



Gippsland Lakes Boating Survey

Summary Report



September 2015

channel Entrance operators moorings away signage
Gippsland lakes boat lake
jetties problem Lake
Arm major end never think wash cause
low system holiday Point mark peak swimming Newlands happen risk
Jet huge licence eg see years kids knots safe
causing bad enforcement number times safety shore
access limits side power entrance time damage channels Zone
accessible going young caused knot way
signs arm wake areas policing hoon
education needs ramp especially know Boat near
rules facilities jet limit area live dangerous go make
biggest children use fish vessels place even one craft
particularly large like fishing better weather Bay need wakes beach
zones water police right speed quite moored high speeds
hire people often speed quite moored high speeds
seen behaviour back get mooring Better big Lakes
foreshore small launching periods

1. Summary

The Gippsland Lakes Boating Survey was undertaken to gather views on boating activity on the Lakes and to obtain user input on matters relating to boating infrastructure, safety, convenience and environmental impacts.

Open to everyone, the survey attracted 737 respondents, 95% of whom own a boat and have been out on the Lakes in the past 12 months.

The sample size, though not necessarily representative, gives a strong indication of the views of many boaters (and some others) about safety on the Lakes and the issues associated with environmental protection and boating infrastructure. The survey also indicates useful aspects of boat ownership, boating habits, destinations and preferences.

Just over 50% of respondents reside outside of the immediate Gippsland Lakes area. 35% live outside Gippsland. The high number of respondents from outside Gippsland confirms that Gippsland Lakes' boating stakeholders come from a much bigger geographic area than the immediate environs of the Lakes.

Respondents participated in a broad spread of boating activities over the past year. Approximately 50% have been fishing and over 25% have been kayaking or canoeing. Approximately 11% have entered Bass Strait for cruising.

Paynesville is by far the most popular starting point for boating, probably due to the moorings and launching facilities available there. Metung is the most popular destination. As well as popular destinations including Ocean Grange, Steamer Landing Sperm Whale Head, many boaters visited a wide variety of locations, including Bairnsdale, Loch Sport, Johnsonville, Marlay Point and Hollands Landing.

From a safety perspective, the most important issues raised by respondents included hoon boating behavior, boats approaching swimming areas, alcohol, poor driver skill and boats speeding in 5 knot zones. Enforcement of boating rules and education were seen as key responses to safety concerns.

Environmentally, boaters place a high value on water quality and habitat. They perceive that the biggest risks to the natural environment are illegal sewage pump-out, fuel spills, bilge water pump-out, litter thrown from boats and marine pests.

Overwhelmingly, respondents support increased boating activity on the Lakes, more funding for boating infrastructure and continued effort to educate boat users to respect the environment and the safety and comfort of other waterway users.

The survey feedback provides a valuable source of information to guide the preparation of the Gippsland Lakes Sustainable Boating Plan.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

Gippsland Ports is undertaking the preparation of a Sustainable Boating Plan for the Gippsland Lakes. The project was commissioned by the former Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee and complements the role of Gippsland Ports as the waterway manager under the Marine Safety Act.

Funded by the Gippsland Lakes Environment Fund, the scope of the project is limited to the Gippsland Lakes. Gippsland Ports is undertaking assessment of boating activities in all other waterways under its jurisdiction as part of its Safety and Environmental Management Plan, currently being prepared.

The Gippsland Lakes Sustainable Boating Plan aims to identify the actions necessary to support continued growth in boating activity on the Gippsland Lakes, while ensuring that the environmental, social and economic values of the Lakes are maintained and enhanced.

In order to canvass community and stakeholder views regarding boating on the Lakes, a survey was prepared and conducted during August 2015.

The survey was widely promoted via e-mail lists, public notices in local newspapers, social media and word of mouth. Boating related organisations also assisted in promoting the survey.

2.2 Purpose of the Survey

The survey serves three main aims:

1. To gather information on boating usage, boat types, visitation, destinations and overall boater activity on the Gippsland Lakes;
2. To gather stakeholder views and perceptions about boating on the Gippsland Lakes, including safety hazards, environmental hazards, boating facilities and aids, and the overall experience of boating on the Lakes;
3. To solicit opinions on the priorities for improving the boating experience, including important areas for improvements to the perceived safety and environmental impacts of boating.

The survey provides valuable information about stakeholders' priorities for the Gippsland Lakes and gives a clear indication of survey respondents' views on potential action to improve boating on the Lakes.

2.3 Survey Format and Administration

The survey was administered using the on-line Survey Monkey software. It consisted of 30 questions covering the following issues:

- Boating activities, frequency, destinations and purpose
- Boat ownership – type of boat, location and use of facilities
- Rating of boating facilities and services
- Broader values and perceptions of the Gippsland Lakes


- Safety risks and remedies
- Environmental risks and remedies
- Importance of boating facilities and management actions (enforcement, education, etc.)
- Respondent information (age, gender, place of residence).

Several “open field” questions were also included to allow respondents to include comments.

The survey was made available as a link via e-mail, the ‘Gippsland Ports’ and ‘Boating on the Gippsland Lakes’ Facebook pages, and the Gippsland Ports’ web site. The survey was promoted via the Facebook pages and web site, public notices in the Bairnsdale Advertiser, Lakes Post and Gippsland Times, media release (published in the local newspapers), the Boating Industry Association of Victoria e-newsletter, the ‘Around the Jetties’ newsletter and via various boating and related organisations and clubs.

Hard copies of the survey were made available to people without access to a computer.

The survey ran from 30 July to 28 August 2015.


Do the Gippsland Lakes float your boat?

The Gippsland Lakes are a boating paradise. More and more people are enjoying cruising, sailing and paddling on our beautiful and relatively safe waterways.

The Lakes also have environmental importance and host a range of activities that are potentially hazardous to the environment and public safety.

Gippsland Ports is undertaking a 'Sustainable Boating Plan', to support growth in boating activity, while ensuring that the environment of the Lakes is protected and the community can continue to enjoy safe, responsible boating into the future.

Input from the boating and non-boating community is an important part of the project. It will help us understand the patterns of boat use on the Lakes and your views on boating facilities, hazards, and improvements to boating.


What do you think about boating on the Gippsland Lakes?

Complete our survey about boating on the Gippsland Lakes.

You can enter the draw to win a Personal Flotation Device!*

To complete the survey, go to:

 www.gippslandports.vic.gov.au

 'Boating on the Gippsland Lakes'

 or contact Gippsland Ports on 5150 0500 to request a hard copy.

* Prize may not be exact model shown, but will keep you afloat!

MORE INFORMATION...

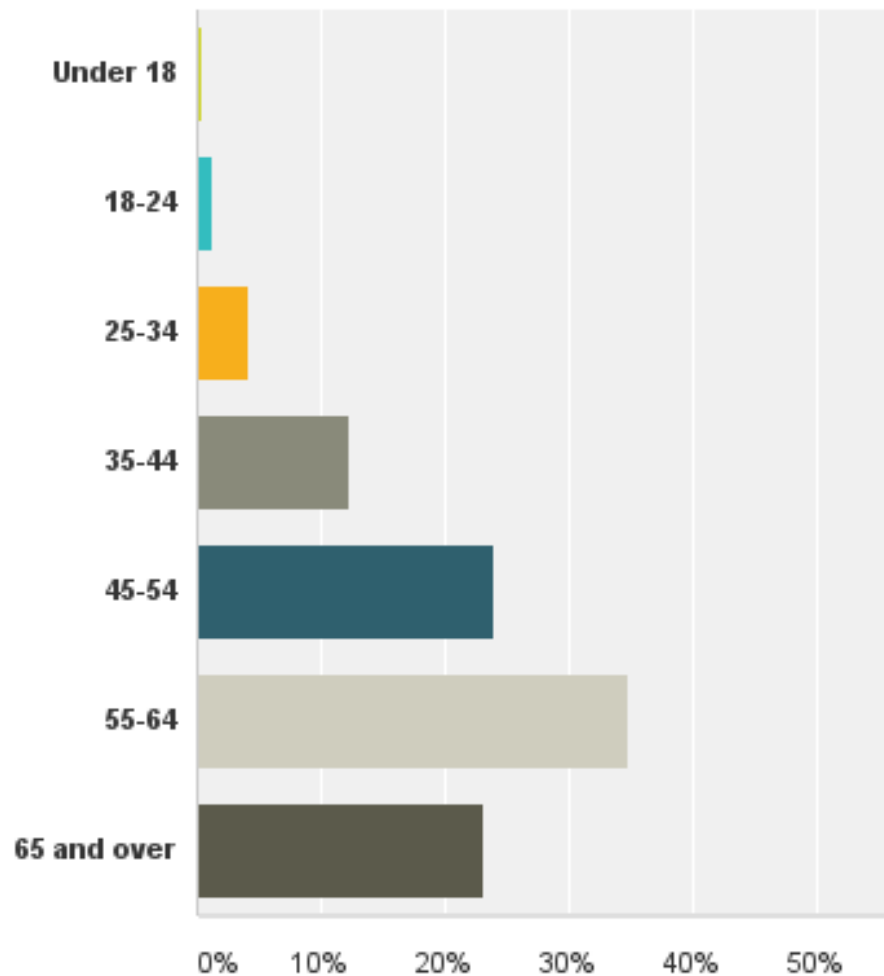
Contact:	Phone: 0417 099 911
Martin Richardson	E-mail: martinr@gippslandports.vic.gov.au

