

Marine Incidents in Queensland 2025

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Foreword

The *Marine Incidents in Queensland 2025* report provides a valuable tool that informs initiatives intended to make recreational boating safer for all Queenslanders.

Queensland has seen a significant decrease in lives lost in 2025, where there was only one fatality and no drownings involving a recreational vessel, which is the lowest rate on record.

This is down from eight fatalities in 2024, and from the average of 14.8 fatalities annually over the previous five years.

While it will take some time before the impact of new lifejacket regulations introduced in December 2024 can be fully assessed, it is to be hoped that the new laws played a role in this improved outcome and will become more common in the future.

In 2025, no drownings were recorded, however, there was one fatality when the master of a personal watercraft died from traumatic injuries sustained in a personal watercraft collision with mangroves.

The previous lowest yearly death toll on record was in 2008, when three people died from traumatic injuries in three separate recreational boating incidents.

Compliance with the recently introduced lifejacket regulations for heightened risk activities has been pleasing, although compliance officers report that there is still room for improvement – particularly for boaties crossing coastal river bars. Boaties are encouraged to review the revised lifejacket regulations introduced in December 2024 to ensure that they are always compliant, and keep in mind that a lifejacket will only save you if you are wearing it.

Recreational boating can never be entirely without risk, however, with training, careful planning, boat maintenance, and the prudent use of safety equipment all boat owners and Masters can minimise the possibility of a day on the water ending in a tragedy.

Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) takes a proactive approach to marine safety, and together with MSQ's on-water compliance partners, the Queensland Water Police and the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol, our BoatSafe trainers, and of course the Master of every vessel operating in Queensland waters, we can all make a difference.

Sally Stannard
Director-General
Department of Transport and Main Roads

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Maritime Safety Queensland in accordance with section 127 of the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994*. It presents details of marine incidents reported to Maritime Safety Queensland that occurred during the 2025 calendar year and involved at least one Queensland regulated ship (QRS).

A Queensland regulated ship is a recreational vessel or ship that is not regulated under the *Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessels) National Law Act 2012* (Cth) or the *Navigation Act 2012* (Cth).

The data presented has been sourced from Maritime Safety Queensland's marine intelligence databases. As some incident investigations remain ongoing, the data is subject to change once investigations are finalised.

Key points

- During the 2025 calendar year, Maritime Safety Queensland received reports of 328 marine incidents
- These incidents resulted in one fatality, 18 hospital admissions and 53 other injuries.
- This represents seven fewer fatalities than the previous year, which was itself lower than the average of 14.8 fatalities over the previous five years, and is now the lowest annual fatality count on record.
- It is also the first time since 2008 that no recorded fatalities resulted from drowning.
- There were 298 incidents that exclusively involved Queensland regulated ships. There were another 33 incidents that also involved a commercial vessel (administered by the Commonwealth's Australian Maritime Safety Authority).
- The most reported incident types were collisions between vessels (89), flooding and swamping (60), groundings (45), capsizes (37), collisions with an object (33).

Incidents

The 328 reported incidents were relatively evenly distributed throughout the year. Incident numbers were marginally higher in spring (28%) and autumn (27%) with slightly fewer incidents recorded in summer (24%) and winter (20%). This reflects Queensland's favourable year-round recreation boating conditions when compared to other states.

Weekend periods accounted for a higher proportion of incidents, with 45 per cent recorded on Saturdays and Sundays. The majority occurred between 9 am and 6 pm, representing 62 per cent of all incidents.

At the time of these incidents, vessels were most often operating in smooth waters (70%), during clear weather conditions (62%), with good visibility (66%), and in winds below 16 knots (59%). All four of these favourable boating conditions were present in 98 of the 328 incidents, representing 30 per cent of reported incidents.

The most frequently reported incident type (see *Figure 1*) was a collision between ships, accounting for (27%) of the 328 incidents. This was followed by flooding and swamping incidents (18%), groundings (14%), capsizes (11%), collisions with a fixed or floating object (10%), person overboard (5%), and a further 14% of incidents of various other types.

