

# Senator builds on impressive record

► **Hugh de Lacy**

Its craft are virtually unsinkable, and Napier company Senator Boats has leveraged its reputation throughout New Zealand, built up over nearly three decades, into a successful foray into the highly competitive Australian leisure craft market.

Senator Boats has been building its aluminium craft, originally designed for the challenging conditions of the North Island's east coast, for 25 years, and it continues to win plaudits as much for its exporting as for its boats.

In May this year its Senator 500 model won the award for Best Specialist Fishing Boat under six metres at the Hutchwilco Auckland Boat Show, following that up in August as Hawke's Bay's Best Emerging Exporter at the ASB Business Awards.

Senator boats are distributed throughout New Zealand by a network of authorised dealerships, and in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and New Caledonia, with New South Wales soon to join that list.

"Our boats are built to conquer the sea, and are renowned for their ability to take on all sea conditions," a company spokesperson says.

"Every Senator model has a commanding presence, with a no-nonsense approach to design where usability, strength and safety are paramount."

The company builds a range of boats from 4m to 12m for a clientele including commercial fishing charters, the coastguard and recreational fishers.

The boats are designed for comfort with higher-than-usual cabin heights and steady, smooth-riding hulls featuring buoyancy that company says is unparalleled in the industry.

"Our decks are spacious and ready for action and, to us, safety at sea is sacred," the company says.

And the measuring of the company's boats is of their true length from stem to stern, without counting overhangs, making the boats seem bigger than they are.

"Bigger is always better at the business end of a boat, and the impact on the client is that they get more boat for the buck," it says.

Senator Boats prides itself on being able to tailor its boats to the client's needs thanks to its extensive range of design options, "which means the boat-owner can get the boat they really want."

Senator boats' reputation for toughness was reinforced during Cyclone Gabrielle in February this year when one of them was swept away, trailer and all, by floods, and ended up 3km away down the beach part-buried in forestry slash. Boat and trailer alike were visibly undamaged and quickly retrieved.

Senator Boats was founded in Napier in 1996, and in 2017 the company was bought by Grant Simmonds, who brought new sophistication to its operations through strategies of branding, marketing, manufacturing systems, quality assurance and product development.



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One of those strategies is to have the company represented by brand ambassadors, including boatie notables Davey Hughes, Mark Cotton and Ollie Craig, who test the boats through a range of adventures in New Zealand waters.

The launch into the Australian market came in 2019 when an Australian, Greg Collett, of the Sports Marine Centre of Bunbury in Western Australia, strolled into the Senator Boats factory in board-shorts and jandals - "thongs" in Australian parlance - to say he was sure there was a place for Senator Boats in the Australian market.

So it proved, and just four years later Senator Boats' boats are to be found as widely distributed across Australia and New Caledonia as they are in New Zealand.



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