



The development and impact of PFD wear regulations on drowning of recreational boating occupants in Victoria

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Overview

- Background and rationale
- Implementation
- Impact
- Implications
- Future directions

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Background and Rationale

- 150 designated waterways in Victoria
 - 1800 kilometres of coastline
 - 3 large enclosed harbours
 - inland lakes and rivers
- Regulation of and responsibility for marine safety on Victorian waters is managed by Transport Safety Victoria
- Suspected drowning must be reported to the Coroners Court of Victoria
- Recreational vessel occupants consistently comprise a large proportion of drownings



Background and Rationale

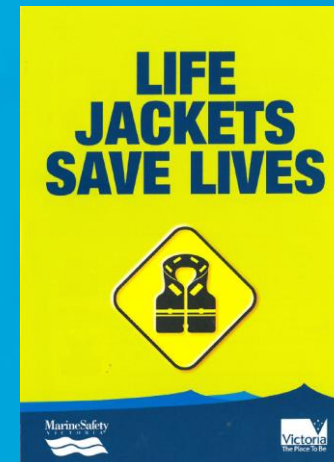
- 2003 report on coronial investigations into 40 drownings between 1999-2002
- Major findings on contributing factors
 - hazardous environmental conditions
 - sudden and unexpected water entry
 - absence of PFD use
- Report recommended
 - improvements to PFD standards
 - introduction of laws to mandate PFD wear



Background and Rationale

2002-03 Education Campaign

- comprised:
 - free to air television commercials
 - billboards
 - boat ramps
- evaluation showed no improvements in PFD wear rates (13%)



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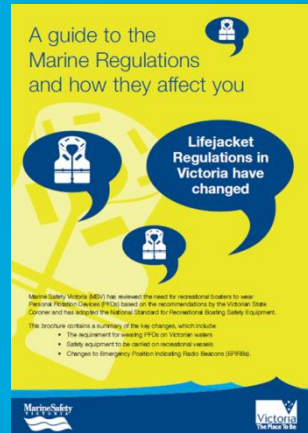
Implementation

- In recognition that:
 - high frequency of recreational vessel occupant drownings
 - high proportion of drowning were of recreational vessel occupants
 - research that absence of PFD use was a major contributing factor
 - education campaigns did not increase PFD wear rates
- The Marine authority conducted significant public consultation on the introduction of laws mandating PFD wear



Implementation

- Laws were introduced mandating PFD wear based on
 - vessel type
 - operating characteristics
- Laws effective from 1 December 2005



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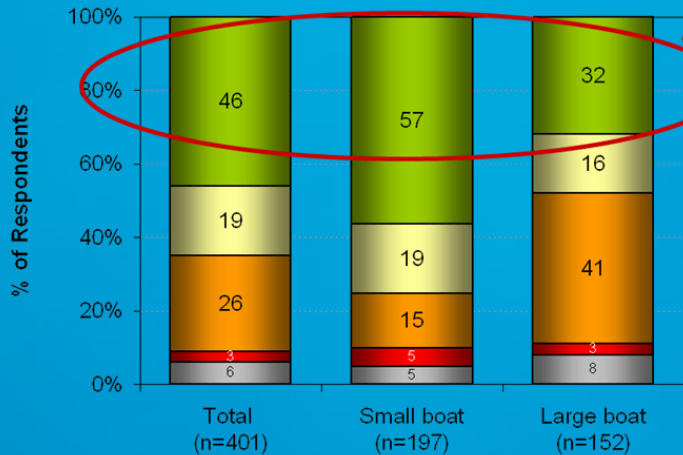
Impact

46% have changed their PFD behaviour

Q.25. Which, if any, of these statements best describes your behaviour with regards to lifejackets since these new regulations have been introduced?
 Base: Total respondents

- In total, 46% have changed their behaviour and now wear a PFD more often as a result of the new regulations.
- This change is most dramatic amongst small boat users, where 57% have changed their behaviour recently, compared to 32% of large boat owners.
- The impact on boaties in metro and regional areas has been more or less the same.

By location	Metro (n=276) %	Country (n=125) %
I've changed my behaviour...	45	47
I haven't changed my behaviour...	18	21
I haven't changed my behaviour...	27	24
I haven't changed my behaviour...	4	2
None of these...	6	6



- I've changed my behaviour and now wear a lifejacket more often
- I haven't changed my behaviour as I already wore a lifejacket most of the time on the water
- I haven't changed my behaviour as I still don't wear a lifejacket when out on the water and as I don't boat in the conditions which require me to do so
- I haven't changed my behaviour as I still don't wear a lifejacket when out on the water even though I know I'm meant to
- None of these statements apply to me

