



Off the Trailer



All in the family

When it comes to choosing a boat that can be enjoyed by the whole family, the Quintrex 610 Freedom Cruiser is a prime candidate.

When Quintrex released a sterndrive-powered bowrider a few years back, I thought it a brave move. Already there was a plethora of excellent bowriders from the leading local manufacturers, in addition to those from most of the imported brands. With each of these vying for the buyer's dollar, the bowrider is in a very price-competitive market.

But all of those bowriders were fibreglass, and with the Freedom Cruiser, Quintrex envisaged adding a new dimension to the market. The Freedom Cruiser range was not only the first but is still the only production range of sterndrive-powered aluminium boats.

Obviously that bold move has paid dividends for Quintrex, as the Freedom Cruiser range has now expanded to four models, from the 5.33m/510 to the 6.5/610 – the latter model reviewed in this test.

The 610 is a nicely-balanced boat that has plenty of room in the bow to comfortably carry a few adults while underway, and a nice full-width aft lounge that gives the boat seating capacity for up to eight people.

The Quintrex 'Millennium' deep-V, variable deadrise hull used right through the bowrider series does have an inherently high level of buoyancy and lift, and on this boat that is quite evident.

With a 2.4m beam that is ever-so-close to maximum legal trailable width, the 610 does sit nice and level, both at rest and underway, and is not all that fussed about where the passengers choose to sit. For much of the test, we had a couple of people sitting in the bow and no-one down the back, and there was no sign of the boat being out of balance or bow-heavy. In fact, wherever people chose to sit seemed to have a very minimal effect on the boat's performance and trim.

Though the hull entry is very fine below the chines to allow the bow to slice through the water, there is plenty of natural lift in the boat to ensure the bow doesn't try to bury itself through other boat washes or rougher water.

Consequently, those passengers wanting to enjoy the ride up front remain dry and



The 610 is a nicely-balanced boat that has plenty of room in the bow

comfortable and with the displaced water pushed down and away from the hull, the chance for wind-borne spray coming back over the rear quarters of the cockpit is greatly reduced.

There's plenty of room in the bow and passengers seated here won't upset the boat's balance or handling.

VERSATILITY

This makes for a very versatile family boat as kids never seem to be happy sitting in the same place all the time, and there are times that it makes sense to have the kids sitting up front in a deep and secure bow, where you can actually keep an eye on them.

Below-floor foam filling of the hull, along with foam installed behind side mouldings and under the deck, provides what Quintrex calls a basic flotation package, but the future standards-compliant 'Level Flotation' you get on the outboard Freedom Sport series is not available on the sterndrive-powered Freedom Cruiser models. It does, however, serve another purpose that is not safety related.

By foam-filling the under-floor compartments not used for storage or a fuel tank, much of the pounding and drumming noise that results from water against aluminium is muffled.

By David Toyer



Above: The helm affords clear, 360-degree vision.

Right: The stereo is safely housed in a storage bin.

Below: The quality mouldings are packed with practicality.



This may not seem much of an issue, but by eliminating that hull noise, there is a perception that the ride is softer and smoother. This is a misconception – the ride is only quieter – but that one little thing makes the boat ride far more enjoyable.

The spacious bow, two swivel bucket seats and the full-width rear lounge do ensure there is space to seat all the eight people the 610 is rated to carry. The rear lounge, while giving extra seating capacity with its full-width configuration, is more comfortable at each extreme, where there is depth to sit back and relax. The curved backrest (where it is shaped around the front of the engine box) reduces the actual seating space, so it's more a case of having to sit bolt-upright.

But then this solution does provide those couple of extra seats that would not otherwise be available if the conventional aft quarter jump seats each side of the engine box were employed. On top of that, by bringing the entire rear lounge forward just a little bit more than normal, Quintrex has been able to get a sun pad across the back of the boat, with bonus storage pods underneath on each side of the compartmented engine bay.

SURROUND SOUND

The engine certainly isn't as well isolated from the rest of the boat, nor is the compartment as well insulated, as is found on most of the local and imported fibreglass sterndrive bowriders. Consequently, on-board engine noise levels are higher. I didn't consider the noise to be excessive, and it's still easy enough to converse with fellow passengers – most importantly at cruise speeds.

