



# ABP Update

**29 September 2006**

## **1. What are some of the issues with its introduction?**

The ABP applies to most new recreational boats including those imported into Australia, and details vital information such as the maximum number of people and load allowed, engine rating and weight and, for boats less than 6 metres, buoyancy performance.

Development of the ABP follows extensive consultation over the last five years with the boating industry, including manufacturers, designers, dealers and the general public, through surveys, workshops, consultation meetings and boat shows.

Two types of ABP have been developed. The ABP for boats under 6 metres includes a buoyancy statement, whilst the ABP for boats 6 metres or more does not include a buoyancy statement. New boats less than 6 metres, built from 1 July 2006, need to have either basic or level buoyancy, as inadequate buoyancy is no longer acceptable.

The ABP is being implemented by each State by amendment to marine safety or consumer law, or a combination of both and penalties will ultimately apply for non-compliance. In most States, a marine authority will, at the time of registration, require a boat owner to advise whether an ABP is affixed to the vessel. Boat owners should contact their local marine authorities as to the ABP requirements in their State.

NMSC, with the states, have been educating industry the boating public on what the ABP means.

Some issues with the ABP's introduction have been as a result of lack of awareness and understanding of the ABP requirements, and we have tried to address this through forums with the BIA and other industry associations as well via our education campaign.

As a result of amendments to the standard late last year, owner builders will now be required to affix ABPs onto the boats they build. We are getting the message out there to this group, and understand the concerns of owner builders, who have not had as much time as other industry sectors to implement the ABP.

## **2. Has there been any resistance?**

On the whole, the industry has been supportive of the ABP's introduction, the Australian Marine Industries Federation and state Boating Industry Associations being actively consulted over the last five years.

We have always taken industry feedback very seriously. For example, late last year, NMSC formed a Technical Reference Group made up of naval architects, boat builders, large boating manufacturers, dealers, BIA and government representatives to address comments received from industry during its last round of consultation.

In Australia, there are no compulsory building standards or laws covering the construction of recreational boats. This initiative will require boat builders to apply minimum safety standards to some key elements in the design of recreational boats.

### **3. Why is it imperative to the industry?**

The ABP is a major milestone for the boating sector, as it is the first initiative where industry and governments around Australia have worked together to introduce a national plate for safer boating. This scheme also brings Australia more in line with similar regulations in the USA and Europe.

Every reputable boat builder conducts practical tests on new models for flotation, handling, speed, trim etc. prior to full production. However, this initiative will require all boat builders to apply minimum safety standards to some key elements in the design of recreational boats as there are no compulsory boat building standards in Australia.

### **4. What will it mean for consumers? Boat manufacturers? Importers**

Of course the main reason the ABP has been developed is to reduce boating injuries and fatalities whilst out on the water. According to NMSC data, 41 people died in Australian waters in 2005, which is 41 people too many. The Regulatory Impact Statement released in support of the Australian Builders Plate, found that fatal and serious injuries associated with recreational boating costs Australians about \$52 million each year.

#### **For consumers**

The ABP provides information in an easily understood way so people can plan for a safer trip out on the water. You can easily see: how many people can be on board to prevent overloading; how much equipment you can stow; and the maximum outboard engine power the boat can handle.

If you are buying a new boat, the ABP makes it easier to choose one that best suits your needs. It allows you to compare the amount of gear and people that can be carried, engine rating and weight and, if the boat is under 6 metres, buoyancy performance.

#### **Boat manufacturers and Importers**

The ABP is really a declaration by the builder or importer that the boat meets the requirements of relevant national or international standards to the extent specified within the National Standard for the Australian Builders Plate for Recreational Boats. And, importantly, only a builder, importer or competent person, who is a legal entity in Australia can supply and approve information on an ABP.

One benefit to builders is that the ABP creates a more level playing field, with all boats being built to safety standards, including imported boats.

Some importers import boats with NMMA or CE plates, and in most cases these boats will still require an ABP. The importer can affix a supplementary plate containing the additional information required eg buoyancy statement and mandatory warning statement. And the person approving the information has to sign off on both the supplementary ABP and the original plate.

To make it easier for manufacturers to comply with the ABP standard, the Australian Marine Industries Federation (AMIF) provides on line facilities for ordering plates ([www.amif.asn.au](http://www.amif.asn.au)). Plates are supplied with customised details already printed, including buoyancy levels, maximum HP and loads.

**Note:**

ABP Exemptions

Boats will not need a plate if they are: second hand; an aquatic toy; an amphibious vehicle; a canoe, kayak or a similar boat designed to be paddle-powered such as surf skis; hydrofoils or hovercraft, pedal powered boats; personal watercraft carrying no more than two people; racing boats; rowing shells used for racing or rowing training; sailboards; sailing boats; submersibles and surf row boats.

For more information on the Australian Builders Plate for recreational boats, log onto the NMSC web site at [www.nmsc.gov.au](http://www.nmsc.gov.au) and follow the links to the ABP page.

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For further information, please contact NMSC communications officer Ursula Bishop on 0412 813 056.