

thirty two° fifty five

newcastle cruising
yacht club journal

SPRING 2024

Making more Waves!
Cruising in tropical Tonga
Australian Sailing Awards



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Opinions of contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the Board or the Club.

While articles and correspondence are welcomed, the Editor reserves the right to decline to publish.



In this edition: Parking and a plea to take a look at the whole picture; repairs and maintenance; new and refurbished bathrooms proposed; Jan and Rob Howard; Membership Survey; NCYC nominated again this year in the Australian Sailing NSW/ACT Awards, Marina Maintenance continues.

I congratulate Janease Graham on her appointment to Club Captain, Steve Rae on his re-election, and Andrew Hill on his election to the Board.

CARPARK

We are approved to start construction of the carpark entry and exit infrastructure by the authorities but I'm a little concerned about some things that have been reported, and others that I have observed firsthand.

Firstly, let me assure you that the Board is acutely aware of the depth of feelings about parking at the club and we have come to what we believe is an equitable solution. Let me define equitable for avoidance of doubt: "fair and impartial".

Please note this essentially means "equitable" to approximately 1,500 of our members plus our business tenants. If you look at our carpark, it's blatantly obvious we don't have space for all members and all tenants to park there all the time. We have a little over 100 spaces so, with the above in mind, do the maths.

Logic suggests that business activities would mostly take place during business hours and social activities mostly outside of that. This is NOT a revenue raising exercise.

The carpark access solution tries to strike a balance by allowing free access for "normal" periods depending on whether you're a member, a tenant, or a visitor. No one will be able to park all day and all night, every day, without charge. Everyone will be able to access reasonable periods of free parking in line with the need for access as a member, business tenant, or business customer.

There is no mention in our constitution of us funding or providing continuous, free parking to our members, tenants and adjacent properties as well as light rail passengers.

I also am very aware of the pressure some people may be under, so please understand we are trying to solve a problem that has been years in the making and I am also aware that doing nothing is not an option. Please understand every member at NCYC has an expectation

of being able to park for limited periods but this is not, nor ever has been, an unlimited right of membership or tenancy.

The new arrangements will also create a financial disincentive for those that have no link to our club but still use our car park, effectively occupying member and customer spaces.

OPERATIONS

We continue to target running the clubhouse bar and food revenue as close to revenue neutral as possible. We feel this delivers the best outcome for our members.

There are some age-related and corrosion repairs needed to the Commercial Centre (the building between Midcoast and the Mariner apartments). Additionally, we plan to replace the soft awning in this area to stop water ingress during windblown rain. In short, as our buildings age we need to continue to inspect and maintain.

CLUBHOUSE

We have completed the initial planning to allow both our rooms upstairs in the new building to be opened into one larger space when needed for larger functions. This sound-proofed and easily reconfigurable bi-fold partition is planned to be installed after the club's busy period in February-March next year.

We have replaced two air conditioners in bar and dining area of the older part building as well as investigating a new bathroom downstairs in the new part of the building. Additionally, we are planning to renovate the original clubhouse bathrooms.

MEMBERSHIP

Jan Howard stood down as our Club Captain at the August AGM and I would like to personally acknowledge her outstanding commitment to the Board over the past eight years.

Jan's intuitive and intelligent contribution to the Board will be missed. Her leadership and skill have seen her, in partnership with Mary Holley, take our women's sailing program from conception to a vibrant community. The now national She Sails program, founded here at NCYC, is a remarkable legacy to an already impressive sailing CV.

Rob Howard is also a well-known member of our sailing community. He has devoted many years of membership on the Sailing Committee and introduced countless people to keel boat sailing on *Schouten Passage*. His integrity and affable approach to all things, both on and off the water, is valued.

Rob was awarded Life Membership at the AGM in August, and he has my sincere appreciation for his 20+ years of service to our club.

We have approximately 100 less members compared to this time last year. We feel this reflects when people sometimes decide to leave as our membership period finishes on 31 March and the 3-month grace period ends. The Board approved 34 new members in August alone.

Some interesting statistics on our membership survey: 88.3% of members think the club is good value (up 2.9%), 93.7% of members would recommend membership to others (up 3.2%), and 96.9% believe the Club communicates well with members (up 2.2%). It's good but not perfect so we will continue to find ways to enhance the member experience.

SAILING

As mentioned at our Presentation Night, we have been well represented in numerous offshore events. NCYC boats also participated in the Sydney Gold Coast Race, Airlie Beach Race Week, and Hamilton Island Race Week this winter.

I will leave that to our Sailing Manager to report in more detail in his article magazine.

I also want to personally congratulate the nominees from NCYC in the running for the NSW/ACT division of Australian Sailing Awards. You are all already winners in our book and you can read about our success in a few pages.

We hope that we see our nominees, and our club progress to the Australian Sailing National awards. Regardless of the outcome we are extremely proud that Australian Sailing has seen fit to recognise them in this way.



They are:

- Bella Jones (Instructor of the Year)
- Peter Mansbridge (Volunteer of the Year)
- Women's Sailing Course - SheSails
- Jack Buchan (Sport Professional Award)
- Ethan Tucker (Sport Promotion Award)
- NCYC Club of the Year (Cat A) – Large Club

MARINA

Essential Marina maintenance continues to progress well. This is always a drawn-out process as we take advantage of the lowest tides that occur every four weeks. It's obvious that this asset and its upkeep is integral to the functioning of our water-based activities, boat lifting and maintenance.



– Barry Kelly

STEPS TO STAY SAFE NEAR SEAGOING SHIPS

- Always keep a lookout for seagoing ships.
- Determine if the vessel is moving towards you or away from you.
- Always keep a safe distance away from a large vessel.
- From the ship's bridge, it is hard to see smaller boats. Some ships will have blind spots ahead of up to 100 metres. Stay far enough away to be in sight.
- Act early so you can move away from these seagoing ships.
- Familiarise yourself with the shipping channels or fairways.
- Stay clear of the channels or fairways when seagoing ships are entering or departing the port and harbour.
- Be aware of wakes of seagoing ships, particularly when the large vessel is in relatively shallow water and moving at higher speeds.
- Always have your navigation lights on at night so other vessels can clearly see you.



- You **MUST** stay well clear of the shipping channels and large ships and only cross the channel when it is safe to do so.
- **DO NOT** anchor in a channel or fairway.
- **DO NOT** block a channel or fairway.

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We are excited about another great sailing season starting at NCYC.

We have a great balance of sailing and social events and activities planned on the calendar for 2024/25. Make sure you are receiving the weekly newsletter to keep up with what's going on.

The sailing calendar is jam-packed with inshore Youth Academy Fridays, Twilights Wednesday, Academy Inshore twilights also on a Wednesday, Champions League Thursdays, Lasers Fridays, and Offshore point score racing Sundays.

We have our weekend away to Port Stephens planned for 9-10 November, our She Sails Regatta in November, and a Cruising Division trip to the Hawkesbury, and our Christmas Sail on 15 December.

We have an overnight race – The Hunter 100 – to start 6pm Friday 22 November. This will be a great opportunity for our Ocean Point Score fleet to extend their skills, for our Hobart fleet to get some training in, and for us to promote offshore sailing to the wider community. This race has also been added to the Australian Offshore Racing Championship list.

The Bay Sailing Centre will increase its sailing offering this summer with a club championship in Lasers, windsurfing/foiling and keelboat divisions. This will be conducted once a month followed by a BBQ.

The Sailing Academy has continued its unprecedented demand and we look to expand our offering. Our Academy Manager, Jacqui Ellis, has been working hard on developing a Pacer program for teens and schools.

The clubhouse has continued to get great feedback on its recent menu changes which is also reflected in growing patronage. We are looking forward to a busy summer. It will kick off with a new initiative – “Dockfest”. We hope members will enjoy a long lunch listening to chilled-out live music.

We are moving forward with some significant upgrades to the club assets including work on the marina, carpark boomgates, roofing, air conditioning, audiovisual, and upstairs function rooms and kitchen.

We look forward to hosting some special member events this summer including Melbourne Cup in November, the Members Christmas party, and New Years Eve. I hope all our members can enjoy sailing and boating activities over the summer.

– Paul O'Rourke

Know how to check and service your inflatable lifejacket. It could save your life.



Servicing inflatable lifejackets

Inflatable lifejackets should be serviced annually or in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Servicing will ensure all parts of the lifejacket, including the bladder, inflation mechanism and CO² cylinder, are fit for use.



Check any cylinder/cartridge is full, armed and secured

- ☑ Remove and inspect the CO² cylinder – it should be intact with no rust or corrosion.
- ☑ Weigh the cylinder on scales – it should match the minimum gross weight engraved on the cylinder, or within 2 grams.
- ☑ If the cylinder is rusted, corroded, pierced or is not the correct weight, it should be replaced.
- ☑ On auto-inflating lifejackets, ensure all auto cartridge components are armed and in-date.
- ☑ Re-fit the cylinder to the inflation system and tighten by hand until just firm.
- ☑ Do not over tighten.

Check the inflation system

- ☑ Following the manufacturer's instructions, reveal the inflation system and use the oral inflation tube to inflate the bladder.
- ☑ Leave overnight.
- ☑ If the bladder loses pressure, take the lifejacket to an accredited service agent for further tests, or replace the lifejacket.
- ☑ Do not attempt to repair your lifejacket by yourself.



Deflate correctly

- ☑ Invert the cap on the oral inflation tube then press down on the valve inside the tube.
- ☑ Do not insert other objects into the top of the tube as they may damage the valve.
- ☑ Roll or press down to fully deflate the lifejacket.



Check the pull cord

- ☑ Re-pack the lifejacket as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- ☑ Ensure the pull cord is free from obstruction, accessible and unlikely to catch on anything when worn.



Learn how at lifejacketwearit.com.au



I'm happy to report that our new 2024-2025 summer boating season is officially underway!

SAILING REPORT:

We opened the season with the Blessing of the Fleet Festival on Sunday 8 September. Reverend Garry Dodd from Mission to Seafarers joined us at the club to

bless each boat that paraded past.

There was an impressive fleet parading the waterfront, which included our club vessels *Jim Holley* and *Paul Gleeson*, racing yachts, cruising fleet vessels, and commercial vessels including Marine Rescue and the All Event Cruises catamaran.

Following the Parade and the Blessing of the Fleet we regathered in the clubhouse to celebrate the opening of the season, where we awarded the best-dressed boat to Ian Watson and his crew aboard *Mistress* and best-dressed crew to the pirates aboard *Mako*. Barry Kelly and the *Concealed Weapon* crew were also acknowledged for their Barbie theme.

Then, a week later, we were ready to race the first race of our Spring Short Ocean Point Score ... but the weather forecasters had other ideas! We woke on the first scheduled race day, Sunday 15 September, to winds in excess of 50 knots and wave heights in excess of 9m.

These extreme conditions demanded cancellation of racing and we delayed the first race of the season to the following week.

Fortunately, Sunday 22 September, provided better weather. The wind before the start was a light 3-5 knots from the east. Thankfully, a westerly overpowered the light easterly and reignited with WNW 10-20 knots for the entire duration of racing that day – a perfect start to the racing season.

I'm looking forward to twilight racing returning in October where we will see some new boats join the offshore fleet, as well as the introduction of inshore twilight races in the Sailing Academy Force 24s. We've also changed the format to be mostly pursuit (handicap) starts, which promises to create some close finishes.



Above: The 2024-25 racing season gets underway in perfect conditions on Newcastle Harbour.

MARINA REPORT:

We've been busy giving the precinct a facelift lately with the trimming of trees in the carpark, painting the pavement, weeding the gardens, and cleaning the waterfront. We've also replaced some dock connections that were identified after our routine inspections.

We've also been making improvements to the floating stage in front of the clubhouse so that we are better equipped to provide floating entertainment throughout summer. Dockfest will be our next major event that bring our unique floating stage into focus.

The Dockfest event will be over the October Long Weekend – 5-6 October.

The carpark boomgate project is also nearing installation with works expected to begin in the coming weeks. It promises to make the club and marina precinct more accessible to everyone.

We're regularly out on the dock so we encourage you to introduce yourself and to let us know if there's anything of concern for us to follow up.

As we sail into the next quarter, let us continue to uphold the spirit of friendship, sportsmanship and camaraderie that defines our club.

Fair winds and following seas.

– Jack Buchan



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NCYC General Members and Newcastle Game Fishing Club Members receive a 12% discount on all purchases when using their discount card.



Hello everyone, and welcome to Spring!

We're thrilled to start this vibrant season with you. A special thank you to all our wonderful patrons who voted for Nautica Dining in The Perfect Plate Awards. Your support means the world to us!

As we embrace the beauty of Spring, we're excited to introduce some fresh and seasonal delights to our menu.

This season is all about new beginnings, and we're celebrating with the arrival of new-season lamb, sweet mangoes, tangy passion fruit, and an array of reasonably priced berries.

You'll also find broad beans and peas making their debut, and we're looking forward to the arrival of Australian asparagus. Keep an eye out for these ingredients in our dishes and on our specials board.

Spring also marks the beginning of sailing season, and with the warmer weather and longer, lighter nights, our restaurant is getting busier. To ensure you have a pleasant dining experience without any disappointment, we highly recommend making a reservation in advance.

While we always strive to accommodate walk-ins, we can't always guarantee availability, especially during peak times.

We appreciate your understanding and look forward to welcoming you for a memorable dining experience. Here's to a wonderful Spring season!

– Luke Carpenter

Functions Report

Well, if you thought we slowed down for winter, think again! It's been a non-stop transformation at the Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club, with more wardrobe changes than a rock star on tour.

We've hosted everything from lively presentation nights (where trophies were handed out as if made of gold) to corporate functions and even a Footy Club ball (yes, we managed to keep the tackling on the dance floor to a minimum).

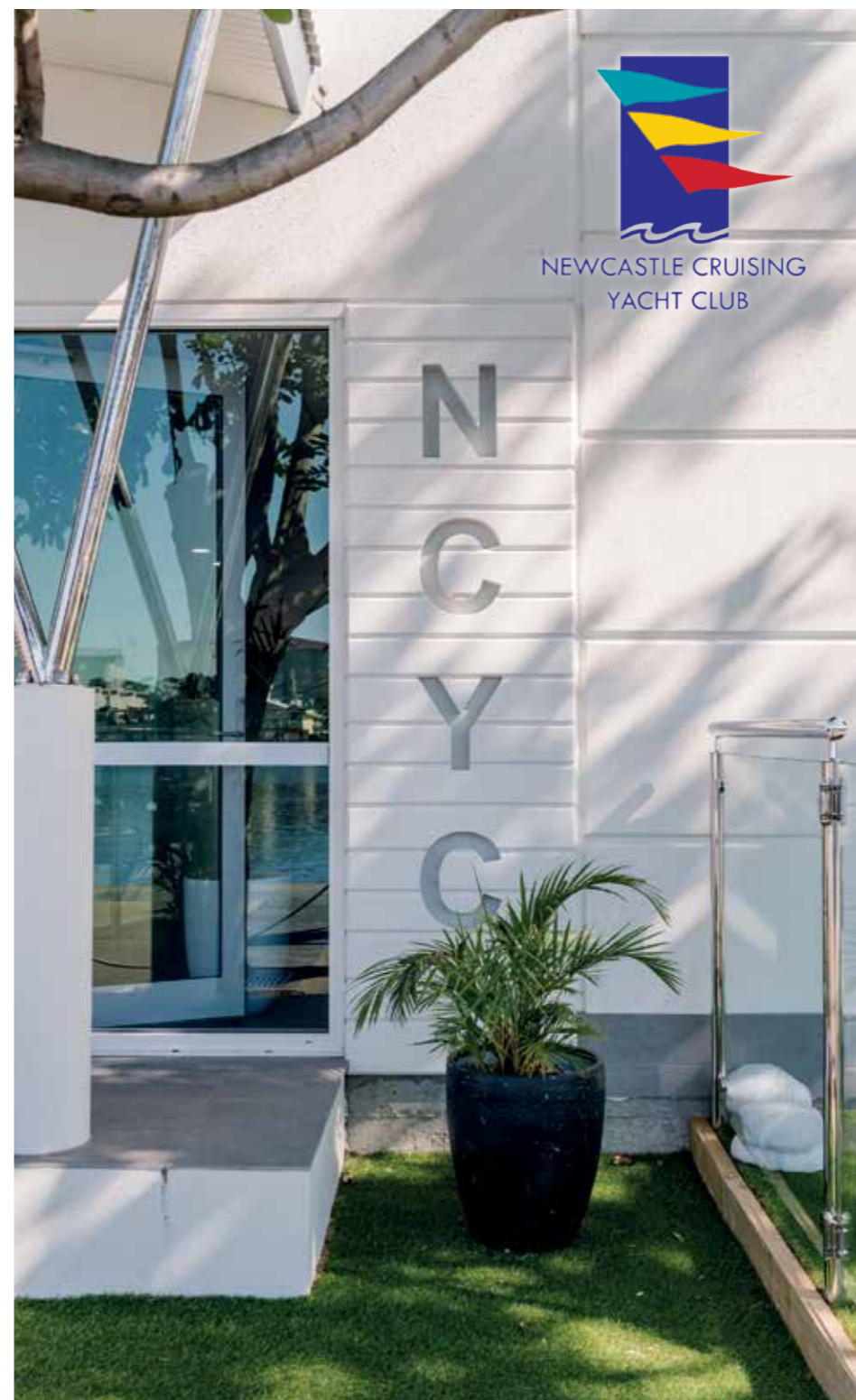
But why stop there? In the coming months, we're shifting gears for our very own music festival over the long weekend of October—get ready to rock out by the water!

And if that wasn't enough, we're donning our fanciest hats for Melbourne Cup Day because who doesn't love a good excuse to wear a fascinator and pretend we understand horse racing?

Then we're setting the sleigh as Christmas is just around the corner. We're gearing up for a sleigh full of Christmas parties, celebrating the most wonderful time of the year with our members and guests.

Let the festive madness begin!

– Rebecca Frost
Functions Manager



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NCYC shines at the 2024 Australian Sailing NSW & ACT Awards

We are proud to announce that Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club (NCYC) and our people achieved impressive recognition at the 2024 Australian Sailing NSW & ACT Awards, bringing home five prestigious awards and runner up in a sixth! This is a testament to our club's unwavering commitment to promoting sailing, fostering community engagement, and developing talent.

CLUB OF THE YEAR

NCYC was awarded the 2024 NSW/ACT Club of the Year (Category A). This accolade highlights the club's outstanding growth in participation, the success of our sailing programs, and the positive impact we've had in the Hunter region. Our Sailing Academy, Youth Program, SheSails initiatives, and the Front-Line Sailing Program have all been instrumental in this success. NCYC continues to host key events such as SailFest Newcastle (pictured) and Sail Port Stephens, which are favourites in the yachting community.

SHE SAILS AWARD

Our Women's Sailing Course took home the SheSails Award for its pioneering efforts in increasing female participation in sailing. Offering multiple weekly sailing opportunities, the course is led by our experienced female instructors and is helping to build a strong and inclusive sailing culture at NCYC. Key events such as the SheSails Development and Open Regattas further support our commitment to women in sailing.

SPORTS PROFESSIONAL AWARD

Our very own Sailing and Marina Manager, Jack Buchan, was honoured with the Sports Professional Award for his dedication to managing NCYC's onwater operations including the annual sailing calendar, major events, the Sailing Academy, and the marina. Jack's efforts have been pivotal in the success of significant events like the Australian IRC Championship, Clipper Around the World Race stopover, and Sail Port Stephens. Since becoming Sailing Manager in 2016, Jack has made a lasting impact on the sailing community in Newcastle.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Peter Mansbridge was recognised as Volunteer of the Year for his incredible contribution to the club, dedicating an impressive 96 days of volunteering last



season. Peter's involvement as a Keelboat Instructor, race management team member, and volunteer with the Front-Line Sailing Program is a reflection of his selfless commitment to the club.

