



By  
Jane Byrne and Don Johnstone  
April 2024

# PFS PRINCIPAL DON JOHNSTONE AND THE BASS STRAIT CHALLENGE

## THE CHALLENGE

Last month PFS Consulting's Principal, Don Johnstone, embarked on a major physical challenge: Don and three friends paddled in individual sea kayaks across the Bass Strait. They set off from Port Albert Victoria and headed for Little Musselroe Bay Tasmania

They took 16 days (including 1 rest day) to cover the 530 kilometres, stopping to camp each night on one of the many islands in the Strait.

The kayakers divided up the responsibilities: James Johnson was the navigator, Richard Barnes was the photographer, Don was responsible for a daily blog and Adrian Clayton was responsible for humor and keeping the spirits up.

Don, who specialises in risk management for financial services and not-for-profit organisations, was well aware of the risks of the journey and so the team did a practice paddle from Sydney Harbour to Royal National Park and back.

### Extract from blog – Practice Paddle

*"I got separated from the rest of the group - which was a good chance for us to revisit our risk management and emergency procedures - a discussion that lasted long into the night - trawling through the anally-retentive 21 page Bass Strait trip plan that I'd prepared. Another hazard that I put to the test - for the sake of the team of course - was a capsizing drill - just off Jibbon Head near Bundeena. We passed both these tests with flying colours and are now pumped for the even bigger upcoming adventure."*



On the journey across Bass Strait they encountered a wide variety of wildlife including (at sea) seals, dolphins, stingrays, shearwaters, pelicans, albatross, cormorants and (on land) possums, tiger snakes, wombats and wallabies.

There were lots of challenges on the water with tides, strong and variable winds, waves and cross currents, sun and even hail. Perhaps the biggest challenge was on the second last day, when they had to cope with 3 metre waves and 22 knot winds gusting to 28, at the end of a long day, so a capsizing would probably have landed them on the rocky shores of Swan Island.

Don became the first actuary to paddle across Bass Strait and says he's in no hurry for his next big adventure. An interesting comparison is that fewer people have paddled Bass Strait than have climbed Mount Everest or swum the English Channel.

**To read Don's day to day blog go here:**  
[Bass Strait Crossing - March 2024](#)

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