Marine incident investigators assess and categorise causal and contributing factors into human, environmental, and material categories. Human factors were identified in 220 (67%) incidents, followed by environmental factors in 170 (52%) incidents and material factors in 104 (32%) incidents.

The most frequently identified factors in each category were:

- *human factors* – inattention/ distraction (84 incidents)
- *environmental factors* – wind conditions (93 incidents)
- *material factors* – equipment failure (54 incidents).

Table 1: Annual incidents, fatalities and hospitalisation 2016 - 2025

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Incidents	409	322	342	327	337	382	346	298	312	328
Fatalities	13	7	6	16	16	11	15	16	8	1
Hospitalisations	40	22	44	37	39	39	30	24	45	18

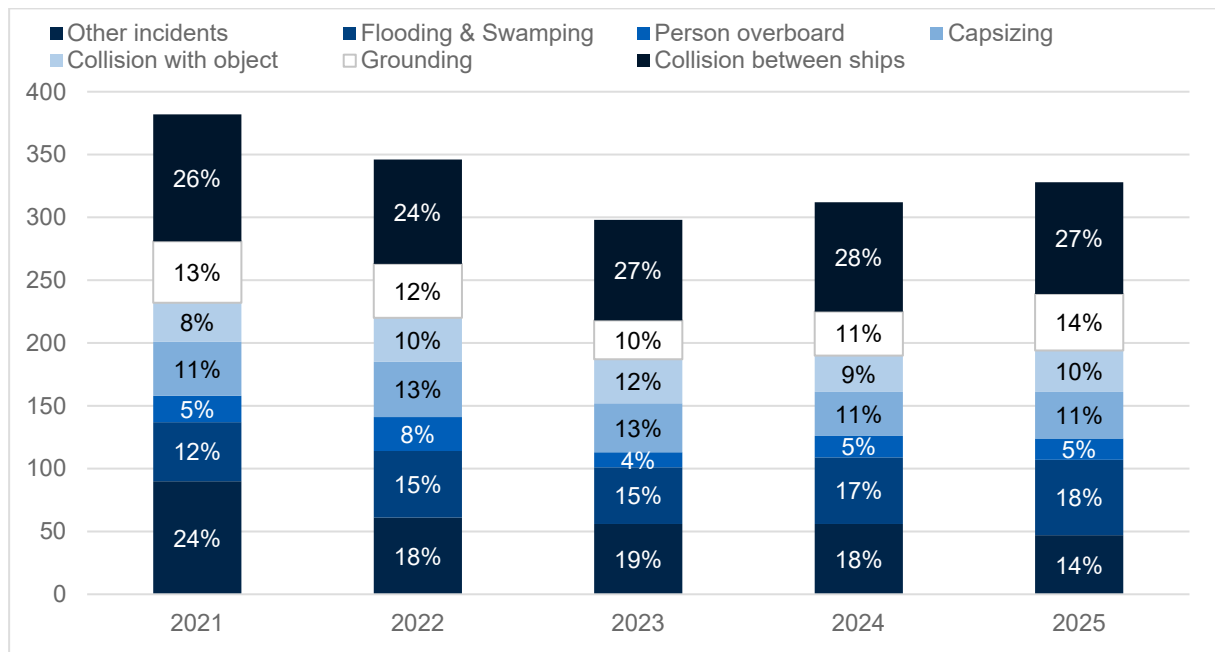


Figure 1 – Marine incidents by incident type 2021 – 2025

Vessels

The 328 reported incidents involved 450 vessels, of which 417 were Queensland regulated ships and 33 were commercial vessels.

The 417 Queensland regulated ships included:

- 265 motorboats
- 97 sailboats
- 42 personal watercraft (jet skis)
- 11 houseboats
- 1 paddle craft
- 1 pontoon.

Damage assessments showed that, of the 417 Queensland regulated ships involved in incidents, 235 vessels sustained damage, while the remaining 182 vessels reported no damage at all.

