



## Fuel Costs For Tow Vehicles

**R**ecently I have been looking into various options to reduce the costs of boating due to the ever increasing cost of fuel. I have put forward a few suggestions, some of them a bit far out, but we have to consider the future ramifications of this cost, particularly on the fixed income people, such as pensioners, etc.

One of the costs of fuel concerns the vehicle used to tow the boat to the local boat ramp, or to that long

# Ebb & Flow

with Neil Dunstan

awaited trip to a long dreamed of place where you have to hide under a tarp to put your bait on the hook for fear of being attacked by the hungry fish. As readers will probably know, my mate John and I have travelled to many places towing my boat, and some of them have been quite a long distance from our homes in Sarina, Qld.

A case in point was the trip that we made to Princess Charlotte bay on the east side of Cape York Peninsular. This trip entailed a road trip of around 1100 km each way, whereas the trip by boat, although quite a feat, was around 400 nautical miles return. So the cost for the boat fuel was around \$540 whilst the cost for the road trip was around \$900 which was quite a significant amount more than the boat fuel costs.

I have always argued that using a four wheel drive to tow your boat is, in most cases, not really

necessary and I have towed my boat all over Queensland using a bog standard Commodore, and have never had a moment's trouble.

The only time that I have found any need for four wheel drive is on some slippery ramps, but still managed without too much trouble by making sure that there is at least 100 kilograms weight on the tow bar using the trailer balance to achieve this. Then by judicious use of the throttle and relying on the smoothness of the automatic transmission I can usually get up even a slippery ramp, albeit slowly.

By using a standard road car, significant savings can be made in terms of fuel costs. For instance, my Commodore will return around eight litres per 100 kilometres when used for normal running on the highway, providing that I use cruise control and set it at around 95 k/ph, and when pulling my boat, the

consumption goes up to about 17 litres per 100 km.

By contrast, my mate John who has a three litre diesel engined four wheel drive uses thirty litres per hundred km when towing his small caravan.

Another mate who drives a petrol LandCruiser uses eighteen litres per 100 km when travelling unloaded, and when he tows his 5.5 metre boat, the consumption goes up to nearly forty litres per 100 km - which would almost break most of us pensioners.

So I reckon that a five metre alloy boat, with a four stroke outboard, towed by a standard road car will do most of the things that we would want, and at a cost that even mean old buggers like us pensioners can afford. Neil Dunstan. Sarina Beach.

*Neil Dunstan.  
Sarina Beach.  
F&B*



*Even in bad situations - like this one in Mourilyn Harbour, FNQ - Neil is confident he'll get the rig out with two wheel drive.*