Quintrex has developed expertise in its use of plastic mouldings for a variety of purposes, from the main helm and adjacent passenger consoles to side cockpit storage and liner modules to the underseat storage inserts that keep smaller items in their place and larger objects, such as clothing and safety gear, clean and dry.

The main cockpit side liners are neat and practical. Being moulded plastic, they offer long life if the boat is left out in the weather, and the surface is easy to clean and maintain. The storage pockets are a good size and will hold most things, from boat hooks and fenders, small rods and the like, to spare ropes and extra safety gear. The eyebrow-style



shade moulded in over the top of the pockets gives a bit of protection for whatever is stored there. The drinks holders, with elastic straps, and the recessed cockpit down-lights, are neat.

The underfloor storage locker has enough room to hold a few skis and/or wakeboards, ropes and handles, and the moulded bins under the bow seating are ideal for safety gear, as well as extra ski ropes and vests.

VISIONARY

From a skipper's point of view, the helm console is well set out and positioned low to give the driver a good, clear view out the front. During our test, I also found that, because of the wide beam and spaciousness of the bow seating, passengers sitting out front didn't impede my forward vision.

All of the instruments and switches are clustered to the starboard side of the wheel rather than across the top. While they are not too low, and although there is some visual obstruction from the wheel, the chance of reflected glare or white-out is considerably less. To add a sounder/GPS does require bracket or pedestal mounting off the top of the console, as there is little other space available.

The stereo is built into the storage bin on the passenger console and if you go looking for a built-in ice bin or drinks cooler, you won't find one. There is, however, enough space on board,

Above: With the 220hp engine in place, performance is decidedly punchy.

Below: The helm is sporty and stylish.

the 610 Freedom Cruiser is truly a great family day cruising boat





There is more than enough power and performance from the top-of-the-range engine

Top: The rear sun pad is a bonus.
Above: The test boat was fitted with the top-tier 220hp MerCruiser V6.
Below: The aft swim platform makes access from the water easy.

including under both the driver's and passenger's console, to stow one. There is also space to slide a picnic basket or two in under the rear lounge. The optional bimini top (offered here as part of the test boat package price) gives good shelter over the two main seats, with enough height that it isn't a hindrance to regular passenger movement between bow and aft seating. The front edge of the bimini has been set back far



enough from the screen that it is possible to stand while behind the wheel.


FAMILY FRIENDLY

With all its on-board space, generous bow and rear lounge seating, all in an easy planing and gentle-riding hull, the 610 Freedom Cruiser is truly a great family day cruising boat.

It is stable at rest and underway, and the (optional) top-of-the-range 220hp MerCruiser 4.3MPI V6, with Alpha drive, delivers good performance with a 48km/h cruise speed at 3000rpm, through to a brisk top speed of just over 82km/h at 4800rpm.

There is more than enough power and performance from the top-of-the-range engine to carry the full complement of eight people, including two kids or friends out the back on skis, boards or water toys. The aft platform extends right across the back of the boat and with the fold-down ladder and extended deck handrails, is designed to make beach or water access fairly easy.

This is a very nice boat from a driver's point of view. The power steering makes it easy and smooth to drive and it handles well under a variety of conditions and passenger loads.

Quintrex is, without doubt, a world leader when it comes to innovation and development in aluminium boat design and construction. The 610 Freedom Cruiser is proof of that. Aluminium boat fans looking for the ideal all-round family boat package will find it doesn't get much better than this. 

SPECIFICATIONS: QUINTREX 610 FREEDOM CRUISER	
Hull length:	6.55m
Length overall:	6.93m
Beam:	2.4m
Weight (hull):	780kg
Fuel:	120lt
Max capacity:	8 adults
Max power:	220hp sterndrive
Rec. power:	190hp sterndrive
Test engine:	MerCruiser 4.3MPI 220hp V6
Price as tested:	\$50,595 (incl rego, safety gear, aluminium trailer)
Test boat supplied by: Broadwater Boating Centre, tel (07) 55291777. For more information, go to: www.broadwaterboating.com.au or www.quintrex.com.au .	