

# Sailability in Australia

## Towards a coordinated national approach

*The objective of this document is to provide a policy recommendation from the Sailability Australia Committee to the Yachting Australia Board focusing on a national approach to Sailability into the future.*



## Index

• The aims of Sailability in Australia .....	3
• The relationship of Sailability within the existing sports infrastructure:	
- Yacht Clubs.....	4
- Class Associations.....	4
- State & Territory Member Yachting Associations .....	5
- Yachting Australia .....	5
- Sailability Australia Committee .....	6
- Sailability State and Territory Organisations.....	6
- Yachting Australia Committees.....	6
- Australian Paralympic Committee.....	7
- ISAF & IFDS .....	7
- Sailability World .....	7
- Special Olympics .....	8
- Diagram 1 – Sailability Linkages.....	9
• The role of Sailability in participation / competition pathways.....	10
- Diagram 2 – The Relationship of Sailability to Development Pathways .....	12
- Diagram 3 –Development Pathways for Able Bods and People with a Disability .....	13
• Inclusion & integration.....	14
• The role and activities of Sailability in respect of:	
- Participation programs .....	16
- Training .....	16
- Instructing & Coaching.....	16
- Events .....	17
- Safety.....	17
- Volunteers .....	17
- National Standards for Procedures and Program Guidelines .....	18
- Insurance .....	18
- Communication & Promotion .....	18
- Sustainability.....	19
• Administration & professional staff support.....	20
• Finance .....	20
- Appendix 1 .....	21
- Appendix 2.....	23

## **The aims of Sailability in Australia**

It is proposed to add the following as a brief Mission Statement preceding the Sailability Australia Terms of Reference:

“To promote sailing as a fun, safe and rewarding activity in which people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups can participate at a social, recreational and competitive level; and to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities within all mainstream yachting activities”.

Two key objectives of Sailability Australia are:

### 1. Grow Participation in Sailing by:

- Attracting participants from non-traditional groups – people with a disability (this group has historically been the focus of Sailability programs), the very young, elderly, people from lower income families, ethnic groups that are not sailing or water-sport oriented (including indigenous Australians), using a non-traditional, non-threatening approach to introduce people to sailing as a new leisure activity as well as a sport.
- Sailability programs enabling new participants to quickly, safely and easily progress to sailing independently and as part of a crew with a minimum of instruction and with the minimal use of technical yachting jargon
- Adopting the “Sailing For Everyone” approach, helping to make the sport more attractive and inviting to a broader range of potential participants, both people with a disability and their able-bodied counterparts. This is making a statement about Sailability’s goal of inclusion and may apply equally to other participation programs.
- Recognising that most people with a disability have able-bodied friends, parents, children or siblings with whom they would enjoy participating in the sport and Sailability programs are an ideal opportunity for this to happen

### 2. Helping the mainstream sport of sailing to become more inclusive by:

- Growing the number of mainstream yacht clubs that conduct inclusive Sailability programs (or inclusive participation or competition programs by any name) in a strategic manner.
- Promoting introductory, participatory programs for people of all ages and abilities that link into clear development pathways
- Working toward seamless integration with yacht clubs, training programs, competition, and all aspects of the sport structure including policy making

### ***Recommendation to Yachting Australia:***

- That the Sailability Australia Terms of Reference be amended to include a Mission Statement and the Objectives reflect the above.

# The relationship of Sailability within the existing sports infrastructure

## Yacht Clubs

An important objective is to encourage more Australian yacht clubs to assess the appeal and accessibility of their clubs to non-traditional groups and subsequently for clubs to develop accessible / inclusive Sailability programs

There is a need to change the language of Sailability - to stop talking about Sailability 'Branches' and start talking about Sailability 'Programs'. The programs, and their on-water sailing and on-shore social activities, are what define Sailability - not the venue or organisational structure.

It is poor use of resources to duplicate infrastructure, and a more sound approach to integrate the programs within the existing yachting structures, of which yacht clubs are the principal unit.

Therefore there is a need to educate clubs and ensure that participation level Sailability programs dovetail with existing club programs and pathways, enhancing overall participation and the utilisation of physical resources.

Historically however it has not been the yacht club structure developing and expanding Sailability programs but the Sailability organisations themselves. It is within a minority of States/Territories that there has been a significant involvement from the MYAs and that the Yacht Clubs have taken carriage of their own Sailability programs.

The focus should be on building the number of programs run at yacht clubs, but the existence and potential of 'Independent Sailability Branches' (where they operate independently of any affiliated yacht club) and their capacity to draw new people into the sport and link with nearby yacht clubs should be recognised. Their isolation also needs to be kept in mind.

*Suggestions for establishing Sailability Programs at Yacht Clubs –Appendix 1.*

## Class Associations

Class Associations manage national and international level competition. Sailability should therefore encourage participants who have the desire to compete at an advanced level to become involved in class association coaching and racing programs as a means of developing their skills and experience.

According to the 2006 Sailability Australia Survey, the programs employed the following boat classes:

Access Classes (International 2.3, 303 and Liberty)	348	
International 2.4mR	13	
Sonar	5	
Payne 24(Salvo)	10	
Other (dinghies, daysailers, keelboats etc)	17	(estimate only)

Due to the proportion of Access Dinghies used in its programs, Sailability should maintain a cooperative relationship with the Access Class Association in particular and encourage it to maintain a divisional structure within its events that enables sailors of all ages and abilities to compete at regattas.

