

Freedom on the Water

By Bob Schahinger, Dis-Able Sailing Inc, *Freedom*

Dis-Able Sailing Inc and its yacht *Freedom* have had a very busy summer since the beginning of 2014. The main focus has been to enable people to go sailing, including racing, irrespective of their ability; this has included participating in State Championships, Women's Series and casual day sailing.



Freedom during pre-start preparations

Women sailing on *Freedom* began during 2010 when a team of women decided to enter the Combined Women's Series at the Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron. This first year was a very successful series. Over the succeeding years a pool of seven women was available to crew *Freedom*. The competition during the past summer was hotly contested by the crew during the racing, but was cheerful and friendly at post racing drinks. *Freedom*, being the smallest yacht in the fleet, did not back down when the wind increased. In fact, *Freedom* excelled in the heavier weather and the crew handled it very well. During one particular race *Freedom* touched the Wreck Buoy and was forced to do a one turn penalty, but in a heat of the moment hiccup, did a two turn penalty! The results were very close during the series and the winner was not known until the final race had been completed and the calculations done. During the presentation, breaths were held as the results were read out and to great elation *Freedom* and her crew won the series by the skin of their teeth. A fantastic achievement!

Every second Monday during the year (depending on the weather and public holidays), Dis-Able Sailing Inc and *Freedom* are host to several people with a disability. They are under the care of an organisation called Northlink which is a Day Options Program of Disability Services (Department for Communities and Social Inclusion). As many as 24 of these people go for a casual sail, or motor if there is no wind, in groups of up to six. Some sit and enjoy their time on the water expecting to see some dolphins, which seems to create a lot of excitement and pleasure, while others count the seals on the end of the breakwater. Others will even help with raising the mainsail and/or participate in steering *Freedom*. It all seems to go very quickly and some are reluctant to leave the boat.



A day sail for visually impaired sailors on Freedom



Freedom's mixed crew at Presentation evening

With a mixed crew of disabled and abled sailors, *Freedom* participated in the Division 2 State AMS Championships, the Inshore Pointscore Series and the Club Division 2 AMS Championship. It seems like a lot of sailing was done but *Freedom's* priority was the Division 2 State AMS Championships. However, after a few wins in the Club Division 2 AMS Championship prior to Christmas the decision was made by the crew that *Freedom* should compete in most of the remaining races after the New Year. *Freedom's* crew of three male and two females for these series comprised of an able sailor steering and another to do the foredeck operations and three other sailors with varying disabilities, including one who was totally blind. With much determination and ever increasing skill levels the crew and *Freedom* won each of these series. This was a credit to the commitment of the crew.

Some of *Freedom's* crew members with a disability now wish to extend themselves by doing some night sailing and possibly participating in offshore racing/sailing. This is what Dis-Able Sailing Inc and *Freedom* are all about - teaching, participating in and enjoying sailing a yacht, no matter the ability of the individual person.

**Sailing:
THE activity for ALL
abilities and ages**