



AUSTRALIAN BUILDERS PLATE

Frequently Asked Questions

General Public

The ABP and the law

1. Is the ABP required by law?

All Australian States apply the National Standard for the Australian Builders Plate for Recreational Boats (the ABP standard) either through Maritime Safety or Consumer Protection law. There are some differences between States in the mechanism for enforcing compliance as a result of the way the local legislation is drafted; however, if somebody is trying to sell you a new boat without an ABP they may be in breach of the law. You may also find that you cannot register it.

2. When was the law introduced?

The law was introduced at different times in each State. A summary of those dates is given on the NMSC web site on the main Australian Builders Plate page. You should check the details with your local Marine Safety Agency.

Implementation of the ABP plate

3. Which boats are required to have an ABP?

New boats are required to have an ABP plate with the exception of: an amphibious vehicle; a canoe, kayak or surf ski or similar vessel designed to be powered by paddle; a rowing shell used for racing or rowing training; a sailboard or sail kite; a surf row boat; a hydrofoil or hovercraft; a race boat; a sailing vessel; a submersible; and an aquatic toy.

A sailing boat with an auxiliary engine is exempt from the requirement to have an ABP fitted.

Vessels subject to a Certificate of Survey, Personal Water Craft (PWC) and Inflatable boats must comply with different requirements.

4. What about second hand boats without an ABP?

Second-hand boats without an ABP, that have previously been registered in the State, can still be re-registered without the need to fit an ABP. A boat that has never been registered or is newly imported may be treated like a new boat.

5. What labelling does a Personal Water require?

The ABP is not required on a PWC designed to carry up to two people.

An ABP is required on PWC's intended to carry three or more persons unless the craft already has information clearly and permanently marked that states:-

- the maximum number of persons the vessel may carry, as recommended by the builder, and
- the total mass of persons and equipment (expressed in kilogram's) that the craft is designed to carry, as recommended by the builder

6. Who can determine the information on an ABP?

The information on an ABP must be determined by a competent person.

A competent person is defined as a person who has acquired through training, qualification, experience, or a combination of these, the knowledge and skills enabling that person to competently determine the information on a builders plate.

The competent person is either:

- The builder;
- The importer; or
- A third-party competent person.

In general, a commercial boat builder is deemed to be a competent person for the purpose of the ABP standard. In the case of an owner-builder or importer, they may not meet the definition of a competent person, in which case a third-party competent person may need to be engaged to determine the information. Where this occurs, the name of the third-party competent person should be shown on the ABP, along with that of the builder or importer.

In some States, the Marine Safety Agency maintains a list of approved third-parties who can act as a competent person for the purpose of complying with the ABP standard.

Any person whose name appears on the plate is assuming responsibility for the information on that plate.

Examples

- Built by Sunhope Boats, Australia
- Imported by RayStan Holdings, Australia
- Information approved by E.R. Smith, Naval Architect, Sydney, Aust.

7. What happens if a dealer modifies a boat prior to sale?

If a dealer modifies the boat so that the information on the plate is no longer correct, then the dealer will need to ensure that a new plate is placed on the boat prior to sale.

The dealer can request that this be done by the builder, if the builder is agreeable, or alternatively by a competent person.

Boats built overseas

8. What about boats built overseas?

Regardless where the boat was built it will still be required to comply with the ABP standard. If you privately import a boat into Australia you will be treated as the builder of the boat for the purpose of the ABP legislation and will need to fit it with an ABP.

9. Is a US or European compliance plate acceptable as an alternative to an ABP for a typical boat?

No

Except for the special treatment of inflatable boats and PWCs mentioned above, overseas compliance plates are not acceptable alternative to an ABP. For one thing, if the information on the plate proves to be false a company located overseas is beyond the reach of the applicable Australian laws.

HIN numbers and the ABP

10. If a boat has a HIN number, does it also need an ABP?

Yes

The hull identification number (HIN) and the Australian Builders Plate (ABP) serve different purposes and provide different information. The requirement to put an ABP on a boat is in addition to any existing requirements relating to HIN.

Location of the ABP

11. Where do I find the ABP on a boat?

The ABP standard states that the ABP is required to be placed in a position where it will be readily visible to the operator of the boat when getting the boat underway, preferably in the cockpit or near the steering position. Placing the ABP on the outside of the transom of a boat is not acceptable.

12. What about boats with more than one steering position.

The plate is only required in the primary steering position, however there is nothing preventing multiple plates or a warning plate at an access point such as on a ladder to the flybridge.

Plate construction and design

13. How is the plate fixed to the boat?

The standard states that the plate has to be permanently fixed to the boat so that is resistant to removal without leaving some obvious mark.

