

# PUSHING THE INNER LIMITS

A COMPREHENSIVE READERS' GUIDE TO THE LATEST BOATING BOOKS, FILMS AND VIDEOS TO HIT THE SHELVES

## A LIFE WITHOUT LIMITS

■ *Life Without Limits* is the remarkable story of David Pescud and his fight for survival in a sea of words. By Helen O'Neill. Published by Bantam Australia.

\$27.95. Reviewed by Brier Jensen. David Pescud is probably best known as skipper of the first disabled crew to compete in a Sydney to Hobart. *Life Without Limits* describes how David's childhood struggle with dyslexia shaped his personality and ultimately

led to the establishment of Sailors with Disabilities (SWD). It also charts the growth of SWD, from its conception to the current attempt to smash the record for circumnavigating Australia.

Technically a biography, Helen has written the book using David's voice, so it reads like an autobiography, full of Aussie slang and colloquialisms, giving an excellent sense of David's character.

David's early life was 'heaven', growing up on the banks of Yowie Bay — Port Hacking, NSW — in an era when kids could run free. He loved the water and made a series of makeshift boats in which to cruise the bay.

However, by eight his inability to learn to read had him labelled 'dumb' by teachers.

While he couldn't read words, he could read the water and sailing became his release. Then, at 14, David watched helplessly as his father drowned. He 'snapped' and his childhood died with his father.

He rebelled, becoming violent and was getting into trouble with the law. Waves of despair led to a cycle of suicide attempts. Finally, at 17, David was diagnosed with profound dyslexia,

"I knew I wasn't stupid anymore. I was dyslexic. Big difference."

The book follows his progression from aggrieved teenager to successful businessman, who at 44 retired to pursue his love of sailing.

After hearing paraplegic, Phil Vardy, on radio saying he wanted to do a Sydney to Hobart race, David rang him and offered the use of his boat. From there SWD was born. David recounts the difficulties they faced, physically and bureaucratically, in putting together their first campaign.

His description of how Aspect Computing, with a partly disabled crew, including a 12-year-old boy, safely finished the tragic 1998 Sydney to Hobart makes riveting reading, but more compelling is the drama of a return sail from Lord Howe Is during which David was almost lost overboard.

SWD provides an opportunity for hundreds of disabled children to experience the thrill of harbour sailing, which David describes with compassion. *Life Without Limits* is an inspirational read for sailors, non-sailors and anyone trying to beat the odds.