3. Survey Results

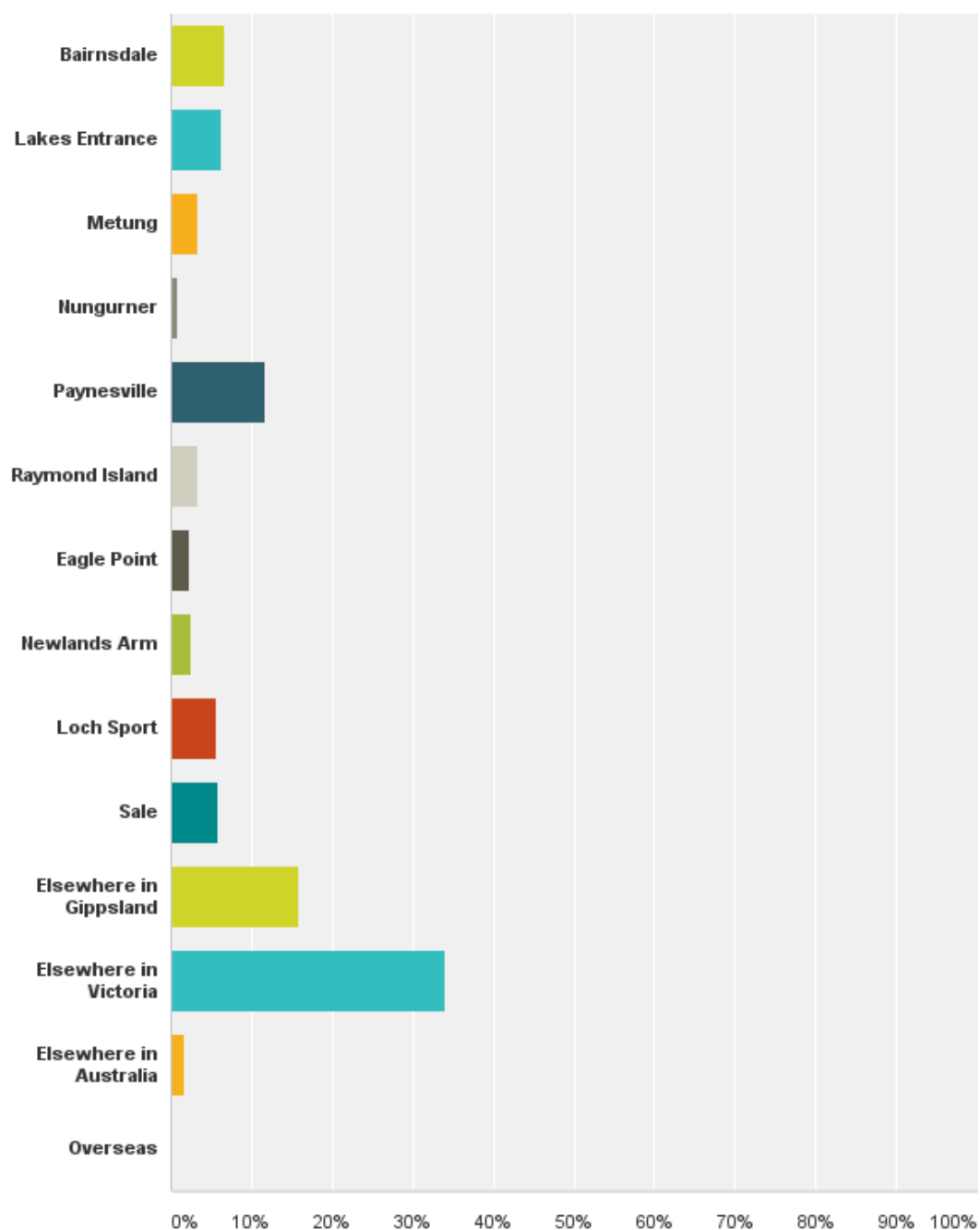
3.1 Respondents

A total of 737 people completed the survey. 87% completed all questions.

Approximately 81% of respondents were male. The majority of respondents were over 55 years old.



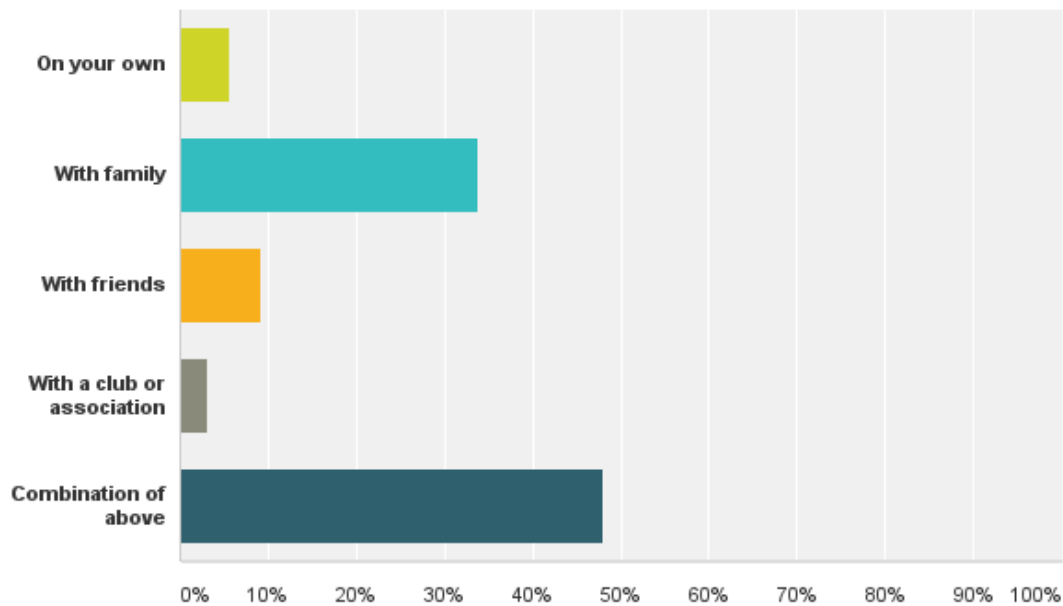
Approximately 50% of respondents reside outside of the immediate Gippsland Lakes area. 35% live outside Gippsland. The high number of respondents from outside the region confirms that Gippsland Lakes boating stakeholders come from a much bigger geographic area than the immediate environs of the Lakes.



3.2 Boating Activity

95% of respondents own a boat and 94% have been boating on the Lakes in the past 12 months. Over half of respondents go boating more than 10 times per year. Boating is primarily a family activity.

