



In at the deep end?

Dear Club Safety Adviser, Club Officers and Committee,

The ARA's recently published "Row Safe" document replaces the Water Safety Code.

This document affects all ARA affiliated clubs, potentially to their great detriment.

You will need to make an informed choice about your next course of action.

Is the ARA responsible for rowing safety?

Yes. It is obliged in law to set and enforce national standards of practice and equipment safety.

Why? To reduce exposure to those significant risks that are avoidable by reasonable means, without detriment to the practice and enjoyment of the sport.

How? These standards should be the minimum enforceable platform upon which clubs build their own safety strategy.

This is one central duty of any sport's national governing body.

Who says so?

- **Two Coroners** - in their Rule 43 letters to the ARA
- **The Minister for Sport**
- **RoSPA** - in its Review of Rowing Safety
- **FISA** - in its safety recommendations to NGBs
- **The Salvage Association** - in its report to the PLA

Does Row Safe fulfil this duty?

No! See the "Introduction" and the "Water Safety Roles and Responsibilities" section. It is clear that the ARA has shied away from setting a core of compliance standards for safety, to be applied nationally.

Row Safe gives only recommendations. It does not regulate. It provides no compulsory standards. It has no "standard operating procedures".

Row Safe's many pages contain only a collection of suggestions. A club is not obliged to follow them.

Row Safe states: "*The approach taken by the club is therefore dictated by the way the Officers and Committee decide to manage safety and adopt the Minimum Standards*".

Just one example: On buoyancy aids, Row Safe says "*Policy on wearing of PFDs for beginners and juniors – set one and communicate and enforce.*"

Where does that leave you?

It becomes your decision, your responsibility, your fault. Clubs have always been responsible for the safety of members, but you will no longer be able to defend yourselves, should you need to, by showing compliance with any compulsory ARA national safety regulation or equipment standards. The example above illustrates that such national standards no longer exist.

Does Row Safe endanger the sport?

Yes! It ignores most of the recommendations and advice provided by the expert authorities listed above. That is irresponsible. It endangers rowers. It puts clubs at unacceptable risk. It puts the ARA itself at risk because as one Coroner very clearly stated: "***It would take a bold organisation to ignore the contents of a Rule 43 letter***". But that is exactly what the ARA has done.

Where does that leave you?

The situation is a mess! **Row Safe does not include current, commonly agreed, expert recommendations, so it cannot be used on its own as a basis for an effective safety strategy.**

Each individual club must now research elsewhere in order to set effective standards to meet its own statutory duty of care.

Row Safe makes it plain that, as far as the ARA is concerned, clubs are on their own if they face litigation or Inquest following an accident. Any club relying only on Row Safe's recommendations will be seen to be ignoring the relevant expertise - just as the ARA has done.

In Summary.

The ARA has failed to set a firm basis of expertly informed compulsory minimum safety standards. Each club must now decide, unaided, whether to follow the recommendations of the ARA, or those of RoSPA, or of the two Coroners, or of FISA, or of the Salvage Association. Or all of them, or none of them...?

That is wrong, it is unfair and it is impractical.

Some clubs, to avoid difficult decisions on regulation, may prefer to do little or nothing for fear of losing members to other clubs with less stringent rules. Other clubs may opt for overly defensive and restrictive safety rules, fearing the legal consequences in the worst case.

What can be done?

If you are you are unhappy with this situation then please make your views known - as strongly and clearly as possible:

- **Write to the ARA**
- **Lobby your Div Reps**
- **Contact your MP**

Please refer him or her to Mr David Heyes, MP, who is fully apprised of the situation.