



Some Thoughts On Petrol Pricing

Some time ago I wrote a piece about fuel prices, and pointed out that Australia produces 70% of its oil requirements locally, and not too many years ago when the return to the oil producers was \$8 per barrel, they were still making a reasonable profit. Now, with the price of oil at \$140 per barrel, imagine the profits with the costs only marginally more than they were at \$8 per barrel.

Last month, I took the opportunity during a break in the incessant south/east trade winds to go down to the Cape to fish and crab for a few days. I did reasonably well, too, catching a good number of the large flathead that come in during June/July and some nice threadfin salmon and yellowfin bream which are also winter arrivals.

Thinking about this fuel cost problem, I decided to work out my fuel usage for this trip. Keeping in mind that I spend a lot of my time putting along at five knots or so in my 5.3 metre Barcrusher. Being retired, I have plenty of time, and I also like to pull a spread of lures on the way.

As a matter of fact, if I have to get up to planing

Ebb & Flow

with Neil Dunstan

speed to catch the tide or something, I find it most unpleasant with all the banging and bouncing and things falling off the dash board shelf all the time; I would much rather travel at displacement speed and enjoy the scenery, whilst listening to the cricket on the radio.

On this trip, I travelled all the way to the Cape and back six days later, at a trolling speed of 1,500 revs on my Suzuki 115, and had seventeen strikes on the way down. This resulted in seven hookups, catching two under-size spanish mackerel, one



small cobia and a sucker fish, all of which were released. I also caught a legal spanish mackerel and two nice school mackerel which went into the icebox. On the way home, I only got three strikes, and landed a large spanish mackerel and a decent sized golden trevally, which is one of the best eating of the trevallies.

I fished and crabbed for six days and caught plenty of other fish and crabs with a bit of exploration to some nearby creeks that I hadn't visited for some time. All of my travelling was done at 1500 revs, except for a few times I opened her up to clear the cobwebs.

After refuelling when I got home, it worked out that I'd used 56 litres of fuel for six days fishing and 30 n. miles travelling to and from my destination.

The point I want to make is this: there are ways to reduce fuel costs and still do plenty of fishing and boating, and if you travel slowly, it is between three and five times more economical when using a 4-stroke motor at these speeds. This of course, does not apply to two stroke motors, as they use only marginally less fuel at slow speeds as they do when on the plane.



I was also thinking about how to manage costs if fuel goes up to \$8 per litre as has been suggested recently, and it is obvious that high speed boats with large motors will not cut it.

The size of a boat is going to have to be re-considered; I spent many years running around all over the ocean up to fifty miles offshore in fourteen foot tinnies of the Quintrex and Clark calibre. I reckon that they are quite seaworthy in the right hands and can go anywhere a twenty five footer can go, provided the weather is below twenty knots.

Therefore an alloy boat around five metres would do

most of the stuff required and if it was fitted with a small 4-stroke outboard of (say) 15 hp with a high thrust prop and gearbox, it would run at say six knots at cruising speed with a top speed of maybe ten knots – you'd be surprised at how much ground can be covered at that speed whilst you are catching fish and enjoying the scenery.

Butane Stoves . . .

One other thing I would like to add, is the point that the editor has been on about for yonks, and that concerns his aversion for cheap propane gas stoves.

I never told PW, but I have one of these stoves on my boat, in case I run out of fuel for my two burner LPG stove. On this trip I was cooking some crabs when I ran out of gas, so I retrieved the propane stove from under the bunk and set it up with a new canister of gas.

When I tried to engage the canister prior to lighting the stove it was not seated properly and some liquid leaked out before I disengaged it. When I reset the container and tried to light the stove, the whole thing burst into flames; apparently some of the gas had settled in the bottom of the stove casing and ignited as soon as I lit the burner.

Luckily, I had it sitting on the wide gunwale of the Barcrusher, and with flames leaping up into the air, I pushed the whole thing over the side!

I think I will take the chance of running out of LPG gas in the future. I now agree completely with the editor: they should be banned from use on boats.

Neil Dunstan.

F&B