

# F&B's Small Craft Section

developed over the last 4 or 5 years through the pages of F&B.

This is a very special boat, with a degree of sophistication unlikely to be found in many other small production craft in Australia. It started life as a standard Stessl 3.4 m Edge Tracker Vagabond, before being fitted out to our special needs by the team at ADM Marine at Hope Harbour.



## AIR-O-FLOAT STABILIZERS - Adding A New Safety Dimension To Tinnies!

**I**ntroducing our first report on an invention that whilst not completely original, is nevertheless one of the most effective new safety aids for small tinnies we've encountered in decades. It's simple, durable, cost effective and it works. This could do for small boats what the wine cask did for the wine industry – and its inventor!

We first heard about Air-O-Float Stabilizers from readers in different parts of Australia who were so pleased

with this new product, we were encouraged to check it out for ourselves.

As you can see on these pages, we subsequently tracked down the system, and had it installed on our brand new Stessl dory, the fishing boat we are using with the new diesel mothership project. To say that the Stessl is the lynch pin of the project is an understatement, as we have gone to inordinate lengths to develop what is the fifth dory in a series we've

This boat is destined to fish places ranging from the Kimberleys in the west, to Lady Musgrave Island in the east, and from the Gulf in the north to the Clyde River at Nelligen in the south, so it's been created with a very diverse range of tasks in mind – all of which are common to thousands of boatowners and readers across Australia who love small craft and target fish species ranging from trout to barramundi.

Like so many of our readers, we too are very safety conscious in small craft, and in the northern waters, aware of the growing menace from crocodiles, let alone the perennial dangers of small craft capsizes and sinkings – all of which can ruin a perfectly good day's fishing!

The problem with all small craft is just that – *they are all **small** craft!* As such, we tend to forget sometimes what they are, and take them into

also looking to build a lifeboat, should the worst ever happen offshore.

**Initial Stessl Trials** As you can see in the photographs, the initial trials with the Stessl *without* the stabilisers, was moderately successful – but only just.

Even with the deeper ‘hire boat’ safety seats, the Stessl was an ungainly, unstable survival platform to say the least.

Whilst it would clearly support the crew of three (see pic) sitting on it, the trim was sensitive and it was felt that in choppy or rough water, it would be extremely difficult to keep all three bodies on the bottom of the boat whilst it was in an upside down position.

Two people were much better, and with Glenn Sanders and his son Evan, was tolerably acceptable – but remember, this is a boat without the outboard, and ancillary gear such as you would have if the battery was locked into the boat by the tie downs that you need when the boat is working normally.

Left in the upright position, as if the boat had been swamped by a bigger wave, the situation was very similar, although two people again stood a fair chance of staying afloat in the boat.

Armed with a bit of cunning and a bucket, we discovered that one person

## HOW MUCH DO THEY COST ?

### *Air-O-Float Stabilizers:*

Length	Weight	Rec.Retail
6' 0"	5.5 kg	\$435
8' 0"	7.5 kg	\$473
10' 0"	9.5 kg	\$509

*\*Note - The Stabilisers are available to special order in virtually any length or colour.*

**The standard colour for the Stabilizers is (this) blue. They are available in this colour ex stock; one offs take extra time.**



inside the boat could bail it right out ready to go again, providing the second person trod water and pushed the crocs and sharks off with his feet!

The moral of the story here is very simple. As the, um, heavier person who would have to jump in the water while Ruth bailed, we've decided (no, *belay that, I've decided!*) that we're definitely going to proceed to pour our collar of foam under the gunwales of the Stessl, very bloody quickly!

### **The AIR-O-FLOAT**

**Stabilizers** There is a simple, essential genius to these things. They are so simple to use that A-O-F's Doug & Judy Hemingway are destined to make their fortune out of this product.

It consists of an aluminium bolt rope track (see pic) set at a predetermined length about 200 mm apart on both sides of the boat. The top and bottom tracks can be fitted by nuts and bolts, rivets, Sikaflex – whatever you wish. Ours are a mixture of Sikaflex and stainless steel bolts and nyloc nuts.

To install or mount the stabilisers, one merely slides the “Dee” shaped inflatable sections along the bolt rope tracks. This takes about 60 seconds on your own, but if you've got an offsider who can help feed the bolt rope into the tracks whilst you pull the ‘sausage’ along the tracks, then the time is

reduced to about 30 seconds a side.

Pumping up each side takes about 60 seconds a side, and the inherent friction of the hyperlon tubes holds them in place. There is nothing to tie-off, lock down or fix. One merely slides the tubes into place, pump them up – and go boating.

To take the Air-O-Float Stabilizers off each side takes all of 10 seconds – it is almost instantaneous. Undo the air valve, the air rushes out, and the Air-