

# FATALITIES INVOLVING JETSKIS

(JULY 2000-DECEMBER 2012)

Regulations regarding safety requirements when operating a jetski (such as licensing and personal floating device to be worn) vary between Australian States.\*

Between 1st July 2000<sup>†</sup> and 31st December 2012, there were 20 deaths reported to an Australian Coroner (as identified on the NCIS database) associated with jetskis where the coronial investigation was completed.

Additional NCIS searches indicate that there are at least an additional three deaths during this time period which are likely to be associated with a jetski which are still under investigation with the Coroner. While these three open cases are included in the following data analysis in order to provide the most accurate frequency data, **it should be noted that these cases may be subject to change until the investigation is completed by the Coroner.**

In the 20 deaths where the coronial investigation was completed, there were two cases where a recommendation was made by the Coroner (refer to page 8 for details).

Major findings in relation to deaths associated with *jetskis* (n=23, open and closed cases) are:

- The highest proportion of cases involved deceased aged between 25-49 years (43.5%; Table 1).
- There was a relatively even spread between males and females (Table 2).
- The number of fatalities involving jetskis has been relatively consistent averaging 1.8 fatalities per year from 2000-2012, however there were notable peaks in 2004 and 2006 (Table 3).
- Almost two thirds of fatalities involved jetski operators compared with almost one third involving jetski passengers (Table 4).
- Over one third of incidents were caused by the operator of the jetski losing control in the absence of a collision (34.8%; Table 6).
- Over a quarter of cases involved either non-Australian residents or took place in a country other than Australia (26.0%; Table 7).
- Very few fatalities showed drug or alcohol involvement (17.4%, Table 8).
- No deaths were associated with intentional harm or natural causes.

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\* Refer to section entitled "Additional information".

<sup>†</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> January 2001 for Queensland data.

TABLE 1: NATIONAL DEATHS RELATED TO JETSKIS (JULY 2000 – DEC 2012), BY AGE GROUP OF DECEASED (N=23, OPEN AND CLOSED CASES)

Age Group (years)	Total (Open)	Percentage [%]
0 – 14	2	8.7
15 – 24	7	30.4
25 – 44	10 (2)	43.5
45 – 64	4 (1)	17.4
65 +	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23 (3)</b>	<b>100</b>

TABLE 2: NATIONAL DEATHS RELATED TO JETSKIS (JULY 2000 – DEC 2012), BY GENDER OF DECEASED (N=23, OPEN AND CLOSED CASES)

Gender	Total (Open)	Percentage [%]
Male	13 (3)	56.5
Female	10	43.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23 (3)</b>	<b>100</b>

TABLE 3: NATIONAL DEATHS RELATED TO JETSKIS (JULY 2000 – DEC 2012), BY YEAR OF NOTIFICATION (N=23, OPEN AND CLOSED CASES)

Year of Notification	Total (Open)
2000*	1
2001	1
2002	1
2003	1
2004	5
2005	1
2006	4
2007	1
2008	1
2009	1
2010	2 (1)
2011	2
2012^	2 (2)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23 (3)</b>

\* From July 2000 onwards (for all states except Queensland).

^ May be an underrepresentation due to a high proportion of open cases having incomplete coding and documentation.

TABLE 4: NATIONAL DEATHS RELATED TO JETSKIS (JULY 2000 – DEC 2012), BY INVOLVEMENT OF THE DECEASED (N=23, OPEN AND CLOSED CASES)

Involvement of the Deceased	Total (Open)
Jetski Operator	14 (2)
Jetski Passenger	8
Swimmer	1 (1)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23 (3)</b>

TABLE 5: NATIONAL DEATHS RELATED TO JETSKIS (JULY 2000 – DEC 2012), BY USE OF PERSONAL FLOATING DEVICE (PFD) (N=22\*, OPEN AND CLOSED CASES)

PFD worn	Total (Open)
Yes	6
No	4
Unknown <sup>†</sup>	12 (2)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22 (2)</b>

\* This table does not include a case of a swimmer that was fatally injured when a jetski collided with them.

