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Stacer 649 Ocean Ranger  
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**D**espite the high dollar and the challenge of 'Factory China', the Aussie trailer boat industry continues to hold its own in terms of well-priced, up-to-date fishing boats. The 'tinnies' are particularly successful in this regard and still hold the lion's share of our home trailer boat market. Even during tough economic times they collectively turn out an impressive number of new boats each year.

The success of our local 'tinnies' was again highlighted this year with the launch of fresh new ranges by Stacer and Quintrex. These are our two biggest brands and both come from the huge Telwater factory on the Gold Coast that also builds the Yellowfin brand.

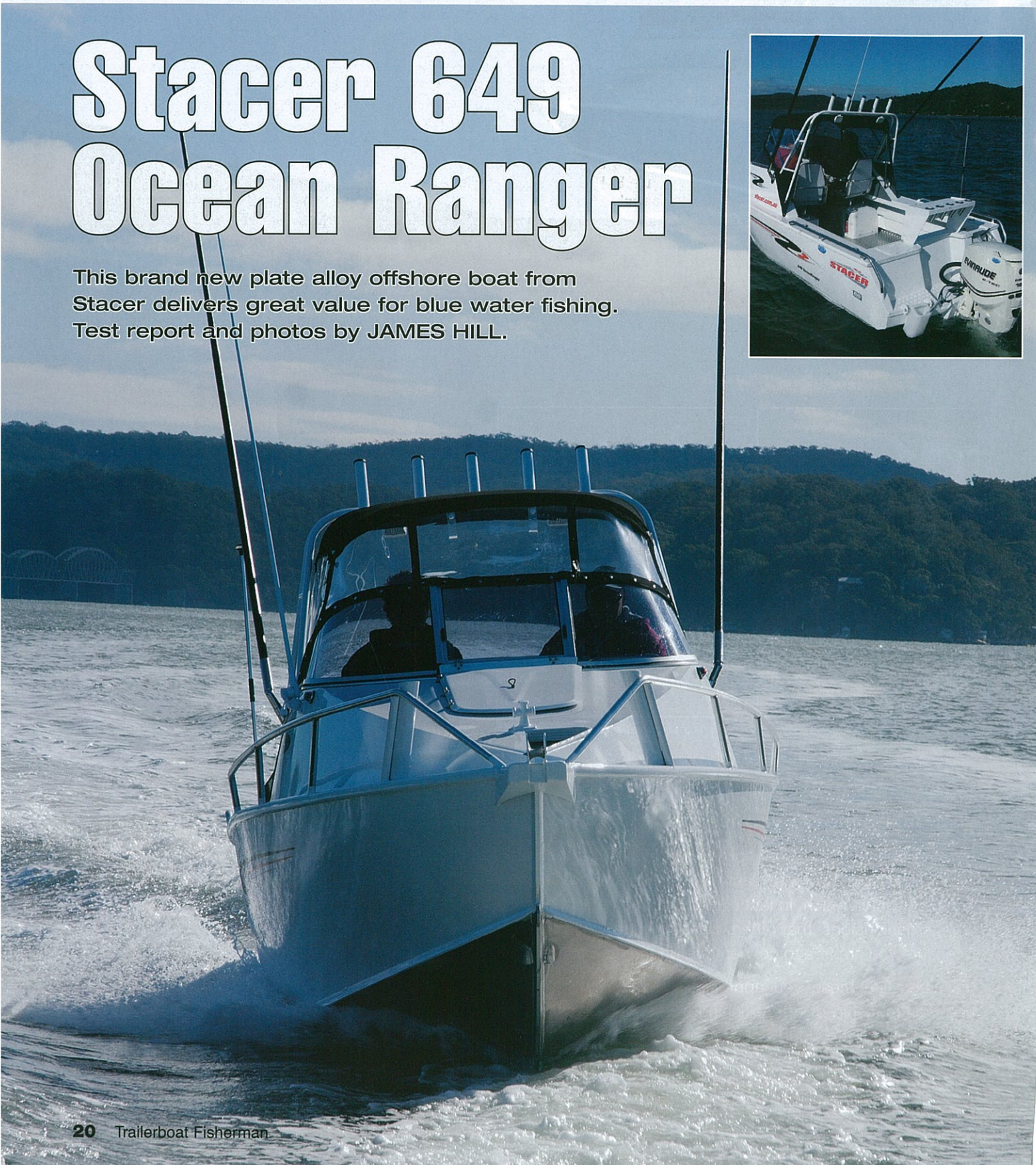
The success of these two Queensland brands is based upon constant improvements in design and a friendly rivalry between their national

dealer networks. In each case there's a very professional approach to design development based on solid market feedback from customers and dealers.

