

# PowerBoat

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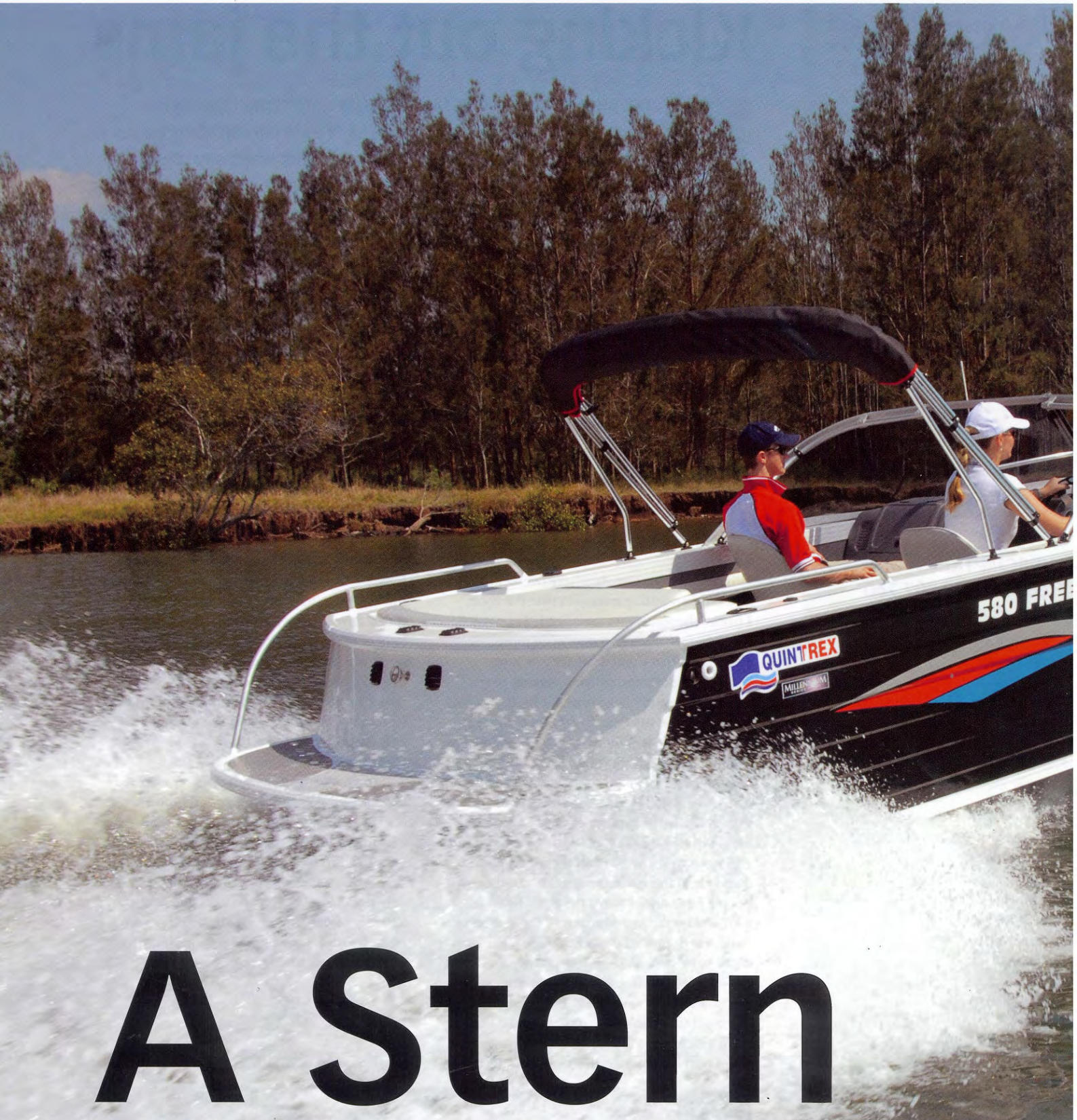
MerCruiser Powered  
Freedom Cruiser

**MUSTANG MUSCLE**  
Limited Edition  
MPV3000

APRIL | MAY 07  
AUS. \$6.50 NZ. \$7.00 (INCL GST)