Damage to these 235 vessels can be classified as follows:

- 25 were classified as an economic write-off,
- 49 sustained major damage,
- 44 sustained moderate damage,
- 117 sustained minor damage

This damage to, or loss of, these 235 vessels most frequently resulted from the following causes:

- collisions with another vessel (85)
- flooding, or swamping (50)
- grounding (26)
- collisions with an object (23)
- capsizing (22)
- fire or explosion (11)
- person overboard (5)
- loss of ship (1)
- other incident (12).

Of the 33 commercial vessels involved, 14 were passenger vessels, 14 were non-passenger vessels, four were fishing vessels and one was a hire-and-drive vessel. One commercial vessel sustained major damage in a fire, while collisions with other vessels resulted in moderate damage to two vessels and minor damage to ten vessels.

People

The 328 reported incidents resulted in one fatality and 72 injuries, including 18 that required hospitalisation. The fatality occurred when the master of a personal watercraft died from traumatic injuries sustained after colliding with mangroves.

Of the 18 individuals admitted to hospital, nine were masters, eight were passengers, and one was a swimmer. Ten were on motorboats, five on personal watercraft and three on sailboats. These hospital admissions arose from eight different types of incidents, including:

- five admissions resulting from collision with a ship (three incidents)
- four admissions resulting from groundings (four incidents)
- three admissions resulting from persons overboard (three incidents)
- two admissions resulting from a capsizing (two incidents)
- one admission resulting from a collision with a person (one incident)
- one admission resulting from collisions with an object (one incident)
- one admission resulting from an onboard incident (one incident)
- one admission resulting from the operation of the vessel (one incident).

Trends

Incidents

The number of reported incidents increased from 312 in 2024 to 328 in 2025 and was lower than the 10-year average of 342.3 incidents (see *Table 2*).

Table 2 - Summary of key indicators 2025 versus 2015–2024 average

Indicator	Average 2015-2024	Indicator 2025	Statistical trend
Total incidents	342.3	328	Needs a downward arrow please
Total fatal incidents	9.9	1	▼
Total fatalities	11.5	1	▼
Total hospitalisation incidents	26.8	16	▼
Total hospitalisations	33.7	18	▼
Incident rate per 100k vessels	129.1	117.8	▼
Fatality rate per 100k vessels	4.3	0.4	▼
Hospitalisation rate per 100k vessels	12.7	6.5	▼

Key

- Not significantly different
- ▲ Significantly higher
- ▼ Significantly lower

While the incident rate rose from 112.6 to 117.8 per 100,000 Queensland regulated ships between 2024 and 2025 (see *Figure 2*), it was still significantly lower than the 10-year average of 129.1 incidents per 100,000 Queensland regulated ships.

