



Dear Clubs

Rowing ACT places paramount importance on safety in its administration. We need no more of a reminder than this year being the 50th anniversary of the running of the Col Panton, following his tragic death and that of his son whilst training for the first rowing 'marathon' which had been planned for 1964.

There are a wide range of safety measures and requirements already in place for the sport of rowing in the ACT. The Board is also considering what additional measures need to be put in place ahead of the regatta season which will result in some further changes in the By-Laws. As a part of this review, the Board will engage Clubs to develop measures to mitigate further risks. Rowing ACT will be issuing a strategic overview document aimed at allowing Member Clubs to more easily navigate those measures and alerting you to new initiatives.

You will know that Rowing ACT has asked each Club to ensure that rowers participating in events, particularly novices, have the necessary skills to do so. We will continue to include that warning for events we run but please note that the Board considers minimum competence to require the capability to:

- row the length of the course in training at least once;
- back boats out of the reeds alongside the course; and
- hold the boat at the start line in cross winds.

The set-up of boats is an essential component of safe racing. Accordingly, we intend shortly to promulgate a list of safety checks to be conducted on boats racing in RACT regattas. Clubs will then be given time to check their boats and will be asked to provide a written assurance of compliance. Thereafter, RACT will be conducting spot checks on boats at regattas to detect boat-safety issues.

As we increase the amenity of Weston Park, including having pontoons permanently placed there, we will work with you to consider how safety at regatta events might be improved.

Rowing ACT would like to remind Clubs that the By-Laws set out a number of policies which are binding to Member Clubs – see Section X. One key policy is Rowing Australia's [On-Water Safety Guidelines](#). These guidelines were developed in concert with state associations and Rowing ACT had significant input. The guidelines note that rowing is a safe and enjoyable

sport but warns of the risks inherent to any activity conducted on, or within the vicinity, of water – in the ACT's case the very cold conditions increase the risks. I would ask that each Member Club place these guidelines on its agenda for Committee/Board discussion before the start of the regatta season. I will also be writing separately to each Member Club later in the year seeking confirmation that:

- the Guidelines have been reviewed by the Committee/Board;
- measures are in place to check the competence of rowers in entering events;
- a safety officer has been appointed and asking for the name of that officer; and
- safety audits are being undertaken.

The On-Water Safety Guidelines are just that – guidelines – so that their implementation will vary from state to state, and possibly from club to club in each state, depending on local conditions and the nature of state associations. Development of local documentation does not need to be onerous and can rely, to a substantial degree, on state and national safety material. However, the guidelines do focus on the need for each Club to put in place measures and sets out the broad role of a safety officer which includes the following.

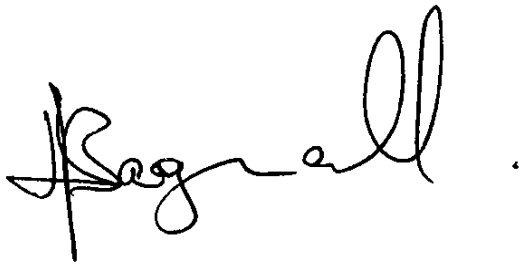
- Knowing what constitutes an incident (or 'near incident') and how to report them. In the case of the ACT, the incidents must be [reported](#) to Rowing ACT which will review the overall implications and follow-up with Clubs and local authorities as necessary. The RACT Board reviews every safety incident report.
- Keeping club members informed of incidents by ensuring a current list of incidents (no names), together with action points, are prominently displayed to promote member awareness.
- Advising the Club Committee/Board on the results of the data reviewed at regular intervals to determine strategies to prevent or reduce the likelihood of a reoccurrence.

The Guidelines ask each club to develop and display its safety code. Included in the display for ACT Clubs should be the [Lake Burley Griffin Traffic Guide](#) and the [Lake Tuggeranong](#) guide.

One important element of the On-water safety guidelines is ensuring that Clubs audit their safety measures. That is, not simply developing a plan but ensuring implementation. The On-Water Safety Guidelines include a useful audit checklist covering emergency communication; hazards; safety equipment and safe equipment; risk management; safe operations; weather conditions and hypothermia; and off-site rowing.

The Vision of RACT developed at the Strategic Planning Day held earlier this year is that “Rowing in the ACT will be seen as a growing, safe, welcoming and unified organisation and will be recognised by the public as a quality sport, and an attractive destination for interstate competitors.” We therefore need to continue to work together to refine our approach to risk management.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bagnall', followed by a period. The signature is fluid and cursive.

David Bagnall
President
Rowing ACT

1 September 2015