



# Stacer 449 No



**A** year ago we tested a boat called the Stacer 529 Northern Fisher that impressed us and many readers with its value-for-money from a fishing perspective.

Most significantly the Northern Fisher doesn't have a painted hull, which helps keep the price down and make it a very practical tinnie for fishing purposes.

The market success of this new Stacer model prompted us to have a look at its smaller sister a year later. The 449 Northern Fisher effectively delivers the same concept in a smaller and therefore even more affordable package.

According to Sydney Stacer dealer, Huett Marine, this model has the right price/size mix to suit a lot of buyers who are making their first entry into a fishing boat.

Like its big sister, the 449 Northern Fisher gives you a centre console steering station and carpeted interior floor with raised casting deck in the bow area.

The unpainted hull is part of the appeal of this new Stacer model, and one could say it doesn't look half bad either with its attractive vinyl topside decals and optional black bimini top.

Again the test venue was beautiful Pittwater and we had a lot of fun running about the waterways in this new Northern Fisher model. It's a

great boat for two people to go fishing, though it's rated for up to five people if you want to take more.

Like the bigger Northern Fisher, the 449 Northern Fisher has the high freeboard and fullish bow sections that will happily suit coastal estuary and near-coast fishing. The idea of having the fuller bow sections is to introduce more buoyancy and stability up around the for'ard casting platform. In effect, it makes the 449 Northern Fisher a better boat for stand-up cast and retrieve fishing.

The price package is pretty tempting too. You can get into this Queensland-built tinnie from as little as \$18,500 including a Mariner 40hp, single-axle trailer and basic safety gear. However, most buyers will pay a little more than that to get a more powerful engine and few extra trimmings.

Our test boat seems like a pretty nice package for \$25,500. Essentially, this gives you a nicer, more powerful





The Stacer 449 Northern Fisher is all about maximum fishing value for the dollar, according to boat tester James Hill.

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motor, better trailer and few more bells and whistles like deluxe braked trailer, under-floor fuel tank, bait-cutting board and a folding bimini (canopy) in black canvas. The package also includes a state-of-the-art 50hp Evinrude ETEC that delivers clean, smooth and economical performance.

As the name implies, the 449 Northern Fisher is designed for the tropics, however, can be employed in many other parts of Australia. The practical mix of high freeboard, stability and fishing space will suit most estuary, lake and river fishing situations.

High internal freeboard and low casting platform is the real secret of this boat. It makes the 449 Northern Fisher equally attractive for traditional bottom-bashing, or the more modern lure-casting style of fishing.

And banging about the mangroves is something you'll have no qualms about with this boat when there are no worries about scratching the topsides.

In many ways the 499 Northern Fisher takes us back to the first principles of what the alloy (tinnie) boat was all about. In short, they were a boat you didn't have to worry too much about and didn't mind the odd bang or scratch!

Given the success of this model it's no surprise that there are now three models – 449, 489 and 529. Perhaps more models will appear if these boats continue to sell like hot cakes?

**Design:** With strong similarities to the Quintrex Top Ender it's no surprise the 449 Northern Fisher sports a full volume bow, generous freeboard and 2.05m beam. The hull length is just on 4.5m and as a total trailer package is about 5.4m long.

Looking at the hull on its trailer you quickly notice the distinctive Stacer clinker topside pattern with extra wide panel just below the gunwale. You also have a square-cut transom that lets you fish right into the stern quarters.

The hull features a Vee-d entry that lets the 449 Northern Fisher cut through high wave chop and keep the interior fairly dry. The boat runs a modest, shallow deadrise past the bow entry so the Northern Fisher will come fairly quickly to the plane when you're throttling up.

If you look closely at the chines you notice there is a wide 'chine lip' to help get the tinnie onto the plane quickly. These chine flats also help to dampen the roll rate and make the 449 Northern Fisher more stable when you are fishing.

