

2013 Presidents Report

It is with a great deal of sadness that I present my last Presidents report to the Taipan association having decided earlier this year to move my sailing interests to another class. Traditionally the Presidents report reflects on the year that was, I will leave this review up to the state representatives as I have lost touch with the class as my focus has mainly been on assisting with the preparation of this year's nationals. I'm going to take this opportunity to reflect of what has been 17 enjoyable years of Taipan sailing and impart what I hope will be a perspective that will assist as the association debates the class's future.

The strength and future of the association has been a point of discussion for the majority of the time I have been associated with this class but through all of that I believe that the one thing that has been lost is the true value of the Taipan brand. From the first moment I saw a Taipan I thought "I have to have one of these". For me the attraction was the opportunity in an ever diversifying range of class, and an opportunity to sail a one design catamaran that over the years has had little change. To be able to go out and sail other sailors knowing that the boat under me was fundamentally the same meant that I was not sailing against money and technology but the opponent on the other boat and for me this became a battle of minds and endurance. I am sure today there are still sailors who look at the Taipan class with the same enthusiasm as I did. I don't believe that the class is any worse off now than what it was 17 years ago. Whilst there has been a shift in the class distribution our numbers I believe are fundamentally the same. This class like most other classes and for that matter clubs, is struggling with a changing demographic, being that the critical mass of sailors are now older. There was a reference made at last year's AGM that our class was perceived to be an "old man's boat". At the time this comment bothered me, because to sail the taipan competitively it has to be pushed the whole time, but in fact this comment simply reflects where the class is today. With the range and diversity of classes and an older demographic, I don't believe that the class will ever strive for the number of boats that people believe we should have, in fact if we maintain our current membership then I think we have done a good job. Whilst there is currently much discussion about what the boat should look like with the inclusion of winglets and carbon booms, before these decisions are made, consideration needs to be given to the actual value of these components as to their functionality or are they there just purely for their aesthetic value. Again let's not lose sight of the strength of the Taipan brand and what has sustained the class to date and the value of one design sailing.

Like most volunteer organisation's, our biggest challenge is not what the boat looks like but how we function as an association. It is true that the main function of the Executive committee has been to run the nationals with little else really being achieved throughout the year. With all of us having busy lives outside of sailing the challenge is to maintain a focus that benefits the class and in turn the members. Having been involved on the committee in one function or another for the majority of the 17 years, I still don't have the answer. What I do believe is that more people need to get involved. We have a diverse range of skills in the membership which can only benefit the class in the long term. That said, I would like to thank the current committee for their support and efforts over the past year. Having had the opportunity to have input into the motion that will be debated later on, I believe that the best thing for the association is to focus on "Taipan" sailing, it's been the core function of the association for many years and it has served us well.

In closing I would like to thank Matt and Chris for their efforts in managing the QLD Nationals and I hope that the event is a well deserved success. I would like to wish all competitors an enjoyable event, sailed in the spirit that has remained

unchanged. I know I leave the association in good hands and wish future committees every success, after all I maybe back.....

Dennis Baker
President
Taipan Catamaran Association.