



## 'Beyond Vegas'

Kirby Naiad pilot boat for Dampier

By MIKE BROWN

After eight years as coxswain of the Dampier pilot boat, Glenn Heales formed his own company Beyond Marine, ordered a boat, and contracted pilot boat operations from the Dampier Port Authority's pilotage providers Argonaut Marine Group. He chose a Naiad from Kirby Marine.

Kirby had already built a smaller pilot boat for Bunbury Port Authority, but that was a stand-by vessel rather than a full-time worker like Dampier's. Kirby put a great deal of design and planning time, including whole-of-life costing models of previous vessels, into creating a highly reliable, manoeuvrable and economically maintained vessel.

The resulting 15-metre vessel features oversized components and has the intriguing name of 'Beyond Vegas'. The owner explains that this was his subtle way of expressing that it was beyond a gamble, a big step for a first-up vessel owner.

Kirby believes this is the world's first pilot boat to be powered by Volvo IPS units. Very popular on larger leisure boats, the IPS azimuthing pod drive system has not yet achieved a big presence commercially. The hull was optimised for the system, and Volvo themselves spent considerable time on this project, keen to ensure maximum efficiency from the installation. Intrinsically more complicated than a shaft drive and rudder system, IPS has features especially attractive for remote areas where maintenance costs are high. Engine and drive system is supplied as a single unit, requiring a single opening in the bottom and no tailor-made engineering.

If problems occur with the drive, the vessel can be brought ashore on a jinker and the unit lowered and removed. It can then be sent to a population centre for work to be done more cheaply. The owner has already ordered a spare IPS so the vessel can be back working within a maximum of five hours. However, aside from impact damage and normal wear and tear, no problems are expected.

The twin engines are Volvo D6s, pleasure-rated at 336kW, but in the

interests of longer life derated to 246kW. This is still sufficient for a top speed of 31 knots with cruising between 25 and 27. This excellent result on an 11-tonne lightship vessel is typical of IPS, which has a reputation for drive efficiency and fuel economy. The performance is enhanced by the fitting of Humpfree interceptors. Aptly named, they remove the planing hump and, far from adding drag, actually increase speed when deployed. Although not fitted here, they can have gyros incorporated to automatically adjust trim.

Manoeuvrability is phenomenal. Control can be switched from conventional wheel and throttle – which itself is highly effective – to joystick. With that engaged the vessel can be steered, spun and crabbed with hair splitting accuracy.

The main deck is laid out in the conventional pilot boat fashion: flush-decked, wheelhouse handrails and car tracks, and pilot rails forward. Below the gunwale the normal Naiad inflatable side tubes have been replaced by heavy-duty plastics-coated polyurethane foam, creating superb fenders as well as replacing more vulnerable buoyancy.

In the further interests of reduced maintenance, instead of hydraulics to operate the pilot rescue platform a simple rope system powered by an electric drum winch is fitted. A definite plus in recovery operations is the duplicate joystick control at the starboard quarter.

The wheelhouse has six suspension seats, mounted leisure boat-style on locker boxes. The coxswain's dash-scanning workload is considerably reduced by the Volvo's sophisticated electronic monitoring systems, leaving him to visually confirm from time to time that the IPS oil temperature is operating in its favoured 60-90 degree range. The sight lines from the helm are excellent. Kirby has provided a first-class working environment.

Powerful and reliable air-conditioning is crucial in the Pilbara. Instead of fitting normal marine units, Kirby opted for a pair of wheelhouse roof-mounted domestic units at a mere AUD\$800 each. Performance is



high and the cost low enough for the owner to keep two spares on hand.

Any even slightly absorbent surface in Dampier will quickly become indelibly red from the airborne iron ore dust. The interior therefore is entirely composed of spray-and-wipe surfaces, and there is a deliberate lack of nooks and crannies. Below the foredeck the domestic arrangements are simple: a basic desk cum table, a microwave, a fridge and a toilet.

'Beyond Vegas' is a vessel made to measure for her task in the typically meticulous Kirby way.

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### 'Beyond Vegas'

#### SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Type of vessel:</b>	Pilot boat
<b>Home port:</b>	Dampier, Western Australia
<b>Owner:</b>	Beyond Marine, Western Australia
<b>Designer:</b>	Naiad Design, New Zealand
<b>Builder:</b>	Kirby Marine, Western Australia
<b>Construction material:</b>	Aluminium
<b>Tonnage:</b>	11 tonnes
<b>Length overall:</b>	15 metres
<b>Beam:</b>	5.0 metres
<b>Main engines:</b>	2 x Volvo D6; IPS each 246kW
<b>Maximum speed:</b>	31 knots
<b>Cruising speed:</b>	25-27 knots