

BOAT (Boat Owners Association) is THE Association for recreational boat owners in Western Australia.

Introducing BOAT

WHY join BOAT?

- *BOAT has Information for you*
- *BOAT has a Social Calander*
- *BOAT addresses your issues*

INFORMATION

BOAT fosters a mutually beneficial attitude of sharing information. It is often quite difficult for boat owners to find out information about boating and related topics of interest to them. BOAT is from the beginning building a database of information (and where to find information) on boating related topics which members will be able to access. Such topics will include regulations, safety, boat building and maintenance and repair information, etc.

BOAT will also from time to time facilitate short-term classes and seminars (some topics already under consideration are

Boating Courtesy,

Engine Handling (outboards, diesel etc).

Some of these topics are particularly aimed at partners and children to help them become more proficient and confident, thus bringing more enjoyment to their boating experience. **Tell us what you would like.**

SOCIAL CALENDAR

An annual Social Calendar is being developed which will cater for differing interests amongst the wider boating community. There will be Boaties' Boules Breakfasts (or Brunches), Boaties' Bush Walks, (maybe even Boaties' Bibbulman Track Bush Walks), and Boaties' Barbecues. **Contribution of ideas from members on what you would like is most welcome.**

The idea is to help make boating more fun for all the family, and to get to know each other.

ISSUES

West Australian recreational boat owners are generally not represented as stakeholders wherever policies which ultimately affect them are being formulated and implemented. As the move towards user pays continues, together with an ever tightening environmental regulatory environment, it is vital that we get a voice in discussions about policy, regulations and charges. BOAT was recently formed to provide that voice.

BOAT intends to provide assistance and support to individual boat owners where they may feel discriminated against, as well as research, active participation, and lobbying where the aspects of the recreational boating community's interests are being ignored. **Tell us what concerns you.**

Many external pressures are mounting which are beginning to make it more difficult for

recreational boat owners to keep afloat. Some of these pressures are:

- Financial - increases in registration fees and mooring fees (eg savage increases at Rottneest).
- Reduction in public facilities - registration fees going up but there fewer public jetties and pens (eg the Department of Transport has handed over one of it's jetties to Royal Perth Yacht Club).
- Waste Disposal regulations prohibit the discharge of anything into local waters but there is no provision for pump-out facilities for recreational boaties and no official policy on alternatives to holding tanks such as on-board toilet treatment units (what the Americans call marine sanitation devices).
- Environmental considerations - eg concerns about mooring and anchoring on sea-grass beds (in other states this is a major issue) and of course Waste Disposal comes under this heading too.
- Discrimination against those who wish to live on their vessels. Authorities have chosen to regulate against allowing residential boating on very flimsy grounds.
- Launching ramps for trailerable boats - are there enough and are they in the right places?

Just a few recent examples in our State where policies and future directions have been formulated and where there is little or no representation of ordinary recreational boat owners' interests are:

- The Swan River Trust's *Inquiry into the effects of vessels on the Swan and Canning Rivers (1996)*. This is a comprehensive document with 32 recommendations - ordinary boaties not represented in the consultative process.
- The *Fremantle Port and Boat Harbours Study* and the *Fremantle Maritime Precinct Study*. These two documents actually use the words "recreational boating" several times but there is no real acknowledgment of the value of recreational boating as a part of a viable maritime precinct or the port and harbours. And there is no commitment to

the on-going provision of facilities for recreational boaties in the Fremantle harbours.

- The Department of Transport has recently amended it's policy on pen rental at Challenger Harbour so that owners can no longer pay rent on a monthly basis. It can be paid 12 months in advance, 3 monthly (at 40% of the annual rate) or 6 monthly (at 60% of the annual rate). However if you leave your pen before the 12 months is up there is no refund! Has this happened at other DOT operated harbours? Not everyone is able to take pay 12 months in advance and the financial penalty is severe if you can only pay 3 or 6 monthly.
- The Rottneest Island Authority recently more than doubled it's annual mooring fees. Will it provide extra facilities for boaties with the increase (around \$250,000)? Or will it pay for adequate monitoring to properly establish the effects of recreational boating on the marine environment at Rottneest?
- The East Fremantle Council charges a minimum of \$7 per day to leave a vehicle in the car park at the launching ramp at East Fremantle.

These are just a few areas where boat owners might have been better served if there had been an association to speak up for them. In these days of "user pays", the user must be represented in the decision-making process.