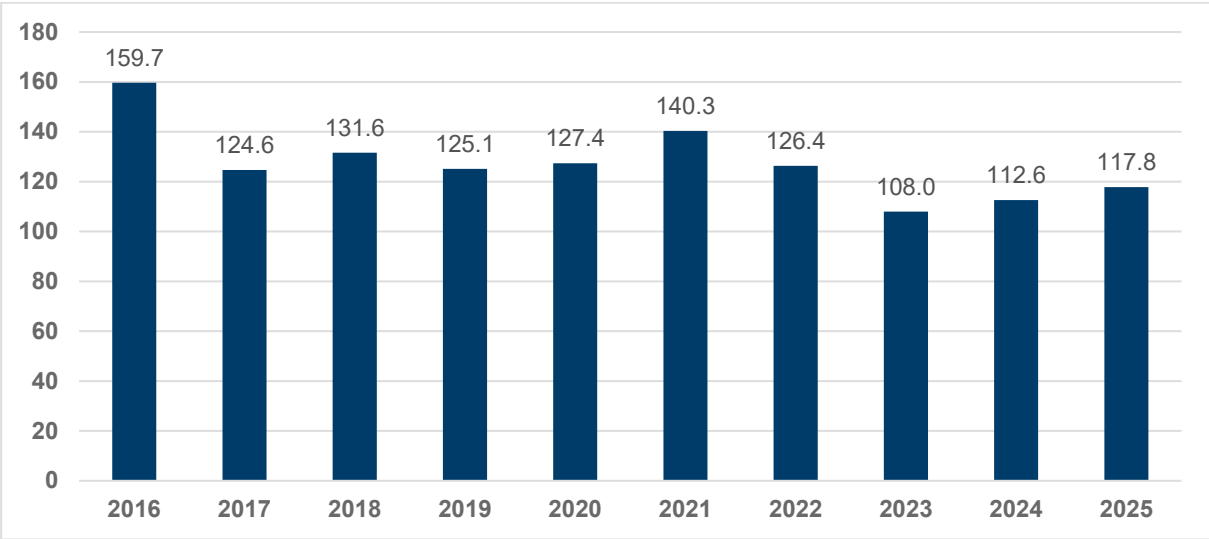


Figure 2 - Reported incidents per 100,000 registered Queensland regulated ships 2016–2025

Fatalities

Both fatal incidents and fatalities declined, decreasing from eight in 2024 to one in 2025. The 2025 figures are well below the 10-year averages of 9.9 fatal incidents and 11.5 fatalities.

Consistent with this trend, the fatality rate dropped from 2.9 to 0.4 fatalities per 100,000 Queensland regulated ships between 2024 and 2025 (see Figure 3), remaining significantly lower than the 10-year average of 4.3.

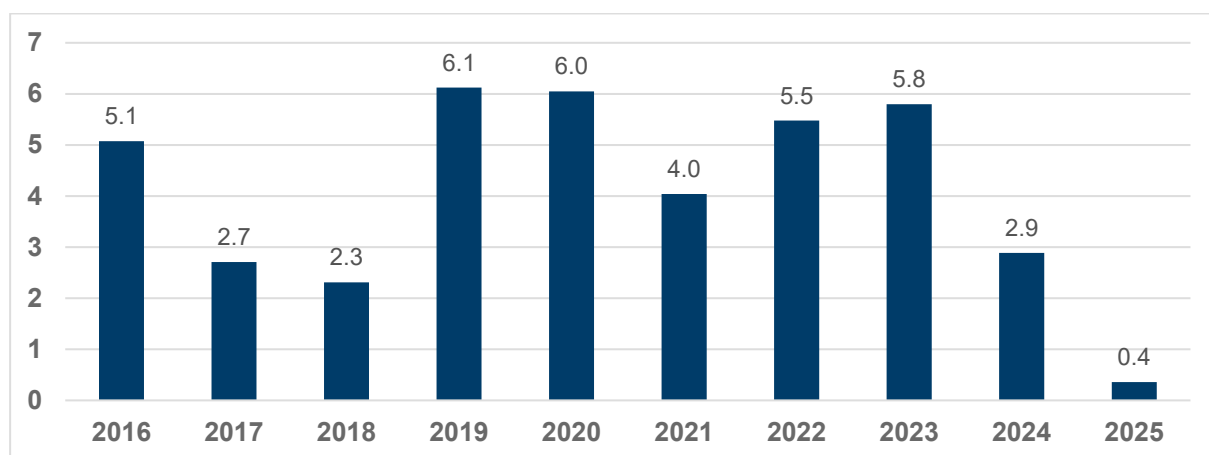


Figure 3 - Fatalities per 100,000 registered Queensland regulated ships 2016–2025

Hospitalisations

Between 2024 and 2025, both hospitalisation incidents and the number of hospitalisations declined, with incidents decreasing from 32 to 16 and hospitalisations falling from 45 to 18.

Both measures were significantly lower than their respective 10-year averages of 26.8 incidents and 33.7 hospitalisations.

Similarly, the hospitalisation rate dropped from 16.2 to 6.5 per 100,000 Queensland regulated ships (see *Figure 4*), which was also significantly lower than the 10-year average of 12.7 per 100,000 Queensland regulated ships.

