

Response to the Office of the State  
Coroner of New South Wales

**Report into Boating Incident  
Gwydir River  
7 February 1998**

<b>Coroner</b>	<b>Coroner, A. J. Dyke</b>
<b>Date of findings</b>	<b>22 April 1998</b>
<b>Inquest location</b>	<b>Inverell</b>
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	The Office of the Coroner held an Inquest into the incident and made <b>two recommendations</b> to the Waterways Authority <sup>1</sup> and the white water rafting agency.

**Status of recommendations**                      **Closed**

**Background**                                      On 7 February 1998 a white water rafting party was negotiating a rapid on the Gwydir River when two people were thrown into the water. One was rescued by another vessel but the other became trapped against some rocks by the force of the water. Attempts were made to free the trapped rafter, and eventually the person was pulled from the rocks. However, the force had torn their lifejacket and the person had fallen out of the jacket and disappeared downstream. The body was found the following day.

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<sup>1</sup> The Waterways Authority was renamed as NSW Maritime on 1 September 2004

**GWYDIR RIVER, 7 FEBRUARY 1998**

No.	Coroner's recommendation	NSW Maritime's response <sup>2</sup>
1.	That flotation devices for the ankles/legs of White Water rafters be investigated to assist in the lifting of legs when floating down rapids if they are thrown from the raft.	<p>NSW Maritime considered this issue with the white water rafting industry and support the industry's global Code of Conduct. The code includes, amongst others, the wearing of appropriate safety equipment.</p> <p>The recommendation that leg buoyancy devices be investigated was considered to introduce further safety risks, potentially preventing a person from standing upright, and is not included in the code.</p> <p>It is noted white water rafting is considerably more common in other jurisdictions and overseas, particularly in New Zealand, and no such requirement exists elsewhere.</p> <p><b>Therefore, this recommendation is considered closed, noting no changes have been supported.</b></p>
2.	That a more proactive role be played in the training of White Water Rafters, especially in relation to teaching the correct method of floating legs first if thrown from a raft.	<p>The NSW Whitewater Code is recognised by NSW Maritime and specifies the requirement for a pre-launch safety talk to include: "Safety Float Position – feet up, on their back, looking downstream.</p> <p><b>This recommendation is considered closed.</b></p>

<sup>2</sup> The response should be considered in conjunction with the published regulations, policies and safety initiatives outlined on the NSW Maritime website and in published materials.