

11. Special activities

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Waterskiing and operating personal watercraft are popular activities in South Australia's waterways. Both involve high speed, which is appealing but also comes with risks. In this chapter you'll find information on licensing and registration, as well as the safety rules that apply to both activities, and steps you can take so you can enjoy your time on the water without attracting complaints from other water users or local residents.

You should always check the water for hazards before undertaking any high-speed activities.

Personal watercraft

Personal watercraft (PWC) are often known by their brand names, including Jet Ski®, WaveRunner®, Sea-Doo®, and WaveJammer®.

A PWC has four key characteristics. It:

- has a fully enclosed hull
- is propelled by a motor
- is designed not to retain water if capsized
- is operated by a person who sits astride, or stands or kneels on it.

PWC operate under the same general rules as other power-driven vessels. The driver must have a boat operator's licence and it's illegal to let an unlicensed person drive a PWC, unless in an area covered by a DTEI hire and drive business licence ([refer chapter 1, Licensing & registration, Hire and drive business licensing](#)).

Note: special permit holders cannot operate a PWC.

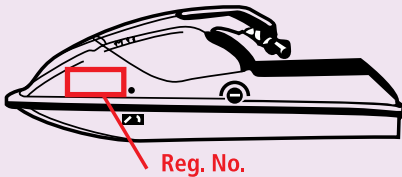
The manoeuvrability of PWC is a large part of their appeal, but it also makes them dangerous in inexperienced hands. A number of PWC clubs and organisations exist around the state that may be able to help with training; some of these groups also run recreational events where you can get more experience. As well, there is a designated PWC-only area at Goolwa, and several PWC Hire Drive businesses throughout the state where you can try out using a PWC and decide if it's for you.

Noise is a common complaint about PWC. Constant or excessive noise when PWC congregate in one area can be very irritating for local residents and others visiting an area. You should respect other people's right to peace and quiet—and that of the wildlife—and be considerate. To avoid or reduce the chance of complaints being made, it's recommended

that you avoid operating PWC when the winds are blowing onshore towards populated areas, including campsites.

Registration

As with other motorised vessels, PWC must be registered for use in South Australia. The following guidelines apply to affixing your registration number, which takes precedence over decorative or customised decals and striping.



Your registration number must be:

- fixed on both sides of the PWC, in a contrasting colour to the background
- a minimum of 150 mm high if the PWC is 3 m or more in length; numbers of a minimum 100 mm are acceptable if the vessel is less than 3 m
- affixed to the hull above the waterline and clearly legible from 50 m in fine, clear conditions (refer diagram).

Operating rules

Like operators of other power-driven vessels, PWC operators are required to:

- comply with give way rules, including giving way to sailing vessels, larger vessels operating in confined channels and other vessels crossing from your starboard side
- comply with all speed limits, including those that apply to non-PWC (vessels are required to travel at a safe speed at all times)
- operate in a considerate manner, with due care for the safety of others
- ride on the starboard (right) side of a river or channel in the direction of travel

- comply with waterskiing rules when towing a person (refer **Waterskiing, this chapter**)
- operate with due care and consideration for others on the water; your spray will annoy other water users if it hits them. Offences such as reckless operation, or causing nuisance, carrying serious penalties, apply for anti-social behaviour.

There are other rules that are specific to PWC. Operators must:

- have a code of practice (Ride Smart) sticker displayed on the PWC that is clearly visible and legible from the PWC's steering position
- check for local rules including operating restrictions, which are often displayed on signage at boat ramps and on beaches
- operate only until sunset or 8 pm (whichever is the earlier) on any day*
- only operate after 9 am on Sundays, or after 8 am on other days*
- comply with a 4 knot speed limit within 200 m of the metropolitan shoreline (edge of water) between the Outer Harbour southern breakwater and the southern end of Sellicks Beach and the backwaters of the River Murray, unless zoned otherwise
- comply with 4 knot speed limits or exclusion zones that apply to a number of other areas across the state, as well as all other general boating speed limits
- ensure that they and any passengers are wearing an approved PFD Type 2 or Type 3 (a PFD Type 1 can restrict movement and can cause injury in high-speed activities, and as such is unsuitable for use on a PWC)
- not operate in unprotected waters (beyond two nautical miles seaward from the coast of the mainland and Kangaroo Island, or from the shores of Lakes Albert or Alexandrina), without approval from the CEO of DTEI.

