

# South Coast 25

**One of the very few sailing craft produced in Australia purely for cruising; with a good standard of finish, full headroom for 6 footers and 6 full length berths — little wonder this yacht is so popular.**

The South Coast 25 represents a significant step in the development of the Australian cruising yacht.

It is the first of the so-called "maxi" trailer yachts to have gone into regular production. It is also one of the first yachts actually produced for cruising, rather than harbour racing or a mixture of both. This is not to say there are not many other fine cruising yachts produced in Australia — but this is one of the very few yachts produced solely for that purpose. And to make it even more unusual, the South Coast 25 is a legitimately trailerable cruising yacht that can be towed along the highways to cruising grounds anywhere in Australia.

We first became interested in the yacht several months ago, in response to a number of reader enquiries questioning the performance and practicality of this yacht. Subsequently, we made our own enquiries and learned the manufacturer, a small NSW South Coast businessman and yachtsman, Rudy Waalkens was making quite a name for himself producing one or two of these big trailer yachts every month.

When asked to consider the feasibility of our week long test programme, Rudy Waalkens didn't hesitate — "When can I deliver the yacht to Sydney?"

Within a few weeks, the beige and chocolate South Coast 25 was despatched from Wollongong and "moored" outside our Palm Beach home.

## DESIGN

There is more than a family resemblance to the Roberts 25 — the South Coast 25 is a direct development of the original Bruce Roberts' design.

This situation came about after boat builder, Rudy Waalkens negotiated the manufacturing rights to the Roberts 25 with Bruce Roberts in return for Roberts' promotional use of Rudy's beautiful foam sandwich Roberts 36 he built several years before. This yacht was subsequently used to promote Roberts design and plan service in magazines and brochures around the world.

Rudy Waalkens wanted to make several changes to the South Coast to incorporate ideas and thoughts of his own; he believed the galley arrangement needed re-thinking and was keen to incorporate a long skeg to provide protection for an inboard diesel propeller shaft — just two of a number of changes he wished to bring into the production model. In the end, Roberts was happy to leave Waalkens to do his own thing.

As a result, the South Coast 25 does indeed bear more than a passing resemblance to a Roberts 25 — it was directly developed from the popular Roberts design.

The South Coast 25 is a very big, very comfortable cruising yacht, measuring 7.69m LOA, with a 2.49m maximum beam, and a displacement around 1.587 tonnes.

The South Coast is available with a retractable keel having a draught (board up) of 0.4 metres, and (board down) 1.6m. In the fixed keel version, the displacement increases by 500 kilos and the yacht carries a slightly taller sailplan using a 8.53m mast and having a draught of 1.42.

The yacht is a very high wooded craft, with noticeably cambered decks, a slightly reversed transom or counter and a quite softly drawn stem. Different people viewed the South Coast 25 with completely different reactions. Out of the water it is a massive craft and a somewhat daunting prospect to trailer.

That opinions differ so markedly, is in itself quite curious; only a couple of years ago, ownership of such a yacht would have brought most unkind comment from the stiff upper lip types who subscribe to the bash on regardless theory of sailing — irrespective of whether Mum is seasick and the kids cold, wet and near tears.

## SPECIFICATIONS

LOA.....	7.69m
LWL.....	6.44m
Beam.....	2.49m
Displacement .....	1.587 Tonnes
Draft:	
Board Up .....	0.4m
Board Down .....	1.6m

Despite "high wooded" hull sections (you can't have headroom without them in 7.6m yachts) the South Coast sails remarkably well.







BELOW: Manufacturer Rudy Waalkens explains how the folding boarding ladder works. His attention to detail throughout the manufacturing process is heartening.



ABOVE: Galley layout is excellent — and remember, this yacht is only 7.69m overall. Check out the ice chest, storage area and moulded nook for fully gimballed stove.

This is what made the South Coast 25 such an interesting test project. This yacht is one of the first to come out and make the definite statement "I am for cruising, for having fun — and for **enjoying** sailing with the family". And it was interesting to note the diversity of comment we received about the yacht confirmed there is indeed a growing trend by yachtsmen towards yachts putting cruising and the enjoyment of sailing before the ultimate performance levels.

Internally, the South Coast is amazingly spacious. Up in the forepeak one and a half berths share comfortable sitting headroom.

The head is located to starboard in the forepeak with **full standing headroom** and provision to be completely enclosed away from the main saloon. Back through the major bulkhead, located almost directly under the maststep, the coachhouse of the yacht encloses a comfortable dinette to starboard, the retractable keel housing and/or seat along the centreline with the very practical galley located to port. Two massive quarter berths run aft to the tuck.

By dropping in the fill-in piece up forward, the yacht has easy accommodation for at least five adults, two couples in some luxury (and privacy) or Mum, Dad and a whole heap of kids. Technically, there is accommodation for Mum, Dad and four children, although the quarter berths are big enough to take a couple of kiddies each!

If accommodation is the name of the game, the South Coast 25 wins hands down. Thus described, the South Coast 25 may not seem too expansive, but then, what can we expect in a yacht with a waterline length of 6.44m? It is the spaciousness of the South Coast 25, with its full headroom below decks and full use of the maximum beam, that makes one wonder whether the brochure was wrong and the yacht is perhaps 9.144m overall and not 7.69m (25').

The 404 kg ballasted centreboard is lowered and raised by a small hydraulic pump. Locked down in position, a cushion is fitted on top of the keel casing, converting it into a comfortable seat opposite the dinette.

The cockpit is just over 6' long and is quite sheltered from the wind or spray by the very high curved coamings which double as back rests.

The South Coast 25 is designed for either inboard or outboard power units. If an outboard is used, the outboard sits permanently in a recessed well under the cockpit sole. The test yacht was fitted with a small 7½ hp Arona diesel which proved more than adequate for the job and gave the South Coast 25 a top speed of around 5½ knots.

## FINISH

As most of these yachts are built today, the South Coast 25 comes in three separate stages.

**Stage one** has the hull and deck joined, bulkheads and floors fitted, and the rudder, windows, keel and supports are installed.

**Stage two** includes the front hatch, companionway door, mast, rigging, main and jib, deck hardware and hydraulics on the trailer version. This stage is known as the "sailaway".

The yacht is then available in varying stages of completion.

**Stage three** includes bunk cushions, life rails, toilet and stove etc., as well as the extensive teak furniture.

Overall, it must be admitted we were quite impressed with the standard of finish. No doubt, Rudy Waalkens' obvious attention to detail affected this decision, as the yacht reflected many little touches which make the difference between a Plain Jane and a real, working yacht.

The rudder is a good example. A small stainless steel handle near the rudder winds up the lower rudder blade and locks in position for trailing or beaching. Simple, but oh-so effective. The stainless steel boarding ladder — folds up and out of the way, but drops down to help Mum and the kids aboard when the yacht is being used on the highway.

The location of the various rigging fittings, such as the sheet fairleads, winches and jam cleats — all are located for easy single handed sailing — and these effect one's impression of the "finish".

Criticism can be levelled at the finish of the deck mould, particularly around the gunwhale, or perhaps the painted finish in the forepeak area, which would have looked much better with a flow coat finish.

However, these are all relatively minor details, and in no way detract from the overall standard of the finish which we would describe as being as good as most competitive yachts on the market.

