

Smooth sailing for Jessica's repairs

by Hayley Sultanie

FOR most teenagers two weeks on the Gold Coast would mean surf, sun and theme parks but for Jessica Watson Gold Coast City Marina means work.

The determined 16-year-old has been at the marina every day as her boat *Ella's Pink Lady* is repaired before she attempts to become the youngest solo sailor to circumnavigate the world.

The Sunshine Coast teenager was left stranded on the Coast after her yacht collided with a 63,000-tonne bulk carrier, *Silver Yang*, off Point Lookout last week hours after leaving on a 10-day voyage to Sydney.

Dean Leigh-Smith from the marina said more than \$50,000 worth of parts and labour had already been donated to Jessica's cause.

All the fibreglass repairs are done and some areas are ready for paint.

"We're on track. We'd like to have done it quicker but unfortunately like anything in this instance we are held up by supply and availability of machines to make some of the materials," he said.

Her father Roger said Jessica had been at the marina every step of the way and the repairs had given her an opportunity to learn even more about her boat.

"It's given us a chance to do a few jobs we might have done in Sydney because we had intended to pull it out of the water there but we won't worry about doing that now," he said.

"It's also important when people are working on the boat to watch them just to see what they've done so she can fix it herself."

Mr Watson said the family had managed to coax her back to the Sunshine Coast for one night on Friday, but she was straight back down to the marina on Saturday.

Mr Leigh-Smith said the marine industry had gone above and beyond to assist.

"The Gold Coast marine industry hasn't been buffered from this economic downturn but I think this just shows the resolve, courage and determination that sticks within our industry," he said.



Jessica Watson working to get her yacht *Ella's Pink Lady* repaired at Gold Coast City Marina before her circumnavigation attempt

● Picture: Paul Riley