

AUSTRAL - Building More Than Just Boats:

The calm, quiet voice of boatbuilder Adrian Keough assured me over the 'phone that I would be welcome to visit his yard in Hackham.

A few days later I called out to Cottage Lane, turned up a tree-lined driveway, then drove past a pleasant house and gardens to the boatyard beyond. There I saw half a dozen gleaming yachts on trailers, and two large workshops.

Adrian came out to meet me and so began my tour of Austral Yachts.

Registered in 1972, this family company, comprising Adrian, his three sons and a further eight tradesmen, has today built and sold over 350 yachts, 300 of which are trailerable.

In 1979, Austral was awarded an Australian Design Award for its now legendary "Austral 20", and in 1994, their innovative new "Austral Clubman 8", with a hull by acclaimed Sydney designer Scott Jutson, won the Australian Boating Industry Association's "Yacht Of The Year" award.

The company has also been given the rights to build and market the popular Noelex Yachts trailer sailers, a well established New Zealand design.

Austral Yachts also operates a large workshop in The Marina Hindmarsh Island opposite Goolwa. Boats of all types, both local and from along the River Murray, come to this facility for maintenance, rigging, hull and osmosis repairs. Both dry and wet stands are available, and the workshop is run by shipwright Jeffrey Keough with up to three other tradespeople.

Both the Austral "20" and "Clubman 8" designs now have their own sailing class divisions, which are contested regularly by



Racing, an area where Austral yachts, such as the "Clubman 8" (above) really excel, to the delight of their owners...

owners right around Australia and across the Tasman.

Obviously, something sets these yachts apart from their contemporaries, so I went looking for it.

Focussing on the "Clubman 8", because you can see one at this year's Adelaide Boat & Fishing Show, I was able to observe the following:

The first thing you notice is the modern design, incorporating an open, wide transom. The hull, with fine entry and fore sections, flat run and water line beam aft, firmly turned bilge and U-shaped aft sections, boasted a mirror-like, gloss finish. This boat draws just 23cm. (9") with its drop keel retracted.

The cockpit, with teak on floor and seats and a brilliant rudder set-up, is clean, uncluttered and has rounded corners.

The deck, with tunnelled halyards plus recessed cleats and winches, is incredibly 'user-friendly'. At the bow, a generous anchor locker will comfortably take two anchors, vital when cruising.



Cruising comfort, (Clubman 8 interior) another area in which Austral wins new buyers...

Below decks I found the galley just inside the companionway to starboard, comprising a sink and stove with ample storage space underneath. In this position, from owner reports, cooking smells quickly disperse due to good flow-through ventilation.

To port, and under the cockpit floor, is a double bunk, and single settees are located on either side of the saloon.

Aft of the port bulkhead are two iceboxes, the tops of which make a handy chart table. Set above, well away from the elements and salt spray, is the radio console.

Amidships, above the centre case, is a fold down table made from Brazilian mahogany with a bright finish.

The forward cabin contains a double berth with storage under, and there is room for an optional, fully enclosed head (toilet).

Noelex 25 and 30 Austral 20, 24 and 30 Austral 8 metre Clubman

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The "Clubman 8" is a proved performer, both for racing and cruising and is easily rigged, trailed and launched.

Austral recommends using an 8hp. Honda 4-stroke outboard, as it is the ideal size, conforms to the AYF regulations and provides excellent performance and economy. Coupled to a remote control fitted to the starboard side of the cockpit, it is set in its own well, about a metre forward of the stern, also on the starboard side. In this position it can operate efficiently in even the most confused seas, a definite safety factor.

Available in three different models, "Club Sport", "Club Adventurer" and "Club Classic", Austral's "Clubman 8", ranging in price (at time of writing) from \$58,000 to \$78,000, offers much to many "salts" and first-time sailors.

These world-class boats have achieved IMS rating and conform to AYF Category 3 keel boat Regulations.

Austral Yachts, however, offers much more. This company stays in touch with its customers through direct contact and its quarterly "Austral Association Newsletter".

Whether it be "Clubman State Heats" off Adelaide, "Sail For Cancer" off Goolwa or a "Cruising Weekend" from Wallaroo, the Association brings owners together for racing, socialising, even training, to all parts of the State.

By directly inspiring owners to get more use from their yachts, Austral does far more than simply sell boats.

While at the boatyard I noticed boats, one around 20 years old, being modified to suit owner requirements. Even at purchase, buyers can select from existing options, or work with Austral on defining others, to be sure that the boat will best meet their expectations.

Importantly, people buying any size Austral yacht are given familiarisation and training on all aspects of the craft's operation



Cruising and racing - the lifestyle of Austral owners nationwide...

and equipment. A senior staff member, experienced in such training, provides comprehensive instruction on all aspects of the craft and its trailer.

If you visit the Austral Yachts stand at this year's **Boat & Fishing Show**, expect to see more than a gleaming new 'Clubman 8' - no doubt you will also find a number of Austral owners and of course, staff members willing to answer questions...A.H.

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