



# Media Update

**May 18 2006**

## Smaller Boats to Float if Swamped

Australian made and imported recreational boats under 6 metres, built after 1 July this year, should have either basic or level flotation, under a new marine safety initiative that has the support of the states and the Northern Territory.

"Flotation is one of the key elements of the Australian Builders Plate for Recreational Boats (ABP), which is being introduced into legislation around Australia soon," explained National Marine Safety Committee (NMSC) CEO Maurene Horder.

At a media briefing held at the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show on the Gold Coast on May 18, Ms Horder explained that the ABP details a boat's capacity and capability to encourage safer boating.

"If you are buying a new boat, the ABP makes it easier to choose one that best suits your needs, allowing 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."

"The ABP requirements mean that in the near future, smaller recreational boats will float in some form if swamped, as, under the ABP standard, inadequate flotation will no longer be acceptable for small boats built from 1 July," explained Ms Horder.

Two types of ABP have been developed, one for new boats under 6 metres, which includes a buoyancy statement, and one for new boats 6 metres or more, which does not require a buoyancy statement.

Ms Horder went on to say that 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," she added

She pointed out that the three year timeframe to allow industry to implement the ABP was coming to an end.

"I am pleased say that most major boat builders are already selling boats with ABPs affixed."

Ms Horder confirmed that the ABP requirements were voluntary at the moment, and that it will become mandatory as all states and the Northern Territory introduce the ABP into legislation in the second half of year.

She said that governments are using either marine safety law, consumer protection legislation or a combination of both to introduce the ABP standard.

"Some states are looking at enforcing the ABP via registration, so most new recreational boats in that particular state would need to have an ABP in order to be registered."

National Marine Safety Committee Inc  
Level 5, 9-13 Young Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
PO Box R1871, Royal Exchange NSW 1225  
Tel: (02) 9247 2124 Fax: (02) 9247 5203  
E-mail: [secretariat@nmsc.gov.au](mailto:secretariat@nmsc.gov.au) Website: [www.nmsc.gov.au](http://www.nmsc.gov.au)

Ms Horder indicated that the next stage was to work with governments to educate boaters and consumers on what the ABP means for them.

She pointed out that people buying a boat needed to be aware of buoyancy characteristics when buying new boats under 6 metres.

“Basic buoyancy allows the boat to float in some form if swamped, so the boat will remain afloat for occupants to cling on to the upturned hull.”

“Level buoyancy means the boat will continue to float in an upright position if swamped, which may allow you to remain in the boat and bail the vessel.”

Ms Horder emphasised that the ABP requires boat builders to apply minimum safety standards to some key elements in the design of recreational boats.

“It is important to remember that the ABP also includes new owner built boats as the aim is to make boats safer across the board.”

The only boats that will not need a plate when sold 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.

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)). For more information and for a copy of Edition 3 of the ABP Standard, visit NMSC web site at [www.nmsc.gov.au](http://www.nmsc.gov.au) and follow the links to the ABP page.

For further information on how the ABP will be legislated in your state, contact your local marine authority.

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For further information, please contact Ursula Bishop on 0412 813 056 or CEO Maurene Horder on 0418 655 203.