

'Kirby Naiad 5.8 Patrol Boat'

A new RIB for the Western Australian Government
By MIKE BROWN



The adoption of RIBs, specifically Naiad RIBs, by government departments in Western Australia continues.

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), long wedded to plate aluminium monohulls, has bought its first RIB patrol boat, a Naiad 5.8 from Kirby Marine.

It uses the same hull and many of the concepts as the patrol boat already built for the Rottnest Island Authority. Indeed, it was the Authority's experience with the vessel that had much to do with DEC's willingness to move away from conventional monohulls.

The two prime movers in choosing a RIB were crew comfort – always an issue in small craft operating on the ocean – and the ease of closing with other vessels and boarding them without damage to either vessel. A related advantage was having a vessel small enough for easy trailing and launching off beaches, and yet still able to cope with poor ocean conditions. The 5.8 Naiad's ocean credentials were established by the Denmark Volunteer Sea Rescue Group's use of one in the Southern Ocean.

DEC intends trailing the Naiad for tasks anywhere within the state, patrolling marine national parks and heritage areas, and island national parks, and taking part in whale research. This adds up to a large and well-spread area, with the exposed waters of Shark Bay and Dirk Hartog Island prominent in it.

Kirby principal, Rob Kirby, describes the '5.8' as "a complex little boat", being virtually a one-off with capability built-in for a range of tasks. The layout is walk-through, allowing boarding operations to take place off the bow, steps being provided to assist in this. The pair of consoles is

linked by a door and slide-in windscreen segment, which is neatly stowed on the aft soft-top brace when not in use.

The consoles provide space for roomy lockers, the lid of the port sub locker lifting to provide the navigator with a table. The port side also houses the radio suite, the coxswain's console carrying the Navman GPS-sounder and the triple digital displays for the Yamaha outboards.

Protection is provided by a soft top that extends to the rear of the after cockpit, and clear infill screens. Seats are bolsters for a semi-standing position without the motor cycle-type knee grips. The bolsters' support structures provide more locker space, a commodity frequently in short supply in RIBs. More space is in transom lockers.

For the benefit of anyone standing or moving between positions, the whole of the self-draining deck is sheathed with a shock absorbing membrane. This has an effect out of proportion to its thickness, and is used by Kirby Naiads because of the builder's belief that the boats can tolerate far more punishment than the human body can.

The hull is Kirby's usual heavy-duty construction aluminium, exceeding USL requirements by a solid margin and reflecting the builder's practice of complying with codes but designing for the task. The hull is foam-filled, removing the requirement to carry a life raft, and uses the highest specification foam: SOLAS-approved Microlen. The inflatable collar is 500mm in diameter with multi compartments, reinforced down the sides to cope with the abrasion of boarding operations.

For casual towage of leisure boats, a frequent task for small government craft, a tow post is provided aft. A rack below the

flap-down rear lounge takes the tow rope. The twin Yamaha four-stroke 45kW outboards are mounted within a protective frame to suit stern-on approaches.

Particularly for diving operations, but also for boarding when on the trailer, Kirby has provided a side ladder that stows alongside the Targa frame. Even with engines stopped, the feeling of personal safety is infinitely enhanced by distance from the propellers. The ladder is mounted to port to also give safety when boarding at the side of a road.

An exceptionally capable boat for its size, and finished to yacht standards.

For further information contact:
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'Kirby Naiad 5.8 Patrol Boat'

SPECIFICATIONS

Type of vessel: RIB patrol boat

In survey to: DPI WA, USL 20

Home port: Fremantle

Builder: Kirby Marine,
Western Australia

Owner: Western Australian
Department of Environment
and Conservation

Length overall: 5.8 metres

Beam: 2.45 metres

Hull construction material: Aluminium

Main engines: 2 x 45kW Yamaha
4-stroke outboards

GPS-sounder: Navman 8084

Radios: VHF 27 mHz

Fuel capacity: 300 litres