It is the intention of BOAT to provide such a voice from now on. BOAT is undertaking to register our desire to take part in any process where policy affecting boat owners interests statewide are being considered as it comes to our attention. Thus we ask members to contact us about their concerns in the boating arena. *NSW has had a Boat Owners Association for about 8 years - one of their earliest battles concerned mooring fees. The government agency concerned was proposing to increase mooring fees by 100% per annum for 5 consecutive years! BOA of NSW are now represented on the Waterways Policy Advisory Committee and they have members sitting on a number of User Group Committees at the local level. In Queensland too, boat owners are now*

represented as stakeholders in policy discussions to do with, for example, the waste disposal issue.

OUR HISTORY

BOAT started life in November 1997 as RESIDENTIAL BOAT OWNERS AUSTRALIA when founding President Sue Folks called a public meeting with a view to forming an association to speak up for people wishing to live on their boats. The intention was to provide a voice for such people on waterways and harbours around the state. The first project undertaken was related to the Swan River. The organisation is lobbying the Minister for Water Resources and the Swan River Trust in an effort to have the Swan River Trust put out a public discussion paper reviewing Regulation 9 of the Swan River Trust's Regulations (1989). Regulation 9 is the regulation which restricts living on vessels on the Swan to 6 days straight and 10 days a month. *You might have noticed that we have had occasional bursts of media attention over the last few months - this is a direct response to our efforts.*

It became obvious very quickly that there was a dire need for an association to represent recreational boat owners across the board, and within which there would be special interest sub-committees. Thus the decision was taken in May to expand the organisation to become Boat Owners Association (BOAT).

CURRENT PROJECTS

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

BOAT's first project is a concentrated membership drive. If we are to provide an effective voice and be taken seriously we must have a good solid membership base. Our target is 2,000 boat owners in the first twelve months. A major opportunity for making very substantial progress towards this target presented itself in the form of the 1998 Perth Club Marine Boat, Dive & Fishing Show at Victoria Quay in August. The Boating Industry Association has supported us in a number of ways so that we are able to have a booth at the Boat Show. For this we are extremely grateful. (Apparently the BIA recently discussed the possibility of having a boat owners' association as part of their

organisation but decided against it because of a perceived possibility of a conflict of interest).

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

We are currently gathering information so that we can approach the Department of Transport on a number of matters related to Challenger Harbour and Hillary's. We are seriously concerned about the erosion of public pen space and the situation in relation to the way pen fees are charged.

DATABASE

In parallel with planning for the Boat Show we are putting in place a database of members and their particular interests and issues, a database of information on topics of interest, plus a database of media and political contacts and a database of members skills and resources so that we can utilise our energies effectively wherever it is deemed necessary. We see it as vitally important that we research issues properly and present our case consistently, reasonably and responsibly.

VOLUNTARY CODE OF CONDUCT

Another project is to develop a VOLUNTARY CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RECREATIONAL BOATIES. We believe that it is better to have such a code, and to encourage boaties to use it, than to have unnecessary regulation foisted upon us. BOAT stands for RESPONSIBLE BOATING particularly in relation to SAFETY, the NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, and COURTESY towards others (e.g. other boats and nearby residents).

BONUS BUYING

The committee is now approaching boat businesses about giving BOAT members a discount on production of their membership card.

RESIDENTIAL BOATING ON THE SWAN RIVER

This is an on-going project. We are presently considering our next steps on this matter.

STOP PRESS

Special Offer

Membership is \$25 per year and we have an early joining offer. If you join now you will become a member until November 1999, up to 15 months for the price of 12.

Bonus Offer

For members, if you sign up two new members, BOAT will provide a free pass to the BOAT SHOW. A \$12.50 saving, half an annual membership per two new members.

Discount Offer

If you have a group going to the BOAT SHOW, running from 20 August to 24 August at the Victoria Quay Function Centre, BOAT can negotiate a substantial group discount.

Help Request

Again on the BOAT SHOW, we are operating a stand at the show to publicise our objectives and to attract new membership. We need members, new and old, to man our stand. Can you help? Ring Sue or Stephen on the numbers below.

Letters to the Editor

We run a 'Letters to the Editor' section where your letters are published and responded to by the Editor. An ideal opportunity to present issues of relevance.

Office Holders

President: Sue Folks

Telephone: 0411748036

Secretary / Treasurer: Stephen Gaebler

Telephone: 9335 3691; 0417941764

Address:

Boat Owners' Association (BOAT)

PO Box 325

SOUTH FREMANTLE WA 6162

email:

stepheng@wt.com.au