

Setting a fast pace

Austal Ships has been a key player in the development of larger and larger high speed vessels, first as vehicle/passenger ferries on the commercial side and now as military support ships for transferring military troops and equipment

In its 15-year history Austal Ships in Australia has built a strong reputation as a designer and builder of fast multihull vessels. Based in Henderson near the city of Perth in Western Australia, Austal has over the years widened its product base through a diversified group of shipbuilding subsidiaries that include Austal Ships, Oceanfast, Image Marine and, since the end of 1999, Austal USA which is based in Mobile, Alabama, and is a joint venture partnership with the US company Bender Shipbuilding & Repair. This has made Austal vessels available to the domestic US market.

Austal established its name by delivering a series of catamarans in the 40m length range to the Chinese market during the early to mid 1990s, and these vessels were the first built by Austal to feature Kamewa waterjets. The connection with Rolls-Royce continues to this day with the vast majority of Austal-built high speed vessels using the Kamewa product for propulsion. As multihull sizes have grown dramatically and new markets been created, so have suitable Kamewa waterjets been available to match the great increase in installed power.

By 1993, Austal had become a leading manufacturer of 40m fast ferries in aluminium and the following year started designing and building large high speed vehicle/passenger ferries. The company obtained a listing on the Australian Stock Exchange at the end of 1998, and apart from establishing the US joint venture, Austal USA, grew by acquisition of the Western Australian shipbuilders Image Marine and Oceanfast.



Each hull of the 66m catamaran *Bocayna Express* has two steerable Kamewa waterjets

The Group now employs approximately 1,800 people and has a very strong technical department designing vessels to suit current requirements and developing new concepts such as very large waterjet propelled trimarans for civilian and military applications.

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"Austal recognises the important role played by suppliers in the production of world-class vessels and has enjoyed a positive, long-term relationship with Rolls-Royce through the provision of a quality product and excellent service," said Austal Ships' technical manager, James Bennett.

Demand continues for the smaller aluminium catamarans, and Hong Kong-based New World First Ferry Services (Macau) Ltd has just signed its third contract with Austal Ships in two years. The latest order is for two 47.5m passenger catamarans to be built by

Image Marine. These vessels will carry 430 passengers at a service speed of 42 knots, allowing the crossing from Hong Kong to Macau to be completed in about 55 minutes. Four Kamewa 63SII waterjets will provide propulsion.

Other small catamarans have been built to operate under quite different conditions, for example *Salten* and *Steigtind* built for OVDs in Norway. These 41.3m 35-knot aluminium catamarans can carry 214 passengers and 12 tonnes of palletised refrigerated cargo and operate out of the north Norwegian port of Bodø. Propulsion is by Rolls-Royce: two Kamewa 71SII waterjets per vessel.

Kamewa waterjets will also feature on a 58m vehicle and passenger ferry order that Austal USA recently secured. It will be the first aluminium vehicle/passenger ferry to be designed and built to the US Code of Federal Regulations. Up to 253 passengers and 46 cars will be carried at 34 knots, linking Milwaukee in Wisconsin and Muskegon in Michigan, crossing Lake Michigan in just over two hours and saving passengers a lengthy drive round the southern shore of the lake.



Salten and Steigtind carry passengers and refrigerated cargo along the Norwegian coast