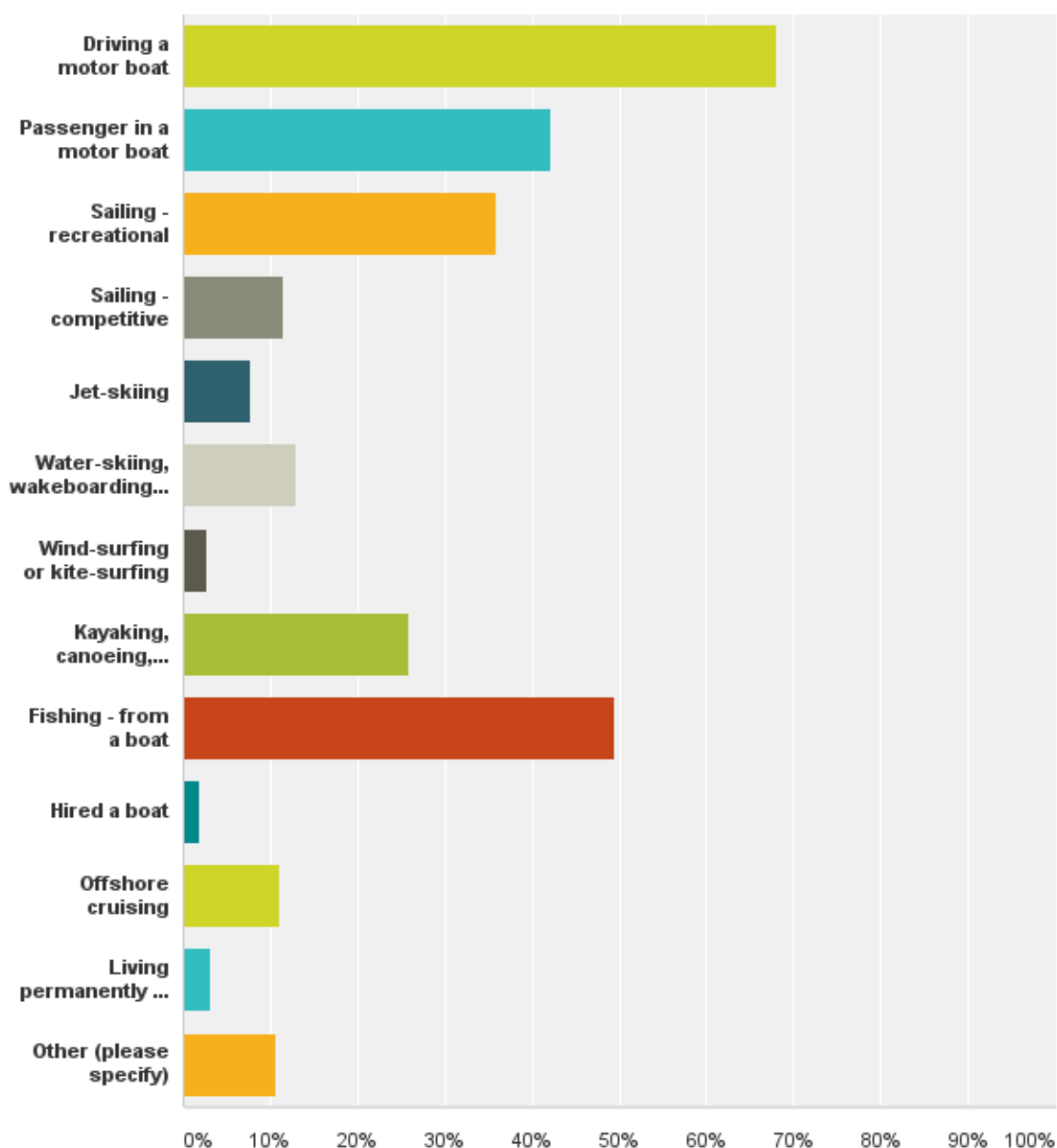
Do you normally go boating...



Only a very small proportion of respondents go boating alone. It is a very social activity.

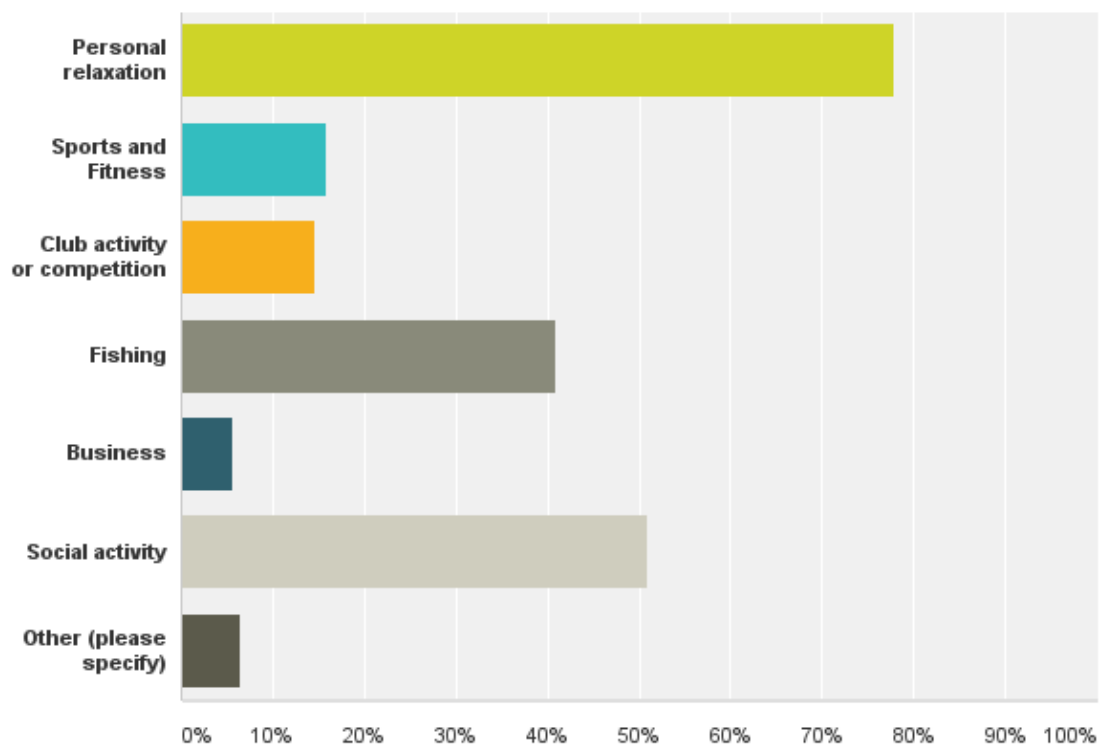


In the last 12 months, respondents undertook the following boating activities on the Gippsland Lakes:



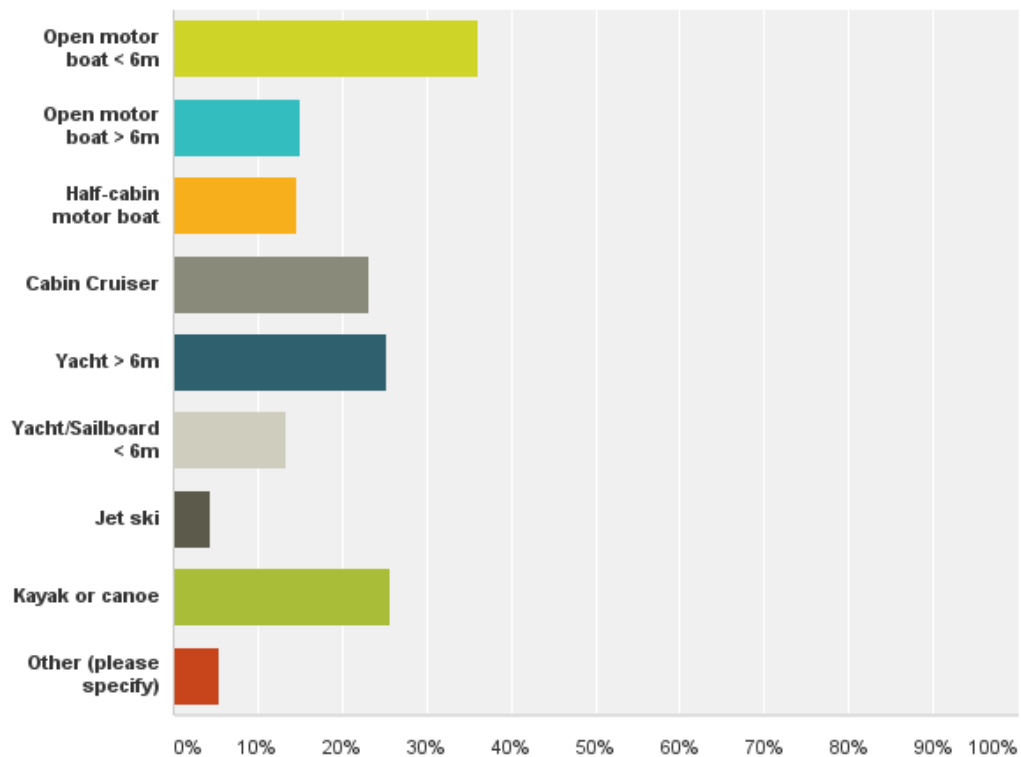
Respondents participated in a broad spread of boating activities in the previous year. Approximately 50% of respondents went fishing. Over 25% went kayaking or canoeing. Approximately 11% went cruising offshore. "Other" responses include hunting and duck shooting, staying on a boat overnight or longer, commercial fishing, power boat racing and commuting from home to work.

