

Hammer Down

Little Big Boat

1550 Fisher

By Dave Magner

I spent most of 2017 in search of a new boat. The process took a lot longer than I expected and it proved quite challenging to find exactly what I was after. I had a list of criteria that my new boat had to meet and it was quite difficult to find one which ticked all the boxes. After checking out a stack of second hand options, I finally bit the bullet and decided to invest in a brand new package. The boat I settled on is a relatively new release from Stabicraft, in the form of a 1550 Fisher from Northside Marine in Brisbane.

Why Stabicraft?

Having spent a few years living in the land of the long white cloud, I've always admired the Kiwi boat builders. Boating is a way of life for most New Zealanders and as they generally have to deal with quite challenging conditions, their marine industry has a well-deserved reputation for designing, tough, practical craft.

To me, nothing typifies the Kiwi attitude to boating more than Stabicraft, who are based way down the very bottom of the South Island at Invercargill. Stabicraft actually started out building commercial vessels to handle the sort of weather that can blow straight up from Antarctica and when you are regularly boating in these sorts of conditions, you start to understand why their boats are built with such high levels of safety in mind.

Now Stabicraft are certainly not

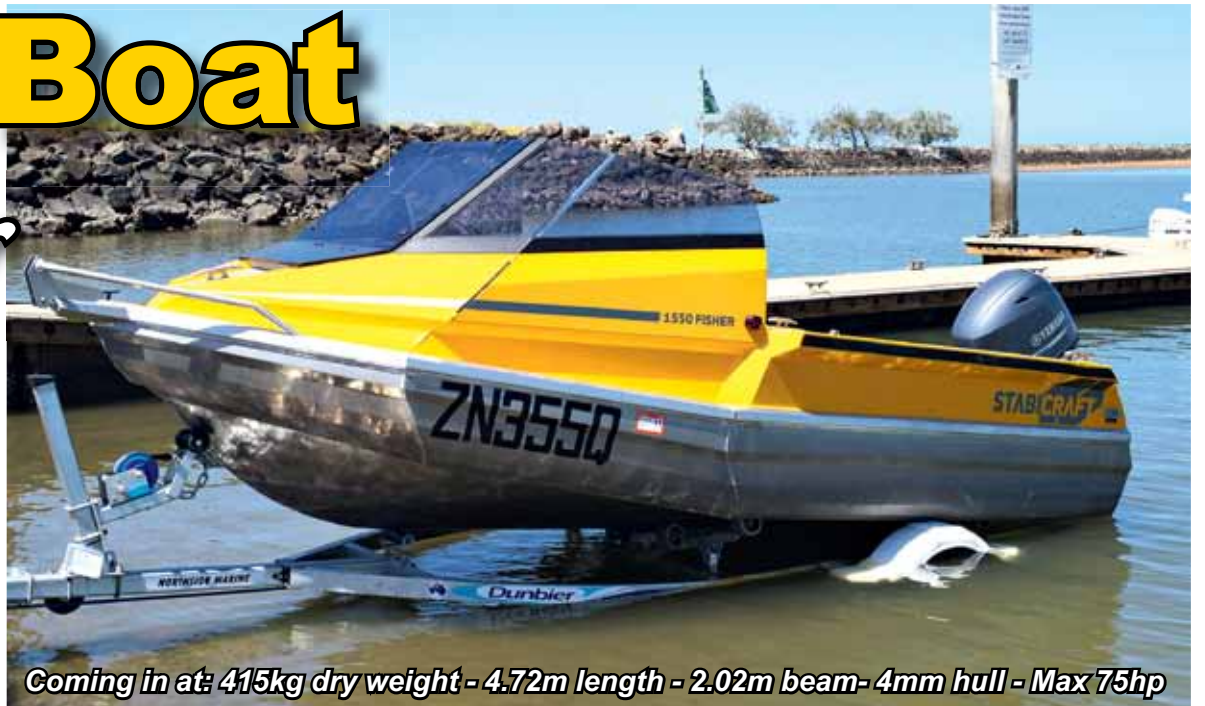
the prettiest looking boats going around but in terms of practicality and safety they are hard to beat. I've certainly appreciated their unique design for a long time and had always said that I'd like to own a Stabi one day. Thankfully I can now tick that off my bucket list.

Stabicraft are of course best known for the hollow aluminum floatation tubes (sponsons) which run down each side of their hulls. These tubes provide a high level of built in floatation and on my Fisher, they provide almost 1000kg of reserve buoyancy. Even if I was unlucky enough to fill it with water, it would still achieve level flotation which is a very reassuring feature when you are fishing offshore.

Features

As you might have gathered from the name, the Fisher is marketed specifically at fishermen and for a sub five metre boat, it's one of the most feature packed fishing platforms I've ever been in. The designers at Stabicraft have made the most of every bit of available space and the boat has a really clever layout which makes it very angler friendly.

Starting up the front, the heavy duty screen has a neat lift up panel in the centre. The panel is supported by gas struts and it holds itself up. When open, this panel provides easy walk through access to the front of the boat. This makes it very simple when anchoring or when putting things in and out of the boat while



Coming in at: 415kg dry weight - 4.72m length - 2.02m beam - 4mm hull - Max 75hp

launching and retrieving.

The cabin area itself is quite small but very functional. Underneath the bow there's a separate compartment to house the anchor and ground tackle. In front of that I've put in a plastic crate to keep my safety gear dry and easily accessible.

The helm area itself is basic but very practical. The dash has room on top for a sounder and other electronics, and my boat came fitted with Yamaha's digital gauges which are easy to read even in direct sunlight. There's a number of trays and shelves fitted in the cabin which are handy for holding those things that you need to use during the course of a day's fishing.

Under the driver's seat are three built in tackle holders, each of which fits a Plano tackle tray. While they aren't huge, you can get a fair number of lures in each tray and they are very convenient to get at. Being under the seat, they are also out of the sun so your lures don't end up blowing up like toad fish by the end of a hot day on the water.

Hinged to the back of the driver's seat is another fold up seat. I generally leave this up and out of the way when fishing to give me more deck room. It can be folded down if you need it however and while I originally thought it might not be up to supporting my 100kg plus frame, it's handled it with ease.

Under the passenger's seat there's a removable 70 litre icebox which doubles as the fourth seat. The icebox lid has been moulded in two pieces, so that you don't have to pull it all the way out from under the seat to open it. I find this a really neat feature and it's easy to slide fish like mackerel in. At first, I thought the icebox might have been a bit small, but just like the rest of the boat it's deceptive and



The wide gunnels are a great place to sit while having a fish.

it holds a surprising amount of fish.

Behind the seats are side pockets which run all the way to the back of the boat. Again, these pockets really help to make this boat work. They are cavernous and easily accommodate seven foot spin sticks. I can get three or four rods in each side, which is plenty for a boat of this size. It's also a great way of keeping them up off the deck and out of the way when you are fishing.

Speaking of the side decks, the gunnels are quite high for a boat of this length, giving good thigh support. They have also been made extra wide and the tops have non slip pads on them. This gives you another option to sit on when fishing. There are two metal rod holders fixed in each side deck and in front of each is a moulded drink holder for keeping your drinks safe.

Across the back of the boat is a full height transom with yet another

storage shelf underneath it. There is quite a bit of storage room under the rear shelf as well, and I can easily stash a spare 10 litre jerry can of fuel and a landing net under there. On the back of the transom are flat spaces either side of the motor, which make more than useful steps when getting onboard if you decide to have a dip.

Ride and Handling

Even though it's not much bigger than your average tinny, don't let its compact size fool you. In experienced hands, the Fisher is a tough and very capable boat which is built to handle the challenge of offshore fishing in suitable conditions.

Fishing out of Burnett Heads, I've run reasonably long distances out to the reef and it's a much smoother ride than you would expect from an alloy hull of this size.

Continued next page



The 60hp four stroke Yamaha is a great match for the hull. It provides very economical travel.



The new Arrow sponsons have given the fisher a quieter ride than the older models.



The centre panel of the windscreen opens up to provide walk through access to the cabin.



This is the sort of mackerel we've been catching since getting the Fisher.