

Spirit of Australia

Three point hydroplane – world's fastest boat

Spirit of Australia was designed and built by Ken Warby to break the world water speed record. On 20 November 1977 he achieved his dream. He broke the outright world water speed record on Blowering Dam, New South Wales, reaching a speed of 464.45 km/h (288.60 mph).

Warby built *Spirit of Australia* in his backyard on a shoestring budget and had the boat ready for trials in 1974. He left his job and named his quest Project 300 (after the 300 mph barrier). Professor Tom Fink, who had worked with Donald Campbell 20 years earlier, provided technical advice on wind-tunnel tests and constant design modifications. Even the night before the attempt, Warby cut six centimetres off the rudder to reduce drag.

In October 1978 Warby returned to Blowering Dam and broke both the 500 km/h and 300 mph barriers, pushing his record to 511.12 km/h (317.60 mph). He is the only powerboat driver alive to have reached such speeds. His record still stands though several drivers have been killed trying to best it. Several are still trying!

Ken Warby was awarded an Member of the British Empire MBE for his successes.

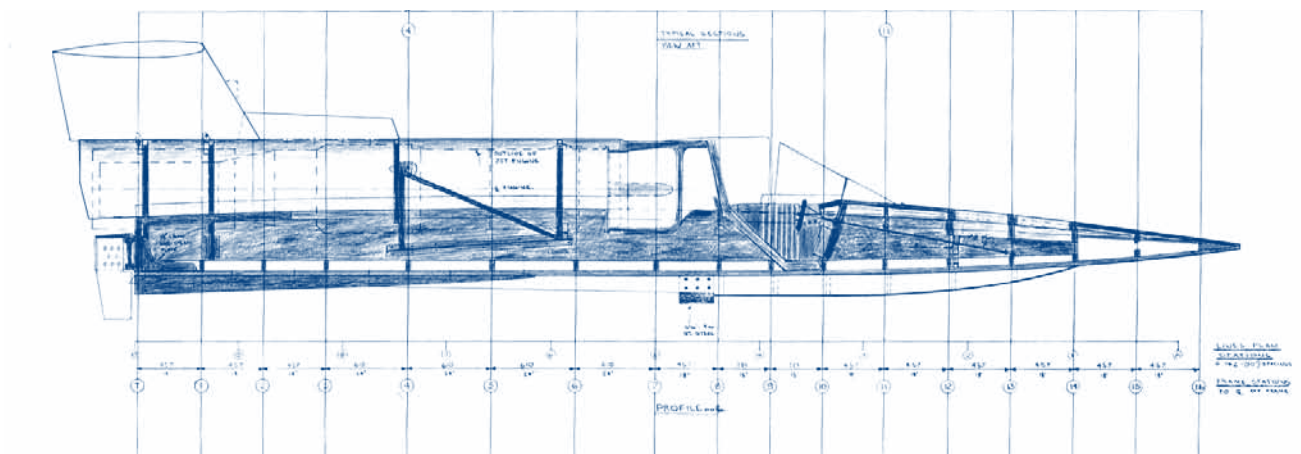


Specifications

Built 1974

Length	8.22 m overall
Breadth	2.50 m
Weight	1.5 tonnes (approx)
Engine	J34 Westinghouse jet from a Neptune anti-submarine aircraft 1959–1962
Power	1587.6 kg static thrust (without afterburner)
Designer	Ken Warby, Sydney, NSW
Builder	Ken Warby, Sydney, NSW
Construction	Plywood & fibreglass over spruce & oregon frame, aluminium cowlings & tail plane, fibreglass air intakes.

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Front: Ken Warby and *Spirit of Australia*, Blowering Dam Tumut NSW 1978 Photographer Michael Jensen National Archives of Australia 4/3/80/8
Above: Construction and arrangement plan of *Spirit of Australia* Drawn by David Payne 1991 ©ANMM