Time restrictions
Regardless of whether navigation lights are fitted, a PWC may only operate during daylight hours between 8am and 8pm from Monday to Saturday and from 9am to 8pm on Sundays.

If engaged in water skiing on the River Murray PWC may operate between sunrise and sunset and the operator must obey the rules that apply to water skiing.

Whales often visit Encounter Bay, Victor Harbor during their migration. The operation of PWC is prohibited during the period between 1 May and 30 September (inclusive) in any year at Victor Harbor in a line south of Chiton Rocks and east of Kings Head.

Safety equipment
When riding a PWC both the operator and passengers must wear a correctly fitted Personal Flotation Device (PFD), commonly referred to as a lifejacket, Type 2 or Type 3.

Note: A PFD Type 1 must not be worn by anyone on a PWC.

Operating in a river or channel
All vessels (including PWC) when operating in a river or channel must keep as far as practical to the starboard (right hand) side of the river or channel in the direction of travel. PWC should cross a river or channel at the shortest possible distance, only when safe to do so and not impede the passage of any other vessel.

Ride smart sticker
The owner of a PWC must ensure that the PWC is not operated by any person unless the craft has a PWC Ride Smart sticker (approved by the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure) firmly fixed to it that is clearly visible and readable from the steering position at all times and is not defaced, obliterated or concealed.

Reporting incidents
If you observe or experience careless or dangerous operation of a vessel or other offence you can report the matter to the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, Marine Operations and Response section on (08) 8260 0220 or email the Boating Safety Unit at dpti.recreationalboatingunit@sa.gov.au

Further information
The South Australian Recreational Boating Safety Handbook has more detailed information regarding boating safety, safe operation and the collision regulations or check the web site at sa.gov.au/boatingmarine

To obtain a free copy of the handbook contact the Customer Service Centre on 13 10 84 or the Boating Safety Unit on 1300 183 046

The Harbors and Navigation Act 1993 and the Harbors and Navigation Regulations 2009 provides for the safe operation of all vessels operating in South Australian waters.

Using a personal watercraft safely and legally
Be safe. Ride smart.
Personal watercraft operation

Personal watercraft (PWc) are often known by their brand names, including Jet Ski, WaveRunner, Sea-Doo, WaveJammer and others, and they are sometimes referred to as motor bikes on water.

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.

A PWc is powerful, fast and able to change course quickly, which make it an exciting choice of craft for enjoying and experiencing our state’s waterways.

PWc operators are required to observe the same boating rules as other powered vessels, but they are also subject to some specific rules.

Penalties apply for failure to obey the rules.

PWc operators are sometimes subject to complaints about noise and dangerous behaviour when sharing popular waterways.

This brochure has been developed to assist people who do not currently own or operate a PWc to understand what rules apply to their operation.

Registration and licensing

The operator of a PWc must have a boat operator’s licence.

As with other powered vessels, a PWc must be registered for use in South Australia.

The registration number must be:

• painted or displayed on both sides of the PWc in a contrasting colour to the background
• a minimum of 150mm high if the PWc is three metres or more in length (numbers of a minimum 100mm high are acceptable if the vessel is less than 3 metres in length)

• displayed on the hull above the waterline and clearly readable from 50 metres in fine, clear conditions while the vessel is underway.

The registration label should be fixed to the PWc near the steering position, clearly visible and readable in daylight.

Speed restrictions

Speed restrictions applicable to all vessels including PWc include:

• 4 knots within 50 metres of
  • a person in the water
  • a vessel or buoy displaying a blue and white flag indicating that there is a diver below
  • a person in or on a kayak, surfboard, sailboard or similar small unpowered recreational vessel
  • all vessels within marinas and other restricted areas
• 4 knots within 30 metres of any other vessel (whether stationary or underway) that may be adversely affected by their wash
• 4 knots within 100 metres of a ferry crossing
• 4 knots within or passing through a mooring area or boat haven
• 4 knots within 30 metres of a jetty or wharf, or a boat ramp
• 7 knots within specified areas, including sections of the Port Adelaide River.

Metropolitan foreshore

A 4 knot speed limit applies to all PWc operating within 200 metres of the metropolitan shoreline (edge of water) between the Outer Harbor southern breakwater and the southern end of Sellicks Beach, unless zoned otherwise.

River Murray

A 4 knot speed limit applies to all PWc operating in the backwaters of the River Murray, including creeks, lakes and lagoons connected to the River Murray upstream of the Wellington Ferry but excluding Lake Bonney at Barmera.

Other areas within South Australia

PWc are also restricted to a 4 knot speed in specified areas located at Beachport, Kangaroo Island, Meningie, Southend and Victor Harbor.

Safe speed

PWc are jet driven, do not have a propeller or conventional rudder and power needs to be applied to turn and control the craft.

Travelling at a safe speed means that the PWc operator can stop the PWc in time to avoid a sudden danger.

Alcohol and drugs

It’s an offence to operate a vessel (powered or unpowered) and to have a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.05 or more; or to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

A person does not have to be 0.05 or more to be charged with driving under the influence.

If engaged in water skiing the operator of the PWc, the observer and any person being towed must remain under 0.05 and all can be subject to random breath testing.

Careless operation

A person who operates a vessel without due care for the safety of any person or property is guilty of an offence. The maximum penalty is one year imprisonment.

For any other offence, the maximum penalty is $5,000.

Dangerous operation

A person who operates a vessel at a dangerous speed or in a dangerous manner is guilty of an offence with a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment.