

A reader called the other day from Melbourne where he was engaged in the exciting process of ordering his new 7.2m Platey from one of Australia's top builders.

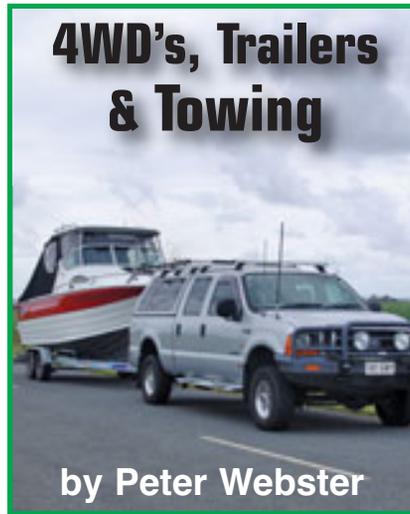
That was all sorted out, and I agreed with all of his choices in terms of the new engine (he'll be right on time for one of the new release V-6 Yamahas that should be available just about when his boat is being finished, so they're working their weights and calculations around the new engines) but what was troubling him more than anything else in the ordering department, was the trailer.

"Peter", he said. "There's quite a few people down here in Melbourne who still reckon that "multi-roller" trailers work better than the "skid" system, and they are advocating that I should stay with a multi-roller system rather than go for the Teflon covered bunk system you guys have been promoting for some time."

"What should I do? Who's right and who's wrong?"

Well, firstly I wanted to clarify the point that we have not just been advocating skid or bunk trailers for the sake of it – because there are many circumstances **where they are not appropriate at all.**

The most obvious of these concerns boatowners with fibreglass boats – Teflon or bunk



More Thoughts On Skid Trailers

bed trailers are not nearly as sensible as a "conventional" multi-roller trailer. Gelcoat is so easily scratched and as that's the barrier that keeps the water out of your fibreglass boat, it's just not a good idea to be slithering along carpeted bunk beds or Teflon covered bearers (see pic here of Di Ross and John Batty's excellent ally trailer from SA trailer) when those strips are almost certainly going to be covered with dust, grime and salt crystals almost every time you launch and retrieve the fibreglass boat.

This is not a good look and over

a 12 month period with a lot of use, you can do an awful lot of damage to the gelcoat on a fibreglass rig, so we have never advocated a skid trailer for a fibreglass boat. Ever.

On the other hand, if you've got a platey with an unpainted bottom, and it's usually 5.00-6.00mm plate, then it makes a whole heap of sense to put that rig up and down on Teflon covered bearers.

Personally, I don't like carpet that much because it still tends to stick, not so much when you're launching and retrieving a lot, but if you're doing the run down to Portland for instance, by the time you get down there, the boat and the bearers will have all come together in such a way that it can be quite awkward getting the boat off the trailer without launching the tow vehicle as well. I mean, at the end of the day, you can launch anything if you're putting it in the water far enough, but the idea is not to launch the truck as well!

Once the boat has come off the carpeted bearers, it's not really a big issue because it then slithers back up and down as per normal, but I still prefer Teflon covered bearers. Why? For the simple reason that aluminium will slide on and off that surface so easily you have to make damn sure it's tied down when you pull the boat out of the water, otherwise it will go back in when you don't want it to. Or prelaunch itself as you go down the ramp.



Don't laugh, it happens all the time – guys get impatient in the queue waiting to launch their boats, get everything set, undo the bow hook and then back down the ramp and bingo, the boat has decided to launch itself ahead of time.

Teflon works, don't have any doubt about that – and make sure your boat is totally strapped down every time you think about moving it.

But again, I stress this is for heavy duty aluminium construction which can handle a bit of salt and dust grazing without too many dramas – and even if it does get a bit scratched, that's all it is – it's a lot of scratches, it's not affecting the integrity of the aluminium plate itself.

Sizes Matter

When can you start using skid trailers? It's not really about size, it's more about the type of hull bottom – and the other problem is that skid trailers do not suit boats with a complicated planing strake arrangement underneath them. Skid trailers are best on boats with a very simple, plain, deep Vee bottom, which can be created in such a way the boat must self align as it comes up the trailer.

Study the pictures here of this very well designed 'bunk' trailer – once the boat is snubbed into that stern "Vee" cradle – on either side of it, it doesn't really matter, it then is guided to the next Vee, and even

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if it goes right offline and hits the side bearer, it is then pushed straight up again by the back Vee as well – it really is as close to foolproof as we can get.

My only bitch is I still think that the weakness of all these drive-on skid trailers is still down under the water with the wheel bearings. You have to be meticulous in making damn sure the bearings are cold when you do the wet launches.

This means it's not a very good idea to drive down Brown Mountain and then launch the boat straight off into the water at Bermagui with red hot wheels – or anywhere else for that matter, where you drive 10-15 km to the launchramp and then launch the boat almost straight away. It really does pay to let those bearings and the hubs cool down, so that the rear seals (they're the

ones that you've got to worry about) can do their job of keeping the water out of the bearings and off the sub axle.

This is harder to do than you think, and does take a conscious effort to say "hang on – I'm not ready to launch yet because the stub axles and bearings are still warm" – and you do have to think about this quite a lot.

Of course, you have to think about it too with a multi-roller trailer, it doesn't make any difference – if you launch 'em hot, they'll let go sooner than you'd like.

The other advantage of the skid trailer is that it doesn't have any rollers to break, fall off, or to add significantly to the un-sprung weight of the trailer. If you're chasing the 2 tonne breakaway limit, this can be a significant point of interest, because an aluminium framed skid trailer will almost always be quite a lot lighter than ditto with multi-roller arms – these are still being made in galvanised steel, and needless to say, still weigh a lot more on (say) a 7.2m trailer that is compared to a 7.2m aluminium trailer with skids.

Trailers are not just a straight forward exercise – they still need thought, good engineering and careful research to ensure the marriage between the boat and trailer is ideal.

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