

Our ref MC5976

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Re: Petition No 295-04 - Concerning public boating safety

I refer to the petition lodged by Mr Chris Foley MP, Member for Maryborough in Parliament on 21 April 2004, in relation to electronic charting and public boating safety.

Enclosed is a copy of my response to the chief petitioner, Mr Tony Connell, for your information. I have also arranged for an electronic copy of the response to be forwarded to your office.

Yours sincerely

PAUL LUCAS MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads

Enc (1)

Our ref MC5976

Mr Hugh Anthony Connell
PO Box 907
Hervey Bay Qld 4655

Dear Mr Connell

Re: Petition No 295 – 04 - Concerning public boating safety

Thank you for your petition which was tabled in Parliament (paper 295-04) by Mr Chris Foley MP, Member for Maryborough on 21 April 2004, about electronic charting and public boating safety. As my portfolio is responsible for this issue your petition was forwarded to me for response. I apologise for the delay in writing to you.

Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) already produces a series of paper-based boating safety charts covering popular boating areas including the Great Sandy Straits. These are readily available to the public and accurately depict features which assist safe navigation.

Given the growing interest in electronic software charting packages as an aid to navigation, MSQ has been working with electronic software charting companies towards the release of its boating safety chart data. As a matter of public safety, the data provided to such companies must be replicated faithfully and accurately in all software products which become available upon the market.

I understand that MSQ has investigated your concerns with the electronic software package you are using and has found that the problem appears to be two-fold: unknown datum of the original source and the ability to magnify information well beyond the original scale. Both of these factors limit the reliability of the electronic version for navigation purposes. I also understand that officers from MSQ have discussed these issues with you. In the meantime, the company that made the electronic charting software you are using has agreed to provide a warning about the technical limitations of their product to all distributors of their product and in all product packaging.

These are examples of the types of technical issues which need to be resolved before the information can be released to the electronic charting companies and illustrate why MSQ is being so thorough in the development of the conditions under which its data will be released.

There are also a broad range of legal and financial issues which need to be resolved from a Queensland Government perspective as well as from a commercial perspective before an agreement for the release of MSQ data can be finalised. Such issues include copyright, intellectual property rights, policy on pricing, licence fees and royalties. I am pleased to advise that resolution of these issues is progressing well and MSQ is aiming to have a standard licence agreement available for all interested electronic charting companies by the end of June 2004.

All this makes it clear that it is not enough to rely only on electronic charts for safe navigation. The master of a vessel must keep a proper watch at all times, as well as referring to other aids to navigation such as buoys and beacons, Royal Australian Navy charts, MSQ boating safety charts, notices to mariners, weather reports and tidal information. Boaties should also maintain contact with the local Volunteer Marine Rescue station to obtain navigational warnings. It is about ensuring safe navigation practices at all times.

If you require any further information, please call Ms Annie Ilett, Assistant Director (Commercial Operations), MSQ on 3120 7002 who will be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely

PAUL LUCAS MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads