

Introducing the third of several reports we're going to publish about one of the biggest selling classes of boats in Australia – 4.3m open boats. F&B is going to purchase a new 4.3m boat to embrace fishing, exploring, swimming, diving and relaxing in different parts of the East Coast of Australia between Brisbane and Melbourne. Buying the boat has presented a series of challenges, and we thought you'd be interested to join us on our journey through tinny-land, making one of the toughest decisions in the market.

#### 4.3's: Rough Water Handling

**T**he seaworthiness and rough water capability of small 4.0-4.5m tinnies of the conventional, 'pointy bow' kind is quite phenomenal, and today, as most of them are sold with full foam floatation to keep them upright when swamped, even with the crew aboard, the issue about their seaworthiness in rough conditions is not really as much about the boat as it is about the skill and experience of the skipper.

In this unusual report, editor Peter Webster shares a lifetime of experience in small craft with the view to giving newcomers a 'heads-up' on what they should expect, what they should do and how they should handle themselves and their craft when the chips are down.

Over the years the writer has had countless wonderful experiences in small craft and blissfully few bad ones, although we've had many situations where the conditions deteriorated to such an extent, we had to be very cautious about getting back to base safely.

Doing this is not really about luck, but a lot more about good management and seakeeping practice.

There are many fundamental rules to observe, and although most are just plain commonsense, it is extraordinary how many people get themselves into real difficulties in small craft when the weather goes from bad to worse.

Ironically too, more often than not, most boating accidents in small craft do not happen in rough conditions, and the vast majority of them happen in conditions most fishos would consider benign. Most small boat

accidents really involve incredibly ordinary, not to say dumb situations, like a bloke standing up and taking a pee over the side of the boat before toppling overboard – or getting over-excited with the landing net scooping up that special fish for your mate.

Sadly, it's the very ordinary accident circumstance that creates most tragedies and of course the chances of this happening are invariably boosted if the guys onboard happened to be pissed as well. Drink has played a big part in far too many accidents in Australia, and it behoves each and every one of us to be mindful that just as drink affects our reactions, attitude and ability to cope in an automotive situation, it's even worse in a boat as we are far more vulnerable in small craft. There, we don't have safety belts, air bags, NCAP ratings or crash protection – we just have 14' of tinny that is inherently unstable, easily toppled and extremely vulnerable to a number of very obvious accident situations.

All of this noted, the purpose of this report is not to deal with these situations, which, to the writer are so bleeding obvious they really don't bare repetition here.

If people are dumb enough to stand up and take a leak in a boat in Tasmania's freezing waters, or one of the Northern Territory's croc-infested lagoons, then there's nothing one can say, beyond *Sayonara!*

Ditto to boating when you've had too much to drink and you've topped it up during the day, or in situations where the boat is chronically overloaded and/or the crew is fooling around in such a way the boat ends up being capsized. There is nothing a writer can say other than 'good luck' in these circumstances.

Instead, what we'd like to do is concentrate on those issues involving families in tinnies, retired



*Common enough situations - strong winds driving up a healthy chop in estuary situations . . . are easily within the safe scope of any good 4.2 - 4.4m tinnie with a competent skipper. And the best way to become competent is to hasten slowly, practice often, and learn to love boating in the rough !*



# 4.3m Boating. . .Tinnies & GRP