



2026 Tidetech VDL-C Newsletter 4





Why is (FREE!) tracking via PredictWind important?

I was the RRV and Comms Officer for the 2024 cruise. We relied on HF and VHF radio which proved to be extremely challenging. I could talk to yachts in Queensland at times but couldn't raise a yacht two bays away!

There were several occasions when we simply couldn't contact some participants. I carried Starlink, so I was able to search on Marine Traffic, but this is also unreliable and depends on other AIS equipped vessels broadcasting their position, not to mention shore-based stations of which there are few in the remote places we go.

With 23 boats in the fleet in 2024, roughly 2-3 hours of each of my day was taken up with the daily skeds, hand-writing positions, calling through the fleet, and then seeking to locate participants who didn't join the sked for whatever reason. In 2026 we will have a full fleet of 45 boats plus the Cruise Commodores and Comm's vessel.

Now that Starlink and a Class B AIS are mandatory, PredictWind tracking via IOS smart phone or iPad and some satellite wizardry will -

- Mean that every participant can be seen without having to rely on HF or VHF radio;
- Enhance safety as both Cruise Commodores, myself as Safety Officer and the RYCT in Hobart can also see where the fleet is, and more importantly where individual yachts are positioned;
- If a particular yacht loses comm's - which of course can and does happen (battery failure, degraded connections etc) then we at least will have a recent "last known" position and can ask other participants in the vicinity to call them on VHF or visit them by dinghy and check on them;

- Lastly, and I admit this is a little along the self-interest line - it will lessen the time I spend each day looking for yachts and make the Comm's and Safety responsibilities so much quicker and easier.

We also require each boat to log their position by 1800 hours each day via internet filling in a google doc form - a task that should take mere seconds!

The form will be available and circulated prior to the commencement of the cruise.

We will still be running a compulsory sked at 1830 hours each day - to provide the fleet with useful information about the next leg, what's on, weather, what we intend to do (i.e. leave or stay) and to get feedback about weather etc. Local knowledge is invaluable and with many in the fleet having completed multiple circumnavigations, what to expect will play a big part in ensuring a safe passage and not getting caught out!

So, the biggest reason we ask ALL participants to sign up with PredictWind and be part of fleet tracking is SAFETY - managing the safety of the fleet is our primary responsibility.

IT'S FREE!

The PredictWind tracker app is available to be used on any PredictWind Subscription, including the "Free" version, so cost is not a disincentive.

Also, PredictWind now has three new weather models using A.I. rather than traditional computer models, and they are proving to be far more accurate at forecasting 3+ days ahead.

I use PredictWind, and Windy, Windy App, BOM, and MetEye. All the models use much of the same data - but interpret it differently and I have found they are all right - what varies is the timing of changes and (local) strength or severity.

Of course, nothing beats a barometer on board to

observe rapid changes that may be local and not necessarily predicted on any model.

So, our hope is that everyone in the fleet either has or creates a PredictWind account and signs on for tracking - it's free and it is all about your safety really!

HOW TO:

PredictWind Tracker App - track your boat by using your mobile phone.

The PredictWind Tracker App offers an economical GPS tracking solution with no extra cost or hardware than your current mobile phone and a **PredictWind Forecast account on any PredictWind subscription level (Free, Basic, Standard or Pro).**

[Set up a PredictWind Forecast account here.](#)

The PredictWind Tracker App is an ideal way to get started with GPS tracking before buying a purpose-designed GPS hardware device, such as a DataHub or Iridium GO!, or as a last resort if there's no time before heading off on your passage.

Important Note: iOS is available now (iPad and iPhone); Android is coming soon.

If you do want to take advantage and subscribe to a paid account - which have some great features such as departure and route planning, and higher definition forecasts, to obtain the 20% discount, **this must be done via the PW website** - not through other subscription services such as AppleID/iCloud. You will know if you are a subscriber via your AppleID/iCloud by going into your settings App, under "subscriptions".

How the 20% VDL-C Discount Works - New subscribers:

The discount is managed manually via a refund from PredictWind's billing team. To receive it, participants must follow these steps:

1. Purchase

Buy your PredictWind subscription at the normal price directly from the PredictWind website (NOT through the App Store or Google

Play — no refunds can be processed there).

2. Contact PredictWind

After purchase, email PredictWind support and request your 20% VDL-C discount refund.

3. Refund Processed

Their billing team will then manually refund 20% back to your credit card.

Existing PredictWind Users:

If you upgrade your subscription, PredictWind will:

- Automatically apply the unused portion of your current subscription as credit
- Then apply the additional 20% VDL-C refund manually
- **Follow the same process in point 2 as above.**

Remember - the VDL-C discount is **only available where your subscription or renewal is done through the PredictWind website**, not through your Apple/iCloud account.

TRACKING

Tracking can be set up now!

To set it up, go to the App store and search "PredictWind Tracker" or on this link:

<https://apps.apple.com/au/app/predictwind-tracker/id6480428437>

Download the App and follow the prompts.

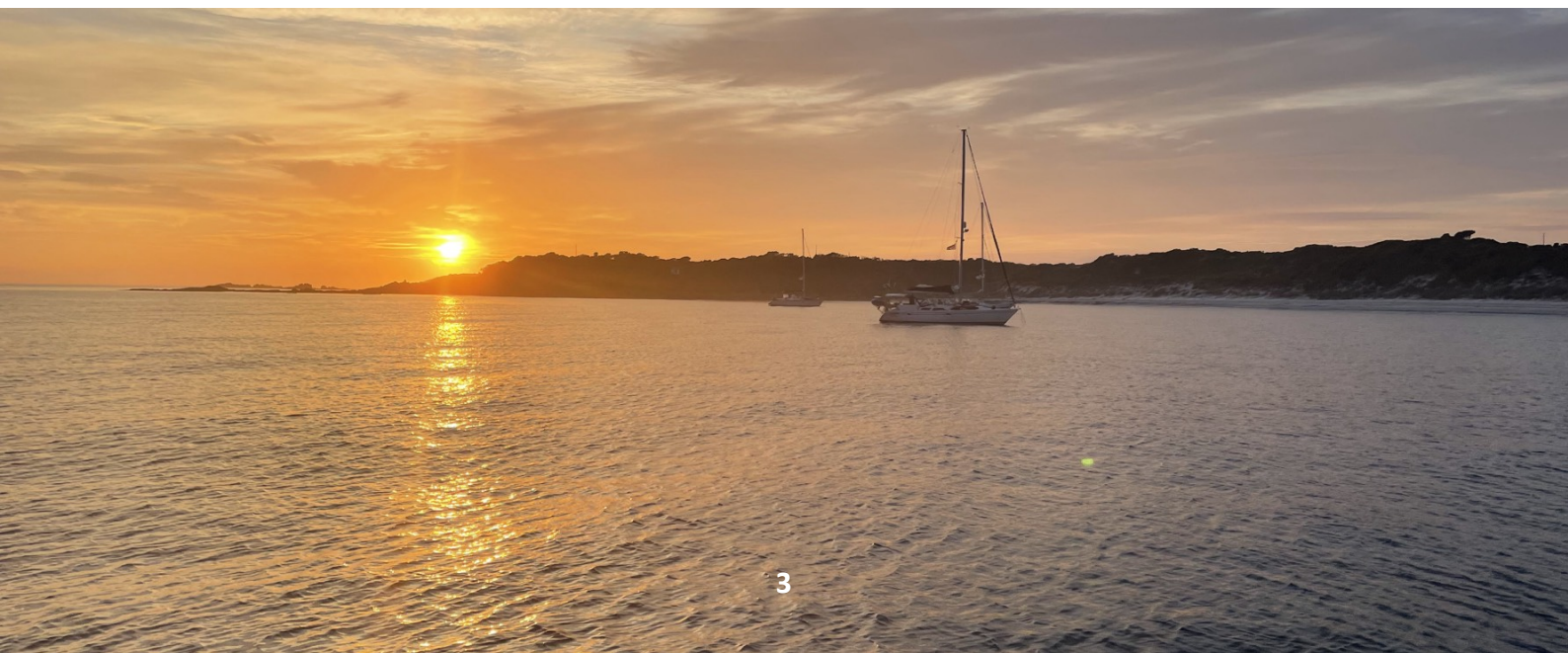
Make sure you use the same email account that you will use throughout the cruise as this is the one that we will advise PredictWind is part of the VDL-C fleet for tracking purposes.

