

Aquapro 1001 RIB Sportsmaster

F&B's

Much is made today of the trend to faster, bigger, more luxurious craft, and we often receive plaintive cries from readers to put more emphasis back into smaller boats.

"Real boats" for 'ordinary people' is an all too common catch cry.

Well, whilst we're not too sure about the "ordinary" part, there's no doubt that the emphasis in boating, fishing tackle, diving gear (etc) is always on promotion of the latest, biggest, "bestest" thingamajig. To an extent, that's the way it is, these days, but I do agree it's all too easy to forget

word "inflatable" here because so many people have a mindset (or bad memories!) about them – and not without good reason.

But these boats are very different. Using a 2.5 mm marine grade aluminium bottom, they are an excellent compromise between the hardness you need from a tinnie (when you're pulling the boat over coral sand, up a river bank etc) and the 'softness' you need when the boat is used as a tender, or you don't want or need the hassle of a dedicated boat trailer.

In our case, we needed a small, stable, easily handled



what it was all about in the first place !

Case in point is the latest rigid "inflatable" from RFD, the safety equipment people. They represent the Aquapro line of Kiwi inflatables here in Australia. When we wanted a versatile, flexible and simple small boat for a number of jobs, we looked long and hard at all sorts of boats, but kept coming back to these beautifully made craft. I hesitate to even use the

boat we could launch from another boat at sea, to use for marine photography. We have to stand up in the boat at sea, so stability is critical – but no more so than it is when you're casting lures into the mangroves. We also wanted a boat we could use when snorkelling – and these RIBs are fantastic for slithering back over the side really easily.

At a time when many young families are wondering how to get

started – *safely* – into boating with minimal capital outlay and maximum fun, this Aquapro 1001 makes a lot of sense.

We use ours with 2 engines, the 2 hp Honda (amazing 5-6 knot performance) and the 15 hp Honda. With the bigger engine, the maximum for this model, you can easily tow kids on wakeboards and tubes, and the RIB fairly zooms along.

We've fitted ours with a portable live bait tank and a battery aerator, plus a battery operated Raytheon (nee Apelco) sounder, and together with the 15 hp Honda, this adds up to a very comfortable, practical and exceptionally safe fishing boat.

The only downside is the obvious – with a rigid bottom, it takes up a lot more space than a roll-up. We reckon it is 100% better though, as the aluminium

bottom turns it around from a very limited use inflatable, and makes it a surprisingly versatile and very useful boat.

The rigid bottom just means it's transported on the roof rather than stowed in the boot. At 46 kg, most vehicles will hardly know it's there – and it's easy for two people to sling it up onto the roof racks in seconds. I can do it on my own easily enough in a couple of minutes.

Priced to include GST, the Aquapro RIB 1001 retails for \$3,772 (plus the Honda 2hp) having come down from its pre-GST price of \$4,008.

*For further information, ring any of the three RFD offices, in
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