



environments, with Gold Coast Water Police issuing between 40–47 percent of all marine infringement notices in Queensland.

Acting Senior Sergeant Kelly said the majority of calls received were for search and rescue, followed by crime incidents and marine enforcement. Water Police officers also respond to between two to three incidents every weekend.

“The crashes can range from minor incidents of two boats drifting together, to serious injury or fatal marine incidents,” Acting Senior Sergeant Kelly said.

“Unlike on the road, it is up to the owner and master of the vessel to report and lodge a marine incident report with Maritime Safety Queensland. If there is a serious injury or the possibility of alcohol being a factor then water police attend.”

One of the biggest problems Gold Coast Water Police officers face is marine incidents involving jet skis.

“Unlike a motor vehicle there are no brakes on jet skis, and in a close-quarters situation some inexperienced masters will back off the throttle to slow the jet ski down,” Acting Senior Sergeant Kelly said.

“However, panic then sets in when they suddenly realise they have no steering, as jet skis are not fitted with rudders and they require the jet of water to manoeuvre.

“Nearly all marine incidents involving jet skis occur when the skipper loses steering and can not take evasive action to avoid a collision.”

Each year Gold Coast Water Police issue more than 100 marine infringement notices to jet ski skippers for unlicensed driving.

are the only method of travel and a way of life for island residents, which can be risky.

Both Thursday Island and Cairns Water Police have an officer on-call 24 hours a day to coordinate search and rescue operations, which can extend over four or five days.

In the Far Northern Region, search and rescue operations areas are divided up between Cairns and Thursday Island.

Cairns Water Police are responsible for about 450 nautical miles of coastline between Lucinda and Cape Grenville north of Lockhart River.

Thursday Island Water Police have responsibility from Cape Grenville through the Torres Straits and

able to get attention quickly,” Sergeant Ibell said.

“In remote areas all forms of communication are limited or non-existent, rescue resources are limited and a rescue asset might be hours away. It is in this time the weather can deteriorate rapidly, the vessel may start sinking and we lose communications with the distressed vessel.”

Sergeant Ibell said a large percentage of boaties in far north Queensland thought a rescue response was only minutes away when in fact it could be hours or longer.

“They don’t prepare themselves for the unexpected and have no emergency plan in place,” Sergeant Ibell said.



In the Torres Strait, where travel on the water is a way of life for these crayfishermen, it is the powerful 90 horsepower tiller-steered dinghies which rule the waters.



Senior Constable Kent Brown and Sergeant Michael Banyari of Gold Coast Water Police patrol South East Queensland’s waterways on the marine equivalent of motor bikes.

Other issues include speeding, free styling (doing tricks) in the wrong area, and travelling more than six knots when close to people, moored vessels, and jetties or pontoons.

Jet skis may be the recreational vehicle of the Gold Coast but a world away in the Torres Strait, it is the powerful 90 horsepower tiller-steered dinghies which rule the waters.

Unlike the recreational boating haven of the Gold Coast, boats

down the west coast of Cape York to north of Karumba.

Sergeant Andrew Ibell, Search and Rescue Coordinator for Cairns Water Police, said the cause of most incidents on the water which required a search and rescue response was poor planning and lack of preparation of vessels prior to departing on a journey.

“For example, when a vessel runs out of fuel in a busy waterway such as Moreton Bay or the Gold Coast broadwater, the crew is usually

Despite the differences in marine practices in the various regions, traffic enforcement extends throughout Queensland’s expansive waterways, with more than 14,000 boaties breath-tested and more than 23,500 vessels intercepted by Water Police in Queensland each year.

*By Michelle Fleming, Media and Public Affairs Branch and Lisa Taylor, South Eastern Region Media Liaison Officer*