

‘New Generation’ 390/430 Walker Bay Series RIBs Released In Australia

Walker Bay, for the uninitiated, is regarded throughout the world as one of the pre-eminent manufacturers of soft and rigid inflatables.

Manufactured in America, they have been distributed in Australia for some time by the Haines Group, and sold to a pretty select group of big boatowners who are weary of having inflatables go soft in the sun, fall apart at the seams and usually wear out in a couple of seasons.

The Walker Bay rigid inflatables have a fibreglass hull guarantee for 5 Years and a Hyperlon guarantee for 10 Years, and that will give you some idea of how fair dinkum they are about building the world’s best inflatable.

Usually, they’re restricted to tender duty on big Rivas and Maritimos and ‘white yachts’ where the owners lift them onboard with deck mounted davits, and for this reason, F&B hasn’t been too involved with the brand. Not too many of our readers have a 60’ - 70’ Riv, much less a super yacht.

That all came to a screeching halt last month



when the first of the New Generation 390/430 Walker Bay RIBs arrived, and the Haines Group realised the boat had far more potential than just as a toy for James Bond movies and images of the good life.

This 390 RIB is a very interesting craft, and it does offer some genuine potential that may interest many of our readers.

Acknowledging that elsewhere in this magazine is a Chinese made Island Inflatable that costs about a 10th of what this costs, and is powered by a cute little Parsun 2-

stroke 3.6hp outboard for a package price of around \$1,590, to bring up a \$30K RIB you must admit, does raise the odd eyebrow, and warrant a more detailed explanation.

Yes, that’s what I thought too! “Thirty K! You’ve got to be kidding!” but I have always had a great respect for Greg Haines and the Haines family, and they, of all people, probably know more about Australian boating likes and dislikes than just about anybody on the planet.

So when Greg told me we should look at this boat

because it had genuine potential, we had to haul back and say, “Well, he’s been right in just about everything else we’ve done, so let’s have a closer look at it.”

Design

This is unlike any RIB the writer has ever seen. Greg is right – it really is a weapon, and it’s been brilliantly designed for quite a wide variety of jobs, some of which may not be obvious at first glance.

Nevertheless, the penny didn’t drop for me until we met them off Runaway