

Smooth, dry and fast

Pontoon boats have a following because they carve through chop and keep their crews dry.

NTMAG took two Aqualine 5.90 hulls for a run, both supplied by Barramundi Marine. One was powered by a Mariner 175 Verado, the other a 200hp Mercury, both potent four-bangers.

Suffice to say, with such big donks, speed was mind-boggling.

But what impressed was the ride.

The test day was a calm dry season afternoon with a steady breeze.

I thought the wake from a passing barge would be enough to get one of the boats partly airborne for a photo.

The problem was, these hulls cut straight through the wake.

The nose of the camera boat hardly lifted as we hit the wake at mid-throttle and 50km/h.

There wasn't even a bump.

Despite carving the wake at various angles, no spray went inside the boats, and we didn't slam.

The upper photo shows how well the pontoons push water away and down.

The pontoon design allows a fine bow entry, which is why these boats cut through the seas so well.

Aqualine is a New Zealand brand, built in Invercargill. The Aqualines are hugely popular as cabin boats in Kiwi Country. NZ sea conditions can be serious, which speaks for Aqualine's pontoon design.

The Aqualine build quality looks good. The internal fuel tanks are big, with a 260L tank in the camera boat.

Thunder Struck owner Carl Robertson showed how tight the hull could turn at speed with the grippy four-bladed prop.

The turning G-forces were like a show ride, with no hull slip or cavitation.

I was told that with the 200hp motor the Aqualine 5.90 nudges 90km/h.

The 175hp engine gave 73km/h at WOT, with two on board, plus 175 litres of fuel. That sort of speed will get your adrenalin racing long before a billfish is sighted.

Fuel figures for the 175hp were:

1.3lph at 670revs, 2km/h

4.7lph at 1500revs, 10km/h

Planing at 2800rpm

15.6lph at 3000rpm, 30km/h

29lph at 4000rpm, 46km/h

68lph at 5000rpm, 60km/h

76lph at 5700rpm, 73km/h

Aqualine have a range of sizes and styles. See www.aqualineboats.com or get up close and personal at Barramundi Marine, Stuart Hwy, Winnellie, NT.

— Matt Flynn



Stuart Butler drives Carl Robertson's 5.90m Aqualine Thunder Struck. Note how the pontoon pushes water down

