Q+A

Western perspective

After two decades with Horizon Yacht Australia, Mark Western remains a fervent fan of the ever-popular Taiwanese yacht brand. *Ocean* caught up with him to find out what makes Horizon so special, and what its future plans are.

Born in Western Australia, specifically the fishing, farming town of Albany, Mark Western, Director of Horizon Yacht Australia, has been on board boats since he was a youngster.

With early career aspirations in golf, Western moved into boat sales instead, joining Horizon in 2005. Australia has been a lucrative market for Horizon, and the calibre of its team on the ground has propelled sales in every state. There are now over 120 vessels in the country.

Having just welcomed a baby with his partner Maddison, Western shares his pathway from washing boats to a career in boat sales, his aims and ambitions, as well as the brand's future plans.

How did the role with Horizon arise?
I started out pursuing a golf career and washed boats to make some extra money. I was poached by John Rapmund around the time he and Russell Wright took on the Horizon dealership.

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>
> **MARK WESTERN**
> DIRECTOR
> HORIZON YACHT AUSTRALIA

I worked my way into the after-sales service manager role, then into the national sales manager position, which is funny because I'd never actually sold a boat at that point! They told me I had the product knowledge and that I'd be great, and two months later I sold my first boat, a 37-metre Horizon, which was the biggest in the country at the time. Not long after that, I sold the first FD87 into Australia. The rest is history.

What do you like most about the brand and the business?
I bleed Horizon. It's a fantastic product and I wouldn't want to be selling anything else. The shipyard, the people we work with in Taiwan, their culture and the friendships we've built around the world make it special. But mainly, it's Horizon's ability to adapt to the market to create market-leading models, not to mention their ability to laminate hulls using patented 6D infusion. They also put so much faith in their dealers and truly listen to what we need.

What are the unique features of Horizon that set it apart from competitors?
Our layup and lamination process is a key part of our success. Then there's the fact that the yard typically builds boats from 60 to 130 feet, but we're one of the few that can offer extensive customisation under 100 feet. Plus, there's our ability to manage build times, which is a big issue for many manufacturers globally. John Lu actually designed custom software to control each build and calculate the exact number of man-hours required for every project.

On top of that is the diverse model range from 60 to 150 feet, covering displacement, fast displacement, semi-planing, planing, explorer yachts, steel monohulls and FRP multihulls.

Have you owned boats over the years?
Yes, mainly smaller boats. I haven't yet had the time for a larger boat. I get the most enjoyment from being on the water, fishing.

Left: Horizon's FD range has experienced huge success, with the top-selling FD90 proving a popular model in Australia.

Q+A

Who have been your career mentors?
John Rapmund, Russell Wright, Gary Wahlestedt and John Lu. I learnt a lot from those who came before me at Horizon, and enjoyed working for all of those guys, but John Lu has taught me the most – we're in touch daily. He's always thinking, and we regularly bounce ideas off each other, not just about boats but owners' events and boat shows too. He's always open to discussing the business and ways we can do things differently or improve. His financial strength is his greatest support and Horizon's greatest asset.

What yacht shows do you attend?
Mainly the Australian shows. I'm too busy with trips to the shipyard for sea trials, build management and client inspections to attend international shows.

How has the industry evolved?
Back in 2007/08, the equipment was very basic. Today, we're essentially building yachts that function like small cities, with an incredible amount of equipment on board. The boats have become far more technical, and the lamination processes have advanced dramatically. We're now in our 6D-infusion era, which is a long way from the original hand-laid lamination.

What keeps things fresh for you?
Building custom boats is a unique and rewarding process. It's hard to get bored when you're constantly designing something special for each customer – we're always working on new designs that will take Horizon into the future.

> New-generation systems ensure yachts can operate globally while meeting the highest standards of environmental compliance.

World upheaval seems to impact every business, how are luxury yachts faring?
The past 12 months have been the slowest on record since we became factory-direct, but it was bound to slow down eventually – we had too many strong years in a row.

We're now starting to see a slight shift in the market, and we think SCIBS 2025 helped kickstart that momentum. Luckily for us, we still have a number of custom orders in build to carry us through this quieter patch, and we're looking forward to pushing ahead in the second half of 2026.

What do your owners tell you about their reasons for buying a Horizon?
Normally, it's because they're looking for a level of customisation they can't find with other brands, or they own an older Horizon and want to upgrade to something bigger or newer.

For our long-time owners, it's often about future-proofing their boating lifestyle, like moving to an FD Series with an on-deck master to reduce the amount of stairs they have to deal with day to day, or a single-level yacht like the SP88.

Is there interest growing for placing boats into charter?
Yes, most certainly, hence the move towards building the FD series to AMSA certification to meet the market demand.

Can you talk about the Horizon Charter fleet concept – is that happening?
I believe companies like Orraia charters will end up with a Horizon Fleet Charter business in the coming years.

What new models is Horizon working on?
We're working on a number of much bigger designs and smaller entry-level designs, as well as the new Lexus yacht, which will debut in Taiwan at our annual Open House Event in March 2026.

What new technology or strategies has Horizon implemented on models and in building processes at the yard?
We're always looking at ways to improve sustainable practices. Many years ago, we created a full-electric cat range that was too early for its time. Horizon is also building a yacht with selective catalytic reduction (SCR) to meet the new Euro emissions standards for yachts over 100 feet, and we have a new design for an explorer that's capable of more sustainable operation, which is close to global launch.

The benefit is clear: these new-generation systems ensure yachts can operate globally while meeting the highest standards of environmental compliance, future-proofing them for years to come.

What are you looking forward to in the final months of 2025 and ahead in 2026?
We have two exciting new models debuting for the Australian market in Taiwan early in 2026 – the SP88 and the FD100 Skyline, both designed by Cor D. Rover and fitted out in a collaboration between me and the vessel's owners.

Both of these will debut at the 2026 Open House in Taiwan. The market is warming back up with enquiries and new leads – we're all excited for future sales and new customers.
horizonyachtaus.com

Left: Mark Western (second from right) leads a team that includes (from left) Todd Lloyd-Pugh (Service Manager), Oliver Bennett (Marketing Manager), Marianne Chatwin (Office Manager) and Caren Brennan (Administration Assistant; not present).