

# Dragons Abreast Sydney

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Last paddle for 2005 and Chrissy coffees: Saturday, 17th December  
First paddle for 2006: Thursday, 5th January

## Newbies Day

We kicked off the month with our last Newbies Day for the year on November 5. Twenty-three eager new faces piled into the boats with their “paddle buddies for the day” and it was a great opportunity for us to give a first wetting to the full set of practice paddles we have just purchased for the club. \Really encouraging, too, was the appearance of two partners among the newbies – we’ll get that mixed crew going yet, Neil!!

The North American winter brought us another Canadian visitor this month – Bonita Russell from the Island Breaststrokes survivor paddler group on Vancouver Island, British Columbia in Canada. Bonnie arrived on the MS Amsterdam cruise liner, docking at 7am that morning and raced to Pyrmont to have a paddle with us. She was going to spend the rest of the day in and around the Rocks before a Harbour Cruise in the evening and a 10pm departure for New Caledonia.



Above: The Lot: Newbies on November 5

Left: A taste of heaven for Brenda Owen and Elaine Beggs

Below: Setting out the munchies



## Roseville Regatta

Our Sydney winter has made for a long wait between regattas and the Roseville Regatta was our first full-blown regatta for this season – and what a beauty it was! It's sometimes hard to remember who's raced before and who hasn't, but DASydney put in two crews and "baptized" at least five virgin racers: Sally Oh, Gael Ellis, Dianne Williams, Deb Hirst and Muriel Buckeridge. It only took the first heat to turn them all into dragon boat tragic! It's a beautiful venue down there under the Roseville Bridge, the sun was shining with just a gentle breeze rippling the surface of the water (guess who forgot the sunscreen so had a free full-facial exfoliation over the next few days – what an idiot!!). With the help of the instructions and a couple of husbands we managed to put up our lovely big tent, giving us some shade and a safe place to keep our trappings. It was a simply gorgeous day so we spread out our pink chairs and picnic blankets and soaked up the buzz.

Fairlie Stanish and I swept our first races there on our way to full certification as sweeps – that's why we had to wear those orange jackets, identifying our provisional sweep status. It was good experience for us both as sweeps, if a bit nerve-wracking, and both crews paddled really well (despite the unfortunate start in the middle lane where my boat clipped a few scales off Illawarra's tail in the swirling current). Mel's Belles only missed getting in the final by a whisker, having had a great start!

As a first-time regatta racer, Deb Hirst had this advice for those who haven't been to a regatta yet:

*If you are nervous about coming to your first Regatta, don't be!!!*

*As a September "Newbie" I decided to go to the Roseville Regatta on Sunday November 6th and had a terrific time along with other "Newbie's" Dianne Williams and Sally Oh .*

*It was such a lot of fun, everyone was so welcoming and supportive. The atmosphere on the day was fantastic and I found racing to*



*be quite an exhilarating experience.*

*It really was a great day out. The weather was beautiful and there was plenty of time between heats to sit around and have a chat with other DAS members.*

*I was very excited to be paddling with "a drummer", and the boats look so fab on the water, each decorated with their Dragon Head and Tail.*

*It was so much fun, and such a sense of achievement to finish each heat that it didn't really matter where we came. Everyone supported each other, we definitely united as one*

**Above: DAS at Roseville: There's always more watching and chatting at regattas than paddling – it's when we get to know each other better!**

**Above Right: Fairlie in full flight and Mel's Belles in action on the River.**

**Left: DAS girls demonstrating one of their other great talents – shopping.**



*boat and we looked fantastic in the new Pink Shirts. I felt very proud to be a part of a team who are raising Breast Cancer awareness.*

*So don't think about it anymore, make a commitment to come to the next regatta, I promise you will not regret it and I think I can guarantee that you will have a such a great experience you will want to keep coming regattas to have some more fun with the DAS crew and improve your paddling and racing skills.*

## Next Regatta

So there you are – put January 14 in your diaries now – we'll be making a day of it for our next regatta, which will be on the Wyong River, Tacoma on the Central Coast. Put your name down with Anne Gates, our Team Captain, now!

Christmas Party at Eugenia's

What a fantastic night that was – over 50 people piled into Colin and Eugenia's immaculate back garden to enjoy a huge "pot luck" (ie each person brought different foods) barbecue dinner. The food was spectacular and, amazingly, it was almost all polished off promptly by hungry paddlers!

