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Joachim Howard's career in the yachting industry started humbly in Port Phillip Bay in Victoria in the early 90s as a deckhand and dive instructor. In 2000, with the superyacht industry emerging in Europe and with the vision of working in the large yacht industry, he relocated to the Mediterranean, gaining skills, credentials and a thorough understanding of the global charter and brokerage market.

In 2005 he successfully achieved his MCA Master of Yachts and continued to be involved with private and chartered yachts, cruising from the eastern and western Mediterranean to North America and South East Asia, with periods in Cuba and Burma.

Bringing home with him the training from aboard, Howard now operates Ocean Alliance, one of Australia's largest charter fleets, and advises owners with purchasing both locally and internationally.

Why did you decide to open your own brokerage company?

Ocean Alliance was established in 2011 following my return from the Mediterranean in 2006 to start a career in brokerage. The company was formed through an increase in yacht owners wanting guidance in acquisition, charter marketing and commercial operation. It was evident to me that there were few companies in Australia focusing on the local and international charter markets who followed a standard of operation found overseas.

What do you specialise in?

Ocean Alliance specialises in several key areas from charter management and marketing to brokerage and operating as a yacht agent. We assist owners to promote and operate a yacht commercially and build the yacht's charter reputation, work with our clients to arrange superyacht events, and assists clients who are seeking to purchase brokerage yachts or commission new construction yachts. We also assist Foreign Flagged superyachts during their visitation to Australia in regards to private cruising and charter permits through a resident agent structure.

The regulatory landscape of superyacht ownership is a complicated topic and requires experienced advice, especially for those owners who want to operate in a commercial structure.

What does Ocean Alliance offer that other brokers do not?

Ocean Alliance has one of the largest selection of yachts under charter management in Australia. Our fleet offers destinations in Sydney, the Whitsundays, the Great Barrier Reef, The Kimberley, Tasmania, Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea. We manage some of the only Australian-based superyachts that are structured to operate for charter in international waters.

We also have direct access to a global fleet of more than 1,400 superyachts available for charter in every destination imaginable and arrange bespoke luxury events on board superyachts operating in Sydney Harbour.

We also have in-depth knowledge of operational structures of commercial yachts, including Flag State, class and regulatory requirements so we can advise owners correctly.

This year you expanded your team to include Laurie Foulon who has past experience with some of the bigger brokerage firms in Europe. What expertise does she bring to your team?

Laurie brings extensive international experience to Ocean Alliance. She has worked with one of the largest brokerage firms in the world with a resumé of managing up to 10 superyachts. Her existing relationships with charter managers and brokers plus her experience with MYBA standards have been invaluable.

Laurie is very au fait with the expectations of international charter brokers and clients when managing yachts in her fleet and understands the standard the yachts need to meet in order to be successful.

STEERING A NEW COURSE

AUSTRALIA'S SERVICES IN THE SUPERYACHT INDUSTRY ARE PROGRESSIVELY UP THERE WITH THE VERY BEST IN THE WORLD. ONE OF THE INDUSTRY'S MOST REPUTABLE PERSONALITIES, JOACHIM HOWARD OF OCEAN ALLIANCE, SPEAKS TO HILLARY BUCKMAN ABOUT WHAT LED HIM AROUND THE WORLD AND BACK AGAIN TO NOW OPERATE ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST CHARTER AGENCIES.

You are now part of the MYBA Yacht Folio network and one of the only brokers in Australia to be affiliated with them. What does this mean for you and the yachts you manage?

The accreditation has been an important step for us as we are now in a position to access every charter yacht globally. But more importantly we can market the yachts we have under management directly to over 800 international brokers via the MYBA platform. The membership also gives Ocean Alliance credibility when dealing with clients and industry given the strict guidelines for acceptance into this association.

Are most of your Australian clients chartering yachts locally or internationally? Has this changed since you formed Ocean Alliance?

We are definitely experiencing charter growth across the board. Historically, the majority of our Australian clients would be looking at charter destinations outside of Australia – typically the eastern and western Mediterranean. Given the increase of professionally operated superyachts locally, we are seeing more Australian clients chartering here, but on average, about 70 percent of our clientele who are chartering for extended periods are international guests.

Our luxury event charter market in Sydney is predominately local clientele and corporate groups, but we are seeing growth with international guests who

experience day and overnight charters while visiting the Harbour.

There seems to be more Australian flagged superyachts available to charter in our waters recently. What do you put this down to?

I see this as a combination of several factors. Firstly we are experiencing an increase in owners wanting to base larger yachts in Australia. These owners are commonly well versed with chartering in other regions and want to operate their own yachts commercially with our assistance. Owners in general are seeing the benefit of a well-managed charter structure.

We're also seeing an increase in demand, especially for extended charters, through international brokers. Australia is developing as a charter destination and will continue to do so with an increase in professionally operated and marketed yachts.

You deal with Australian buyers looking at buying yachts overseas.

How does Ocean Alliance help out in this process?

The majority of brokerage we are involved with is in the overseas market.