There's a slight amount of outward slope to the transom, however, the important point is you can get your feet right against the stern. Other features of this design included welded side decks, extruded gunwale and a small keelson to protect the bottom. The latter helps to slow down the drift rate, which can be a help when drift fishing.

Obviously, the hull is not painted, but you seem to quickly adjust to that fact. I also guess when you are underway it hardly matters whether the boat is painted, or not.

Overall, the 449 Northern Fisher is well sized to handle the semi-rough waters of most coastal estuaries and waterways. In this respect it's going to suit a lot of boat buyers because so many of us live near the coast fringe.

Structurally, the boat seems reasonably up to the job required, including the odd trip out around headlands. It has a 3mm bottom panels, matched by 1.6mm topside panels and extra support from internal framing and fully welded side decks.

The hull has the Basic flotation with foam buoyancy, and this is enough to support five adults.

With a hull weight of 340kg the Northern Fisher gives you a total trail weight around 750kg. That puts her in the range of most four-cylinder cars like





Toyota Camry or the smaller SUVs like Subaru Forester AWD.

**Performance:** Catching up with our test boat at the Bayview ramp, Pittwater we wasted no time getting into the water after our photo session ashore.

It's always interesting see a new boat for the first time and the immediate impression we got with the 449 Northern Fisher is the roominess of the hull. It actually looks and feel like a bigger boat than the length would suggest.

We certainly drew a few interesting looks before we got the boat into the water. Many commented they liked the fact the boat was bare alloy. Most felt it made the Northern Fisher look like a "real fishing boat!"

Slipping the 449 Northern Fisher into the smooth, dark green waters of Pittwater we loaded our gear aboard and quietly moved out to the bay.

There's no doubt the new generation of clean-tech motors are really pleasant to be about and our 50hp Evinrude lived up to that peaceful reputation.

As with the bigger Northern Fisher we notice the hull has above-average stability and comes willingly to the plane. In this respect it also helps that you've got a centre console as it keeps the weight of crew further forward, and more central in the boat. This definitely helps the Northern Fisher come on the plane quicker.

Underway, the tinnie moved quickly as we were past the eight-knot zone and could push the speed out to a

comfortable 20 knots without pushing the motor too hard.

We cut across some low wash and did some fast turns, all of which the 449 Northern Fisher executed pretty well and without any noticeable problems.

While the ride at times might get a little hard with these wide, shallow hull sections I think the Northern Fisher will suit coastal boating. After all you can always use your motor trim to get the bows down and help soften ride in the more choppy conditions.

And how is the boat to drive? The tall centre console allows you to comfortably steer in a standing position and gives you a great view for fish-spotting.

As standard there is no seat, however, a handrail over the console allows you to brace yourself in bumpy waters. Having said that I reckon some skippers are going to get a little tired standing over long periods. With that in mind it might be worth ordering the optional quarter box seat that comes with a cushion top.

The 449 Northern Fisher comes with mechanical non-feedback steering that is quite adequate for a boat of this size and horsepower. Certainly, she is easy enough to steer and during our test.

While not quite as stable as the bigger Northern Fisher models we found this model acceptably steady for inshore fishing. With smaller boats you've got to be a bit more careful in swell conditions and that would apply if you did go outside. Of course, this

all gets down to being sensible and picking the right conditions venturing into open water.

Conversely, the Northern Fisher is a brilliant craft for venturing up into the creeks and mangroves. It's especially well suited to fishing these locations because it's small enough, and shallow enough to operate in tight spaces. And you certainly won't be worried about scratching the paint!