INSTRUCTOR OF THE YEAR

Bella Jones received the Instructor of the Year award for her outstanding work delivering sailing programs at NCYC. Her dedication to continuous learning, safety, and customer care has set her apart. Bella's leadership in both dinghy and keelboat programs has been crucial in the success of our Sailing Academy.

SPORT PROMOTION AWARD FINALIST

We'd also like to congratulate Ethan Tucker, our Memberships & Marketing Coordinator, for being named a top four finalist for the Sport Promotion Award for his coordination of marketing and administration at our major events, further demonstrating the depth of talent and passion at our club.

These successes are a reflection of the entire NCYC community's hard work and passion. We look forward to continuing to grow and promote the sport of sailing in the region!

Making Waves Foundation: Offering empowering sailing programs for local youth living with disability and or experiencing social challenges

At the end of this year, the Making Waves Foundation will celebrate three years of permanent operations in Newcastle, and we could not be more grateful for the support of our local sailing and business community.

Since our launch, our ever-popular two-hour 'Winds of Joy' program has seen over 2,000 passengers sail Newcastle Harbour and out the heads into Stockton Bight. As always, our resident sea lions in the harbour generally put on a show for us, much to the delight of our passengers, many of whom have never set foot on a boat.

In Term 2, 2023, we launched our unique 'Winds of Change' term-based program, and it has proven extremely popular with a number of schools signing up again. The same students attend each week, and actively learn to sail the yacht with their volunteer mentors. This program, however, is not all about sailing. The program is aimed to empower participants, who are carefully chosen by the school, to build confidence to try new tasks, develop resilience, practise teamwork, and build their social skills in a new environment on the water.

Several participants enjoyed sailing so much they have returned to race in the NCYC Wednesday Twilight series on *Joy* and club boats, at SailFest and Sail Port Stephens.

Looking to the future, we plan to launch our 'Wright of Passage' program next year which is our on-dock boat building program. Under mentorship from our trained volunteers, 6-8 students who are nearing the end of their schooling and looking for options outside of the classroom build a kitset dinghy. This gives participants



a simulated workplace environment, trade-based skills, and exposure to different career options in the maritime industry and other trades.

Further afield, our Sydney-based program yacht *Kayle* completed the Sydney to Southport yacht race and as part of the 23rd Northern Campaign while in Southport, offered Winds of Joy sails to local disability schools. *Kayle* continued north to Rosslyn Bay, Mackay, and for the first time, offered Winds of Joy sails to students in Townsville.

We were represented at Magnetic Island Race Week helping to raise awareness in Far North Queensland of the work we do to empower young people with a disability and those experiencing social challenges.

Making Waves will once again race for disability joining the Rolex Sydney to Hobart fleet in 2024 with local NCYC sailor, Alyson Gearing on board. Congratulations Alyson!

We continue to seek on-water and off-water volunteers to help run our programs. No sailing experience is necessary, and training is provided. With our Wright of Passage program, whilst not necessary if you have a trade background that would be welcomed.

For more information on volunteering and how you can support our program growth visit makingwaves.au or contact Sarah Gamble on 0427 880 840 or Toni Fox on 0416 006 088.

Streamlining the path to the start line

In the world of yacht racing, one of the most significant challenges for boat owners is managing the documentation and compliance required to get to the start line. From navigating the Notice of Race (NOR) to ensuring all safety equipment is up to date and compliant, the administrative side of sailing can be overwhelming. That's where Race Ready Sailing comes in, offering a system designed to alleviate these pain points for boat owners.

Kris Anderson, the creator of Race Ready Sailing, explains how the business was born out of necessity: "It all started when I helped Joe [de Kock] prepare for an offshore campaign with two boats. The amount of paperwork required was immense, and I realised that I could use my skills to help others streamline this process."

What began as a personal project soon evolved into a fully-fledged business, offering boat owners a way to focus on what they love – sailing – without being weighed down by the complexities of compliance.

One of the most significant benefits of Race Ready Sailing is the attention to detail. Whether it's ensuring that Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) are correctly recorded or that all medical kits are compliant, Kris ensures that every boat meets current safety regulations. "Most race boats don't supply personal flotation devices (PFDs), but they must be compliant. Each NOR may



also have its unique requirements, and that's where we come in – to make sure nothing gets overlooked," Kris notes.

The journey of commercialising Race Ready Sailing wasn't initially Kris's idea. It was Joe who encouraged her to take this service to the next level.

"Joe said I was so good at it, and he suggested I give up my day job to spend more time around boats. I've always loved organising things, and helping boat owners get their vessels in order was a natural fit for me," Kris reflects.



Sailing compliance can seem intimidating, especially for newcomers, but Kris's approach is designed to ease this transition. From organising safety audits to reviewing sailing instructions, Kris sits down with owners to ensure they understand every step of the process.

"Once you start tackling these things, it becomes a lot less daunting. It's all about building confidence," Kris says.

In addition to compliance, Race Ready Sailing taps into Kris's extensive network of contacts within the sailing community.

Whether connecting new sailors with experienced crews or guiding them through twilight races, Kris is a valuable resource for sailors at every stage of their journey. "Twilight races are wonderful for learning and enjoying the sport. And from there, it's easy to think, 'Sail Port Stephens sounds fun – how do I get involved in that?'," she says.

