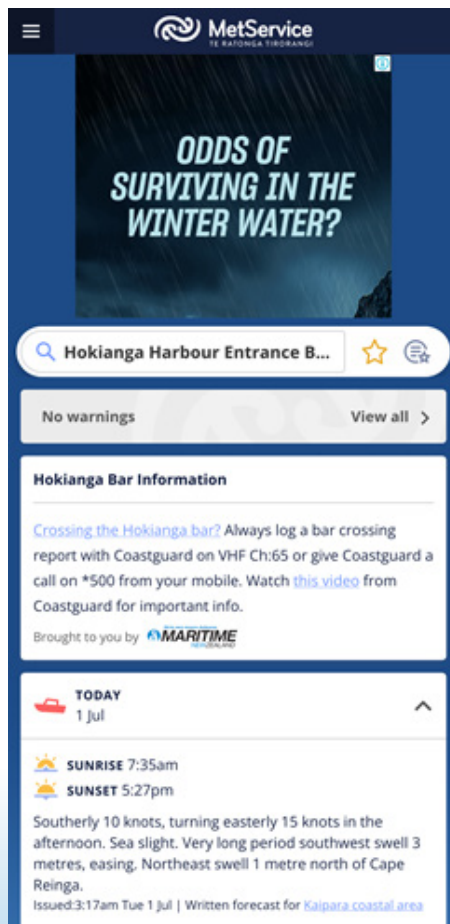
The campaign ran from 25 June to 31 July 2025 and aimed to:

- Raise awareness of winter specific boating risks.
- Encourage wearing lifejackets, carrying two forms of waterproof communication and checking the marine weather forecast.
- Reduce winter recreational boating fatalities.

We are awaiting the full post-campaign report, but early digital results show strong engagement:

- Over 1.6 million impressions served via NZME, with the Big Reveal ad achieving a 1.12% click-through rate (CTR). This is similar to high-impact summer placements.
- All NZME Run of Site ads achieved CTRs between 0.79% and 0.80%, far exceeding the display benchmark of 0.07%.
- Approximately 6.3 million impressions served via Facebook to people aged 18-54, generating over 30,000 completed video views.

Eight Forum members and stakeholders also shared campaign materials through their own channels. This campaign is expected to run again in coming winters.



Metservice and Instagram winter campaign images

Safer Boating Week 2025 - Focussed, practical, and ready to launch

Safer Boating Week returns from 20–26 October 2025, marking its 12th year of promoting safer boating across Aotearoa. While the format will be slightly different this year, the purpose remains the same: to drive awareness, reinforce key safety messages, and equip Forum members with content to share.

Campaign objectives:

- Generate media coverage and raise public awareness.
- Reinforce core safety behaviours ahead of summer.
- Provide useful, shareable content for SBF members and stakeholders.

2025 focus: Small craft safety

Building on last year's kayak campaign and the Come Home Safe Deals, this year's spotlight is on small powered and unpowered craft, especially dinghies. The campaign will highlight a key risk: ending up in the water and struggling to re-board — even with a lifejacket. The overarching theme is *"If you end up in the water, how prepared are you?"*

We will reinforce three core behaviours:

1. Wear a correctly fitted lifejacket.
2. Carry two forms of waterproof communication.
3. Check and understand the marine weather forecast before and during your trip.

Campaign activation

A small-scale dinghy activation will be filmed to serve as the visual centrepiece of the campaign. This will generate earned media coverage and form the basis of broader marketing content. Forum members may be invited to support this activation.

All campaign materials will carry the Kia Mataara brand and build on the Come Home Safe theme. Assets will be made available for Forum members to share or adapt across paid, owned, and earned channels.

No standalone launch event

Instead of a separate launch, the SBF hui on Tuesday 21 October will include a short presentation of the campaign and materials. With the approach now confirmed, Forum members are encouraged to start planning aligned activities or ways to support the week.

Questions or plans to support?

Please contact **Adrian Stephenson** to discuss your involvement (adrian.stephenson@maritimenz.govt.nz)

Bar awareness roadshow returns

As spring approaches and the days grow longer, more Kiwis are heading out on the water. But before the fun begins, Coastguard wants boaties to be ready for one of the most challenging and dangerous parts of any trip: crossing a bar.

That's why the Bar Awareness Roadshow is back, running from September through to the end of the year, and visiting over 30 boating communities across Aotearoa. Coastguard is teaming up once again with the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council to deliver free seminars packed with practical advice and local insights.

Last year, 2,175 boaties attended — more than four times the number in 2023. This year, Coastguard is aiming even higher, because they know that knowledge saves lives.