The main purposes of boating activity are: personal relaxation, social activity and fishing.



3.3 Boat Ownership

Most common boat is “Open motor boat – less than 6 metres”. Boat ownership is spread across all boat types. Many respondents own more than one water craft. 25% own a kayak or canoe.

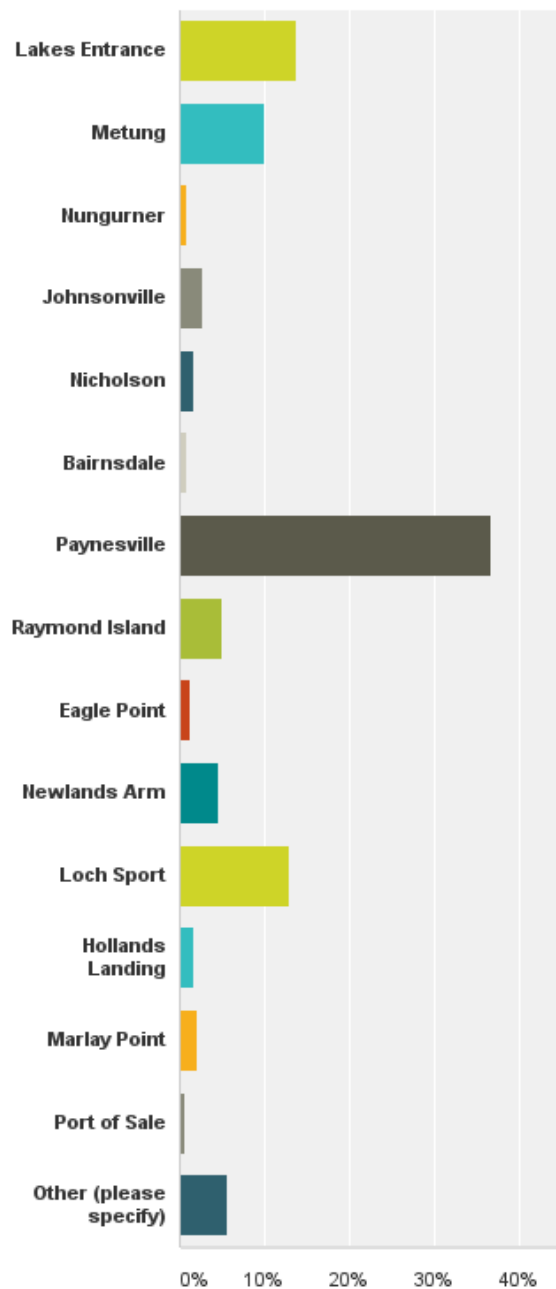


3.4 Locations and Destinations

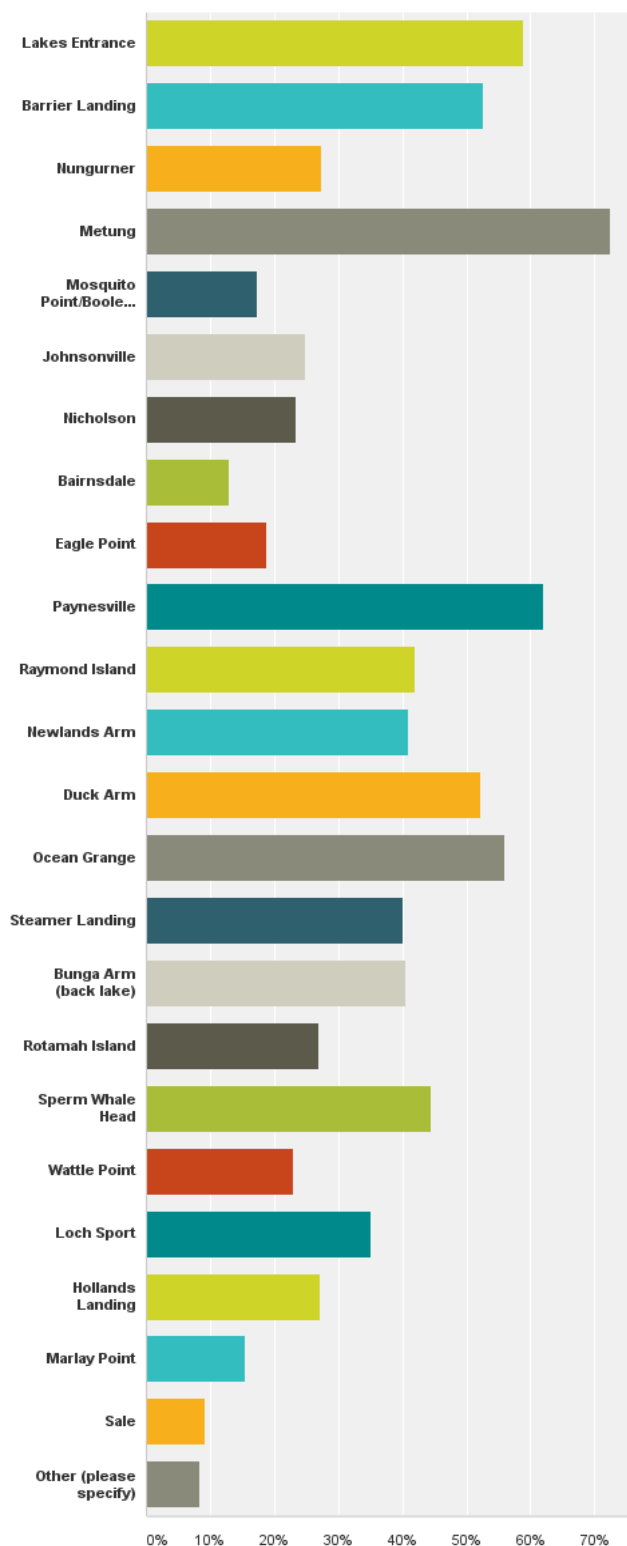
Paynesville is by far the most popular starting point for boating.

Many boaters visited a wide variety of destinations, including places such as Bairnsdale, Loch Sport, Johnsonville, Marlay Point and Hollands Landing.

Where do you commence your boating?

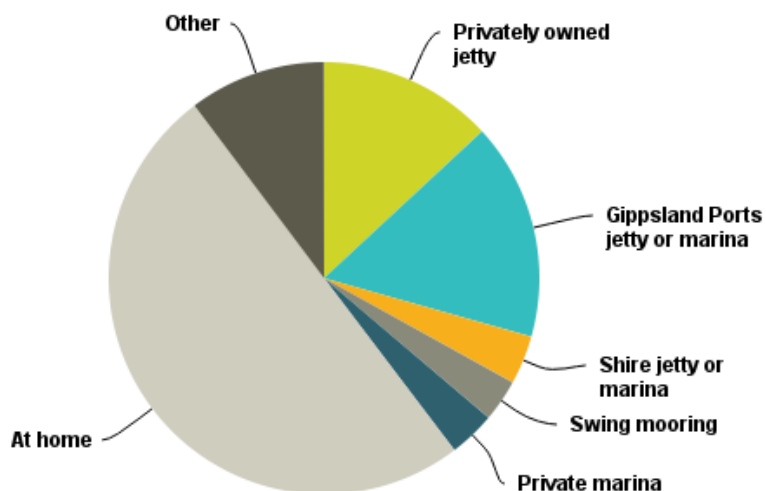


Metung is the most popular destination. Most popular destinations outside the main towns are: Ocean Grange, Barrier Landing, Duck Arm, Sperm Whale Head, Bunga Arm and Steamer Landing.

