



Hart Marine

30 years of advanced composite technology in Victoria



When Mal Hart established Hart Marine three decades ago on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula in Australia, he combined it with his passion for sailing. By the time the company shifted focus into the building of commercial vessels a decade ago, the company had few peers in advanced composite construction.

Initially the yard specialised in the leisure and racing sector, but soon transferred into the world of commercial vessels. This change in focus was a logical path for company growth and allowed Hart Marine to apply its unique skills more widely. Early commissions came for corporate charter vessels and commercial sport fishing craft, vessels that were an ideal bridge between the leisure and commercial worlds. Competing largely against builders in aluminium, Hart quickly diversified into workboats and, most notably, pilot boats.

Hart's series of pilot boats began with a commission from Victoria's Port Phillip Sea Pilots (PPSP). PPSP frequently operate in appalling sea conditions in Bass Strait, and are often the de facto heavy weather sea rescue service. In a particularly horrendous sea at the entrance to Port Phillip, a pilot boat had capsized, resulting in the tragic loss of vessel and crew.

It was clear that any new vessels had to offer exceptional seaworthiness and safety

features, and the PPSP immediately began the process of assessing designs worldwide. The research was for both the best pilot boat design and the best builder for the job. PPSP concluded that the "ORC Pilot Boat" family from the French naval architects Pantocarene had the best all-round design, and that Hart Marine should build it.

For many years, pilot boat designs have essentially been "more of the same" with small incremental improvements. The Pantocarene concept was a seven-league leap.

Far from a conventional pilot boat with self-righting capability, every design element of the vessel came under the naval architects' scrutiny. In the case of crew comfort, suspension seats are combined with the ORC's wheelhouse unit being carried on specialised vibration isolation mounts that are more common in fast ferries, making an enormous improvement to the quality of the crew's working day.

The Pantocarene beak bow is the most visible of the vessel's non-traditional features. The result of years of calculations, tank testing and sea trials, the bow shape is designed for wave piercing in a head sea and to give early gaining of buoyancy when the bow dips in a following sea, inhibiting any broaching tendencies. This feature is coupled with a wider than typical waterline for enhanced stability.

The first two boats PPSP ordered were the 'Ranger', a 14.4 metre vessel, and the 18.1 metre 'Akuna IV'.

The success of PPSP's pilot boats quickly attracted the attention of other operators, with Western Australia's Albany Port Authority placing an order for a 15.6 metre vessel. Svitzer Australia, the company providing marine services at Chevron's flagship Gorgon gas project at Barrow Island, is also a Hart Marine customer.

With world-leading environmental safeguards that include turtle-friendly working lights and electric tugs, Chevron was calling for the best in all areas. Svitzer proposed a Hart Marine pilot vessel and Chevron approved. The resulting vessel will also be the centrepiece of a groundbreaking training project, with local indigenous people set to be recruited and trained to operate Svitzer's tugs and pilot vessel.

Hart Marine continues a path of steady growth. The company's story demonstrates the value of collaboration and innovation, combining international expertise with local experience in the quest for success. Currently, the team consists of 35 technicians based out at the company's high tech Mornington yard.

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