We have a strong network of agents and we are experienced in the sales process, which generally requires more due diligence than buyers believe. The key is to understand the client's brief, area of operation and if the yacht is to be commercial or private. These factors are critical when determining suitable options for a client.

We are dealing with an increase in buyers who wish to purchase overseas and then bring the yacht back to Australia to charter. The existing structure of a yacht for this proposal is crucial to ensure Australian authorities can accept the yachts' certificates for commercial operation without further, unexpected costs to the buyer.

You have worked with Superyacht Australia and the government to make the process easier for internationally flagged superyachts to charter in Australian waters. How is this progressing?
Superyacht Australia and the committee members have worked very hard on this topic. We believe it is one of the most important issues the superyacht industry is addressing currently. There is already a mechanism in place for Foreign Flagged vessels to operate within Australian waters for charter but the goal is to make that

pathway easier and more defined like we are seeing in other countries such as Fiji. We should be aware of the level of revenue funneled into the local economy through these visiting yachts.

With distance being one of the region's biggest challenges in encouraging international superyacht owners to bring their yachts here, what do you think we need to do to promote the region to the American and European markets?

The truth is, we already have growing numbers of superyachts travelling to the Asia Pacific region. We're seeing an increase in private and commercial yachts visiting Southeast Asia, and Fiji is experiencing record numbers.

Australia is growing, but not capturing the full potential of the migration and I believe this is partly due to the current charter regulations and Great Barrier Reef cruising restrictions, which are in the process of being addressed.

The destination needs to be attractive to the owner, captain and yacht manager on several levels. Economically, for refit work and charter opportunity, the destination must be superyacht friendly in regards to regulations and we must be competitive with superyacht services for both crew and guests. Promoting to yacht managers and captains is a good starting point because without their support and enthusiasm for the region the yachts will not come.

What do you think is the biggest challenge in our industry when it comes to chartering and management?

It would have to be the changing regulatory landscape. We are seeing the Australian Maritime Safety Authority adopting more of the international yacht codes and giving further responsibility to Classification Societies when dealing with large commercial yachts based in Australia.

Our other challenge is educating international brokers about Australia and the South Pacific as a charter destination. In most cases, we find little is known about our region and its fantastic potential for chartering and cruising. ○

www.oceanalliance.com.au



TEAM ALLIANCE
Top Left: Laurie Foulon and Joachim Howard and below one of the largest yachts available to charter in Australia, *Sovereign*, a 44.2-metre Benetti.

THE FLEET

MASTEKA 2 (122-foot Monte Fino)

An elegant superyacht with expedition capabilities, *Masteka 2* is perfectly suited to the South Pacific environment. Nominated for superyacht of the year in the 30-40 meter category 2009, her Dubois styling shines in every aspect of her design. *Masteka 2* is based in Sydney from September to February, available for corporate and event charters or extended periods. She cruises the Fiji Islands from March through September and available for charter. 2016 will see *Masteka 2* complete her 4th season in Fiji. A region she is fast becoming recognised for.

ANDA (138-foot Brodene Lothe A/S)

Anda is an exiting addition to the Ocean Alliance fleet. She is based in Perth, Western Australia, and following a full reconversion and refit her Owners have opened the opportunity for your clients to charter her. She will be cruising the Kimberley region, and then is opened up to South Pacific itineraries. She accommodates up to 10 guests in 5 cabins, and a maximum of 12 guests cruising.

SOVEREIGN (145-foot Benetti)

At 44.2 meters, *Sovereign* is one of the largest yachts available for charter in Australia. Based in her homeport of Sydney Harbour (October to March), she will also be cruising the Australian East Coast up to the Whitsundays and Great Barrier Reef (July to September). Her large volume accommodates up to 12 guests in 5 luxuriously appointed cabins providing an intimate charter experience. Sydney Harbour will be showing its best profile thanks to the unsurpassed experience of the crew onboard.

TANGO (140-foot Austal Yachts)

Recently refitted in Winter 2014, *Tango* has completed an extension of 5 meters including a new beach club and dance floor/touch-and-go helipad area on the sundeck. A Jacuzzi in the bow provides an additional relaxing option, complementing the sauna in the beach club. One of the largest superyacht experiences in Sydney Harbour, *Tango* is sure to impress your guests and treat your family and friends to a unique experience. Up to 8 guests are accommodated in 4 cabins on board. The full-beam Master cabin is located on the main deck and features his and hers ensuite, whilst 3 double cabins with ensuite sleep the rest of the party downstairs. The newly added beach club features a convertible sofa to host 2 more guests in absolute privacy.

IROUE (81-foot Ferretti)

Iroue is the only luxury yacht available for charter in New Caledonia. Built in Italy, she has two MTU 1,500 horsepower engines capable of cruising at 22kn and up to a maximum of 32kn. Her spacious and luxurious living areas are charming and Captain Michel Bonnet and his crew will be at your service. *Iroue* hosts up to eight guests in four cabins – two luxurious king and two twin (convertible to king) ensuite cabins offer comfort and serenity. *Iroue* is based in New Caledonia, and also available for charters in Vanuatu.