



# SAFETY INFORMATION NOTICE

No. 1 of 2019

## Race Categories for Offshore Racing

### Issue:

The organising authority shall select the category under Special Regulation 2.01 deemed most suitable for the type of race to be sailed. The category establishes the uniform minimum equipment, accommodation and training standards that boats must comply with for that race.

### Notice:

At the outset, it is important to point out that the Organising Authority (OA) for an event assumes the responsibility for all aspects of the organising and running of an offshore event.

A key decision for the OA planning an offshore yacht race is the choice of the Race Category (Australian Sailing Special Regulations, Part 1 for Racing Boats, Section 2, 2.01) as this selection determines the eligibility of the yachts and sailors that can enter the race and the extent of the systems and procedures that the OA needs to establish in order to be able to run the race safely.

In choosing the Race Category, the fundamental elements of the race that an OA needs to consider include:

- The waters over which the race is to be run
- The extent to which the yachts and their crew can look after themselves, particularly in the case of an emergency at sea
- The accessibility of external rescue resources when required

#### 1. The Race Course

Features of the race course that should be considered include;

- The overall length of the race as longer races will clearly challenge the crews and boats and expose them to less certain weather forecasts.
- The exposure that the boats will likely experience to the full force of the offshore winds and waves.
- The prevailing weather patterns that are typical at the time of year that the race is being run. For example, the cyclone season within the tropical latitudes.
- The availability of safe harbours where the yachts can shelter if needed and the avoidance of lee shores.

#### 2. The Ability of the Yachts to Look After Themselves

The following additional items directly impact the ability of a yacht to look after itself in an emergency;



- The construction and inherent stability of the yachts that are permitted to enter the race.
- The equipment that entering yachts will be required to carry.
- The experience and training level of the yachts' crews.
- The ability of the OA to communicate with the yachts throughout the race.

### 3. The Accessibility of External Rescue Resources

Where a yacht is unable to completely look after themselves in an emergency, the accessibility to provide additional rescue resources will additionally be impacted by;

- The distance offshore that the yachts will be travelling
- The extent to which the race is being run throughout the night hours when some rescue resources may not be available.
- The ability of the OA to effectively coordinate the race with the available rescue services (AMSA, State Marine Rescue and Coast Guard organisations, Police)

Any given race involves a combination of some or all of the above elements, and maybe more, and an OA needs to then integrate them into an overall assessment that results in the choice of the Race Category. As the risk level increases, the choice of the Race Category moves increasingly from Category 4 toward the lower levels that are available in the Special Regulations, such as Categories 1 or 2.

As the choice of race category moves to lower levels, the requirements of the boat, its crew and its equipment become more demanding and expensive and OA's regularly face the challenge of balancing those increasing demands against the desire to attract more competitors. Those challenges are biggest when moving from in-shore categories to the highest offshore category (to Category 4) and even more so in moving to the more challenging offshore categories (Categories 1 and 2) where boat design, construction and stability requirements become more onerous.

In the final analysis, the OA needs to be able objectively justify its final choice of race category based on a clear understanding of the risks that potentially face competitors in the event and its ability to provide additional support should the need arise.