The vast majority of Access dinghies are owned by Yacht Clubs or Sailability organisations. As such, Sailability or Clubs are the major providers of competition boats for class events and championships.

## **State & Territory Member Yachting Associations**

The role of MYAs is crucial to the integration of Sailability within the mainstream sport structures. It is through the MYAs that Yachting Australia initiatives developed under Project CONNECT, along with any form of support of national support for the development of Sailability programs, will be directed.

In the past, some MYAs have not fully embraced Sailability and it has evolved as a stand-alone organisation in those States. Whilst the growth of Sailability programs has continued, and with it an increase in participation numbers, the MYAs and State Sailability organisations must be brought within the operational sphere of the MYAs in order to achieve the potential for inclusive programs being established at a greater number of affiliated clubs.

It is recommended that the State Sailability Committee be represented on the MYA Board or vice-versa, and that an annual round-table meeting between each MYA and State Sailability Committee be held.

## **Yachting Australia**

From the Yachting Australia Disability Action Plan (Project CONNECT) January 2005:

*Sailing is a sport that can be enjoyed at a variety of levels by participants of all ages, regardless of ability. Yachting Australia is committed to presenting solutions to all of our affiliated Yacht Clubs and Training Centres to enable them to open their doors to participants with disabilities.....*

*.....We aim to not only give more people with disabilities the opportunity to participate at a grass roots level in this sport, but also to support their progress to High Performance and have the possibility to represent Australia Internationally.*

Through its Disability Action Plan, Yachting Australia has taken some important first steps toward making the mainstream sport of sailing more inclusive and at the same time acknowledging its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Due in large part to the growth of Sailability within Australia over the past decade, sailing has been acknowledged as one of the most progressive sports in terms of providing recreational opportunities for people with a disability. From this strong basis, there is now the potential to develop a Worlds Best Practice approach to inclusion in sport.

Should Yachting Australia wish to rise to this challenge, it could be anticipated that this would be strongly supported by the Australian Sports Commission Disability Sport Unit. There is also an opportunity to showcase this internationally through involvement in the ISAF Connect to Sailing initiative.

Dependent, of course, upon appropriate funding being available, a national program could potentially be implemented involving:

- National co-ordinator possibly supported by State/Territory co-ordinators
- MYA / Club Information / Education Sessions
- MYA / Club Support
- Delivery & support of 'inclusive coaching', 'inclusive officiating' and 'opening doors' modules
- Document resources – manuals, guidelines, procedures, forms, brochures and promotional collateral, audiovisual materials
- Sailability Australia and State/Territory Sailability Committee support

### **Sailability Australia Committee**

The current structure of the Sailability Australia Committee, comprising representatives from each State and Territory MYA, offers an ideal opportunity to maintain communication links between the Committee and the MYAs, along with an avenue to encourage engagement between the MYAs and their respective Sailability Committees.

It is recommended that Yachting Australia clearly define and document the roles and responsibilities of the Chair and each of the delegates, including the process for reporting to and from the MYAs and that acceptance of these responsibilities be a condition of appointment.

### **State & Territory Sailability Organisations**

Currently the level of activity and degree of 'connectedness' to their MYAs varies significantly from State to State (and Territory).

It is important that these key organisations, which have done so much to grow participation through Sailability programs, are included in the decision making process and are prepared to implement the changes agreed nationally.

This is a crucial role for the State/Territory delegates to the Sailability Australia Committee.

### **Yachting Australia Committees**

Sailability should refer to other YA Committees for expertise in specific areas and be available to inform other committees as requested. There should be a more formalised process of annual reporting to communicate information about key initiatives between YA committees.

### **Australian Paralympic Committee**

Yachting Australia manages the relationship with the Australian Paralympic Committee. It would be anticipated that the APC would support the development of clear athlete pathways from participation level (Sailability programs) to elite Paralympic competition.

## **ISAF & IFDS**

The International Association for Disabled Sailing (IFDS) has been delegated the role of international authority for disabled sailing by ISAF. The primary focus of the organisation is elite competition through the endorsement of IFDS World Championship events and managing the relationship with the International Paralympic Committee in respect of the Paralympic Sailing competition.

The structure of IFDS and its relationship with ISAF segregates sailors with a disability from the mainstream of the sport. Whilst this is arguably an appropriate structure at the elite levels of sailing, there is significant potential for greater integration of IFDS and ISAF and greater integration of sailors at pinnacle level competition (such as Olympics). Yachting Australia should encourage this.

The IFDS Functional Classification System, used to determine the eligibility of athletes for the Paralympics and IFDS Endorsed events, includes only a small proportion of all disabilities. As such, sailors with an intellectual disability, those who have acquired their disability as a result of ageing, sufferers of chronic fatigue syndrome and a substantial group of sailors with a broad range recognized disabilities are ineligible to compete.

Other than the 2004 YES Europe Conference, and the 2005 YES Asia Conference which were both strongly supported by the Sailability internationally, IFDS has not generated or promoted any specific participation or development initiatives.

Members of the Sailability World Board and the IFDS Executive met in November 2005. It was identified that whereas the IFDS primary emphasis is on Paralympic & World Championship competition, and the focus of Sailability World is on entry level participation programs, both organizations need to work together in cooperation with the MNAs to develop clear pathways through the sport from entry to elite level. In this aim, Yachting Australia has an opportunity to lead by example and provide a blueprint for other MNAs.

