



**Dale Last MP**  
**Member for Burdekin**

**Burdekin Electorate Office**

Shop 30 Centrepont Arcade

AYR QLD 4807

Tel: 07 4767 0500

Freecall: 1800 817 594

Email: [burdekin@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:burdekin@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Shadow Minister for Police and Corrective Services, Shadow Minister for Fire and Emergency Services  
Shadow Minister for Rural and Regional Affairs

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## **Media Release – Cover up could cost lives**

Shadow Minister for Fire and Emergency Services Dale Last has accused two senior Labor Ministers of gross negligence and breaking their promise of keeping Queensland boaties safe.

A damning revelation labelling boat licence courses as nothing more than a ‘box ticking’ exercise has been brought to light recently by Mr Last following a horror year on Queensland waterways.

Unredacted pages of the 2018 Blue Water Review report revealed that “many comments” were made to Australian Navy Commodore Campbell Darby (author of the report) that the boat licensing course was nothing more than a “box ticking exercise” and did little to educate the public on the broader on-water risks and potential technical vulnerabilities.

Mr Last said a concerned boatie had brought several pages of an unredacted copy of the 2018 Blue Water Review to him after Queensland recorded its highest number of marine fatalities in 20 years.

“In 2020 we lost 17 lives on Queensland waterways and for at least a year before that, these two Ministers hid revelations from a Navy Commodore that could have potentially saved lives,” Mr Last said.

“We’ve seen a staggering rise in the number of recreational vessels registered in Queensland and with that you would think there would be more people lining up to get their boat licence.

“Marine rescue volunteers, who are our frontline responders when boating incidents occur, predicted the risks would rise as waterways became more congested and the public purchased bigger and faster vessels.

“Instead of listening to our frontline volunteers, taking on board their feed back and making potentially lifesaving changes to boat licensing courses, the Minister has turned a blind eye and with that boating tragedies have soared and our volunteers have been left to pick up the pieces.”

Mr Last said the Minister needed to front up and explain why the decision was made to cover up the information in the first place.

“Regardless of who decided to redact this information, the ministers would be fully aware of the failures in the system and instead of acting, they have buried it and put the lives of Queenslanders at risk,” Mr Last said.

“If the Minister is serious about the safety of our boaties he needs to commit to fixing the system that is so out dated, it’s failing to keep people safe.”

“You would not let someone behind the wheel of a car if the licensing system was just a box ticking exercise, why should boating not be treated with the same consideration.”

**ENDS – Media Contact:** Mikayla Colquhoun (07) 4767 0500 or 0488 195 127

