



Contender #1 - the Trailcraft 480 Profish set new Australian standards with its self draining deck, transom door and superb road and water access.



Contender #2 - The original "top-ender" and many claim still the #1 Choice. Millenium hull is marginally softer and dryer than the Trailcraft in some conditions, but this is seen as 'softer' than the Trailcraft's more rugged, hose-out finish.

Face-Off at 4.85 Metres !

The Hunky 485 Side Consoles

There's no doubt the 485 "Top-ender" style console tinny has been one of the most successful new models to hit the waterways in recent years. In this special report, editor Peter Webster takes a pragmatic view of the top half dozen products in Australia, and considers the many variations on the theme that are available as well.

There is always some debate about who actually invented the so-called "Top-ender" concept, but there's much doubt that it was inspired by the pro-charter fishing boats up in the Northern Territory and several of the Top End's best known individual sportfishermen such as Alex Julius and Col Roberts et al.

Well known to Australian fishing enthusiasts, these guys had a need for something more than your average tinny because they needed a boat to stand up safely in, so they could cast into the banks of rivers, around rock bars and ledges etc. But they also needed a boat that was capable of running creeks and river entrances of the kind where they run down off the wetlands into the Gulf or Top End country.

Some of these rivers and creek entrances can be quite nasty on a run-out tide or wet season run-off, and the traditional tinny was often found wanting, even though it might well be seaworthy in the broad sense of the word.

From this background, Quintrex (especially) responded to the calls for a tinny with markedly higher sides, an

orientation towards casting and lure fishing as distinct from bottom bashing, but a boat that was not going to be too big to be a pain in the bum if it had to be launched down a river bank or into unmade rivers and creeks without a launchramp.

The Top End fishos knew that once you get past 4.5-5.0m, it gets to be very bloody difficult to get a boat in and out of the water – especially after the wet season when everything's pretty wet and muddy.

Within these generally physical constraints, Quintrex and a number of other manufacturers (GS Marine, Cairns Custom Craft, and several WA manufacturers) answered the call with a variety of craft which whilst different, were in fact, all pretty much the same.

The specification is quite comprehensive, and although you'd never get 10 fishermen to agree on any one single boat package, in reality, what happened here is the physical conditions and constraints combined to force all fishermen (and thus the boat builders) to all end up with the same sort of boat.

At the end of the day, if the specification calls for a boat 4.8m

overall, trailerable, made of aluminium, with casting platforms fore and aft, a side console and so on – needless to say they are all going to end up looking pretty similar.

But to Quintrex goes the credit for popularising the concept. To their amazement I'm sure, the Top-ender that was first featured in their catalogue a couple of years back targeting the Top End fishos, suddenly drew a response from fishermen all over Australia, and within one or two seasons, the concept of the so-called "Top-ender" side console fishing boat had become accepted as a genuinely different and separate type of boat.

Today, heaps of manufacturers make them and although they don't call them Top-enders (Quintrex seemed to have sustained the rights to that name) they are all of the Top-ender genre.

In 2003, fast rising WA builder Trailcraft raised the stakes quite a bit by introducing their Pro-fish series, and redefining the Top-ender style boat to another level of convenience, sophistication and seaworthiness.

Trailcraft introduced a genuine self draining cockpit into the 16' size craft and set a precedent that has not yet been matched in Australia. They also