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PORTABILITY

Suzuki showcases its large range of DF portable outboards.

By Chris Beattie

Outboard engine technology has come along in giant leaps and bounds over the past decade or so with such innovations as direct injection, use of lighter weight designs and composite components, more power from smaller engines, less internal friction, quieter running and other neat tricks. Mostly though, the limelight has been hogged by the larger displacement categories, which has meant that the smaller capacity engines and configurations have been a little overshadowed. So I was interested recently when Suzuki invited me to learn more about its large and varied range of DF portable outboards.

The venue was the Gold Coast's watery playground, the Broadwater, and for a little authenticity and relevance we decided to trial the range in the gentle waters off Wavebreak Island. Since one of the most common portable outboard applications is powering tenders stowed on larger craft, Highfield Boats provided a selection of its smaller range of rigid inflatables.

Suzuki has a quite extensive range of portables, our selection on the day running from the smallest engine, the 2.5hp single-cylinder, up to the 30hp three-cylinder powerplant. In between are 4, 5, 6, 8, 9.9, 15, 20 and 25hp models.

Engines are basically distinguished by their power outputs, sizes, weights, and starting and steering systems.

For simplicity and weight reduction, Suzuki portables up to 15hp do not have batteries – from 15hp up electric start is optional – so

manual start it is, which certainly didn't present any problems on the day. The larger portables also boast Suzuki's Lean Burn fuel management system, which constantly monitors engine load to deliver exactly the right amount of fuel for any given situation. It's a proven system that Suzuki claims optimises fuel consumption and is employed across the full range of the company's larger outboard engines. Below 15hp, all engines rely on traditional carburettors for fuel delivery.

All DF portables employ multifunction tiller-steering as standard, with a couple of variations in their applications. The 15hp and up models incorporate the reverse/neutral/forward shifter on the tiller, while the smaller units have a small lever mounted within easy reach on the engine. A conventional twist-grip throttle controls engine rpm on all models.

Engine trim in the non-electric start versions we sampled on the day is a mechanical process involving selecting pre-set positions on a drilled bracket and is simply a matter of experimenting with each application depending on load and sea conditions.

Being portables, of course, all are designed to be removed and stowed when not in use and rely on simple screw clamps when it comes to mounting to transoms. The smaller engines run from just 13kg for the 2.5hp baby of the family, up to 64kg for the 30, so the bigger they get the more muscle they need when it comes to installation and removal. It's worth noting that the 6hp is the lightest in its class, according to Suzuki.



Suzuki has a quite extensive range of portables

The larger portables also boast Suzuki's Lean Burn fuel management system



Fuel storage also varies according to size, with the 2.5 and 4hp having small inbuilt tanks, while the bigger units employ tote tanks.

All motors sampled on the day started with little effort and pretty much all on the first pull. Underway, the smaller capacity units needed a little time and encouragement to get on the plane, including throwing my weight forward to keep the nose down, but once on the move they maintained their momentum with ease. The tiller-steering was nicely weighted and a breeze to get used to. Every now and then I stopped to adjust

the trim when needed, and when beaching it's simply a matter of grabbing a rebate or handle at the back of the cowl and hauling the engine onto its rest as you run up on the sand.

We put two engines to the test in terms of fuel usage – the 25 and 15hp models – and running at regular cruise rpms with one person aboard, the 25 managed an average of 10km/lt, while the 15hp delivered 11.9km/lt. Both figures are more than adequate as far as typical tender usage goes.

Portable applications don't generally demand much in the way of outright performance as they are designed for utilitarian purposes, mostly ferrying people and cargo to and from shore and other vessels. As a result, ease of use, light weight, reliability and low running costs are the main concerns and, certainly from my experience on the day, the Suzuki portables tick all the boxes.

Apart from electric start and electric tilt options on the bigger units, they can also be ordered in the more common long-shaft specification for deeper hull applications. Suzuki also reports increasing interest in its portables from canoe and kayak enthusiasts.

Recommended retail price for tiller-steer models begins at \$1241 for the 2.5hp up to \$6561 for the 30hp, plus dealer delivery charges. Suzuki also has a range of forward steer models from 20 to 30hp that come with a remote control.

More information: suzukimarine.com.au. 



Right: Simple screw clamps make mounting and removal a breeze.