We will, closer to the start of the VDL-C be setting up a "fleet tracking page" for participants, so that for safety reasons, Cruise Commodores and Comms can check positions of participants easily and quickly in case of adverse conditions or danger "at a glance".

I hope this clarifies the PredictWind pricing and tracking, but as always, if you have any questions, please reach out.

John Hall

VDL-C Communications Officer



Need Crew or Want to Join the Cruise?

As we get closer to TideTech VDL-C, there will be boats looking for extra crew — and people keen to join for part or all of the journey.

If you're a skipper needing crew or a sailor wanting to come along, connect with us:

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1DENjQsGp4/>

This is a link to the relevant post on the VDL-C Facebook Group page.

- Email Richard at richardscarr@bigpond.com. He's our cruise Harbour Master / Events Manager.

Richard will need to know:

- Whether you're offering or looking for a berth
- Which legs or dates you're available for
- A little about your experience (or enthusiasm!)

The VDL-C is all about community and shared adventure, so let's help everyone find a boat.



Safety & Sea Survival Course

As part of our focus on safety and preparedness for the TideTech VDL-C, we're looking to see who would be interested in completing a Safety & Sea Survival Course (SSSC). We're proposing to run two course options to help accommodate as many VDL-C participants as possible (dates subject to pool availability):

Proposed Course Dates

- ◆ Course 1: Thursday 15 – Friday 16 January \$395
- ◆ Course 2: Thursday 5 – Friday 6 February \$395 (4 people have nominated for this date)

This course is an excellent refresher — or first-time experience — covering offshore safety, emergency procedures, and practical survival skills in the water.

Email Michael Denney (RYCT Sailing Manager) at sailing@ryct.org.au

We need responses to confirm numbers and lock in pool bookings.

Position Reporting Forms

An electronic Position Reporting Form has also been added to the VDL-C homepage.

It is a mandatory requirement that each participant report their position daily by 18:00 hours during the cruise to keep the organisers updated throughout the cruise and to streamline the daily sked.

This is a safety requirement, so please ensure you report using the form each day by 18:00 hours.

Another link to add to your favourites on your web browser for quick access!

Link: <https://ryct.org.au/vdl-circumnavigation/>

RYCT Event Registration Forms

A link is now available on the VDL-C homepage under Events (or ctrl + click on the link below) to register for RYCT organised events:

- Marion's Vineyard - 21 February (Platter orders only required)
- Strahan Dinner Cruise - 4 March
- Callington Whisky Function - 17 March (Constitution Dock)
- Commemorative Whisky Bottles
- RYCT Fleet Dinner - 19 March

Link: <https://ryct.org.au/vdl-circumnavigation/>

Here you can order platters for Marion's Vineyard, tickets for Strahan Dinner Cruise, RYCT Fleet Dinner Hobart, Callington Mill MACQ01 Hobart and also additional whisky bottles.

For Tamar Yacht Club Function (20/2/26):

Link: <https://events.humanitix.com/vdl-circumnavigation-dinner>

For Port Esperance Sailing Club Function (13/3/26):

Link: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1432938?>

Crew Manifest Form

An electronic [Crew Manifest Form](#) to record additions or changes to your crew has also been added to the VDL-C homepage. It can be filled out on any html page, so can be done on your PC, tablet or phone. The form is available now to update your crew and throughout the cruise, so would be a good link to add to your favourites on your web browser.

Link: <https://ryct.org.au/vdl-circumnavigation/>

A screenshot of a web form titled "VDL-C 2026: Crew Manifest". The form has a red header with a logo and the title. Below the header, there is a small warning icon and text: "Use Skipper and Crew details with date on and off the vessel." The form contains three main sections: 1. "Name" with a sub-label "1. Yacht" and a text input field "Enter your yacht". 2. "Skipper" with a sub-label "2. Skipper" and a text input field "Enter your skipper". 3. "Email" with a sub-label "3. Email" and a text input field "Please enter an email". At the bottom of the form, there is a red "Next" button and a small note: "Have you set your password? YES/NO".