Australia is highly regarded within disabled sailing circles as our competitors have always placed well at international events with the Sonar team winning Gold at the Sydney Paralympics, Phil Vardy has been an influential IFDS Vice President for 12 years (retires his year), Sailability Australia member and Sailability World Secretary Jackie Kay is on the Development Committee, and Access Sailing's Chris Mitchell is on the Technical Committee.

## **Sailability World**

The primary aim of Sailability World is to promote "sailing for everyone" worldwide.

The focus of Sailability is on participation and development into new nations. In some countries, Sailability operates as a disabled sailing program (segregated/integrated) although there is a progressive move toward an inclusive approach such as that taken in an increasing number of Australian States and Territories.

Sailability programs have now been established in 15 nations with the majority emerging over the past few years, indicating a strong growth phase. In December 2004, nine nations attended a formation meeting for Sailability World representing widely varying levels of development. Through the YES Europe and YES Asia conferences organized by IFDS with support from Sailability World, emerging Sailability organisations have benefited significantly from the experience of the established nations.

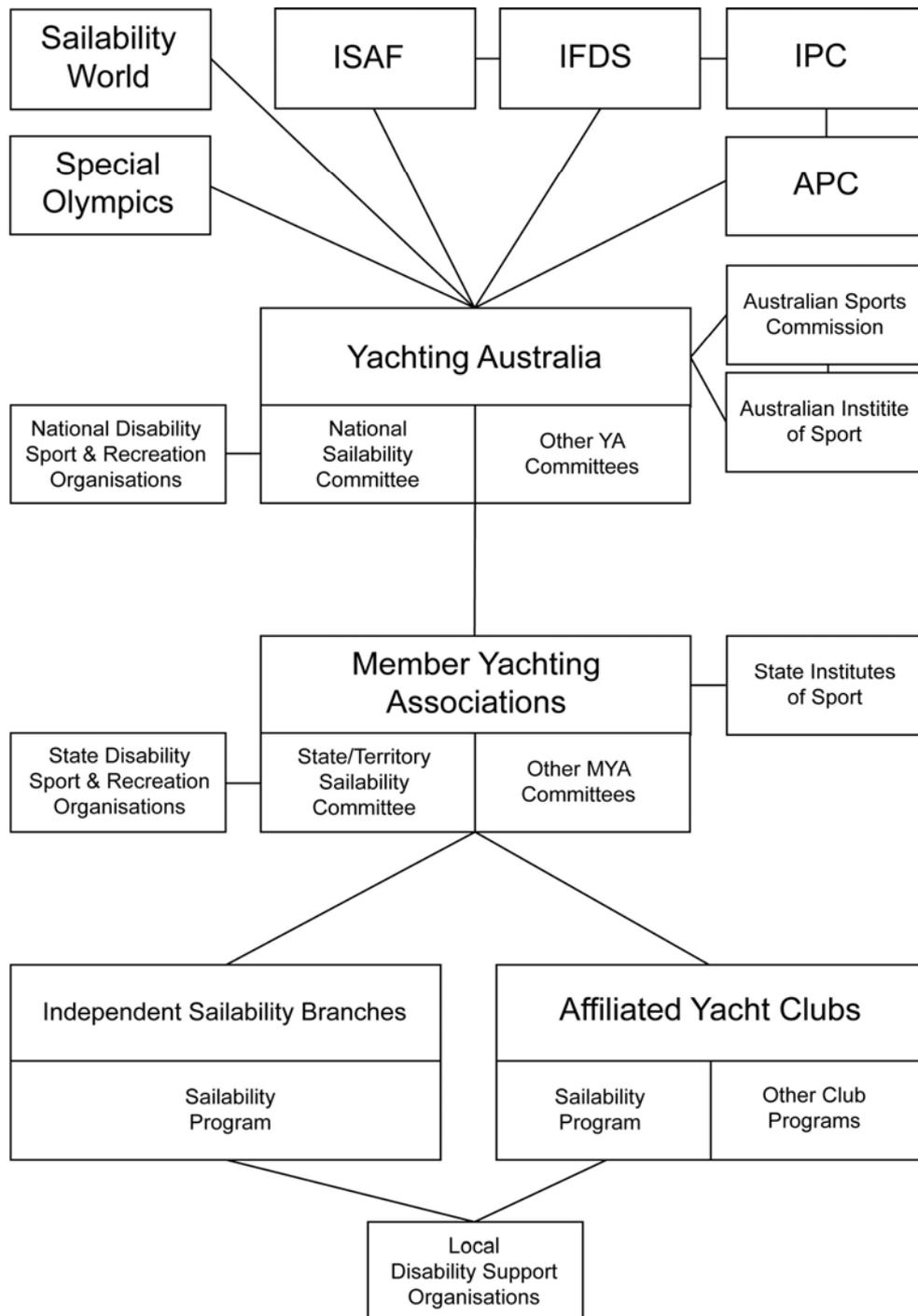
The established Sailability nations (GBR & AUS) have strong links with their MNAs. This is not necessarily the case with the emerging nations and Sailability World provides a forum to encourage them to engage with their mainstream organisations.

## **Special Olympics**

Adoption of sailing as an Australian Special Olympics recognised sport opens a new competitive pathway for sailors with an intellectual disability. This initiative has been led by Sailability Australia members Terry Peek & Jackie Kay and is likely to result in the Access classes, in which Australians are strong competitors, being adopted by Special Olympics International as the preferred competition equipment.

