

# The Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW "Representing the Anglers of NSW"

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Secretariat  
National Marine Safety Committee  
PO Box R1871 Royal Exchange  
SYDNEY NSW 1225

Dear Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the issue of Personal Flotation Devices (PFD's) as detailed in the discussion paper. The Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW (RFA) is a representative body for recreational and sport fishing in New South Wales.

RFA and its member representative bodies believe in education and awareness with appropriate research and monitoring in preference to mandatory regulations.

In New South Wales we have been proactive in implementing a 'Rock Fishing Safety' education and awareness project which is nearing completion and is focusing on improving the understanding of the dangers of this activity rather than legislate against it. ANSA NSW also run a 'Guardian Angel Ring' project, putting in life rings at known 'fishing black spots' which firstly provide a warning sign of the dangers associated with the location and secondly can be used to assist someone who has been washed in.

These projects are followed up with regular and ongoing fisher attitudinal surveys (covering all languages), the results will then be used to determine the next action phase, before any introduction of mandatory regulations for Rock Fishing in NSW. You can view the work to date at [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au) , [www.dsr.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au) , [www.rfansw.com.au](http://www.rfansw.com.au) or [www.angelrings.com.au](http://www.angelrings.com.au) .

RFA notes that within the several reports acknowledged in the discussion paper along with the information provided is limited to just a few states and does not encompass all boating and drowning incidents in Australian waters. There appears to be little reference to language issues, the language spoken by those that have drowned from boating accidents. It is paramount that any boating awareness or safety campaign must be multi lingual in voice and writing to encompass all users.

We also note that there will be locations and times when it is not practical to have a life jacket on i.e. launching vessels from boat ramps or launching areas, moving around in a marina, anchoring up, landing a fish in a game chair, and other low risk areas where the skipper may assess the risk and need.

PFD's have developed considerably in recent years with the introduction of several inflatable types, these are not generally recognised in our state as true PFD's even though they are Australian Standard rated until after they have been inflated. There needs to be consideration for changes to state regulations for these various types of life jackets and the situations that they will be accepted in.

**The RFA of NSW- "PROMOTING SAFE AND ENJOYABLE FISHING"**  
For more translated material and downloads on rock fishing safety visit  
[www.rfansw.com.au](http://www.rfansw.com.au) or [www.safewaters.com.au](http://www.safewaters.com.au) or [www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au)

RFA of NSW - Member of NSW Recreational Fishing Trust Fund Expenditure Committee  
- Associate member with the NSW Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing to  
RECFISH, National Peak Recreational Fishing Body

In conclusion we acknowledge that wearing life jackets in certain situations is not only prudent but will save lives.

RFA would support a national approach for all children <12 years old required to wear a life jacket preferably a PFD2 if they have an ability to swim. If not then a PFD1 must be worn. *(If the latter prevails this certainly supports that our national primary school education swimming standard for all children has slipped.)*

The decision to wear a life jacket must remain with the 'skipper in charge of the vessel', and the State Government or Territory Maritime Agencies responsible.

It is the skipper's responsibility to be aware of, and abide by, the maritime rules appropriate to that State or Territory they are boating in. This includes being aware of local boating conditions, any hazards and prevailing weather and tidal information where they intend to use a vessel. Just as it applies to many other regulatory situations such as Road rules and Fisheries rules.

We note that the current design and wear ability of PFD1's is a major restriction and possible hazard itself during various activities on a vessel. They are bulky and uncomfortable to wear in many conditions, except when in the water.

RFA would fully support a nationally funded and backed education and safe boating awareness program, which the States and Territories can use the basic awareness information gathered and presented from experienced and respected users adding state/territory based local content covering the local environment and issues.

This should be supplemented with a nationally funded research and monitoring project 'Boating Attitudes' (before and after) to ascertain behavioural changes in boat user attitudes over a campaign period. This would then allow RFNSW to consider the results from each state research project and after further public consultation may support regulatory improvements at a National level.

To attempt the implementation of a 'one rule fits all' is not supported at this stage and will cause major confusion amongst all boat users.

The Alliance notes and recommends the following items be listed for further attention by the NMSC:

1. An approach to the Federal Government to ensure that all boating safety equipment is GST free which will reduce costs and hopefully increase acceptance and usage of safety equipment;
2. Develop, fund and implement a National Code of Conduct for major organised events such as boat races, fishing competitions, sailing races with State Government or Territory Maritime Agencies to implement where applicable.
3. Any safety program must not be used as a way to raise revenue. Governments should be encouraged to legislate the redirection of any such monies raised from compliance activities back into further campaigns on educating the boating public on the proper use and safety aspects e.g. when to wear a life jacket. People are far more inclined to comply with safety requirements if they fully understand the benefits. These funds could be administered by representative user groups and held in trust under the governing maritime body for that state or territory.
4. Investigate and improve the Australian Standard for Boat Manufacture ensuring that the manufacturer applies the correct amount of buoyancy for 'positive hull displacement' when a hull is swamped allowing for the maximum carrying capacity of the hull, (i.e. motor size and type, fuel load, electrical installation) not the minimum capacity as is the current situation.
5. Encourage research into the design, manufacture and ongoing maintenance of life jackets, improving the wear ability, acceptability and suitability for all boating conditions around Australia. A recent coroners report noted the importance of crutch straps for all PFD's.

6. Review, investigate and improve state based boat licencing arrangements where currently licences are generally granted on the passing of a multiple choice test and not based on experience or practical knowledge.

Should you require further clarification then please contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Poole', written in a cursive style.

Malcolm Poole  
Chairman  
Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW