



With a new hull and transom design, the Stabicraft 2600 Supercab offers an even better ride than its predecessors and, as John Willis found out, there's plenty of power to go with it.

Smooth RIDER



WEATHER CONDITIONS

Wind: Rising to 35kts
Sea: Severe chop



Don't you just hate the phrase, "Does it get any better than this"? Of course it does.

Forever is a long time, but for now the Stabcraft 2600 Supercab has achieved a certain top-shelf status in state-of-the-art engineering and boatbuilding design.

At this stage, I think it's fair to say Stabcraft is the world leader in pontoon-style, plate-aluminium trailerboats, and if they keep improving at such a constant rate the sky really is the limit.

For those who think these boats are ugly, I couldn't disagree more. I reckon they look great. And as for anyone who wants to question the ride, well, I suggest you test the latest 2600 Supercab. You will be eating humble pie quicker than I can say "Stabcraft rocks".

SYSTEM UPGRADE

We put the Stabi 2570 Supercab to the test as one of five finalists in the alloy category of last year's Australia's Greatest Boats competition (*TrailerBoat* #288, November 2012). It blew us all away with its mix of grandeur and safety, almost begging us to drive out of Victoria's Port Phillip heads and just keep going.

Remarkably, the new 2600 is the recipient of a few improvements that see it stand over the 2570 in more than a couple of areas. The Kiwi designers went back to the drawing board to come up with the all-new Arrow pontoons, reducing the big square shoulders and refining the entry, making an already good ride much, much better.

As I commented on the 2570 after our AGB test last year, "Its boxy shoulders

will cause some bangs and crashes, but that's a fair compromise for its safety and buoyancy."

Well, drivers can now have their cake and eat it, too. The new 2600 is noticeably softer on the water and doesn't get that abrupt jolt into a head sea. In addition, the ride has also been smoothed out by the new Game Chaser transom design, through which the keel now extends all the way to the back of the engine pod. The resulting longer keel line means you have an even larger boat that spreads itself more evenly between the chop.

Incidentally, according to Stabcraft, one of the overriding considerations the new transom addresses is being able to back down on game fish without turning the boat into a swimming pool. While Port Phillip Bay is a little light on in the



Clockwise from below: The new hull and transom designs have smoothed the ride significantly; the helm continues the almost military theme for which Stabcraft's tough boats are renowned; you'll appreciate the cabin's excellent protection when Mother Nature bites.





marlin and tuna department, we did back it up hard into some serious slop (just for fun) and it works a treat. Just remember to trim up before you do.

Our test day saw us go toe to toe with 30-35kt winds blowing the tops off the nasty 1m slop and the big Stabicraft just ate it up. We were able to run almost full bore into a head sea in relative comfort, turn around when and where we felt like it, and then bore on downwind like a thoroughbred out of the stalls.

The added hull length has also provided increased stability to an extremely strong contender. The 2600 is made with 6mm plate underneath, 4mm pontoons and a 3mm superstructure. Combine that with

Clockwise from left: Two 150 Hondas see the 2600 streak to speeds of over 75kmh; sleek and purposeful — it's unmistakably Stabicraft; the superb workstation is a winner; a clear and uncluttered workspace.

TRAILERBOAT RATES THE STABICRAFT 2600 SUPERCAB	
1 Fun factor	10/10
2 Innovation	10/10
3 Design and layout	10/10
4 Quality of finish	10/10
5 Handling and ride	10/10
6 Stability at rest	10/10
7 Ergonomics	10/10
8 Standard equipment	10/10
9 Value for money	10/10
10 X-Factor	10/10
OVERALL	10/10

“We went toe to toe with 30-35kt winds blowing the tops off a nasty 1m slop and the big Stabicraft just ate it up”

an almost 2t dry hull weight and you have the feeling of a bulletproof boat. Make no mistake; this is a big, solid, heavily built package.

POWER TO BURN

The twin 150hp Honda V-Tec four-strokes on the back powered the 2600 along beautifully. The extended hull gives her plenty of punch out of the hole and the boat sits easily on the plane at a comfortable 13.5kts (25kmh) at 3000rpm. We travelled into the nasty head sea in the efficient torque range at 24.5kts (45.4kmh) at 4000rpm, and when we turned around for a comfortable surf downwind she sat beautifully at 31kts (57.4kmh) at a fuel efficient 4500rpm.

We did manage to open her right up in the slop to get up to 38kts (70.3kmh) at 5500rpm. However, Michael from Melbourne's MY Marine told me speeds of 40.5kts (75kmh) are achievable in better conditions with well-trimmed engines, and I wouldn't disagree with his assessment.

I really can't emphasise enough just how much softer the ride is, but the overall

handling also seems much better. The 2600 has a much sportier feel than its predecessor and the boys at MY Marine are about to fit one with a 300hp Yamaha which, combined with the big 22° deadrise hull, promises to blow us all away.