The stats tell the story:

- Preventable drownings fell to 72 in 2024 (down from 90 in 2023). However, fatalities involving powered craft rose to 21% of all cases, with 18 lives lost — many in tidal waters or during bar crossings.
- On 7 February, Coastguard logged a record 753 bar crossing reports in a single day, showing just how common and risky these crossings are.

Upskill with Coastguard's video resources:

- Bar-specific safety videos for Kaipara, Port Waikato, and Manukau.
- Tutorials on logging a Bar Crossing Report.
- Guides on maintaining inflatable lifejackets.



Coastguard rescue vessel crossing the Tairua bar

Watch and learn on Coastguard's [YouTube channel](#), and register your interest for a seminar near you:

[Coastguard | Boats Crossing Dangerous Bars: Safety Tips & Bar Awareness](#)

Follow Coastguard on [Facebook](#) for updates and locations.

Thanks to Ben Parsons, Senior Communications Advisor at Coastguard, for sharing this important update, and for helping keep boaties safer this season.

Shipwreck city: a national wake-up call on abandoned boats

Auckland's harbours are becoming a graveyard for derelict vessels, with hundreds of abandoned boats cluttering moorings and coastlines — earning the nickname “Shipwreck City.” But this isn't just a local issue; it's a growing national challenge affecting waterways across Aotearoa.

From Northland to Fiordland, councils and harbourmasters are grappling with the rising number of recreational boats left to decay. Many of these vessels are no longer seaworthy, posing serious risks to navigation, the environment, and public safety. Once a boat reaches the end of its life, owners often walk away — leaving authorities to deal with the mess and ratepayers to cover the cost.

The *Seven Sharp* story highlights the scale of the problem in Auckland, where the Harbourmaster's team is working tirelessly to identify and remove abandoned vessels. But with each removal costing thousands, the current system is unsustainable.

This issue underscores the importance of the work underway in the products workstream of the Recreational Craft Strategy, which aims to “increase the use of fit-for-purpose quality vessels, and safety equipment and ensure products are maintaining and meeting standards”.

As New Zealanders, we pride ourselves on our connection to the sea. But if we don't act now, our coastlines risk becoming dumping grounds for neglected craft. The strategy is a vital step toward ensuring that every boat, whether afloat or retired, is treated responsibly.

Watch the full story on [TVNZ+](#)



Winter Boating Safety on Seven Sharp

Following the winter boating campaign, a media story was developed between Maritime NZ and the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council on behalf of the Forum, and pitched to *Seven Sharp*.

It aimed to reinforce the messaging in the “Better your Odds” winter campaign.

While shot in Tairua on the Coromandel, its message was relevant to recreational craft users all around New Zealand.

It focused on:

- Considering the risks before going out on the water.
- Demonstrating how easy it is to fall overboard.
- Understanding the differences between summer and winter boating safety.
- What skippers should do when planning their trips.
- Checking conditions and making the right decisions.
- Crossing bars and planning around them.
- What to do if you end up in the water.

This piece, as well as the “Better your Odds” campaign, the bluefin tuna safety campaigns, and other work done by Forum members around the country, shows a concerted effort to reduce instances of harm on the water. A huge thanks to everyone involved.

Watch the story [here](#).



'Matt overboard' (Matt Wood falling overboard)

Pod and Reel Podcast: Real voices, safer boating



The Pod and Reel podcast continues to amplify real stories and safer boating messages from across Aotearoa — thanks to the support of Safer Boating Forum members.

Your backing has helped bring authentic voices to the forefront, sharing lessons, risks, and the people making a difference in our communities.

The latest episode, recorded in Gisborne, is now live and there's more to come:

- West coast beach launching.
- Rock fishing.
- Mums and kids fishing with the Wild Chix and Coastguard.

These stories are powerful tools for behaviour change, helping us connect with boaties in a relatable and engaging way. They also align with our strategic focus on nearshore safety and community-led storytelling.

You can listen to the Pod and Reel podcast on [Spotify](#).

Thanks again to Mike Plant and the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council for leading this kaupapa and helping keep boaties safer.



Work underway to shape new Recreational Craft Strategy

The Safer Boating Forum Leadership Group has commenced work on a new **Recreational Craft Strategy** to guide national harm prevention efforts across the recreational boating sector.

The current strategy concludes at the end of 2025, prompting a timely opportunity to reflect and reset our shared vision and direction for the years ahead. The new strategy will build on the progress made to date, while responding to emerging challenges and opportunities in the recreational craft space.

The development process is intentionally collaborative, with a strong focus on engagement and co-design. A key milestone was the **Safer Boating Forum Leadership Group meeting on 30 September**, where strategic direction was advanced. This will be followed by a **full Forum meeting on 21 October**, where members will come together to shape the strategy as a collective.

Engagement with Māori partners is a priority in the design of the strategy review approach, to ensure they are actively involved in the shaping the strategy.

