

## INQUEST INTO THE DEATHS IN THE 1998 SYDNEY TO HOBART YACHT RACE

### STATEMENT OF LISA RATCLIFF

On 18 July 2000, I, **LISA RATCLIFF** of 3 Moona Road, Kirrawee, in the State of New South Wales, public relations officer, say:

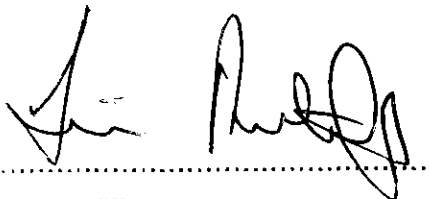
1. Since February 1996 I have been employed by the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia ("CYCA") as the CYCA Public Relations Officer.
2. During the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race ("SHYR") I worked in the Media Centre with Peter Campbell, Amelia Cater, Kelly Foster and Meredith Gray.
3. In 1998 the Media Centre was based on the second floor of the CYCA clubhouse until 27 December 1998 when it moved to the Hotel Grand Chancellor in Hobart. In 1998 the Media Centre staff change over from Sydney to Hobart was performed in stages. To the best of my recollection, Kelly Foster and Amelia Cater flew to Hobart on the night of 26 December 1998. Peter Campbell flew to Hobart early on the morning of 27 December 1998 and then, Meredith Gray and I followed later that day. However, I cannot recall if Gray and I were on the same flight.
4. Prior to the 1998 SHYR I received a copy of the CYCA SHYR contact list, a true copy of which is annexed and marked "A".
5. As the Media Centre was in the CYCA clubhouse, one of our telephones was an internal telephone. That internal telephone had a sticker across the top of it with important contact numbers for the 1998 SHYR on it including Phil Thompson and Peter Campbell's mobile numbers. In any event, by 26 December 1998 I had memorised Peter Campbell and Phil Thompson's mobile numbers and gave them freely to anyone who telephoned the Media Centre looking for them.

- 2 -

**26 December 1998**

6. On 26 December 1998 from approximately 11.00am to 3.30pm I was on the water on the Telstra boat for the start of the race. From approximately 3.45pm till late that evening I was in the Media Centre assisting Peter Campbell.
7. All the media centre staff were on the water from approximately 11.00am to 2.30pm on various media boats.
8. I did not receive a telephone call from anyone at the Bureau of Meteorology ("BoM") on the afternoon of 26 December 1998. I am not aware of anyone else in the Media Centre receiving a telephone call from BoM on the afternoon of 26 December 1998.
9. I am not aware of BoM faxing a storm warning forecast to the Media Centre on the afternoon of 26 December 1998.
10. At the time of preparing this statement I printed out the 1998 media releases which I had stored on a disk. As a consequence I printed out a media release which was issued at 1800 on 26 December 1998 which refers to BoM issuing a storm warning. Annexed and marked "B" is a true copy that media release. To the best of my recollection, I first became aware that BoM had issued a storm warning on or about the evening of 26 December 1998 when I read the attached media release. As far as I am aware the attached media release was written by Peter Campbell. I am not aware how Peter Campbell became aware of the storm warning.
11. When I left the Media Centre on 26 December 1998, I had not received, nor was I aware that anyone else had received a facsimile or telephone call from BoM in relation to the storm warning.

Dated: 18 July 2000



Lisa Ratcliff

TELSTRA  
SYDNEY  
— TO —  
HOBART

Telstra Sydney - Hobart Yacht Race 1998  
Race Personnel - Contact List



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Hugo van Kretschmar 0419 695 434

Hans Sommer 9953 5899 (Home)  
Race Chairman 9428 2900 (Business)  
0418 221 710

Peter Bush 9953 5899 (Home)  
Immediate Past Commodore 0412 603 209

Alan Green 0414 505 666

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Howard Elliott 0411 508 810

Mark Pryke 0419 223 344

Sam Hughes 018 622 723  
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Peter Campbell 9869 8489 (Home)  
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Young Endeavour  
(Radio Relay Vessel)  
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"B"

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

1800 hours, 26 December 1998

### **SPECTACULAR START FOR THE TELSTRA SYDNEY TO HOBART RACE**

The maxi yachts Brindabella and Sayonara are this evening sailing virtually boat for boat as they power down the New South Wales south coast under their huge spinnakers after a spectacular start for the 115 boat fleet - but with a dark and stormy night at sea ahead of them.