Eugenia's divine moussaka and her pumpkin dish were both voted "to die for", Fairlie had made delicious char-grilled capsicum rollups and Deb (in fine form in her spunky red wig) barbecued enough of her signature haloumi nibbles to share with everyone. There were far too many delicious dishes to list but the star turn of the night was the twins' amazing life-sized paddle cake. It would have been a treat to have been at their place to see them wielding the jig saw on the five ply board to make the "plate" that held this incredible cake (don't you just love that orange poppy seed cake inside the delicious,



Top: Hostess Eugenia Raftos cutting the twins' paddle cake  
Above: Di and Neil Millgate and host, Colin Raftos.  
Left: Sally Lynch, Anne Gates & Brenda Owen  
Below Left: Deb Read playing Santa  
Below: Jenny Petterson, Cynthia, Jo Petterson and Vicki McLean



## Our First Twilight Regatta

The first ever Twilight Regatta generated huge excitement – it was a two kilometer race and most paddlers were really nervous about lasting the distance – soooooo much longer than our usual races! As it turned out it wasn't as tough as many of our training sessions – bring it on! When can we do it again! Special accolades are due to one very spunky newbie survivor, Dianne Williams, who put her hand up for this one. Don't you just love that about our DASydney girls – such an “up and at ‘em, can do” attitude! This was Dianne's version of the event:

*“Are you MAD!?! Can I do it or is this just too much.” These are some of the thoughts going through my head when I said I would have ago at the twilight regatta.*

*We assembled at Blackwattle Bay at 6pm with so much excitement and adrenalin running through us but yet happy that we were at a familiar spot and about to attempt something none of us had done before. We were a team of 20 in a mixed race, our favourite man Neil was there to make this possible and for him it must have been fun to finally be able to compete in a race. All other teams had many more men but that never deterred us at all and the other teams were all there to support us as well. This is a sport that has shown so much camaraderie.*

*It was a 2km mixed race around the bay with boats starting a minute apart. We started off first; it was up the bay at a great pace and wonderful timing. There was no stopping, no changing sides and no looking back. We turned at the yellow buoy and were on our way back when the next challengers over took us. We kept doing all that our strokes asked of us and then Cynthia called for us to “take it home” - before we knew it the horn blasted and we had finished. What wonderful exhilaration and excitement.*

*Thanks Neil, you helped make our night possible and all the crew for giving me encouragement. Also thanks to the organizers “let's do this again”. For me personally, I DID IT!!!!*

*I am a newcomer to this sport (and all sports for the past 30 years) but this has made me feel alive and like I can conquer almost anything. For those who hesitate at regatta time don't, who cares where we come in a race its that sense of fun, excitement and achievement at the end that makes it all worthwhile.*

## The Equal of Ten Good Men

As Dianne points out, it was thanks to Neil Millgate that we were able to enter the Twilight Regatta, because it was a mixed crew regatta. So we put together a mixed crew – 19 girls and Neil – not quite competitive, being 9 guys short but, as was proved on the night, our Neil's easily the equal of ten good men. We still managed to beat City Dragons by 13



Above: Mel's Belles waiting for the start

Below: Into the sunset: one of the last crews to start with another just finishing on the other side of the bay. Below right: Neil Millgate



seconds and we came in 10 seconds behind the Blue Fins. It was interesting trying to sweep round corners in a race, I have to say – especially when the keen beans called a lift as we went into the first turn (expressly what we had been warned as sweeps not to do, for safety reasons). Happily we got to the end without incident, which was great.

Neil was his usual good-natured self on the evening and threw himself into his first real regatta with gusto. He has some great advice for the other DASydney partners out there:

*What a way to spend a Friday evening! Drive into town. Meet under the Anzac Bridge. There, waiting for me, are 20 of the most beautiful women I know, waiting to take me on my first regatta!*

*What a mixture of personalities and style -*

*and, hey, they have included me!*

*Now I do enjoy being with a boat load of ladies, but sooner or later, I'm going to run out of stamina, so I think it's time for some other desperadoes to pick up a paddle and come forward. Martin has faced the challenge and looks like becoming a regular (pity the boat isn't bigger!), but where has Gordon gone? And where are all the other male members hanging out? They could, if they want, become part of a team that welcomes every level of skill, doesn't criticise, is prepared to laugh at themselves, and every time they take to the water, they are winners.*

*So, fellas, if you want to share the glory, see you on the water.*

The next Twilight regatta is on Jan 20th - put it in your diary now! It's a blast!