The new strategy is scheduled for launch in **May 2026**, and will provide a refreshed platform for coordinated action to reduce harm, improve safety outcomes, and support a thriving recreational boating community.

This is a pivotal moment for the sector to come together and shape a shared vision for the future of recreational craft in Aotearoa. We can and must do better in our efforts to continue to save lives.



Recreational Craft Strategy 2023-2025

Nobody's stronger than Tangaroa

In 2024 Northland Regional Council received a Community Grant from Maritime NZ for their programme 'Nobody's stronger than Tangaroa'. They teamed up with Moana Futures to deliver education and practical skills at selected events and Wānanga at marae and communities throughout Northland.

Here are few of the events they held throughout the 2024/205 as part of their programme.



Ngatiwai Marae, Ngaitonga

A group of 30 Māori men and women participated in a two day water safety/safe boating workshop at the Ngatiwai Marae on the 14 and 15th December 2024.

At the Wānanga, participants learned essential practical skills and knowledge about safe boating practices. This included hands-on training with equipment such as lifejackets, first aid, and navigation tools, along with kōrero on rules of the moana such as weather awareness, and emergency procedures. Practical skills learnt included lifejacket fitting and use, vessel inspection and pre-trip checklist, boat handling and manoeuvring, navigation and chart reading. Knowledge and awareness gained included boating rules and regulations,

weather awareness and skipper responsibilities. The Wānanga was an interactive workshop with hands-on training, practical exercises and group discussions.

On the 22 February and 22 March 2025, they ran a similar workshop at the Onerahi Boat Ramp attended by around 30-40 people. This event covered essential skills like previous workshops and included hands-on demonstrations of equipment usage, real-life boating scenarios, and skippers' responsibilities.

Lifejacket hubs were established at the completion of the Wānanga to help foster harm prevention in these communities. Just before Christmas 2024, a hub was established at the Ngā Kaihoe o Whangaruru waka ama club in Whangaruru.



Jury Greenland from Moana Futures with the MNZ/NRZ education trailer at a community event



Ngā Kaihoe o Whangaruru waka ama club in Whangaruru and the lifejackets they received for their hub

Coroner's findings highlight importance of our work on skipper responsibility

Coroner's findings released last month after a fatal jet ski incident on the Waitara River in 2021 highlight the importance of the Forum continuing our work on skipper responsibility. In this case, the Coroner focused on safe speed.

The tragic incident occurred when Patricia Elaine Teresa Wilson Wirihana Takanini was riding on a ski biscuit being towed by a jet ski on the lower Waitara River. As the jet ski approached a bridge, it was travelling at over the five knots speed limit. Ms Wilson Wirihana Takanini came off the ski biscuit and was flung into a concrete bridge pillar. She hit her head and was fatally injured.

The Coroner's two recommendations are both directly focused on speed. One is about signage on the Waitara River and the other about publicity relating to speed on all navigable rivers.

For the first recommendation, Maritime NZ and the local authority for most of the river, New Plymouth District Council, have reviewed signage on the river. This work began during the Coroner's investigation. When the Coroner released their Findings, the Council had already scheduled sign upgrades at boat ramps on the river. New signage displaying the five knot speed limit is also planned for the bridge.

The second recommendation is where the Forum can play a key role. The Coroner recommended that Maritime NZ uses its networks and platforms to publicise the five knots rule, its importance on navigable rivers throughout New Zealand, and to share the findings to support this. The Forum – working at national, regional and local levels – is the ideal network to do this.

The Forum is working through our members, with clubs, at point of sale and in publicity to boaties promoting skipper responsibility. This includes knowing the rules and safe speed. The Coroner's findings are part of the evidence that guides and encourages this work and, sadly, show the tragic reality of why it is needed.

Please share this news with your members and contacts. Encourage them to continue promoting skipper responsibility, knowing the rules, and safe speed.

A summary of the incident can be found [here](#).





KASK

Keeping you Safe on the Water

KayakSafe Workshop is aimed for people interested in taking up kayaking as well as existing paddlers and will provide information to keep people safe on the water.

The workshop is led by trained volunteer experienced sea kayakers and consists of an interactive presentation followed by discussions of equipment.

 **Howick Library**

 **Saturday 18 October 2025, 10 am - 1 pm**

To register your attendance, please use the QR code or e-mail steve@kask.co.nz



The Safer Boating Forum Leadership Group and other forum leaders in Auckland for the recent Strategy session.



Do you have something you'd like to share with the Forum?

Are there things you'd like to see in the Forum newsletter?

Please feel free to get in touch with any feedback or suggestions — we'd love to hear from you.

Alternatively, if you have an article or information you'd like to feature in the next edition of the newsletter, please email us at saferboating@maritimenz.govt.nz.

