

Tuesday, 31 March 2020

4:47pm AEDT

UPDATE TO MEMBERS ON COVID-19 – STAY SAFE

COVID-19 is an extraordinary and unprecedented challenge for our industry and our nation, and we all have a role to play in arresting its spread, protecting each other and following the most recent Health advice and government directives.

The Boating Industry Association (BIA) recognises the challenge and the need to support the Federal and State Governments directives and suggestions in slowing the rate of COVID-19 transmission. State Governments around the country are now issuing directions to stay at home unless absolutely necessary and a number of States have been explicit in stating that recreational boating is not an essential activity under the conditions of this pandemic.

The advice is clear, if you do not have to go boating for a defined essential reason, don't. Our understanding is that examples of essential reasons for boating are where a boat is used for transport for people who live in residences with boat access only, people who work on boats and people whose boat is currently their principle place of residence.

The boating industry remains open for business.

A number of our members have businesses that cannot be conducted from home. Examples include boat manufacture, service and repair work, some retail and wholesale sales and distribution, and the management and maintenance of maritime infrastructure such as marinas. Travelling to these workplaces is currently permitted and all workplaces must adhere to the social distancing and hygiene requirements set out by the State and Federal Government directives.

The BIA will continue to lobby government at all levels that marinas, boatyards, workshops, accessory, component and parts suppliers and other service facilities must maintain operational capability. These businesses must remain open to provide essential services to vessel owners to ensure that vessels remain safe and afloat at their berths; that urgent repairs can be made to vessels to keep them safe and secure; that craft can be hauled out in emergencies such as risk of sinking; that people living aboard – and who may now be jobless – can continue to access facilities such as clean toilets, showers, electricity, water and provisions.

Boating is a way of life for many people but now is the time to recognise our role as community leaders and support the government directives to contain this disease. With Easter school holidays rapidly approaching, our boating community would normally be thinking of getting out on the water in a boat or personal watercraft with family and friends. In the face of this disease and to comply with government directives we must all holiday at home this year to help safeguard the nation. Recreational boating will have to wait. The safety and wellbeing of our members, their families and friends, and customers, who are critical to our recovery, is our absolute priority.

The recent announcement by the Federal and State Governments regarding cashflow support through PAYG relief, rent relief and the 'Job Keeper' allowance amongst others are gratefully acknowledged. This will help cushion the blow but it will remain a very difficult year for our industry.

We are working hard to advise governments at all levels to protect the maintenance of essential services to the boating community and to include boating in the recovery stages as soon as health guidelines permit and ensure decision makers are aware of the benefits of getting out on the water in a boat as a valuable way to help people recover. We have a clearly defined plan to achieve this and in the face of our current restrictions we will be focusing on getting people to look forward and aspiring to boating in the lead up to Spring and Summer this year.

Our thoughts are with you all and the BIA is continuing to work tirelessly on your behalf. Please stay healthy and safe.

Darren Vaux
President

State Governments are now releasing directions that capture boating. An example of yesterday's NSW State Government Gazette re restrictions is at

https://gazette.legislation.nsw.gov.au/so/download.w3p?id=Gazette_2020_2020-65.pdf

An example of the recent Victorian Government direction:

<https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety/newsroom/boating-covid-message>

Marine Safety Queensland issued a direction regarding recreational boating last night:

https://www.vision6.com.au/v/63604/1029904/email.html?k=fmVL8FR8OcAUtQ_xES0RpIW02pWkZdsLui8EkDqIERY

More such directions are expected.