



AUSTRALASIA'S LEADING MARINE LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

# CLUB MARINE



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Vol. 33 No. 5

RRP \$12.95

**MARITIMO X60 SHOWTIME PERTH AND SYDNEY HAMILTON ISLAND RACE WEEK  
MEDITERRANEAN SKI MARATHON CORROSION - THE SILENT KILLER DESTINATION EDEN**



# CAPABLE KIWI

## Surtees's new 540 Workmate Hardtop is a lot of boat in a compact package.

The all-new Surtees 540 Workmate Hardtop closes a gaping hole between the Kiwi company's brilliant little 495 and its big brother, the 575.

The 540 hull is completely new from the flooding keel up and is possibly the smallest hull to incorporate an enclosed hardtop from any mainstream manufacturer.

I must admit that I was originally a bit concerned about the balance of a deep-vee hull with its helm quite far forward and having the additional weight and windage of a tall enclosed hardtop. However, after driving the nippy new hull it seems my concerns were unfounded.

The 540 is a nice fit for its Dunbier aluminium single-axle trailer and, with an all-up package weight of around 1100kg dry, it can be towed easily by a medium-sized car.

It's a versatile package that is small enough for a one-person outing, yet equally large enough for two or three adults or a small family to enjoy a fishing expedition.

At first look, the Workmate might seem pretty basic and even simplistic, but it's actually a very cleverly thought-out craft. There are well-designed rodholders, rocket launchers, underfloor flooding kill tank, plumbed livebait tank, cutting board, huge side pocket storage and nice, wide coamings. Plus there's a very large cockpit for its size, safe gunwale height and rear boarding platforms with a fin-friendly ladder.

The hardtop adds comfort and protection to the Workmate's amenity, and there are mounting tubes for an extended shade awning in the hardtop as standard – a handy addition if you spend a lot of time in the sun.

The hardtop and large, open deck, combined with a helm mounted forward of the hull shoulders, give the illusion of a much larger boat. Visibility is superb with a tall, three-piece windscreen, thankfully with a large wiper, and there was plenty of headroom for me. The seating is basic, but comfortable, with a deluxe upholstered

pedestal for the skipper and a pop-up seat to port for the passenger, with a solid support mechanism that is easy to use.

In keeping with the rest of its practical layout, the dash is a fairly simple affair, but it does boast a full-width tray with sturdy and well-placed grab bars. Local dealers MY Marine, at Dromana south of Melbourne, fitted the Garmin GPS752xs with ClearVü, traditional CHIRP Sonar and mapping.

Surtees has left the bow wide open for personal fitout and storage. We had a ripper two-door Icey-Tek esky sitting securely up front that can double as extra seating if shifted to the rear. There's a huge front hatch that even I found quite comfortable leading out to a stubby bowrail, encompassing ample bollards and a bowsprit with a deep anchorwell.

I love the amount of side pocket storage throughout the boat and I note that the new transom layout, complete with its sliding rear door, open tray plus the enclosed plumbing and electrical compartments, are welcome updates. It's all raised off the fully sealed deck, preventing water ingress. The entire deck flows to a deep bilge with pump, making cleaning a breeze.

The 540 boasts all of the features that Surtees is known for, including the very soft-riding Razortech deep-vee design, 190lt Anti-Roll Stability Ballast with manually operated gate, Tough-Deck super-rigid hull construction incorporating Safety Buoyancy airtight flotation compartments, a Quick-Hitch auto trailer locking mechanism – all backed up with Surtees industry-leading 10-year worldwide hull warranty for total confidence.

We launched easily into the sapphire waters of Twofold Bay and got the feel for this nippy new hull very quickly. Both Editor Beattie and I were very impressed by just how soft the 540 rode as we punched into a short head sea. While I loved the sophistication and smoothness of the 80hp Honda four-stroke, I couldn't get the best out of it as it was slightly over-propped, achieving a WOT of only 5000rpm (maximum rpm is quoted at 6000) with full 100lt fuel tank and two adults onboard.

Still, we reached a reasonable 32.4 knots (60km/h) with the 17in alloy prop in the slight slop, however it was a little sluggish out of the hole, a factor that will undoubtedly be rectified with a smaller diameter replacement.

But the Workmate still proved to be a terrific little hull to drive, and loads of fun. It has a truly confident feel in a sea and took on both the slop and a larger swell in easy stride. Many plate boats in this length class have 4mm hulls with 3mm side plates, however the Surtees 540 has a sturdier 5mm hull with 4mm sides – and I reckon you can feel the difference.

She's surprisingly stable and sure-footed, with the new design incorporating 40mm more beam than its big brother 575. Combined with the ballast, the 540 certainly feels like a larger boat and I believe the wider beam is also helps overcome any tendency to roll caused by the hardtop.

The 540 Workmate HT is a terrific package that will tick all the boxes for many mobile anglers and divers. It's a versatile package that has the capability for offshore sorties, but will explore shallow estuaries, rivers and lakes with equal ease. Quality of construction is unquestionable, the ride is terrific, the abilities enormous and I, for one, love the distinctive red livery.

More information: MY Marine, tel: (03) 5987 0900, web: mymarine.com.au.

—John Willis



SURTEES 540 WORKMATE HARDTOP	
Length overall:	5.4m
Beam:	2.19m
Weight (BMT – dry):	approx. 1100kg
Fuel capacity:	100lt
Power as tested:	BF80 Honda four-stroke
Base price (BMT):	\$48,000
Price as tested:	\$62,000

