

*Right: The Noosacat 3000 coming in through the break on the Noosa bar. It takes a lot to ruffle the feathers on this big rig, as it is one of Australia's foremost roughwater craft. Below Left: Almost as important as how they handle the rough stuff - a boat's stance when it is OFF PLANE and/or at rest, or just poking along, can be critical in really bad conditions (or just trolling, for that matter) and as you can see, the Nooscat 3000 has an ideal stance.*



# Noosacat 3000

We've been scheduled to test this new Noosacat 3000 now for several months but through a combination of unusual circumstances it has been repeatedly postponed.

The exercise of getting The Boat Mag's team together with the Noosacat people, a camera boat, and high tide on the Noosa Bar at approximately late morning on a nice sunny day in a boat with engines, proved something of a challenge. We do apologise to the readers who thought we were testing the boat last month, and a couple of months before that and so on. The wait has been worthwhile. There are very few boats in Australia that can turn the lights on like this one, as once again we rediscover why Noosacat is easily the biggest powered cat builder in Australia – and has been for many years.

Editor Peter Webster has the story, with pics by Ruth Cunningham.

**T**he Noosacat story is really the story about Wayne Hennig and his ever patient wife Debbie and the stoic, level-headed growth they've administered in one of the most unstable industries on the planet.

To Wayne and Debbie's eternal credit they have charted a steady course through the vagaries of recessions, downturns, change in regulations, ever-changing Survey requirements and so on, that would have left lesser companies gasping

for air – but they have steadily moved on, overcome the many obstacles bureaucracy (especially) has put in their path over the years and matured a multi-million dollar business that is the envy of most boat builders in Australia.

It's easy to say it was simply because they had the old "SharkCat" franchise and therefore they were on a winner from the outset. Obviously, this has a degree of truth in it, but what they purchased nigh on 22 years ago

has almost no relationship to the product they are producing today, nor does it acknowledge the management skills they brought to the table to enhance this iconic brand's position in a highly competitive market place.

Today, Noosacat produce a very sophisticated, well finished, high performance cat range with models spread from 5.0m through to 15.0m, and just about every metre step in between.

Noosacats are now in use all over



Back inside, cruising sweetly up the Noosa River. Configuration and aptitude to 'serious' fishing is magnificent. It's also available as a spectacular Walkaround, an Open or Hardtop Runabout - and a Long Cabin model - the latter popular with SAR groups.



## Noosacat 3000 Cuddy

Australia with every Sea Rescue organisation, Coast Guard, Water Police, Parks & Wildlife etc (you get the picture) and have been supplied to just about every department in every State of Australia at some point in time. In addition, hundreds of cats have been built for various levels of commercial and professional usage and of course, several hundred more have been built for private owners who can afford what is, frankly, the best fishing-type boat in Australia.

That's a pretty big call, but I was reminded of this once again last month when we had the opportunity to go up to Noosaville from the Gold Coast and spend the day with the Hennigs and the new 3000 model.

It's always something of a privilege as far as the writer is concerned, to be given the opportunity of working craft of this calibre in conditions that will be confronted by Noosacat owners all over Australia.

The test 'course' starts with the crossing of the Noosa Bar, which although it is quite small and relatively safe by comparison to some of the bigger ocean entrances, it still stands up and looks at you enough to get the adrenalin going, and force the helmsman to concentrate on his path out through the break.

On this day, the channel was better defined than it's been in times past, but was 'working' well enough for our two boats (we

had a new Marine Rescue boat alongside for trials and photography) and provided a terrific start to an exciting day.

With Wayne at the helm (*Where else? Getting him off the helm is always a challenge!*) we thundered out through the Bar and then repeated it for the cameras twice, before heading out across the bay into typical south east Qld conditions - a very nice 10-12 knots with calm seas on a low swell.

Over the years, the writer has tested all of the Noosacats in different sizes, and as we've written before, always prefer the lighter, more buoyant models that don't drag their stern around with a pronounced, nose high running angle.

Hate that, and have been very critical of other manufacturers in the past for creating cats that are too heavy in the 'ends' by using engines that are too big or too heavy for the cat's hulls' displacement.

Nothing flattens a cat's performance like an overweight engine structure right on the transom, and worse, usually creates a very uncomfortable 'pendulum' effect when the boat is held down by the stern and up by the buoyancy in the bows. Horrible - especially on near vertical bar or surf waves.

For this reason, the writer is always sceptical about the use of sterndrives, although it must be noted, the aluminium block Volvo D-3 equipped Noosacat 3100 we tested last year was certainly a very pleasing example of how you can get a diesel powered Noosacat beautifully balanced by using the lightweight aluminium

Volvo block, and carefully placing the diesel fuel tanks in such a way to ensure the craft remains balanced, regardless of the fuel load.

Here, we were powered by twin 225hp 4.2L Yamahas, outboards that are widely accepted as the the current "state of the art" in outboard design and manufacture, producing their horsepower for an astonishing 272 kilos a side - plus props. These outboards are perfect for 'cats, with one of the best power: weight ratios it's possible to get, and a beautiful choice for the Noosacat 3000.

Yes, it was probably over-powered a bit, and certainly, an owner can easily come right back to 150 Yamahas, and still have a sparkling level of performance, but as many readers well know, the writer is something of a revhead when it comes to high performance cats, and totally believes that more power is better than less - especially if the weights are relatively similar. You don't have to use the last inch of the throttle, but crikey there are times when it's good to have it under your right hand.

The reason it's relevant here is that more than most boats, the Noosacat is inevitably going to be used in extremely rough water. It's what they do.

It's part of the Noosacat DNA. These boats are born, bred and trialled in the roughest conditions imaginable, and they're designed to go forth, usually rescue or tow, and come back again safely with the crew and any of the victims rescued, safe and sound.

This of course pre-supposes a highly

## Hull Specifications

Boat length (not bowsprit) **8.0m**  
Overall length **8.60m**  
Boat length on trailer **9.1m** (approx)  
Beam (maximum) **2.50m**  
Draft **0.40m** (engine up)  
BMT (est) **3.2 - 4.0 tonne**  
Power rating **2 x 150 - 225hp** (25.5 inch)

## Standard Features

Stainless steel bow rail with bowsprit loop  
Bow Sprit with bow roller  
Bow bollard & 2 stern bollards  
Self draining anchor locker with hinged lid  
Anchor rope dead eye  
Winching eye to tunnel  
Fore deck access hatch  
2 x moulded double battery boxes, built in  
Wiring conduits  
5-piece windscreen with armour plate front panel  
Wiring cover with door  
Deluxe seats on moulded bases, storage under  
2 x bunks with moulded bases with storage under  
Fabric covered bunk cushions  
Lockable door to forward cabin  
Moulded GRP duckboard with lift-out transom door  
Moulded side pockets  
Quality compass  
2 x heavy duty batteries  
Battery master switches  
Start Battery paralleling system  
LED Navigation lights  
3 LED cabin or cockpit lights  
Hydraulic steering  
**2 x 150hp 25" Yamaha, s/s props, 4-stroke, c/rotating**  
Binnacle controls with supreme cables  
2 x fuel filters & fuel lines  
Yamaha can-bus instrument package including fuel senders.  
Engine installation, pre-delivery and sea trial  
27 MHz radio and 8' aerial  
2 x approx 225ltr 316 stainless steel under floor fuel tanks  
2 x external deck fuel fillers & vents with covers  
Stainless steel hardtop rails  
Heavy-duty "D" section mid rail fender  
316 S/S Duckboard rails  
316 S/S Duckboard ladder  
4 x S/S Cockpit rod holders  
S/S Grab rail to dash  
In hull transducer wet box with 8" bronze Inspection port  
All under floor areas flow-coated  
Fibreglass floor, bulkheads & beams (no timber),  
Helmsman's and observer's footrests on dash  
Moulded binnacle controls console  
16 x underfloor buoyancy compartments



This is an important shot, as it clearly shows the tunnel in this superb new hull can easily 'breathe', swiftly exhausting the water rushing down through the tunnel. This leads to faster take-offs, easier cruising, lower planing speeds.

skilled crew, and a dedicated rescue craft fit-out, which was exactly the case we found in the Hervey Bay Marine Rescue Noosacat. It was undergoing part of its sea trials before its hand over, and conveniently, was locked-in to run alongside the test boat for the photography.

This was particularly interesting for the writer because we have a great deal of respect for the work of the Marine Rescue and Coast Guard people around Australia and always like to study how they've set the boats up, the equipment they use, the tow post they've installed and so on. All of which is the result of many years of often very dangerous work in appalling conditions - so they learn very quickly what works and what doesn't. Once again, we were seriously impressed with the fit-out and design features of the Marine Rescue Boat from Hervey Bay.

## Design

The Noosacat 3000 measures 8.70m overall including outboards, and 8.60m when measured including the bowsprit and duckboard. The actual moulded length of the hull is 8.0m. The maximum beam is a useful 2.50m which means it's trailerable in all states of Australia without flags and flashing lights, and has a hull draft of 0.40m at rest.

We ran the tape measure across the hull and cockpit and came up with some interesting figures.

The net width between the coamings in the cockpit is 2.090m, and there's a terrific 3.120m between the back of the seat boxes

and the transom moulding ie, the true cockpit area is 3.12 x 2.09 but from that you have to take out the (very useful) centre fishbox which measures 1.230m fore and aft and 530mm across the boat. However, as you can see in the pictures, this is an absolutely ideal work table with a very big draining fishbox underneath so it lends itself to any number of combinations.

Our first thought was that you'd use the lower unit (1.23m long) as the kill box, and the upper unit as a lure or tool centre, with a hinged teflon cutting board on top . . then we'd convert one of the two boxes under the helmsmen and passenger chairs into a live bait tank on one side and an ice chest (or eutectic freezer) on the other. There's certainly plenty of room for such development.

Freeboard internally down the lowest point is a wonderful 765mm at the transom, which rises up to 830mm next to the seat boxes. Aussie blokes will love it, because it's the sort of gut height (we!) need when the rig is working in swells down on the South Coast, or in choppy conditions up at the 'Reef, or . . .

The seat boxes for the helmsman and passenger chairs are well fitted too, measuring just over a metre in length, 630mm high and 480 wide.

The cabin is probably the weak link in the whole thing because the bunks on either side are only 1670mm long which is annoyingly short for someone of the writer's size - a fairly normal 6 foot height.

However, with the optional infill panel between the berths, you can easily sleep

## Noosacat 3000 Cuddy



Attention to detail is comprehensive - and it is all done in the best traditions of Aussie GRP fishing craft. The new mouldings are of an extremely high standard, and show this factory's vast experience in the smaller, but vital details (such as the throttle box, radio locker mouldings (above, centre) footrests, etc). This will be a very easy rig to clean and maintain in pristine order.

across the boat. In that case, there is stacks of room, because the NC 3000 is nearly 2.4m wide.

That said, we have to acknowledge here that the Noosacat team did this in the NC3000 Cuddy deliberately, because most people want all the space in the cockpit they can get - and not 'lost' in the cabin which is so rarely used.



Alternatively, owners looking for a softer, more family or cruising oriented NC 3000, should consider the Long Cabin version (above). This is available with a completely different toilet and berth arrangement, a galley - even a dinette if required.

The test configuration is actually that of a hardtop cuddy cabin cruiser. We must observe the hardtop is a terrific feature of the craft, wrapping around with side opening windows and toughened glass in solid frames facing forward. We have to

remember this is a boat that's actually designed to go through breaking surf if necessary, so everything is super strong and over built.

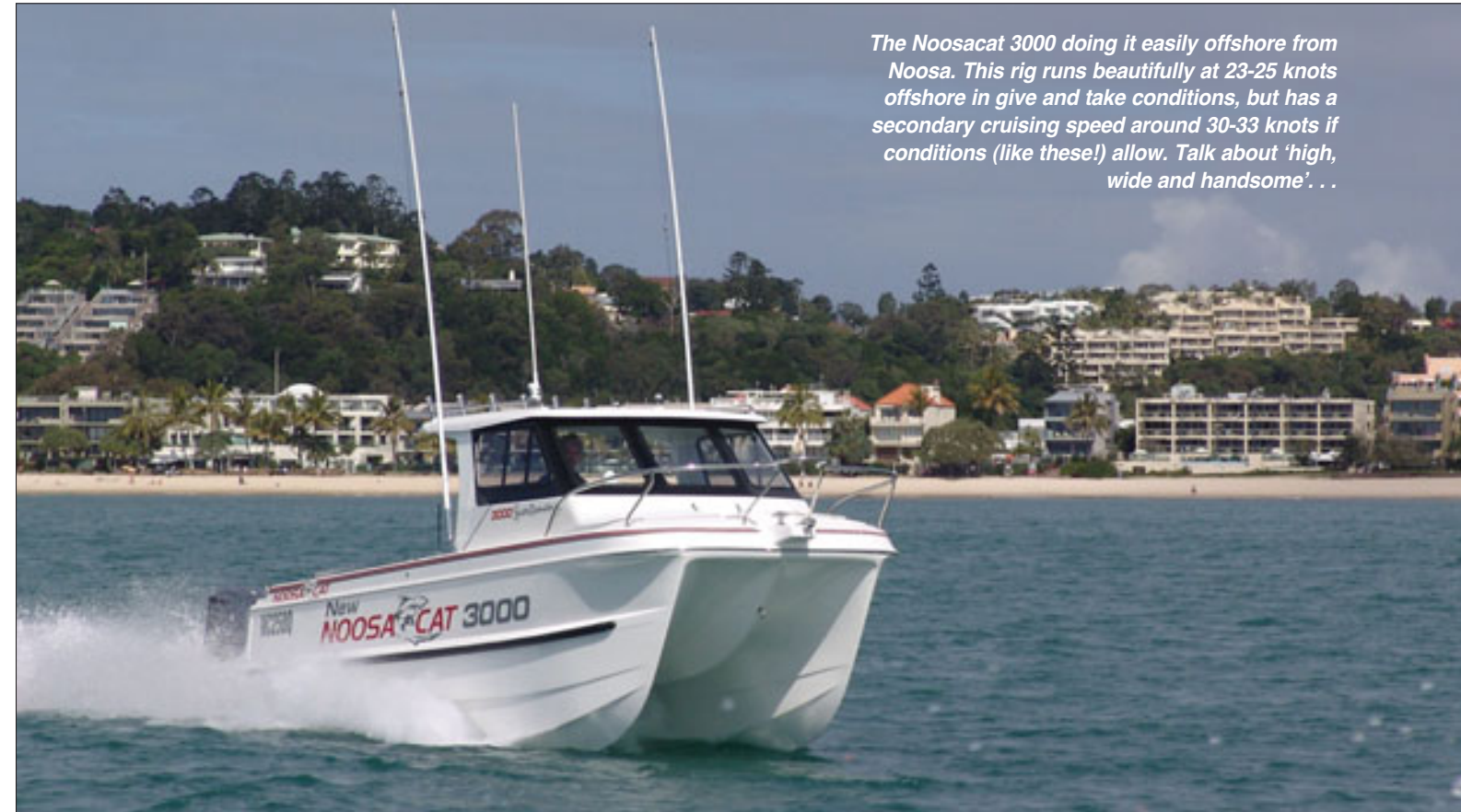
### Handling & Ride

The handling of this cat is out of the box, and conventional in the catamaran world where its symmetrical hulls do end up leaning outwards as distinct from the asymmetrical hulls, which tend to bank inboard.

This is not the time or place to debate the issue, but it would seem to the writer that history has now shown us that the symmetrical hulls are the most popular with most cat enthusiasts.

In some ways the argument is a little specious and reminds the writer of the perennial debate the automotive industry has over independent rear suspension compared to a fixed rear axle, or a front mounted rear wheel drive car versus a rear mounted engine.

No matter what we design and build in the world today, you can bet your sweet life somebody will have another theory, another commitment, another belief that challenges the original, and just as its pointless to



The Noosacat 3000 doing it easily offshore from Noosa. This rig runs beautifully at 23-25 knots offshore in give and take conditions, but has a secondary cruising speed around 30-33 knots if conditions (like these!) allow. Talk about 'high, wide and handsome' . . .



argue for long about whether a rear engine Porsche handles better than a centre engine mounted Ferrari, or a front engine mounted Aston Martin, we have the same sort of situation here.

Whether an asymmetric hull is better than a symmetrical hull is actually up to the individual to consider, trial and form his or her own conclusions. And you can bet London to the proverbial, that if you put 10 fishos into two similar sized and powered cats, one asymmetrical and the other symmetrical, you'd end up with 10 different opinions.

From the writer's viewpoint, I would have either - the issue is not one that I have any real concerns about. To the writer it's like buying a performance car - it's just one of the elements that you take onboard when you trying to decide which one to buy.

Here the writer would be more influenced by a history that goes back decades of incredibly tried and tested performance under the most extraordinary and dangerous conditions one can find at sea, and the reason that the Coast Guard and Sea Rescue people keep backing up for more is patently obvious.

These boats do the job.

In terms of handling and ride, the writer has had several of these craft, and still ranks the original 23' cat with the twin 150 Yamaha V-6's (2-strokes) as one of the

finest craft I've ever owned.

This boat is of the same genre - although it is about 4 generations away from what was built in those days, with a vastly changed standard of finish and fit-out.

The fundamentals of handling and performance remain (thankfully) reasonably constant.

Hennig has always committed to the principle of honouring the original SharkCat's legendary handling and ride in appalling conditions, although he has, bit by bit, almost chine by chine, improved the breed over the years. Not so that anybody would shake their head and say "that's a bit weird", because in most cases the changes are almost indiscernible.

In this case, for instance, he took one of the best and longest established cats in the range that used to have a couple of very hard-to-build aluminium pods hanging off the back of it, and then arranged for a brand new hull plug (and subsequently, the moulds) to be generated in 2011 incorporating the original hull characteristics and design, but with the superb new transom arrangement which is now all one integrated unit.

So not only has the original hull been lengthened, he's also increased the chine flats a tad, narrowed the tunnel a smidgen, to allow for the bigger, heavier engines he expected the owners to use.

So once again it's the Volkswagen theory of design management - little bits at a time without ever risking the fundamental integrity of what is one of the finest hulls of its type produced anywhere in the world today.

**Time Out #1:** Okay, so that's all bleeding obvious - "Webster's at it again with his usual rave about Noosacats" . . . I recognise this reaction is inevitable these days, when 99% of the tests published by everybody in the magazines, internet blogs and opinion pieces, conclude that EVERY boat is the softest riding, fastest, best built, smoothest, most economical boat that cuts through the water like the good old hot knife trick . . . I'm aware many readers will be drawn to that conclusion in respect of the flattering comments I've made about the NC 3000 in this report.

There's only one small problem with that situation, and it's this: Folks, this IS the brand that started all those cliches, and it's my happy lot about once a year, to be reminded just how good these Noosacats have become.

They are literally in a class of their own matched only by their peers from the likes of Leisurecat, Kevlcat, Dominator (etc), other boats that are in this cat league around 8.0m-9.0m, all of which display

## Noosacat 3000 Cuddy

characteristics that you simply can't replicate in a monohull.

Now without being able to stage a Rally comparing all the cats head to head (I wish!) the writer is, I think, entitled to draw some conclusions about this craft when it is compared to other craft in the main stream.

That is, if you're going to spend \$150,000-\$200,000 on a high performance power boat, what else can you buy that compares to the Noosacat 3000? And how does it compare in terms of performance, ride, handling and so on?

And that's where the argument or issue becomes crystallised, because in the writer's opinion, there isn't a mono hulled boat like this made in Australia (*or anywhere else, for that matter*) that can stand in the shade with the Noosacat 3000, so we are entitled to talk about its ride softness, its impeccable handling and extremely good manners in seriously rough weather.

