

# The 2015 Noosa Cat 2400 Open Cab

Presenting an unusual report involving several Noosa Cat 2400s Open Cabs in different situations, including an immaculate private, moored (on an air-berth) NC 2400 Open Cab, and a just launched, brand spanking new one on sea trials off Noosa.

Resident catophile (PW) takes a deep breath, and tries hard to remain dispassionate and objective, but fails dismally on both counts. Again.

“Testing” a Noosa Cat of any description is always

- (a) challenging and
- (b) very exciting.

Most of them are fitted with powerful outboard engines to provide a high level of performance, and combined with the dynamics of a Noosa Cat, are the equal or better than almost any other rough water craft of this size in the world. That’s not just hyperbole, it’s just a plain fact.

So the process of testing such craft even for a professional boating journalist, is always something we approach with some circumspection, not to say nervousness.

This applies particularly to your correspondent, because the way history has panned out, I’ve had the opportunity of owning and operating a number of Noosa Cats (or their forebears, the Sharkcats) as well as a number of other competitive cats.

Over a 40 year period, the writer has tested virtually all of the production cats made in Australia.

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**B**ecause of the continuity of my career in this exacting field, the writer has ended up with more notches on his cat belt than anybody else, which is sort of pleasing, but brings with it a responsibility that is sometimes a bit overwhelming.

You see, the problem is that most boat owners have no idea how good a properly set up cat can be, or the level of difference that exists between monohulls and catamarans. As a result, when they read my reports extolling the virtues of another cat, and they've been reading such tests for many years, they naturally assume that my boating world stops and starts with cats. Only the older, long term readers recognise that in fact, the half dozen boats that have most influenced my work and experience in recent years, have all been monos.

That's really my problem. As a marine journalist I've been lucky enough to drive, test, fish, and cruise in hundreds of different boats – mostly monos, but with a lot of cats, and even some tris, too. So I have the advantage of being able to compare, test and measure the difference between all the different sorts of boats. And yes, over the years, I have written that Cats have significant advantages over their mono cousins in certain, very specific situations.

Where it gets a bit more complicated, is that many

***Above:** Ron's 2400 Open Cab is nigh-on perfect as a single hander from the skipper's own jetty - especially for deep sea table fishing. But he mostly fishes with Trevor his mate (and neighbour) and they work Moreton Bay wide very successfully.*

***Facing Page:** Ron Cummins has had a lifetime of experience in a wide variety of craft, but at this point, he's very happy with his Noosa Cat. "It's fast, easily handled on my own if needs be, safe as a bank, and soft riding coming back across the Bay. And believe me, it can get pretty hard going in the late summer months when the storms roll across the bay."*

readers have been reading and dissecting my work for decades, and see me as being very one-eyed about two hulled boats, pointing to all the favourable tests I've written over 30+ years about Powercats, Ocean Trek, Sharkcats, Markham Whalers and Dominators, Allycats, Kevlacats, Leisure Cats, Marlin Broadbills, Sailfish, and at the top of the list, easily the most consistently reported over the last 20 year period, the Noosa Cats.

But the times 'they are a changing' like never before, and the parameters we applied to boat tests in the 1970s changed as we went through the 1980s, then the 1990s, and so on. Things that we were enthusiastic about in the 1990s may no longer apply, so the perspective we take into today's test programs



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need to be re-assessed to ensure they remain relevant to the needs of current fisherman and boatowners.

To share with you the historical perspective, it's a bit like looking back on the development of Holden in Australia. These days, we would now consider models such as the EJ Holden, the HR, even the more modern 15 year old VN models, are passé by today's exceptional car building standards. But at the time of their release, we thought they were the bee's knees. I can very clearly remember the release of the EH 149's – especially the "big" motor option, in the 179 variant. And then along came the first Monaro with the 273 cube V-8. I worked my butt off to get one of those vehicles back then, because it was the ultimate expression of performance motoring in Australia, *at the time*.

Nowadays, most 'shopping baskets' and any reasonable SUV would leave the old Monaro for dead in terms of braking, handling, comfort, and performance, but don't worry, at THAT time, the 273 V-8 Monaro was on the cutting edge of performance motoring . . .

And so it is with boats to a large degree, and just as there's been some classic cars, there have also been some classic boats. Boats that have withstood the

**Above:** When it takes an hour or two to get out to the fishing grounds (as is fairly common, these days) it is important that crew comfort is taken into account. The NC 2400 has an ideal, space efficient (and comfortable) set-up for 3 or 4 people, with good seating, excellent all-weather (and sun) protection, and space to get up and 'stretch a leg.'

**Top Right:** Crew vision, as the NC 2400 sweeps across Moreton Bay heading east 'nor east, cruising around 24-25 knots in calm conditions on a perfect day. Doesn't get much better than this - note the 'see-thru' live bait tank on the transom, portside, next to the walk-thru transom door. It is ideal to bring seriously big fish aboard, or for the family to go swimming and/or diving.

test of time and are arguably as good today as when they were first designed and launched.

Into that family of classics comes the undisputed classic of the power cat world – the original 23' Sharkcat. Not only was this an exceptional rough water handling boat, with massive stability, an amazingly soft ride and a self draining deck that could (literally) fish 9 blokes on one side - as the ads for these remarkable craft would point out.

But put it into the context of the 1970s when it was first developed, it's easy to see why it achieved such

legendary status so quickly. There was nothing remotely near it, produced anywhere in the world, as good as the Sharkcat 23 for particularly ballsy applications such as busting out through a surf break, or an open bar, or the new rock wall-lined barred entrances that were being built in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Terrifying sometimes in a monohull (thinking the Tweed River, Port Macquarie, Narooma, etc) these bars took a terrible toll on the 1970s and 1980s mono fishing boats that attempted to cross them when the owner should have stayed in bed, but they were just second nature to the Sharkcat 23 and its smaller cousin, the old Sharkcat 560.

And here's the rub, the fundamental design principles of the original seventies Sharkcat 23 haven't been much improved to this day, and still stand head and shoulders above even the most competitive mono craft in this size range.

So when the Noosa Cat factory CEO Wayne Hennig confirmed that the new, upgraded Noosa Cat 2400, the 2015 derivative of the original 1970's model was being retooled again (for probably the fourth or fifth time) we were particularly interested.

Hennig has done a magnificent job protecting and actually embellishing the quality of the Noosa Cat brand (*nee Sharkcat franchise*) and has continually tweaked and tuned the tooling to bring it up to spec

with today's fibreglass laminates, technology (especially for today's 4-stroke outboard motors), propellers, and provision for the suite of electronics that blue water boat owners now demand as par for the course.

So we followed the new 2400 tooling with a great deal of interest, especially as it became apparent that Hennig was committed to producing a completely new, foam-cored hard top which would finally overcome the perennial cost of servicing, if not replacing canopies, bows, straps etc, in the soft top configurations.

Mind you, it's important to realise that the soft top option is still available. In fact, it's the base model of the new 2400 series and it is very popular with the Noosa Cat *afficionados* in the far north, who just *lurve* their soft top cats, because of the tropical heat and humidity, and the need for flow-through ventilation *au naturel*. For them, the 'runabout' (as it is known) is a no-brainer.

This model is still available, and always will be. The Stage Two version of this model is arguably even more popular with even wider, national appeal – where you have the rigid hardtop, on stainless steel posts, surrounded by drop-down curtains, or clears with zip-outs.

That said, the further south you go from Brisbane, *(Continued on page 52 . . .)*

*Tracey Hennig's excellent shot of the very latest Noosa Cat 2400 (Oct, 2015) coming in through the barred entrance to the Noosa River on Australia's Sunshine Coast, north of Brisbane, Qld. No production mono of this length can match the Noosa Cat's performance and handling in conditions like these, with such ease and safety.*





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the more the demand for the enclosed 'wheelhouse' increases, as the temperature cools and the conditions often worsen.

One of the interesting furphies about rough water in Australia is that our northern waters contain most of the roughest bits of water. Well, obviously they do in cyclone season, but for day to day, all year round analysis, the most seriously rough water along the Australia coastline is usually found in the Tasman Sea between Australia and NZ, and arguably all the way down to Tasmania, around the Bass Strait and into the Antarctic-exposed southern waters.

When you go down further south from Sydney, the need for more protection, wet weather performance and comfort becomes of much greater consequence than it is in the north, where in many states (nor-west Australia, for instance) it either never rains for months, or if it does, it's a welcome relief.

That isn't the case in Bass Strait, and being able to stand at the helm of a 7.0m boat fully covered by a proper wheelhouse in places like Hobart or Portland, is a godsend.

Having kept in close contact with the factory, we learned recently that several of the new 2400s were becoming available for testing in southern Qld, including one particularly well fitted model for recreational use (remember, most of these craft are fitted out for SAR and Police-type patrol work) so we became very interested in following through this recreational 2400 Open Cab – and thanks to Ron

**Above:** The twin Yamaha 150s are a perfect match for the NC 2400, providing unbridled grunt for stop-start bar work, but surprisingly economical cruising economy at the sweet spot around 4,200 r/min.

**Top Right:** Off plane stance - critical for SAR operations (and trolling, for that matter) is excellent, with the NC 2400 holding a near perfect nose-up attitude at displacement-type speeds, with sufficiently 'full' shoulders to strongly resist the bows burying when travelling slowly in deep chop conditions. This often occurs when the skipper decides to back right off and take a wave 'on the chin' in a barred, steep-to wave situation.

Cummins, the Redcliffe, Qld owner of this month's test NC 2400 who gamely lent us his 2400 Open Cab for this report.

Ron Cummins is a retired cabinet maker with a penchant for fishing out of Moreton Bay. He has a beautiful canal waterfront home in Scarborough, a suburb on the north side of Brisbane. A typical canal estate, Ron's home is just minutes down the canal, until it steps out into North Moreton Bay, for the run across to the islands on the other side of the Bay.

I was delighted – and grateful – we could work with Ron on this report, because his situation epitomises exactly what the Noosa Cat 2400 was designed to do. For a growing number of people like Ron who have achieved some degree of comfort in their retirement, and the wherewithal to invest in a dedicated fishing craft, it is hard to imagine a more suitable craft for this purpose.

### Why Buy A Noosa Cat 2400?

It's a good question and one Ron and I discussed at some length during the day.

When cats were originally invented by Bruce Harris back in 1973, outboard motors were 2-stroke, and frankly, quite unreliable. Anybody who was going to sea, needed two engines to make damn sure they came back again, and this especially applied to line and trap fishermen, abalone divers and of course, the Search & Rescue organisations.

But that was a long time ago, and now we have 4-stroke engines that epitomise reliability, marine efficiency and extraordinary power:weight ratios that are just about the definitive engine for a high performance cat. And mark my words – all of these craft with engines such as this boat's twin 150hp Yamaha 4-strokes – are genuinely high performance craft and invariably achieve 40 knots (plus) in lightship trim, and still log 35-37 knots ready to go out to the Swains, Rotto, Montague (etc) with a crew of 2-4 people, food and drinks for the day, 100kg of ice and bait, plus almost half a tonne of fuel.

Nevertheless, there is an argument, and it's in this very magazine, where we can see a beautifully built plate aluminium Kiwi monohull, (the White Pointer 730) with its single engine and 100% fishing aptitude. Given this is also an outstanding craft, why would anybody need to step up to a twin engine Noosa Cat of the calibre that we have here in Ron's 2400 with its 2 x 150 Yammies?

Well, the blunt truth of the matter is that 98% of the boating public have already decided they *don't* need a twin engine cat, but there's a whole bunch of us (and the writer includes himself in this) whose passion is

to go out into the wild blue yonder, a long way offshore, and well and truly out of sight of land and contact.

The writer has always had this inherent passion for twin engines for wide offshore fishing, which I guess stems from some horror moments in my early boating life in the 1960s and 1970s when the single engine wouldn't start, and we had to cope with that dreadful feeling of looking back westwards, and not being able to see Australia. (*Gulp!*) Then it would sink in - *how the hell were we going to get back to base?*

Fishos like the writer in those days, only had to do this half a dozen times to sear your soul into the recognition that if you needed peace of mind wide offshore, it's best to have two of everything. Especially if you are genuinely fishing 20-30 miles offshore along the Continental Shelf, up and down the east coast of Australia. Never mind being out beyond the outer Barrier Reef on the run to the Swains (80+ nm) from Gladstone, or through to the Ribbons in Queensland from Cooktown, along the GBR. Or out to the Rowley Shoals in WA . . . Australia is big water country, and many of the top fishing grounds are miles offshore.

In any of these situations where you're a bloody long way from home and mother, I can't really have peace of mind unless we've got two engines running through completely separate electrical systems (batteries, VSRs, etc), drawing from separate fuel tanks – everything, with what the professional ship's engineers call built-in redundancy.

These guys are trained to *plan* for f . . k ups; they *know* they will inevitably happen. So when the

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proverbial hits the fan, they make sure you have genuine alternatives to get you back home.

Beyond that, there are other issues too.

It's not the place or time to compare it specifically with the White Pointer monohull platey featured elsewhere in this magazine (*which is, I hasten to add, available with twin outboard 'systems' too*) but even our Kiwi colleagues would agree that the best monohull outboard powered platey is unlikely to have the stability approaching that found in a Noosa Cat 2400 of approximately the same length.

Stability becomes crucial when you're working in very heavy seas, especially if they're coming from  $\frac{3}{4}$  behind, and the skipper is having to work "downhill". At this point in time, having a boat that resists laying over, or dropping down on its side when the skipper goes over and down a wave, is a significant safety benefit.

True, cats are certainly not infallible, either. I am totally aware of that, having used them in truly appalling conditions; seas where the skipper had to totally focus every step of the way, and literally 'feel' his way through the conditions. They can fall over too,

**Yeah, well, your new Hyundai 130 probably wouldn't haul it too well, but as shown here, it is well under the 3.5 tonne cut-off, so any of the larger 4WDs will easily handle it. The tandem axle set-up is all that's needed, too, for local work, but if an owner was contemplating fishing in different locations, or regular long-haul work, the tri-axle trailer would be recommended - mainly to deal with Australia's many crappy, narrow highways trailerboat owners still have to deal with (like the Bruce Highway in QLD, from Gympie north) as they get further away from the big cities.**

if they're put in the wrong place in the wrong hands, especially if the skipper is going too fast for the conditions.

The upshot is that I'm more aware than most of a cat's limitations and weaknesses, but nevertheless, when the chips are down, you wouldn't get me in any else.

In Ron Cummins' situation, going across Moreton Bay regularly to fish off the islands, means for two or three months, he's often got to come back across the 'Bay, against a really bitchy westerly right on the nose (creating a very bumpy ride in any monohull) More commonly, throughout the year Moreton Bay is exposed to strong southerly winds and the occasional gale. It's big, wide, open water, and anybody who wants to do the trip regularly across the Bay, and is a financial position to afford the best, is advised to think cats first and foremost.

### Structure & Fittings

Ron's boat was beautifully set-up and had enormous appeal for sportfishermen of all persuasions. At the core of the boat is the cockpit, and the way Ron has done it reflects his experience in reef and bottom fishing as well as pelagics across the top. He admits he doesn't do as much sportfishing these days, because he really does like getting into the reefies that can be found off Moreton Bay – with a wide variety of beautifully coloured fish available for the table if you know what you are doing – and Ron, clearly, is in that league.