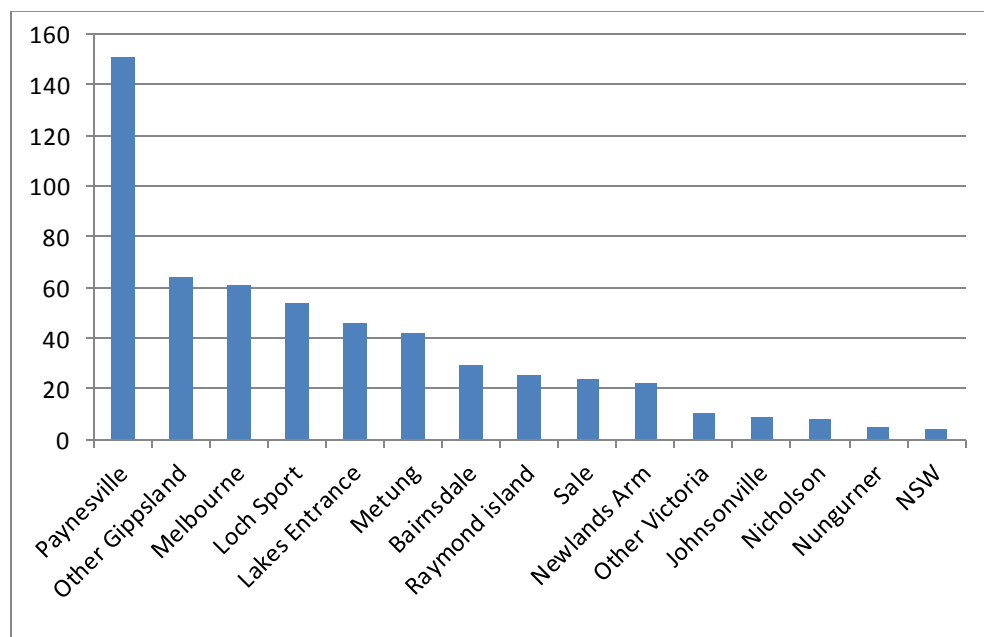


About 50% of respondents launch boats stored at home. Over 40% are permanently moored on a jetty or marina. These results indicate significant travel for boating and a high demand for boat launching facilities.

Where is your boat usually stored?



At what location is your boat usually stored?



3.5 Boating Habits

Respondents were asked a series of questions about boating habits. The table below compares the responses of all boat owners against owners of boats over 6 metres.

Do you...?	Never (%)		Sometimes (%)		Often (%)	
	All boats	Boats > 6m.	All boats	Boats > 6m.	All boats	Boats > 6m.
Have trouble finding a short-term berth	33.00	21.61	56.38	64.55	10.61	13.83
Beach your boat at locations around the Lakes	18.26	23.17	46.22	48.09	35.53	28.74
Use an anchor	13.61	13.47	61.10	68.19	25.28	18.34
Keep a trailerable boat in the water	61.25	58.80	28.04	28.90	10.70	12.29
Take a boat into Bass Strait	59.86	59.76	31.14	31.10	9.00	9.15
Use a chemical toilet	63.17	48.28%	21.89	28.53	14.95	23.20
Use sewage pump-out facilities	65.38	48.94	18.18	25.98	16.43	25.08
Use bilge pump-out facilities	81.30	73.84	13.70	19.87	5.00	6.29
Witness dangerous or inconsiderate behaviour	10.08	6.27	61.95	62.96	27.97	30.77

Most boaters:

- ***Have some trouble finding a short-term berth***
- ***Beach their boats***
- ***Use an anchor***
- ***Witness dangerous or inconsiderate behaviour by others.***

Trips into Bass Strait do not vary according to boat size (40% “sometimes” or “often” regardless of size), but people whose main purpose is fishing use the entrance more (60% “sometimes” or “often”).

Use of sewage and bilge pump-out is higher among larger boat owners, but relatively low overall.

3.6 Perceptions of Boating Facilities and Services

The survey included several questions (some asked in previous Gippsland Ports surveys), seeking users' views on the adequacy of infrastructure and services.

The detailed results are included in Appendix 2. Comparisons over time are unreliable due to different survey methods, but are also included in Appendix 2 for information.

Highest satisfaction (average score above 5 out of 10):

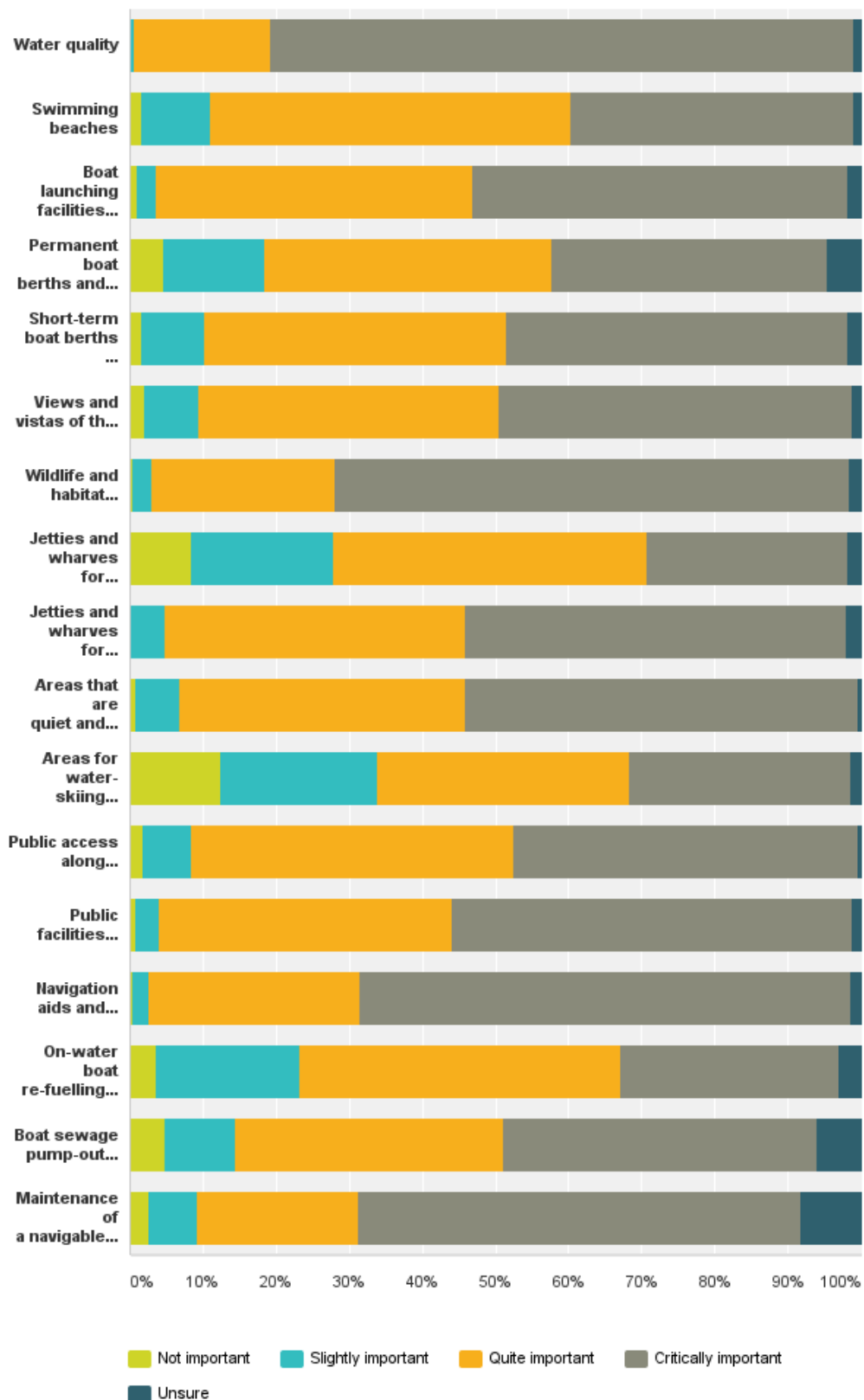
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- ***Extent to which navigation aids help with safe boating***
 - ***General condition of wharves and jetties***
 - ***Reliability, visibility, size and location of navigation aids***
 - ***Availability and accuracy of information about waterways and navigation aids***
-

Lowest satisfaction (average score below 5 out of 10):

-
- ***Availability of permanent berths and moorings***
 - ***Enforcement of berthing time restrictions***
 - ***Access to sewage pump-out***
 - ***Availability of short-term berths and moorings***
 - ***Access to on-water fueling***
 - ***Enforcement of waterway rules***
-



3.7 Importance of the Gippsland Lakes' values and facilities



Top 5 highest rated values:

