Rotary Youth Sailing Challenge

Newsletter – April 2026

Overview of the Youth Sailing Challenge

A Rotary-sponsored program for youth aged 15-18, offering sailing aboard the tall ship 'One & All' during school holidays, emphasizing life skills, teamwork, and personal development in a maritime environment.

Participants learn sailing skills such as setting sails, navigation, and helming, initially under supervision, then independently navigating back to port.

The program fosters self-confidence, teamwork, and resilience through hands-on sailing and living without electronic communications.

Participants are divided into watch groups, with meals served in socially distanced arrangements, and with strict hygiene protocols.

The program extends Rotary's youth initiatives, providing valuable skills and memorable experiences, as reflected in testimonials from past participants who highlight personal growth, new friendships, and adventure.

Overall, the RYSC aims to develop young people's confidence and teamwork through immersive sailing experiences, supported by Rotary and community sponsors, with a focus on safety, personal growth, and lifelong memories.

Next Youth Sailing Challenges

SA - One & All ***12th - 16th April 2026*** **-** fully booked and getting ready to sail

Vic - Enterprize ***26 Sept - 29 October 2026*** **-** Can apply at www .y out hs a iling .c om .a u

SA - One & All ***27 Sept - 1 October 2026*** **-** Can apply at www .y out hs a iling .c om.a u

RYSC story of two Inspirational women

Nikita is a twenty-year-old from rural New South Wales who participated in her first voyage in 2023. From Adelaide to Melbourne, she sailed on *One and All,* thanks to the kind sponsorship of the Holbrook Rotary Club. This first voyage was a pivotal moment in her life, greatly increasing her self-confidence and sparking a desire within her to continue sailing tall ships across Australia. As of now, Nikita has sailed on *One and All, Enterprize, Leeuwin II, James Craig,* and *Søren Larsen,* and according to her, she has "no plans of stopping any time soon." She believes that sailing on these magnificent tall ships has changed her life for the better and often promotes that when she volunteers on them. She sees amazing young people from across the world flourishing with the new skills and friendships that they create on these ships.

Acarya is a twenty-one-year-old from rural Victoria. Nikita and Acarya were primary school acquaintances who, out of shared passions, recently reconnected. Due to difficult circumstances, Acarya was invited to live with Nikita and her family for an extended period. Through her work on the family farm, Acarya got to know Nikita very well and learned of her RSYC experience on *One and All* and her desire to continue volunteering on tall ships in the future. Nikita was about to embark on a voyage volunteering on *Enterprize*, and Acarya was there through the entire process. She dropped her off at the Wharf and was there to see the ship enter again at the end of the voyage. Hearing Nikita's excitement and stories from the ship only boosted her curiosity further. So, in 2024, Acarya was interviewed by the Holbrook Rotary Club, and with the joint support of David Binks, sailed on *One and All* as a RYSC participant. She has since volunteered on several tall ship voyages.

Both girls have said that they strongly believe that the **Rotary Youth Sailing Challenge** has had a major positive influence on their lives. The skills and connections that they have forged on these voyages have given them the space to grow outside of past and present hardships. This has allowed them to persevere and see the future in a positive light, not only helping them succeed in breaking detrimental cycles but also pushing them to excel in all areas of life. They are now both at university, studying their dream degrees and having a blast with newfound friends and family.

It is a two-way street. Milt Golenberg from Holbrook Rotary Club who mentored both these girls before and after their return received inspiration from their struggles and successes and is one of many Rotarians now dedicated to the program.

Even amidst the frenzy of university life, Acarya and Nikita continue to volunteer on their local tall ship, showcasing the everlasting connection that is made once you set foot on the deck of your first ship. They understand how impactful that connection can be and aim to provide other especially underprivileged youth the same opportunity they received through the generosity and kindness of the individuals and Rotary clubs involved in the Rotary Youth Sailing Challenge. Both girls hope that the program extends long into the future.

Chairman's Report

I am extremely pleased to be able to report that the Rotary Youth Sailing Challenge, already the fastest growing youth program in Australia, has just taken another leap forward. When students return from one of our voyages and talk to their sponsoring rotary Club, members are amazed at the confidence, drive and ambition the young participants have gained. It is generally a life-changing experience. It propels clubs to sponsor again and again and encourages other clubs to do likewise.

In South Australia, my home state, the situation with our tall ship the *One and All* is particularly exciting. For six years we have been running two voyages a year. On our October voyage last year and the two before that we filled the ship early and had to refer a few applicants we were unable to accommodate to the following voyage.

We learned the ship was going to Port Lincoln in January of this year and my committee decided to take a gamble and see, while the ship was over there, if we could run a voyage out from and back to Port Lincoln . This made three Rotary voyages in the one year.

This ambitious project required a lot of work but the result was better than we could have hoped for. We again filled the ship. (For a full report on the Port Lincoln voyage refer to a subsequent newsletter article entitled "The January Port Lincoln RYSC sail")

The April voyage, which will have sailed by the time this newsletter reaches you, was overfilled well before the sailing date. This filled us with confidence and the committee has made the decision to run three voyages every year. In 2027 the additional Voyage will leave and return to Port Adelaide departing on the tenth of January .

