



NMSC Media Release

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Full Steam Ahead for ABP

NMSC CEO Maurene Horder has responded to comments in the marketplace by boat plan retailer Brian Poole on the Australian Builders Plate for Recreational Boats.

"We have had lengthy dialogue with Brian on a range of ABP matters over the past year," she said

"Our technical committee has responded to him and we have certainly taken some of his comments into account, however, I would like to clarify incorrect information being circulated in the marketplace."

The Australian Builders Plate is being introduced for most new recreational boats including those imported into Australia, with the expectation that it will reduce injuries and fatalities out on the water.

Ms Horder said that industry has increased their support since the NMSC commenced consultation five years ago, and they have had a direct input into the development of the ABP standard and legislation.

"Surveys initially conducted by ourselves and the Boating Industry Association showed strong support for safety amongst industry, with buoyancy and stability ranked as the most important standards required and loading and engine rating as the most important items to be included on an Australian Builders Plate.

"There is little in the way of regulation of construction standards for recreational boats and we hope the plate will encourage boat builders to apply minimum safety standards."

She said the reason that basic or level flotation was required on an ABP for boats under 6 metres, was that buoyancy was a key safety issue for smaller boats, based on studies into the causes of marine accidents.

"We are more than happy to see manufacturers ensure that boats larger than 6 metres have level or basic flotation, and of course some manufacturers are already doing this."

NMSC's *National Assessment Boating Fatalities in Australia* report, found a relationship between vessel length and buoyancy for dinghies, other open motorboats and half cabin motorboats - which make up the majority of vessels involved in fatal incidents. Inadequate stability was a contributing factor in 12% of the fatal incidents involving vessels less than 6 metres compared to only 6% with vessels 6 metres or more.

"Inadequate stability was an even stronger feature when they were less than 4 metres in length.

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“This is why small boats such as dinghies are required to have an ABP, including those sold without an outboard.”

Ms Horder clarified that not only do industry want to choose which standard they develop information for ABP's to, they say that the benefits of adhering to a single standard is not worth the cost implications.

“There has never been an expectation that all the standards would result in identical safety outcomes for every boat.

“The objective is to provide flexibility to allow variation so manufacturers do not have to make recalculations for the Australian market, provided they adhere to relevant National or International standards.”

“Manufacturers only need refer to the parts of the relevant standard that relates to information required for an ABP, such as the maximum engine weight and power rating,, number of persons for the boat, maximum load, and for boats under 6 metres, buoyancy performance.

“We are not inventing something new here, boat capacity plates have been mandatory in the USA and the EU for many years.

“Australia is really just catching up with the rest of the developed world.”

Ms Horder also pointed out that the stability and buoyancy characteristics calculated using different approaches, still provides much better levels of safety than the current situation, where there is no calculation or testing required. She said that both ABYC Rules and the ISO standards are comprehensive standards that are already well established in the marketplace.

She acknowledged that there are variations in passenger numbers arising from the application of different standards for the same size and type of boat and this can have competitive implications.

“It is interesting to note that this is the current market situation, regardless of the introduction of the ABP, so it is up to industry to choose which standard is right for them.

“However, we are currently considering the need to review the Australian Standard AS1799 and we will be discussing this with Standards Australia.

“Concerns in relation to definitions and calculations within a particular standard should be taken up with the custodian of that standard.

The ABP is being adopted voluntarily by industry prior to it becoming mandatory from 1 July 2006. Most states and the Northern Territory will be amending their marine legislation to bring the ABP legislative requirements into force with two states, Tasmania and Western Australia also using their states consumer legislation to introduce the standards.

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“Under the legislation, a boat will need to have a plate affixed by either the builder, importer or other competent person.

“Boats without plates will not be able to be sold legally, and marine authorities may also choose to deny registration to those boats.”

Ms Horder explained that consumer protection laws already apply to boats regardless of the introduction of the ABP. But the requirement for a plate ensures that information vital to the safe use of the boat is readily available for the operator.

“The legislation introducing the ABP will help dealers to meet their existing obligations under consumer legislation.

“One of the issues of concern is that pre-sale modifications may render the information on the plate no longer correct – a situation that can be seen to be a breach of consumer protection laws.

“Now under the ABP, dealers can organise for the information on the ABP to be updated, helping them to meet their existing consumer protection requirements.”

Ends

For further information, please contact communications officer Ursula Bishop or CEO Maurene Horder on (02) 9247 2124.