

Spoiled For Choice

Despite the gloomy prognosis about the future of manufacturing in Australia, we present hard evidence that the boating industry is fighting back, and working hard for your business. Over the next 40 or so pages, we're going to take a walk down the metaphorical Boat Show aisle and study Australia's top 6.0-6.5m GRP Cuddies with a fishing orientation, in this, the first of our new Virtual Boat Show Series.

Research and Notes by the ABM team

In kicking off this 6 Part Series, we acknowledge our Series of Consumer Surveys intentionally coincides with the national BIA Boat Show 'circuit'.

This began earlier this month with the Brisbane Tinny & Tackle Show, and will now progressively travel around Australia to every capital city concluding with the Brisbane Boat Show in September.

In the intervening months, the industry will haul boats from one city to another, and at quite considerable cost, assemble displays designed to tempt your wallet or credit card from its hidey hole with the purchase of a new boat, outboard and the latest gee-whiz electronics.

Nationally, thousands of boatowners will flock to the Shows, but this year, there are some very genuine concerns that the displays won't be as comprehensive as they have been in years past. This is almost entirely due to the GFC's long term damage to the industry's infrastructure, and specifically, the national boat dealer network.

A situation has developed where many of the top Victorian boats aren't going to be seen north of the Murray River, and many of the Queensland boats aren't going to be seen south of the Tweed River, on the border with NSW. This is largely due to the loss of so many dealers in recent years and the resultant limits to the number of boats and the spread of brands

the remaining dealers can carry, let alone display in Boat Shows.

To this end, we are launching our **Virtual Boat Show** this month, presenting a comprehensive survey of all the 6.0-6.5m GRP Cuddies with fishing in their DNA.

Next month we'll have 4.8-5.0m pressed Side and Centre Consoles, the month after that, we'll have 5.2-5.7m GRP Family Half Cabs, and so on, until we've rounded up the six most popular groups of boats available in Australia today.

In this way, we will provide readers all over Australia with comprehensive research notes on the range of boats available, whether they are on display in the local Boat Show or not.

As some of these boats (this month's 6.0-6.5m half cabs and sports cruisers, for example) cost anywhere from \$50,000-\$100,000, for families contemplating that sort of investment, a Jetstar or Virgin flight interstate is not even an issue. What matters is that they know these interstate boats exist, and they learn quickly and accurately, how to follow up their interest. Most of the research can then be done directly with the boat's manufacturer, the websites, the boat reviews and finally, a trip to wherever the nearest display or demo rig is being maintained.

Of course the bigger aluminium brands such as Quintrex and Stacer have a very comprehensive national dealer network, but this is not the case with



Very typical of the modern six metre half cabs or cuddies, the Savage 645 is replete with walkaround trench on the side decks, transom door(s) and a full size cabin for over-nighting or a snooze between tide changes. Set-up like this, it makes a fine 'outside' family fishing boat, too.