

F&B's Small Craft Section



Launching The Stessl 3.4 m Vagabond ET

Introducing the fifth 'mothership' fishing dory we've developed. This one steps forward with a 20" transom, and new levels of floatation and safety - in one helluva fishing platform !

As most readers are aware, this Stessl 4.3m Vagabond Edgetracker is the key to F&B's "Mothership Project" based around the 8.0m Cairns Custom Craft powered by the 300hp Yanmar turbo diesel.

The concept of the "mothership" came about several years ago following a visit to the town of 1770, and being forced to sit on our hands as 30 knots of SE wind blew the fishing out right along the coast for about 100 miles north and south of 1770.

On that first trip, we didn't have the experience or knowledge that we subsequently gained to take a small, roof-topper type boat that would have enabled us to fish morning, noon and night in all the creeks and estuaries around the 1770 area – despite the wind.

Of course, the locals all knew – and

we watched with some chagrin as they all disappeared into the bush each morning to return with wide grins and full fish boxes later in the day.

A few months later, we took the 1996 Signature 702 Walkaround Project boat into the wonderful Hinchinbrook region, and again came a cropper, as we realised that the style of fishing we wanted to do ("I'm gunna

catch me a barra!"), was virtually impossible in such a big 7.0 m boat. A brilliant thing offshore, the 702 Signature was out of its depth in creeks with 300 mm of water at low tide! And at around 2 tonnes or so, even Ruth couldn't push the big Signatuire off the sandbars at the front of the creeks . . .

Fast forward again. This time with the Genesis Project we were starting to get our act together, and for the first time introduced ourselves and readers to the idea of taking two boats to these areas.

I should stress here that this was not exactly 'hot news' for the north Queensland or Northern Territory fishing fraternity who have been using big boats as motherships with small dinghies as dories from just about the beginning of pleasure boating in Australia.

But for a fisherman from the deep south (and the clear blue waters off the coast from Bermagui to Port Stephens) this was all revolutionary stuff. And as we discovered, it was also timely for thousand of readers south of Brisbane Qld or Port Hedland WA who were figuring on a having themselves a northern holiday chasing barra . . .