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## Lifestyle 6.7 m "All rounder" GRP Tri



**Introducing one of the few genuinely new and very innovative GRP boats we've seen in Australia in several years. A fibreglass trihull, this new entry has a wide range of applications and is sure to be a real success in both the commercial and recreational markets.**

Released at the 2001 Brisbane Boat Show, the Lifestyle 6700 is without doubt, one of the most interesting new fibreglass boats we've seen in some years. Absolutely brim full of excellent ideas; the Lifestyle 6700 is the culmination of experience and skill from three blokes who between them share more than 50 years of boating experience.

Down in SA, many readers will remember the name Steve Peake. Steve, hailing originally from SkipperCraft in that state, has been working up on the Sunshine Coast now for several years. He has quite a few notches on his plug makers belt, not least of which is a wide range of the current Noosacats, many of which have been tooled by this very talented craftsman.



Chris Reynolds is another bloke with Noosacat involvement - he's been one of their key employees for several years and in fact it was at Noosacat where the two men met up with each other and discovered a rapport that ultimately led them to create a business together.

The third player in the team is Steve Evans, the Solas Propeller man well known to F&B readers because he has personally helped out hundreds of our readers over the years. He is deservedly known as Steve, The Prop Doctor throughout Australia. Steve is a very switched on marketing man, with a vast knowledge of the Australian dealer network and how boat distribution systems work, so he became involved in the Lifestyle Project too.



So perhaps it's not all that surprising that these three men came up with such a polished craft. Few would argue that Steve Peake is one of Australia's foremost plug makers, and with input from his two colleagues, what you see here is one of the most competently produced trailerboats available in Australia.

Lifestyle Boats are never going to be a threat to the Haines Signatures and Seafarers of the world, nor is that in their business plan. They see themselves as occupying a niche in the overall scheme of things, contentedly building a very high quality fibreglass boat on the basis of one, perhaps even two boats a month, at best. In this way, they hope to retain the same sort of flexibility and individual attention that has made plate aluminium boat building so attractive to the more experienced buyers dominating today's market place.

By keeping their production team small, and their output carefully controlled, Lifestyle Boats can retain a degree of customer involvement not normally found in the fibreglass world.

## Design

This is a very good looking tri, isn't it? When they first pulled into the car park, I was amazed at the sleek, slim lines of the craft, and delighted to find the mouldings were of such a high standard. The craft is right up "there" with the best of Australian GRP standards.

Testing boats 'out of the box' is always a bit of a worry, because more often than not, the standard of mould making or glass production leaves a great deal to be desired. Not here - this is a boat that's equal to any in its class, with a very high standard of moulding, very attractive lines, and a direct application to all sorts of boating, be it recreational or commercial.

But let's take a closer look at what makes it work.

Upfront, we're looking at a fibreglass trihull, or as it would be known in some quarters, a "gullwing". From the writer's viewpoint, calling it a trihull is more accurate than calling it a gullwing, because this is indeed a fair dinkum tri. Typically, the forefoot and "mouth" area are the critical zones, and getting the shape of these areas right is what occupied many months of Steve Peake's time.

This is where the boat meets the water. Unlike a monohull, this boat has three separate hull shapes to get into a wave and out the other side without going Kerbang! in the process. Most whalers, tris and for that matter, many cats fall apart when the skipper brings the boat about and heads directly into the sea.

Head-on is the Achilles heel of almost all these multihull craft. Understandably, we were very keen to find out how this design coped in choppy water, but looking at the boat in the car park, and studying the underwater lines, I must admit I was singularly impressed. The laminar flow of water through the tunnels of this boat is quite impressive, and has obviously been subject to some meticulous workmanship and planning. Very interesting!

As you can see in the photographs, it's a big tri, measuring 6.7m LOA with a maximum beam of 2.5m, a draft of approximately 300mm and a highway weight, complete with boat, motor and trailer on the weighbridge of 1.980 tonnes. That's with the 130hp Honda as shown here, and a tandem axle, hydraulic actuated disc braked Tinka trailer.

It's not a 'pretend' walkaround. There is a really good trench right around the cabin. It's big enough to allow oversized blokes like the writer to walk around the cabin in safety and comfort. You're not squeezed between the coamings and the 'shed' nor do you have to position your bum over the side to get around the cabin.