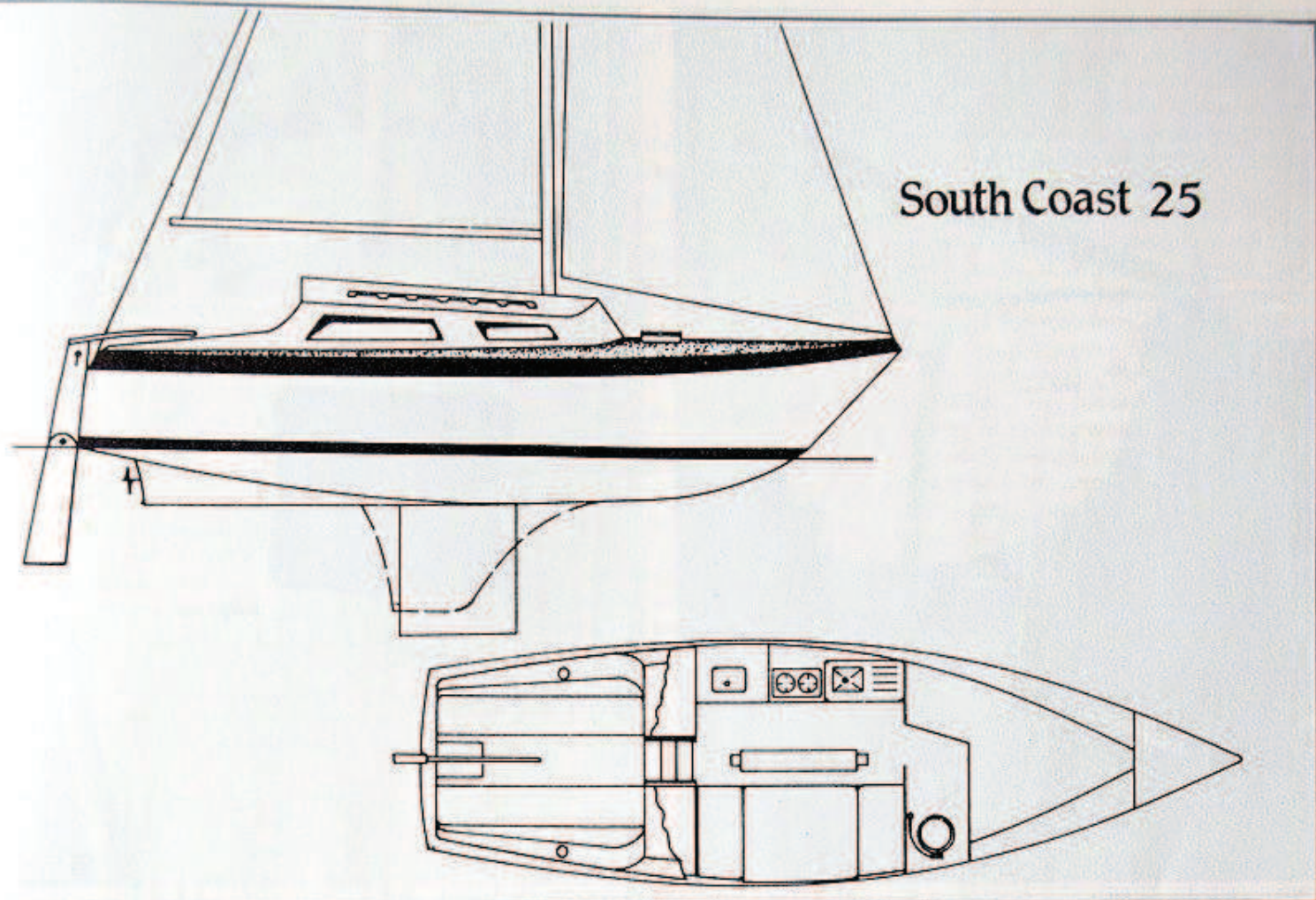
## CONSTRUCTION

The South Coast 25 is laid up in a one piece mould using a combination of chopped strand matt and hand laid woven rovings. We watched and were impressed by the diligence of the small team of fibreglass workers at the factory and noted the attention they paid to the hand lay up in small, difficult to get at areas, such as around the keel, up under the deck coamings.

The deck and coachhouse roof mould is interesting, as we noted the great strength and rigidity in the struc-