**Time Out #2:** *In making these comments, can I stress that they assume that the rough sea capability is matched by the rough sea skill of the skipper. These boats are inanimate fibreglass and metal objects that do absolutely nothing except sit in the water and consume money until such time as somebody stands behind the helm and puts the throttle forward. Then, if they're taken offshore into gale conditions, there's almost no way you can break them in a physical sense, but by c/rikey, with the wrong skipper at the helm in certain conditions, cats will fall over just the same as anything else; they can get the crew into very scary situations if the skipper doesn't know what he is doing or hasn't the necessary training to handle ANY sort of boats in rough seas, let alone gale conditions, offshore.*

The point is, and it's the point the writer has made repeatedly – it would be no different to putting the writer in the new Ferrari 485 Italia and saying "Go forth and hot lap Bathurst".

My lap time would be embarrassingly slow – so much so that any of the pro drivers could probably lap me in the Italia in a 1955 Morris Oxford.

The point is this: It's not about the machinery – it's still all about the skill, the experience, of the man standing behind the helm. And this is my central point – with that right person, with the right experience behind the helm, a boat like the Noosacat



**Above:** The new tooling in and around the transom and outboard wells is beautifully done - note the "tunnel" for the steering tie bar, the walk-thru transom door and fold-down ladder.

3000 will handle a full gale and come back safely.

Having said that, readers might now be tempted to think you have to be especially talented or skilled to drive a Noosacat 3000 - but again, at the risk of some monotony, to use the Ferrari analogy: whilst I may not be able to hot lap around Bathurst, I'm pretty certain the writer could drive that awesome red beast down to the shops, or up to the mountains without hurting myself, the car or anyone else.

What I'm referring to this time, is having the ability to **extract the best** from the craft and draw it out to its full potential – that will take some serious practice, and could take a year or two of experience at sea in a wide variety of conditions.

The Noosacat 3000 is about as safe as it gets. It's extremely predictable, and I would have absolutely no hesitation in giving my 10 year old grandson the helm for hours without a worry in the world – as we did with my son Jeff in the 1970's.

### Compared To Other Cats

Lined up against cats such as the Kevlacat 3000, the Leisurecat 8000/9000s,

the new Markham 8100, the Noosacat 3000 handles the competition easily, as none of the other cats are markedly better. Using our standard 14 element scoring system covering

Design / Styling  
General Handling  
"Downhill" Handling  
Ride Softness  
Dryness  
Helm Comfort & Ergonomics  
Fishability  
Stability At Rest  
Overall Seaworthiness  
Inherent Safety  
Standard Build Finish  
Standard Build Fit-out  
Electrical Fit-Out & Planning  
Trailer Aptitude  
Value For Money/Application

Where each element is scored out of ten points for a total out of 150, this new Noosacat 3000 can certainly claim the 'Top Cat' mantle. Given it has only just been developed and launched, this is exactly how it should be.

### Performance

The 225 Yamahas provided exhilarating performance and enough brute acceleration to knock a person clean off their feet if the electronic throttle(s) are opened too quickly.

The big 19" props have enormous bite, and the low down torque of these two 4.2L engines is truly exciting.

It is a Bar boat *par excellence*, and the sort of boat you go out into choppy or rough waters for the sheer bloody hell of it. Boy, it's good, and it is such fun to drive that you're drawn into a higher speed envelope than is probably sensible – especially for your passengers.

But it is an adrenaline machine, and if you tweak it to get the big Yammies howling up around 5,000rpm, and just twiddle the individual leg trim angles to get it running absolutely perfectly horizontal, it has to be one of the most exciting "fishing" boats ever built.

Mind you, the NC3000 is positively civilised in terms of throttling it back and keeping the peace – and for that reason I'm more than comfortable suggesting that 2 x 150hp outboards would be easily enough for 90% of the market. Only the desperates like the writer, who don't get out often enough to do this, will really find it necessary to go down the road with outboards up to 225hp.

### Fit-Out & Finish

This is, by Riviera or Maritimo standards, a very plain boat. It is largely flow coat finished and although the fittings themselves are very good quality and well built into the boat, the Noosacat retains the "hose-out" capability preferred by Australian fishos.

