



# NMSC Feature

**Friday 29 September 2006**

## Safer Boating with an ABP On Board

The Australian Builders Plate for Recreational Boats will make boating safer according to a National Marine Safety Committee (NMSC) spokesperson.

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 out on the water.

"For example: they can calculate how many people can be on board to avoid overloading; 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 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.

Finalisation of the ABP follows extensive consultation over the last five years manufacturers, designers, dealers and the general public via 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.

Ms Horder added that buoyancy was a key safety issue, particularly in relation to smaller boats.

"The NMSC commissioned National Assessment of Boating Fatalities in Australia 1992 – 1998 Report identified a relationship between vessel length and buoyancy for dinghies, other open motorboats and half cabin motorboats," she said.

"Together they made up 57% of all vessels involved in fatal incidents over the period of the study.

Under the ABP standard, smaller recreational boats will now have to float in some form if swamped. Inadequate flotation is no longer accepted for boats less than 6 metres in length, built after 1 July 2006.

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.

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)

“This scheme also brings Australia more in line with similar regulations in the USA and Europe,” she added

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

Ms Horder confirmed that Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland have all introduced the ABP into legislation.

“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, and this is already the case in NSW.”

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.

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 added that it was important to remember that the ABP also includes new owner built boats, as the aim is to make boats safer across the board.

Boats will not need a plate if they are: second hand; aquatic toys; amphibious vehicles; canoes, kayaks or similar boats 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.

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 is or will be legislated in your state, contact your local marine authority.

Ends

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