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Impact

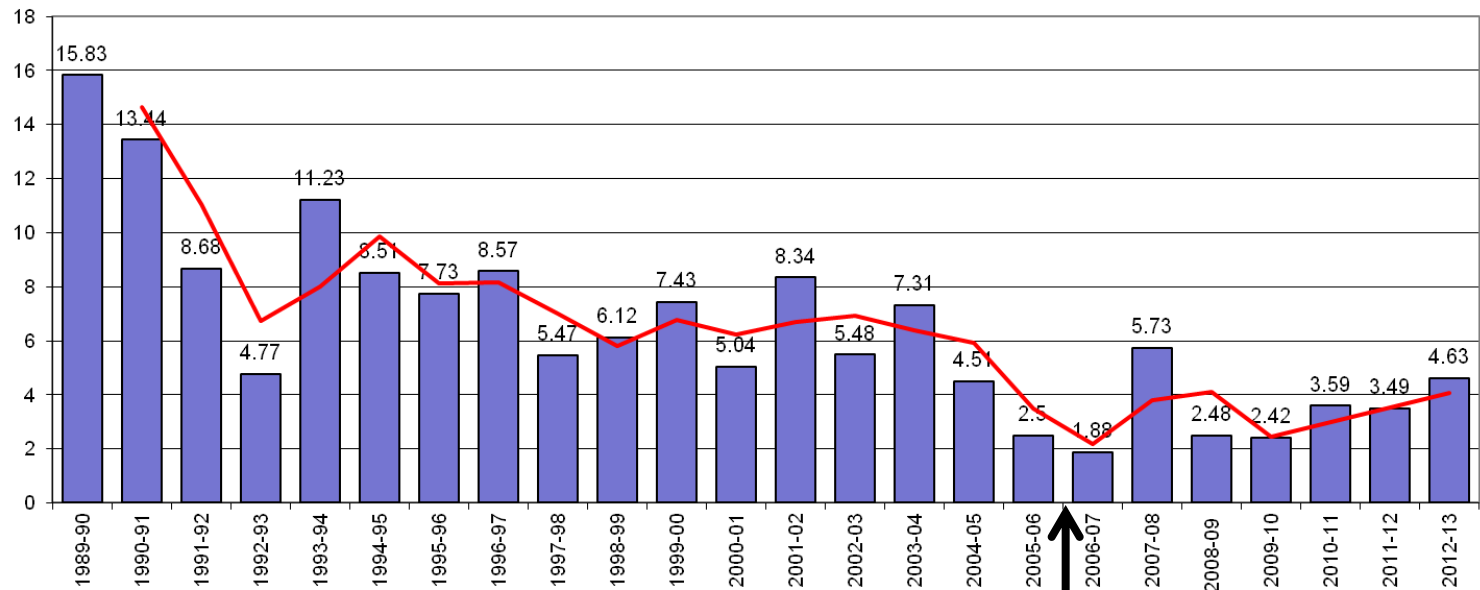
- Before and after study:
 - 59 pre-intervention compared to 16 post-intervention
 - significant decrease:
 - vessel occupants < 59 years
 - occupants engaged in pleasure cruising and “other” boating activities
 - occupants of small powerboats
 - incidents in inland waterways



RECREATIONAL
ACTIVITIES

Impact

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Rate of drowning per 100,000 vessel registrations

PFD regulations

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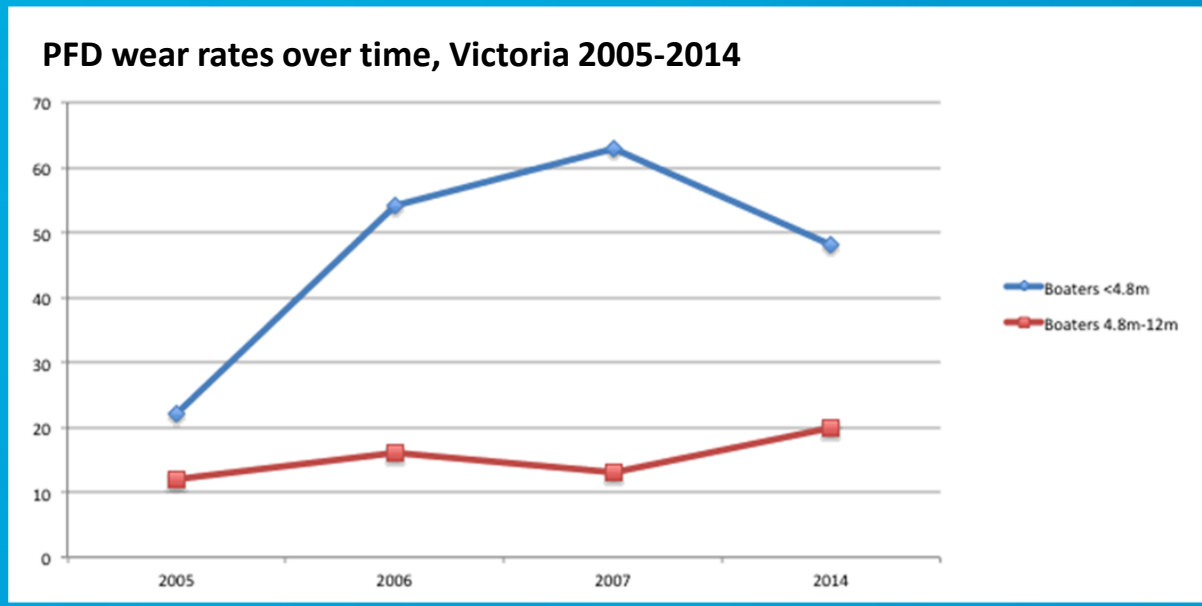
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RECREATIONAL
ACTIVITIES

Impact

- Recent decrease in PFD wear rates
- Decreased level of enforcement and education



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Implications

- In Victoria education alone was not shown to reduce drownings amongst recreational vessel occupants
- When mandatory PFD regulations were introduced supported by a visible enforcement regime and public awareness, an increase in PFD wear rates and reduction in drownings was observed
- When enforcement and education declined, PFD wear rates declined and drownings have increased



Implications

- In accordance with the scientific approach to injury prevention:
 - a multi-faceted approach to prevention is most effective
 - education / public awareness
 - legislative framework
 - enforcement regime
- This must be ongoing to achieve a sustained reduction



Future Directions

- Strengthen enforcement regime
- Develop targeted education / public awareness about
 - safe systems approach to recreational boating
 - minimum safety requirements for boating occupants
 - enforcement for non-compliance with regulations
 - advances in PFDs and distress beacons



Thank You

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