Sayonara, the American maxi skippered by Larry Ellison with New Zealander Chris Dickson at the helm, won the beat to windward down Sydney Harbour in a 12 knot nor'easter, clearing the Heads 45 seconds clear of George Snow's Brindabella, followed by Grant Wharington's Wild Thing.

However, Sayonara lost ground when a spinnaker blew out shortly after rounding the sea mark, and about an hour after the start Brindabella reported they were to seaward and slightly ahead of the US boat. Tactically, Brindabella, by going to sea, has clearly gained an advantage in the fast running East Coast Current.

The perfect Sydney warm summer day attracted the biggest fleet of spectator craft since the 50th Sydney to Hobart in 1994, with an estimated 300,000 people on the headlands and on the water, with several hundred craft following the fleet to sea, churning waters off the Heads into "washing machine" conditions.

Just before 4.30 this afternoon, ABC helicopter pilot Gary Ticehurst advised the Telstra Media Information Centre that Brindabella was 500 metres ahead of Sayonara and about 15 miles offshore as the two maxis sailed to the south of Wollongong.

In third place came Marchioness, revelling in the downwind sailing as the nor'east freshened to 20 knots.

Also exceptionally well placed was Syd Fischer's 50-footer Ragamuffin with the two Sydney AC 40 one-designs Sledgehammer and Sharp Hawk V also looking right up in the money on projected IMS handicap results.

However, there is a dark and stormy night ahead with thunderstorms moving up the coast ahead of a severe southerly change late tonight or early tomorrow morning.

The Weather Bureau this morning issued a gale warning for the Tasman Sea south of Sydney and mid-afternoon upgraded this to a priority storm warning for coastal waters south of Merimbula.

The warning says the gusty west/south westerly change of 30 to 40 knots was expected on the NSW South Coast late tonight, probably between midnight and 2am when most of the 115 boat fleet is in the Shoalhaven area, with leaders south of Jervis Bay.

(2)

Seas will rise to 3 to 4 metres with the change, with the swell also increasing to 2 to 3 metres after the change, with short steep seas generated by the galeforce winds against the fast running southerly current.

The stormy conditions are expected to continue through Sunday, with west to north-westerly winds increasing to 45 and 55 knots south of Merimbula late Sunday afternoon, with little sign of them abating before Monday.

The mass start from the harbour was spectacular, with all yachts getting a clear start but the maxi ketch Nokia involved in a double collision with Sword of Orion and Bright Morning Star. While damage was not extensive and all three are continuing in the race, they each lost time at the start, with Nokia back in 10th place as the fleet as they cleared the Heads.

At the Heads, Sayonara rounded the mark 45 seconds ahead of Brindabella, followed by Wild Thing and Marchioness and at the sea mark, one mile east of the Heads, the order was the same with Sydney (Charles Curran) close astern of Marchioness, followed by the Swan 68, Elysion Blue, with Ragamuffin literally riding her wake as they headed down the coast.

Of the IMS grand prix racers, Ragamuffin was exceptionally well placed, with Kenwood Cup team mates Quest and ABN AMRO Challenge also well up in the fleet along with the two Sydney AC 40 One Design sloops Sledgehammer and Sharp Hawk V.

The first position report from the fleet will start at 2005 hours tonight, with computer generated details available on the Telstra web site about 2200 hours.

#### LATE NEWS:

At 5.340pm, Geoff Cropley reported that Brindabella off Port Perpendicular, near Nowra, making record-breaking boat speed bursts of 16 to 20 knots and catching every wave to stay in front of Sayonara which was 250 to 300 metres astern.

"The southern sky is getting very dark...very quickly," Cropley said.

**Further Information:**  
**Telstra Sydney to Hobart Media Centre**  
**Phone: 02 9363 1344**

**Telstra Sydney to Hobart web site: [www.syd-hob.telstra.com.au](http://www.syd-hob.telstra.com.au)**