

Sandtrap for boaties

Fear of fatalities as vessels regularly crash into Broadwater bars

by Matthew Killoran

BOATS continue to run aground in the Broadwater's silted channels despite dredging work, prompting calls for more action before someone is killed.

Over six days Ron Nightingale watched from his Labrador high-rise apartment as seven vessels, including house boats and speed boats, crashed into a sandbar southwest of Wavebreak Island.

He says it is only a matter of time before someone is killed.

Marine industry experts share his fears and are calling for the State

Government to expand its \$1.7 million dredging program.

The accidents occurred from Wednesday, July 29, to Monday, August 3.

They happened away from the main navigational channel - which Broadwater MP Peta-Kaye Croft said was the only section the State Government was responsible for.

Mr Nightingale said action had to be taken before a serious accident claimed a boatie's life.

"I'd like to see full-blown dredging brought back," he said. "The sand is just filling up the Broadwater."

Gold Coast City Marina general manager Steve Sammes said while the industry was pleased dredging had started, it had to be expanded beyond the main channels.

"I'd certainly reinforce what we've seen to date is just a token offering, which addresses the areas of immediate concern," he said.

"It's not just those channels but other areas need to be dredged to make a safe haven for boaties."

Mr Sammes said while maps were available of the Broadwater's channels, which included channel depth, silt build-up made much of the detail inaccurate.

Mermaid MP Ray Stevens said the clogging of the Broadwater was a blight and called for more consultation with the industry to determine what needed to be done.

"These boats are running aground on sandbars that are left exposed because of the half-baked sand dredging exercise," he said.

Ms Croft said the marine industry had already been and would continue to be consulted.

She said while it would be good to have more money to spend, the \$1.725 million allocated this year was 'a great outcome'.

"We're responsible as to dredg-

ing the navigational channels. If there's build-up in other areas, that's not a requirement of Queensland Transport," she said.

"No one has specifically told me that outside of these channels that there is a problem."

In July the State Government committed \$1.725 million to dredge the Broadwater this year despite a Gold Coast Waterways GHD report that found \$20 million was needed to solve the sand build-up.

Dredging has begun for the South Channel, the South Wavebreak Island Channel and the West Crab Island Channel.