

Aboriginal Maritime Safety Plan **2020-2022**





ABRAXAS

CUTTERFISH



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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that the following document may contain images of people who may have died.



1 Introduction

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) recognises the importance of Aboriginal communities maintaining kinship ties using all modes of transport, including the waterways. Aboriginal communities use the waterways for many different economic and social purposes. While the use of the waterways as a transport option to attend school and work is well understood, Aboriginal communities are connected through history and culture to waterways.

A waterway is an important place for Aboriginal people to connect with family members, attend funerals and participate in cultural events. In this way, boating safety is linked to cultural, as well as physical and economic, well-being. TfNSW recognises the Aboriginal cultural landscape values of waterways, the survival of freshwater and saltwater culture in NSW and the importance of waterways to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

This plan sets out a range of priority actions to reduce the likelihood and consequences of boating incidents involving Aboriginal people on NSW waterways for the period 2020-2022.

In the 10 year period from 2008/09 to 2017/18, there were nine boating-related drowning fatalities in Australia involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This accounts for six per cent of all drowning fatalities involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (based on Royal Life Saving Society Australia data). Of these nine boating-related drowning fatalities, 89 per cent were male.

In NSW, 90 boating-related serious injuries involving Aboriginal people were recorded between July 2005 and December 2019. However, data collection for boating-related trauma involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been recognised as an area for significant improvement.

The NSW Government is strongly committed to preventing fatalities and serious injuries on NSW waterways. The NSW *Maritime Safety Plan 2017-2021* aims to promote safe and responsible boating among all waterway users. This plan sets out a range of priority actions that will be delivered in partnership with key stakeholders, including local communities, to reduce the risk and severity of boating incidents for Aboriginal people on NSW waterways. The priority action from the *Maritime Safety Plan 2017-2021* states that TfNSW will:

Develop a boating safety strategy with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to promote boating safety in NSW Aboriginal communities.



The *Maritime Safety Plan 2017-2021* supports *Future Transport 2056*. It is a suite of strategies and plans for transport developed in concert with the Greater Sydney Commission's Sydney Region Plan, Infrastructure NSW's State Infrastructure Strategy, and the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's regional plans, to provide an integrated vision for NSW. It sets the 40 year vision, directions and outcomes framework for customer mobility in NSW, which will guide transport investment over the longer term.

The *Aboriginal Maritime Safety Plan* supports the vision and focus areas of TfNSW's *Reconciliation Action Plan 2019-2021*, particularly in terms of building and strengthening relationships and respecting and celebrating culture.

This plan also links with the NSW Premier's Priorities which aim to enhance the quality of life of the people of NSW. They include the delivery of key policy priorities:

- › a strong economy
- › highest quality education
- › well connected communities with quality local environments

- › putting customer at the centre of everything we do
- › breaking the cycle of disadvantage.

1.1 Context

The 2016 Census estimated that there were about 216,176 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in NSW, or 2.9 per cent of the population; the largest population in any Australian State or Territory. The references to Aboriginal people in this plan, and measures to improve Aboriginal maritime safety, are inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people. The 2016 Census indicates:

- › 32.4% of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander population in NSW live in Sydney

