

The Stacer 565 Coral Fisher BMT Package

This year's Australian Boat Show season July-September witnessed the introduction of a major change in boat marketing. For the first time ever, a range of boats was offered for sale at the same price in Perth as it was in Brisbane, and even more remarkable, it was offered as a completely finished boat/motor/trailer and accessory package. There's no doubt it's an audacious move by Stacer, but does it really offer a better deal for the consumer? Last month, editor Peter Webster decided it was time to find out . . .



For Australia's biggest trailerboat manufacturer, Telwater Pty Ltd, the manufacturers of the growing Stacer range, along with the burgeoning range of Quintrex models, the decision to lock in the recommended retail prices from one side of Australia to another is pretty revolutionary stuff.

Given that their factory is in southeast Queensland, it patently costs them more to get a boat to Broome on the northwest shelf of WA, than it does to Brisbane, and ditto for Queenstown Tas, compared to the Gold Coast. How can they do it? Why are they subsidising the freight to these far-flung centres?

If that wasn't enough to keep the industry pundits puzzled, imagine their shock when they realised that Stacer had produced not one superb 66 page full colour catalogue at vast expense to management, this awesome production only had a shelf life of 3 months! Yes, already they have produced an updated version for the summer of 2003, and clearly they intend to upgrade their catalogue every quarter.

Now given that this is obviously a reflection of their need to continually upgrade (or downgrade) the prices and interest rates shown in the catalogue it is, nevertheless, one of the most extraordinary marketing moves ever made in the industry.

Having made the brochures and catalogues for most of the companies in the industry at one stage or another over the last 30 years or so, the writer is more aware than most about the significance of this manoeuvre.

Up front, the writer should also declare that like many in the trade, I have some serious reservations about the effectiveness (note I used the word effectiveness not the word principle) of BMT packaging.

To the writer, the whole deal stop and starts with the effectiveness of the fit-out – the ability of (whoever) to look at the customer's needs for the type and geography of the boating being planned – and making damned sure he/she gets exactly what they need.

This is where the controversy lies. Many dealers vehemently believe they are better equipped to set-up and prepare the boat and trailer, motor and accessories combination to suit the needs of their local boating community, and that's a pretty compelling argument from some of Australia's most experienced dealers.

Even so, Stacer's management ardently believes that they can do just as good a job as the local dealer, and further, their computerised procedures allow that local dealer to tailor his customer's boat to suit the local market anyway. For example, the

Narooma NSW dealer might need a much longer anchor rope than Stacer would otherwise supply a dealer in another district such as (say) the Gold Coast. No problem – the dealer just orders the longer anchor rope. Or if the WA dealer in Geraldton wants a full-length cockpit canopy instead of the 'normal' Tee-top - that too can be arranged. Just add money.

Stacer are adamant that the local dealer's influence and knowledge is no way compromised by the BMT packaging of the factory – as long as the dealer is able to communicate what he wants to the factory at the time of ordering, they see no reason why they can't produce the goods as and when required more efficiently than the local dealer.

Why is this so? What is the reason behind Stacer's push into BMT packaging? It's an interesting subject and one that is quite complex, but the nub of it is this: Stacer's management believe that the dealer's principle role is to look after the customer; to seek out and find new customers, love 'em to death - and sell 'em a boat.

Telwater believes that every minute a dealer spends fiddling around putting in a 27meg radio which he's bought one at a time from GME, is a classic waste of time and energy.

Obviously, Telwater will buy umpteen thousand radios from GME this year at an infinitely better price than any dealer in Australia could dream of matching. That's just plain commonsense, but multiply that process out by 50 or 60 items and you can see why Stacer's management believe they can maintain the dealer's competitive edge (and then some) whilst leaving the dealer to concentrate on what he is supposed to do best of all – service the customer.

Well, it is a brave new concept, and one has to admire their courage and commitment to the consumer. Sure, obviously they want to flog more boats to the consumer (we're not that naïve!) but at the same time, they know the only way that's going to happen is if the Stacer dealers