

F&B's Small Craft Section



Pick Of The Bunch? - You Decide !

Choosing the best configuration for your next boat is an intriguing subject, especially as so many of the manufacturers now have multiple models based around the same hull. In this report, Peter Webster shares a lot of experience with fishos, families and kids in sorting out the best features of the top five configurations.

It's becoming something of a cliché, but in truth, boat buyers have never had it so good.

There is a staggering array of boats for sale, both new and secondhand, in just about every shape and size imaginable. But fundamental to the process is the recognition that there are essentially 5 different types of configurations or layouts for trailerboats,

Each has different design values to the other, and each offers specific advantages to the boatowner. This is what often causes a great deal of confusion and no little concern when newcomers to boating (especially) try and figure out which is the best configuration for them.

In this report, we're going to focus on the excellent range of 4.80m Ally Crafts, but we could just as easily have focussed on the range from Haines Signature, Quintrex, Stacer, etc. Many

The centre console is invariably the cheapest model of a series, 'coz there ain't much to 'em! This Ally Craft 4.80 Reef Raider is a terrific example of the breed - and a helluva good start-up fishing rig for serious fishos.

manufacturers now make the 5 configurations available in the one hull size.

The 5 shapes include:

- **Cuddy Cabin**
- **Centre Console**
- **Bowrider**
- **TopEnder**
- **Runabout**

So within most of the big manufacturers' ranges, we have 5 configurations for just about every step in their different size boats, leading to a bewildering array of boat models to choose from.

In a perfect world we'd have all 5 boats design characteristics or advantages in the one model - but obviously enough, that is simply not possible. So in the end, the consumer does have to make a choice.

That's where this report begins. Choosing which boat best suits your



needs is an interesting not to say debatable issue, and with a bit of luck, we'll fuel the fires of debate over the next couple of pages!

In this report, we'll take a look at the "big picture" pros and cons of the different types of designs, without worrying too much about the nitty-gritty differences between (say) an Ally Craft and its opposite number from Sea Jay. That's an area we'll look at in the not too distant future but for this issue, we'll focus just on the differences between the 5 configurations regardless of the manufacturer.

Cuddy Cabin

This is probably my favourite. Depending on the size of the boat, the cuddy cabin really isn't a practical area for sleeping until you get up into the 6.5m boats. In the really popular areas from 4.7m-5.8m LOA, the cuddy is usually little more than a couple of low seats or mini-berths, backed up with an open bulkhead with the helm mounted on the bulkhead on the starboard side.

As you can see in the pic, this Ally Craft 480 Challenger has the big opening hatch in the middle, a feature that's become almost a de facto standard in Australia from just about every manufacturer. They do this

because it allows them to eliminate the side decks, and thus push the cuddy cabin right out to the gunwales of these relatively small boats.

The cuddy cabin models are usually the safest in any manufacturer's range and so it is here with the 480 Ally Craft.

The cabin "shed" itself provides a bulwark or protection against the ingress of the sea or waves, and this offers a considerable boost to a boat's safety compared to the bowrider version, for example, with its completely open foredeck arrangement.

Cuddy cabins also have the big advantage of allowing fairly tall blokes like the writer to stand underneath the canopy which has got an infill panel between the top of the canopy and the top of the windscreen (see pic.)

This is a good set-up, because it means that a 6' bloke can walk around the cockpit quite safely, stay inside the cuddy and the canopy for excellent shelter from the sun, rain and wind, and with two aft facing seats end up with a pretty good fishing platform - especially if you like anchored fishing of the whiting and luderick kind.

Many of these cuddies have a fold down seat across the back transom which works with varying degrees of

Cuddies around the 4.80 mark, like this 4.80 Ally Craft Challenger are particularly useful in a wide variety of roles - especially because they can combine standup shelter, flat floors, and two very comfortable fishing possies for a couple, fishing over the stern at anchor ie, for whiting, bream, flatties, luderick, etc.

success - but in these smaller models, they're usually more trouble than they're worth.

The downside of the cuddy set-up is the big reduction in available fishing area for true fishos, because in the cuddy type boat, it is really hard to fish more than two people at a time.

Centre Console

The centre console configuration is available from just about every manufacturer in the land, and it sustains its popularity because it is such a practical set-up.

A lot of fishermen don't like centre consoles as such, especially if they've got to cross over a bar, but they are so practical in all the other departments, the centre console will forever remain the popular choice for dedicated fishos.

Most use the platform up forward for casting, or working into schools of