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Celebrating 30 years at the Cove

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SCIBS stalwart Barry Jenkins looks back at 30 years of boat shows at Sanctuary Cove.

The Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show today is an integral part of the local boating industry and a key barometer of its fortunes. Turn the clock back 30 years, however, and it wasn't always that way. In fact, the origins of one of the world's leading boat shows were somewhat serendipitous. It could all have been very different.

The conception of the show dates back to the opening of the Sanctuary Cove development in 1988. Developer Mike Gore staged what was billed as the Ultimate Event to promote the project, drawing entertainers and celebrities from around the world including Frank Sinatra and Whitney Houston. Pleasure boats also formed part of the event, mainly to highlight the appeal of the site's marina location.

Barry Jenkins at SCIBS 2017.

Barry Jenkins, who has been with the show since the very beginning, recalls that in the wake of the Ultimate Event, he was given the task of coming up with a program of events to promote Sanctuary Cove, one of which was a boat show. Initially, in 1989, it was called the Queensland International Boat Show, before becoming the Sanctuary Cove International Boating Festival and then finally SCIBS as we know it today. It is the only event hosted by Sanctuary Cove to have been staged every

year since it first opened.

The inaugural show attracted about 123 exhibitors and the response from the public was immediate.

"It stopped traffic north on the Pacific Highway back to Dreamworld and south down to Runaway Bay. You couldn't get near the place," recalls Jenkins.

The concept of an on-water display and the marina village quickly captured the boating public's interest. The following year there were 200 exhibitors and thereafter numbers continued to grow year on year, breaking through the 400 barrier and hitting a top of more than 450 in 2008 just before the industry fell off a cliff.

While the exhibition figures speak for themselves – Jenkins says that over the years the show has hosted 9,500 exhibitors, 1.2 million visitors and generated an economic impact in excess of \$3 billion – the influence of the event in helping to build and sustain a local boating industry is inestimable. The success of global brands such as Riviera and Maritimo, the development of marine businesses and trades in SE Queensland at the likes of the Coomera Marine Precinct, have all been aided by the success of SCIBS in creating an internationally-recognised boating event. The relationship between industry and show has been symbiotic; both have needed each other in order to grow and be successful.

In the years after 1989, what started out as an event to promote the Sanctuary Cove resort quickly took on a life of its own. This created its own challenges at the venue given that it is a gated community with full-time residents, as well as hotel guests, rather than a dedicated exhibition space. Jenkins was soon working full-time on SCIBS alongside general manager Harry Davis and a small army of staff employed to manage the event's burgeoning logistics.

"The show became all-consuming," says Jenkins. "Year by year, it grew and grew and grew until it got to the stage where it became virtually everything I did at Sanctuary Cove."

The success of the show also saw it being promoted overseas as an international event. Jenkins attended boat shows around the world, from New Zealand to Fort Lauderdale in the US, the China International Boat Show at Shanghai as well as inaugural shows at Singapore, Dubai and Mumbai, using these occasions to spread the message about SCIBS and help put Sanctuary Cove on the international map.

Part of the industry

Increasingly too the show began to be seen not just as an event in its own right but as part of the broader marine industry. Jenkins himself was active with Marine Queensland, the precursor to today's BIA Queensland, as well as the Australian International Marine Export Group (AIMEX) of which he is currently a director. He was also the founding chairman of Superyacht Base Australia (now Superyacht Australia) which began life at Sanctuary Cove as a means of helping to grow the superyacht sector in Australia. He credits Ian McAndrew, former president of BIA NSW, and Graeme Avers, former president of BIA Queensland, for encouraging SCIBS to become more actively involved with the industry and strengthening the mutual relationship between the show and the boating industry at large.

While the industry has played a major role in promoting Sanctuary Cove on the world stage as a desirable Gold Coast destination, equally SCIBS has been instrumental in fashioning a uniquely Australian boating market, not just on the Gold Coast but throughout Queensland and beyond.



For Barry Jenkins, what started out as a month's assignment to help out with a program of events has turned out to be nearly three decades of involvement with SCIBS, a relationship which continues to this day. Asked to name a highlight from the past 29 shows, his response is that of a true showman: "Every time we got a new exhibitor was a highlight," he says.

Undoubtedly though the show's peak came in 2008 when the show saw a record 450 boats on water, 600 boats on land and a total of 53,700 visitors over the four days. It was not to last, however, and in the ensuing years SCIBS has followed the fortunes of the wider industry.

"As the industry went back, so did the show. Any boat show can only be a reflection of the industry," says Jenkins.

He gives credit to the current owners of Sanctuary Cove, Mulpha Australia, for keeping the show going despite the tough times.

"Right through those not-so-good years, Mulpha underwrote the show to give the industry a continuing platform," he says. "Now it's starting to rebuild itself and as the industry grows, the show will grow in turn."

Today, with the 30th show in sight, there is a definite optimism about the future of SCIBS and the local industry. Last year

was the biggest show in ten years, attracting 42,000 visitors and 300 exhibitors, with a palpable buzz of confidence throughout the marina and village.

Buoyed by that result and the current positive outlook for the industry, organisers are hoping for another bumper year in 2018 and a well-deserved celebration of the 30th milestone.

The 30th anniversary Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show will be held from 24-27 May, 2018. Tickets are on sale now [here](#).

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