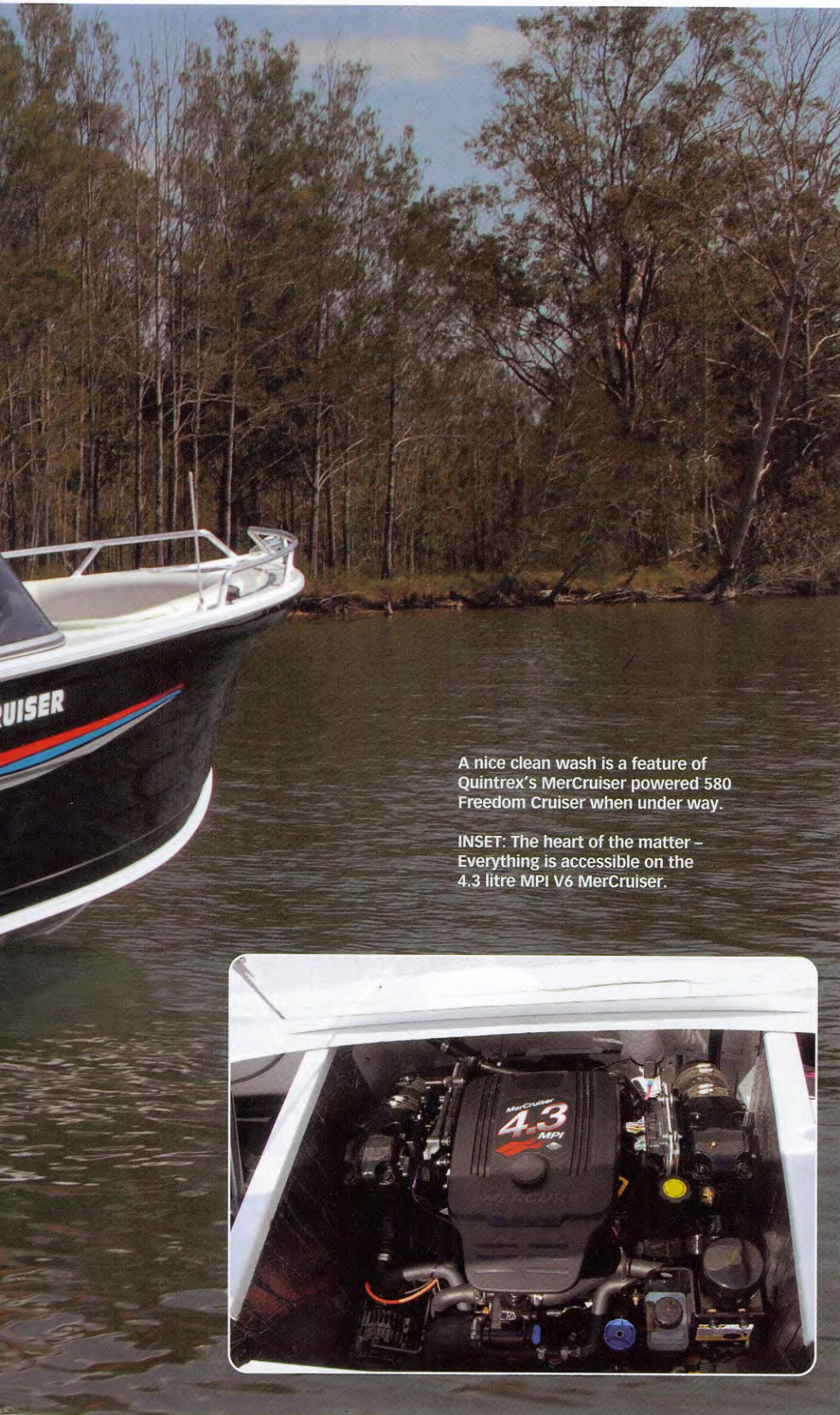


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# A Stern

# Approach



A nice clean wash is a feature of Quintrex's MerCruiser powered 580 Freedom Cruiser when under way.

INSET: The heart of the matter – Everything is accessible on the 4.3 litre MPI V6 MerCruiser.

Tinnies aren't often associated with sterndrive powerplants but **Wayne Kampe** can see why this neat Quintrex might change that thinking.

Quintrex outboard powered craft have been part of the Australian boating scene for so long that it's hard to imagine one being pushed off a trailer without an outboard on the transom. But it is happening. The outboard is being replaced by a MerCruiser inboard engine on both the new 540 and 580 Freedom Cruiser models.