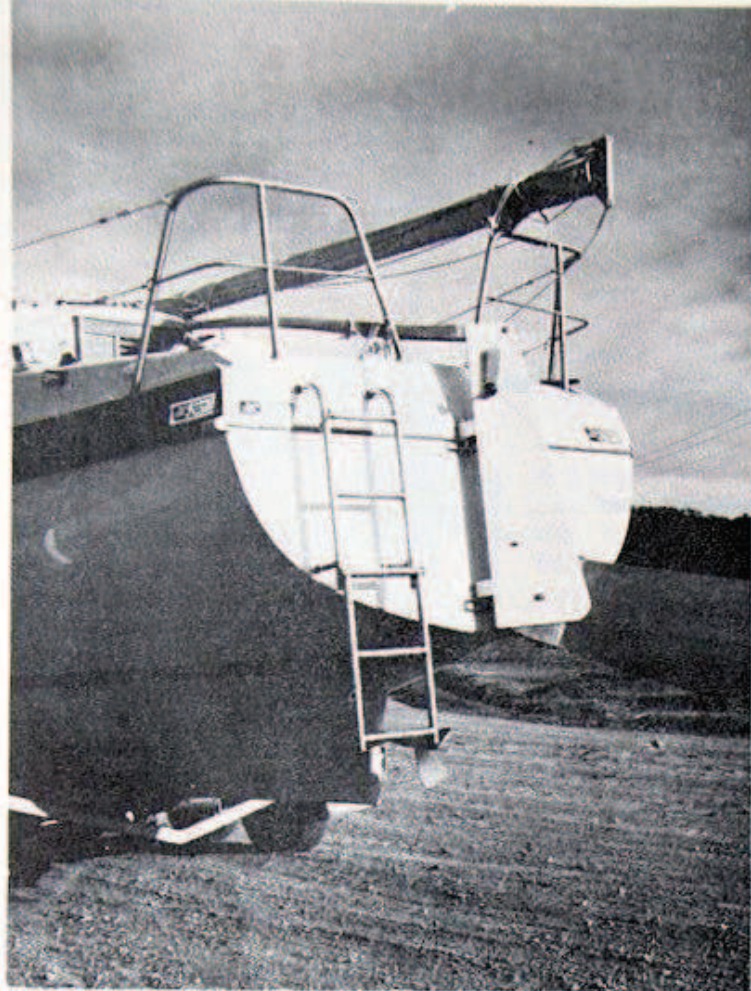
## South Coast 25



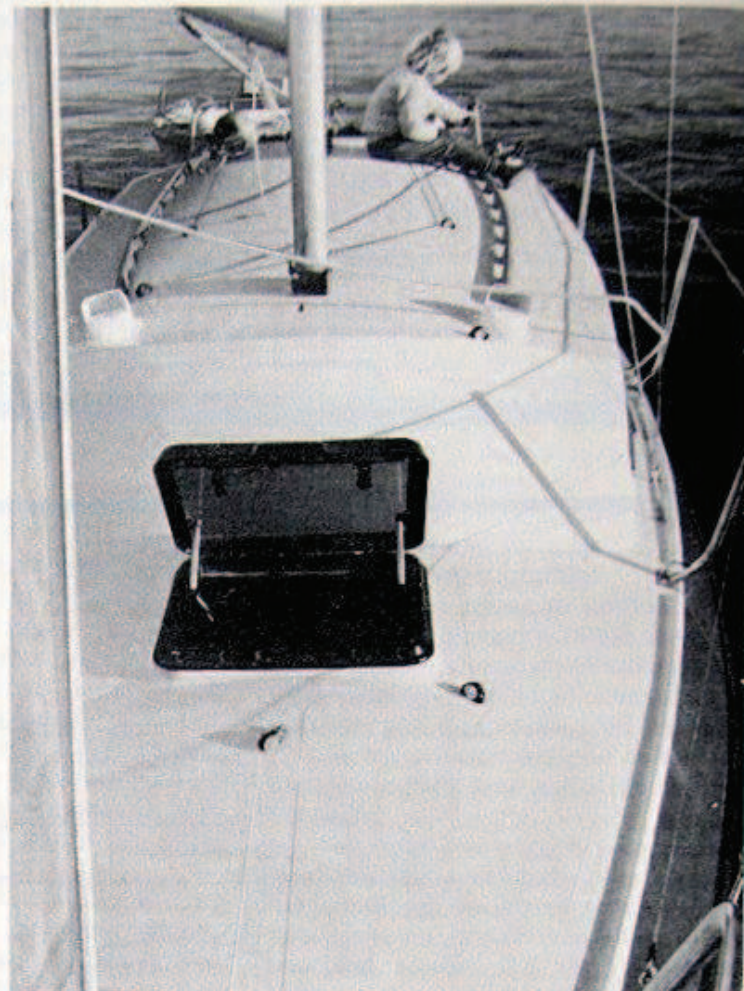
The interior of the South Coast 25 is little short of cavernous! Note the youngster sitting on the centreboard casing, which is in the "locked down" position. When the keel is fully retracted, the seat is eliminated.







