



# Brisbane River Share

5 simple tips to ride the river safely





The Brisbane River is the longest river in South East Queensland, winding for some three hundred and fifty kilometres from the mountains through the city of Brisbane before finally flowing out into Moreton Bay.

The Brisbane River attracts unpowered and powered craft, large and small vessels alike. Aquatic sports lovers share the waterway with large commercial vessels and just like a major city road, on-water traffic can become extremely busy. All river users must therefore take equal responsibility for their safety and the safety of those around them.

To help ensure everyone can safely share the river, the **Brisbane River Code of Conduct** has been developed for all river users to follow. Both the Code, and this pocket guide, have been developed with input from all key river users and peak bodies including Maritime Safety Queensland (Department of Transport and Main Roads), Rowing Queensland, Transdev Brisbane Ferries and Brisbane City Council. The code clearly sets out in detail the roles, rules and responsibilities of all river users to safely share and enjoy the Brisbane River.

The Brisbane River Code of Conduct provides the basic rules that, blended with common sense and good seamanship, will help to keep us all safe... and share the river.

It can be viewed at [msq.qld.gov.au](https://msq.qld.gov.au) (search Brisbane River Code of Conduct).



The Brisbane RiverShare campaign has been developed by Transdev Brisbane Ferries in partnership with Brisbane City Council, Maritime Safety Queensland (Department of Transport and Main Roads) and Rowing Queensland.

“As operators of Brisbane City Council’s CityCat and CityFerry fleet, safely sharing the Brisbane River is always our highest priority...as it should be for *all* river users.

This handy pocket guide summarises the Brisbane River Code of Conduct in five easy to remember tips and features a map of the busy city zone of the Brisbane River for easy reference and passage planning.

Stay safe and have fun!”

**Colin Jennings**  
**Managing Director**  
**Transdev Brisbane Ferries**





## **RIVERSHARE TIP #1 - HATCH A PLAN...**

*A little homework...plan your course*

## **CHECKLIST**

Pre-check weather and tide conditions.

Understand buoys and channel markers.

Does anyone know you are heading out?

Agreeing on a simple passage plan before you head out onto the river, is a great way to get off to a good start. Ensure you are aware of the approximate location of obstacles such as pontoons, pylons, moored vessels, bridge footings, buoys and beacons...and know the best course to safely avoid them. Be aware of the direction, or correct side of the river you should be travelling in, where any exclusion zones may be, and what the different channel markers mean.

Remember that the Brisbane River is a tidal estuary, meaning water levels can rise and fall by up to two and a half metres during a twelve-hour tidal cycle. This can create powerful currents of up to eight km/hour, making launching or docking a small craft, crossing the river, or turning in the

vicinity of a larger vessel, both challenging and dangerous. It makes good river sense to observe both the strength and direction of this extreme water movement...before setting off.

Effective passage planning involves giving some thought to all of these important factors before you launch. It will go a long way to ensuring a safe, enjoyable and trouble-free time on the river.



## **RIVERSHARE TIP #2 - INTERACTION...**

*Working together to stay apart*

### **CHECKLIST**

Know which 'lane' of the river you should travel in.

Stand off at the '50-metre gate' to give way to vessels docking or departing.

Remember: 'At least twice as wide when passing down the side'.

To help ensure that everyone can ride the river safely, the Brisbane River is divided into imaginary thirds or lanes, stretching from bank to bank. Non-powered, passive craft are to travel in the outer thirds nearest the riverbank, while larger, engine powered vessels operate within the centre third, as they generally require the deeper water.

The exception to this, is when larger, powered vessels must come into or exit a river bank terminal or pontoon. In this instance, here's how it works:

Imaginary gates are set at fifty metres up and down stream from each terminal, sometimes marked with yellow buoys. If you are outside the fifty metres and a commercial vessel is coming in or departing, you simply wait at the gate, or 'stand off', until it has finished docking and departing.

If you are waved through by the vessel Master, then you can quickly pass. Always remember the golden rule: 'At least twice as wide...when passing down the side.' If you stay well out, the powered vessel Master can clearly see you from the wheelhouse, and can wait until you safely pass, before pulling out.

# Passage Planner:

Number in party: .....

Wind strength/direction: .....

Tide times: H .....

L .....

Estimated return time: .....

