

Storm chaser

This Territory fisho has a much broader appeal

WORDS + PHOTOS ANDREW RICHARDSON

There's nothing more Australian than getting out on an aluminium boat and spending some quality time with Mother Nature. And for a long time Quintrex have been making this activity a lot easier, a lot more comfortable and now, a lot more stylish. The 490 Top End is a good example of all of its hard work.

Initially, it was a bit of a struggle getting this review together, because it was early December and, anyone who knows anything about boating, knows that things go mad in the marine industry around that time. It seems that as consumers, if we don't have a boat we

start itching for a new summer toy and when December hits that itch becomes an aggravating rash that needs serious attention. I have to admit, I once suffered this "December fever" and almost bought a rather dodgy yacht on Christmas Eve, so I definitely know the feeling.

But it all came together, even though Damian Kerves, from Hunts Marine, got the blunt end of this sudden surge in pre-Xmas demand and took around 10 mobile calls from keen customers during the test. Good for business but not that good for Damian's blood pressure.

To add to his troubles, an ugly looking thunderstorm



chased us around the bay for most of the test. I had my rain jacket with me and the 490's generous stowage areas were large enough to safely protect all the camera gear, so yours truly was OK anyway. But Damian with all the rushing around, had forgotten a rain jacket, so he decided to try to drive around the bad weather, and me, I felt like a storm chaser in the American Mid West.

DODGING STORMS

It turned out that chasing (or dodging) storms was a great way to give this Quintrex 490 Top Ender a thorough workout. It was a lot of fun. I got to spend plenty of time behind the helm and drove the vessel in a variety of inshore conditions.

The 90hp Evinrude ETEC was a smooth operator right across the rev range and its 15in stainless steel prop delivered more than enough power to get us out of the hole. The 490 topped out at 33 knots and cruised comfortably in the mid 20s.

Although a 90hp is rated as top power for the 490, I wouldn't suggest going much lower in power as the vessel was clearly comfortable with the ETEC; in fact, it felt like a perfect match.

The helm felt comfortable, but the non-assisted steering was rather heavy. I noted hydraulic steering as an option and that's probably the way I would go and while I was at it I would look out for a stainless steel wheel, which would raise the style of the helm area up to the level of the rest of the vessel.

This Top Ender was easy to settle into and the craft's weight suppressed most of the pounding from the chop. This 490 Top Ender has been designed to be comfortable

and functional and I reckon Quintrex have hit the mark. From bow to stern the vessel had standout features that will appeal to the fisherman from the abundant stowage areas to the high topsides.

The test vessel was priced at \$36,950, including trailer and registration and this price included the optional berley bucket and the trolling-motor pad. The list of standard features is huge and you can check them out at www.quintrex.com.au.

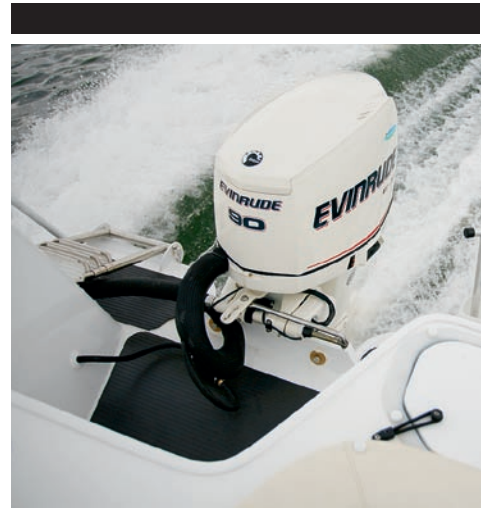
But in summery, some of the standard features include the VHF radio, sounder, lightweight alloy-core hatches and the aft live-bait tank. A stainless steel was also part of the package.

Damian explained that the design was originally intended for Top End anglers with a bass bent, but with so many standard features the range was proving to be a popular fishing favourite Australia-wide.

MILLENNIUM HULL

The 490 Top Ender features the Quintrex Millennium Hull design, which has a steep flared wave-cutting bow section that really softens the ride. The vessel takes all the rough stuff forward and delivers a remarkable soft ride for a tinnie. The hull is covered by a three-year warranty, but judging by the vessel's build quality, I am sure Quintrex could afford to warrant their hulls for much longer than that, especially when many of her imported American rivals now offer 'limited lifetime' warranties.

This boat hits the mark with fishermen, but also has a broader appeal as a practical value-for-money runabout with solid performance from that exceptionally smooth Evinrude ETEC 90hp. ⚓



SPECS | QUINTREX 490

ENGINE ROOM

An Evinrude ETEC 90hp outboard spinning a stainless steel 15in prop powered the 490 Top Ender.

PERFORMANCE

In mild inshore conditions the Top Ender recorded the following speed-to-rpm figures.

KNOTS	RPM
3	1000
7	2000
20	3500
23	4000
25	4200
28	4500
32.5	5100

Length:	5.41m
Beam:	2.22m
Depth:	1.17m
Bottom Plates:	3mm
Topsides:	2mm
Transom:	3mm
Hull Weight:	469kg
Rec HP:	50hp
Max HP:	90hp
Capacity:	Six
Contact:	1300 727 188
Web:	www.quintrex.com.au

+	Soft riding Ample storage
-	Heavy steering