**SPSN UPDATE**

**INITIAL MARKETING VISIT TO AUSTRALIA**

**DATE:** Nov 15 – 16, 2023

**PARTICIPANTS:** Ross Blackman (Bay of Islands Marina) and Viki Moore (Island Cruising)

**BACKGROUND:** There had been initial discussions between members of SPSN about marketing the concept of cruising the South Pacific islands to Australians. The concept being that the easiest way for Australian cruisers to reach Tonga or Tahiti was via New Zealand. Stephanie explored attending the 2023 Sydney Boat Show but we could not obtain a stand. Subsequent discussions lead to the decision to identify and establish a relationship with marinas/clubs along Australia’s East Coast who would be well suited and keen to host departures and arrivals as current SPSN members do.

Ross had a personal trip to Australia planned for mid-November and Viki agreed that she would join Ross to present SPSN and Island Cruising if appropriate clubs/venues could be identified.

The Cruising Yacht Club of Australia (CYCA) in Rushcutters Bay, Sydney and the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club (RPAYC) in Newport, Pittwater expressed strong interest in hosting evenings and plans were established. Unfortunately the club member organising the CYCA evening got dates confused and this venue was changed to the lounge in a yachties hotel at the last minute.

**Wednesday 15th – Blues Point Hotel**

We had a small group of very keen cruisers. One couple have signed up for the South Island Rally this coming summer then the Island Cruising Rally in 2024.

This was a good practise run for Viki and me.

**Thursday 16th – RPAYC in Newport, Pittwater**

This was a completely different evening. David Williams, Rear Commodore Cruising, and club staff could not have been more accommodating. A large meeting room was prepared with seating, screen and sound system ready to plug and play. David invited us to dinner before the presentation then introduced us to 60+ club members and members of the public who were also welcomed – a 50/50 split.

The audience were super receptive and many questions followed our PowerPoint presentation.

Fortunately there was a cruiser in attendance who had crossed the Tasman to join the 2023 Island Cruising Rally and he spoke very positively about an enjoyable Tasman crossing and a fantastic season in the islands – very helpful to have third party endorsement in the room !!!

Questions were focussed around weather, weather routing, modern communications (IridiumGo vs Starlink), watermakers, seasons, departure points and timing.

One very interesting fact was that Australian officials seem very flexible on departure points so that although Newport is not an official entry/departure port it seemed there would be no problem having officials come to Newport for a rally clearance. Returning to Australia is a different matter and ports of entry are strictly controlled. Also of note was there is no Cat 1 inspection required for Australia yachts departing from Australia.

NOTE: Viki announced at the presentations that she had just purchased the Down Under Rally which incorporates the existing GoEast Rally to Noumea. We discussed the fact that the GoEast Rally could simply be expanded to include Nelson and Opua.

**SUMMARY:**

We found genuine interest in cruising the South Pacific via New Zealand and it appeared that this had not been in most people’s minds. The advent of Predict Wind and weather routers has removed much of the scary stigma the Tasman Sea once held.

There was a very visible display of interest (smiles, comments) when it was pointed out that international cruising yachts did not pay GST while in NZ.

While we were in Australia and since our return Viki has received 5 rally registrations from Australians.

David Williams at RPAYC has expressed strong interest in finding out more about joining SPSN.

Beneteau Yachts Australia (Mr Micah Lane at Flagstaff Marine – Rushcutters Bay) has expressed interest in a presentation to Beneteau owners and prospective owners (the Flagstaff database) at a suitable date in the future. I contacted Beneteau through my past association with the brand in NZ.

Micah tried very hard on our behalf to find a venue close to the CYCA but ran out of time with such short notice. He did however identify the Royal Navy Sailing Association clubhouse in Rushcutters Bay as an excellent venue, he approached them on our behalf and had a very positive response but unfortunately the date we were in Sydney didn’t suit.

During our time in Australia Viki was the keynote speaker at a conference for women involved in the Australian marine industry. She was approached by the CEO of the Australian Boating Industry Assn and asked if she might like to do a presentation at the Sydney Boat Show. After discussion we think that this presentation and presentations at selected clubs/marinas might be a better use of time and money as opposed to paying for an expensive stand at the show. Doing one big talk to many as opposed to lots of small interactions with individuals who may or may not call at our stand at the Boatshow could be more productive. Our reception at RPAYC certainly reinforces this.

FYI I have attached a list of ports of entry/clearance on the east coast of Australia as a guide to where are officials are based and where yachts can easily depart from – ie. rally meeting points.

Overall a very positive response to our first approach to East Coast Australia.

**NEXT STEPS:**

1. Identify additional ports/clubs/marinas who can act as ports of departure for future rallies and will join SPSN
2. Present to interested ports/clubs/marinas
3. Plan SPSN/Rally promotions with appropriate partners starting March/April next year.
4. Promote the promotions
5. In parallel with the Australian promotions sign up SPSN members in Vanuatu and New Caledonia ASAP.

This trip was jointly funded by Ross, Viki and the Bay of Islands Marina. In closing I would like to thank Sharron for her help in preparing the PowerPoint and Viki for her efforts in our joint promotion. I see Viki’s rallies as a critical vehicle for the continued growth and success of the SPSN. If we look back at history SPSN started with the Puddle Jumpers rally ……………

All the best

Ross Blackman

Bay of Islands marina