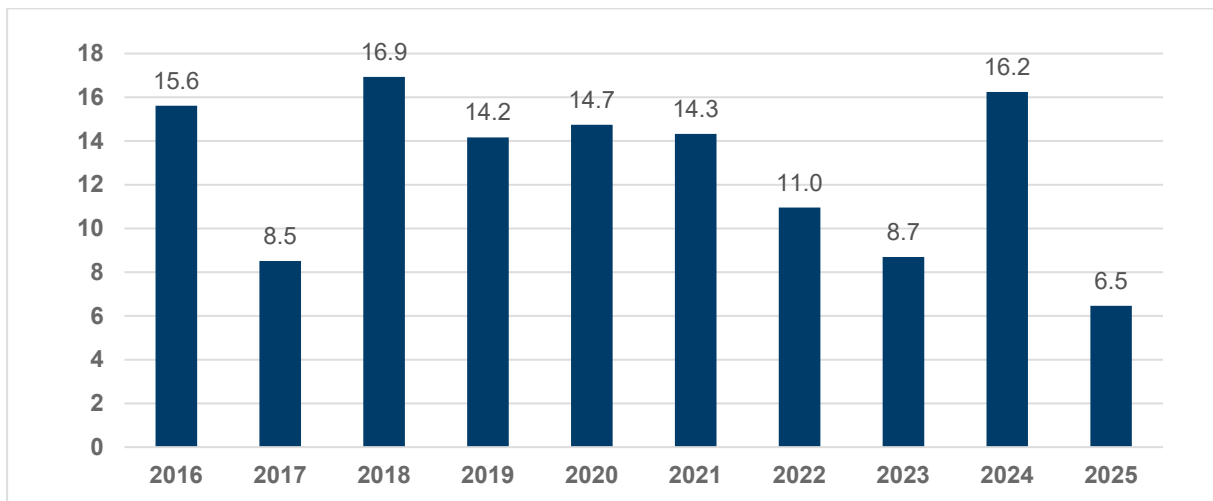


Figure 4 - Hospitalisations per 100,000 registered Queensland regulated ships 2016–2025

In the regions - 2025

Brisbane

The Brisbane maritime region comprises three reporting areas: the Gold Coast, Pinkenba and the Sunshine Coast.

During the reporting period, the region recorded 184 reported marine incidents involving 258 vessels, including 241 Queensland regulated ships and 17 commercial ships.

No fatalities were reported; however, there were 12 hospital admissions and 31 other injuries.

Gold Coast

The Gold Coast reporting area recorded 83 reported marine incidents involving 119 vessels, including 109 Queensland regulated ships and 10 commercial ships.

No fatalities were reported; however, there were five hospital admissions and 14 other injuries reported.

Pinkenba

The Pinkenba reporting area recorded 59 reported marine incidents involving 81 vessels, including 75 Queensland regulated ships and six commercial ships.

No fatalities were reported; however, there were three hospital admissions and six other injuries reported.

Sunshine Coast

The Sunshine Coast reporting area recorded 42 reported marine incidents involving 58 vessels, including 57 Queensland regulated ships and one commercial ship.

No fatalities were reported; however, there were four hospital admissions and 11 other injuries reported.

Gladstone

The Gladstone region recorded 67 reported marine incidents involving 92 vessels, including 85 Queensland regulated ships and seven commercial ships.

No fatalities were reported; however, there were two hospital admissions and 15 other injuries reported.

Mackay

The Mackay region recorded 28 reported marine incidents involving 36 vessels, including 33 Queensland regulated ships and three commercial ships.

No fatalities were reported; however, there were two hospital admissions and six other injuries reported.

Townsville

The Townsville region recorded 19 reported marine incidents involving 27 vessels, including 24 Queensland regulated ships and three commercial ships.

No fatalities were reported and there were no injuries of any type reported.

Cairns

The Cairns region recorded 30 reported marine incidents involving 37 vessels, including 34 Queensland regulated ships and three commercial ships.

There was one fatality, two hospital admissions and one other injury reported.

