

THE NEW WHEELCHAIR PONTOON

GROUND-BREAKING PROJECT FOR DISABLED ACCESS

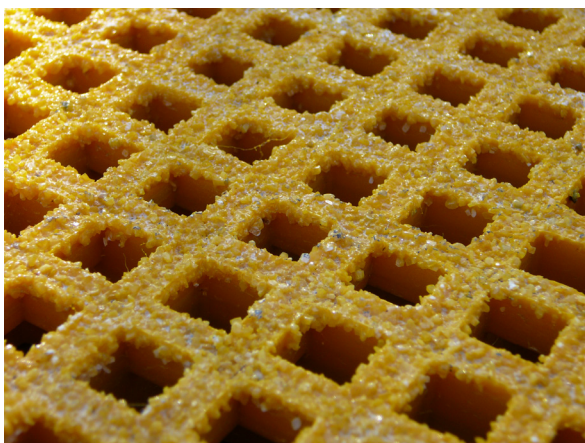


At the end of 2011 Walcon Marine was proud to complete the building and installation of the world's first, deep water 'Wheelchair Access Pontoon'. A specially designed and engineered marine pontoon, it has been created to allow the disabled and elderly wheelchair access into deep water, whether at pools, lakes or coastal locations.

This first pontoon was the result of an initiative from the Woollahra Municipal Authority for its facility on Sydney Harbour, Australia and was opened in

November 2011 by the Mayor of Woollahra Cllr Isabelle Shapiro (shown bottom right, centre). The work was undertaken by Walcon Marine Australia Pty Ltd. The pontoon works by allowing an individual in a wheelchair to move down a series of internal ramps fitted within the pontoon which extend to below the water level. At the end of the ramp system is a below-water platform at one side of the pontoon ramp, from where individuals are able to easily float off their submerged wheel chairs and move ahead into the water.





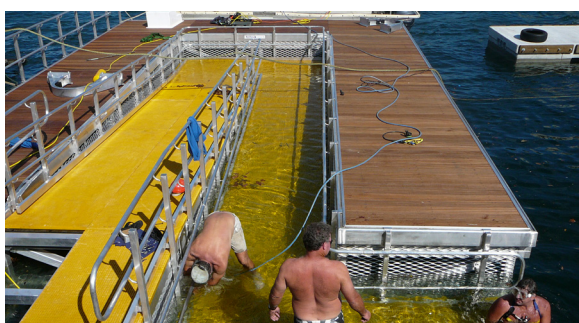
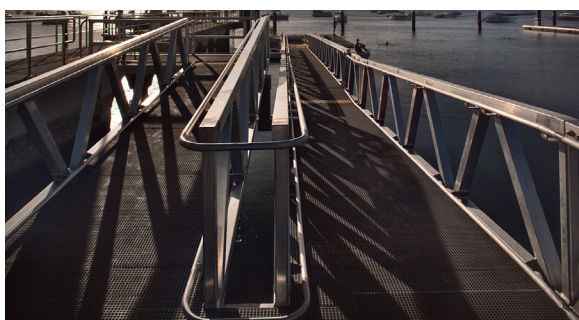
The main pontoon was constructed using a standard Walcon System 2000 deck arrangement with some modifications and polyethylene floats, attached to purpose-designed frames which create the central ramp structure and provide the rigidity needed for the whole 16m x 7m pontoon to withstand adverse weather conditions. The decking on the final ramp sections, leading down into the water, is a special non-slip material (pictured left) which provides excellent grip for the wheel-rims of the chair.



This surface is impervious to the elements, as are all materials used in the pontoon's construction.

The angle of the ramps is designed to minimise the effort for the user in moving from ground level to the water, and the full length of the structure incorporates both handrails and chair guides to ensure a smooth and secure passage for the chair and its occupant. The design also ensures that the pontoon achieves the appropriate degree of buoyancy to ensure that entry level into the water is neither too shallow nor too deep.

Walcon Marine Australia Pty Ltd has manufactured many unique designs of marine pontoons but even they admit that this one was particularly unusual. "We are more used to our products being the home for varying types of water craft", said James Walters, MD of Walcon Marine. "but we have an excellent team of engineers and staff that enjoys something a little different, and this installation was especially satisfying". The pontoon and associated access works were conceived by Kieran McInerney Architect in association with d-Construct Architects. The engineering designs



were developed by TLB Engineers working with KMA, as well as with Mark Relf of Accessibility Solutions, who ensured that all national standards for accessibility were implemented throughout.

The Wheelchair Access Pontoon is now available in Europe and worldwide from Walcon Marine Ltd and its overseas subsidiaries.