Person ashore notified? Y / N

- 1 City Parklands Surf Life Saving
- 2 Queensland Canoeing Association
- 3 River Life
- 4 Rowing Queensland



### Legend

- Ferry Terminal
- CityCat
- CityHopper
- Cross River Ferries
- ♿ Wheelchair access
- 🚌 Connecting bus services
- ℹ Information centre
- 🚉 Busway station
- 🚊 Train station
- 🚲 CityCycle
- 🏠 Rowing sheds
- 🛥 Public boat ramp / pontoon

^ New terminal opening late 2014

# Brisbane Ferry Network

## **RIVERSHARE TIP #3 - BATTLING THE ELEMENTS...**

*...Strong winds, fog and floods*

### **CHECKLIST**

Make sure you can see 1000 metres all around you - If not, don't go out on the water.

If a rain squall, fog or strong winds hit during your passage, seek shelter ashore and sit it out.

Be wary of what might be hidden below the surface after rain or floods.



Strong winds, fog and floods can make for treacherous conditions on the river. At certain times of the year, rain squalls and the associated strong winds and 'white outs' can hit without warning, reducing visibility to zero. Remember that if you can't see clearly for at least a thousand metres all around...then you can't be seen either. You should not be on the water in such conditions.

If you get caught in a rain squall, or see one coming, it's best to quickly get in close to the riverbank and sit it out. These squalls generally only last a few minutes, so when conditions improve, you can continue on.

These heavy rains often cause the river to flood. Long after the rain has stopped and the flood has ebbed, the Brisbane River can remain choked with debris and hazards for days and even weeks. Always be alert after a flood and be aware that hazards may lurk beneath the water's surface.



## **RIVERSHARE TIP #4 - CLEAR COMMUNICATION...**

*...and good manners*

### **CHECKLIST**

5 short horn blasts = 'I'm unsure of your intentions.'

Keep your wash or wake to a minimum.

Observe speed limits and slow down around other vessels and marinas.

A standard set of maritime sound signals is used the world over to help vessels communicate in a concise, courteous and professional manner. If you hear five short horn blasts from a powered vessel...it's not a sign of aggression.

This is the recognised sound signal to let you know that the Master is simply unclear of your intentions. You can quickly clear things up by stopping, manoeuvring out of the way, calling out your intentions or politely gesturing. When it comes to good manners on the river, your vessel's wash or wake can have a big impact on staying friendly with your fellow river users. You cannot only damage other vessels, you could put someone in grave danger.

As the Master of any powered watercraft, always be aware of your wash and the effect it can have. Minimise the impact by observing speed limits and increasing speed only when you're clear of other vessels or marinas...and in open water.



## **RIVERSHARE TIP #5 - VISIBILITY**

*See...and be seen*

# CHECKLIST

Avoid being on the river when visibility is poor.

Never cross on a bend and only cross when you can see clearly in both directions.

Between sunset and sunrise, use the all-round flashing white light, (navigational requirement for passive craft on Brisbane River)

The river is undoubtedly a water-sports paradise, but it can all so easily go very wrong. Imagine how hard it might be for the Master in the wheelhouse of a CityCat to spot a small craft like a kayak or rowing scull in very low light, especially at dusk or dawn.

It's very easy for small passive craft to stray into the wrong place or get caught in unexpected currents. Large powered vessels like CityCats can find it hard to manoeuvre quickly to avoid dangerous situations.

Always use appropriate lighting – like the all-round flashing white light which is a navigational requirement for all passive craft on the Brisbane River during times of low visibility or darkness.

When it comes to visibility, making your way across the river also becomes critical. Even when

conditions are perfect, if you can't see what's coming around a bend or obstruction, another vessel can't see you either. As a guide...if you can't clearly see what's coming more than five hundred metres up ahead or five hundred metres from behind you (that's one full kilometre all around), then you should continue on toward a straighter, more open stretch of river before you cross.

Remember, to ensure safe passage, you should always make your crossing quickly and in a straight line, at right angles to the riverbank.





A Brisbane River safety initiative proudly supported by:



*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*



This pocket guide is intended to provide a general introduction to river safety and does not purport to cover all river safety obligations. Readers are strongly encouraged to refer to and familiarise themselves with the Brisbane River Code of Conduct and applicable Marine Safety legislation. Transdev Brisbane Ferries Pty Ltd will not accept liability for any loss or damage claimed as a result of reliance on this publication.