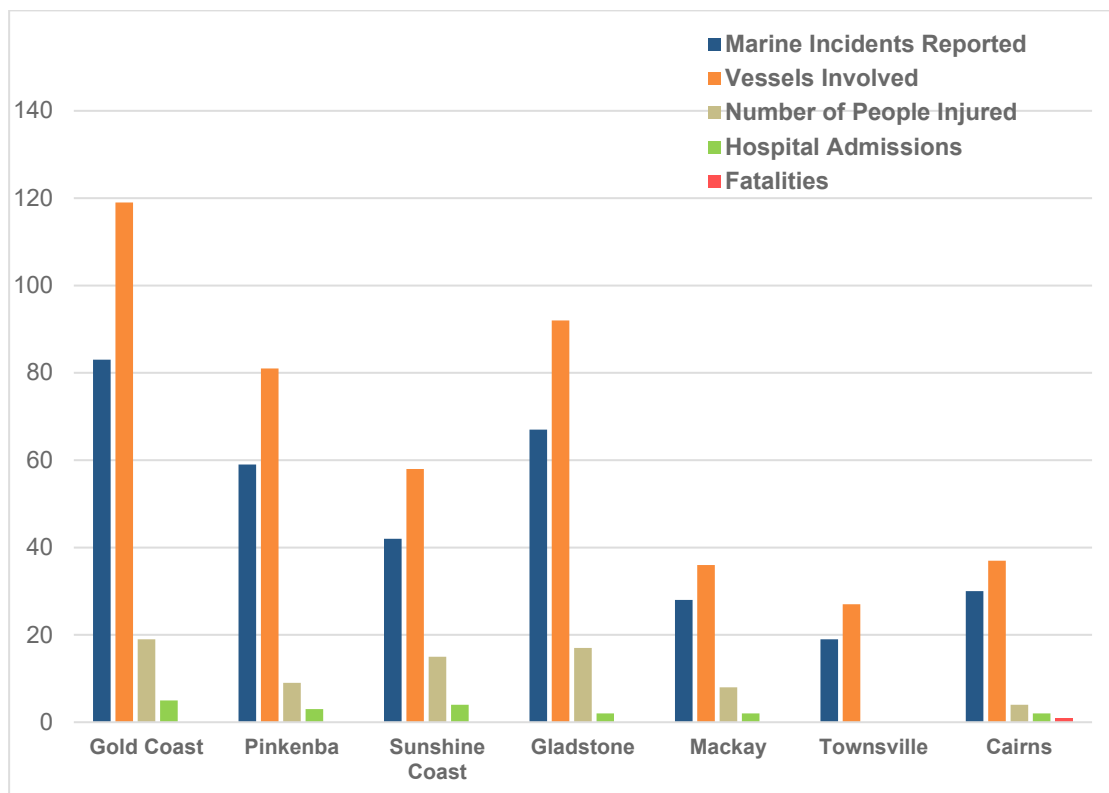


Figure 5 – Regional marine incident report data 2025

Conclusion

The particulars of the incidents reported during 2025 are consistent with those reported in previous years.

Boaties are reminded to remain vigilant and avoid complacency, particularly when operating in favourable boating conditions. The reduction in fatalities, and notably the absence of any drowning-related deaths, is a particularly encouraging outcome and reflects the continued importance of education, compliance, and effective safety regulation.

In 2026, Maritime Safety Queensland will continue to focus on strengthening recreational boating safety across Queensland. Key initiatives include the ongoing refinement of the BoatSafe training program and continued enhancements to waterways management, supporting more proactive and consistent management of Queensland's waterways.

Maritime Safety Queensland reiterates the statutory requirement for the mandatory reporting of marine incidents in accordance with the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1995*. Information obtained through the investigation and analysis of reported incidents informs the development of targeted and effective education, regulatory, and enforcement strategies.

These strategies are intended to further reduce both the frequency and severity of marine incidents in Queensland waters.