## When we're not at Regattas

It would be easy to think, reading the newsletter, that all we ever do is go to regattas, when the great bulk of our paddling is just pootling up and down the bay. Sometimes it is stroke drill as in the photo with Mel standing to one side checking paddle position or trying to get our elbows straight. It's surprising how crooked straight elbows can be in practice! One day we'll organize a video session so people can see themselves in action – sometimes it's quite revealing to see that what you were quite sure you were doing isn't really happening at all.



Coaching on the beach with Mel



## Margot the Bikie: DASydney's original "Can Do" Kid

Keeping in touch while on vacation visiting her son in the US, Margot Case, our original DASydney Coordinator seems to have been up to her usual antics - she's got the bike and the leathers, all she's missing now is the tattoos (radiation tattoos don't count):

*Howdy folks, (thats USA "speak")*

*Well my first adventure hit me the day after I arrived in the good old USA - my son said we would go for a bike ride, which to me meant push bike – NOOOOOOOO - it was MOTOR BIKE! Now to all who know me I HATE MOTOR BIKES!!! and only a mothers love for her son would induce me to get on this black and yellow MEAN MACHINE - that is after I was "kitted out" in all the gear - I really looked like a Bikie Moll! albeit and old one. He told me we were only going on the back roads so I thought OK I CAN DO THIS!*

*After swinging my leg over the bike (soooo flexible due to paddling!) I sat there clinging on for dear life as we set off. Then I realised we were on a MAIN ROAD - yikes cars whizzing past me - so much for a back road spin! Finally I ventured a look at the surroundings as we zoomed along but I still clung on. Then we went around a bend and I found I had to move my body to the angle of the curved road - an interesting feeling and I DID NOT FALL OFF!*



Margot the Bikie

*We finally arrived at our destination, took off the gloves which had huge silver knuckle duster type metal things on them, removed the helmet and Jamie just placed them on the bike - was told they would be there when we returned from our shopping trip! Being the cynic that I am I was not sure but yep, there they were when we got back so kitted up in the gear again for the ride back. This time I tried to relax a little and finally have to say that I did enjoy it a TEENY WEENY BIT but was*

*glad to be home in one piece.*

*The photo is proof of my bikie adventure - just one more thing to reflect on at 65! Have to also say it snowed the day before thanksgiving – another photo as proof! So pretty but had all gone by the afternoon. Anyway that's it for now folks - have a paddle or two for me and whilst here I will continue doing my daughter in laws "body pump class with barbells and weights – way to go!!!*

*Love Margot xxx*

## Accommodation Alert (not an Alarm) re Internationally Abreast Dragon Boat Festival 2007

From Robin Shoebridge:

O.K. Dragons Abreast ladies, supporters and partners, we're on the go again. This event in Kawana on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland is the week after the 2007 World Championships in Sydney. It might seem a long way off, but believe me, it'll catch up with you really, really quickly. Be warned – overseas paddlers are booking already so we don't want to be stuck with just the leftover accommodation ourselves. I'm looking for firm expressions of interest in relation to accommodation on the Sunshine Coast for this event. We thought it would be fun to all be staying in close proximity so we can all do things together. So far I have approximately 20 people (including partners) who have said "Yes, Yes, Yes".

Having been to Vancouver in June of this year with other DAS ladies, I can tell you that it's pretty special – and when you see 1,600 pink people (yep, that's how many there were and at Kawana in 2007 they're expecting 3,000), at the Opening Ceremony AND the Closing Ceremony you'll get the picture. It's stunning. Just ask other DASydney paddlers who were there. They'll tell you it's pretty awe inspiring.

