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THE VIEW FROM

# INSIDE

04 | Aug/Sept 2013

**“We are all visitors to this time, this place.  
We are just passing through.  
Our purpose here is to observe, learn, to grow,  
to love ... and then we return home”**

Australian Aboriginal Proverb

**COVER** 1950s original design caravan from the Richard Potter collection. Photo by Daniel Linnet [www.linnetphoto.com](http://www.linnetphoto.com)

Above Blue Mountains NSW

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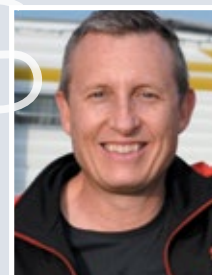
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Peter Garrett shares his love of camping



Rod Bruem

**It's amazing what Aussies can create in their own backyards. In this issue we celebrate the tradition of 'do-it-yourself' builders, with a feature on three remarkable vehicles built from scratch or modified by their owners.**

In our news pages this month we report on the battle local manufacturers are having trying to get governments to do something about cheap and shoddy imports that are destroying the industry's reputation for quality 'Australian made products'.

Time to Roam Australia is an unashamed champion for the Australian camping and caravan industry.

Since we launched our first issue in February this year, we've learned a lot about what it's like taking on the big global players in fairly tough business conditions.

Six months down the track, we're grateful for the overwhelming support we've received from readers from all over the country and from all walks of life. Caravanning and camping is such a universal and shared joy and our aim is to celebrate this in every edition. The readers comments on our letters page are pretty typical of the feedback we receive daily when the mail arrives with another bunch of subscriptions.

We're also grateful to our great team of distributors who have helped make Time to Roam Australia's most accessible caravan, camping and travel magazine. You can now pick up a copy from

more than 600 locations including caravan & holiday parks, visitor information centres and caravan dealers and accessory stores around the country. From Broome and Darwin in the top end, to as far south as Hobart, we have the country covered.

You can also see every edition online as well as all our back issues via our eMagazines, which are always live online if you missed one.

You can also usually pick up a copy at many of the caravan and camping shows held throughout the year. We're either exhibiting or we're available at our advertisers stands. Come and see us at the upcoming Mid North Coast & Rockhampton Shows in August. A big thanks to many of the show organisers nationally who have welcomed us at their shows with open arms.

As Australia's first free nationally circulated caravan and camping magazine, we're especially indebted to the advertisers who've supported us from the outset.

This really would not be possible without that support – so as you enjoy the read in the print or online versions please keep in mind these advertisers and support them and let them know you saw their business in Time to Roam Australia.

Rod Bruem

editor@timetoroam.com.au



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# Govt ignoring camper threat



Picture: Camper Trailer Guild founder and CEO Roger Fagan inside his Sydney manufacturing plant which employs 55 people.

## Industry calls for tougher rules to stop potentially dangerous camper trailers being sold are being ignored by the Federal and State Governments.

Australian manufacturers allege the suspect campers don't comply with weight regulations for safe towing, while some also have non-compliant gas fittings.

Adding to industry's frustration, the mostly Chinese-sourced campers are being sold with 'Australian Made' stickers attached.

The Australian Manufactured Camper Trailers Guild believes buyers are being misled and their safety is at risk.

The camper trailers at the heart of the dispute are mostly assembled in Australia from components made in China.

Guild founder Roger Fagan believes there are at least 3000 camper trailers sold by one Sydney-based importer and assembler that are non-compliant because they exceed the 750kg limit for un-braked vehicles the moment any luggage is added.

He has evidence of another importer that has fitted gas stoves to campers in breach of local regulations.

In both cases, attempts to highlight the problems to Federal and State MPs appear to have so far failed to deliver, as has attempts to lobby the body responsible for supervising the 'Australian Made' logo.

"It's a lot like the problem faced by our farmers and food manufacturers. Supermarkets pass off food as being

Australian-made because they claim the re-packaging here and marketing make up more than fifty per cent of the cost of production, so therefore it qualifies," Mr Fagan said.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission told the Camper Trailer Guild it was up to its members to take expensive legal action in order to prove consumers were being misled.

Sydney-based camper builder Karl Geddes of Blue Tongue Campers says existing industry compliance rules are out of date and often ignored by the import-assembler companies.

"The laws need tightening up, it would be a pain for all of us, but the industry would be better off."

Mr Geddes said he was aware of one company using Chinese-made couplings that did not comply with Australian Standards. When questioned by compliance officers at a recent Caravan show, he said employees hastily applied stickers to some trailers to look as though they had the mandatory plates.



