

Boat Buyer's Guide: 5.3m Cuddlies!



capability of most of the boats in this category. Now we are talking about a whole range of boats that are more than capable of going offshore to fish in relative safety and a surprising degree of comfort.

That does not mean to suggest that all these boats are designed to do – far from it. Almost all of them

Packaging

As most readers know, the writer is passionate about getting this issue of packaging right in your new boat. Packaging is about making sure you get the biggest boat you can for the amount of money that you've got, consistent with the class of outboard you want to use, and the type of



Cuddy Cabs . . .

Continuing our series of consumer surveys on many of the most popular boat sizes available to the recreational boatowner in Australia. Again, we're unashamedly mixing aluminium boats with fibreglass, and comparing the real and sometimes imagined differences between the two. This report has been prepared by F&B's editor Peter Webster, merging many years of boating experience with the intricacies and complexities of today's high tech trailerboat market.

When the tape measure reaches 5.0m, and it's measuring the length of a boat from the stem to the stern, it is quite amazing the changes that come over the boat under scrutiny. In recent months, we've studied 4.75m cuddlies, and a whole series of bowriders, none of which were really designed to go to sea.

And that's the difference. When discussion turns to cuddlies at 5.3m and beyond, we're now starting to get into "serious" boating.

Up to about 5.0m overall, boats tend to be primarily constrained to inshore and open bay waters. Of course, thousands of them go offshore every weekend from hundreds of different ports in Australia, but that doesn't mean to say that too many of them were actually designed for that purpose.

What tends to happen is that people will buy the biggest boat they can afford, and then use it offshore fishing for snapper or morwong on

It isn't very hard to pick an outright winner in the 'Family Cruiser' stakes - the Whittley 530 Impala is a jewel in a very rocky place. Beautifully finished, jam-packed with years of cruising experience, the Whittleys are revered by the laymen, and respected by the veterans - and as it happens, they are just a few weeks off a complete Impala upgrade.



the local (near-shore) reefs, and around the headlands nearest to their home port, and scurry for cover if there's even a hint of bad weather on the horizon.

However, once we turn the corner at around 5.0m LOA, and start heading into 5.3m-5.4m country, all the rules start to change. The specifications move up, the costs rise exponentially, and with it, the



are still classed as "all rounders" in the sense that they make terrific family boats for barbeques up the river, towing tubes around the bay or lake, and can often be found in freshwater lakes working in and out of the drowned forests.

This is the beauty of this class of boat. For many it is the definitive family boat size – invoking the cliché "not too big – and not too small".

trailer you need to put underneath the rig.

So let's start right up front with the motor, arguably the key factor in packaging.

For example, most of these craft will work to perfection with a motor in the 80hp-115hp range, but for the sake of the argument, let's identify the Honda 90 as a working example of a superb engine for a 5.30-5.35m