



# MEDIA RELEASE

December 1, 2003

## Testing Conditions for Access Liberty Regatta

Melbourne's Sunday weather provided a challenge to sailors and the new Access Liberty during a Sail Melbourne organised regatta at Docklands as a lead up to the IFDS Dinghy Worlds being staged in January.

Winds of 20 to 30 knots with some stronger gusts meant that all boats were racing with reduced sail area. Whilst still heeling at an acute angle in some of the "bullets" which flashed across Victoria Harbour, the 75kg of ballast in the Liberty's centreboard ensured the boats stood up to the blow and the competitors remained safe and dry.

The conditions were so extreme that almost all other keelboat and dinghy events around Melbourne were abandoned. "If it were not for the safety of this venue and the stability of the Access Liberty, we could not have been able to hold these races", regatta organiser David Staley said.

Sailing consistently throughout and with a third his worst result for the day, Mark Thompson from Ballarat claimed the overall trophy. When not in a boat, Thompson moves about in a wheelchair but his many years of offshore keelboat sailing experience prior to his accident gave him the edge in Sunday's heavy conditions. Second and third places overall went to teenagers Luke Strickland from Geelong ahead of Alison Weatherly from Ballarat.

Of the competitors in the event, 60% had some form of disability and several were using servo-electric controls for steering and sail settings. The innovative Access Liberty, designed and built in Melbourne, will be used for the International Foundation for Disabled Sailing Single Person Dinghy World Championship being held at the Blairgowrie Yacht Squadron as part of the Sail Melbourne 2004 International Regatta from January 13-22. This World-first event is to be contested by sailors with profound disabilities such as Paraplegia and Quadraplegia. Eight countries have already entered.

For additional information about Sunday's Access Liberty Regatta at Docklands, the IFDS Dinghy Worlds or the twenty four other events scheduled as part of Sail Melbourne 2004, please contact:

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**Sail Melbourne Access Liberty Regatta at Docklands November 30, 2003**

Final placings for the best three results of a four race series

1st	Mark Thompson	Ballarat	6pts
2nd	Luke Strickland	Geelong	9pts
3rd	Alison Weatherly	Ballarat	11pts
4th	Colin Johanson	Docklands	12pts
4th	Murray Mitchelhill	Geelong	12pts
6th	David Weatherly	Ballarat	14pts
7th	Rex Fuller	Albert Park	18pts
7th	John Jackway	ADSS	18pts
9th	Maggie Madden	Docklands	19pts
10th	Gavin Lewis	ADSS	21pts