

Company Profile

Eyachts is one of the most recognisable yachting brands in the region and the largest importer of dayboats into Australia, with the leading European marques on its books, notes **Scott Alle**. Still, the company continues to push forward, with Peter Hrones's trademark focus on good design front and centre.

DESIGNING SUCCESS

Buying a yacht can be a capricious, angst-filled experience. But it doesn't need to be. The best yacht dealers are genuinely intrigued by the intricacies, challenges and beauty of yacht design, while constantly seeking out the foremost examples of exciting new technologies to bring to their clients. Their dedication and professionalism make the purchase journey enjoyable, and they share a common love of boats and the sea.

The Eyachts team and their newly formed company Carbon Yachts definitely slot into this category. Eyachts was founded by Peter Hrones in 2006, and over the past 17 years has established an enviable reputation for sourcing highly innovative, stylish and eco-conscious boats that are suited to our challenging sea conditions and strongly resonate with a wide range of buyers.

Meanwhile, Carbon Yachts is fresh out of the mould and a Hrones family affair with Peter, his wife Cath and their three sons Chris, Ollie and Ben all bringing their shared skills and decades of experience in family boating to a new wave of high-end carbon creations emerging from Europe.

A lifelong and highly accomplished sailor who grew up learning the vagaries of wind and current on the yachting mecca of Pittwater north of Sydney, Hrones admits to having his sailor's hat on with everything he chooses. "I don't think there's anything in our portfolio a sailor wouldn't buy," he says, and it's reflected in the brands he brings into the business – he's indulged his love of fast and light sailboats with the Y!Yachts and Saffier Yachts brand falling under the Carbon Yachts umbrella.

"Carbon Yachts is about sourcing iconic boats with a focus on the future and where technology is heading," explains Hrones.

Right: Together with his wife Cath and sons (from left to right) Ollie, Ben and Chris, Peter Hrones (centre) is working on a new venture, Carbon Yachts, which sources iconic yachts with a focus on the future.



"The new generation seems very comfortable with developments such as electric boats and foiling," he laughs.

With Y!Yachts' superyacht-standard and volume-performance yachts able to be handled by two people or even solo, Hrones continues his long and close association with Michael Schmidt, the founder of the Hanse Group and one of the most influential figures in the sailing industry in the past 25 years.

Saffier Yachts is a Dutch brand that produces daysailers with excellent all-round performance and sharp styling. Hrones has a



Saffier 33 Life and rates it as one of the best yachts he's sailed on – "built with passion and without compromise," he says.

Carbon Yachts will also take on the Scandi-styled Virtue dayboat, and Hrones says the factory has enthusiastically embraced his suggestions for features such as carbon sinks and dash, plus carbon in the hull and t-top. "It's crazy not to use carbon if you can – it's probably the best material you can use in a boat," he argues, adding, "It's one thing in the world that's actually dropped in price in the last six months."

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Perhaps the most exciting offering in the Carbon Yachts stable is the world's first mainstream foiling electric boat from Candela. The Swedish brand has released the C-8, which has reviewers frothing with descriptions such as "transformational driving experience" and "game-changer".

Enthusiasts of flight mode over the waves have been quick to put their money down. One has already been sold to New Zealand, and Hrones is in discussions with the factory that could result in a C-8 taking flight in Australia by the end of the year.

If you already own an Axopar, Brabus Marine, Pardo, Rand, Greenline, Sirena or a Saffier Yachts, or are perhaps considering a sailing carbon performance cruiser such as a YYacht, a fast, low-emission boat like a Virtue, or even a revolutionary electric foiling Candela, then there's a fair chance you share Hrones's deep appreciation for form and function.

The Eyachts portfolio has a boat to match nearly every boating aspiration, from 6-metre, Scandi-styled Rands to 88-metre Sirena cruisers, capable of crossing oceans in enviable luxury.

"Good engineering, a light boat, but still affordable," is Hrones's response to which



Hrones has a habit of experiencing firsthand whether a boat lives up to its design brief, which makes his input highly valuable to a manufacturer.

fundamental characteristics he looks for in any new addition to the Eyachts stable. "E also very much stands for economy," he continues. "We look at the economy of all the boats, especially the way they move through the water; how much wake they leave."

We're sipping coffee on a sparkling winter's day dockside outside the Eyachts head office at The Quays Marina on Pittwater. There's another office in Sydney at the Spit now, known as the Eyachts test-drive centre, plus a new, fully undercover showroom near Pittwater in Warriewood, with another 560 square metres for new boats between 20 and 45 feet, which will open in September. There's also a slightly smaller showroom on the Gold

Coast and offices in Melbourne, Western Australia and Auckland, New Zealand. It's a big operation, with a turnover of AU\$35 million in the group last financial year and nearly 25 staff, reflecting Eyachts' prominence as one of Australia's and New Zealand's leading yacht dealers. "Yeah, we've done well," acknowledges Hrones. "I guess when you have a passion for something, it's easier."

It also helps when you can draw on Hrones's more than 30 years of industry experience, including creating Windcraft Yachts in 1999, which he subsequently fashioned into a template for professionalism in a sector that suffered from a patchy record in terms of standards of customer engagement and service.

Hrones sold out of Windcraft in 2017 to concentrate on Eyachts and, against all advice from well-meaning and other colleagues, took on an unknown, no-frills, blocky-looking boat called Axopar from Finland. "Everyone said, what are you doing with these little Popemobiles?" remembers Hrones, referring to the boxy shape of the first cabin version, of the Axopar 28.

He recalls the prevailing negative opinion at the time was that they weren't going to work. "The main comments were: they're sort of ugly, a bit weird and a little quirky, but I've heard they drive well with this twin-stepped hull design, they're very smooth, and they go very, very quick."

