



**BOAT TEST:** NORTHBANK 650 CUDDY  
**STORY:** MARK BRACKS **PHOTOS:** BARRY ASHENHURST

# Bank on it

South Australia's growing boatbuilding reputation is sure to be enhanced by the latest weapon from Northbank Marine, writes Mark Bracks.

**W**ith the masses of imported boats available these days, it's easy to forget just what a world-leading industry we have here in Australia. Boats built here are designed for Aussie conditions, and on the eastern seaboard we don't seem to give much thought to the boatbuilders in other states.

After testing yet another craft from this fine land, I was clubbed in the head once again — why would anyone look anywhere else for recreational boat?

So, who is Northbank Marine and what does it offer?

## NORTHBANK WALTZ

As you may have gathered from the pictures, first impressions of the Northbank are impressive. The 650 Cuddy is a very well designed and immaculately finished vessel, which also has a slightly smaller 6m sibling born of the same design template.

The hull is of fibreglass composite construction with an excellent finish and attention to detail. As it is designed and built in Adelaide, it's made for the rough stuff. This is reflected in the hull, which tops the scales at 1300kg.

That hull may seem a tad heavy to some, but if your pastime is serious offshore fishing, it's a bonus — the extra weight really flattens out the ride. Also, combined with a top speed of over 80kmh, it ensures that it takes minimal time to get where you're going, without feeling like a crash-test dummy.

Manoeuvrability and ride across a rolling swell are excellent. Instead of bouncing over the top of waves, the Northbank 650 Cuddy drives through them, flattening out the swell to make the ride that little bit more comfortable. This is thanks, in part, to the 21° deadrise, and it will no doubt score extra brownie points when the family is aboard.

## TOWER OF POWER

Hanging off the back was a 250hp supercharged six-cylinder Mercury (the 650's maximum rating). The first thing that strikes you when the Northbank is on its recommended Dunbier trailer is how bloody big the engine is. How much bigger will outboards become?





### HIGHS

- Manoeuvrability and offshore form
- Standard features and storage
- Well-designed and very usable cuddy
- Brilliant performance with Verado engine

### LOWS

- Some may consider hull a bit heavy
- Windscreen frame needs repositioning
- Price may scare off some punters

But the new Merc is a bottler, and when the throttle is applied it launches out of the water in an instant — no doubt assisted by the state-of-the-art electronic throttle control. Combined with the fuel injection, this makes for surprising responsiveness — and with a 250lt fuel tank, it gives you the opportunity to explore plenty of water.

If you're into skiing it would be an idea to warn your crew about the power, as the engine could pull the entire cast of Sea World Nara Resort out of a deep-water start! However, for such a big beast, the four-stroke is amazingly quiet, both at idle and at speed.

In fact, the only apparent noise from aft was the hydraulic power-steering unit. This has already been addressed for future craft, so I wouldn't be surprised if owners will be looking behind them to check whether the donk's still attached to the transom. Yeah, yeah, motoring across the water would be one hint that it's still working — but seriously, it's *that* quiet!

### MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

The 650 is not just a pretty face. There are plenty of well-thought-out and practical features that come as either

**Clockwise from below: Dash looks bare, but these instruments store more info than a Sale of the Century champion; Uncluttered cockpit leads to a useable cuddy cabin; Supercharged Verado will push this baby out to more than 80kmh.**



standard fitment or optional add-ons.

The hull has an above-average, large working deck for a few of the lads to head out into the briny, as well as a spacious bimini, plenty of headroom and a bunch of rocket launchers as standard.

There's plenty of storage too, with a large catch tank under the deck as well as a livebait tank in the transom and plenty of area underneath the leather swivel seats.

Behind the pilot's seat there is also a handy tacklebox compartment with containers supplied. Beside the two cockpit seats is a fold-down rear seat as well as a decent-sized boarding platform

## “you'd be hard pressed to go past the Northbank”

ladder. A walkthrough transom is optional.

Other options include carpet, an anchor winch, a fibreglass hardtop, extra rodholders, a baitboard and even a sink and stove.

Seating in the cuddy is very spacious and comfortable, with under-seat storage plus two shelves on either side, as well as a step to gain access to the bow.

Capacity in the 650 is for eight bodies, and all options carry through to the smaller 600 cuddy, which can accommodate seven adults. The 650 is a safe boat too, with high gunwales and plenty of freeboard.

The fully hydraulic steering is precise, very responsive and virtually one-finger operational. Other nice touches are the stainless-steel multi-adjustable steering wheel and an adjustable fore-and-aft pilot's seat, plus a footrail and ample vision from the cockpit.