Features such as Quintrex's Millennium series hull, flared bow and Maxi 2 transom carry forward from the outboard rigged craft but there's also the addition of a full width duckboard at the transom's (now rounded) extremity on the new model.

The Quintrex/inboard Freedom Cruiser series (540/580) was born of Quintrex R & D and first shown at the Melbourne Boat Show in July 2005. The concept really put the cat among the pigeons at the show and judging by sales, has appealed to many buyers since.

Some of the advantages the 580 Freedom Cruiser offer over a traditional outboard rig include more internal room than the outboard version, plus there's also extra stability due to the engine's central position and lower centre of gravity. The Freedom Cruiser is an eight-seater bow rider which makes a great crossover family fun/fishing boat given its substantial freeboard, large internal dimensions and ample onboard features; it's fun to drive and the style of boat that makes it easy for a skipper with wife and children aboard to slip some skis into the between-seats under floor locker (along with fishing rods in the cockpit side racks) for those days when fun boating and maybe a spot of fishing is on the agenda.

### Design & layout

The big bow rider sports well cushioned seating for up to four up front and I, for one, would have no objection to being comfortably seated with a nice firm back rest while wetting a line given some of the rough and tumble craft I have fished out of over time. Ever used a tackle box for a seat?

A sensibly low split bow rail is handy for when youngsters might be aboard, and for manoeuvring around the ramp. The Freedom Cruiser's large roto-moulded anchor well and associated cleat are tucked in behind a big bowsprit – the cleat is forward enough to be out of the way when fishing. There's exceptional below seat storage given the floor depth. An interesting option for dedicated anglers would be the Quintrex convertible bow casting platform which also offers handy storage areas.

The wide three piece acrylic windscreen equipped with a grab rail opens to port and there's a hinged door set up to block cold winter breezes. Both folded nicely out of the way to allow easy access to the rear cockpit area with its bucket seats for skipper and mate, plus full width rear lounge set up ahead of the engine box. All interior floor area was carpeted.

## REVIEWED: Quintrex 580 Freedom Cruiser

Dash features (port side) include a sizeable glove box that incorporates a CD and MP3 player. By the passenger's elbow there's a drink holder within the injection-moulded side cladding. Storage is available (and on the skipper's side) within the foot well area; a handy cargo net keeps items such as PFDs, clothing bags and the like forward so foot room is not cramped. Over on the skipper's side an easily monitored and well laid out dash set up with main instruments was located to starboard of the soft feel wheel linked to power steering.

Quintrex has thoughtfully provided a fair amount of above dash flat area on which to mount electronics equipment and navigational aids; a Lowrance X-135 sounder was installed high on the big 580's dash and there was considerable additional space still available.

The Quintrex Premier (sliding) bucket seats as fitted are large enough for even the biggest backsides and I liked the strong

pedestal mounts. I also liked the handy under-floor storage compartment between these seats which could easily be set up with ice for drinks or the catch of the day. It was easily accessed which is a major point in its favour.

The test craft was equipped with an optional bimini cover which we left in its protective sock. Storm covers and side covers are also Quintrex options.

### Bigger cockpit

Quintrex hasn't been slow to point out that the Freedom Cruiser's cockpit is actually larger than if equipped with an outboard, due to the space required for an engine well. In any case four adults can easily move around the wide and high-sided cockpit with ease. Cockpit features include: rod holders, floor lighting, side pockets and side rod racks plus massive side storage spaces each side of the engine box. A 13 litre Engel refrigerator – part of Quintrex's Lifestyle boating package – was tucked aft of the skipper's seat and is certainly

handy and quite unobtrusive and a useful family boating option.

The cockpit's aft bench seat will seat up to four although the central section is a bit on the narrow side to cater for the engine box. That said, the box is not intrusive, is very well sound proofed and has a well padded sun lounge atop it. Strong boarding rails facilitate access aft to the craft's full width boarding platform which has a telescopic ladder tucked to starboard.

### MerCruiser magic

I've long been a closet admirer of well set up inboard powerplants and quickly warmed to the 220hp 4.3 litre MPI V6 mated to an Alpha 1 leg fitted to the Freedom Cruiser. This is an optional powerplant incidentally; with standard guise comprising of a 190hp carburettor equipped 4.3 litre V6. The review boat's V6 was turnkey quick to start and hummed into life with little noise and even when working hard, was remarkably quiet thanks to excellent levels of sound proofing.