Yet, Hrones simply thought this feedback was fairly normal for something that was new in the market and wasn't a copy of anything else at the time. "It was original," says Hrones, "a boat that was, on its own, making a new market."

Nine years later, Axopar is a major industry success story. Over 5,000 boats have been built and the company has forged its own category, the sports adventure dayboat, which has attracted a string of imitators and look-alikes. "Yes, the boats looked a little agricultural, with a low freeboard, and the cabin sat a bit high up," Hrones reveals. "But we suggested some changes and they listened, and that company has grown ten-fold."

No less, Eyachts is in the top five of the 100 Axopar dealers worldwide, and in 2023 reached the milestone of selling 250 of these fast, rugged, smooth-riding hulls. Axopar has a new flagship on the way, the Axopar 45, of which Eyachts has already pre-sold some, and at least one hull will be in Australia and available by the end of the year.

Praised by reviewers for its "go-anywhere appeal" coupled to an array of "Swiss-Army-knife features", it's planned that two 45s will take centre stage at the 2024 Sydney International Boat Show.

PETER HRONES

1984-85
Whitworths Marine – working in mail order at the warehouse after school.

1985-87
Sydney Sailboat Centre – selling windsurfers on weekends and school holidays (part-time).

1987-1992
Lamoore Yacht Sales, Palm Beach – full-time yacht broker.

1992-94
Travelled Europe – worked at Jack Holt Boat Chandlery in London; boat deliveries from Portugal to UK on a 36-foot Sigma and a 120-foot motorsailer.

1995-98
Lamoore Yachts Sales – manager.

1999
Founded Windcraft with Scaryacht and Prout Catamarans – expanded to Australia/New Zealand dealer for Hallberg-Rassy, Comet, Hanse, Dehler, Moody, Solaris and Fjord brands.

2006
Founded Eyachts – dealer for Greenline Yachts from 2012, Axopar from 2015, Brabus from 2018, Pardo and Sirena from 2020, and Rand from 2022.

2015
Co-founded TMG Yachts, previously the Multihull Group – Lagoon Catamarans and Prestige Yachts.

2018
Launched VesselTec – full in-house service centre with shipwrights, electricians and skippers, now a team of 10.

2019
Launched Cobli – syndication scheme partnered with Axopar and Lagoon Cats for factory-direct, exclusive shares and five or six people per boat.

2023
Founded Carbon Yachts with sons Chris, Ben and Ollie and wife Cath – YYachts, Saffier Yachts, Virtue Yachts and Candela.

Hrones has owned an Axopar 28, continuing his habit of experiencing first-hand whether a boat lives up to its design brief – something that makes his input hugely valuable to the manufacturer. "They can only guess what the customer wants, but we're at the forefront," he notes wryly.

The latest fledgling boat brand to benefit from his extensive experience and intuitive feel for design is the Swedish-designed and Polish-built Virtue, a stylish, low-emission dayboat specifically configured around and for use with electric outboards and rapidly advancing battery technology.

A gleaming new Virtue V10 (9.95 metres) will be the new Hrones family boat, and will be on display at this year's Sydney boat show.

There are plans for bigger Virtues in the pipeline, and Hrones has contributed several of his famous prototype sketches. "I'll do something on a serviette, and then it will go



Opposite: Hrones has owned an Axopar 28 (bottom), and a new Virtue 10 (top) will be the next family boat.

This page: Hrones is an accomplished sailor, so YYachts (left) was a natural fit for the new Carbon Yachts venture, as is the all-electric Candela brand (above).

to a proper drawing," he divulges, and those outlines, more often than not, morph into GRP and carbon.

The Sydney show will also mark Eyachts' relaunch of the Greenline range, pioneers of hybrid propulsion in boats since 2008. Stock shortages experienced during the pandemic have eased, and the new sixth generation of Greenlines features the latest developments in integrated drive systems.

The new Greenline 40 can run diesel and electric motors simultaneously, enabling the light, semi-displacement hull to achieve a passage from Sydney to the Whitsundays on a single tank of fuel, effectively 950 nautical miles. That's a huge improvement on the gas guzzlers of old with poor hydrodynamics that dug big holes in the water, complete with shore-break-sized wakes. Eyachts will exhibit three Greenline models – a 39, a 40 and a 45 – on their stand at the Darling Harbour marina.

While Greenline provides a choice of diesel, electric or hybrid options, another Eyacht brand, Rand from Denmark, offers electric propulsion as a first choice, with petrol, diesel and outboard power plants also available.

The concept of inboard electric boats has taken a while to get traction in the Australian and New Zealand boating markets – likely due in Australia's case to the distances involved and

the unforgiving sea conditions – but Hrones expects interest to continue to grow in the nine-model Rand range of 20- to 30-footers.

"They definitely have a cool retro look to them," he says, and Eyachts will have two Rands at the Sydney show – a Rand 25 Spirit and a Rand 28 Leisure – which are sure to draw admirers not only for their looks but also the cutting-edge technology powering and underpinning their hulls.

Rounding out Eyachts' dayboat portfolio is Pardo, which combines Italian panache with impressive performance and build quality. Hrones says Pardo attracted a new type of buyer during the pandemic thanks to their expanding model range, including the Pardo GT52 that premiered last September at the Cannes Yachting Festival. Two Pardos, a 38 and a 43, will be on display at the Sydney boat show.

Hrones intends on heading to Europe next year for a new boat purchase and to spend some time with family in the UK. It will mean he'll be less involved in the day-to-day running of Eyachts, but any potential buyer of an Eyacht or Carbon Yacht craft can be assured that every member of the team shares the commitment to excellence that has defined the company so far. **O**

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