Karl Geddes – Blue Tongue Campers

## Comment: Let's save the gold nugget

The issues facing Australia's recreational vehicle manufacturers are symptomatic of what's wrong with politicians and regulators in our country.

We like to think of the industry as the 'gold nugget' of Australian vehicle manufacturing.

If you've panned for gold, you'd know the nugget is the valuable bit left when all else has gone from the pan.

Our foreign-owned car manufacturers have all but given up, despite being given billions in taxpayer handouts.

Meanwhile the Aussie-owned companies building caravans, campers

and motorhomes, have quietly got on with business. The quality of their product has seen them enjoy double-digit growth rates, while at the same time they've employed thousands of people directly and indirectly.

These companies are not asking for handouts. Really all they want is for policy makers to help ensure there is a level playing field when it comes to regulation and for better information so buyers are not ripped off. In the case of camper trailers, it's about ensuring families don't end up with shoddy imported campers from China when they bought something claiming to be

'Australian Made'.

At the very least, it's time for an update of the 'Australian Made' labelling system given it hasn't changed since it was launched by Bob Hawke back in 1986.

Consumers would benefit from an improved system, along the lines of the star energy ratings used on electrical goods, showing exactly what percentage Aussie made goods actually are from here.

The Camper Trailer Guild isn't asking for much, but it's surely a disgrace that nobody seems to be listening.

**Rod Bruem: editor@timetoroam.com.au**

## Creative goes to Traveller

Melbourne caravan manufacturer Creative Caravans has ceased trading and gone into receivership, putting 30 employees out of work.

The private family owned business was established by Micahel Vona in 2003 and owes creditors more than \$2 million.

Traveller Caravans, also based in Campbellfield, has purchased the Creative trading name and future orders from the receivers for an undisclosed sum.

Receiver Peter Fraczek says it's unclear how much money raised from the sale of assets will go towards covering the company's debts, however worker entitlements would be paid out of a Federal Government fund.

## Take care with refrigerators

The risk posed by gas installations in caravans has been brought home by a recent accident in which two Melbourne girls suffered second degree burns.

A caravan exploded near Stawell in early July after the girls aged eight and 10 lit a candle.

It's believed a gas fridge was removed from a caravan, but the gas wasn't disconnected.

Meanwhile the Tasmania coroner has found a faulty gas fitting was to blame for three deaths of three men in a caravan last year.

Rodney Williams, 53, his son Matthew, 26, and Terry Bartle, 39 died on a hunting trip in the Tasmanian Highlands.

The Coroner blamed a faulty gas fitting attached to a refrigerator that should not have been used inside a caravan.



# PARKS NEWS



## Watch out NSW

Long-term residents of NSW caravan parks are being warned they will face eviction without warning under new laws proposed the state Government.

The Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW says the Residential (Land Lease) Communities Bill 2013 will allow operators to reclassify a residential site from long-term to short-term and then evict home owners without notice.

The Bill is due to be introduced to State Parliament later this year.

## Tassie welcomes RVs

Tasmania is working to overturn its reputation as an unfriendly destination for caravans and motorhomes.

The Caravan and Motorhome Association of Australia has now listed more than 25 Tasmanian towns as RV Friendly.

Tasmanian Tourism Council chief Luke Martin said the state needed to further develop a mix of tourist parks and free camping areas in order to maximise its appeal to RV users.

## Headline fight in SA

SA Independent Senator Nick Xenophon has offered legal help to residents of an Adelaide caravan park facing eviction.

Holdfast Bay council wants to evict permanent and semi-permanent residents from the Brighton Caravan Park to upgrade facilities for tourists. Some have lived there for more than 20 years.

The redevelopment includes 20 new up-market cabins on the site where the residents live, along with luxury tents and a new kiosk.

## New park for Bribie

Queensland's Moreton Bay Council has approved a major new caravan park and resort for Bribie Island on the shores of Pumicestone Passage.

The Sandstone Point Family Holiday Resort will have 79 powered caravan sites, 49 cabins and 22 tent sites.

Bribie Island Chamber of Commerce president Rhonda Cockinos said it would provide a welcome boost to the local economy, with a hotel, motel and museum part of the planned development.



## WARM WELCOME AT THE GRAMPIANS

My wife and I are ex residents of Beechwood (Koree Island) and still have a villa in Wauchope but we have been on the road for two years and three months. We were recently staying in Port Macquarie at the Melaleuca Caravan Park where we picked up Time to Roam and saw all the Kombis. I thought you might like this photo of a Kombi tent we saw at the Top Tourist Lakeside park at Halls Gap in May. The other photos are of ourselves taken at The Pinnacle in The Grampians. We highly recommend this van park run by a young couple. One features of the park was the wood fired heater for the pool. The pool temperature was 32 degrees celcius and the air temp was eight degrees outside. We will be enjoying Port for a few more weeks before heading north to Rockhampton, then returning back south in November.

**Graham and Rosslyn Ward,  
Port Macquarie NSW**

## CAN'T WAIT FOR TIME TO ROAM

Time to Roam would have to be one of the most entertaining travel mags that I have read, and I really look forward to each issue arriving. I even print off a copy from the website prior to my hard copy arriving! The four caravan parks I look after are distributors and there is often many a heated discussion – without the benefit of a campfire, over various articles.

Queensland at this time of the year, although cool, has beautiful sunny days and the 'Southerners' or 'Winteries' arrive from the Southern cold states to enjoy both the weather and the hospitality. From July through to September the majestic humpback whales comes to play in the calm waters off Hervey Bay and tourists flock to the parks to enjoy it all.

I will unfortunately be leaving this job soon and hooking up my own little van and heading off to places unseen and yet to be discovered. (Sounds poetical doesn't it and I'm not sure there are many of these places left in Australia!) I have personally joined the growing number of fans online so I can continue receiving Time to Roam while on the road. Best wishes for many more successful editions.

**Jan Schmidt, Caravan Park Officer,  
Fraser Coast Regional Council QLD**

**Time to Roam Australia welcomes letters and photos or contributions from our readers on just about any subject that relates to caravanning and camping. [editor@timetoroam.com.au](mailto:editor@timetoroam.com.au)**

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## MIGHT BE OLD, BUT IT IS MODERN



We came across your great Time To Roam magazine (edition two) recently in a NSW caravan park.

Having an older style caravan ourselves, I was interested to see the layout of the inside of the Sunliner van.

My husband and I own a 12 foot 1976 Modern van and have used it for the past 31 years for our caravan holidays. The layout is identical to the Sunliner. We even have the same electric toaster that was shown in your photo. The toaster was given to us for a wedding gift in 1972 and yes, it still does the job.

My husband has made repairs to Gertie (that's her name) over the years, but it is still our "little house on wheels".

Our motto is, "Who needs all the mod cons to enjoy yourself". After all, our van might be old but it is "Modern".

**Denise Tarrant,  
Happy Valley SA**

*Modern lovers, check our feature starting on page 20 – Ed.*

## GREAT READ

For Easter this year we hooked our little caravan, circa 1970 up to our 1941 Willys hot rod and set off from Maldon in Victoria to Labrador on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland for the 2013 Hot Rod Nationals.

The Willys and the caravan travelled well and we had a great time at both the Nationals and the caravan parks that we stayed in along the way. At one of these we picked up your great little magazine, which we now subscribe to and enjoy, thanks for a great read.

**Gordon Prossor,  
Maldon VIC**

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# It's a Doggone Debate!

MORE DOG OWNERS ARE TAKING TO THE ROADS WITH THEIR PETS, BUT THEN FINDING THEY CAN'T TAKE THEM TO SOME OF THE BEST PLACES, INCLUDING NATIONAL PARKS.



**FOR**

**Dog lover Paddy McCann argues the case in favour of more tourist access for dogs:**

It's funny but when I made the decision to bring Pepper with us in our motorhome, I didn't really consider what kind of impact this would have on our journey. I'm not sure if I was brave or stupid, but starting to suspect the latter.

Remember when you bought that first motorhome or van and you suddenly started noticing all of the other motorhomes and caravans on the road? (It was the day they all started waving to you).



Once you're on the road with a dog, you suddenly start noticing all of the signs that have pictures of dogs on them. Unfortunately they usually have a big Ghost Busters-style red circle and slash through them. Not a happy sign.

When I think about all those times I have travelled to a dog beach and had my 12 inch pooch rolled by some lion sized beast, I do understand how these signs have gained traction in Australia. I have no personal desire to be stepping over cucumber sized droppings on my daily walks, or the need to hold my own dog chest high while some salivating monster is eventually restrained by his owner. "He's only playing mate - wouldn't hurt a fly!"

But these signs do not differentiate. The fact is that most travelling dogs are as sensible and as respecting of the world around them as their owners. Sure there are idiots out there, but does this really warrant a blanket ban on dogs in all the fun places.

