

'Tom Reed'

7.3m Sea Rescue Naiad from Kirby Marine

By MIKE BROWN

The replacement of Western Australia's rescue boats and small patrol boats with RIBs continues, and the RIB of choice is the Naiad built by Kirby Marine.

The latest delivery was to the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA), the body in charge of Western Australia's sea rescue groups.

The new vessel's main role will be as a relief for rescue boats temporarily out of service, so it had to be readily towed by a standard, large four-wheel drive. The 7.3-metre Naiad, despite being mounted on an extra-heavy duty trailer, fits that requirement.

The aluminium hull has a 23-degree deadrise, and has the now-usual pair of small steps in the bottom to reduce friction at higher cruising speeds. Overall beam is 2.7 metres, but waterline beam, once planing, is only 1.9 metres, so the area creating friction is never high. The collar is extra heavy grade, with four internal chambers. Outside, a thick protective belt takes the wear of coming alongside other vessels.

Apart from spaces housing fuel tanks, all the hull voids are foam filled. Kirby uses the best available, life jacket-quality, foam for this task. Among other benefits it has self-extinguishing properties.

Earlier rescue Naiads mainly featured cabins and foredecks, but the choice has swung to a small mid cabin with a well deck or second cockpit ahead of it. Most contact with other vessels is made over the bow, which the crews find more convenient and which is well clear of the propellers for such tasks as passing a tow.

Access to the fore cockpit is usually via a watertight door in the cabin's forward bulkhead, although it is also possible over the walkways on the collar at either side. The cabin is laid out with shelving to take the various items of equipment in containers rather than having them loose in lockers.

The driving station provides Ullman jockey seats for coxswain and navigator. These are the world's most expensive and also the best. As builder Rob Kirby says, usually a remarkably small percentage of a

vessel's cost is dedicated to crew safety and comfort. He congratulates FESA on this contribution to the volunteer crew's welfare that will feature on all future rescue boats.

Another standard Kirby fitting is the shock-absorbing membrane on the cockpit deck. Despite its limited thickness, it takes an astonishing share of the wear and tear that knees and backs would otherwise have all to themselves. The other aids to personal safety, grab rails and rope handgrips, are plentiful and well placed.

A full Furuno navigation package is fitted, and a whole battery of radios. These include 27MHz, VHF, dedicated VHF and a multi-frequency radio. The latter has 27MHz, VHF, UHF and aircraft VHF in the one box. The radio direction finder is a hand held model that has 121.5MHz capability for homing on EPIRBs (even 406s also transmit on this frequency).

With the exception of the remotely operated searchlight, all lights on board are Hella LEDs. Apart from the vastly increased life of LEDs, they have the great advantage of minimal power draw for a given candlepower.

Engines are a pair of Yamaha's well-proven 112kW four-stroke outboards, driving four-bladed stainless steel propellers. They are probably down on speed compared with three-bladers, but their area suits them well for towing. The motors are equipped with hydraulic steering and are fed from a 400-litre fuel tank. All the motors' ancillaries, filters, batteries and the like are mounted in a group at the transom.

There are strong points at the transom, and a combined collision bar-rope guide over the transom. The towline itself is housed in a dedicated compartment under the cockpit seat.

Kirby's practice of mounting a folding ladder at the side in way of the Targa bar has received universal approval. Taking survivors or divers from the water well clear of the propellers and in view of the coxswain makes sense to everyone. For the first time, this 7.3m RIB has a ladder at each side, adding useful flexibility to operations.



Rob Kirby's policy is one of constant improvement. If a suggestion or observation is made, and is one that makes the product better, then it gets incorporated into future vessels. On that basis, this is the best rescue Kirby Naiad yet.

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SPECIFICATIONS

Type of vessel: RIB rescue vessel

In survey to: 2C USL

Home port: Fremantle

Owner/operator: Fire Emergency Services, Western Australia

Designer: Naiad Design, New Zealand

Builder: Kirby Marine Fabrication, Western Australia

Construction material: Aluminium

Length overall: 7.3 metres

Length waterline: 6.7 metres

Beam: 2.7 metres

Draught: 0.45 metres

Main engines: 2 x Yamaha, each rated 112kW

Maximum speed: 43 knots

Cruising speed: 30 knots

Range: 200nm

Radars: Furuno 24nm

Depth sounder: Furuno

Compass: Plastimo

GPS: Furuno

Plotters: Furuno

Windows: Beta Marine Windows

Safety flooring: Taylor Marine

Seats: Ullman

Fuel capacity: 400 litres

Crew: 2 plus 4