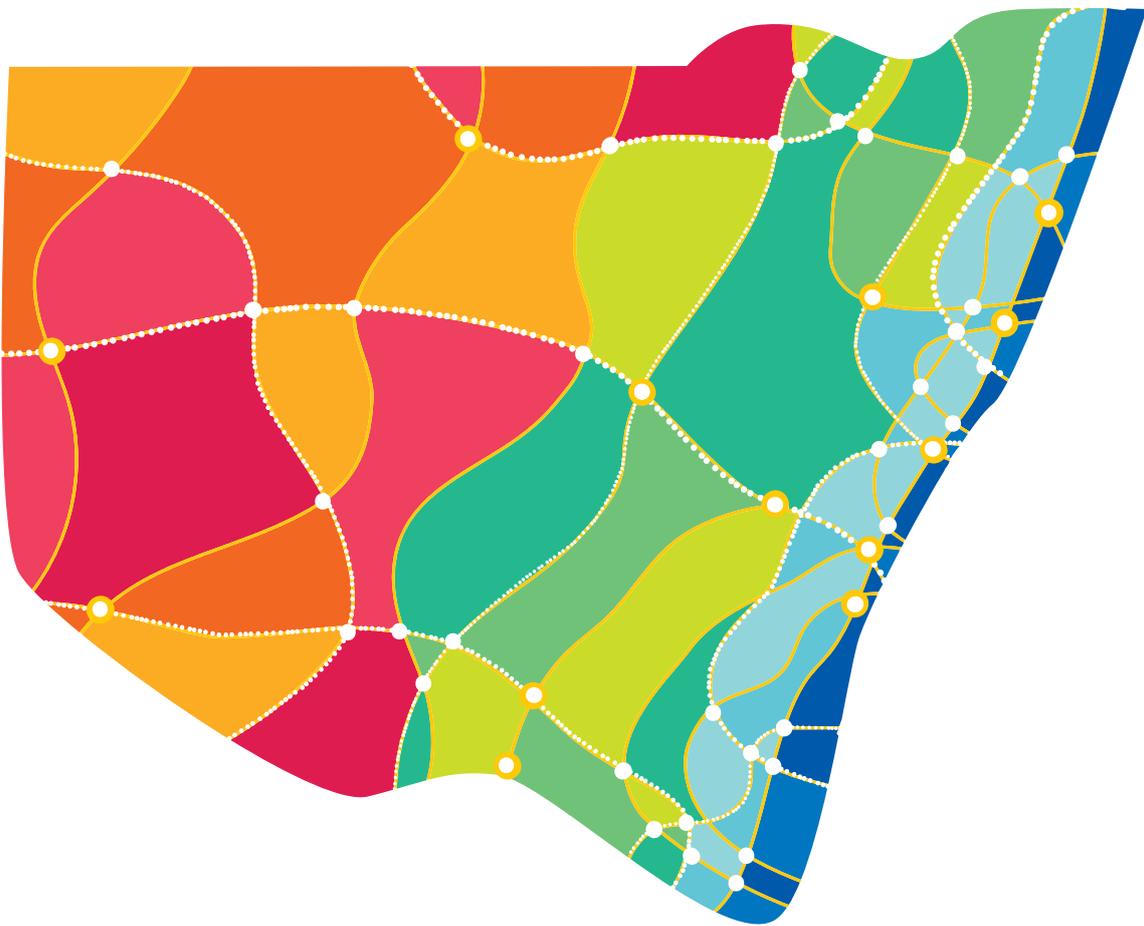
The Aboriginal population in NSW has a much younger profile than the non-Aboriginal population, with a median age of 23 and a relatively low population of those aged over 65 years.

This plan considers all of the above demographic information and boating incident data linked to the NSW Aboriginal population.

1.2 Connecting Communities Map

The Connecting Communities Map represents TfNSW's dedication to, and care for, connecting communities and people across NSW. Whether they be coming or going, TfNSW works to ensure that everyone's journey is a safe one.

The colours of the map demonstrate the diversity of landscape and communities across NSW. The lines show the roads, rail and waterways - the ways in which our communities are connected. The dots on the intersections show communities and individuals that are connected through our different modes of transport.



2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boating safety principles

In recent years, the Centre for Maritime Safety at TfNSW has hosted and chaired Indigenous Boating Safety Forums in Darwin (May 2016) and Sydney (July 2017). The forums were attended by representatives from government organisations across Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.

TfNSW recognises the importance of ongoing engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as an opportunity to better understand localised issues, and to collaboratively develop ideas to improve boating safety.

10 boating safety principles for delivering safety outcomes were identified through the first forum. These principles are:

1. Recognise the importance of sharing ideas, resources and establish consistent strategies for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about boating safety.
2. Recognise the value of liaising closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their leaders as a mechanism for communicating safety messages.
3. Recognise that communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people needs to consider the use of culturally appropriate language and channels.
4. Recognise the importance of promoting lifejacket wear as priority action for preventing drownings.
5. Advocate for the proper use, care and storage of boating safety equipment by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
6. Endeavour to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with awareness of, and access to, appropriate safety equipment.
7. Advocate for the use of vessels that conform to appropriate safety standards, especially regarding positive buoyancy, and if required, have a certificate of survey.
8. Promote consistent safety messages to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
9. Advocate for responsible behaviours among skippers and passengers, and heighten awareness of the risks of alcohol and drug consumption when boating.
10. Advocate for the sharing of boating incident data and statistics involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



3 Vision

Maritime safety is central to the practice of freshwater and saltwater culture in NSW. This plan identifies key opportunities to change behaviours to help reduce fatalities and serious injuries involving Aboriginal people, and enable safe and responsible use of NSW waterways. This plan seeks to contribute to improved cultural, educational and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people.

3.1 Core principles

1. Increase engagement with Aboriginal people in the NSW Government's safe systems approach to waterway safety.
2. Collaborate with Aboriginal communities to co-design and target the delivery of culturally relevant boating safety programs.
3. Increase the participation of Aboriginal people in the maritime economy using a pathway of engagement through boating safety.



