

MEDIA RELEASE

**For immediate release
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Sailing for the disabled comes to the Great Lakes

Have you ever heard of Sailability NSW?

Sailability NSW is a registered charity that facilitates the participation in sailing and boat usage at social, recreational and competitive levels on inland, estuary and ocean waters, for people with mental and physical disabilities regardless of age and level of disability.

Across Australia tens of thousands of people take part in Sailability's regattas. The organization is run by all volunteers and has many branches across NSW, including Taree, Port Stephens and Port Macquarie.

Now, it's the turn of the Great Lakes and who could blame them! As everyone knows, we have some of the best waterways – pristine, safe and protected and within easy reach.

Sailability NSW State President John Price is a newcomer to the Great Lakes and is very pleased that a branch will be set up at the Coomba Park Aquatic Club site.



Disabled sailers in one of the special sailing boats

"Sailability NSW has been looking for a suitable site with disabled access in the Great Lakes from which to launch our sailing boats," John said.

"Last weekend we held a 'Come and Try' Day and I am pleased that more than sixty people attended from Port Stephens, Tea Gardens and Forster/Tuncurry.

"Our special guest was Melissa Nelson a gold medal winner in sailing at the 2015 Special Games World Championships in Los Angeles.

"Once the branch is fully operational, Sailability NSW intends to run sailing activities on weekdays so that families and carers can bring their disabled colleagues for a wonderful time on the water.

"We expect that to happen in the near future and we invite anyone with an interest in sailing, or even those who have never tried it, to come and have a go and once they do, we know they will be hooked."



At the Coomba Park Sailability Day (l to r) John Peers, Melissa Nelson, Stephen Bromhead, Jo Burns, Georgia Stevenson, Peter Brown, Ivy Eades, Evie Evans and Kelly Price

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Sailability uses special Australian-designed two person Hansa dinghies with weighted keels so they are very stable, easy to sail and very dry and fit two people with ease. The new floating pontoon at Coomba Park is an ideal setting with easy access that enables disabled people to get into a boat without getting wet.

President of the Coomba Aquatic Club Peter Brown said that despite Sunday's cool breeze everyone had a sense of achievement and joy watching the participants on the water.

"This day was all about the disabled, their families and carers and to show them just what can be done by getting on the water to enjoy the freedom of sailing," Peter said.

"The Coomba Aquatic Club is thrilled that the pontoon can be used to assist disabled people access the lake.

"The pontoon was built by the Club's volunteers and a generous grant from the NSW Government and I am pleased to say it is extensively used.

"It was also a pleasure to have our Club patron and member for Myall Lakes Stephen Bromhead come along to welcome our visitors and see for himself how these remarkable Sailability boats in action.

"I join with John Price in welcoming the start of a Sailability NSW branch in the Great Lakes."

Media contact: John Price 0435 795 660