I should qualify that last statement. By "fun places", I am of course talking about "human" →

## RUNNING OUT OF SPACE AT HOME?



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“SORRY MATE, WE NEED TO PROTECT THE WILDLIFE. NO DOGS.”

fun places such as beaches, forests and parks.

My point is that if you take a pooch travelling in Australia, you dramatically decrease the places you're permitted to visit and camp. In NSW, the “no dogs allowed” sign is almost ubiquitous. We were at Trial Bay in NSW recently and there were so many dog signs as we entered the beach, I could only conclude that there was some kind of sale on the things.

The signs offered conflicting information which was so confusing; we ended up respectfully ignoring them all.

Please don't take me for a law breaker or a rule bender by nature - it is just that sometimes a person has to take a stand. A ban on dogs in National Parks for example is really very silly.

If the objective is to prevent disturbance to native flora and fauna, why not clarify the rule to prevent people from disturbing flora and fauna regardless of whether it is their dog that is doing the disturbing or their 4x4 or whatever. It would be like banning cars from the roads to increase road safety. The issue is not the car; the issue is the occasional car owner doing the wrong thing.

Current rules about dogs are just lazy. They discriminate against thousands of responsible dog owners and their fauna loving pooches without addressing the real issues. You don't want dog poop on your footpath? Make rules that say no poop in public walkways – not dog

poop, not horse poop, not people poop, not any poop!

Speaking of poop, I realise it's time to allow my dog Pepper to heed his call to nature and I swing the door on the Motorhome open and see the familiar lush green grass of my own back yard. It is not quite the perfect solution but until the rules about dogs are relaxed and new rules that focus on responsible dog ownership are implemented, we might be safer staying at home.

**AGAINST**



**Time to Roam regular vet columnist Karen Goldrick explains the rules and concludes it's in everyone's best interest to keep our parks pet free**

There's been plenty of talk about allowing shooters in National Parks to help control feral

animals like pigs, dogs, cats, goats, deer, foxes and rabbits. This supplementary pest control program will be operational in National Parks and reserves in NSW, and a trial is planned to begin in 12 parks later this year.

The initial concern from the public was that people using the park may be accidentally shot. Or alternatively, native fauna may be injured or killed. However the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) reassure us that there will be ample notification of proposed shooting in parks, as already occurs when NPWS staff under take pest control programs. Parks will be closed to the public, and neighbours will be informed. There will be heavy penalties for any injury to native animals. The NSW Government will provide extra funding to NPWS to help implement and manage the program. No children, dogs or bows will be allowed.

So if volunteers with guns are allowed in parks, and the possibility of damage to flora and fauna, what about domestic pets? Surely a dog restrained on a leash, or a cat confined to a vehicle is no more risk than the shooters?

In NSW domestic pets (dogs, cats, horses and other pets) are currently banned from National Parks. This is disappointing to the many travelers traversing this state with their pets, who would like to holiday in the parks. The exceptions to this ban are as follows:

- Guide dogs and trained assistance animals are allowed in, although their owners take



responsibility for any damage that occurs

- Stock are allowed to traverse authorised stock routes and working dogs may accompany them
- Dogs may be used for search and rescue
- Pets may be allowed to travel through a park if confined in a vehicle, if there is no other route to a private property

### So what is the problem with pets in parks?

Pet dogs and cats pose a potential risk to wildlife through predation, habitat destruction, spread of parasites and disease, and the possibility of escape, therefore increasing the already uncontrollable feral animal problem in our National Parks. Small native animals and birds may be easily scared by the scent of a dog, whom they would regard as a predator, and they may abandon their young if stressed.

There are also concerns that droppings from domestic dogs may carry parasites or seeds from unwanted weeds. Pets may damage areas of cultural significance. Although many, if not most pet owners are really very responsible, and would keep their pets controlled on leads, or confined in vehicles, there are those small few who would not.

It is not only the risk from our pets we need to worry about. Wildlife and feral animals may be a reservoir for serious infectious disease like Distemper (present in foxes), which may infect our pets if they are not vaccinated.

There are many Regional Parks in NSW which do allow dog walking, as long as your dog is confined on a leash. You can go to the NSW Government Environment and heritage for more information on these.