4 Safe systems approach

- This plan aims to tap into the strengths and capabilities of local communities to help deliver improved maritime safety outcomes.
- Programs that are developed to support this plan will have a long-term focus to enable real change and embed an enhanced understanding and adoption of safe boating practices.

Safe Systems – Healthy Love

Establish and operate a culturally relevant governance framework for Aboriginal boating safety through the co-design of action plans, research and knowledge management with Aboriginal community leaders and peak organisations.

The safe systems approach to waterway safety is adopted in the *Maritime Safety Plan 2017-2021*. The safe systems approach acknowledges that people will make mistakes, and if an incident occurs, it should not lead to a fatality or serious injury. The approach looks at the interaction between people, vessels, the waterways and elements supporting the system to develop measures and improve safety in a holistic manner.

Safe Waterways – Healthy Country

Increase Aboriginal community engagement in the management of safe and healthy waterways by supporting Aboriginal participation in the management process.

National incident data identifies that a considerable proportion of Aboriginal fatalities occurred in lakes and lagoons. This highlights the potential for targeted programs addressing specific community and place needs.

Aboriginal boating data is limited and this plan identifies the need for improved data collection, working with Aboriginal communities to obtain relevant data. This should involve incorporating Aboriginal perspectives in policy development and operational decision-making. For example, the management of vessel wash which can impact sites of cultural value across NSW waterways.

Safe Vessels – Healthy Culture

Build and strengthen relationships between TfNSW Boating Safety Officers, Boating Education Officers and Aboriginal community leaders through the targeted delivery of the Bark Canoe Program as a tool for meaningful engagement.

The Bark Canoe was made onsite by TfNSW staff, led by local Aboriginal people using age-old methods of combining ochre with bark from the blue gum stringy-bark tree, collected sustainably from Watagans National Park on the Central Coast. The Aboriginal Bark Canoe project aims to promote diversity across Transport for NSW by teaching staff traditional boat and rope making techniques in partnership with communities.

The Maritime Safety Plan 2017-2021 recognises the importance of regular maintenance of vessels and safety equipment in reducing boating-related trauma. Supporting vessel safety training and education programs for Aboriginal people is an example of how TfNSW can improve boating safety outcomes.

Safe People - Healthy People

Raise Aboriginal community awareness of boating safety through the promotion of key safety campaigns, adapted in a culturally relevant way, coupled with face-to-face engagement at community events.

TfNSW will continue to support safe waterway use in Aboriginal communities through initiatives such as:

- › Lifejacket safety campaigns, incorporating both lifejacket wear and servicing messages.
 - › Additional support for Aboriginal people to obtain boat licences, particularly in regional and remote areas.
 - › Direct engagement with Aboriginal communities to deliver key safety messages aligned with the *Maritime Safety Plan 2017-2021*.
- › Development and delivery of bespoke culturally relevant boating education programs.
 - › Increase engagement with Aboriginal high school students by leveraging TfNSW Boating Education Officers, Boating Safety Officers and relevant boating education and training partners (e.g. Marine Teachers Association, TAFE).
 - › Identify and support opportunities for career pathways within TfNSW's maritime business units.
 - › Consider increasing the number of Aboriginal-identified positions in regional NSW (within TfNSW's maritime business units).
 - › Identify and support career pathways in the commercial maritime sector through advocacy and funding support.
 - › Create maritime traineeship opportunities for Aboriginal people throughout NSW



5 Objectives and actions

This plan has three broad objectives, under which key actions are outlined

Improve our understanding of the issues

- › Address the data gap by working in collaboration with Aboriginal communities and other agencies to collect and collate Aboriginal boating safety data. Improved data will be used to inform policy and program development.
- › Seek greater input from Aboriginal communities on waterway issues.
- › Improve understanding of how to overcome barriers to engagement.
- › Improve access to, and use of, safe vessels and safety equipment.

Turning ideas into action

- › Develop behaviour change campaigns for Aboriginal people addressing priority maritime safety issues in a culturally relevant way.
- › Establish a network of Aboriginal boating safety champions to encourage safe boating practices, and reduce unlicensed boat driving and lifejacket non-wear.
- › Continue to support infrastructure projects that improve waterway safety and access.

- › Promote use of safe vessels and safety equipment.
- › Provide tailored information and clear opportunities to enter and re-enter the boat licensing and registration system.
- › Support maritime-related education pathways.
- › Support maritime-related employment pathways.
- › Review procurement pathways to support Aboriginal businesses in the maritime sector.

