

# Coast LIFE

CATCH A WAVE, CATCH SOME FISH, CATCH SOME RAYS



## SMOOTH SAILING

Make sure you are prepared before you hit the water in your boat this busy summer season. Learn a few handy hints which will help make your time on the water more enjoyable.

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# Eco powers up craft

### Slow boats to relaxation are not for the speedsters

By **BILL HOFFMAN**

**A**N Australian company is banking on greater environmental awareness to drive demand for a style of boating that has been around since the 1800s but may be about to come into its own.

Electric powered craft are not for everyone, a top speed of six knots limiting their appeal at this stage to those for whom the concept of boating is a social occasion on water.

But Eco Boats' range of stylish watercraft is already attracting attention on the Sunshine Coast from those whose primary need is comfort and a desire not to impact negatively on the environment. Its top-of-the-range 22-footer will be on display at Noosa Marina tomorrow and Sunday with test rides available to those interested.

Eco Boats Australia representative Steve Mullie said research showed that a few hours in a petrol-powered boat had a bigger environmental impact than a return road trip from Brisbane to Sydney.

Petrol-powered marine engines are among the highest contributors of hydrocarbons, oxides, and nitrogen emissions in the country.

The alternative, which costs just 50 cents to charge, has surprisingly been around since the late 1800s and remained popular until the 1920s when the arrival of the internal combustion en-



**DREAM MACHINE:** Steve Mullie of Eco Boats shows off the 22 foot Duffy Electric boat.

PHOTO: GEOFF POTTER/N25899C

gine saw a shift to fossil fuels still in use today.

Mr Mullie said the threat of global warming and rising fuel prices had generated a lot of interest in electric boats in his native Holland.

"Electric boating is getting a lot of attention from councils who've decided to clean up their act, reducing noise and pollution on their waterways. Some rivers and canals already only allow electric-powered vessels," he said.

Electric boats are also gaining popularity in the United States

where waterfront property owners are finding them as easy to use and as maintenance free as golf buggies.

All you need to do is flip a switch and grab the wheel and, because they don't exceed six knots, no licence is required to operate them.

At four and a half knots the boats' batteries retain sufficient charge to be run for eight hours. Increased speed reduces time on the water with operation at the maximum six knots likely to run batteries down within five hours.

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**ENGINE ROOM:** The motor and rudder assembly.



**CRUISING ALONG:** Steve Mullie in the 22 foot Duffy Electric boat.

## Electric vessels generate interest

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HOWEVER, there is an optional solar system that allows batteries to be topped up on the run.

"With top speeds of around six knots (11kmh), a trip on an electric boat is all about relaxing and unwinding," Mr Mullie said.

"Some people want speed, but we're offering a social event that brings friends and family together and doesn't cost the earth.

"The beautiful thing is that

electric boats are so quiet.

"It's a lifestyle boat, perfect for relaxed day or sunset cruising on the river with family, friends or business associates."

The other advantage is that with only one moving part the vessels are also virtually maintenance free compared with combustion engines that have hundreds of moving parts.

The Eco Boat range sells from \$25,000 for a vessel capable of

carrying five to \$65,900 for the top-of-the range 22-footers.

Mr Mullie believes electric-powered craft will come increasingly into their own as improved battery storage technology allows them to travel greater distances at higher speed without compromising boat space.

The electric boat display at Noosa Marina will be open from 10am to 5pm tomorrow and Sunday.