

Canoeing and Kayaking in the Hawkesbury River and Cowan Creek

The Hawkesbury River and Cowan Creek are popular waterways for all types of activity. Popular pastimes include canoeing and kayaking, especially in Cowan Creek and Berowra Creek. Both of these waterways are surrounded by national parks and are, therefore, extremely popular with the boating public. At times, these areas attract large amounts of water traffic, during day and night.

An understanding of the safe boating rules that apply to canoes and kayaks will help paddlers enjoy their sport in safety and is aimed at keeping them aware of their obligations in sharing our waterways with other people.

Safety Equipment

Lifejackets are required to be worn when paddling more than 400 metres from the nearest shore. It is strongly recommended when enjoying our waterways that you wear an approved lifejacket (Type 1, 2, or 3) at all times. It is also recommended that it be made of bright colours so it can be easily seen by all others.

General Safety and Traffic Flow

Conflict between canoes and kayaks and larger vessels can happen. For example this can occur in the Cowan Creek area as there are many marinas and boat ramps being used by all types of vessels (eg. large motorcruisers, personal watercraft, ski boats) day and night. When using these areas, paddlers are to be alert and keep to the starboard (right-hand) side of the river in accordance with the water traffic rules that apply to all vessels.

It is also extremely important to be clearly visible while on the water. Suggested precautions to take:

- *dress brightly*
- *paddle in tight formation*
- *paddle during daylight hours or adhere to the light requirement in the Code of Conduct for Rowing and Sculling shells*
- *stay close to the shore line*
- *keep to the starboard side of the channel.*

Canoes and kayaks can be hard to see on the river, especially early in the morning or late in the afternoon, because of their low profile in the water. Sun reflection can make it even more difficult to see a small, low-to-the-water vessel like a canoe or kayak, hence, it is important that you stay on the right side of the river and as close to the shore as possible. Please avoid paddling in the middle sections of waterways as oncoming traffic from either direction may find you hard to avoid.

Safety Checks

Please conduct a safety check before heading out:

- ensure all safety and rescue equipment is in working order
- check the quality of all equipment
- check the weather forecast and consider the possibility of returning early if the weather turns foul
- advise friends and family on your time of departure and return and the proposed route taken
- find out as much information as possible about the area
- leave enough time for your return journey taking into account changing winds and currents.

Wash

Take care in these areas and be alert for wash created by vessels travelling through the area. It is best to meet the wash head on and avoid letting it hit you side-on. In extreme cases or dangerous situations, please report vessels creating large and dangerous wash to your local Boating Service Officer on 0427 976 161.

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