VDL-C Links

Save these into your web browser's FAVOURITES for quick access.

Compulsory Daily Skeds

Here is the Zoom link you'll need for the compulsory evening skeds. Please note that it will be the same link used throughout the whole event, so put it in your favourites!

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89827366205>

Meeting ID: 898 2736 6205

Crew Manifest Form Position Reporting Form

<https://ryct.org.au/vdl-circumnavigation/>

RYCT Event Registration Form

<https://ryct.org.au/vdl-circumnavigation/>

Tidetech Link

<https://vdlc.tidetech.org/?layer=combinedcurrents&baselayer=topographic>



Second Sked Comms Compliance Test

Saturday January 10, 2026 at 1700 hrs

Topic: VDL-C Comms Check-in

Time: Jan 10, 2026 05:00 PM Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9462272152?omn=84465028110>

Meeting ID: 946 227 2152

If you weren't able to do the first one in December, you must do this one. As this is a comms compliance check, you must do it from your boat using the system you intend using on the circumnavigation.

When joining the "Second Sked Test" via Zoom, you will initially enter a waiting room, and in turn will be admitted. There may be a short wait while we deal with other participants. We need to ensure all participants are recorded as having complied with the comm's test.

The daily sked at 18:30 hours while on the cruise will operate differently, so there is no waiting in the waiting room. It is only the Comm's Sked that requires waiting until you are admitted.

Thanks for your patience and understanding!

Getting Your Meds

Some participants have encountered difficulty obtaining prescribed medications. Please find the following guidelines to assist.

VICTORIA

The Ocean Racing Club Victoria sets out how to go about this and have generously allowed the VDL-C Committee to use the below instruction from their website.

1. Find a registered Pharmacist

The ORCV website lists appropriately qualified pharmacists who are familiar with the legal requirements for dispensing prescription drugs for Medical Kits for Racing Yachts.

See <https://www.orcv.org.au/safety/medical-information-2>

If you have another pharmacist who is happy to provide the listed drugs, it would be advisable to include a copy of the "Protocol for Lawful Supply of Schedule 4 or Schedule 8 Poisons to Yachts in Victoria" with the other documentation listed below, as not all are familiar with the details of the requirements.

2. Documentation Required to be sighted by Pharmacist:

- Australian Sailing Special Regulations - see here: <https://cdn.revolutionise.com.au/site/94lsnbqhcplfdoa.pdf>. Note that the Special Regs also are recommended for cruising yachts.
- Copy of Notice of Cruise indicating the recommended Medical Kit - see here https://ryct.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/VDL-C-2026-Medical-Kit_Ver-2.pdf
- Proof of entry of the yacht into the Cruise
- Personal identification of boat representative, to provide proof of boat ownership or crew membership of the yacht entered in the cruise.

3. Storage of Drugs

- All medications must be stored in a locked container securely attached to a fixed internal structure of the yacht. The keys to this container must be kept by the appointed First Aid officer and another crew member.
- Therapeutic storage of medications is usually below 25°C.

4. Record of Drugs

- The yacht owner or crew member must keep a record of the purchase, administration, Preparation for Cruising Medical Emergencies and disposal of any Schedule 4 or Schedule 8 drugs. Proformas for these records can be downloaded from the ORCV website.
- In the event of any drugs reaching their expiry date or having been exposed to prolonged high temperatures, they should be returned to the pharmacist for appropriate disposal and this action be recorded in the Yacht's Drug Register.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Similar arrangements have been made in NSW and this may be of assistance:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pharmaceutical/Documents/authority-racingboats-medicines.PDF>

TASMANIA

Assistance may be found here: <https://www.health.tas.gov.au/health-topics/medicines-and-poisons-regulation/information-patients-and-general-public-about-medicines-and-poisons/supply-scheduled-substances-master-vessel>

QUEENSLAND

Assistance may be found here: https://www.health.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0028/1108990/fs-ships-mpa.pdf

NB: Although the Special Regs refer to *racing* yachts, the Australian Sailing Special Regs stipulate "**Recommended for Cruising Boats**". So, instead of the Notice of Race, use the "Notice of Cruise" and other equivalent documentation to prove entry and participation.