One of the most impressive of the new models from either of these brands in 2012 is the Stacer 649 Ocean Ranger. This is a craft with strong fishing appeal to those anglers wanting to branch offshore. This is Stacer's first true-blue plate alloy boat and is

# Stacer 649 Ocean Ranger

This brand new plate alloy offshore boat from Stacer delivers great value for blue water fishing. Test report and photos by JAMES HILL.





a big step up from the conventional press-sheet tinnie it normally builds.

With the added strength of plate alloy and a deeper, more Vee'd hull the new Stacer 649 Ocean Ranger means business offshore.

Other attractions include a spacious, self-draining cockpit, cuddy cab for shelter and deep side pockets for your fishing gear. It's a sizeable craft yet falls within a price range that is not beyond the scope of many tradesmen looking to get into their first offshore fishing boat.

Not surprisingly, for a craft hailing from same Telwater factory you see influences from the hardcore, offshore Yellowfin range. Most noticeably the Ocean Ranger also provides a tough, checkerplate floor and self-draining floor to transom scuppers.

That said, this is not a clone of another brand and incorporates distinctive Stacer features and bottom design. In particular, the Ocean Ranger has the unique Stacer EVO Advanced hull form that helps it ride better in rough water.

After sampling this boat on the Gold Coast I did a more extensive test of the Ocean Ranger with Sydney dealer, Huett Marine. This was carried out in mid-winter and so I was darn glad to have the shelter provided by the cuddy design and optional bimini top and clears. Particularly with the added

options of a bimini/vinyl clears and cabin cushions, you could see this boat keeping family groups pretty happy as well. So, beyond fishing trips the test boat could have a life cruising with the clan or going on camper-boat holidays.

Our test boat was pretty much the standard factory BMT package that includes the excellent Stacer dual-axle alloy trailer and Evinrude V6 150hp outboard. On top of this we had the additions of overhead rod rack (rocket launcher) VHF radio, Lowrance HDS GEN 2 colour sounder/GPS chartplotter, deck wash and underwater LED lights.

The boat sat atop a dual-axle Stacer alloy trailer with spare trailer wheel. Including offshore safety pack it cost \$62,990 ex-Sydney. This is pretty good value, but if you want to keep the price down even further you can opt for the base BMT (boat, motor, trailer) package for only \$53,500. That price still includes the Evinrude V6 150hp and the dual-axle alloy trailer.

**Design:** Ocean Ranger is an all-new design that incorporates a modern, variable Vee bottom featuring the Stacer EVO bottom, which forms a gull-wing effect in the back end of the craft.

Measuring 6.69m from tip to tail overall, the 649 it has a beam of 2.4m, which means it fits comfortably within the highway trail limit for day or night driving.

Being an offshore boat, its transom deadrise has been increased by the Stacer team from the standard 13-degrees to a sharper 19-degrees. This ensures the Ocean Ranger has a bit better ride offshore than your average tinnie. It also maintains reasonable speed as well in choppy water.

On the trailer the Ocean Ranger looks very impressive in the standard white with Stacer topside graphics. It's a good looking craft with its well raked

bow and wedge-shaped cuddy sitting nicely atop the sleek hull.

Looking closer you notice this boat sports extra large spray deflectors around the chine level and a noticeable downturn in the chines.

You also find easy access aboard thanks to a fastback transom incorporating a neat landing deck plus folding alloy ladder and walk-through door on the starboard side.

Under this transom is a full-depth but narrow pod. This pod configuration works pretty nicely in practice with sufficient buoyancy to help get the Ocean Ranger out of the hole quickly from a standing start.

Once aboard you find a roomy, self-draining cockpit with a checkerplate alloy floor and sufficient freeboard to keep you safe offshore. There's also a comfortably cuddy cab with walk-through hatch arrangement that lets you access the anchor through the safety of the cabin.