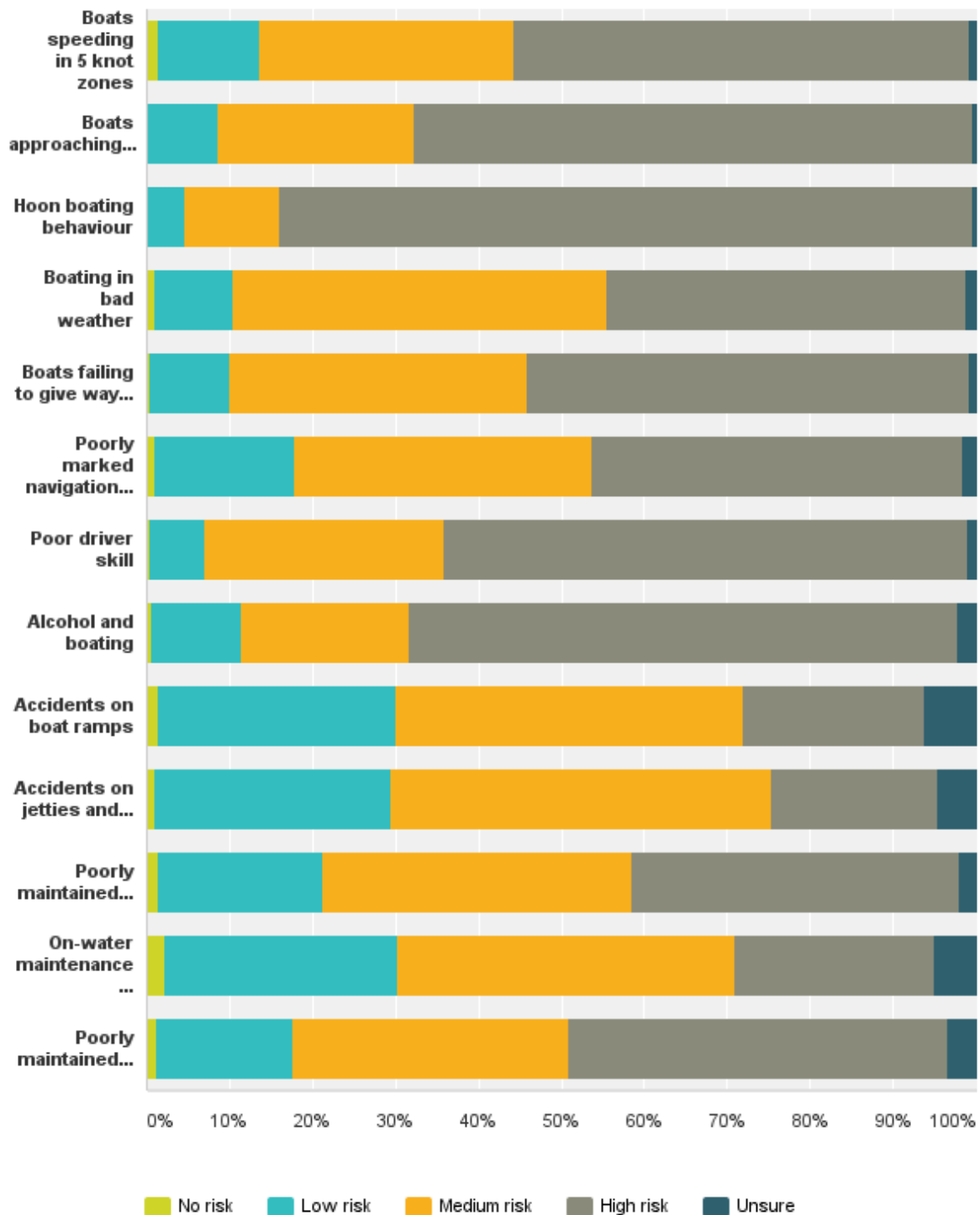
Value/attribute	Critically important (%)
Water quality	80
Wildlife and habitat protection	70
Navigation aids and channels	67
Maintenance of a navigable entrance to the ocean	61
Public facilities (parking, toilets, seating, etc.)	55

The natural values attributable to water quality, wildlife and habitat are most important to respondents. It follows that most boaters on the Gippsland lakes are both aware and respectful of these environmental values.

The lower rated values include: Areas for water skiing, jetties and wharves for fishing, on-water boat refueling, permanent berths and moorings. However, even for the lower rated values there were only a small proportion of respondents thinking they are “not important”, in each case outweighed by the “quite important” or “critically important” responses.



3.8 Safety Risks



Highest rated safety risks:

- 1. Hoon boating behaviour*
 - 2. Boats approaching swimming areas*
 - 3. Alcohol and boating*
 - 4. Poor driver skill*
 - 5. Boats speeding in 5 knot zones*
 - 6. Boats failing to give way correctly*
-

83% of respondents regard hoon boating behaviour as high risk.

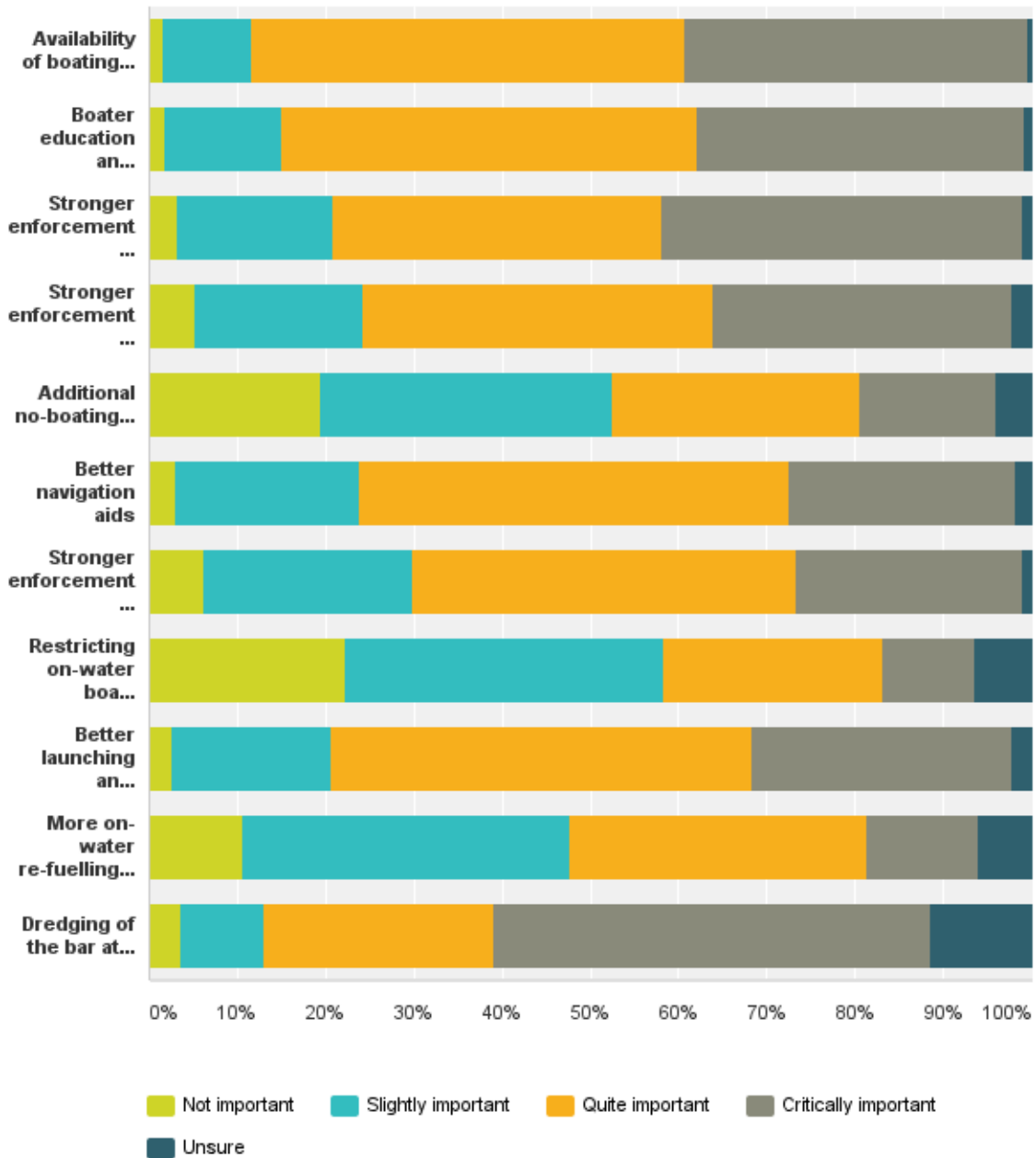
Lowest rated safety risks:

- 1. Accidents on boat ramps*
 - 2. Accidents on jetties and wharves*
 - 3. On-water maintenance and re-fueling*
-



Q17 How important are the following in REDUCING safety risks?

