



Media Release
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Industry refloat

Cautious optimism is pervading a New Zealand marine industry which ran aground earlier this year in the wake of the international recession.

In Invercargill that optimism wears a local face. Mark Flutey was one of 14 staff laid off by Stabicraft Marine in March this year. Now he's back on the factory floor on a fixed term contract until Christmas, and all going to plan will be resuming his boat building apprenticeship in January.

Stabicraft Marine managing director Paul Adams said from September 2008 to June 2009 had been the most difficult in his 22-years in the marine industry.

Forward orders plummeted, overseas markets dried up and stellar growth became stagnant almost overnight.

The silver lining of the poor economy was the industry rallied, working together to create products for the times and improve efficiencies, he said.

While business worked together to create synergies, the Marine Industry Association found education money from the Boating Industry Training Organisation to put in place training systems set to revolutionise the way the marine industry works.

"The recession has forced us to take stock about everything we do, and the way we do it. We were so busy filling orders in the boom years we weren't taking the time to really think about what we were doing and whether there was a better way," Mr Adams said.

When six months of forward orders dwindled to less than a week and it became a daily battle to balance the books there was plenty of time to think about if there was a better way.

"Now forward orders are strong until Christmas – and there's some good irons in the fire for the first quarter of next year," Mr Adams said.

"There's been a local resurgence in demand. Invercargill is doing the best out of all our dealerships. We have done extremely well with retail. There is a good run through to the end of the year.

"Everyone is asking is this a V or a W? Are we on the way out or should we be preparing for another dive? We just don't know, but so far the signs are positive," Mr Adams said.

New products developed during the recession cover the big and the small of the range – the 259 and 349 dinghies, the new look 409 Fish'r with its distinctive red bonnet fill niches in the small boat market while the 2250 GIII Supercab brings maximum performance and handling into the mid-sized boats.

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For further information, please contact:

Paul Adams
Stabicraft Marine
Ph 03 211 1828 Ext 6
Email: paul@stabicraft.co.nz