**Power:** The Stacer 449 Northern Fisher is designed to take motors of 40-60hp. As tested with an Evinrude 50hp ETEC we got quite reasonable performance though not overly fast. With two people aboard the GPS results were as follows:

3500rpm	14 knots
4500rpm	18 knots
5500rpm	23 knots

Judging from these results some readers might conclude the maximum power of 60hp would be better for their needs. I might concur with that sentiment if I were regularly going some distance to the fishing grounds. For example, a round trip of more than 40 nautical miles on sheltered coastal lakes. However, for most weekend fishing warriors I would think the 50hp size motor would suit the 449 Northern Fisher pretty nicely. Keeping in mind that with the bimini folded and just yourself aboard the top end speed would be a few knots quicker.





The Stacer 449 Northern Fisher comes standard with a 70-litre fuel tank, which is relatively generous for a boat this size. Interestingly, it's the same fuel tank they put in the bigger model boat.

I might mention, the overall performance could be improved by an optional stainless steel propeller.

**Deck Layout:** This is quite a well thought out package for the coastal estuary fisho. The 449 Northern Fisher comes with a proper bow roller, Tee bollard and moulded plastic lined bow anchor locker.

You also get a welded alloy bow rail, extruded coamings and two plastic rod holders per-side. There's also low grab handles astern and a carpeted floor, stepped into a low casting deck forward.

The casting deck is one step up from the main cockpit level, which makes it very easy to move back and forth within the boat, especially if you're holding a fishing rod!

Moving aft you find a small, narrow console that ensures there is plenty of space to move around the interior of the 449 Northern Fisher. You also get a low shelf within this console for stowage of personal items and a small dash with room for a steering wheel and motor instruments. An optional sounder could be pedestal-mounted onto the side, or top of console.

The interior also features raised side pockets for hand lines and other fishing gear. There is a single floor locker in the casting deck and that's about it. However, adding an optional Igloo Fishbox will give you a place to keep the catch as well as drinks and food

cold. The latter comes with a cushioned top so it could also provide seating for the skipper and crew.

Other options include a cutting board over the motor well that we had installed in our test boat. The boat comes with a proper self-draining motor well so you have a natural drainage spot for the cutting board.

We score the 449 Northern Fisher full marks as a fishing platform because essentially it's so open and allows you to fish uninterrupted 360-degrees around the boat. It's also worth emphasising the layout and hull form of the 449 Northern Fisher suits a wide range of fishing styles and extends beyond what punt style boats can offer.

**Verdict:** While not as roomy as its two bigger siblings, the 449 Northern Fisher should provide the better bet for entry-level fishing. It's a fairly affordable boat and these days many Australians are holding back on spending too much money on anything, let alone a boat. In this respect I believe the 449 Northern Fisher is the right boat at the right time.

While the standard package is geared more toward inshore fishing, this boat could fish close-coastal waters in the right conditions and with appropriate safety gear. It's light weight also suits beach launching, which further extends the fishing options of the 449 Northern Fisher.

Some of the other options you could add, depending on your needs include a transom step, live bait tank in the transom area and tee top over the console. And, of course, adding a sounder would be pretty much a necessity if you were serious about going fishing.

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## BOAT TEST ANALYSIS

Boat supplied with Evinrude 50hp ETEC outboard, electric start console steering, deluxe braked trailer, underfloor 70-litre fuel tank, rod holders, bimini folding canopy, raised cutting board, safety gear and rego. Price \$25,490 from Huett Marine ph 02 9456 1444.

## SPECIFICATION CHART

Brand	Stacer 449	Quintrex	Savage	TABS	Allycraft
Model	NorthernFisher	520Classic	495Piranha	Territory460	ShadowOasis
Material	alloy	alloy	alloy	alloy	alloy
Style	console	console	console	console	console
Length	4.49m	5.2m	5m	4.8m	4.6m
Beam	2m	2.1m	2m	2.2m	2.1m
Rated power	60hp	80hp	90hp	75hp	75hp
Power as tested	Evinrude50	Mariner60	Yamaha60	Yamaha60	Yamaha50
Hull weight	350kg	357kg	409kg	450kg	400kg
Fuel capacity	70L	70L	70L	70L	n/a

## 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.