Of particular interest was the set-up with the centre fish box and bait table, cleverly positioned rod holders around a stainless steel rack across the transom, and one of the best live tanks Noosa Cat has yet built – complete with a clear front that was so good I was worried for Ron that his fish could get sunburnt – *and I'm not kidding!*

Instead of having a clear window in a live bait tank,

it's better to have a degree of tinting like your car, because (quite seriously), if a boat stays on a particular course in the sun for an hour or two, the fish actually can get sunburnt, and unless the water is constantly re-cycling, it gets too hot. That said, it's still a terrific idea and one of the most practical ways of checking if the live baits are still nice and frisky, because you've only got to glance at the tank from anywhere in the cockpit and see the state of play.

Ron's boat really didn't want for anything at all.

It is very near and dear to the writer because I've often told my family that if I was able to win the lottery and buy a boat of this calibre, this is the one I'd have at the bottom of the garden, should we be so lucky to work our way back to that environment before it's too late! *I wish . . .*

It was a delight to go out with Ron and Trevor, two blokes who have obviously done an awful lot of fishing together, who know the 'Bay like the back of their hand and had a Furuno screen absolutely full of marks in some of the well-known spots, but with a few I couldn't help but notice were in what I wouldn't have thought were fish producing spots. But judging by the tracks around these marks, these blokes have been fishing there quite often, and I'm sure it wasn't for their health!

### Performance

For the record, Ron's rig with complete equipment on board, safety gear, anchors, warps etc, literally in ready to fish and cruise condition, produced the following figures.

The sweet spot (4,100 - 4,200 r/min) was cruising at 45.2kph (24.6kn) across the Bay – *and it doesn't get much better than that, does it?*

Data from Yamaha suggest that at this cruising speed both engines will be burning around 52-53 L/ph and given the fuel tanks in total have a capacity of approx 450 litres (2 x 225L) this translates to a

working range at cruising speeds of roughly 375km or 210 nautical miles. Obviously at trolling speeds on one engine where the boat is only using 5-7 L/ph, that range is enormously increased, providing capacity that can sometimes be needed if you do cop

R/min	KM	Knots
1000.....	6.6 .....	3.6
1500.....	11.2 .....	6.1
2000.....	13.6.....	7.3
2500.....	17.0 .....	9.2
3000.....	27.8 .....	15.0
3500.....	36.8.....	19.9
4000.....	44.7.....	24.1
4500.....	51.6.....	27.8
5000.....	58.8.....	31.7
5600.....	68.2.....	36.9

a load of bad fuel, and/or break down, or drop a prop miles from anywhere.

### Conclusion

The base cost of the 2400 Cuddy, (or 'runabout') with 115 Yamahas, is \$103,160 + GST = \$113,476.

To upgrade to the Open Cab featured here, is \$10,860 (incl GST) for a total of \$124,336.

The upgrade to 150 Yamahas is \$7446 (incl GST) in both cases.

Add in the Noosa Cat tandem trailer (\$15,122 incl GST), we're looking at \$146,904 (incl GST, in October, 2015) plus electronics, and any of the options that can be fitted to create a dream sportfishing or family cruising boat situation.

Australians have every reason to be extremely proud of the cats we produce, and Noosa Cat is easily on top of the leader board as far as the production of cats in this country is concerned. Nobody else in the world has such a wide range of magnificent craft, with the most popular models being this Noosa Cat 2400, the Noosa Cat 3000 and the dynamic Noosa Cat 3500 followed by the long term favourites, the 4100 and 4400, all the way up into the 50' range where we're really getting into specialised twin hulled country, the like of which no-one else makes anywhere in the world.

It's a unique business with an amazingly good product that's now been developed over nigh on 20 years of tuning, modifying, adapting and changing, to the point where they now have an unparalleled standard of capability, finish and value for money. And the bottom line is their *raison d'être* – their ability to handle the roughest conditions boatowners are likely to ever encounter, and do it in remarkable safety, stability, comfort . . . and peace of mind.

ABM