Tables

Registration and Licensing

Table 3 – Queensland regulated ships by region in 2025

Queensland	Brisbane	Gold Coast*	Pinkenba*	Sunshine Coast*	Gladstone	Mackay	Townsville	Cairns	Total**
Jun-2025	158,309	36,908	96,940	24,461	52,504	20,736	23,381	23,475	278,445
Dec-2025	159,887	37,285	97,847	24,755	53,231	20,861	23,484	23,826	281,335

*Gold Coast, Pinkenba and Sunshine Coast equate to the Brisbane total.
** Total for Queensland which includes vessels registered to addresses outside of Queensland.

Table 4 – Marine licence holders by region in 2025

Recreational marine driver licence holders	Brisbane	Gold Coast*	Pinkenba*	Sunshine Coast*	Gladstone	Mackay	Townsville	Cairns	Total**
Jun-2025	676,088	145,365	434,822	95,901	156,209	55,721	73,668	79,179	1,054,686
Dec-2025	684,256	147,334	439,550	97,372	158,708	56,164	74,130	79,961	1,067,360

*Gold Coast, Pinkenba and Sunshine Coast equate to the Brisbane total.
** Total for Queensland which includes licensees with addresses outside of Queensland.

Incident related tables

Table 5 – Marine incidents by incident type and region in 2025

Incident by Type	Brisbane	Gold Coast*	Pinkenba*	Sunshine Coast*	Gladstone	Mackay	Townsville	Cairns	Total
Collision between ships	57	29	14	14	15	8	5	4	89
Grounding	23	6	7	10	9	4	1	8	45
Capsizing	19	7	4	8	10	1	3	4	37
Collision with object	20	6	12	2	8	1	2	2	33
Other incident	10	1	7	2	6	3	1	1	21
Flooding	23	22	1		3	7	3	3	39
Other - Close Call	2		1	1			2	1	5
On-board incident	3	1	2		2			1	6
Swamping	8	1	5	2	8	1	1	3	21
Person overboard	9	4	2	3	3	2		3	17
Fire or Explosion	7	6	1		2	1	1		11
Collision with a person	2		2						2
Loss of ship	1		1		1				2
Total	184	83	59	42	67	28	19	30	328

*Gold Coast, Pinkenba and Sunshine Coast equate to the Brisbane total.

Table 6 – Vessels involved in marine incidents by jurisdiction and region in 2025

Vessels Involved	Brisbane	Gold Coast*	Pinkenba*	Sunshine Coast*	Gladstone	Mackay	Townsville	Cairns	Total
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Queensland Regulated Ships	241	109	75	57	85	33	24	34	417
Commercial Vessels	17	10	6	1	7	3	3	3	33
Total	258	119	81	58	92	36	27	37	450

*Gold Coast, Pinkenba and Sunshine Coast equate to the Brisbane total.

Table 7 – Vessels involved in marine incidents by ship damage and region in 2025

Damage vessels	Brisbane	Gold Coast*	Pinkenba*	Sunshine Coast*	Gladstone	Mackay	Townsville	Cairns	Total
Total damaged vessels	134	79	38	17	49	27	15	22	247
– Economic write-off	6	2	3	1	8	3	4	4	25
– Major Damage	33	29	4		4	6	4	3	50
– Moderate Damage	23	7	9	7	7	9	3	4	46
– Minor Damage	73	42	22	9	30	9	4	11	127
No Reported Damage	124	40	43	41	43	9	12	15	202
Total	258	119	81	58	92	36	27	37	450

*Gold Coast, Pinkenba and Sunshine Coast equate to the Brisbane total.

Table 8 – People by injury type and region in 2025

Injured People	Brisbane	Gold Coast*	Pinkenba*	Sunshine Coast*	Gladstone	Mackay	Townsville	Cairns	Total
Number of People Injured	43	19	9	15	17	8		4	72
– Fatalities								1	1
– Hospital Admissions	12	5	3	4	2	2		2	18
– Other Injuries	31	14	6	11	15	6		1	53
No Reported Injury	275	127	85	63	103	39	30	51	498
Total	318	146	94	78	120	47	30	55	570

*Gold Coast, Pinkenba and Sunshine Coast equate to the Brisbane total.