Delivering sustained improvements in maritime safety

- › Support funding for Aboriginal maritime safety programs.
- › Investigate opportunities for bespoke Aboriginal boating safety programs addressing licensing and other safety issues in partnership with government partners, industry and the community.
- › Support school-based boating education programs for schools with large numbers of Aboriginal students.





6 Stakeholder engagement

This plan embraces the development of new partnerships and builds on existing stakeholder relationships to improve collaboration with government, not-for-profit and private sector organisations, including Aboriginal support organisations. This cooperative approach continues to leverage a range of perspectives, skills and capabilities to improve Aboriginal maritime safety outcomes in NSW.

This plan has been developed in consultation with the following NSW Government agencies:

- › Department of Justice
- › Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Premier and Cabinet
- › NSW Police Force
- › Department of Education
- › Office of Local Government, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

Key stakeholders across industry and community have also been consulted in developing this plan, and will continue to be involved in the implementation of actions and supporting programs. These stakeholders include:

- › NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- › Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council
- › Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care Secretariat (Absec)
- › Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
- › Tribal Warrior Aboriginal Corporation
- › Local Aboriginal Land Councils
- › Aboriginal community groups
- › Marine Area Command (NSW Police Force)
- › Marine Rescue NSW
- › Surf Life Saving NSW
- › Royal Life Saving NSW
- › Marine Teachers Association of NSW
- › Boating Industry Association (BIA)
- › TAFE NSW

6.1 Community engagement

Aboriginal communities are close partners for delivering the actions associated with this plan, and will be involved with the implementation of initiatives. Initiatives will be prioritised and targeted to help address localised issues as required.

A number of Aboriginal events will also be targeted to extend reach among Aboriginal people and share key messages. To do this, TfNSW aims to have a strong presence at relevant statewide and regional events. The events include, but are not limited to:

- › The NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout, held annually during the Labour Day long weekend in October (four day event)
- › NAIDOC week events, held annually across Australia.
- › Yabun Festival, held annually on 26 January upon the traditional lands of the Gadigal people in Sydney.

TfNSW and its partners should attend these events to provide key safety messages to Aboriginal community members and promote safe behaviours on the water. The Centre for Maritime Safety welcomes the consideration of additional events by sending details via email to:

maritime@transport.nsw.gov.au

The Maritime Safety Community Grants Program is available to support appropriate programs or events which are eligible for funding by demonstrating alignment with key initiatives outlined in the *Maritime Safety Plan 2017-2021*.

Information about the Maritime Safety Community Grants Program can be found at:

<http://maritimemanagement.transport.nsw.gov.au>

Aboriginal communities are close partners for delivering the actions associated with this plan.



6.2 Engagement channels and initiatives

The success of behaviour change initiatives will depend on the effectiveness of engagement activities with Aboriginal communities across NSW, as well as interstate communities where NSW waterways cross into other states.

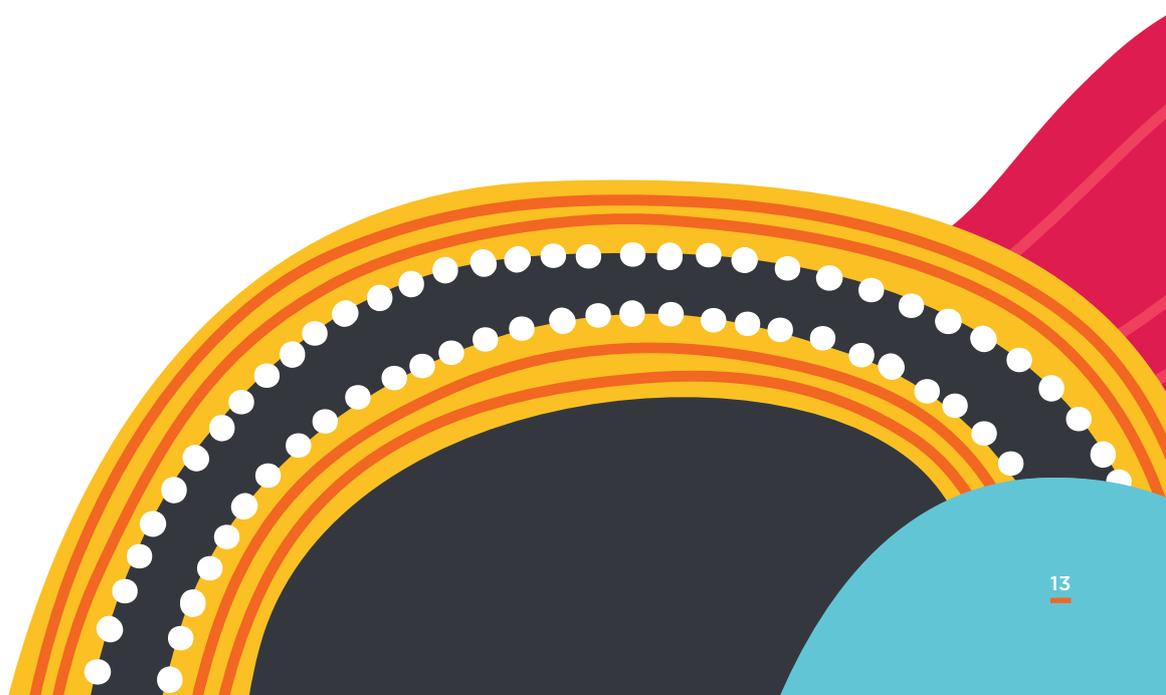
The key initiatives and channels that will be used for engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are listed below. A mix of methods and tools will be used to ensure reach is maximised. It is essential that engagement activities acknowledge specific cultural aspects and cultural practices are followed.

