

August 2026

Edition 231

Edited by John Weaver

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Notes from the Editor

At Manly Sailability we are blessed with some very dedicated, long-serving volunteers who don't always get the recognition and thanks they deserve. One such person is Helene Francois and her involvement and contribution to Manly Sailability is outlined on page 2 of this issue of *Signals*.

With the Manly Yacht Club wharf being repaired our sailing days have been disrupted, however, due to the late start on the reconstruction, some volunteers have been able to enjoy impromptu regattas on a Saturday morning – a fun way to hone their sailing and their racing skills. (page3).

Erratum: In the last issue of *Signals* Manly Sailability recipients of the Sailability NSW long service pins were listed, however in a major oversight Ken Boyes was not included as a 10-year recipient. The editor apologises to Ken, who does so much for Manly Sailability and Sailability NSW, for the oversight.



August 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.

Helene Francois – Sail, Smile, Repeat

For Helene, it all began with a work opportunity and a glimpse of Sydney Harbour. Originally from France, Helene discovered Australia through work and quickly fell in love with the harbour and the lifestyle. In 2004, she made the decision to migrate to Australia and make the Great Southern Land her home.

Her connection with Manly Sailability, however, began even earlier. Helene first encountered Sailability and Eli in 2001, drawn to the combination of sailing, the beauty of Manly Cove and the organisation's commitment to supporting the community. What started as an interest soon became a lasting commitment.

For Helene, volunteering is about people as much as it is about sailing. She wanted to meet like-minded people and contribute to a worthy cause. More than two decades later, she is still turning up on the pontoon, ready to sail, help out and share a laugh.

Helene is happy to do whatever needs doing. She welcomes people, sails the dinghies, chats with participants and, a couple of times a year, takes on the role of sailing day coordinator - "bossing everyone around", as she puts it.

But her favourite part of the role is simple: the people. She loves the interaction with both volunteers and participants, and there is an obvious joy in simply being out on the water. "You can't beat cruising around Manly Cove!" she says. However, behind the friendly faces and community spirit are some surprisingly competitive volunteers, particularly when regatta days arrive. Helene knows this first-hand, having won the Helly Hansen Women's Challenge. *(cont. p3)*



Helene at the Volunteers Recognition Luncheon, with Jackie and Caroline



Helene with participant Dennis, with a second place in a regatta.



Sailing with Clare in the Helly Hansen Women's Challenge.

She also has another, rather less glamorous, Sailability achievement to her name: the Mermaid Award. It came after Helene got tangled in a mooring line and fell overboard trying to untangle the boat. She had to be rescued by the safety boat and being fished out of the water, she admits, “wasn’t very glamorous”—but it has certainly provided a memorable story.

Some of Helene’s most meaningful moments, however, have happened away from the competition and the laughs. One participant with severe brain damage particularly stays with her. Through repeated interactions, Helene gradually found a way to communicate using basic words and hand signs. It was a small breakthrough, but a deeply significant one. For Helene, it demonstrated what volunteering at Sailability is really about: connection!

She has learned that a group of people acting with goodwill can bring an enormous amount of joy to people whose everyday lives can be challenging. Her experience has also made her more comfortable and confident around people with a broad range of disabilities.

For participants, Helene believes, being on the water offers something genuinely unique—the feeling of freedom that comes from leaving the shore behind and cruising around Manly Cove. The specially designed Hansa boats make that experience possible, while Sailability’s iconic location adds something truly special.

The volunteers themselves are equally important to Helene. She describes them affectionately as “a funny bunch of odds and sods with a common purpose”. There is goodwill, camaraderie and plenty to learn from one another, both about sailing and about life. Over the years, she has formed lasting friendships with the core group of long-standing volunteers.

What keeps her coming back is that Manly Sailability brings together her interests and her values. Even after all these years, she never gets bored. Her idea of a perfect Sailability day is blue sky over Manly Cove, a gentle breeze and happy participants. And perhaps that captures Helene’s approach to volunteering best.

Sail. Smile. Repeat.

Looking ahead to another season, Helene is hoping for more of the same. More sailing, more smiles, more conversations and more memorable days on the Cove.



With long time pal Eli

Helene and Dennis
enjoying a morning sail
on Manly Cove

Impromptu Regattas

As you know, the wharf at Manly Yacht Club is being rebuilt, and all sailing has been cancelled until the beginning of October. However, the work has been delayed, giving a small group of volunteers the opportunity to gather at the sailing club for two Saturdays in a row and enjoy unplanned, deconstructed regattas.

On the first Saturday, with beautiful winter sunshine and very little wind we sailed - or perhaps drifted - around a simple course between the Manly East YA mark and the Manly West YA mark. Six boats took to the water: three with blue/green sails and three with red/orange sails - the “Cool” and “Hot” teams, who raced against each other for team honours.

We managed just one drifting race, with the combined points of the “Hotties” making them clear winners on the day, with Ragnild taking first place. The sailors were Jim, Warwick, Ragnild, Rob, Michael with crew Gary, and John with new volunteer Bec.

The following Saturday, five boats started. With some boats carrying two people and others single-handed, a handicap start seemed the fairest approach. The doubles — Peter with John and Ragnild with Bec — started first, followed 30 seconds later by Warwick and Michael, and then, another 30 seconds later, Denis.

Denis won the first race and was rewarded with an additional one-minute handicap. Despite this he won again so an even heavier handicap was imposed for the third race, but once again Denis sailed through the fleet to take the win. Ragnild and Bec managed not one but two 360-degree penalty turns in a single race — a new record! Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the time on the water and the opportunity to practise and hone their sailing skills.



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 Rob. (robsoutham9@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.



John and Robert aboard *Charlie's Chariot*, keeping an eye on the sailing fleet.

Upcoming Sailing Dates

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

Monday	28 September	<i>Bookings available</i>
Saturday	10 October	<i>Bookings available</i>
Wednesday	14 October	<i>Bookings available</i>
Saturday	24 October	<i>Bookings available</i>
Monday	26 October	<i>Bookings available</i>
Wednesday	28 October	<i>Bookings available</i>
Saturday	7 November	<i>Bookings available</i>
Wednesday	11 November	<i>Bookings available</i>
Saturday	21 November	<i>Bookings available</i>
Wednesday	25 November	<i>Bookings available</i>
Monday	30 November	<i>Bookings available</i>
Saturday	5 December	<i>Christmas Regatta</i>

Upcoming Special Events

Christmas Regatta

Saturday 5 December 2026

Although still a few months away, its time to start thinking about our series of regattas held throughout the sailing season, the first being the Christmas Regatta, to be held on Saturday 5 December.

As we did last year, in addition to the prizes for the best sailors, there will also be a prize for the "best dressed" boat and crew who best epitomise the Christmas spirit.

Places will fill quickly so if you would like to participate please let John know on 0413 507 596 or jweaver172@gmail.com

Our Generous Sponsors



Lions Club of Manly



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