<sup>†</sup> Insufficient documentation was attached on the NCIS database to determine whether the deceased was wearing a PFD at the time of the incident.

TABLE 6: NATIONAL DEATHS RELATED TO JETSKIS (JULY 2000 – DEC 2012), BY TYPE OF INCIDENT (N=23, OPEN AND CLOSED CASES)

Type of Incident	Total (Open)	Percentage [%]
Losing control of the jetski without collision	8 (2)	34.8
Collision with other jetski	6	26.1
Collision with a boat	5	21.7
Collision with 'other' object*	3	13.0
Hit by jetski	1 (1)	4.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23 (3)</b>	<b>100</b>

TABLE 7: NATIONAL DEATHS RELATED TO JETSKIS (JULY 2000 – DEC 2012), BY RESIDENCY OF DECEASED<sup>†</sup> AND LOCATION OF FATAL INCIDENT (N=23, OPEN AND CLOSED CASES)

Residency of Deceased and Country of Incident	Total (Open)
Australian resident (>2 years), incident in Australia	17 (3)
Australian resident (>2 years), incident overseas	3
Australian resident (<2 years) or international visitor, incident in Australia	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23 (3)</b>

\* "Other" involves collisions with water markers, metal poles, or rocks.

<sup>†</sup> Please note that "residency" does not refer to a visa status but the country in which the deceased generally resides. The country of residency was determined by information within attached documentation (police report and/or finding). An individual was considered an 'Australian resident (<2 years) or international visitor' when the documentation stated they had lived in the country for less than two years or were currently holidaying in Australia.

TABLE 8: NATIONAL DEATHS RELATED TO JETSKIS (JULY 2000 – DEC 2012), BY ILLICIT DRUG AND ALCOHOL INVOLVEMENT\* (N=23, OPEN AND CLOSED CASES)

Illicit Drugs or Alcohol detected in Deceased	Total (Open)	Percentage [%]
No	10 (2)	43.5
Yes	4	17.4
N/A <sup>†</sup>	9 (1)	39.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23 (3)</b>	<b>100</b>

TABLE 9: NATIONAL DEATHS RELATED TO JETSKIS (JULY 2000 – DEC 2012), BY TYPE OF WATER (N=23, OPEN AND CLOSED CASES)

Type of Water	Total (Open)	Percentage [%]
River	10 (1)	43.5
Ocean	9 (2)	39.1
Lake	4	17.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23 (3)</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Only considered alcohol involvement where blood alcohol concentration (BAC) was greater than 0.05g/100mL.

<sup>†</sup> "N/A" refers to cases where there was either no toxicological testing performed or no results were available in the attached documentation.

TABLE 10: NATIONAL DEATHS RELATED TO JETSKIS (JULY 2000 – DEC 2012), BY EXPERIENCE OF JETSKI OPERATOR\* (N=23, OPEN AND CLOSED CASES)

Experience of Jetski Operator	Total (Open)	Percentage [%]
Likely inexperienced	7	30.4
Experienced	4 (1)	17.4
U/K	12 (2)	52.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23 (3)</b>	<b>100</b>

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\* “Operator” refers to the person in control of the jetski at the time of the incident. A jetski operator was considered “likely inexperienced” if the case information (police report or finding) stated the jetski was hired on the day of the incident or the jetski was recently purchased by the deceased without reference to previous experience. A jetski operator was considered “experienced” if the case information (police report or finding) stated the individual had experience riding a jetski. If no information on the level of experience was available, the case was classified as “U/K” (unknown).