Offshore racing holds a special place in Kris's heart, and while she's unsure how many more years she'll continue sailing in these challenging conditions, she's grateful to stay connected to the community through Race Ready Sailing.

"Learning to race teaches you how to be a better cruiser, it makes you understand your boat better, and it connects you to the yacht club and the wider sailing community," she adds.

The importance of safety cannot be understated, and Kris emphasises that while the compliance process may seem tedious, it's all about ensuring safety on the water. "You don't want to wake up and not know how long ago someone went overboard. The same things can go wrong whether you're cruising to Broughton Island or doing an offshore race," Kris explains.

With Race Ready Sailing, boat owners can focus on



Above: Joe de Kocks's team with the national IRC trophy won at Newcastle SailFest.

the joy of racing, knowing that the administrative side is handled with care and precision. And for Kris, it's a way to stay close to the sport she loves, helping others navigate the sometimes-challenging world of compliance so they can enjoy offshore sailing and cruising.

Contact: 0400 428 177 | racereadysailing@gmail.com



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NCYC members Andrew and Claire Heenan have been cruising their Moody 41 Classic *Skylark* in the Pacific since March.

We departed Newcastle for Opuia, NZ to join the Island Cruising NZ Pacific Rally to head 1,150nm north to the warm waters of Tonga and beyond.

The Pacific Rally provides a wealth of accumulated knowledge, weather routing, and passage oversight, along with technical support and a social program. This rally has a non-prescribed itinerary with yachts departing Australia, New Zealand, and other Pacific countries and travelling at their own pace and direction through any or all of Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and beyond.

There are several rally events along the way and many informal gatherings. The social side is strong, and communication is continuous within the Rally Group. Support is ever-present, with information sharing, parts, crew delivery, repair advice, assistance, and more.

The key to having a passage north with following breezes is to embark on the back of a passing low-



pressure system. This means the first few days are usually in lively SE breezes with a substantial swell. Depending on boat speed, you could then end up motoring for a couple of days before you pick up the SE trade winds further north. Fortunately, we were spared the motoring and kept reasonable breeze by adjusting our route using satellite-based Predictwind routing.

We broke up the passage by stopping at North Minerva Reef (790nm from Opuia, 5 days passage), a 6nm wide doughnut-shaped atoll with a 100m wide entry. It is a reasonably deep (15-25m) anchorage, proving you can't have enough chain in the Pacific. It provides good shelter at low tide and a wobbly one at high tide as the swell washes over the surrounding reef.

As there is no visible land, you are effectively anchored



in the middle of the ocean. Our time there was sensational – snorkelling reefs and wrecks plus enjoying the local lobster. There were 25 yachts anchored there at one stage – not bad for a place that is reputed to have had fewer visitors than the top of Mount Everest!

We made landfall at Nuku'alofa on Tongatapu Island, Tonga's capital, on Friday afternoon. Customs, Immigration, Biosecurity, and Health departments were all keen to finish up for the weekend and we were very grateful to depart the dangerous concrete and metal dock in the small fishing harbour to anchor in the bay off Pangaimotu Island and Big Mama's Yacht Club with around 15 other yachts.

The Yacht Club is currently a ramshackle building, having been destroyed by a tsunami in 2022. They were very excited to have the rally business to help them rebuild. Their feast night was filled with superb food, music from the police band, and lots of dancing.

The islands of Tonga are broken into four separate groups: Tongatapu/Eau, Ha'apai, Vava'u, and Niuaotepapu. Tongatapu in the south is the economic capital and is the most developed area, but still with mostly dirt roads where pigs, chickens, and dogs roaming freely. The 'supermarkets' stock shelf stable foods and all fresh food is purchased at the markets.

About 90% of the supermarkets are Chinese owned. Tonga only produces 40% of its financial needs, the remainder coming from international aid (US, AU and NZ). It's a poor Kingdom in general but a happy one.

Tongans are smiling, warm, and generous people. We struggled to walk anywhere as we were always offered lifts in cars.

The kids are always interested in you, especially in the more remote islands – walking through the villages you end up like the Pied Piper with a trail of kids behind you. Everyone goes to church on Sunday dressed in their best – complete with traditional Tongan woven outer garment tied around the waist.



The singing in church is a real experience – harmonic and full voiced. Nothing else happens on Sunday as it is day of rest and family feasting – all shops are closed, no water sports, no fishing, or housework is permitted.

Tonga has no marina facilities and little in the way of a boating industry. There is no potable water supply for yachts, so a water maker is essential. All fuel is acquired using jerry cans lugged to the local service station via dinghy and taxi. There is limited rubbish collection and no recycling of any sort, so sadly litter is overwhelming (Andrew has decided to clean up only discarded things from beaches with a tally of 130 so far). There is also no veterinarian in Tonga at all – thus the hundreds of dogs, with bitches being permanently pregnant or nursing.