* A PWC engaged in towing another person (that is, waterskiing and such) on the River Murray can

operate between sunrise and sunset any day, provided all waterskiing rules are complied with.

There is no legal requirement to carry safety equipment on your PWC, except that each person on board must wear an approved and properly-fitted PFD Type 2 or Type 3 at all times. However, it's recommended that you carry easily transportable equipment, including flares, if you're operating in semi-protected waters (inshore of a line 2 nautical miles seaward of the low water mark of the coast of the mainland or Kangaroo Island, or of the banks of Lakes Alexandrina and Albert).

Safe operation

It's most important to keep a good lookout at all times, for other vessels, people, and hazards in the water.

- Wherever you operate, swimmers may be hidden from view by waves and swell, so keep well away from, or slow right down in, areas where swimmers are likely to be. A 4 knot speed limit applies within 50 m of swimmers or other people in the water.
- Don't cut blind corners.
- Slow down or stop if your vision is affected by sun or spray.
- Keep clear of anchored and moored vessels.

For your own safety, always wear an approved PFD Type 2 or Type 3, always attach the ignition cut-out safety line and consider suitable footwear, goggles and gloves.

PWC are increasingly being used for waterskiing. The same rules apply to PWC operators as all powerboat operators, including the requirement to carry an observer who must face the skier at all times. To comply, the PWC must have seating for at least two people and ideally three, in case the skier is injured. It's also advisable to use a PWC that is designed for towing.

Maintenance

This section outlines the minimum maintenance checks you should make before and immediately after using your PWC (refer to your user manual for more detail).

It's crucial that you have the device professionally treated to protect against engine rust and corrosion if it's going to be left unused for a long time, for example during winter. You should also follow the manufacturer's recommended servicing and maintenance requirements.

The following checks are advisable before operating your PWC.

- Ensure your fuel and oil tanks are topped up with fuel and oil that meet manufacturer's recommendations.
- Check and drain water trap under front hood (if fitted).
- Check the battery fluid and charge levels.
- Ensure that water intake and 'tell-tale' (this is the stream of water coming off the engine during running that tells you all is running smoothly) are not restricted by weeds or debris.
- Check all equipment, including safety equipment.
- Check starting procedure:
 - turn fuel to the 'on' position
 - pull the choke all the way out
 - insert the lanyard to start/stop assembly
 - press the green starter button for 20 seconds. If the engine does not start, wait for 10 seconds and try again
 - when the engine fires up, push the choke all the way in and let it run for 30 seconds, revving the engine gently to pull fuel through the system; then switch the engine off.
- Check steering and throttle are working as they should, while the engine is on.
- Check the ignition cut-out safety line works.
- Ensure all equipment is on board.
- Check that the cover and seats are in place.

The following after-use checks are the minimum required to maintain your PWC in good operating condition.

- Once the PWC is out of the water, start and run the engine to remove excess water from the exhaust.
- Remove bungs and drain the hull.
- Hose down the PWC and trailer to minimise the risk of rust or corrosion.
- Remove all sand and salt build-up, paying particular attention to the inside of the jet unit.
- Hose out the engine bay (being careful not to spray water up the air box intake).
- Flush out the engine cooling system with fresh water:
 - remove seats
 - hook water up to the engine using the flushing fitting
 - remove the safety cap and hook-up flusher fitting
 - start the engine and let it run until it idles smoothly
 - turn on the water supply and gently rev the engine to help circulate the water through the exhaust system (don't turn the water on without first starting the engine, otherwise it will quickly fill up with water)
 - continue to flush the engine for 3-5 minutes (water will run out of the jet pump exhaust and 'tell tale')
 - turn off the water supply, then rev the engine gently to remove water from the exhaust
 - shut down the engine.
- Spray engine with a suitable de-watering (DWF) spray to prevent corrosion.
- Leave seats and storage bucket out to let the engine dry.
- Always store undercover or buy a suitable cover.
- When not in use, keep the engine bay cover open for ventilation.

Hiring a PWC

You need a boat operator's licence to be able to hire a PWC for use in South Australia, unless you operate the PWC in waters defined under a Small Vessel Hire Business Licence ([refer chapter 1 Licensing and registration, Hire and drive requirements](#)) from DTEI. Under such a business licence PWC can be hired to unlicensed people over the age of 16 years, to be used only in waters defined under the licence. There is no other situation in which people who do not have a boat operator's licence are able to drive a PWC.

The following conditions apply to use of a hire and drive PWC.

