



After two long years of boat building, F&B's 8.0 m diesel project boat, *Dusty Rover* was finally finished and ready for its 'shakedown' cruise.

For our first foray in open waters, we chose the run from Townsville to Cardwell via the Palm Islands and Lucinda, to ensure we ended up with *Dusty* in the Port Hinchinbrook marina. Typically, it proved to be a voyage with very mixed results.

Story and pics by Peter Webster and Ruth Cunningham.

Dusty Rover's 'Shakedown' Cruise: Townsville To Port Hinchinbrook

This report actually begins back on the Gold Coast, when unexpected delays forced us to revise our original cruising itinerary. This will ultimately see *Dusty Rover* explore the waters north of Cairns, around the tip of Cape York, into the Torres Strait, and down through the Gulf of Carpentaria via Bamaga, Kurumba, Weipa, etc. But not this year.

For the remainder of this year before the wet season, we have to be content with the initial shakedown cruise, and one, or perhaps two shorter legs back up to Cairns in the months of October and November. At that point, *Dusty* will be repositioned to a cyclone-safe facility for the wet season from December through March.

But that was a long way off when the first leg was planned in August-

September.

Instead of taking the boat up by trailer as we had first intended, various complications had set in to make it much easier to transport *Dusty* with Trewin Transport, the specialist boat-trucking company we've used to move many boats around Australia with unfailing satisfaction and efficiency.

The plan was for Trewin to pick up the boat on Friday for their regular run through to Townsville and Cairns on the Sunday and Monday following, with Ruth Cunningham and the writer flying in to join it on the Monday morning.

It proved to be an extraordinary week. First there was the terrorist attack in New York and Washington, and subsequently, the collapse of Ansett Airlines on the domestic front. We had problems with F&B's

production too, so it wasn't until Friday, the day Ansett stopped flying, that we turned up at Brisbane Airport to fly Virgin Blue through to Townsville, with tickets we'd rolled over (fortunately) from the week before.

The friendly mob at Virgin Blue were very good to us, and despite the enormous pressure they were under on the day Ansett stopped flying, they honoured our tickets and coped with all of our specialised luggage. Nevertheless, we were relieved just to arrive in Townsville later that day.

But the delays getting away had taken their toll on various plans, and the Breakwater Marina people couldn't put *Dusty Rover* in the water that night



due to other commitments. We had to wait until Saturday morning before their 45 tonne Travel-lift could pick *Dusty* up off its hardstand cradle, and lower it slowly and carefully into the water.

With the 300 hp turbo Yanmar diesel rumbling happily away in the background, Ruth gingerly backed *Dusty* out of the slings and drove over to the adjacent fuel wharf to pick up the writer. We then worked our way right back round this very big marina to the first row, Arm "C" opposite Townsville's outstanding new "Strand" foreshore development.

With lines securing *Dusty Rover* in the berth, we settled down for the planned 24 hour period sorting out all the bits and pieces we had locked away in the cabin, buying the fresh food and grog, and generally preparing to leave the marina on Sunday morning.



Townsville's Breakwater Marina is next to (and part of) the Breakwater Casino, and conveniently located in the heart of the City. It is a first class full-floating concrete arm facility that is well managed and extremely active. Fuel is available here (including unleaded) 24 hours a day.

