

RED HEAD VILLAGES ASSOCIATION (Inc)



North Bendalong, Bendalong, Berringer, Cunjurong, Manyana

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28th February 2024

The Hon. Jo Haylen
Minister for Transport
NSW Government
Cc Ms Liza Butler, Member for South Coast

Dear Minister Haylen

Re: Personal Water Craft (PWC) safety risks in Bendalong and Manyana village area, Shoalhaven LGA

I am writing to you on behalf of the Red Head Villages Association Inc (RHVA) which represents the communities of Manyana, Bendalong, North Bendalong, Cunjurong Point and Berringer Lake in the Shoalhaven region of the NSW South Coast. Many members of our community have expressed strong concerns about the impact of Personal Water Craft (PWC), specifically jet skis, on the safety of our residents and visitors. This is particularly a concern when visitor numbers swell at holiday time especially during the January school holiday period.

Over the recent January holidays many concerns were heard by the RHVA about jet skis being operated in a dangerous manner close to shore. Swimmers, snorkellers, kayakers and paddle boarders have all been affected by jet skis being driven dangerously close to them. Many of these people affected are children. Also jet skis have been observed travelling too close to whales and dolphins. In all of these cases the jet skis have been in direct contravention of the NSW maritime safety regulations.

Following are anecdotal reports from residents who have experienced 'close-calls' with jet skis near our local beaches during the recent holiday period:

- A kayaker on Berringer Lake being knocked into the water by a high-speed jet ski turning at speed too close
- On 4 occasions in the weeks around Christmas/New Year a swimming group had just finished swimming from Dee Beach to Washerwoman's beach at Bendalong. Moments later jet skis travelled at high speed along that same path about 50 meters from the beach. That speed means the operators could not have seen or avoided anyone. This contact would have been deadly
- A stand-up paddle boarder was missed by 10 meters and was very scared and others have been knocked off their board
- We have even had jet skis at Monument beach powering between surfers and the shore and then accelerating to jump waves not 10 meters from surfers. Again, fatal with a small mistake

The RHVA recognises the rights of people to enjoy PWCs, but in areas far from swimmers and other watercraft. There is plenty of ocean offshore for them to enjoy. Extracts from the Transport for New South Wales Personal Watercraft Handbook state:

“When driving a PWC (including when towing a person or people) you must keep the vessel, any towing equipment and anyone being towed, a minimum distance of:

- **60 metres** from people in the water or if that is not practicable, a safe distance and speed

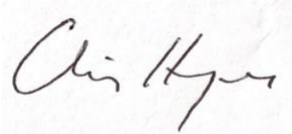
Our experience is that in too many situations jet skis along our beaches have been driven significantly closer than 60 metres from people in the water and at a high speed.

Following are some suggestions from our members for improvements to signage at key PWC beach access locations at our local beaches, and improvements in enforcement of maritime regulations:

- Installation of appropriate signage at local boat ramps to explain the safety rules regarding distance required from swimmers and snorkellers, watercraft, sea life and swimming-beaches.
- A mandatory speed limit of 4-knots/hr within a specified distance from the shore at Washerwomans, Boat Harbour, Flat Rock, Dee, Inyadda and Manyana beaches
- Washerwomans, Dee and Flat Rock beaches are declared official “Swimming Beaches” that would require PWC to maintain 200 metres from the beach if travelling at speeds greater than 4 knots

This matter of PWC safety has become urgent for us. The RHVA welcomes an opportunity at your earliest opportunity to meet with a representative from your department to discuss PWC safety improvement measures in our villages.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and reads "Chris Hayes".

Chris Hayes
President
RHVA Inc