## Diagram 1 - Sailability Linkages

The following schematic illustrates the recommended integration of Sailability within the existing sport structure. It should be noted that Sailability programs are not closely linked with MYAs in all States & Territories



### **Recommendation to Yachting Australia:**

That MYAs are encouraged to maintain close links with Sailability, preferably as an MYA Committee, and encourage the development of Sailability programs primarily through member yacht clubs.

## **Role of Sailability in participation / competition pathways**

In many cases, Sailability can be a participant's first experience of sailing. For able-bodied youth with a sense of adventure, traditional learn to sail methods can be ideal, but for many it is too challenging. Sailability offers a non-threatening means to introduce people of a wide range of ages and abilities to the sport, to build their confidence and develop their basic skills.

### **Participation**

Sailability's national success can be partly attributed to the organisation's acknowledgement that not all participants wish to sail at a competitive level. This approach is equally important for both able bodied and disabled members alike, but particularly so for people with a disability whose daily existence is often a struggle. Many participants enjoy recreational sailing as a leisure activity rather than a competitive sport, providing the opportunity to enjoy sailing as a healthy outdoor and social opportunity.

Often the only racing that recreational sailors take part in are State and National Access Dinghy Championships more for the social opportunity to interact with friends from other clubs. Sometimes participation in these regattas encourages sailors to develop their sailing skills to higher levels.

Another significant aspect of Sailability's participation program are the therapeutic benefits that sailing provides to participants with disabilities who live in supervised accommodation, nursing homes and rehabilitation centres. This includes people who have significant disabilities, those recovering from injuries, the elderly, and many with intellectual disabilities. The health benefits of Sailability programs have been recognized and acknowledged by physiotherapists, occupational therapists and family members. This group of participants in particular benefit from Sailability's inclusive philosophy.

### **Competition Pathways**

Able-bodied participants starting with Sailability programs can progress on to conventional sail training and racing programs. Participants with a disability can also link in to these mainstream programs depending upon their ability, but may benefit from use of Sailability program resources initially.

Recreational Sailability programs can be the first step on a new sailor's development pathway. This may be all that some participants aspire to – just mucking about in sailboats – but there must be avenues available to enable progression - skill development, volunteer involvement or social interaction.

Programs should encourage participants to develop their skills to whichever level they choose. Depending upon the individual, this could include involvement in modified racing, club racing, regional events or State and National Championships. The step to club racing can be progressed through training under the guidance of experienced instructors to ensure the sailor's knowledge and ability will enable them to participate safely. Club level racing is really the commencement of the competitive pathway.

When the developing sailor has the competency to race at a club level, often the Sailability program personnel and infrastructure will continue to help support the sailor's progress in training and racing.

Should a sailor wish to progress beyond that level and demonstrates the talent to be successful at that level, MYA or Yachting Australia coaching personnel should be contacted to advise on the athlete pathway.

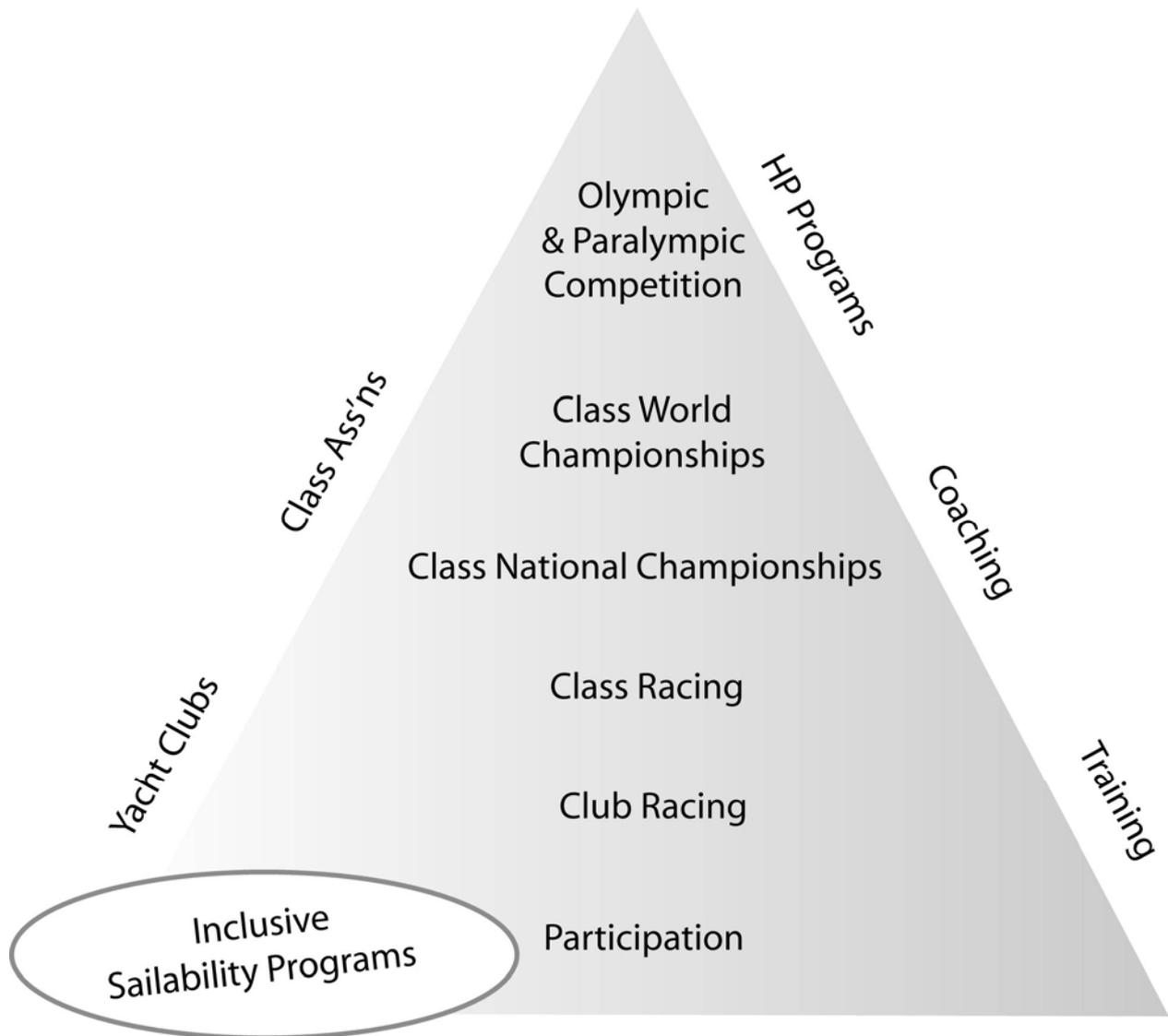
There are a variety of high level competitive opportunities for sailors with a disability who commence their involvement in the sport through Sailability programs:

- Paralympics & IFDS World Disabled Sailing Championships (for the sailors whose disability falls within the 15% or so of disabilities covered by the IFDS Functional Classification System)
- Class World Championships in classes which sailors with a disability regularly compete against, or as part of, able-bodied crews (Sonar, 2.4mR, SKUD 18 and other Access classes)
- General dinghy, catamaran, trailable and keelboat championships as part of the mainly able-bodied fleet
- Blind and Vision Impaired sailing competitions such as the Blind Sailing International (BSI) Fleet Racing format with integrated crews or the autonomous Homerus International Match Racing format
- Special Olympics for sailors with a recognized Intellectual Disability
- Australian Youth Championships for youth and junior sailors who are classified under the IFDS FCS

As a result of Yachting Australia's involvement in Project CONNECT, all Instructors will now undertake 'disability awareness' training and Coaches will undertake an 'inclusive coaching' module as part of their accreditation. This has been an important step toward inclusion of sailors with a disability into the sport's development pathways. The role of Sailability as an introductory program should form part of the Instructor / Coach education.

## Diagram 2 – The Relationship of Sailability to Development Pathways

The following illustrates the position of Sailability within the traditional participation pyramid



### Diagram 3 –Development Pathways for Able-Bods and People With a Disability

The following illustrates the development pathways for different participant groups. Not included in this diagram are the pathways through match racing, teams racing, ocean racing, boardsailing or, importantly, volunteer roles.



**Recommendation to Yachting Australia:**

- That Yachting Australia recognize the common and shared nature of development pathways for able-bods and sailors with a disability as a key rationale for promoting sport-wide inclusive practices

## Inclusion & integration

According to the Australian Sports Commission, sport development is something Australia has been very good at. Nearly two thirds (9.1 million people) of the Australian population aged 18 years and over participated in sport and physical activities in the 12 months prior to 2002 (ABS).

Australia's results at the elite end of sport (including Paralympic sailing and other sailing disciplines for sailors with disabilities) would indicate that sport at the grass roots level is healthy and proving to be a good foundation for participation and competition. It would be easy to assume that Australia's outstanding success at the elite end of sport for people with a disability was also largely due to a high levels of sport development. But indications are that only a small percentage of the 19% of Australians with disabilities participate in regular sport and physical activity.

One of the first steps any organisation needs to take in order to address the, sometimes complex, issues of inclusion of people with a disability is how to educate their community about the needs of people with a disability. This is often not as easy as it appears, as inclusion is less about doors, toilets and parking spaces and more about attitudes and acceptance.

How do you provide training on positive attitudes? Disability rights groups have, for many years, been promoting appropriate community education as the key to influencing attitudes and behaviours. The premise here being that with appropriate education, the MYAs, clubs, instructors, coaches & volunteers will develop positive attitudes and start changing behaviours and as a result, the sport will become more inclusive. A key to sport development for people with a disability, therefore, is the appropriate education of the clubs and their volunteers to the needs of people with a disability.

The Australian Sports Commission's Disability Education Program (DEP) is the essential starting point for the sport. It promotes greater understanding and awareness of the needs of people with a disability and, importantly, provides a platform for greater inclusion.

Sailing as both a sport and recreation can provide a unique environment where people with even profound disability can achieve independence. The difference in ability between able-bodied and sailors with a disability is significantly reduced when afloat, and this is in contrast with most other recreational pursuits.

The community of sailing can play a significant role in the normalization of many peoples' lives, and assist the de-stigmatisation of disability, through the inclusion of people with a disability within all aspects of the sport.

A number of other points are worth considering:

- Sailability programs in Australia are progressively being conducted on a "sailing for everyone" basis in an effort toward making the sport more inclusive. Conducting "disabled" programs segregates people with a disability from their able-bodied peers and re-inforces stigmatization.
- Most people with a disability have able bodied friends, partners, siblings, parents or children with whom they would like to share activities. In an inclusive environment, the sailors with a disability can participate with and compete against their able bodied friends, all enjoying the social environment that sailing provides. And it creates an opportunity to attract non-sailing friends and relatives to the sport as well.
- Since the introduction of integrated schooling and policies of social integration, the under 30s are more comfortable and accepting of participating in sporting and social activities alongside people with a disability will this situation will continue to develop over time.