(Continued OverThe Page)

MEDICAL INCIDENTS and FORMS

1 Medical Incidents at sea

- In the event that you require access to medical advice whilst making passage, as an Australian Citizen, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority should be your first call. Any subsequent medical evacuation arranged by them will be at no cost. Travel insurance often does not cover crew on board recreational yachts and contacting a local authority directly may incur a hefty fee. Call 1800 641 792.
- In the event of a serious medical incident, advice is available here: Healthdirect Australia - 24-hour medical advice line 1800 022 222.
www.healthdirect.gov.au
- It is highly advisable, if you are not a registered medical practitioner, to seek advice and direction regarding the administration of any prescription medicine.

2 Forms

The forms below may be used with appropriate amendment and reference to the VDL-C Cruise:

- See here for a pro-forma ORCV Medical Incident form:
<https://www.orcv.org.au/docman-link/safety/medical/4343-orcv-medical-incident-form-feb-2025/file>
- See here for ORCV Schedule 4 drugs register:
<https://www.orcv.org.au/docman-link/news/safety-news/2704-yacht-drug-register-s4-drugs/file>
- See here for ORCV Schedule 8 drugs register:
<https://www.orcv.org.au/docman-link/news/safety-news/2706-yacht-drug-register-s8-drugs/file>



VHF Installation Tips

Brought to us by our good friends at Tas Maritime Radio

The VDL-C strongly recommends participants join TMR. It's only \$10 to join and an annual \$35 fee, and it means your details are on a database that could be crucial in a distress situation.

<https://tasmaritime.au/membersarea/join-up>

With summer and the boating season now upon us, Tas Maritime Radio is receiving a number of requests for radio checks from members and others who have replaced their radios and/or antennae or are simply checking that everything is working reliably.

The Tas Maritime Radio website contains a few useful tips and we think it worthwhile to mention them here. To read the detailed information check the FAQ section on the website.

Antennae

The first thing to consider when installing a VHF radio on a boat is mounting the antenna. The higher the antenna the greater the range. On a yacht, there are generally two locations, the pushpit or the masthead. With pushpit mounted antennae the mast and rigging often 'block' the signal resulting in fading while swinging at anchor. A masthead installation offers greater range and omnidirectional coverage. Remember though, if you lose the mast, you lose the radio, probably at a time you most need it!

On cruisers mount the antenna as high as possible and at least a metre away from other antennae. On trailer boats a swing-down antenna, mounted as high as possible, is best.

Terminating coax

Ideally the antenna coaxial cable should be one continuous length of good quality RG58C/U or RG213 cable especially for long cable runs of 6 metres or more. Avoid using 'antenna combiners' that allow the same antenna to be used by an AM/FM broadcast receiver. The more connections in an antenna cable, the greater likelihood of trouble.

Mounting the radio

Whilst it may look nice to mount a radio above the chart table down below, ideally the helmsman should be able to operate it. It must be mounted in a dry location, clear of rain and saltwater spray and free from engine vibration.

The microphone holder should be mounted where the microphone is easily accessible at all times. An extension horn speaker can be mounted externally if required. Some manufacturers offer 'remote heads' for flybridge or cockpit installations.

A spare fuse or two should be taped to the radio fuse holder as spares.

Radio Faults

Apart from an electronic fault within the transceiver (which will require specialist attention), most radio faults come down to faulty connections. Regularly check all your cables and connectors as well as your antenna insulator.

Radio hiss with little or no signal indicates a poor connection or a short circuit. A cable may be broken or frayed, or a connector damaged. Your antenna may be shorting to the hull. If you have a whip antenna it may be cracked. The antenna insulator may be cracked or covered with a layer of salt. Worse, you may have painted it!

MAYDAY:

Vessel/crew are in imminent danger and are in need of immediate assistance.

PAN-PAN:

The situation is urgent and help is needed but the danger is not imminent or life-threatening.

SECURITÉ:

For broadcasting important safety information, such as severe weather warnings or hazards to navigation.