From the writer's perspective it is perfectly okay, because like most fishos, the writer is not really interested in carpet or tricky finishes in a boat like this. To me, it's all about going out to the canyons, or along the 'Shelf sportsfishing or drop lining in the very deep water that we have to go to these days.

I can see electric winches along the gunwales, and some very big sea bass coming over the side; perhaps SBT's from the southern parts of Oz, let alone mackerel and billies from our northern waters.

The cuddy model is not a boat you'd buy for long range cruising with your lady or family 'coz the hardtop cuddy is basically all about fishing, fishing and of course, fishing.

This is just about the perfect boat for blokes who are downsizing from Berties, Rivs, Randalls, Mariners, etc, after a lifetime of bluewater fishing; blokes who still want to get out there, but without the hassles of crew and the huge maintenance costs of serious game boats and their attendant diesels, gearboxes, shafts, etc.

I can see this boat moored at the waterfront homes now scattered all around Australia, just a mile or two from the



entrance and 10-15 miles from some seriously good offshore fishing grounds. Locations where the owner often has a Bar to cross to get out, and very often, needs a soft riding rig to look after an increasingly bad back, hips, knees or whatever. The fact is, fishos are getting older and need the ride softness that boats like this can provide driven sensibly.

And let me make this point clearly to you – yes, it's capable of great speed and daring-do out in the blue stuff, but the really important aspect of this boat is that it has the most beautiful bluewater cruising speed of around 23-25 knots, at which point the Yamahas are just loafing along, the ride is quiet, soft and if the skipper lets it walk through the waterway itself, it is an absolute joy to experience.

It is seriously a boat the writer would look at running the 23-25 miles off the Gold Coast to the 'Shelf. Working up or down the Shelf for 3 or 4 hours, undertaking a spot of deep water canyon fishing if the surface pelagics are quiet, before coming back home in an hour or so – yes, let me say that again: *coming back the 23-25 nautical miles in an hour or so; back into the canal well before dark.*

I can't think of a better boat for the job than the Noosacat 3000.

### Trailer

For the record, with the 2.5m beam the Noosacat 3000 is legally trailered behind a big F250 or Chev Suburban type vehicle, and Wayne makes a beautiful trailer (available in stainless steel even!) for the rig so it fits it like a glove (see pics).

For readers on farms, sugar cane properties etc., who are within tractor towing range of the ramp, and prefer to keep the rig at home, be aware this is really easy to tow legally without flags, flashing lights etc, but it is a big rig and needs a big tow vehicle or tractor to pull it.

Wayne has confirmed the typical BMT weight of the rig is in the 3.25 - 4.00 tonne range, depending on gear fitted.

### Cost

As tested the rig here cost \$150-\$155K with the c/rotating 225 Yamahas, LAN instruments, etc., including GST. However, the price can be considerably less, depending on the brand of outboards selected, the horsepower, the day's rate on the \$AUD, and all those other variables designed to give boat builders and their clients many sleepless nights!

The trailer is available for another \$20,460 for the standard galvanised steel tri-axle model or with the upgrade to the LDX stainless steel frame, another \$3,740 – that's for a trailer that will probably out-live us all, I suspect.

### Conclusion

There are no prizes for working out that yours truly would put his hand up for one of these tomorrow morning except for a painfully obvious reason! But financial considerations aside, this is truly an exceptionally good boat for the purposes we've described in this report, and continues a magnificent tradition the Hennigs have honoured so well over the last 20 years.

Noosacats like this are not for everybody. Indeed, they apply to a relatively small number of very lucky people who have the 'reddies' to stump up the purchase price, the waterfront facility or farm sheds to house it, and the location around Australia where it can be used to maximum affect.

Cats by their very nature are bigger, heavier, need more power than most monos, but provide an extraordinary level of ride comfort and safety, let alone bad weather performance that puts them in another league compared to monohulls. This is a very good craft with few peers in its class and now that it's got its brand new hull, it carries its Noosacat label with even greater distinction than ever before.

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