

Cost and green gains with cleaner

A new hull cleaner for marine craft, designed and built by Cairns' engineering firm Tescorp, has overcome a costly and long-standing maintenance problem for large and small vessels alike. The hand-held scrubber, operated underwater by a diver or snorkeller, eliminates the need for expensive anti-fouling treatments and the high cost of taking vessels out of the water. In replacing the need for anti-fouling, it also benefits the environment.

The central feature of the hull cleaner is a small hydraulic motor, contained within a waterproof, stainless steel capsule, which drives the scrubber's 400 millimetre diameter brush head. It is linked to the unit's 2.2 kilowatt electric power pack by up to 40 metres of hydraulic hose. The unit can also be driven by a petrol engine and operated by a diver using a dive compressor, or 'hooker' breathing system, if required. The complete lightweight unit is carried on a custom-made hand trolley.

Tescorp managing director, Andrew Sands, says the hull cleaner offers significant advantages over existing hull maintenance options.

"Any skipper knows that keeping your hull clean is crucial to a vessel's speed, cost-effective operation and the prevention of corrosion. To date, that sort of maintenance has required vessels to be removed from the water in a slipway on a regular basis with all the cost and lost time involved in such an exercise," Mr Sands said today.

"With our new hull scrubber this sort of cleaning can be carried out as part of a routine care and maintenance program without the vessel ever leaving the water. It's a major breakthrough for boat maintenance that will deliver significant savings and benefit the environment at the same time," he said.

Fantasea Cruises in the Whitsunday Islands has been using a Tescorp hull scrubber for some time and confirms its advantages. Fleet manager, Steve McGillivray, says he compared the costs of slipping a vessel and using traditional anti-fouling treatments, with the hull scrubber.

"We basically halved our costs and the savings on one slipping alone paid for the hull scrubber," Mr McGillivray said. He said the machine only takes about one and a half hours to clean the hulls of a 30 metre catamaran.

Andrew Sands said the hull scrubber is easily managed in the water because it assumes neutral buoyancy and virtually attaches itself to a hull through a vacuum effect caused by the spinning brush head. It incorporates several important safety features, including a 'logic control' operating system.



Andrew Sands with Tescorp's hull scrubber

"The scrubber is engaged by clasping a handle on each side of the brush head unit, one of which has a built-in pressure switch. If the operator releases his or her grip on the handle, the scrubber stops immediately," he said.

The hull cleaner is the latest in a series of innovative products from Tescorp that combine lateral thinking with the versatility of hydraulic motors to achieve some enterprising engineering outcomes. While designed for marine craft, the machine may also find a market in the professional pool maintenance industry.

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