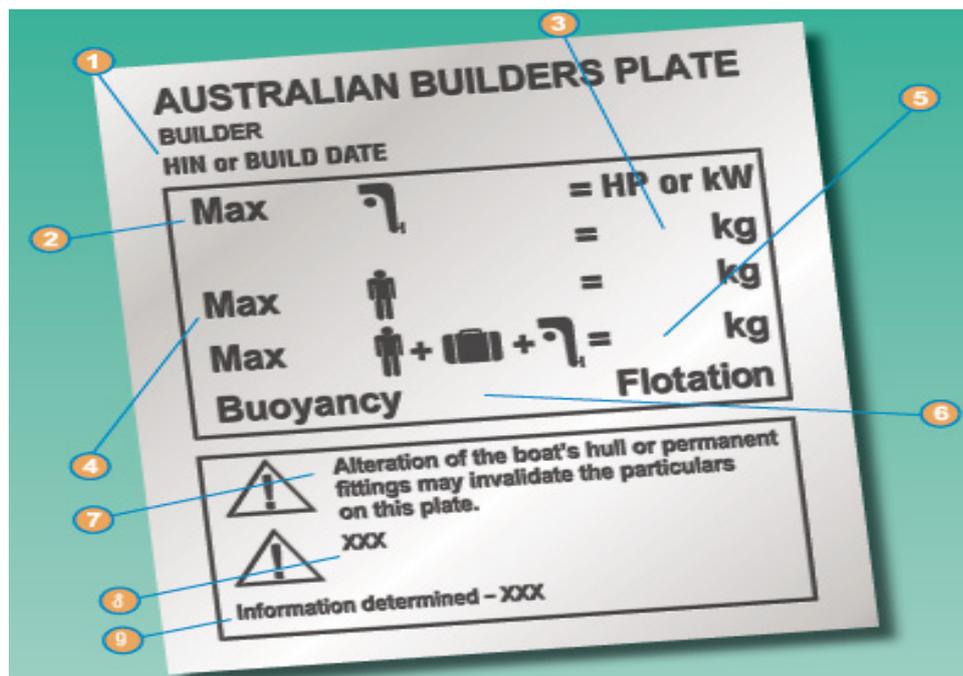
Examples of ways in which a plate might be attached include riveting, gluing, embedding, engraving or printing the plate directly onto the boat, provided that whatever method is used the plate is permanently fixed to the boat.

14. Does the plate have to be a particular shape or size?

No

The ABP standard does not specify that the plate has to be a particular size or shape. The standard does however specify the size of the text and symbols that are to be used on the plate. The standard also specifies the information on the plate.

The plate can be any size and shape provided the plate complies with the requirements relating to text and symbol size and legibility, and displays all the information required by the standard. The standard provides a sample plate that meets the requirements of the standard to assist manufacturers in designing their own plate.



This is a sample of an ABP for a boat less than 6 meters with an outboard motor. For further details, please refer to the National Standard for Australian Builders Plate for Recreational boats.

- 1) Name of the person approving information on the plate, normally the builder or importer, and the capacity in which they approved the information and either the Hull Identification Number (HIN) or the year built
- 2) Maximum outboard engine power rating for which the boat has been designed and tested, expressed in kilowatts or horsepower
- 3) Maximum outboard engine weight for which the boat has been designed and tested expressed in kilograms, including the weight of any auxiliary outboard.
- 4) Maximum number of persons on the boat expressed as a whole number and in kilograms.
- 5) The maximum load that the boat has been designed and tested to carry when underway, This includes persons, maximum outboard engine weight allowed including any auxiliary engines, and carry-on equipment such as personal equipment, personal safety equipment, spare parts tools, dry provisions, fishing tackle, portable tanks and their contents, It does not include the mass of the contents of fixed fuel or water tanks.
- 6) For boats less than 6 metres in length there will be a buoyancy statement. The terms used may be basic flotation or level flotation. After July 2006 the term "inadequate flotation" will no longer be permitted for use.
- 7) A mandatory warning statement that alterations may invalidate the particulars on the Australian Builders Plate.

- 8) The person approving information on the plate may also add an optional person/load capacity warning statement or other safety information.

Examples may include.

Warning – the recommended maximum persons to be carried on the flybridge should not exceed 2 persons or 150 kilograms

Warning – the recommended maximum load should be reduced in bad weather or when the boat is operated offshore. Refer to the owner's manual before operation.

- 9) The standard used to determine the information provided on the plate.
An Example might be:
Information determined – AS 1799

15. Is the same style of plate used for boats less than 6 metres, and those 6 metres or more in length?

The standard requires different plates for vessels 6 metres or more in length from those less than 6 metres in length.

