

Marine Watch and jet skis boost policing our waterways

by Cassandra Glanville, QPS Media and Public Relations Branch

Yeppoon Water Police protecting the local waterways are (from left) Senior Constable Randall Gawne, Constable Andrew Simpson and Sergeant Shaun Halson.

Community marina living is fast becoming the preference for many boat loving Queensland residents, although the lifestyle is ideal for relaxed living, the necessary equipment involved with indulging this passion for the water is often an easy target for thieves.

A novel idea was born from an apparent rising number of thefts from marina communities and boat ramps - Neighbourhood Watch for our waterways, Marine Watch.

Marine Watch is about observation and reporting and has been invaluable in bringing the police and community together in an effort to fend off would-be thieves attracted to marinas and boat ramps.

Popular items for thieves range from fishing rods to outboard motors and rubber duckies, however large or small; if the opportunity arises a thief would not think twice about stealing your belongings.

Members of the Queensland Police Service (QPS) Water Police often act as Marine Watch liaison officers between the QPS and the community.

Sergeant Shaun Halson, Officer in Charge of Yeppoon Water Police said it was about building relationships to aid in crime prevention.

“Liaison officers work closely with Marine Watch Area Coordinators to provide tips on how to secure belongings, updates on current

problem areas and highlight the need for members to keep an eye out for each other and to report any suspicious behaviour,” said Sergeant Halson.

Mr Geoff Willis, Area Coordinator for the Moreton Bay Trailer Boat Club Marine Watch said since the introduction of Marine Watch in his area there had been a noticeable decline in security breaches within the marina.

“Our local Water Police have taken a great interest in the program and their presence has brought the community together with one goal, to actively take steps to prevent theft within and around the marina,” said Mr Willis.

During the summer months, due to a greater number of vessels in Moreton Bay, there appears to be more offences and an increased number of complaints.

To compliment Marine Watch during summer, the QPS Wave Runner jet skis are in peak demand and are most commonly

used to patrol canals, boat ramps and swimming areas within Moreton Bay.

Utilised as quick response vessels, the jet skis have proven invaluable in fast vessel intercepts, shallow water intercepts and search and rescue activities.

The value of the Wave Runners is most evident in their manoeuvrability, which aids in the successful apprehension of fast vessels as they work in tandem to assist with the interception of the alleged offender’s vessel.

Initiatives such as Marine Watch and an increased police presence on the water have brought members of the public and local police closer. Police and the community must work together for the security of their belongings at marinas and for their general safety on the water.

Marine Watch and the use of jet skis are innovative ways for the QPS to take steps to reduce crime on or around our waterways.

Tips for keeping your belongings safe:

- be aware of your surroundings and report any suspicious behaviour
- don't leave items in your boat if it will be unattended for long periods
- check your boat regularly when it's not in use
- engrave your licence number on portable equipment
- keep a record of model and serial numbers
- chain your outboard motor and rubber duckies to your boat
- fit a locking device to the wheels of your trailer.