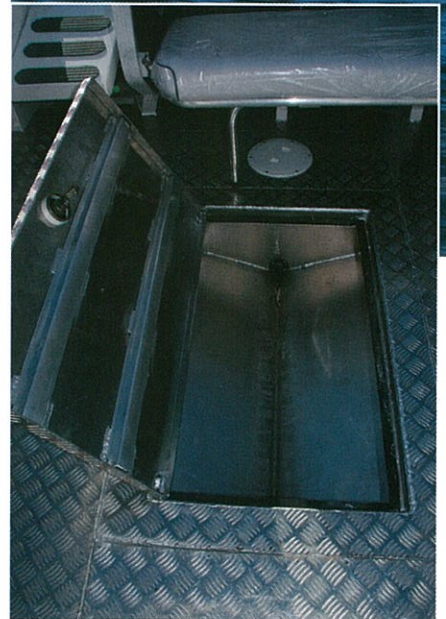
The smooth topsides highlight the plate construction in this boat. You get 4mm topsides, while the bottom sheets are an impressive 5mm as is the whole transom section. This is all backed up with support framing plus additional underfloor bulkheads and the welded cockpit floor.

The boat itself weighs around 902kg ex-factory without any accessories. This translates to a rig tow weight of around 1800-1900kg so the 649 Ocean Ranger is getting beyond car towing. However, this big Stacer falls comfortably within the capacity of tow popular SUVs like Jeep Cherokee (2270kg) Kia Sorento (2500kg) Mazda CX-9 (2000kg) and the Toyota Prado (2800kg).

At home you'll need a clear 7.3m area to park the boat, however, thanks to the folding targa you could garage this craft in most modern carports. The overall road height then becomes 2.58m.







The overall build quality is impressive and the boat is covered by a limited, three-year warranty on the Ready-to-go package.

**Performance:** Some days are diamonds, some days are just darn cold. We got one of the latter during our test with a freezing cold southerly gale. This was largely the reason we launched further up-stream at the delightful hamlet of Brooklyn on the Hawkesbury River.

Even this far in from the ocean the wind was whipping up a nasty chop over the lower reaches of the river. Wind blasts were icy and we therefore were glad of the bimini and clears.

In these conditions the Stacer 649 Ocean Ranger acquitted itself with honour. It handled the tough wind chop with ease and stood up well to the cross-wind blasts.





Helping things along is a set of electric Volvo BTS300 trim tabs on the transom. These are really necessary on any deep Vee boat and at times they helped us settle out the trim. That said, I was impressed with the boat's basic stability and the way the EVO bottom helps to firm up stability when fishing.

I found the Ocean Ranger handles rough water pretty well and indeed a bit better than I expected for a boat that's lighter than some of the traditional fibreglass deep Vees.

After several hours of playing in these challenging conditions I came away with the impression the 649 Ocean Ranger is a pretty good all-rounder. It's a craft that will look after you offshore yet at the same time be right at home fishing around the estuary and further upstream.

I particularly like the helm/passenger pedestal seats. These are heavy-duty models with upholstered bolster cushioning that holds you in place nicely in rough water. There's also pretty good vision through the curved windscreen, though I did find the big Lowrance sounder/chartplotter does block the view a bit. I don't know the answer to that because these days most serious anglers want a big screen to see what's going on.

And talking of skippering, the Stacer 640 Ocean Runner comes standard with a lot of good kit like hydraulic



steering, pedestal foot-bars, recessed throttle lever and a VHF radio. You also get an attractive three-spoke sports steering wheel, drink holder, Evinrude instrumentation and waterproof switch panel with controls for the electric bilge pump, LED navigation lights.

**Power:** Fitted with a V6 150hp Evinrude ETEC matched with 15-inch Rebel prop, the 649 Ocean Ranger provided a top speed of 36 knots at 5500 RPM. This is pretty quick going and suggests a top speed of 40 knots would be possible with the maximum power of a 175hp.

Frankly, we were pretty happy with the way the Ocean Ranger performed with the 150hp sized motor and I doubt you would be going for a bigger size motor unless you were wanting to cover massive distances to reach your fishing grounds.

I'd expect to achieve similar top end performance with the equivalent Yamaha 150hp and Suzuki four-strokes though perhaps with not as quick speeds in low rev range. That said, these new four-strokes are so much better out of the hole these days it would be really interesting to see what they could achieve.