I know for sure that Australia's Dragons Abreast Paddlers will do even better when it's an "At Home" event. So have a good look at your diaries/calendars and mark it out for Thursday, 27 September 2007 to Monday, 1 October 2007 for a good paddle time at Kawana Waters – time to settle in on the Thursday and time to wind down on the Monday. Looking forward to hearing from you. If you want to be part of our early group accommodation booking (while there's still a good choice) please email me your names and contact details on [rsho3799@bigpond.net.au](mailto:rsho3799@bigpond.net.au)

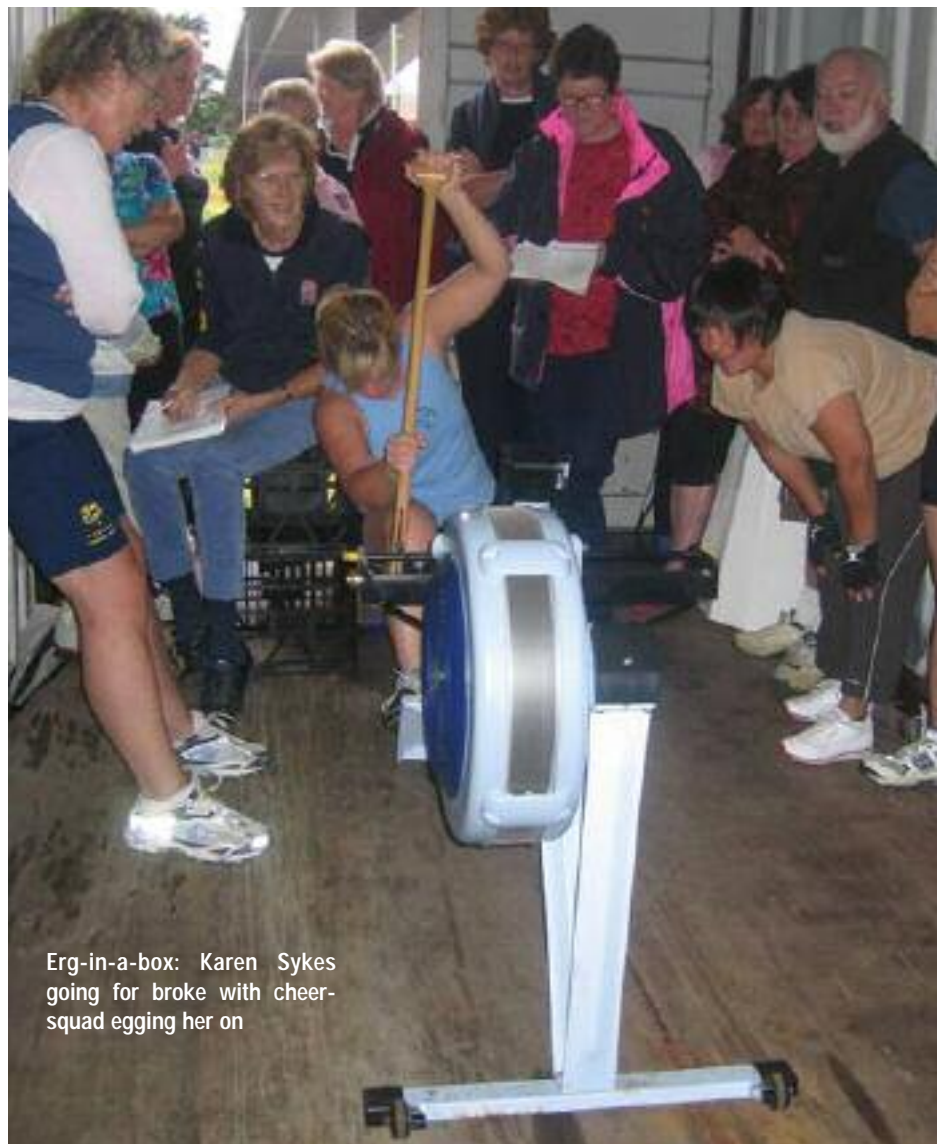


## Erg-in-a-Box

No, it's not a pop-up Christmas present suggestion – it's an evil machine which is actually a modified Concept 2 rowing machine (you may have seen Concept 2 rowers at your local gym) with a fixed seat and a pulley system so that it has a paddle action. Last weekend, despite the pouring rain, we held our first optional erg testing for keen paddlers. Seventeen girls showed up to have a go and despite the puzzling stiffness of the machine on the day, all tests were completed satisfactorily (a few tests were done on other days and as conditions weren't the same the overall results aren't comparable). We'll try to overcome the equipment difficulties when we do it again on January 28th – prior to Chinese New Year.