It might be just me, but my only criticism — and this applies to many craft — is that when sitting down, the windscreen frame is in direct line of vision. You're either peering over the top or ducking down to make sure

you can see everything, and this can be a real problem when you're in the tight stuff.

There must be some big blokes in Adelaide — the forward hatch is absolutely huge, and it offers easy access to the anchor well.

### JACK BE NIMBLE

You'd reckon a 1300kg hull would be cumbersome, but its manoeuvrability is astounding. Combined with the rocking performance of the 250hp supercharged engine, this hull will win many friends in a short time.

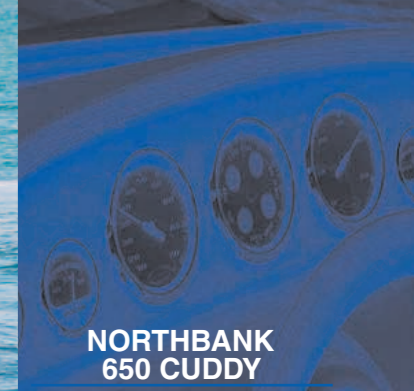
At 3500rpm the boat is ticking over at 40kmh; but when giving it the berries and

redlining at 6600rpm, the motors will push this baby to well over 80kmh.

The particular model I took for a steer didn't have your traditional cockpit instruments, but rather the new state-of-the-art electronics. These things store more information than the Encyclopedia Britannica, and feature displays and diagnostics that would put a jumbo to shame.

The craft, as tested by *Trailer Boat*, has a pricetag over \$82,000. Some would say that's rather a lot for a fishing boat, but 28,000 readies are taken up by the super-powerful engine alone. Seriously, for practicality and a bit of luxury in a top-of-the-line fishing craft, you'd be hard pressed to go past the Northbank.

Quite simply, the Northbank 650 Cuddy is built for the serious fisho who desires a top-of-the-range craft with style, performance, individuality and quality. If that's what you're looking for in a hull with a three-year warranty against structural defects, you'd be a mug not to take a closer look.



## NORTHBANK 650 CUDDY

Price as tested: \$82,990 with 250hp Verado, trailer

Options fitted: . . . . Engine upgrade, rocket launcher, bimini, transom door, stainless steel bowrail, swim platform, ladder, seatboxes and hatches including tackle trays, cushions, rear 3/4 lounge, padded coamings, carpeted floor, cabin and cockpit lights, Navman 6600 sounder/GPS plus fuel flow, 27 Meg radio, compass, heavy-duty trailer and more

Priced from: . . \$63,990 w/ 200hp EFI Mercury with some options

### GENERAL

Material: . . . . Fibreglass composite  
 Length (overall): . . . . . 6.50m  
 Beam: . . . . . 2.41m  
 Deadrise: . . . . . 22°  
 Weight: . . . . . 1300kg (hull only)

### CAPACITIES

Fuel: . . . . . 250lt  
 Passengers: . . . . . Eight  
 Rec/max hp: . . . . . 200/250

### ENGINE

Make and model: . . . Mercury Verado  
 Type: . . . . . Inline six-cylinder supercharged four-stroke  
 Rated hp: . . . . . 250 @ 5800rpm  
 Displacement: . . . . . 2.6lt  
 Weight: . . . . . 295kg  
 Gearbox ratio: . . . . . 1.85:1  
 Propeller: . . . . . Revolution 19in stainless steel

### SUPPLIED BY

Hirecraft Marine, Victory Parade, Toronto, NSW, tel (02) 4959 1444 or visit [www.hirecraftmarine.com.au](http://www.hirecraftmarine.com.au)  
 For your nearest dealer, call Jaan Lindsaar, tel (08) 8242 6644, or email [northbank@esc.net.au](mailto:northbank@esc.net.au)

## Which bank?

Northbank Marine is a relatively new player in the recreational boating ranks. It has been a retailer in Adelaide for nearly 15 years, and is now expanding its craft.

The reason? That's simple: “We're all a mob of mad fishos, so we thought we could design a pretty good boat,” says company owner Robert Cumming.

So, to put Northbank's dream into practice, its craft were CAD/CAM

designed by naval architects. And the company should feel pretty chuffed with the results.

Northbank isn't satisfied with just having two craft to choose from, however — there are now 4.9m and 5.4m versions in the pipeline too.

The company recently sourced dealers in other states, as there never used to be a dealer network. Hirecraft Marine in Toronto is now the NSW dealer.