



Haines Hunter 445R Side Console Conversion

by Steve Jones

He's at it again - this time, Townsville barra fisho Steve Jones has turned his energy into the conversion of a 445R into a red hot barra fishing platform - for a price that will turn you green with envy . . . *read how he did it!*

I have always loved lure fishing for barramundi, jacks etc, and have usually done so from a 12ft vee nose tinny fully set up with casting platforms, false floor, electric motor, etc. The problem with this boat had always been a lack of room for the tonnes of gear I always want to carry, and the banging / wet ride we suffered when crossing open water.

One day, after a very

wet, uncomfortable and cramped trip with 3 onboard, I decided I needed a bigger barra boat. I had previously had a Haines 17C converted to centre console, and had a professional do most of the glass work (F&B issue XX), with Dad and I doing all the painting and fit-out, so was very familiar with the process of rebuilding a glass boat. I contemplated the usual bigger tinny option, but decided I wanted a quiet and smooth

ride, as well as an interesting project and the chance to pick up some skills if I did most of the work myself. I decided a Haines 445 would be the perfect hull. It is extremely beamy for its length (its actually beamier than our old 17), and has an extremely soft ride. I read a lot about the 445's and knew it would be a great hull for what I wanted to do.

Now the problem would be to find one. As it turned

out, it was no problem at all, as one of my mates from work had a very poor conditioned 445R with a very spongy floor with a completely soft transom, no motor, on a poor trailer. He had just bought a 6.0m boat and wanted the little Haines gone from his shed.

Obviously I bought it, and the whole itchy process began. As mentioned above I was very familiar with the process of rebuilding glass

Two year old Isabella Jones ready for her first barra adventure in Dad's beautifully renovated 445R. Starting from the wreck (left) to the classy rig (above) it's a real tribute to his skill and patience.



boats, having paid someone to do one for me in the past, as well as reading plenty (Jeff Webster's "Secondhand Boat Secrets" and Tony Ravenscroft's writings in F&B (all now in the SEA Library - Ed) were a great help, plus researching on the internet.

I had the theory but not the skills. As it turned out, building in the manner that I did (fibreglass over ply) is a very simple process and most people with a bit of

woodwork know-how, will master it reasonably quickly. This technique has been written about many times, and the way I did it by no means reinvented the wheel.

The first job was to strip every fitting and give the whole thing a good clean out.

Then the transom was attacked. This involved cutting the deck about 600mm ahead of the transom on both sides. This allowed the rear deck

