

Noosa Cat 670 Walkaround

We were excited about the new Noosa Cat 670 Walkabout when we first saw the plug being built in the factory on the Sunshine Coast. Walkabouts, centre cabs and the like have become quite fashionable in the last couple of years, but none of the major cat manufacturers has really “bitten the bullet” and created a dedicated walkaround or centre cab model. Wayne Hennig’s Noosa Cat has now uncorked the flask . . . and let the genie out of the bottle.

Story & Pics By F&B’s Peter Webster

It’s not entirely correct to say there has never been a GRP walkaround cat before, especially when the writer owned the blue Hookham 6.0 m cat *Tusitala* for several years, and this was notionally a walkaround model.

However, even designer/builder Mark Hookham would be the first to admit that it wasn’t the real McCoy in the sense that it didn’t have a trench style walkaround ahead of a centre mounted cabin. There was a pretty good reason for that too.

It stemmed from Hookham’s belief that to create an open deck boat intentionally used for crashing out through white water bars wasn’t exactly the smartest move in the world. Whilst this problem seems to be completely overlooked by many aluminium monohull builders, it’s significant that all of the cat builders (including Kevlacat, Dominator, Noosa Cat and the peripheral, smaller cat manufacturers) have all been at pains to keep their distance from a walkaround or centre cab model.

It’s ironic isn’t it? Here we have three or four of the top cat manufacturers in Australia with boats that are acknowledged as the toughest, best handling bluewater boats in their class,

and all of them have been at pains to put distance between themselves and the centre cab concept.

So we were more than usually interested when Noosa Cat’s Wayne Hennig, responding to specific requests from a number of Coast Guard flotillas around Australia who were seeking a centre cab model, finally agreed to invest the tooling and manpower resources needed to create a dedicated Noosa Cat centre cab or walkaround model.

If ever there was a hull shape or configuration that suited this type of design it’s always been a cat, as these boats are the only ones that can really handle the possibility of being poked through a breaking barred inlet wave. They have the ability to cop ‘green’ water coming onboard (down the side of the cabin), and shed it, just as fast, as it surges down the back of the cockpit.

Thus it was of no real surprise to observe that even here, Hennig and his on staff naval architect Terry Davis have been at pains (still) to keep the walkaround trench to a tight 300 mm wide by 270 mm high (average) just to make quite sure that if you do have to punch this boat out through the Narooma Bar, you can do it safely.

As Hennig points out, that’s the Noosa Cat difference. “When someone buys one of these trendy mono-hulled aluminium centre cabs,” he told F&B, “they don’t really expect to go out through the Wide Bay Bar or Lakes Entrance in their 20 foot aluminium centre cab or centre console, because they know it will be too bloody dangerous!”

He continued “But when they buy a Noosa Cat, they not only figure it’s safe, they’ll go out to “play” in the bar just because it’s fun! And given that so many of our boats are in use with the Coast Guard and Volunteer Marine Rescue groups around Australia, it’s not unreasonable to think they’re capable of handling themselves in true white water situations. So when we sat down to design a safe, practical walkaround model, we had to keep all this in mind.”

Design: You can see a lot of the American Tiagra/ Profish/ Sea Ox in the new boat, and that’s no doubt an influence Wayne Hennig received during his last trip to the Miami Boat Show in February 1998.

The 670 Noosa Cat Walkabout is a very high wooded boat, standing the best part of 1.8 m tall on the floor of the



Fisherman & Boatowner FIELD TEST