Our initial day on shore was 'exciting' with an earthquake and tsunami evacuation resulting in us being delivered to the middle of the island by the local police. We stood on not very elevated land with hundreds of frightened school children (suffering from 2022 flashbacks), waiting for the worst. Luckily the threat passed without major incident and *Skylark* remained safe on anchor where we had left her. All manned yachts had evacuated the anchorage to deeper waters, but on reflection, should the worst have happened, all efforts would have been too late and insufficient.

The Ha'apai island group, 90nm north, are low sandy beached islands covered with coconut palms. Only

a fraction of the islands are inhabited and those who live there are mostly subsistence farmers. Housing is ephemeral in nature – possibly due to the threat of cyclones and tsunamis that will destroy all at whim.

While we were there, volcanic activity had created a new land mass nearby and the local volcano was off limits and on constant watch. Even the uninhabited islands are home to pigs and chickens.

There are some small 'resorts' (slightly rustic, maybe 3-star) that have solar or generator power, tank water, and usually have a focus such as kite surfing, diving or whale watching/swimming. There are many fabulous snorkelling and diving spots among these islands in magnificently clear water. It is easy to spend weeks exploring as the winds allow.

Food provisioning is very limited here and expensive. There are shops with shelf stable products in the main town Pang'gai, Lifuka Island. Fresh produce is usually only what the locals can grow in excess of their needs (bananas, taro, cassava) at the local markets. It was not unusual that the only thing available is a hand of bananas or some cassava.

By the time we were ready to move on to Vava'u, we were definitely ready for some fresh food! We have become bread bakers, coconut collectors, and know 101 ways to eat coconuts and cabbage and sweet potato.

Continued Page 18

Sailing in Tonga

We wish we were more successful at fishing – so far, we have only landed one mahi mahi and it was delicious.

The Vava'u island town of Neiafu 100nm further north, have set up to cater for the yacht sailing season. There are numerous businesses focused on mooring hire (the harbour is deep), food, gas and fuel provisioning, dinghy accessible restaurants and bars, diving, fishing, and whale watching. We got involved in some community works as part of the rally with beach cleaning, endangered bird counting, and fund raising for veterinary services.

The surrounding islands are only 1.5 hours of motoring in any direction from Neiafu, with many different anchorages on a mix of inhabited and uninhabited islands. Unlike Ha'apai, these islands are steep sided and ringed by reefs, coral heads and deep bays without sandy beaches. The snorkelling and diving opportunities are excellent in crystal clear turquoise water (Blue Lagoon is as blue as it comes).

Villages in some of the islands make money by hosting a Tongan feast when enough anchored yachts make it worth their while to kill a pig. They are more than happy to trade bananas, papaya, plantain, and breadfruit for money. Coconuts are a free to collect and abundant and many yachts carry a bush knife (machete) to open them like the villagers do (Andrew uses an angle grinder!).

The vast surrounding reef and island systems provide adequate shelter from swell, however, there are plenty of obstacles to avoid. A laptop with satellite imagery and GPS feed is considered essential for this part of the world. This allows you to view reef systems, coral heads/bommies, estimate water depths, and compare positions with regular charts, which are often inaccurate.

It is not unusual to have reefs missing from navigation charts and the consequences can be dire (unfortunately,



one Rally yacht was lost and several others worse for wear so far). We always traverse reef systems with the sun high in the sky and a person on the bow wearing polarising sunglasses.

Having visited 28 Tongan islands, it was time to move on. We used Neiafu, Vava'u as our launching ground for the three-night sail to Savusavu, Fiji, where new adventures await.

– Andrew and Claire Heenan

ALWAYS LOOKOUT FOR SEAGOING SHIPS

DO NOT pass within 30 metres of the side or stern of a seagoing ship

30m

30m

30m

- Before heading out check the Daily Vessel Movements at portauthority.com.au/lookoutnewcastle
- Keep monitoring the safety broadcast from Newcastle Harbour VTC (24/7) VHF Channel 09

STAY FAR AWAY TO BE IN SIGHT

From the ship's bridge it is hard to see smaller boats. Some ships will have blind spots ahead of up to 400 metres. Stay far enough away to be in sight.

Line of vision from bridge

Blind distance ahead

BE AWARE IT'S THE LAW

Under NSW marine legislation you are required to never obstruct, restrict or impede access to:

- any fairway or channel
- any wharf or other landing place
- the safe navigation of a vessel
- the handling of cargo or movement of passengers
- launching, removal, securing of a vessel.

It is an offence to:

- fail to comply with the directions of the harbour master or any person acting under the direction of a harbour master
- operate a vessel in any navigable waters negligently, recklessly or at a speed or in a manner dangerous to the public.

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Maintaining your vessel

As the weather starts to warm up, many of us are eager to get our vessels back out on the water. Before heading out it's important to do a thorough check to ensure both your vessel and safety equipment are in good working order, particularly if your vessel has been in storage.

A well-maintained vessel will help ensure the safety of you and your crew and passengers when out on the water. Remember it's the skipper's responsibility to make sure the vessel and all safety equipment is in good working order. If anything needs fixing or replacing, do it before you head out.

Our friends at Marine Rescue have reported that the major causes of breakdown for powered vessels include mechanical failures, issues with motor, flat battery and fuel shortage or contamination – all of which could've been avoided if these vessels had been regularly checked and maintained.