It's fantastic to see girls really throwing themselves into it to see what they can do. It's really hard to keep "paddling" flat out for the whole two minutes, so having a cheer squad gathered around while you slog away to the bitter end is a huge encouragement. Some girls just wanted a benchmark so they can do it again down the line and see how much they've improved, others were battling it out for positions in the competitive boat. The erg scores aren't the only thing taken into account when selecting a crew, but they are a very good indicator of aerobic capacity – and they generally have the advantage of being objective and unarguable.

Oh, and yes – the erg-in-a-box reference is because the machine is stored in one of the containers at Banks Street, where we practice – a tad stuffy on a hot day, but out of the rain for us last weekend.



Erg-in-a-box: Karen Sykes going for broke with cheer-squad egging her on

## Important Clarification on Supporter Recruitment Guidelines

One of the critical tasks for the committee is to try to ensure the preservation of a BC-supportive atmosphere in the club – obviously, because we are primarily a club for breast cancer survivors. As word has spread of the fun we have and of our inclusiveness more people want to join who have nothing to do with breast cancer. Since there are already plenty of regular clubs out there, we've started referring these enquiries on to those other clubs. So while in the past we welcomed everyone (we needed the numbers), now we're admitting as supporters only family/partner and/or best friend of our survivor members, but not wider acquaintances or those with no close connection to one of our survivors. Please keep this in mind when speaking with any potential newbies.

Next Newbies will be 25th February, 2006 (but remember they MUST pre-register).

## The Bendigo Bank Initiative

You will all have received an email from our National Coordinator, Michelle Hanton, about the terrific Bendigo Bank support for DAA. The idea is that paddlers and their friends and supporters can sign up through DAA to switch their banking to Bendigo Bank. As I understand it, this just brings Bendigo Bank more customers and in so doing Bendigo Bank rewards DAA by remitting a proportional amount to the national DAA coffers (which desperately need it!). So you have a perfectly normal account with Bendigo Bank, it costs you nothing extra, but DAA benefits nationally. If you have a business you can switch your business account to Bendigo Bank too to benefit DAA – why not find out more? For more information contact Vivienne Gregg on [vgregg@bigpond.net.au](mailto:vgregg@bigpond.net.au).

## DASydney Craft Group

The BOOBS Exchange (Building On Our Beautiful Skills) session is booked out for January already – on Thursday 19th January 13 lucky souls will be off to Robin Shoebridge's for a day of scrapbooking under her expert guidance.

## December Milestones

As I write this, it's Pam Bell's birthday on 1st December. Then on the 6th it's Lyn Tyson's; 12th Sally Oh's; 17th Elaine Beggs'; 19th Fiona Davidson's and right between Christmas and New Year (when everyone probably forgets it) the 28th is Di Ryall's birthday. Happy Birthday all.

## Postcards from the Ether

Some of you will remember Helen Hynes, one of our "from the beginning" girls. She sent this update from Ireland:

Just a quick email to let you know that my final scan was "clear of disease" with a few follow up scans to do with my kidney to come. It may be just a post operative problem but as I will need scans for the next year anyway, I will be keeping an eye on it.

So, we are now making plans to return to the USA and finally get all of the stuff we left in storage in Sydney back - it will almost be like Christmas when we get our hands on the stuff.

Say hello to all the ladies. Helen

And Helen Rabone::

Just a short note to let you know that I haven't forgotten you all. I think about paddling all the time. I hope to come back again next year and give it another go. I am off to India and Nepal tomorrow with my daughter for about 6 weeks which I am so excited about. Anyway wishing you all a great xmas party at Eugenias and will see you again in the new year. Cheers Helen

## The Welcome Mat

Hard on the heels of our latest newbies day we are delighted to welcome Lyn Alcock, Ruth Morgan, Martin Hirst, Debbie Fisher, Jenny McDonald, Margaret Davis, Jenny Moxham, Tracy Donovan, Tawan Lynch, Fiona Davidson, Sue Tolhurst, Jasmen Shahbazova, Rowena Marstin, and Diana Plater as financial members of Dragons Abreast Sydney. We hope you will have as much fun as we do!

## Eh? – What was That Again, Dear?

I knew paddling was good for us – but I didn't know it could keep us out of the funny farm!

According to a Swedish study reported in Lancet Neurology, people in their late 40s and early 50s who exercise (read "paddle") regularly could reduce their risk of dementia by about 50 per cent. Those who are genetically prone to Alzheimer's disease could see a reduction of about 60 per cent, it adds.

