



## Free your Spirit

***Free Spirit owner and Skipper Peter Mannow feels 'privileged' to live and work in the Great Lakes. Fed up with city life, the ex structural draughtsman and his wife Jacqui moved to the area following a nine month 'around Australia' search for the perfect location to set up their home and their business. "Lifestyle was a big driver for us," said Peter. "We didn't want to wait until we were ready to retire before leaving the city."***

*The Great Lakes offered the perfect position for Peter's venture – Free Spirit Cruises.*

*"We wanted to be within easy reach of the Sydney weekend market as well as having access to a diverse and pristine waterway system. The Great Lakes didn't offer a lot of competition at the time, so in 1993 we had the Free Spirit built and began operating in early 1994."*

*Over the years Peter's business has evolved into a shining light of sustainability best practice. "Sustainability is extremely important to me as an individual, a father and also as a business owner. A good business model is one where you don't waste a lot and where you use as few resources as you can. It's about your moral duty but must consider the bottom line."*

*Improving efficiencies is a process of continual improvement for Peter. "As soon as something needs replacing, we replace it with something better and more efficient." By adopting this philosophy Peter has not only managed to significantly reduce his carbon footprint and emissions but is also saving \$12,000 a year in fuel which equates to almost \$60,000 per year that he doesn't have to earn! Plus, by starting up a tree planting program, Peter will completely off-set the carbon emissions of his business for life by planting about a 1000 trees in a wildlife corridor.*

*"People will expect businesses in the tourism market in the Great Lakes region to address their environmental impact. International visitors in particular are looking for this when choosing which local activities to take part in."*

*Peter's top tips for anyone considering starting a business in the Great Lakes – "Do your homework. Tourism is extremely seasonal. Make sure that you have a good understanding of the market and make sure that you keep the needs of the local market front-of-mind as during the quieter times, they are your bread and butter. Consider our pristine local environment, opportunities exist for those prepared to embrace it's protection as part of their business model. If flagging yourself as a business moving towards sustainability, don't 'Green wash', put your money where your mouth is, and deliver on your promises."*