



Horizon Boat's 'Family Boat Project' leader, Allan Evans, stands beside the special baby-toddler seat, in the cockpit of the new Horizon 490. A 'quarter cab' by definition, it has plenty of protection and seating for a family inside and out the cabin, and will feature excellent fishing capability.

# Boats, Babies - And Budgets!

F&B is continually fielding enquiries from readers across Australia looking to purchase their first boat. Be it new or secondhand, there is invariably a common thread to the boating public's enquiries. They mainly concern the issues of safety, cost, boat packaging - and most importantly, future resale. In this special report, editor Peter Webster looks at a very interesting family boating program we've been developing these past few months . . .

**“Boats, babies and budgets”** is the working title we've given to a project that involves Bob and Chris James' popular Horizon boat building business, the F&B team and a mutual determination to develop a brand new family boat at a very economical and affordable level.

At the heart of the issue is the question of cost. We get hundreds of enquiries through the year from people asking whether Brand A is better than Brand B and whether it's worth paying \$5,000 more to get Brand C.

And that's just about the boat. When you get down to the engine questions, it really becomes quite complicated.

Two-stroke versus 4-stroke, inboard or sterndrive? These issues all start piling up on top of the consumer who suddenly starts to feel that the whole business is just too hard. There seems to be so much research required, so

much work chasing up the loose ends of boating, that a disappointing number of consumers actually give away the notion altogether.

There is no need for this to happen. It's our contention that boat buying can be a relatively painless affair, and more

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**The transom set-up on the new Horizon 490 Family is identical to the one we developed for the Horizon "Beachie" project. It combines a really good live bait tank to port, and a boarding ladder and 'walk-up' for an easy entry over transom, to starboard.**



to the point, can deliver a very exciting outcome.

To help us in this F&B Family Boat project, we volunteered a very typical young Sydney family consisting of 29 year old dad, 26 year old mum and 12 month old baby. They've even got the Commodore station wagon and the pet dog.

I know a lot about this Sydney family because they are all related to the writer – my son Jamie, daughter in law Melissa, and grand daughter Ashley. (*Jasper the dog is a ring-in, but I guess you've gotta have 'em !*)

This family is a fine example of today's younger generation of would-be boating families. They're living with Sydney real estate costs; they have a mortgage that's shoring up the Reserve Bank, incredible day-care expenses for the baby, medical insurance, transport costs (etc!). They also have a passionate desire to maximise their available leisure time by floating around on the Hawkesbury River and Pittwater region just 'down the road' from their home in Sydney's north-west. These two people are also typical of a generation of young people who have grown up in the world of boats with their "baby-boomer" parents, who are now settling in to the long haul mortgage situation, with their own children and their own requirements.

But times have changed for the boating world.

Notably, in this day and age, the woman invariably works, and usually full time, so the available leisure time today's family has to spend on activities such as boating, is actually compressed, compared to the generation just past.

Then, in the 1950s, 1960s and well into the 1970s, most mums did not "work" (I stress, in the sense of an 'outside' job), and for most of them, part of their 'mission statement' was to prepare for the family's weekend leisure activities and/or holidays.

Weekends away were a real proposition, if only because Dad could leave everything up to Mum (and the kids, very often) to organise for the weekend ahead.

Mum and daughter(s) would get the food, drinks, clothing and camping gear ready; the boys would have the fishing gear stripped down and packed, the boat loaded - so that Dad could just pull into the driveway, hitch up the rig - and they'd all disappear 'down the coast' on Friday night.

Returning on Sunday night, for example, it was Mum who got stuck into washing the grubby clothes, cleaning the camping and cooking gear (etc) on Monday and Tuesday morning

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**Figuring out what goes where is always hard in small boats. It's always best to work with the real stuff - the actual icechest, the Sani-potti (in the cabin) but it is amazing what efficiency you can achieve in a small space. Note polyethylene Bermuda fuel tank.**