

Commodore's Report

I'm honoured to present the Commodore's Report and in doing so provide an overview of our operations for the half-year ended December 2025.

Firstly, I'd like to begin by thanking the General Committee, Sub-Committees, Volunteers, donors, the General Manager and all employees for their hard work and assistance in providing a high-quality experience for members and guests. These efforts were rewarded with RBYC being awarded Australian Sailing's Victorian Yacht Club of the Year. In addition, other RBYC members were recognised for their contribution to sailing with Peter Coleman, being awarded his second consecutive Victorian Para Sailor of the Year award, John Savage (long-standing member), Laura Harding, and Tess Lloyd (past members), receiving Australian Sailing's Barrenjoey Medal, the sport's highest honour, Rod McKenna was nominated as a finalist for Volunteer of the Year and Rear Commodore Cath Hurley and Club Captain Marnie Irving being nominated as finalists for the She Sails Award. The Club and Peter Coleman were subsequently nominated for Australian Yacht Club of the Year and Australian Para Sailor of the Year respectively. Although we were unsuccessful on both counts, the awards and nominations are a recognition by our peers of the outstanding contribution RBYC makes to Australian sailing.

I'm also pleased to announce that after many years of hard work, the Club has secured a new 21-year seabed lease. Negotiations, led by our GM, Past Commodores Niesje Hees and Peter Strain and our Treasurer, recommenced towards the end of the year with the new lease being signed in February this year. I'd like to, on behalf of members, thank everyone involved for their efforts. Also, I'd like to acknowledge the assistance of Steve Walker CEO, Boating Industry Association of Victoria and James Newbury, the Member for Brighton in the Victorian Parliament for their assistance in supporting the Club with their application. The new seabed lease now includes the Hardstand area, the Race Control tower and the Eastern Channel with the Club now responsible for its maintenance and navigation marks. The new lease terms were acceptable to the Club.

On the water, the first few months of the sailing season were challenging. Late Winter and Spring storms resulted in a number of races, including keelboat, one design, OTB and Twilight races being abandoned. Speaking with other Commodores around the bay, many

commented on how challenging the last six months of the year were for their clubs. We were no exception and, in our case, not only do we not have sailors coming to the club in bad weather, it also adversely affects our hospitality operations. Sailing participation, while OTB and one design level remains strong, it is disappointing to see the small keelboat fleets despite range of sailing opportunities. In an attempt to boost participation, the Club is trialling Sunday Keelboat Racing. On Sunday 26th April, the Club will host a non-aggregate PHS Tower/Tower race starting at 10.30am and depending on the level of interest will schedule additional races in the future.

RBYC once again hosted the Sail Melbourne regatta, which saw 332 sailors from 15 countries, 272 boats, in 19 divisions on competing on five separate courses. As part of Sail Melbourne, Australian Sailing conducted the 2025 Australian Para Sailing Championships for the 2.4m class, as well as hosting their Annual Conference for the Australian sailing team and training camps for a few Olympic classes. RBYC is committed to hosting this regatta and apart from showcasing our Club, it provides an opportunity for our sailors, young and old, and our race officials to broaden their skills. Also, congratulations to all our sailors who have participated and/or cruised near and far on their achievements, including our Stonehaven Cup Team who successfully defended their title.

Membership levels at the end of December 2025 were slightly above levels a year earlier. We have seen growth in Intermediate members offsetting a decline in other member categories.

As our 150 year anniversary celebrations ended, the Club published a wonderful history of the Club written by Don Warner and John Scanlon. The book captured the history, the characters and events that have shaped our Club. Don and John spent the past three years creating a truly special commemorative book. Through hundreds of interviews, pages of documents, and treasured photographs, they've captured the spirit and story of our club like never before. On behalf of members, I'd like to thank Don, John and Past Commodore Niesje Hees for their dedication and creativity in producing a book that will grace coffee tables for generations to come.

The profitability of Club's operations was well above budgeted levels, but the outcome for the 6 months ended December 2025 was lower than the corresponding period in 2024. The operating surplus declined by 11 percent to \$140,023.73. Although revenue increased by 7.0 percent, this

was more than offset by an increase in costs. The main contributors to the increased costs were labour costs and administration and other expenses. In his report to the AGM last year, the Past Honorary Treasurer noted that due to structural changes in our operating costs i.e. a large increase in insurance, minimum wage and mandatory superannuation payments “it will take a number of years to get back to an operating surplus over \$500k.” The Club’s catering operations continue to make a negative contribution of around \$145,000 largely due to wage percentages exceeding targeted levels. This is despite staff levels being actively managed. This is of serious concern to the General Committee who, together with the GM, are looking to make some major changes. The Club’s members continue to enjoy unparalleled access to hospitality facilities compared to other clubs on Port Phillip. However, we cannot continue with the current business model for hospitality and there will be changes ahead but the impact on member services will be kept to a minimum.

The most immediate challenge facing the Club is the poor state of the attenuator. The attenuator has reached its design life and despite ongoing repairs, the recent late Winter and Spring storms have necessitated some immediate repairs and brought forward the timing of its replacement. The GC commissioned a series of reports from Water Technology on key engineering risks and mitigation, replacement options and immediate repair options. The first two reports have been delivered, and we are awaiting the third report. The planning and financing of the attenuator repair and replacement will absorb considerable Club resources and for the time being, the dredging of the marina has been postponed until a clearer picture emerges about the repair options for the attenuator.

In summary, although the Club continues to trade profitably and membership remains strong, profitability is at a level that cannot be sustained in the long term. Moreover, weak consumer confidence, falling household disposable income and rising costs will put additional strain of the Club’s operations in the short term. Nevertheless, we will still have plenty of opportunities over coming months to come down to the Club to sail, swim, or simply enjoying a meal and drinks with friends.

Thank you.

Peter Demura
Commodore
Royal Brighton Yacht Club

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