



Speech by

Hon. Paul Lucas

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard Thursday, 20 May 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

BoatSafe

Hon. P.T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.10 a.m.): I want to inform the House of the steps the Beattie government is taking to improve safety on the water for our 480,000 boaties. This afternoon I will be attending the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show, where I will be formally launching BoatSafe. This is the new assessment scheme for recreational boat licences in Queensland. The BoatSafe program will require boaties to complete one standard practical course. BoatSafe is about providing a consistent assessment standard across Queensland for all recreational boating licence applicants. In the past, people have been able to sit a practical test or an approved training provider course. This has led to different levels of competence and safety awareness among boaties. Under BoatSafe, everyone will need to demonstrate their competency to operate recreational vessels through a practical exam.

BoatSafe will start on 1 July but there will be a 12-month introductory period where people will still be able to go through the previous licence option. During this time there will be three licence options—a licence test by an authorised officer, which is the old system, the existing approved training provider course or the BoatSafe course. As of 1 July 2005, BoatSafe will be the only option. BoatSafe will ensure that all applicants must have competency based training and assessment as the primary means to qualify for a boat licence.

Maritime Safety Queensland has consulted widely and has broad community and boating industry support. BoatSafe training providers will be able to consider applicants' prior and alternative boating qualifications, which could count towards their obtaining a recreational boat licence. BoatSafe will also ensure boaties' trainers meet more rigorous training, assessment and integrity standards. They will need to meet management standards, and Maritime Safety Queensland will closely monitor and audit the provision of BoatSafe training and assessment.

Getting out on Queensland's waterways can sometimes be just as dangerous as driving a car. In the past five years there have been 31 fatalities and 113 serious injuries on Queensland waterways involving recreational boats. Human error has been identified as contributing to more than 40 per cent of serious incidents and to 70 per cent of incidents in general.

Let us not forget that recreational boating is all about fun, but it also has to be safe. Queensland's current 480,000 licensed recreational shipmasters will not need to reapply. However, I would encourage them to consider doing a refresher safety course periodically.

The BoatSafe course will cost around \$125. It is a bit more expensive than the current practical test option, but it is a small price to pay for potentially saving your life or the life of someone else. As it is, 45 per cent of new boaties choose training courses instead of just sitting a practical test, and this is increasing by five per cent each year. Also, many training schemes are offered through our schools. Even at \$125,

Queensland still has the cheapest recreational boat licences in Australia, and with the introduction of BoatSafe we will also have the toughest.