### Case 1:

*The deceased was riding a jetski with a passenger on the back when he appeared to lose control over the jetski and both individuals fell into the water. Neither individual was wearing a safety jacket or any other safety devices. The deceased was a poor swimmer and drowned after a period of struggle in the water.*

#### Recommendation:

“I recommend that the warning sign on the [name] Bridge be repaired or replaced by signage making it clearly known that power boats are prohibited in [the water] beyond that point.”

### Case 2:

*The deceased was riding a jetski and appeared to have trouble controlling it, falling off the jetski several times in the lead up to the incident. He was seen to impact with a large breaking wave which resulted in him crashing heavily. He drowned as a result of the incident.*

#### Recommendation:

“Marine Safety [state of the incident] has recognised that the PFD 3 worn by the deceased in compliance with the Marine (Vessels) Regulations was unable to prevent [the deceased] from drowning, and apparently believe a review of this issue is timely. I recommend consideration be given to altering the current exemptions in relation to jetskis (personal watercraft) to require mandatory wearing by operators of a PFD type 1, particularly in open waters.”



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

State regulations regarding use of PFDs and License requirements to operate a jetski:

ACT	N/A*
NSW	<a href="http://www.maritime.nsw.gov.au">http://www.maritime.nsw.gov.au</a>
NT	N/A
QLD	<a href="http://www.msq.qld.gov.au/Safety/Personal-watercraft.aspx">http://www.msq.qld.gov.au/Safety/Personal-watercraft.aspx</a>
SA	<a href="http://www.sa.gov.au/subject/transport,%20travel%20and%20motoring/Boating+and+marine/Boat+and+marine+safety/Boating+safely/Personal+watercraft">http://www.sa.gov.au/subject/transport,%20travel%20and%20motoring/Boating+and+marine/Boat+and+marine+safety/Boating+safely/Personal+watercraft</a>
TAS	<a href="http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/176122359?selectedversion=NBD50474852">http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/176122359?selectedversion=NBD50474852</a>
VIC	<a href="http://www.transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety/recreational-maritime/your-vessel/personal-watercraft-pwc">http://www.transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety/recreational-maritime/your-vessel/personal-watercraft-pwc</a>
WA	<a href="http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/imarine/personal-watercraft.asp">http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/imarine/personal-watercraft.asp</a>

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\* N/A: no information on state regulations available.

## METHOD

Data is available on the NCIS database from 1st July 2000 (Queensland data available from 1st January 2001). Data for the purposes of this report was extracted in November 2013.

Incidents involving jetskis on the NCIS database were identified where the object coding was equal to “Watercraft or Means of Water Transport/Powered (Motorised) Watercraft or Means of Water Transport/ Jet Ski”, for open and closed cases. Searches were also conducted of the police narratives of open cases for the term “jetski” and “jet ski”.

Cases were manually reviewed to confirm involvement of a jetski in the incident.

## LIMITATIONS

### AVAILABILITY OF CASE DOCUMENTATION

In some cases, reports associated with a death may not be available on the NCIS to allow for confirmation the details surrounding the fatality, and the level of detail contained in these reports can vary.

### OPEN CASES

The proportion of open cases on the NCIS may impact the data set, especially for cases in more recent years. Coding may not yet be completed or documentation not available for open cases. The percentage of closed cases for each calendar year at the time of data extraction is as follows:

Year	Closed [%]
2000	99
2001	98
2002	97
2003	97
2004	97
2005	99
2006	97
2007	95
2008	95
2009	92
2010	90
2011	84
2012	61

## NATIONAL CORONIAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (NCIS)

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## THE NCIS

The National Coronial Information System (NCIS) is managed by the Victorian Department of Justice on behalf of the NCIS Board of Management.

NCIS is funded by each State and Territory Justice / Attorney-General's Department, the New Zealand Ministry of Justice, and the following Australian federal agencies:

- Australian Department of Health and Ageing
- Australian Institute of Criminology
- Safe Work Australia
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- Australian Department of Infrastructure and Transport

Data is provided by each of the coronial offices around Australia and New Zealand, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Safe Work Australia.