

Confidential Safety Information Reporting Scheme

Boating Service Officers on Sydney Harbour

A report was made about the scarcity of Boating Service Officers on Sydney Harbour. The reporter stated that he had on numerous occasions encountered fishing vessels drifting or anchored in ferry channels, necessitating extreme caution on the part of the ferry masters in navigating around smaller craft. His main concern was that NSW Maritime did not seem to have the capacity to patrol the harbour effectively due to the lack of Boating Service Officers. He was also concerned about the lack of feedback from reports which were submitted to NSW Maritime which resulted in masters not knowing what the results or actions were.

CSIRS Requirement

As part of the OTSI investigation, a Safety Valve Notification (SVN) was issued to NSW Maritime notifying the above concerns and seeking advice about the results of its findings and any proposed remedial safety actions.

Investigation outcome

NSW Maritime agreed with the reporter that the outcome of the reports may not always have been communicated back to the originator, even though it claimed the reports were always followed up. NSW Maritime undertook that in future it would provide feedback to all persons who report incidents.

In relation to the scarcity of Boating Service Officers, NSW Maritime stated that it was unable to provide coverage for the harbour 24 hours every day, but that patrols were programmed to provide the most effective coverage with available resources. For instance additional patrols were programmed for the peak periods of December and January every Friday and Saturday night. Additionally, when alerted by industry or private operators, specific purpose patrols were conducted throughout the year in pursuit of those not operating in accordance with regulations.

OTSI Action

A copy of this summary report has been passed to the Transport Safety Regulation division of the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator. OTSI has also advised the reporter of the response and actions provided by the NSW Maritime. This report and the associated response will be retained by the Office of Transport Safety Investigation for future safety trend analysis.