It's one step up and an easy walk up front to the forward fishing area and the two marvellous anchor lockers.

No kidding, this is one of the best foredeck set-ups I've seen. It has two huge anchor lockers, both big enough to take a decent sized (151b) plough anchor and chain on one side and a nylon warp Danforth anchor on the other.



**Stability at rest is excellent; ideal for bottom fishing or trolling.**

The windscreen is a nice piece of armour glass, and although the cabin obviously comes inside the maximum beam quite a way, it's interesting to note you don't really feel as compressed or tight as you do in many other craft. The two helmsman's chairs sit well together, both swivel easily and with the addition of the clears and bimini shown, a practical wheelhouse set-up is created.

One step down into the cabin reveals more excellent planning. Although the berths are only 5'8" long (1.72m) there is actually plenty of room to sleep albeit 6 footers will have to curl up a bit as the bunks are only just 58" wide. Interestingly, with the fill-in panel in place, the width of the cabin (or the resultant double berth) is 5'6" across the boat as well - so there's plenty of play room in here for the energetically inclined.

A toilet can be fitted between the berths, and in the test boat was one of the pump-out varieties. The boys can easily build in a holding tank for areas where the sewerage issue is particularly sensitive. For trailer boat owners, a chemical toilet slots into the same position.

Back up into the cockpit, the test boat was fitted with some very nice (optional) seat mouldings embracing a galley unit on the port side and an ice chest and live bait tank on the starboard. Again, this is all very good design.

## Performance

As you can see in the photographs, it was a pretty awful sort of day, with a strong sou-easterly blowing, and a gale due in that arrived (fortunately) just after we finished the test. Nevertheless, it was blowing up enough to make the seas offshore pretty sloppy, and with five of us onboard, the Lifestyle 6700 was working fairly hard to keep it all together in the manner we'd like with only 130hp on the transom.

This boat is actually rated for 225hp 4-strokes, or two x 115hp 2 or 4strokes on the transom - or for that matter, a diesel or petrol stern drive.

But the 130 Honda was struggling a bit with the load, especially as we came across the bar. It all worked properly, we didn't have any dramas, but I just thought it was a bit sluggish with a heavy load of blokes onboard (sorry, Ruth) and I would have liked to have seen more horsepower with a better power weight ratio on the transom on this particular boat.

Having said that, if I lived in Sydney and went boating on the Hawkesbury River most weekends, then the 130hp Honda would be just about the perfect choice. It turned in a top speed of just on 28 knots, and we thought that was good for a heavily laden boat. Without all the bodies onboard, I've no doubt whatsoever we'd be pulling a clear 30 knots very easily.

In answer to the BIG question; does it thump?

Then the answer is a qualified "yes" but "no". *Okay, what does that mean?* It means that for the bulk of the offshore work we undertook the boat was fantastic. There was scarcely any thump or bump to speak of, lateral stability is unreal (as you would expect) and it doesn't have anything like the fore and aft peaking or sensitivity that you get in cats where you have to be very careful not to load up the corners too much because the displacement isn't there to carry too much weight.

In this case, it doesn't really make that much difference - there's plenty of buoyancy down the bum of this boat and more than enough to carry two 4 strokes, let alone one. In fact, I suspect the boat's handling would be even better if it had the weight of two 4strokes on the transom because then that would in turn lift the bow up even more than it is now and promote (I suspect) an even softer, bang-free ride. Okay, back to the thumps and bumps. The boat still does bang a little bit inshore funnily enough, especially in waters around 450-600mm tall in the bay. It was difficult to establish that one speed was actually better than another so as a result, we tended to travel across the chop flat stick in order to minimise the wetted area - this is a good technique usually, and it works well here, too.

I don't want you to take this out of perspective. The ride is more than acceptable in all the mid-range speeds, and I don't think it's all that much harder riding than many of the top brand monohulls that we've tested.



**Construction values are very high; no wood is used in the GRP construction.**

Offshore, working in the seaway, it's a very confidence building boat. As noted, the stability is excellent; it's very comfortable to walk around and it doesn't have nearly as much 'rock and roll' on the pick as many monos.

We're able to confirm that the Lifestyle 6700 is a very good compromise between the advantages of a cat and the advantages of a mono, with minimal disadvantages of either strain.