Past studies have also suggested regular exercise might guard against dementia, however, this is one of the first to look at the effects over a long time scale – about two decades (good grief – must I paddle for two decades? – I'm already 60!! Will not be a pretty sight!). The study involved 1500 men and women, of whom nearly 200 developed dementia or Alzheimer's disease between the ages of 65 and 79. The amount of exercise that seems to be needed to be protective was physical activity which lasted 20-30 minutes at least twice a week and which was enough to cause breathlessness and sweating.

So keep paddling, gals, even if you can't remember why!!

## Regatta Diary and Registration

Don't forget our next regatta is on the 14th January on the Wyong River, Tacoma, on the Central Coast. It will be a lovely day's excursion

and makes sense to car pool for the event. Register for it now with Anne before you get caught up in the Christmas whirl. While you're at it, the next Twilight Regatta at Pymont will be Friday 20th January – put that one in your diaries too and register with Anne as soon as possible. Of course you are all keeping the weekend of 10/11 February free for Chinese New Year – more about that right after Christmas.

## Did you know?

The current DASydney membership contact list is always posted on our group email site – any time you want to contact another DASydney paddler, you can get their phone numbers by logging into that site (ring me if you need help). You can also see what suburb people live in and then arrange to car pool with someone living nearby eg: for the January regatta! You can also get to our newsletter on the site as well.

## Cold Turkey?

Can you bear it? Will you get withdrawal symptoms? Will you need medication to help you do without it? (well, maybe a little libation – it IS Christmas, after all). We're stopping paddling for a Christmas Break – last DASydney paddle/coffee for 2005 is Saturday 17th December – but we'll be back again Thursday 5th January – see you then!



Have a super Christmas, everyone - and then in January you can come back and paddle off all that pud!  
Cynth...

# DAS CALENDAR 2005.2006.2007

Date(s)	Event	Location	Details
<b>December 2005</b> 10th – 11th	DBNSW Level 1 Dragon Boat Coaching Course	DBNSW, Homebush	By arrangement only.
Sat 17th	Last paddle for 2005	Banks St, Pyrmont	Pls be sure if you say you are coming that you do come – otherwise you let others down.
<b>January 2006</b> Thu 5th	First paddle after Christmas	Banks St, Pyrmont	Don't forget to register before New Year if possible.
Sat 14th	Regatta	Wyong River, Tacoma, Central Coast	Register now with DASydney Team Captain, Anne Gates on jabberwocky@myaccess.com.au – and start arranging car pooling for the day.
Thu 19th	DASydney Craft Group - Scrapbooking Day	At Robin Shoebridge's	Booked out
Fri 20th	Twilight Regatta	Banks St Pyrmont	6pm sharp – register with Team Captain, Anne Gates on jabberwocky@myaccess.com.au
<b>February 2006</b> W/E 11th /12th	Chinese New Year Dragon Boat Festival	Darling Harbour	You MUST put this in your diary now!!!
Sat 11th	Chinese New Year Banquet	Regal Restaurant, Chinatown	This will be huuuuge! Book now! Contact DASydney Social Events Coordinator Margo-Lynne Lee for booking details on shortsandie@hotmail.com.
Wed 15th	Hornsby Zonta	Hornsby	Guest speaker: Cynthia Kuiper
Sat 25th	DASydney Open Day for Newbies	Banks St Pyrmont	Please see note in newsletter re current supporter membership guidelines. Reservations essential: cynthiakuiiper@yahoo.com
<b>March 2006</b> Sat 25th	2006 NSW State Dragon Boat Titles	Penrith, SIRC	
<b>April 2006</b> Fri 14th – Sun 16th (Easter)	2006 AusDBF National Dragon Boat Titles	Nagambie Lakes, Victoria.	For accommodation, contact: Nagambie Lakes Visitor Centre ph: 03 5794 2647 www.nagambielakestourism.com.au
<b>August 2006</b> 11th – 13th	World Club Crew Championships	Toronto, Canada	Training Squad selection after the Nationals
<b>September 2007</b> 20th – 23rd	World Dragon Boat Championships	Penrith SIRC	We'll need lots of competitors and lots of volunteers
28th - 31st	Internationally Abreast Dragon Boat Festival	Kawana Lakes, Sunshine Coast, Qld	Small place – not too soon to book accommodation now