Sydney 2000 Olympics

The temporary superyacht marina that stayed open for ten years, and the industry it started

Event	Sydney 2000 Olympic Games
Facility	Rozelle Bay Superyacht Marina, Sydney Harbour: 27 stern-to berths for yachts of 30 to 75 m, built in 1999 as a temporary facility for the Games
Role	Captain Richard Morris, Marina Manager for the NSW Waterways Authority (later NSW Maritime), and agent for the visiting superyachts
Period	June 1999 to July 2009
Superyachts in Sydney for the Games	About 40
Legacy	A temporary Olympic marina that stayed open for a decade, and a permanent superyacht industry in Sydney

Why it matters

Before 2000, Australia was almost invisible to the world's superyacht fleet. Sydney had nowhere suitable for large yachts to berth and no one to look after them when they arrived. The Olympic Games changed that, and Captain Richard Morris was at the centre of it.

The Rozelle Bay Superyacht Marina was only ever meant to be temporary. Its planning consent, granted in December 1999, described a "Temporary Facility for Visiting Vessels" and ran only until 31 March 2001. When the Games ended, Richard made sure the yachts did not leave. He kept the marina open and running for the next decade, until it was sold as a going concern in 2009. That decade turned a two-week Olympic event into the superyacht industry Sydney and Australia enjoy today.

The problems we solved

1. Nowhere for superyachts to go

The problem: A 1998 feasibility study for the Olympic organising committee forecast demand for about 100 superyacht berths at the peak of the Games, against 66 suitable berths in Sydney, and very little infrastructure to serve the yachts that came.

What we did: A purpose-built temporary marina was constructed at Rozelle Bay in 1999. Richard, a former superyacht captain, joined the project in June 1999 and became its Marina Manager, setting up the berths, services and procedures for yachts of up to 75 metres.

The result: The first yachts berthed for the Millennium New Year, and the marina was complete in April 2000, ready for the Games.

2. Forty superyachts for the Olympic Games

The problem: About 40 superyachts came to Sydney Harbour for the Games, spread across more than a dozen marinas and moorings, each needing berths, pilots, customs and immigration clearance, fuel, provisions and services in a city that had never handled a fleet like it.

What we did: Richard coordinated the berthing of the visiting fleet across the harbour and, as Marina Manager, also acted as the yachts' agent, handling clearances and every service a yacht needed. The Harbour Master gave him the authority to pilot superyachts himself.

The result: The Games fleet was the largest gathering of superyachts Australia had seen. The NSW Waterways Authority estimated the visiting superyachts injected at least $20 million into the economy during the Games.

3. Keeping the yachts after the Games

The problem: The marina was temporary, Richard's contract ended with the Games, and the obvious outcome was that the yachts would leave and the marina would close.

What we did: Richard made sure the yachts did not leave. He kept the visiting yachts in Sydney through the summer that followed, and the marina's temporary consent was extended again and again. He went on to market Sydney to the world's superyacht fleet, at the international shows, in the trade press and through the industry bodies he helped to found.

The result: Annual superyacht visits to Sydney Harbour grew from 7 in 1999 and 38 in the Olympic year to 45 to 48 a year by 2006 to 2008, more than the Games themselves. By the time of its sale the marina had hosted more than 100 different superyachts, and over the decade Richard piloted more than 150 large yachts into Sydney Harbour himself.

4. Handing over a permanent industry

The problem: By 2008 the temporary marina had become a permanent fixture that the government no longer needed to run.

What we did: Richard managed the sale of the marina business for NSW Maritime, through a public request for proposals.

The result: The sale was completed in June 2009. On 1 July 2009 Richard left NSW Maritime, ten years to the day after he started, and received a NSW Government Certificate of Achievement for his ten years' service.

Timeline

When	Where and what
1998	Feasibility study for the Olympic organising committee identifies a shortage of superyacht berths
Aug 1999	Richard joins the Rozelle Bay project; construction under way
Dec 1999	Temporary planning consent granted, valid to 31 March 2001; first yachts arrive for the Millennium

When	Where and what
Sep 2000	About 40 superyachts in Sydney for the Olympic Games
2001 to 2008	The temporary marina stays open; visits grow to 45 to 48 superyachts a year
June 2009	Marina sold as a going concern
1 July 2009	Richard leaves NSW Maritime after ten years to lead Australian Superyachts full time

In the press

> *"It was only a 15 month contract to the end of the Olympics, but I ended up staying ten years."*
>
> Captain Richard Morris, "Man at the Top", Yachting Matters, Issue 18, Spring/Summer 2010, p. 64

> *"As Marina Manager, I also acted as the yacht agent, providing all the agency services available through Sydney Superyacht Services."*
>
> Captain Richard Morris, Yachting Matters, Issue 18, 2010, p. 65

> *"Australia's superyachting community has developed largely since the 2000 Olympics, for which the Sydney Superyacht Marina was built."*
>
> The Wall Street Journal (Asia), "Australia Sees Rise of Superyachts", 13 July 2011

> *"Richard and the team at Waterways supplied service and support far beyond my expectations."*
>
> Captain of a visiting superyacht, NSW Waterways Authority media release, "Superyachts Sail into Sydney", 2000

Further coverage: OCEAN Magazine, issue 66 (2016), Industry Profile, on Richard's role in the Sydney Superyacht Marina for the Sydney 2000 Olympics; OCEAN online, "Superyacht experts expand", 14 August 2015; Superyacht Business, "Enticing Australia", April 2013.

What this shows

Sydney 2000 showed what the right people and the right facilities can do for a city's superyacht visits, and the decade after it showed how to make that last. Richard Morris is the only person who has run a superyacht marina and agency for an Australian Olympic Games. With Brisbane hosting the Games in 2032, Australian Superyachts brings that experience, and everything learned since, to the next one.