



In the perennial quest for real bargains, the Number One Rule is to hunt around for the top brands. Boats like this SeaRay 275 AJ (above) and the big CruiseCraft 685 (below) are prized because even buyer #5 knows they have been very well built, will perform extremely well (if set-up and maintained correctly) and will retain top resale if looked after. An unsung advantage of buying 'pre-loved' craft like these is that they are invariably well 'trained', properly fitted out, and set up for immediate action. Better still, the savings WILL run into many thousands of dollars compared to their replacement cost.



The recent combination of a strong Aussie dollar, a weak US greenback and a tired local boat building scene, opened the flood gates for the importation of both new and secondhand boats from various parts of the world. Boats arrived in all shapes and sizes, pushing the market down to a historically 'soft' level, sending the price of new and secondhand boats tumbling even further. **Put simply, there are many more people trying to sell boats, than there are people who want to buy one.** Now the Aussie dollar is dropping back to 'normal' and heading lower still, the market is **changing all over again.**

In this report, originally published just a couple of years ago, Editor Peter Webster re-casts a very experienced and a necessarily cynical eye across today's marketplace to help readers develop the best buying and selling strategies in the latest scheme of things.

Buying Secondhand: It's Your Move

Older hands in the boating world learned long ago that "all that glitters in boating is not stainless steel" and the old truism that "anything cheap in boating is sure to be worth a lot less than the price asked" has never been so apt.

The trouble is, for people coming into boating for the first time, it's incredibly difficult to sort the wheat from the chaff, especially when you've got a dozen or more very convincing salespeople all believing that their product is simply "miles better" than their competitor's boat 150 metres down the road.

Each sales person believes with a maniacal fervour that you will embrace financial ruin by purchasing anywhere else except "in this yard, from me, *today!*"

We've all seen it, we've all heard it. It goes on every day of the week. And the poor first time buyer, often out of sheer frustration and weariness, all too often ends up succumbing to the more subtle of the salespeople who can recognise that the buyer has been "softened up" and is ready for the "kill".

If this sounds a tad cynical, so be it – and if the cap fits, wear it.

Let's go back to square one. How does a consumer work his or her way through the mire? How do they learn to recognise what is good, or not so good value, in a very short space of time?

Over the following pages, we're going to examine some of the broad-based issues.

We'd like to share with you some of our experiences that we've had, and whilst this is an

enormous subject that has been the subject of many excellent publications (including my son Jeff Webster's series of publications - "Secondhand Secrets" *et al*) what we'll try and do here is draw out the salient points that will help guide you down the road.

Work Out a Budget

First off, you need a budget – yes, that's bleedin' obvious, but what I'm talking about is a real budget – not a pretend one, or a bluff budget, I'm talking about a real, fair dinkum, *how-much-money-can-you-really-spend-on-the-boat* sort of budget that you'll share with your wife and family when the crunch comes to buy something.

You can't afford to waste time looking at boats either up or down from your budget, because there are literally thousands to look at; you just won't have enough time in the rest of your life to study the market that carefully.

I kid you not, we're talking here about hundreds and hundreds of boats for sale in every classification, so before you begin to do anything, the first issue is to establish what you can actually afford to spend on the new package.

Yep, "package" – that means the whole damn kit and caboodle. The boat, the trailer, the engine, any repairs that are necessary, the insurance cost, brokerage fees, valuations, marina lift-out fees, a survey, etc. All of the costs must come from that budget figure and you've got to be fair dinkum with