The full speed results with the Evinrude were as follows:

3500 rpm	24 knots
4500 rpm	31 knots
5500 rpm	36 knots

From these figures I'd think most buyers will go for a 150hp size motor, and some might even try a 140hp to keep costs down. Either way I expect performance to stay within the 30-plus knot range.

I might mention the Ocean Ranger comes with a decent underfloor fuel capacity of 160-litres, twin batteries, master switch and a 12-volt power outlet at the helm for accessories.

**Deck layout:** This is a very practical design for our coastal and offshore conditions. Up front there's a neat anchor bowsprit with split bowrail helping to feed the anchor line to the roller.

You also get a clever half-cover anchor well that provides added ore security for the anchor gear when you're offshore.

There's also the long fore-hatch for walk-through access from the windscreen to the anchor point.

Additionally, you have small side decks sufficient to walk to the bows from the cockpit. And there's the cuddy cab, which incorporates a small Vee berth so you could catch a nap on overnight fishing jaunts.

Back aft is a roomy cockpit with raised side pockets big enough to carry all your hand lines and other fishing gear. The wide side decks make it easy to sit, or to mount extra rod holders.

The Ocean Ranger also comes standard with four rod holders and there are side rails aft that could be used to moor the boat or tie off keeper nets.

The rear passenger lounge folds up to form a good knee pad for fishing at the stern. You also get as standard a raised alloy cutting board across the rear deck. This also has an additional five extra rod holders.

It goes almost without saying the Ocean Ranger is set up to fish and fish hard. Standard features include an underfloor 135-litre plumbed kill tank plus a 65-litre plumbed live bait tank at the transom (port side).

The Ocean Ranger also features a rocket launcher (overhead rod rack), berley bucket and transom door that could be used to land a big fish. Our test boat was also fitted with the optional outrigger mounting plates and outriggers.

Stowage is pretty good with stowage bins under the bunks, under-seat storage boxes and large side pockets

in the cockpit. The seat boxes have recesses for the EPIRB and fire-extinguisher and could house a set of plastic tackle drawers.

**Verdict:** Stacer has done a particularly impressive fishing package with this new model alloy trailer boat. The 649 Ocean Ranger gives you a craft quite capable of serious bluewater fishing activity, yet within a price range that is surprisingly affordable for this size of craft.

I have only a few quibbles: I'd like to see a proper lock-down hatch cover on the bow anchor well and perhaps a better dedicated mounting point for the sounder/chartplotter. However, beyond that, this is a very appealing boat package.

This would be a brilliant boat for two fishing mates to buy in partnership. Especially for a first venture into bluewater fishing, it's a good choice and should be reasonably economical to run.

Arguably, the 649 Ocean Ranger also covers the needs of family entertaining pretty well and this will also help to justify the big-dollar purchase to Mum and the kids. Well, that's the argument for winning over the wife – so good luck.

**tbf**

### BOAT TEST ANALYSIS

Boat supplied with Evinrude V6 150 ETEC, stainless steel propeller, dual-axle Stacer alloy trailer, spare trailer wheel, bimini, front/side clears, rear lounge, cabin cushions, deck wash, VHF radio, Lowrance HDS sounder, outriggers and offshore safety pack. Price \$62,990 Huett Marine NSW ph 02 9456 1444.

### SPECIFICATION CHART

Brand	Stacer 649	Surtees	BarCrusher	Extreme	Seatamer
Model	OceanRanger	6.7Sportfisher	620C	570GameKing	580Horizon
Material	alloy	alloy	alloy	alloy	alloy
Style	cuddy	hardtop	cuddy	hardtop	w/around
Length	6.4m	6.7m	6.7m	5.7m	6.5m
Beam	2.4m	2.3m	2.3m	2.2m	2.5m
Rated power	175hp	200hp	175hp	150hp	150hp
Power as tested	Evinrude150	Honda175	Evinrude150	Yamaha115	Suzuki140
Hull weight	902kg	1000kg	1043kg	670kg	750kg
Fuel capacity	160L	240L	200L	80L	200L

### STAR RATING

Finish	★★★★★	Helm Set-up	★★★★★
Fitout	★★★★★	Fishability	★★★★★
Ride	★★★★★	Safety Features	★★★★
Dryness	★★★★★	Value for Money	★★★★★

\*Data ESTIMATED by the TBF team when accurate information is unavailable. Maximum star rating 5 stars.