The situation in other states is also very encouraging.

In Victoria Suzanne Zammit the chair of the Victorian committee has reported the Voyage planned for the ***Enterprize*** in that state in April was oversubscribed. This occurred over a month before the voyage commences

The start dates for voyages in New South Wales and Queensland are getting closer. A voyage on the ***Duyfken*** out of Sydney Harbour is scheduled for September this year and another a Queensland voyage on the *South Passage* is planned for departure from Manly, Brisbane in July 2027

In WA investigations are currently being made to see if we can start the program on the newly recommissioned ***Leeuwin.*** *Leeuwin* was out of action for two years while repairs were conducted following major damage caused by the ship's being crashed against a dock by a large freighter.

Overall, I can say that the Rotary Youth Sailing Challenge is in a very enviable position and those associated with it can feel immensely proud of the tremendous good it is doing and will do in the future for young people around Australia

David Binks

January 2026 Youth Sailing Challenge out from Port Lincoln, SA

Three students from the Adelaide School of English, selected to go on the Voyage, had no means of getting from the greater Adelaide area to Port Lincoln. All were girls and refugees from different countries, each with a different native tongue.

I agreed to drive the three girls to Pt Lincoln picking them up early on Saturday morning. For the first hour they sat silently with their eyes on their mobile phones. Then the silence broke and they started chatting to each other in English. I then had difficulty getting a word in edgewise for the reminder of the eight-hour drive.

The Port Lincoln Rotary Club did a magnificent job organising Club members to assist. They picked up students who had flown across to the Lincoln airport. Rotary families billeted overnight those that drove and flew over, taking the students to the wharf for the departure ceremony in the morning.

The whole town it seemed had got behind the Voyage. At the departure ceremony the Mayor made a short speech, District Governor Rajeev had come across and the Chairman of RYSC spoke, explaining how the success of the program in changing participants' lives had caused it to grow so rapidly resulting in this additional Voyage to meet demand.

At about 9:30 a.m. with registration and formalities completed ONE & ALL cast off and the bunch of excited but nervous (a few extremely nervous) young people commenced their adventure and what an adventure it turned out to be.

David and Pam Binks had sailed from Adelaide to Port Lincoln on their yacht *Enterprise* to see the students depart and return from their sail. Joy and I joined them for the cruise back to Adelaide.

We sailed out to the nearby beautiful Banks Group of Islands with the thought of relaxing, catching a few whiting and returning to Port Lincoln to see the ONE & ALL berth the following Thursday.

As we sailed out, the wind continued to strengthen and by the time we arrived quite a big sea was running. David found the most shielded area and we anchored but the wind continued to increase in strength until it was blowing a gale.

On "ship-tracker" we could see the ONE & ALL heading across to the eastern side of Spencer Gulf, presumably with the thought of finding protection from the southeasterly under the coast. Unfortunately the wind went further south, the ONE & ALL was not protected. We had visions of a ship sailing through the night with a shipload of very seasick, frightened young people.

During Tuesday we saw the ship head back to Port Lincoln eventually taking shelter in Spaulding Cove. They did some sails out into the rough stuff during the day but went back to a sheltered area Tuesday and Wednesday nights. We sailed back to Port Lincoln in some pretty rough conditions to see the ship return, all the time afraid we would find, for the first time, a group of very unhappy sick young people.

What we did find was the exact opposite. A happy laughing bunch of youngsters who said what a marvelous time that had. When questioned about sea sickness they all said yes they had been seasick and yes the waves were a bit scary but all of that was forgotten. No one wanted to leave the ship, their new friends and go home.

Don Will, Secretary of the Rotary Youth Sailing Challenge

The Duyfken

The Duyfken , based at the Maritime Museum in Sydney, is the tall ship we are proposing to use for the Rotary Youth Sailing Challenge in New South Wales.

The ship has very interesting origins. It was meticulously built from what scant plans and details remained of the original Duyfken. This Dutch vessel was the first European ship to discover Australia. It landed on our West Coast in 1606 and the crew met with groups of Aborigines. This happened some 200 years before Captain Cook discovered the East Coast of Australia

The builders of the Duyfken replica were a group of highly skilled traditional wooden boat builders gathered together by Alan Bond to build the detailed replica of the Barque Endeavour

Having completed the Endeavour it was decided such a skilled group of artisans should be kept together. This resulted in funds being raised and a replica of the Duyfken being built.

The completed vessel is an example of small trading ships of the era. Currently in the care of the national maritime museum Sydney it is on display for the public to see for much of the year. The Duyfken does however have a certificate of seaworthiness and each year does some sailing.

Every second year she sails to Hobart to participate in the wooden boat festival.

The dimensions of the Duyfken are:

Overall length.	88 ft.
Displacement.	110 tons
Beam.	20 ft.
Maximum mast height.	50 ft.
Sail area.	31,000 sq. ft.

Further Information

Check out our video at https: //vimeo.com /828257288

For more information visit: www.youthsailing.com. au

Contacts

Vic	Suzanne Zammit (Southern area)	0450 090 794
	Milt Goldenberg (Northern area)	0413 002 624
SA	David Binks (chairman)	0438 221 937
	Don Will (secretary)	0414 645 402