So, each time you plan to head out, take time to thoroughly check your battery, motor, fuel, water pump, lights, vessel structure. You must also ensure all safety



equipment carried is in good condition, is in date and each item meets the appropriate specifications and standards. This includes checking that the lifejackets are maintained and serviced regularly in accordance with manufacturer specifications, to ensure you and your crew and passengers can rely on them if you ever need to. A comprehensive list of how to check and maintain your vessel and safety equipment is available on our website.

Have you planned ahead for your day out?

You're the skipper, you're responsible. Visit lifejacketwearit.com.au to plan your day and prepare for common risks.



ARE YOU BOAT READY?
PLAN ○ PREPARE ○ PREDICT



Welcome aboard Marine Rescue Newcastle!

This edition I'd like to focus on the training our Unit does to better qualify our members to assist the boating public.

RADIO STREAM

When you join MR Newcastle, you are required to be trained in our radio room and become a qualified Marine Rescue Radio Operator. Marine Rescue NSW, as a registered training organisation, puts our radio operators through a very lengthy training regime where each trainee is 'buddied' up with other qualified operators who take each trainee through the necessary stages until all prerequisites are met. The trainee is then ready to undertake the very vigorous Radio Operators assessment.

This assessment, when successfully completed, sees the trainees issued with their Unit(s) of Competency and epaulettes and are added to the roster to man the radio room.

There are two other levels for the Radio Stream that are available to radio stream members – the Watch Officer, which allows the holder of this position to manage more involved incidents and manage the radio room in times of more intense incidents, and SarSo (Search & Rescue Support Officer), who, when qualified, can operate in the search and rescue coordination field.

BOAT STREAM

Those members who wish to follow the boat stream as crew members still have to obtain their radio competency but can also undergo the various Units to become a qualified Marine Rescue crew member.

Crew trainees undertake months of on-water training, as well as completing various crew-learning guides to fulfil the theory side of the stream. Crew members must be able to take charge of the rescue vessel should something happen to the coxswain as well as having the numerous skills necessary to help vessels in need of assistance.

Once ready for the assessment, the trainee is put through an operational assessment by a higher rated and qualified assessor and, when successful, the trainee receives their Unit of Competencies and epaulettes. Once this has been obtained, the member becomes a part of the qualified list to be called on for assists and rescues. All MR rescue vessels must have a minimum number of qualified crew to be on the water.

Following crew certification, members can then work towards the next level, being Leading Crew, which



will allow them to command certain small Rescue Vessels and in limited plying ranges to sea.

After that there is the MR Coxswain, who can take vessels like Newcastle's *NC30*, a 10-metre 600HP vessel, up to 30 nautical miles to sea.

Finally, there is the MR Master Coxswain who also has external qualifications and able to master some of our larger vessels.

The picture shows an AIS picture of just one training session *NC30* and

trainees undertook recently. During such sessions, the radio operators at our Radio Base are also involved via many transmissions through our internal radio network.

Should you or any of your friends be interested in joining our organisation, please feel free to contact our Membership Officer, Stuart, via: newcastle@marinerescuensw.com.au



To receive up-to-date information on weather warnings, safety tips, boating tips and more. www.facebook.com/MarineRescueNewcastle

Save the Dates

13 Oct	Powerboat Handling Boat Licence
20 Oct	Bay Sailing and Ocean Pointscore
21 Oct	Oatley Fine Wines
4 Nov	Prepare for Sailing at Night
10 Nov	Bay Sailing and Ocean Pointscore
22 Nov	Hunter 100
24 Nov	Safety & Sea Survival Full Course
25-26 Nov	She Sails Open Regatta
9 Dec	Peter Drayton Wines
15 Dec	Members Christmas Party
2025	
16 Feb	Bay Sailing and Ocean Pointscore
2 Mar	Bay Sailing and Ocean Pointscore
22-24 Mar	SailFest Newcastle
30 Mar	Newcastle Port Stephens Race
31 Mar - Apr 5	SPS Passage Series
25-27 Apr	SPS Windward-Leeward Series
2-4 May	SPS Bay Series

Security Phone Numbers

Emergency

- Police – (02) 4929 0999
- Water Police – (02) 4984 9012
- Fire Department – 000
- Dockmaster – 0408 299 512

Club Directory

- **General Inquiries** (9am - 5pm)
(02) 4940 8188 – info@ncyc.net.au
- **Licensed Club**
(02) 4940 8188 – barmanager@ncyc.net.au
- **Marina Manager** (8am - 4pm 7 days)
0408 299 512 – dockmaster@ncyc.net.au
- **Administration** (9am - 5pm 5 days)
(02) 4940 8188 – info@ncyc.net.au
- **Functions** (9am - 5pm)
(02) 4940 8188 – functions@ncyc.net.au





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The NCYC's Nautica Dining is a fresh culinary experience in every sense, with award-winning Executive Chef Luke Carpenter leading an eclectic and dynamic kitchen crew

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Looking at getting your kids into sailing? Tackers is the perfect pathway onto the water. We run programs throughout the school terms on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and condensed programs in the school holidays. Bookings are now open, so get in quick as they sell out fast!

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