Answered: 662 Skipped: 75



Most important safety remedies are:

- ***Dredging of the bar at the entrance***
 - ***Stronger enforcement of speed limits***
 - ***Boating information, maps, etc.***
 - ***Boater education***
-

Approximately 50% of respondents regard dredging of the bar at the Lakes Entrance as “critically important” for safety. Another 25% regard dredging as “quite important”.

Selected comments:

“Policing should be done in the high tourist season, not after everyone is gone home as is done now. Water police in particular are never seen during peak periods. Fishing inspectors are never around and need to be around Lakes Entrance almost all the time. Ports need to inspect residence moorings for effluent discharge more often, pretty poor at Post Office jetty at the moment with repairs being done, toilet and washing water discharges.”

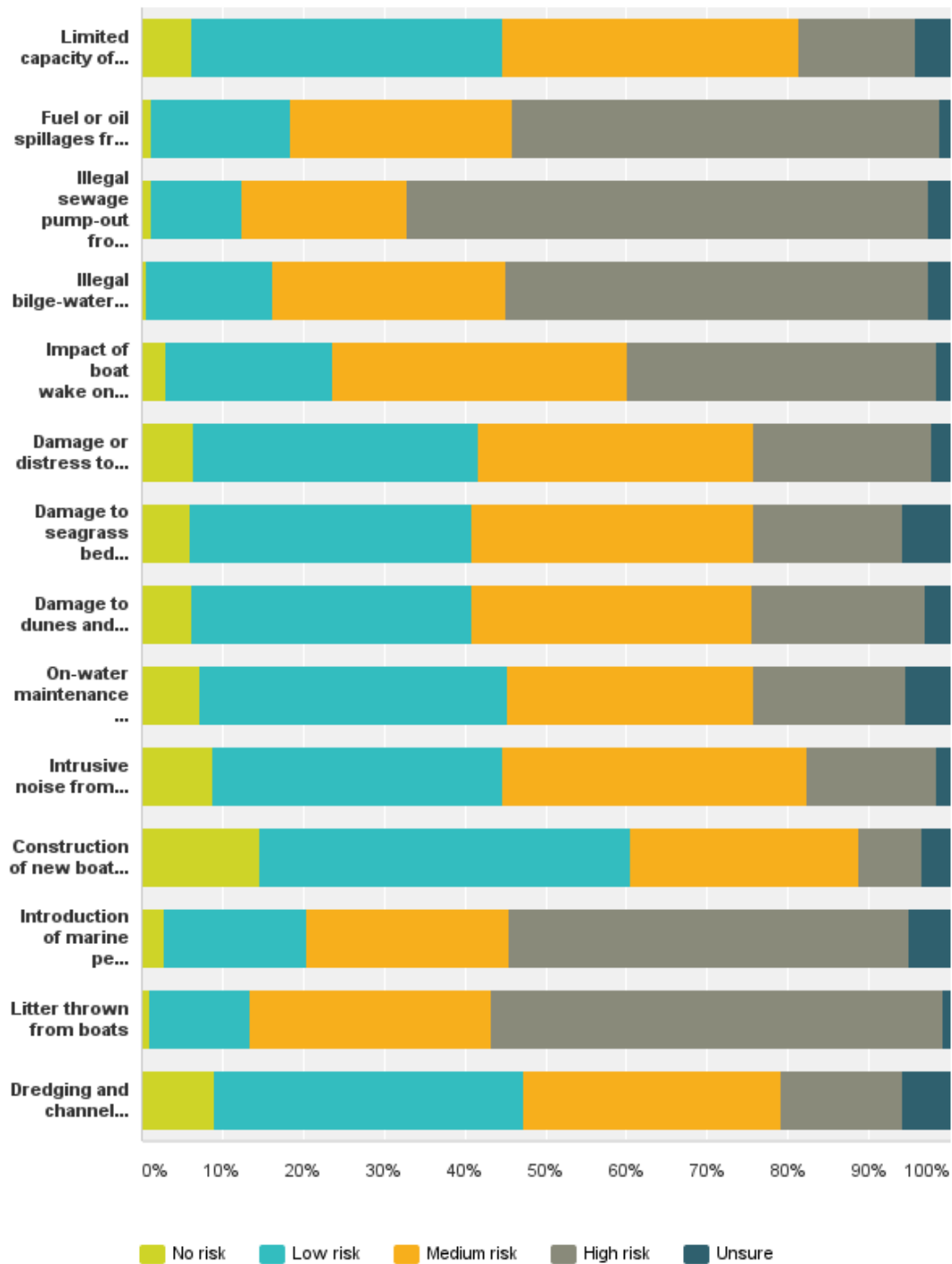
“Changing references from 5 knot speed limit to “No wake zone”. This is one of the most important safety (and comfort) improvements one could make anywhere boats and boaters congregate.”

“Better management or education to hire boat users, particularly highlighting higher risk areas such as tidal influence at mooring sites or wind impact on Gippsland Lakes water ways.”

“Better education for locals and visitors about speeds and rules on the lakes and rivers. Better enforcement of speeding on the rivers.”

“Education not enforcement is a better approach to managing risk.”

3.9 Environmental Risks



Highest rated environmental risks:

- ***Illegal sewage pump-out***
 - ***Litter thrown from boats***
 - ***Fuel or oil spillages***
 - ***Illegal bilge water discharge***
 - ***Introduction of marine pests***
-

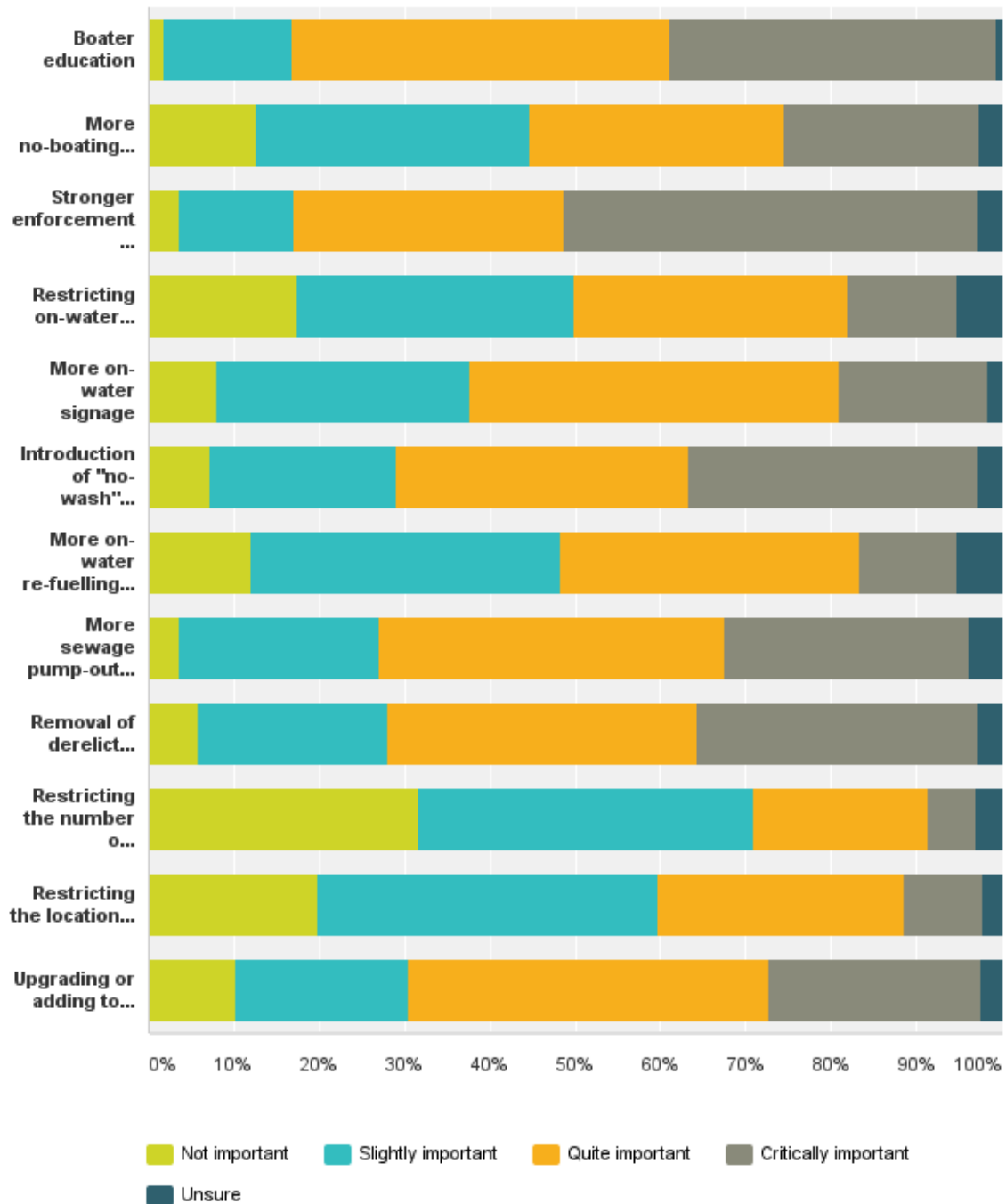
Lowest rated environmental risks:

