

## **Presidents Report**

1 July 2020

Mark Roberts, President of the International Etchells Class of Australia, updates us with exciting news about the season ahead, and reports on the ongoing hull review under the direction of the international body.

“The Australian Association has been using the winter months to plan for what should be a cracking summer. The instigation of new initiatives, such as the Etchells Championships League, which will allow our fleets to race in home waters, whilst at the same time competing against their mates from across Australia is just one of the exciting new things that our members will have coming into the new season. We also launch a new Australian Championship regatta series, and will continue to promote and assist Corinthians with free coaching at major national events. All in all, it is going to be a very big year, and I can't wait!”

“It's never been a better time to get involved in the Etchells as far as I am concerned, which unquestionably explains why in Australia there has continued to be great growth, even in our off season, with lots of boats being sold to incoming members.”

In January of 2020, Roberts advised that following queries concerning the Australian mould, the Governors of the international body had asked for scans of two boats from each of the three builders to form the basis of an audit of the fleet. “In short, we are still very early on in the process of review, and due to COVID-19, progress has understandably been slow.”

“Further, by reason of limited financial resourcing in the international body, the proposed scanning of six boats was regrettably reduced to only one, which was a boat from the Australian mould. That scan was then compared with a single scan of an Ontario boat that was generated around 15 years ago. Limited by reason of the sample size, and also queries around the robustness of comparing scans in this way, the International Class is now looking to other forms of testing in the hope of advancing the review, and shining light on what is currently pretty unclear in the minds of many.”

“It is of course well known that all three manufacturers have always produced boats that are not identical. This is the product of Etchells being built from three separate moulds across three continents. However, the class rules then ensure that there is indeed a certain 'sameness' by requiring that all Etchells, regardless of the builder, fit within well-defined tolerances that encapsulate the measurement process. I do not feel anything shown to date allows one to make any kind of informed decision about whether the known differences between the three manufacturers is anything other than noise.”

“Personally, I think that the recent success of the Australian boats in overseas events, including Corpus Christi, is without question the product of the talented people involved. Certainly more so than any other single factor. Indeed, the way those guys went about setting up their boats is now being emulated by many Etchells crews across the world. It was pretty revolutionary stuff that followed an 18-month period of intense trial and error with many long hours spent on the water two-boat testing. Watching this unfold was pretty cool to be honest, and from my

perspective, one of the best things was the willingness of these guys to share their knowledge with anyone wishing to ask.”

“Again, that was a product of the guys involved. Anyway, over the next few months we hope to know more, and I promise to update the Australian members if anything new comes to light”, stated Roberts.

On the regatta front, Roberts highlights more exciting racing news. “Of course we are all upset to realise that the Perth World Championships would need to be adjourned until 2021. However, this only provides more opportunity to make this event even bigger and better as far as I am concerned.”

“In the meantime, the Australian fleet will return to the iconic waters of Sydney Harbour in January of 2021 for the Australian Championship, which will be hosted by the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron. With the championship returning to Sydney Harbour for the first time in 15 odd years, this is likely to be a wonderfully exciting and well-attended event.”

"Having also spoken recently with sailing icon, John Bertrand AO, who is planning on getting up to Sydney over the next couple of months for some sailing, this will be the perfect venue to bring us all together again to share some great sailing, a few beers with mates, and lots of fun. Even better still, we have extended an invitation to our wet-sailed Etchells friends to be involved in a show case event.”

In closing, Roberts commented, “As highlighted in our original January release, we remain committed to transparency and delivering accurate information, once this has been firstly determined, and then ratified. In the meantime, we are all looking forward to racing, which is exactly what this great class has always been about - out on the water where it all counts.”