- Sailability today is light years removed from the “Crippled Sailors Service” of the early nineties
- If the basic and racing skills are properly delivered through Sailability and club programs, experience indicates that sailors with a disability are welcomed onto the club race course by other competitors.
- The Australian Access Class Association has been established and conducts regattas that are open to able-bodied and sailors with a disability.
- And yacht clubs will benefit from inclusion and integration both socially and financially

*See How People with a Disability Participate (a rough guide to the terminology) – Appendix 2*

***Recommendation to Yachting Australia:***

- That Yachting Australia should continue to implement the inclusive initiatives generated under Project CONNECT

## **The role and activities of Sailability**

### **Participation programs**

Introductory and participation programs for people with a disability are the primary role of Sailability. Programs should teach the very basic skills, and provide sailing opportunities that are fun, safe and enjoyable. For those sailors who wish to progress their skills toward involvement in competitive sailing, Sailability should provide a link to general club programs or class based activities.

Sailability programs provide regular participation sessions for groups of people with a disability. These activities are often held on weekdays and are often organised through disability support agencies, special developmental schools, or institutions. Participants in these segregated programs should be encouraged to also take part in inclusive or integrated programs at other times.

A club's ability to provide activities midweek and/or weekends often depends upon a club's volunteer pool dictating when and how often the Sailability program can operate. It is not uncommon for retired volunteers provide manpower for mid week activities, while volunteers who work provide the labour resource for weekend activities.

### **Training**

Whilst Sailability is seen primarily as an introductory participation program for people with a disability, in some club environments it may also be an appropriate environment for the delivery of basic training programs such as the Yachting Australia 'Get Into Small Boat Sailing' levels 1-3.

Instructors should be accredited and have undertaken the DEP Disability Awareness module. It is also recommended that other program volunteers undertake this training.

Volunteers involved with transferring sailors from wheelchairs to boats should be trained in the safe use of the equipment and the needs of the sailors.

Sailability programs should be seen as an adjunct, or introduction to, regular yacht club training programs rather than operating in competition with them. If fees are charged for a club's regular training, then any equivalent training conducted under the Sailability program should also charge a fee. If fee relief is provided for Sailability participants in cases of financial hardship, similar provisions should be provided for participants in regular club programs.

### **Instructing & Coaching**

In the interests of successful long term integration of participants within mainstream sailing, and in particular racing activities, Sailability programs have a responsibility to ensure their sailors are adequately trained and are sufficiently competent so as they are not a hazard to themselves or to others.

Where sailors who have been introduced to the sport through Sailability, and may have received training in basic boat handling and racing skills, are at a point where coaching is being sought, this should ideally be delivered by mainstream club or class coaches. At this point in a sailor's development, they should become fully integrated within the mainstream structures of the sport, provided there is adequate support for the participant's disability. Sailors with a disability also need to be fully aware that they will be competing on equal

terms, possibly in mixed fleets with larger yachts. Other competitors will be expecting them to understand and observe the Racing Rules of Sailing.

## **Events**

It has largely been Sailability programs around the world that have enabled participation and competition in the Access classes to grow and develop to the point that there was a need for ISAF and MNA affiliated class associations to manage the competitive aspects. Sailability programs have been and still are the source of the majority of competitors, boats and support volunteers for Access Class events due to the widespread use of the Access 2.3 and 303 classes in particular. However, the Australian Access Class Association is only a relatively new organisation and it still relies upon the support of the Sailability and club network to conduct its Championships.

For the conduct of major disabled and integrated sailing events such as IFDS and Class World Championships, the IFDS Event Management Handbook has been found to be invaluable. The role of staging major events is best placed in the hands of a major club with the experience and infrastructure for large championships. The support of experienced Sailability volunteers will nevertheless be an important aspect of the success of the event. The IFDS handbook can also be adapted to lesser events.

## **Safety**

The duty of care involved in conducting a Sailability program is no more or less than for any other sailing activity. There are however many additional considerations. Typically, Sailability participants may have reduced mobility or sensory perception (such as blindness or hearing loss). Physical access, communication and procedures may therefore be significantly different to traditional participation or training programs.

It should be recognized that a person with a disability has the same right as an able-bodied participant to make informed decisions regarding their sailing activities. This is known as the “dignity of risk”, or simply stated, sailors with a disability should not be wrapped in cotton wool.

Standards of volunteer training and accreditation, along with boat and personal safety equipment, should be in accordance with Yachting Australia Safety Prescriptions and State/Territory marine laws.

## **Volunteers**

Sailability program volunteers, like all volunteers, should be suitably trained, be provided with appropriate equipment and facilities, and be acknowledged for their contribution.

An important philosophy of Sailability is the empowerment of all participants. Sailability programs encourage everyone to contribute to the program in whatever capacity they are able. In many cases, those who are able-bodied manage the physical aspects of activities and participants with a disability will take on administrative roles such as volunteer co-ordination, treasurer, club president etc. This has been a key feature of Australia’s success with Sailability as most programs promote the full inclusion of all participants, at all levels of operation.

The popularity of Sailability programs can place a heavy load on volunteers when only a small ‘core’ group are involved in multiple days each week. Where a larger pool of volunteers can be assembled, attention needs to be paid to training and coordination. Maintenance of equipment becomes an issue with larger programs and this can place an additional load on volunteers.