Normal every day conversation was possible while cruising (45 to 65 kph) within the 3000 to 4000rpm range and only when stretched to the 5000 rpm mark did it become really noticeable. Noise levels of the MerCruiser installation, to my mind, compared more than favorably with most outboards on the market and were probably even better at the cruising revs I've outlined.

The Alpha 1 leg, linked to a 21" propeller, carried exhaust noise well away from the transom and probably contributed to those noticeably low noise levels. The craft was instantly responsive to trim adjustment from the leg as well.

The Quintrex Millennium hull's ride has been acclaimed by the boating press since its release but let me add that nothing whatsoever has been lost with the inboard conversion. In fact, I would venture that the contrary has been achieved, given the additional balance to the hull attributable to the engine's placement. On the plane at a



**ABOVE:** The lower door in the hinged windscreen section is a handy feature that acts as a wind block if the weather turns cool.

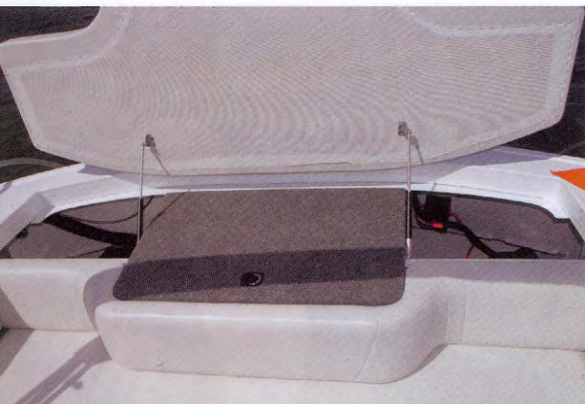
**LEFT:** The Engel fridge is part of Quintrex's options package and wide side pockets are handy for day storage.

**BELOW:** A neatly laid out dash allows for easy instrumentation monitoring.

**FAR LEFT:** Look Ma, no outboard - The Freedom Cruiser's rounded stern is easy on the eye and Quintrex's Millennium hull does a good job of pushing spray well to the side when under way.



## REVIEWED: Quintrex 580 Freedom Cruiser



**LEFT:** Storage compartments are set up each side of the engine box.

**ABOVE:** There's ample storage under those comfy bow rider seats.

mere 18kph with the engine at 2000rpm the Quintrex hull moved smartly along at 48.3kph for 3000rpm, 67.3kph for 4000 rpm and at 78.8kph for 5000 rpm.

The hull handled very sweetly indeed and it was a pleasure to throw into hard figure of eight turns to see it recover almost instantly. Ride was pure Millennium of course, with wash and waves encountered within the Coomera River providing only slight bumps. It would take a fair amount of wave action to upset a hull as large as this one and from past experience with Quintrex craft of around this size I would rate the 580 Freedom Cruiser to be as thoroughly capable of offshore work as it would be for family boating on lakes and estuaries.

### Conclusion

I was impressed with the Quintrex 580 Freedom Cruiser/4.3 litre MerCruiser inboard package. It performed very well, was beautifully balanced and offers a practical alternative to outboard powered rigs. There's all the room in the world available within the craft and ample storage as well. A point I haven't made also is that the 580 Freedom Cruiser is very stylish with its rounded transom stern design giving the craft a sleek, contemporary look. For a family group

## Technical summary

### Quintrex 580 Freedom Cruiser

<b>Length:</b>	6.55 metres
<b>Beam:</b>	2.38 metres
<b>Weight:</b>	1100kgs(boat and motor)
<b>Capacity:</b>	Rated for up to 8 people
<b>Fuel:</b>	95 litres
<b>Power:</b>	As reviewed, MerCruiser 4.3 litre 220hp MPI V6
<b>Speeds:</b>	18kph @ 2000rpm (planing) 48.3kph @ 3000rpm 67.3kph @ 4000rpm 78.8kph @ 5000rpm
<b>Towing:</b>	Large family 6 wagon or 4WD
<b>Price:</b>	\$41,775 plus dealer/ delivery charges
<b>Contacts:</b>	<a href="http://www.quintrex.com.au">www.quintrex.com.au</a> for your local dealer.

looking for a big versatile rig for both pleasure boating and fishing the big 580 Freedom Cruiser is a winner. And for keen anglers it will offer just as much as well. Quintrex advise that the cost of a standard rig (excluding dealer and delivery charges) is around the \$41,775 mark.

