



Matt Carroll
CEO Australian Sailing
Locked Bag 806
Milsons Point, NSW 1565

Dear Matt,

World Sailing Proposal E26-17 on Rule 42 Applicability to Laser Sailing

As the President of the Australian Laser Class Association (ALCA). I am writing to seek Australian Sailing's support on the issue of the World Sailing proposal E26-17 on application of Rule 42 to Laser class sailing.

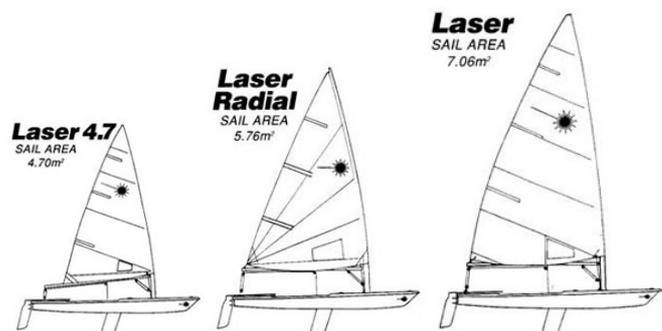
We the ALCA understand that the submission E26-17 has been presented to the board of World Sailing which, if adopted, will have the effect of removing the restrictions of Rule 42 from Laser racing at World Sailing and Olympic events in all but light breezes.

We have canvassed opinions within the Laser Districts across Australia and we are of the unanimous view that this change would be very bad for the Laser, Laser Radial and Laser 4.7 Class sailing at all levels in Australia.

While the current proposal is for high level international events, it is our view that, if adopted, the change would trickle down to all levels of Laser sailing with large negative consequences. By trickle down we refer to the inevitable pressure which will be placed on first national then state and subsequently club sailing organisations to align the rules which will govern Laser sailing at the elite/Olympic level.

This proposed change would be very bad for Laser sailing here and worldwide for the following reasons:

- It will make Laser sailing much less attractive to the vast majority of our Laser sailors in particular due to the emphasis on physical strength as a major determinant of success in both upwind and downwind Laser sailing.
- When we are succeeding in attracting both female and male sailors to Lasers from a wide range of ages (8 to 80 years), this change will make it harder to achieve level competition between male and female sailors and very young and old sailors due to the additional emphasis on physical strength and agility. It will make it far harder to attract sailors from this wide spectrum which is a major attraction of Laser sailing.
- We understand that the proposed change's motivation is to "increase athleticism and competitiveness on downwind legs". While it may increase the need for pure physical strength it will reduce the requirements for technique and agility - making downwind Laser sailing more brute force endeavour. Only those



regulating boxing or like sports would see competitiveness being increased by moving the emphasis of the game from technique and agility to brute force.

- The change to the class rule would also allow, for example, rapid athwartship body movement in upwind sailing which further increases the risk of back injury and leads to a dramatic change in the skills and endurance needed to sail fastest to windward. A keen Laser sailor and sports physiotherapist who spends time working with our elite sailors confirms from his experience there is a real risk of injury due to pumping especially during upwind sailing.
- Due to the different construction and rig layout of the Laser compared, for example, to the Finn pumping upwind would be one of the main things that would make this proposal "ugly". It would look like windsurfers pumping upwind - but with sailors using their backs and hips to perform the movement as opposed to windsurfers and trapeze sailors who would use their whole body weight via a harness.
- Our current Laser gold medalist when asked about the proposed change said "There is definitely already enough stress on the Laser body without added pumping!"
- Obviously with the depth of feeling on this subject, we the ALCA and our Australian Districts would most likely take the option to leave rule 42 to apply for our State and National events. This will make it harder for elite level sailors competing on the world stage where they, and their coaches would have to develop and hone two sets of sailing techniques, one optimised for local and the other for international events. This would potentially disadvantage the elite level sailors in countries which follow this model.
- Changes such as this should have been widely canvassed with the classes or sailors. The change has wide and, in our view as stated here, universally negative consequences for the sport of Laser sailing. These should have should have been considered and weighted against the few, if any, benefits in an open and transparent way.

As it is we have only become aware of this proposed change through informal international channels after it seems it has been well advanced in its documentation and consideration within World Sailing. We are left to wonder who is representing our interests in these high forums. Who is responsible for communications to the many who are affected by such decisions made by the few in high places? We are wondering how close these decision makers are to grass roots dinghy sailing such as we enjoy in Lasers and how much of these people's focus is on the marketability of the sport over the participation and enjoyment of it as we are.

We understand that the International Laser Class Association (ILCA) is strongly opposing the change to rule 42 for Lasers and has approached World Sailing on the issue. We the ALCA fully support ILCA's stand and representations to World Sailing on the subject. We have communicated our strong support for their approach to ILCA.

We seek Australian Sailing's full and immediate support in measures to prevent this totally unnecessary and backward step. At the very least AS should be insisting that a decision on this (or any similar significant change) not occur until full and proper consultation including research and analysis of the consequences is carried out in a transparent way.

We look forward to Australian Sailing's support and action on this issue.

Please feel free to contact me on 0417 644 086 kenhurling@hotmail.com at any time.

Regards

Ken Hurling AOM
President
Australian Laser Class Association