In many cases, participants' carers, parents and other family members can be encouraged to assist with program activities.

Volunteers are Sailability's most precious resource and should be enthusiastically welcomed. It is important that a sense of camaraderie is built up by having social functions, both with & without the participating sailors. Non sailing volunteers should be encouraged to learn to sail - to enable them to safely assess sailing situations & be able to pass on their sailing knowledge to new participants. Ideally, volunteers should not be asked for any fees or payments.

It is recommended that Sailability Australia make use of the resources of Volunteering Australia in order to provide an additional source of volunteers and resources that can be directed to the various programs around the country.

## **National Standards for Procedures and Program Guidelines**

Several State & Territory Sailability Organisations have developed detailed procedure manuals and program guidelines, notably NSW, VIC & WA.

It is recommended that Sailability Australia, with the support of Yachting Australia, consolidate this material and make it available electronically with sections downloadable from the Yachting Australia website.

## **Insurance**

Public Liability Insurance is mostly an issue where Sailability programs operate independently of an existing yacht club and must cover the principal cost of cover without a larger participation base.

Volunteer personal accident insurance can also be seen as an issue where Sailability volunteers are not affiliated with Yachting Australia where YA members enjoy the personal accident cover associated with Silver Card Membership.

Marine insurance costs are also generally reduced where a Sailability program is conducted by a yacht club.

It is recommended that Sailability Australia in conjunction with Yachting Australia investigate the possibility of a national insurance scheme for public liability, volunteer personal accident and marine insurances to obtain the lowest possible price for the benefit of Sailability programs

## **Communication & Promotion**

A sense of national unity has benefits in terms of esprit de corps, in terms of mutual understanding and cooperation. But, if we are to fulfill the goals of growth and sustainability that we and Yachting Australia seek to achieve, that sense of unity also needs to be matched with a strong national identity. A strong national identity, promulgated through strong and consistent branding of Sailability across Australia will become important as we move into a more commercial, more professional phase. For Sailability Australia to move to next level, but not communicate its vision, its role, and its achievements would be to sell short the efforts of the team involved.

During 2005, it became apparent that Graeme Adam, the Sailability NSW Public Relations Officer was gradually de facto taking on tasks with a national coverage and this has only increased in 2006. There is a need for this responsibility to be upgraded to a more formal

and planned level with a scheduled public relations plan. Such a program was outlined in the paper put to the early April 06 SA meeting by Graeme.

Promotional emphasis should be at a State and local level by MYAs and clubs where support can be better identified & leveraged.

Whilst it is understood that Yachting Australia has many competing priorities, Sailability is almost invisible on the YA website and it is recommended that changes be effected to increase the activity's profile.

## **Sustainability**

The period 2000 – 2003 saw a lack of national leadership for Sailability in Australia yet the number of programs and participation numbers continued to grow. In order that development happens in a coordinated and orderly fashion however, it is important to maintain focus on a strategic vision. It is recommended that a Strategic Plan for Sailability Australia be prepared in association with the Yachting Australia Strategic Plan development or review processes. The Sailability Australia Committee should have carriage of this section of Yachting Australia's Strategic Plan and the MYAs should ensure that their delegates are committed to the vision and will actively work to the plan's implementation.

In order that the objectives set out during Yachting Australia's involvement in Project CONNECT are realized and that MYA's and local Sailability Programs are provided with coordinated support, a National Coordinator position is essential. Ideally this would be supported by a series of State/Territory or Regional Coordinators.

Funding for professional support of Sailability at a national level would initially need to be sourced via Government grant or some form of sponsorship. However the sustainability of this type of support is reliant upon revenue being generated from within unless recurrent funding can be secured from the Australian Sports Commission for this purpose.

Other than the small percentage of Sailability participants who affiliate through a yacht club for the purposes of competing in Access Class Championships, individuals taking part in Sailability programs do not contribute to costs of sport administration beyond the local level. Due to the range of ways in which people participate at Sailability – as members, as occasional 'casual' sailors, as part of an organized group etc – it is unlikely that the imposition of a mandatory State/Territory standard affiliation fee would have anything but a negative impact on participation. It is recommended that a Membership Fee Structure be developed in order to meet the annual expenses shortfall of effective national support for Sailability.

One of the resources that is currently duplicated in some States and non-existent in others is a manual of procedures and guidelines for Sailability program committees and volunteers. It is recommended that the compilation of a comprehensive online resource of information for Sailability programs be managed at a national level to ensure that a consistent approach is being taken across the country.

The greatest threat to the sustainability of Sailability programs at a local level is volunteer availability. This can sometimes be fragile because committees & key volunteers change & there is a need to ensure there is sound leadership and volunteers feel their contribution is valued and is acknowledged. A succession plan at leadership level is important to preserve sustainability and methods for achieving this should be included in National Sailability Program Guidelines.

## **Administration & Professional Staff Support**

Professional administrative support or program coordination at a club level is desirable, however in most cases the income from programs cannot justify a separate position. Currently funding for operation of Sailability programs at the local level is achieved with support being obtained from Local Government, service clubs, merchants, philanthropic organisations, State Government funding bodies etc. However the State and Territory Sailability organisations rarely are able to secure ongoing financial assistance.

National coordination of the Sailability program could be undertaken by a single individual. Ideally however, that person would be supported by a number of MYA based Regional Development Officers focused on educating clubs and volunteers about inclusion and the opportunities for establishing Sailability programs, in addition to supporting existing programs.

