

Superyacht boom exacerbates national shortage of marina berths



Brock Rodwell, sales director of Ray White Marine, says buyers of luxury yachts and superyachts should think about where they will keep their purchases because Australia has limited marina berths. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Damian Shaw

EXCLUSIVE

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Sales of boats and superyachts soared throughout the pandemic, but there's a problem – there's nowhere to put them, with the boom exacerbating a national shortage of marina berths.

Queensland experienced a doubling in boat registrations when borders were shut and a surge in savings created an appetite for larger vessels, with the pace of growth so strong that the number of boats hitting the water increased almost four times faster than population growth in percentage terms, according to the Aurelius Marina Research Report.

Nationally, average marina occupancy grew from 84 to 86 per cent from 2019 to 2021, with more than half of Australia's marinas (57 per cent) having waitlists.

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NSW and Tasmania have the highest occupancy rates of 91 per cent, according to the 2021 Health of the Australian Marina Industry Survey released earlier this year.

Marina Industry Association president Andrew Chapman said anticipated future growth bodes well for the industry. However, researchers said the acute need for more in-water storage needed to be addressed by all levels of government.

Australia's richest woman, Gina Reinhart, raised the issue of the marina shortages last year, urging the Queensland government to invest in docks for superyachts ahead of the 2023 Olympic Games.

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Luxury yacht and superyacht broker Brock Rodwell buys and sells vessels all around the country. He said the pandemic has people wanting the biggest and best on the water, which was a struggle to get, not only because of stock but because there are not many places to store large watercraft.

The superyacht sector has taken off on Australian shores during the pandemic with more than a few... multimillion-dollar sales taking place at the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show on the Gold Coast. The expo is the largest of its kind in the southern hemisphere and typically brings in [More](#)

“It’s certainly something that you have to think of when you’re buying because if you don’t have the leisure of the boat being exactly where you want it to be in the first instance,” said Mr Rodwell, sales director of Ray White Marine.

“I sold a 105-foot boat, which is just over 30m. We can always usually pull a favour or find some space somewhere but we actually had to put it on anchor until a berth freed up.”

Queensland has some of the largest marina berths in the country, averaging 13.5m, but the Aurelius Marina Research Report found the number of berths between 20m and 24m – the size most popular for mid-range luxury motor yachts – was down by 6 per cent over the same period.

North Queensland is facing a critical shortage of berths starting at Bundaberg, with only 49 of 4117 available.

Sam Wade, the managing director of the Shute Harbour Marina Resort, said infrastructure spending is vital if the marine industry in Queensland is to maintain its position as Australia’s boating capital.

“The report identifies a sustained trend of growth in demand for marina berths, but it also reveals a trend to accommodate larger boats which is where the industry is heading,” Mr Wade said.

The \$350m Shute Harbour Marina Resort, one of the biggest residential-resort projects for north Queensland in more than a decade, is shoring up supply through the development of a mixed-use marina development with 395 wet berths from 10m to 30m.

On the Gold Coast, Mr Rodwell is part of the redevelopment of the superyacht marina at The Spit, which was a crucial element in securing the Ritz Carlton at the location.

The full findings of the Aurelius Marina Research Report will be released later in the year.

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