

In This Issue:

- April Photo Board
- The Hansa/Access Journey
- Upcoming Sailing Dates and Special Events
- Our Generous Sponsors
- Committee Members and Key Contacts

Notes from the Editor

In this issue of *Signals*, we share the fascinating perspective on the philosophy of Universal Design, and how these principles shaped the evolution of the Hansa Access dinghy.

Our End of Year Regatta, to be held on Saturday 16th May, marks the final regatta of the season. and everyone is encouraged to enter. The following day, Sunday 17th May we host our Volunteer Recognition Picnic at 1.30pm at Club Totem, Stocklands, where we recognise the outstanding contribution made by our volunteers and supporters. See *page 4* for details on both events.

April Photo Board



You can find full reports about each of our past sailing dates on our website, along with a selection of photographs, under LATEST NEWS.

The Hansa/Access Journey: Universal Design

The Hansa/Access story began more than three decades ago, sparked by the creation of a small, multi-purpose sailboat, envisioned as the perfect introduction to sailing for Asian communities. At the time the designer, Chris Mitchell, was living in Singapore and observed that teaching Asians to sail in the unstable and easily capsizable Optimist dinghy did not make sense. Instead, he imagined a boat more suited to people who traditionally neither swam nor sailed.

Despite these innovative ideas, those managing the sport were uninterested in this change, preferring to emulate Western practices, and this lack of support prompted Chris returned to Australia—a move well-timed with the beginning of Sailability. Chris's boats, featuring ballast keels for stability, joystick steering, and the ability to sail while seated, proved ideal for people with disabilities.

Thus began a symbiotic journey between Access Dinghy, Sailability, and the broader vision of Sailing for Everyone. This approach advocated for the inclusion of disabled people in mainstream sailing, rather than segregating them into separate programs. The aim was to allow people with disabilities to participate as equals.

In 2001 Chris and partner Jackie were contacted from Japan by a Mr Ishi, founder of a group focused on enhancing infrastructure and quality of life for Japan's ageing population, who expressed surprise upon seeing the boats in action. He described them as the finest example of Universal Design he had encountered.

Universal Design is not a rigid discipline, but rather a flexible process that considers everyone's needs from the outset. It does not involve retrofitting existing designs to make them more usable, but instead creates fully inclusive solutions from the beginning. In this context, the concepts of inclusion and exclusion become irrelevant.

This term was new to Chris and Jackie, so they were pleased to discover their work had a name. Their efforts were now recognised as part of a community welfare and social justice project, positioning them as global leaders in Universal Design. They were subsequently invited to present their boats at the 2002 UN Conference on Ageing.

Throughout the history of Hansa, the team has consistently rejected the label of "disabled sailing." That was not the original intent, nor is it the focus today. Instead, their mission is to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to leave behind their disability and join in as equals. The boats were not designed specifically for disabled people, but with their needs in mind.

The Hansa approach stands apart from the typical inclusion versus exclusion debate. Hansa represents an imaginative concept - a slice of harmony and acceptance in action. At its core, the simplicity of Hansa's philosophy is this: If no one is excluded in the first place, there is no need to discuss inclusion.

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Today, Hansa Class boats are sailed in 43 countries, including Antigua, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Estonia, Finland, France, Great Britain, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Oman, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Samoa, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tahiti, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and the United States.

In 2025 the Hansa Club World and International championships were held at the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club in Newport, Sydney and this saw 182 sailors from 17 countries come together for the event. In 2026, more than 50 major regattas around the world are scheduled on the calendar at www.hansaclass.org. The European Championships will take place in Barcelona in September, and the World Championships are set for France in 2027.

Chris and Jackie remain dedicated to producing Hansa boats, consistently responding to the rising global demand. Their approach is anchored in the original Hansa philosophy: “If no one is excluded then there is no need to discuss inclusion.” By adhering to this principle, Chris and Jackie ensure that their boats are designed for everyone, not just specific groups. This unwavering commitment reflects the core values of Universal Design and underpins their ongoing work.



Duke of Edinburgh Award with Sailability Manly

Students who volunteer with Sailability Manly can now fulfil their required volunteering component for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Through this hands-on experience, participants directly contribute to making a meaningful difference in the lives of people living with disabilities.

This partnership is more than just a volunteering opportunity; it gives young people the chance to witness the impact of their efforts. By engaging in community service, students develop a stronger sense of social responsibility and a lasting commitment to supporting others.

For groups of up to 8, you can book quickly and easily via our website!

Go to www.manlysailability.com.au and click on BOOKINGS.

Choose your sailing date from the list and complete the form with your details.

For larger group bookings (more than 8) please reach out to Eli. (demenyeli@gmail.com)

Check our website on the day of your booking to confirm if sailing will be going ahead under current weather conditions

Our Saturday sailing dates are often the least busy, so can be a great option for a relaxed morning of sailing.



Upcoming Sailing Dates

All of our sailing sessions start at 9am and have a 'last sail' time of 11.30am.

Saturday	2 May	<i>Bookings available</i>
Wednesday	6 May	<i>Bookings available</i>
Saturday	16 May	<i>End of Season Regatta</i>
Wednesday	20 May	<i>Bookings available</i>
Monday	25 May	<i>Bookings available</i>
Wednesday	10 June	<i>Bookings available</i>
Saturday	20 June	<i>Bookings available</i>
Monday	29 June	<i>Bookings available</i>
Saturday	4 July	<i>Bookings available</i>
Wednesday	15 July	<i>Bookings available</i>
Monday	27 July	<i>Bookings available</i>

Upcoming Special Events

Season Finale Regatta

The End of Season Regatta is scheduled for Saturday, 16th May and we invite all participants to join for a day of fun and competitive sailing.

To register, please reach out to John via email at jweaver172@gmail.com or phone 0413 507 596.

Volunteer Recognition Picnic

Our annual Volunteers Recognition Picnic is to be held from 1.30pm to 3.30pm on Sunday 17th May at Club Totem, Stocklands, Balgowlah.

This is our chance to say thank you to our wonderful volunteers and supporters, and present 2025-2026 awards to the worthy winners.

Tickets are \$15 per head, RSVP to Eli by 7th May at demenyeli@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

Our Generous Sponsors



BALGOWLAH

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Our deepest thanks to the individuals who have made donations and/or donated their skills and expertise:

- Bruce & Pam Davis
- Maz & Graham Radford
- Helene Francois
- Dr Shue Zhang
- David Webb
- Brian Stitt
- Wilma Johnson
- Betty Baines
- Jeff Smit, Premier Automation