Boats less than 6 metres in length require buoyancy information, whereas those boats that are 6 metres or more in length are not required to state their buoyancy.

In principal the more onerous plate (ie: the one for vessels under 6 m) could be used on all vessels, however in practice it may be simpler to use different plates

Motors

16. If I buy a boat without an engine, will the ABP still have the section relating to the power rating completed.

The ABP standard requires that all sections be completed correctly. For boats that do not have inboard engines this includes the maximum outboard motor power and mass that the hull can safely handle. This allows the owner of the vessel to fit an appropriate sized motor at a later date.

17. Does the power rating have to be in Kilowatts?

No

The ABP standard states that the maximum power capacity can be expressed in either Horse Power (HP) or Kilowatts (kW). The mass of the outboard motor must, however, be specified in kilograms.

18. What happens if I fit an auxiliary outboard to the boat?

The information about the maximum outboard motor power rating applies only to the boat's primary motor. The power of any reserve outboard is excluded.

However the mass of the auxiliary motor would need to be counted when the owner assesses whether or not the proposed loading is within the maximum load capacity of the boat.

Maximum load and persons capacity

19. What is included in the maximum load capacity?

The maximum load capacity represents the maximum mass a boat has been designed and tested to safely carry when underway determined in accordance with the selected technical standard. This includes the mass of persons, the outboard, including any auxiliary outboard, portable fuel tanks, and carry on equipment such as personal equipment, personal safety equipment, spare parts, tools, dry provisions, fishing tackle, portable tanks and their contents, etc. It does **not** include the mass of the contents of fixed fuel and water tanks when full.

20. What does the maximum persons capacity mean?

The maximum persons capacity is the recommended number of persons the boat can safely carry, including their personal gear, based on mass. This number is necessarily an estimate because human beings don't all weigh the same. The permissible technical standards used to calculate the maximum load capacity (the Australian Standard, the US standard and the ISO standards used in Europe) all give more or less the same results for a given boat. However, the standards each use different masses for a typical person. Most standards express the result as the number of adults the boat can safely carry, at 80kg per person in the case of the Australian Standard. However, the US standard assumes a mix of adults and children and comes up with an average mass of around 65kg.

Symbols

21. Which symbols are be used on the ABP?

Symbols that may be used include an outboard engine symbol, a person symbol, a suitcase symbol, and a warning symbol.

If symbols are used—

- The outboard engine symbol shall be used to display information about a boat's maximum outboard power capacity and mass.
- The person symbol shall be used to display information about a boat's maximum person capacity as the number of adults and their total mass.
- The person symbol combined with the suitcase symbol and the outboard symbol (in the case of a boat not fitted with an inboard engine) shall be used to display the boat's maximum load capacity.
- The warning symbol shall be used to display warning information.

Warning Statements

22. What constitutes a warning statement on the ABP?

A warning statement would caution the user. The ABP specifies one mandatory warning that must be displayed on all boats, with following words being used.

"Alteration of the boat's hull or permanent fittings may invalidate the particulars on this plate"

In addition, builders may include additional warnings that are relevant to the boat in question. For boats with a flybridge, the warning statement may provide maximum passenger numbers to be carried on the flybridge or, a warning statement may refer the user to the owner's manual before operating the boat.

Example of warning statement that refers to flybridge boats:

“WARNING – The recommended maximum number of person to be carried on the flybridge at anytime should not exceed 2 persons or 160 Kilograms.”

If a warning is used, it must be consistent with any limitations expressed or implied with the standards used.

Standard to Be Shown on Plate

23. Does the plate have to show the standard used to determine the information provided on the plate?

Yes.

The name of the standard used to determine the information on the plate has to be shown on the plate.

This should be expressed as: “*Information determined (insert name of appropriate standard)*”. The name of the standard may be expressed as the standard number or abbreviation by which the standard is commonly known, rather than its title (ie: AS 1799, ISO 12217, ABYC).

EXAMPLE

Information determined - AS 1799.

Flotation

24. What is meant by basic and level flotation?

Basic Flotation

The ABP Standard defines basic flotation as “a flotation system that will keep a boat carrying its maximum load from sinking when swamped, assuming the occupants of the boat have left it and are in the water clinging to it. With basic flotation the swamped boat may float at any attitude.” This is a general definition to explain the concept.

Level Flotation

Level flotation is defined in the ABP standard as being “a flotation system that will keep a boat carrying its maximum load from sinking when swamped, assuming the occupants remain within the boat and supported by the flotation system. The flotation system must be such that it will keep the swamped boat floating level and prevent it from capsizing in calm water. Level flotation does not provide a self righting capacity. but in calm water should allow bailing of the boat.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact your local Maritime Safety Agency