The Stabicraft 2600 has a shorter bow rail than its predecessor. I was quite partial to the big high rail, but have come to agree the heavy-gauge 50mm and 38mm rail on the 2600 is a thing of beauty and, along with all of the mooring and docking cleats and bollards, shows true commercial strength. The bow is completed with a Sarca anchor, bowsprit and Stress Free anchor winch.

IN THE TANK

On the inside, the layout and features are largely in line with previous models, with the exception of one major difference: there is a huge 300L underfloor kill tank that is probably big enough for a 100kg tuna, maybe more. It's seriously huge. There is still the big underfloor storage under the vee-berth and a pump-out toilet is available as an option.

Stabicraft dashboards have always been very clean and basic, with everything comfortably within sight and reach, and it is no different here. The little side console on which the dual binnacle controls are mounted has handy storage for your smaller items like keys or mobile phones.

Our test rig was fitted with the terrific Garmin GPS Map 5012 multi-function touchscreen, with plenty of dash space left over for more instruments. There are grab handles where you want and need them, as well as an overhead communications console.

The big Stabi is very easy to drive with terrific vision, and the two upholstered pedestal seats with flip-up bolsters are quite comfortable. There is an optional tackle locker with a padded lid behind the passenger.

One of the 2600's most obvious new features is the cabin's bi-fold doors. As we all know, doors can be a bit of a problem in trailerboats, whether attached by slide or hinge, and I must admit I was a bit concerned these bi-fold (two sets of hinges each side) units would rattle like hell. Wrong again. We never heard a thing all day, even in the tough conditions of the day. The real beauty of these doors, however, is the fact they open up a huge workspace to the cockpit, locking securely when you've finished.

In the cockpit, the hardtop roof extends nicely past the rear doors as a small awning. It has an eight-rod rocket





PERFORMANCE
 13.5kts (25kmh) @ 3000rpm
 24.5kts (45.4kmh) @ 4000rpm
 31kts (57.4kmh) @ 4500rpm
 35kts (34.8kmh) @ 5000rpm
 38kts (70.3kmh) @ 5500rpm



launcher on top, plus channels to stop water runoff. The workspace is sensational with high coamings (750mm at the lowest point) filled with side pockets.

The coaming decks are wide enough to allow you to sit on them but, perhaps more importantly, their width means the handrails are spaced far enough away from the rod holders to allow clearance for a large 37kg game reel.

There is non-skid rubber strip on all horizontal surfaces and the tubular rubber floor matting in the cockpit is a dealer-fitted option.


THE WRAP

I have said it before, but Stabicraft's well-conceived workstations are amongst the best in the industry, yet the updated version with its integrated central livebait well still managed to eclipse their previous efforts. It has all of the elements we need in any working or recreational

boat, all compactly assembled to the correct dimensions. Combine that with walkways and transom platforms either side, as well as a fin-friendly dive ladder and the layout will suit all requirements — fish, dive, recreational or commercial.

We even caught some nice squid for lunch during our test, which we kept alive in the aforementioned large bait tank. Our photographers had fun talking to them through the inspection window, now forever dubbed Fish TV.

Top all of this off with the power, reliability and performance of twin Honda 150hp outboards, hydraulic steering, and a terrific Transtyle custom alloy trailer and you have one tough mother of an offshore workhorse that runs like a thoroughbred.

At a package price of around \$180,000, the Stabicraft 2600 Supercab is a serious boat at a serious price, but she's worth every red cent. 

STABICRAFT 2600 SUPERCAB

HOW MUCH?

Price as tested: \$180,000
Options fitted: Twin Honda 150hp; stainless steel props; custom trailer; twin 250L fuel tanks; saltwater deckwash; twin battery and isolation switch; Lowrance VHF stereo; Fusion CD player; Garmin 5012 touch screen GPS / sounder; bi-fold doors; two pedestals seats; offshore safety equipment; tube matting; rear boarding ladder; tackle locker seat.
Priced from: \$149,990 (with 250hp Honda four-stroke)

GENERAL

Type: Pontoon style, deep-vee monohull
Material: Plate alloy hull, 6mm sides and 4mm superstructure
Length: 8.8m
Beam: 2.49m
Weight: 2900kg
Deadrise: 22°

CAPACITIES

People: 9
Rec. HP: 225
Max. HP: 300
Fuel: 420L
Water: N/A

ENGINE

Make/model: Two Honda 150hp V-Tec four-strokes
Type: Four-stroke, DOHC, 16-valve, inline four-cylinder with BLAST
Weight: 220kg (each)
Displacement: 2354cc
Gear ratio: 2.14:1
Propeller: 18in four-blade

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