Observe handle on tiller base to wind up the rudder blade. Also note deep protecting skeg before propellor.



Camber in the deck is obvious. Side decks are too narrow to walk around, so everyone goes over the top. Note hatch and hardware.

ture during the test programme and were not surprised when we saw this whole area being reinforced with end-grained balsa being laid up to create a form sandwich section in all of the likely stress areas of the upper decks. This is where the South Coast team have been able to achieve a feeling of gut strength and rigidity in what is really a medium displacement yacht; foam sandwich is perhaps at its finest in this application.

All stress areas, such as chainplates, backstay and forestay areas are appropriately reinforced and through bolted into pre-moulded plywood sections, glassed rigidly in place.

In the fixed keel yacht, the iron keel is through bolted into a reinforced fibreglass/timber and steel bed and fixed in position with a total of nine 5/8 and 3/4 stainless steel bolts.

Secondary items such as deck hardware, hatches and hand rails were absolutely first class. Everything is fitted with first quality materials. The forward hatch was an extremely good quality imported French unit, the handrails were all teak and the staunchions and life rails are hand made in 316 stainless steel by a very good tradesman.

## Rigging

For a 7.6m LOA yacht, the South Coast 25 has a sail plan just about as

simple as they come. The sloop rig is designed for maximum convenience; almost every function of sailing can be handled from the cockpit.

The mast is held up by a single forestay, upper and lower shrouds from a single spreader, and a single backstay which has a yoke spliced almost in line with the end of the boom. This is fitted with a small tackle providing a 3:1 purchase on backstay tension.

A small kicking strap or boom vang tackle is fitted, along with almost centre boom sheeting controlled over a small traveller section located on the coachouse. All halyards are internal and lead back to two Barlow 15 winches, also fitted on the coachouse. Sheet winches are located on the coaming with the jib sheets being run through adjustable sheaves fitted to a genoa track located along the narrow sidedecks. The jib sheets then lead behind the winch, turn back through cheek blocks to the winch, before cleating off in conventional jam cleats. It sounds a bit complicated, but it is really quite simple and tends to keep the jib sheets out of the cockpit.

From a trailing point of view, it was possible to raise and lower the mast (puff, puff!) on your own, providing you had a youngster to hold the mast forward while you secured the forestay. Incidentally, to lower the mast, the

backstay tackle is eased, two upper shrouds are released and the mast lowered towards the stern — having released the forestay! Rigging time was initially about 20 minutes, but with a bit more practice, it could be less. If it was your own yacht, you would no doubt work out cunning techniques to (for instance) leave the boom and mainsheet system in position etc., thus saving time getting underway.

## Performance

Gauging a yacht's performance is nearly an impossible task unless you start running around the buoys with the opposition — and even then, often as not it depends on the skipper's skill and his crew.

Obviously, the South Coast 25 is not really going to terrify many quarter tonners, but on the other hand, it makes no pretensions of being able to do so.

On the four separate occasions we sailed the South Coast, we had extremely variable conditions.

One late evening we enjoyed a getting-to-know-you session in a blustery 20 knot westerly. Another Sunday was spent lazily sailing around the Pittwater enjoying a late afternoon on-shore breeze — the third day was for photographs, and as you can see, it was absolutely still. The last was a mixture,



ending up in strong westerlies once again.

Sunday's performance was probably the most indicative. As happens in Pittwater (and in most other yachting centres) the "mob" all tend to sail up the Bay in vaguely cohesive order, coming about according to wind direction, enthusiasm or whatever - and heading off towards the other side of Pittwater where the procedure is repeated.

On this particular day, we sailed in company with a mixed bag of yachts - and we gave ground only to the 30 and 35 footers. Anything of our own size, we not only stayed with, but gently pulled away from in several cases. The last run home to the mooring was particularly interesting, as we sailed in close company with a well-known 24 footer stock yacht (sailed by a very experienced yachting friend) and we deliberately "had it on" over the last mile or so. In this case, the high wooded bulk of the South Coast 25 probably helped, as running for the mooring she gave a particularly good account of herself, despite several serious challenges by our friend.