In the safety department, the Lifestyle 6700 is a clear winner amongst its GRP peers.

It has one of the highest levels of inherent boat safety we've ever encountered, with multiple glassed-in air compartments ("positive" foam floatation is an optional extra), a self draining cockpit - and is genuinely unsinkable without cutting it up with a chain saw.

And on top of all this, it only needs one engine. So it gets very close to that dream situation where you are approaching the ride and stability levels of a cat, with the performance, handling and economy of a mono.

We found it was an unusually dry boat too, and especially so for a tri.

Usually, the slabby sides of a tri (or some cats) doesn't engender dryness in a seaway, but it was pleasing to note that such is the bow lift of the centre hull, the two outer sponsons are mostly out of the water anyway. It's only in really rough and choppy conditions that they engage the water surface. Even then, the curved chine on the outer sponsons rolls the water back down to the sea, thus deflecting most of the loose spray. Summarising the performance is easy - offshore handling and ride we'd score it 7.5-8.0 out of a possible 10, with 9.5 for safety with the positive foam floatation installed, and 7.5-8.0 for style and intrinsic appeal. I liked it - it looks really good in the flesh.

## Application

Well, there's not much you can't do in this boat. Obviously it's going to be a fabulous fishing boat with the addition of a bait board and the usual toys such as outriggers, downriggers, depth sounder etc. As a fishing boat it's a ripper because it's very comfortable underfoot, the cockpit is a particularly nice size - not too big, not too small, and it's nicely uncluttered - no rear seats or squabs although I daresay a lounge could be added if you needed one for the rellos.

It's also a boat with terrific family appeal and potential, especially from the safety viewpoint. I keep hammering this issue of safety because it's one of the very, very rare boats in Australia that can be purchased with either sealed air tanks right through the chassis sub structure, and/or positive foam buoyancy to make it completely unsinkable.

Given the publicity around the need for boats to become unsinkable, it's true to say that the Lifestyle 6700 is one of the first cabs off the safety rank. And for many family people that is a terrific advantage. Full stop.

In cruising mode, this could easily be converted into a wonderful weekend cruiser for a couple, and with the addition of cockpit curtains and canopies, the whole rear cockpit could be made into a snug tent or cabin that's folded away during the day. Lot's of potential here, be it a fishing boat, a family cruising machine or an island hopper for an escapist couple, there's no doubt the Lifestyle 6700 is well named.



**Cabin area is surprisingly roomy - and nearly as wide as it is long.**

## Construction

Steve Peake has built this boat without a splinter of wood. An all fibreglass construction, it will still be working hard when most of us are pushing up the daisies.

Steve and Chris are deservedly proud of their very high construction standard. Utilising fibreglass stringers, bearers, GRP cockpit sole, cupboards and dash arrangement, it really is a very fine example of the plug maker's art.

## Conclusion

One of the better boats we've tested in a long while. Easily one of the most interesting, and one of the most practical. I'd love to see more people in a boat like this because small manufacturers like the Lifestyle Boats' team deserve to be supported if only to reward them for the courage, initiative and skill they've shown in developing such a fine craft.

I think it's going to make a wonderful fishing boat, and you can see half a dozen of these plying their way out of the far NSW South Coast ports such as Bermagui and Eden with two or three anglers onboard.

Personally, I'd prefer a bit more horsepower than we had with the 130hp Honda, but please keep in mind we did have five big adults onboard during the test, and this no doubt impacted on the boat's handling and performance.

That said, I think it is a pretty big ask for 130hp to push a big 20' long full beamed fibreglass cruiser, so I'm not casting aspersions at Honda so much as reminding readers that if they live and work in areas with a strong river barred entrance (Port Macquarie, Narooma, the Tweed, etc) then definitely, I'd order this boat with up to 175hp on the transom - or my other preference would be for twin 80-100 hp Yamahas.

But as noted earlier, if you live and work in flat water areas such as the Pittwater, Brisbane Waters, Port Phillip Bay, Moreton Bay etc, and there are only two or three of you onboard usually, then the 130hp Honda as fitted here is more than ample for quite pleasing 28 knot performance.

All in all, an excellent new addition to the recreational fleet and one we believe is destined to achieve a real measure of success this summer.

For further enquiries please ring Chris Reynold's mobile 0413 135 666

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