



NMSC Feature

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Safer Boating with an ABP On Board

The Australian Builders Plate for Recreational Boats will make boating safer and could ultimately reduce fatalities out on the water, according to a National Marine Safety Committee spokesperson.

National Marine Safety Committee (NMSC) CEO Maurene Horder explained that the main aim of the ABP is to provide information to boat users on a boat's capability and capacity.

"The ABP means that those operating a boat can easily plan for a safer trip.

"For example, they can calculate how many people can be on board, how much equipment they can stow and the maximum outboard engine power the boat can handle.

"This initiative will also require boat builders to apply minimum safety standards to some key elements in the design of recreational boats."

The NMSC will utilise the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show, to be held from May 18 – May 21, to inform media on the impact of the ABP on the industry and boating public. NMSC and Marine Safety Queensland representatives will also be at the Show to provide information and advice on the ABP to industry and the general public.

Ms Horder said that it was also important to get the message out that owner builders will now be required to affix ABPs onto the boats they build from 1 July 2006.

"The boating industry have been keen supporters of the ABP initiative, and including owner builders will only make the industry safer," she said.

"However, we understand the concerns of owner builders, who have not had as much time as other industry sectors to implement the ABP."

Ministers of the Australian Transport Council endorsed the latest amendments to the ABP Standard late last year, which included owner builders being required to affix an ABP. Most states and the Northern Territory will be amending their legislation to bring the ABP requirements into force this year.

"We have had some feedback from owner builders, and the challenge will be to inform as many as possible on the ABP."

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 meters, 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.

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Two types of ABP have been developed, one for boats under 6 metres, which includes a buoyancy statement, and one for boats 6 metres or more, which does not include a buoyancy statement. From July 1 2006, new boats less than 6 metres must have either basic or level buoyancy, as inadequate buoyancy will no longer be acceptable.

Ms Horder went on to say that there are no compulsory building standards or laws covering the construction of recreational boats in Australia.

“According to our figures, approximately 31 000 recreational boats, registered each year will be impacted by the ABP,” she said.

Ms Horder assured the boating public that the Australian Builders Plate would provide accurate safety information.

“A builder, importer or competent person, are the only ones who can supply and approve information on an ABP, and they need to be a legal entity in Australia,” she said.

New boats that will not need a plate include: second hand boats; aquatic toys; amphibious vehicles; canoes, kayaks or similar boats designed to be paddle-powered; 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 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.