- ***Construction of new boat launching and berthing facilities***
 - ***Dredging and channel maintenance***
 - ***On-water maintenance of boats***
 - ***Intrusive noise***
 - ***Damage or distress to wildlife***
-



Q20 How important are the following in REDUCING risks to the environment?

Answered: 630 Skipped: 107



Most important environmental remedies:

- Stronger enforcement of illegal sewage discharge
 - Boater education
 - Introduction of “no-wash” zones
 - Removal of derelict vessels
 - More sewage pump-out facilities
-

Selected comments:

“I think most of us would change our behaviour if we understood that it was doing harm, and how it was doing harm. Intrusive rules could very easily spoil the experience; please be very careful changing rules.”

“Make it illegal to put sewage into the Lakes. At present even boats with holding tanks pump straight into the Lakes because they are too lazy to go to a pump out station.”

“Inspections in marinas of vessels consistently pumping contaminated bilge water into the lake, usually with oil or fuel slick showing. Mostly old timber boats that aren't maintained!”

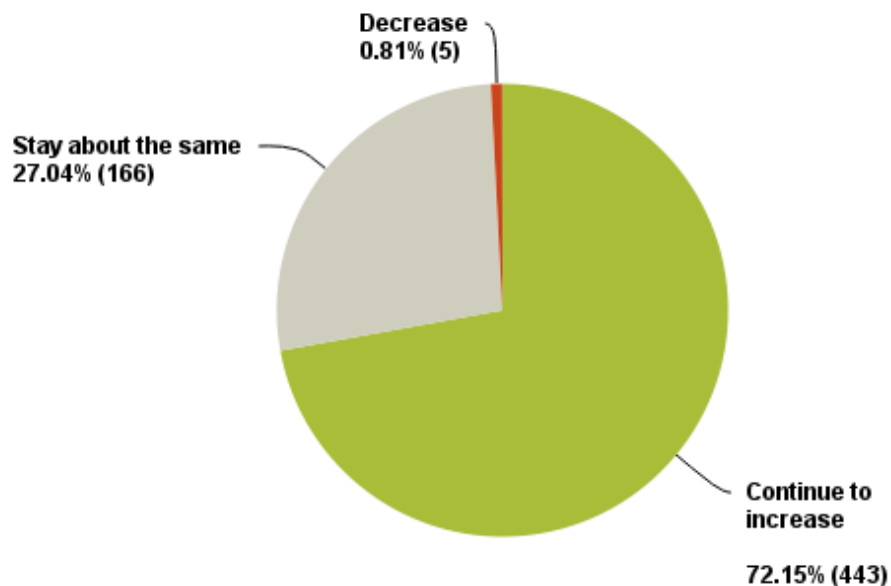
“Organise a "boating" clean up Australia Day. Such an activity could raise awareness of environmental impact and encourage boat users to be proactive and more responsible in their practices.”

“More boating facilities will make it easier for boating and should ensure less damage to environment.”

“It is important to focus on risk-plus-frequency not just on risk. For example, no-boating zones probably don't matter much because the overwhelming majority of boaters only go to the popular places. It is also important not to create endless restrictions on low-impact boating by people who are not just casual visitors but may well have been coming to, and caring for, the Lakes for decades. In the end, friendly on-the-ground presence to help create a culture of care for the Lakes is the most productive thing, not rules.”

3.10 Overall views about boating on the Gippsland Lakes

In the future, would you like to see boating and boating facilities on the Gippsland Lakes...



Selected comments:

"I have enjoyed boating on the Gippsland Lakes for fifty years and have seen many changes. Both environmentally and facilities. We need to ensure our Lakes are preserved environmentally and at the same time provide high quality facilities for the enjoyment of this beautiful waterway."

"There is nowhere else in Australia quite like the Gippsland Lakes. The level of appropriate infrastructure, particularly jetties, toilets and hot showers, and accessible towns (primarily Paynesville, Metung and Lakes Entrance) is quite unique and makes the Lakes accessible in even quite small yachts and boats. I have often heard first time interstate boating visitors expressing their amazement at what we have here."

"Increased high quality boating infrastructure is needed to maintain the destination as one of Australia's best coastal / inland waterways for tourism and recreation."

Other important actions to improve boating on the Gippsland Lakes:

89%

More government funding for boating facilities

85%

Overall improvements to boating infrastructure

84%

More capacity for seasonal increases in boat numbers


83%

More toilets, seating and public amenities on foreshores

80%

More information and education about boating and availability of facilities

Appendix 1: Boating Survey Cover Page


Boating on the Gippsland Lakes
Introduction
<p>This survey is being conducted on behalf of Gippsland Ports to gather community views about boating on the Gippsland Lakes.</p> <p>Gippsland Ports has been commissioned to prepare a 'Sustainable Boating Plan' to help guide the future growth and management of boating on the Lakes and to ensure that boating activity can continue to provide economic, recreational and social benefits, while protecting the natural environment of the Lakes.</p> <p>The survey seeks information about your participation in boating activity and your views on matters including boating safety and facilities.</p> <p>We are also seeking your views on how we can help to ensure that boating is safe, enjoyable and environmentally-friendly into the future.</p> <p>Even if you do not own a boat, we are interested in your views.</p> <p>The survey will take about 15 minutes. Personal details and individual responses will be kept confidential.</p> <p>If you provide your e-mail address at the end of the survey, you will be informed of the results and have the chance to win a prize of a personal flotation device.</p> <p>The survey closes on 28th August 2015.</p> <p>Hard copies may be returned to: Gippsland Ports 97 Main St. Bairnsdale or P.O. Box 388, Bairnsdale 3875</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p>

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Appendix 2:

Perceptions of boating facilities and services

Attribute	Poor (1-4)	Satisfactory (5-8)	Excellent (9-10)	Unsure (%)	Weighted average
Extent to which navigation aids help with safe boating	10	58	30	2	6.92
Reliability of navigation aids	13	63	23	2	6.50
Visibility/size of navigation aids	14	69	16	1	6.26
General condition of wharves, jetties and berths	18	60	21	1	6.25
Location of navigation aids	16	65	17	2	6.21
Number of navigation aids	16	66	16	2	6.19
Availability and accuracy of information about waterways and navigation aids	17	69	20	4	6.05
Access to boat launching facilities	18	54	22	6	5.89
Managing the amount of silt and sand in channels	29	58	11	8	5.10
Effectively managing the impact of boating activities on the environment	21	59	10	11	5.04
Monitoring the safe operation of vessels	24	53	10	13	4.79
Safety of access to the ocean	14	49	12	25	4.49
Access to on-water fueling	34	41	12	13	4.47
Enforcement of waterway rules (speed limits, no-boating zones, etc.)	45	41	9	5	4.42
Availability of short-term (visitor) berths and moorings	41	42	8	9	4.40
Access to sewage pump-out	16	46	11	26	4.21
Enforcement of berthing time restrictions	35	41	7	17	3.89
Availability of permanent berths and moorings	32	39	3	26	3.34



Photo courtesy of Araluen Park Cottages