- The licensee must provide adequate instruction in operating the vessel, including applicable laws.
- The hirer must sign a statement that they've received such instruction.
- A PWC operated by an unlicensed person must not carry another person.
- As with other PWC, hire PWC may only be operated until sunset or 8 pm (whichever is the earlier) on any day, and may not operate before 9 am on Sundays or before 8 am on other days.*
- All hire PWC must carry a Ride Smart sticker, and the licensee must draw the hirer's attention to its list of requirements.
- Unlicensed operators must wear a brightly coloured bib, clearly visible at all times.

* A PWC engaged in towing another person (such as waterskiing etc) on the River Murray can operate between sunrise and sunset any day, provided all waterskiing rules are complied with.

Note: an unlicensed operator must not tow persons under any circumstances.

Waterskiing

Waterskiing is a popular and exciting sport; however, the combination of relatively narrow waterways, crowds of boats at busy times, and the relatively high speeds involved, create some risks.

To help reduce the chance of an accident, the following special rules apply to waterskiing in addition to the general boating rules.

- Waterskiing is not allowed between sunset and sunrise, except with written permission from DTEI.
- No more than three waterskiers, or one device with no more than three people on it, may be towed at one time, except with written permission from DTEI.

Note: a special permit holder cannot operate a vessel towing a waterskier or any other person.

- Every person being towed must wear an approved PFD Type 2 or Type 3.
- Any vessel (including a PWC) being used to tow a person must carry an observer as well as the licensed operator. In general, both the operator and observer must be aged at least 16 years (a special permit holder may act as the observer only if the boat operator is aged at least 18).
- The observer must watch the skier at all times and give the operator directions to keep the skier safe.
- Boat operators, observers and waterskiers must not have a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .05 or above.
- On leaving a take-off/landing area, the operator should keep to the waterway's starboard side and keep well clear of any vessel approaching.

- All turns on the River Murray must be in an anti-clockwise (left-hand) direction. This helps you keep to the starboard side in the direction of travel at all times.
- On returning to a take-off/landing area, the operator should approach from the starboard side and clear the area as quickly as possible.
- Ski ropes, devices or skis trailing from a boat must be removed from the water and booms brought on board before returning to a take-off area.
- Dropped skis, ski ropes etc must not be left in the water where they can be a hazard to other traffic.
- For their own safety, skiers must be dropped off in the water to glide towards the riverbank or shore, rather than skiing into the launching area.
- Vessels must not approach within 100 m directly behind a person who is being towed.

Hand signals

Boat operators, observers and waterskiers should learn the hand signals in the following diagram for clear communication between boat and skier.

A skier falling into the water must hold an arm or ski in the air to show the observer where they are and that they are not hurt, and to draw attention of their presence in the water to other boat operators.

Chapter 11. Self-check questions

1—Speed up

(Thumbs up)



2—Slow down

(Thumbs down)



3—Turn

(Circling motion above head followed by pointing in the direction of the turn)



4—Back to shore

(Pat top of head)



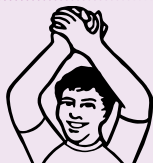
5—Cut motor

(Slashing hand across throat)



6—OK after all

(Hands clasped over the head)



7—Stop

(Hands raised with fingers outstretched)



8—All OK

(An 'O' made with the thumb and index finger)



1) What is the speed limit when operating a PWC within 200 m of the metropolitan shoreline, and in backwaters of the River Murray?

- A. 5 knots.
- B. 10 knots.
- C. 4 knots.

2) On which side of a river or channel must a person remain when operating a PWC?

- A. On any convenient side, except when waterskiing.
- B. To the starboard (right) side in the direction of travel—the same as all vessels on water.
- C. To the port (left) side in the direction of travel—so that other vessels can see you coming and get out of the way.

3) What information is displayed on the PWC Code of Conduct ('Ride Smart') sticker?

- A. The rules and regulations that apply specifically to PWC.
- B. Maximum speed and stoppage distance information, to allow for safer stunts and tricks.
- C. Emergency telephone numbers.
- D. All of the above.

4) In what direction must turns be made by a vessel engaged in waterskiing on the River Murray?

- A. To the right (clockwise).
- B. To the left (anti-clockwise).
- C. In any direction, as long as you signal where you're going.

5) When is an observer required on board a vessel that is towing a skier or skiers?

- A. When the vessel is towing children.
- B. At all times and on all vessels towing a person or persons—whether on skis, a kneeboard/wakeboard, or a device.
- C. Only in or on vessels that have a seat for an observer.