Clearly, annual recurrent funding of a significant magnitude is not sustainable, nor is such a level of income likely to be drawn entirely from the participants unless a) participation through Sailability programs is further increased by extending the number of clubs offering programs (currently less than 10% of affiliated clubs have a Sailability program connected to them), and b) that some form of affiliation fee is levied on program participants.

## **Finance**

In most cases, local Sailability programs obtain funding for capital items such as boats, hoists, jetties, ramps and building modifications via corporate sponsorship, service club donations, private donations or (for major items) government funding programs. Operating expenses such as insurance, support boat fuel, maintenance, volunteer uniforms etc are usually covered by participant fees.

At an MYA level, different State / Territory Governments take varied approaches to funding. Some will fund capital items, whereas others will only provide program funding. In most cases however, this has not been ongoing and is, at best, a year to year prospect.

It is recommended that Yachting Australia should continue to pursue funding at the national level to support the development of the national Sailability network.

### ***Recommendation to Yachting Australia:***

- That Yachting Australia should continue to pursue funding at the national level to support the development of the national Sailability network.

## **Appendix 1 - Recommendations for establishing Sailability Programs at Yacht Clubs**

Most Yacht Clubs are incorporated, operate specifically for the benefit of members who are the "shareholders", and generally not for profit in approach but aim to promote the sport of boating with varying degrees of commitment to sailing as opposed to power boat activity. Hence organised sailing for those with a disability may initially present a challenge for clubs because most candidates will not be financial members and the Club committees will probably have misgivings concerning physical risk, insurance implications, access modification costs, equipment costs, volunteer requirements and the potential general impact on members. These issues are generally a result of ignorance of the requirements and the potential for the Club to benefit from such a venture. Whilst this can be managed if the attitude is positive, it should be recognised that Clubs cannot be forced to participate in such programs and that the committees are answerable to the membership.

To successfully introduce and maintain a successful Sailability program in an established club it is necessary to gain the members support for and understanding of what is involved. One way to achieve this is to identify a senior committee person who is prepared to be the champion of the program and to put a comprehensive proposal to members which defines the aims and objectives but more particularly the costs and responsibilities involved. It should not be promoted as a "do good or feel good" activity but rather an integral part of the club's sporting program along with dinghy, keelboat, match racing, teams racing etc. It is appropriate to have a board member whose portfolio includes Sailability and if possible to arrange that the Sailability Program be self funded (at least in the initial stages) through sponsorship with the club providing the venue and infrastructure.

The human resources to coordinate, supervise and operate the program can be a mixture of staff and volunteers preferably club members, however the expectations of participants and disability support or recreation organisations may quickly outstrip these if there is not a planned, realistic approach. It is important to guard against disappointment in this regard and to build the program slowly as experience is gained.

Physical assets can often be shared (eg boats jetties etc) and it is a positive indicator if the Sailability program is able to contribute to club assets from its sponsorship. Clubs and their members react positively to success and therefore if sailors with disabilities are successful in sailing events or recognised for positive contributions to society generally, the club benefits. If the Sailability program leads to participants becoming club members, the program will succeed.

Where Sailability programs are already associated with a yacht club, integrated sailing needs to be fostered. Consideration needs to be given to the ratio of recreational sailors to those who wish to compete in integrated sailing, bearing in mind the safety of those sailors in open club competition and the fact that not all who express the wish to race would be competent to do so. Sailability programs should have a training program for their sailors to provide race knowledge and experience before entry into Club racing.

It is also possible to promote the concept of yacht club support of Sailability as the main expression of each club's corporate social responsibility (CSR). If the club doesn't have one, it can be suggested they adopt this approach as a good community citizen. It is recommended that Yachting Australia develop a proforma CSR that includes this.

There are many within the existing Sailability network who would have the experience and knowledge to educate Yacht Clubs who do not have any association with Sailability about the benefits of conducting inclusive participation programs.

One successful model with a focus on competitive sailing is that of Adelaide Sailing Club, a large off-the-beach dinghy and catamaran sailing club with pontoon access for trailerable yachts. Sailability is a standing item on the Sailing Development committee as is Junior Training. Sailability Sundays are held once a month during the season and membership of Sailability SA Inc is encouraged. Disabled sailors may join Adelaide Sailing Club at

concessional rate which includes the YA fee and race in the club program using the club Access dinghies. Groups wishing to experience Sailability during the week can do so at nearby Port Adelaide Sailing Club.

Another example is Sailability Pittwater which is itself affiliated as a yacht club with Yachting NSW. It conducts recreation sailing midweek and on weekends operates development and high performance training in 2.4mR and Liberty classes in addition to conducting club racing.

## **Appendix 2 - How People with a Disability Participate – a rough guide to the terminology**

Segregated – programs and activities for sailors with a disability are provided separate to those of their able-bodied counterparts within the mainstream of the sport and recreation of sailing. There is little interaction between the two groups (ie. separate events & competitions, separate facilities, separate training & development programs etc)

Integrated – Where the level of disability is profound, where people of similar disability types wish to participate together, or for high performance disabled sailing competition, activities can be conducted in parallel with the able-bodied, utilizing the same environments, program structures, coaches etc.

Inclusive – As much as possible, people with a disability participate alongside able-bods, sharing their recreational and competitive pathways and their physical and social environments.

Mainstream – The primary structures of the sport include or integrate people with a disability within all social, recreational, competitive, officiating and administrative aspects.