All of this, of course, is of little consequence; was it not Herreschoff himself who wrote of the futility of chasing the ultimate ¼ knot of performance; suffice to say here, the performance of the South Coast 25 will not disappoint many, and indeed, will probably surprise most experienced yachtsmen.

In gusty, strong winds, the South Coast 25 must, by its very design feel the wind strength and she heels quite easily for the first 10°, before feeling her bilge and firming up very quickly. Once down in this position, even with the sheets hardened she turns in a remarkably good performance. With the keel locked down, we hauled on the sheets to see what would happen, but she surged away before finally rounding up, exhausting the wind from the sails. Despite the strong conditions, we at no stage even felt (nor thought about) the possibility of the yacht being knocked down - such was the secondary stiffness hard on the wind.

Off the wind was not quite as impressive as on the wind. For some reason, I thought she would disappoint in her pointing ability, but the opposite seemed true and she consistently pointed higher to the wind than many

yachts we have tested recently, but seemed less happy off the wind.

## Application

Here is one of the most appealing cruising yachts in Australia. It has a character, a charisma which grew with our increasing use and familiarity with the yacht. It is comfortable, it is surprisingly quick - it is easy to sail and the children all enjoyed sailing her more than usual - despite the fact they had to stand on the seats to see over the high cabin structure!

No doubt about it, it is a great family boat. And a delightful way to get more Mums afloat as there is space below to pack away the needs of a large family for a long cruising holiday. Here is a yacht with the where-with-all to provide caravan like accommodation on the highway - and the water!

Further, it is not just the Mums who will be attracted. Experienced yachtsmen will appreciate the great big anchor well in the forepeak which will take not just one little Danforth, but a bulky CQR, a rock pick - plus chain and warp too! Another bonus is the skeg running aft considerably helping the directional stability of the yacht downwind, and protecting the prop for in-board engine installations.

Our major criticism in this area concerned the forward hatch - although it was extremely good quality it was annoyingly just too small to be really useful for anything other than fresh air flow. If it had been just 2" bigger all round, it would have been perfect as a forward exit from below decks - and even more to the point, would have given immediate access to the forepeak for sailbags etc.

## Trailing

I must admit, I nearly had a coronary when Rudy Waalkens pulled up outside my home. Truly, it is so big at close quarters, it is positively daunting - and I am not exactly inexperienced in the art of towing boats on trailers! But Rudy hastened to assure me it was just like "all other boats I had towed" and with my tongue firmly planted in my cheek, I said "leave her here, she'll be right."

Launchramps being what they were in Pittwater at the time, we felt more

than the usual trepidation about launching such a vast yacht at the private yacht squadron ramp; it was a nervous party that took off one winter morning with the job of launching the South Coast 25 for the first time. We were also **towing it** for the first time.

I think it was 100m from home when I decided maxi yachts are here to stay - truly, it was no harder to tow than my 6m sterndrive - it was frankly amazing. Subsequently, I trailered the South Coast 25 over Sydney Harbour Bridge and down the Bulli Pass to Wollongong and can readily confirm the viability of towing what seems to be an impossibly big yacht on the highway. Providing a big enough tow vehicle is used - and I am thinking here of V8 Holdens, Falcons (as a minimum) there is no reason why the South Coast should be any more difficult to haul than a big caravan.

On the waterfront, despite the bulk of the craft, the yacht is easy to handle - **providing you have at least one and preferably two family members experienced in handling ropes.** Armed with a Haulmatic power winch, my 12 year old son and I tackled a difficult retrieval in gusty conditions in a matter of minutes.

## Conclusion

After our first dose of maxi trailer yachts, it was interesting to note the whole family caught the maxi yacht "bug". It really is feasible to trailer such a big yacht in and out of every day launchramps. To be certain, launching and retrieving on a daily basis is a bit hard to imagine, but no more so than most yachts in excess of 6.4 metres.

For families, we see the South Coast 25 as having achieved what could be a yachtsman's dream come true - ownership of a moderately priced yacht with the comfort and safety of a big keel yacht, having the enormous advantage of being small enough to trailer home for the winter or wet season, and be feasible to trailer on the highway to different and exciting cruising grounds around Australia during annual holidays. That is a pretty exciting concept, and the South Coast 25 is one of the very few yachts we have seen make the grade.