Initiative/Channel	Purpose	Responsibility
Brand toolkit	To set a co-ordinated, endorsed and cluster-wide approach to developing culturally appropriate creative materials	TfNSW Public Affairs and Marketing
Behaviour change Campaigns	To deliver mass reach and utilise a range of audio and visual mediums to deliver key safety messages	TfNSW Public Affairs & Marketing, in partnership with the Centre for Maritime Safety and Maritime
Compliance and enforcement activities	To provide access to frontline staff in order to discuss specific issues as they arise	TfNSW Maritime and NSW Police
Digital (websites and social media)	To provide a centralised location for relevant Aboriginal maritime safety information. To provide broad reach and utilise a range of audio and visual mediums.	TfNSW Centre for Maritime Safety and Maritime
Email	To provide broad reach and key information, with links to more detailed resources.	TfNSW Centre for Maritime Safety and Maritime
Meetings/workshops/briefings	To directly engage community stakeholders in an appropriate way	TfNSW Centre for Maritime Safety and Maritime
Brochures	To provide key information on topics of interest.	TfNSW Centre for Maritime Safety and Maritime
Media release	To provide timely and specific information, which may include consideration or targeting of Aboriginal people	TfNSW Public Affairs and Marketing, in partnership with the Centre for Maritime Safety and Maritime.

Initiative/Channel	Purpose	Responsibility
Publications relevant to audience (letters to the editor; editorials; advertisements)	To provide broad reach for topical or specific issues.	TfNSW Public Affairs and Marketing, in partnership with the Centre for Maritime Safety and Maritime.
Information sessions	To present information face-to-face, discuss community issues and access community expertise.	TfNSW Centre for Maritime Safety and Maritime
Events	To convey safety messaging and access community expertise.	TfNSW Centre for Maritime Safety and Maritime
Survey	To collect important data about the Aboriginal community and waterway use, including attitudinal and behavioural data.	TfNSW Centre for Maritime Safety

6.3 Aboriginal brand toolkit

TfNSW has developed an Aboriginal Brand Toolkit that was endorsed by the Aboriginal Reference Group. The Aboriginal Reference Group acknowledges the need to enhance community engagement in relation to maritime matters. The Aboriginal Brand Toolkit should be applied consistently to all Aboriginal boating safety communications.



7 Evaluation

A continuous process of review, monitoring and reporting is necessary for the delivery of this plan.

The Aboriginal Maritime Safety working group will be responsible for overseeing and monitoring the delivery of this plan in coordination with other maritime safety program initiatives to ensure streamlining of resources and approach.

This plan will be regularly reviewed to ensure it retains currency and adopts necessary changes based on current results, as well as changing social and environmental factors.

Success of this plan will be based on:

- Reduction of Aboriginal boating fatalities and serious injuries
- Increase in licensed Aboriginal boaters (medium – long term)
- Improved data about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boating community (short – medium term)
- Reach of communication channels
 - Website visitation
 - Social media reach, engagement and sentiment
- Media coverage and sentiment
- Participation in meetings/workshops/information sessions
 - Exit surveys – positive responses

8 Resources

The *Maritime Safety Plan 2017-2021* is available online at:

<https://future.transport.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/media/documents/2018/TNSW8277-Maritime-Safety-Plan-ACC-MARCH2018.pdf>

Future Transport 2056 is available online at:

future.transport.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/media/documents/2018/Future_Transport_2056_Strategy.pdf

The NSW Premier's Priorities are available online at: nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities









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