

# 2017 FESTIVAL OF SAILS

The Rex Gorell Land Rover 2017 Festival of Sails, was a fun-filled four-day event that combined first class sailing on Corio Bay with a brilliant shore-side festival that drew over 100,000 people to the beautiful Geelong waterfront.

Challenged by a shared schedule of events with the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race, our event was moved from its traditional link to the Australia Day public holiday to the second last weekend of January. The sailing program extended to Thursday January 26th, concluding just in time for the Australia Day fireworks display and for the cycling event to start on Friday 27th January 2017.

Perfect weather greeted the fleet of over 200 yachts for the opening event...the 174th running of the Melbourne to Geelong Passage Race. It was a spectacular sight watching the yachts jostling for position in the minutes leading up to the cannon firing, the Melbourne city skyline as a backdrop and the tall ship, SS Tenacious, as the start boat. Equally impressive was the fleet entering Corio Bay under spinnaker, only metres separating the leaders after many hours of racing.

Over the next three days, competitors enjoyed world class racing on multiple

courses in yachts ranging from million dollar Grand Prix racers, to family cruisers, to children's dinghies...truly a Festival of Sails of all shapes and sizes. After racing, sailors enjoyed the quality entertainment program in and around the regatta village at RGYC.

Of course the Festival of Sails is not just about the sailing and 2017 event was no exception. The waterfront festival stretched from Steampacket Place to Eastern Beach and provided a range of engaging activities including free entertainment, roving performers, water-ski shows, food vans and markets for the community of Geelong and visitors to the region to enjoy. There were free 'come and try' activities on Eastern Beach including Discover Sailing, stand-up paddle boarding, beach volleyball and the ever popular Range Rover Terrapod driving experience.

Our key supporters were the State Government of Victoria and the City of Greater Geelong and I thank them for their ongoing support. We were very pleased to receive confirmation during the event from Hon. John Eren, State Minister for Tourism and Major Events and from Peter Dorling, Administrator, City of Greater Geelong, that their support for the event will continue to at least the 2021 Festival of Sails.

Thanks also to our presenting partner Rex Gorell Land Rover and to Geelong Connected Communities for supporting the waterfront festival. Special thanks also to the many other event sponsors who got behind the Festival of Sails and contributed to its success.

The Executive Committee and the Operations Committee worked tirelessly throughout the year and special thanks must go to those involved with the planning and implementation of this iconic event. In particular I thank our wonderful RGYC volunteers and staff for their efforts. Without them, this event could not happen.

We are very much looking forward to the Festival of Sails returning to the traditional date. The 175th Passage Race on Australia Day 2018 will be the greatest attraction for all sailors next summer and we are planning an excellent three day racing program and exciting shore side entertainment.

Please join us for this historic regatta.

## Peter Alexander

*Vice Commodore & Festival of Sails Chairman*

