

Haines Signature 542 F

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It's not easy to improve Australia's biggest selling 5.5 metre class fibreglass half cab, but Haines Signature have decided to introduce an upgrade to their incredibly popular 540 Series, with first deliveries to dealers slated for April this year. Fitted with one of Australia's first installations of the brilliant Yamaha 115 hp EFI 4-stroke outboard, this combination has lifted the benchmark for Australian small craft standards one more notch . . . *Peter Webster reports.*

The Haines Signature 540 F in a relatively short space of time, is achieving near legendary status. Adventurer Hans Tholstrup has had a lot to do with it, of course, taking one of these stock standard 17 footers from Darwin all the way through to Japan in the most convincing demonstration of this hull's inherent seaworthiness we'll ever see.

But throughout Australia, hundreds of 540 F's are winning heaps of praise from contented owners who have discovered a boat that for once, delivered on the promise made in the advertising blurb.

What sets the 540 F apart from most is its singularly clever packaging. As the advertising claims, it's big enough to take offshore with some degree of comfort and safety, runs beautifully on a 90 hp engine but handles up to 135 with ease, and will take a family of up to 5 or 6 people away for the weekend barbecue up the river in style - all this, and it lives happily on a single axle trailer. That means you're not wasting money on that critical second (or "tandem") axle set-up (a saving of thousands) and further, you don't need to go into hyper expensive V-6 outboard country (saving many more thousands of \$\$\$\$!). And despite all these very practical and noteworthy features, it's a hell of a good boat offshore or inshore.

Developed from the really old (now) Signature 530 F, itself one of the most popular boats ever made in fibreglass in Australia, the 540 took the old 530's awesomely soft ride in choppy water, but gave it the stability the 530 didn't have - well, not like it is now in the 540 F.

All in all, the 530/540 has undergone an evolutionary period of nearly 10 years, and with hundreds and hundreds of boats sold around Australia, there has obviously been a great deal of feedback from the Haines Signature dealers across Australia.

Right up front, let's make it clear that the 540 F will continue for years to come. It is one of the two biggest selling boats in the Haines Signature range (the 520 Bowrider is the other) and there is no chance the 540 F will be dropped in the foreseeable future.

Instead, the factory has listened to their dealers and customers and decided it was preferable to introduce an additional model rather than change the formula

Yamaha's F115A

The new F115A four stroke, 16 valve DOHC Direct-Action in line 4 cylinder engine takes Yamaha into the larger horsepower category for the first time with a motor that is light, powerful, and economical to operate.

The F115A powerhead was derived from the F100A, which accounts for its compact profile. The powerhead derives its power output through additional displacement (1741 cc), and the introduction of a new EFI system. This is the first Yamaha 4-stroke engine to benefit from the EFI system, which provides higher output power, improved fuel economy, cleaner exhaust and quiet, stable low speed idling.

The high precision EFI system uses an air intake system located at the front of the engine which contributes to low end to mid range torque. Optimal combustion is assured through a series of sensors and the Engine Control Module (ECM), controlling ignition timing and the amount of fuel injected in a highly atomised form.

The lower unit and bracket are taken from the proven Yamaha two stroke V4 design for a lighter, slimmer profile with proven dependability.

The F115A weighs 185 kg in the long version, and 189.5 kg in the extra long model. This is a clear 43 kg and 42.5 kg lighter than existing 4-stroke 115 HP engines. Equally important to note is the fact that it is just 18 kg and 18.5 kg heavier than the equivalent Yamaha 115C 2-stroke motors.

Special attention has been given to the quietness and low vibration characteristics of this engine. Contributing to this is the stable combustion associated with the EFI system, and outstanding mechanical balance of the engine. At low speeds the lack of noise and exhaust is especially apparent, as is the quiet running at idle through an idle speed controller and idle noise reduction system.

Sophisticated extras include an assured cranking system, 25 amps alternator, negative power tilt and trim, power tilt and trim switch on the bottom cowling, and a freshwater flushing device.