**Karen Goldrick is a veterinarian at All Natural Pet Care NSW [www.naturalvet.com.au](http://www.naturalvet.com.au)**

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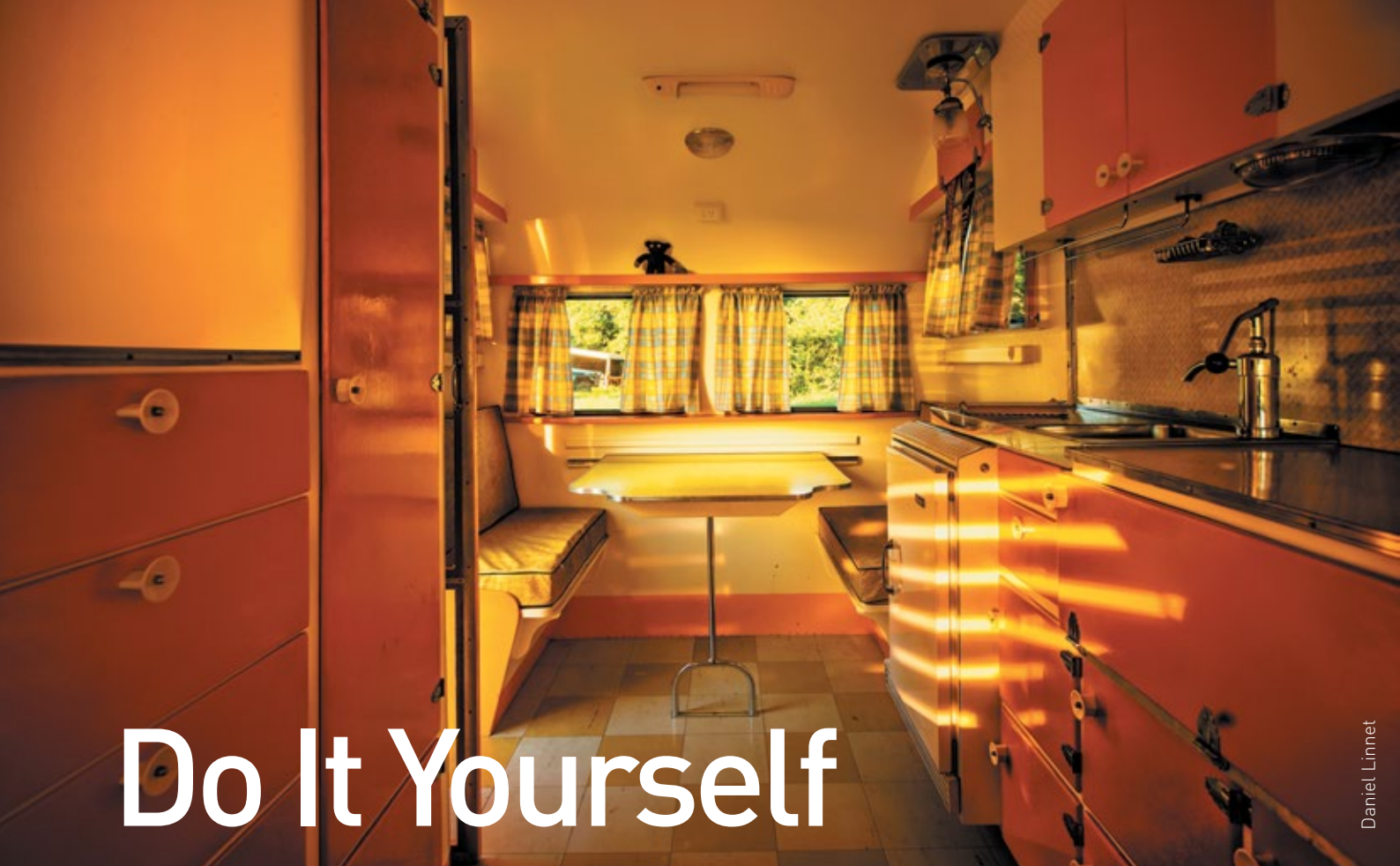
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Daniel Linnet

# Do It Yourself

## CELEBRATING AUSTRALIA'S BACKYARD BUILDERS

**Aussies are famous for their backyard ingenuity. What other country can lay claim to discoveries like the Hills Hoist, the Victa mower and Donald Bradman?**

Then there are the unsung heroes, the do-it-yourself handymen who've fashioned amazing leisure vehicles that have been at the centre of countless family holidays, sometimes even serving as a spare room in the backyard.

Nowadays you can buy a caravan, camper or motorhome in just about any size or style, registered and ready to hit the road. But up until the mid to late 1960s, it was more common to build your own 'home away from home' on wheels. Back then there were a range of caravan kits available, while some designed and built their own unique vehicles.

At Time to Roam we salute the do-it-yourself Aussie backyard builders, from yesterday and today.

Here are just a few of the more remarkable do-it-yourself creations we've discovered. We'll be sharing more in upcoming issues and as always, we welcome tips and contributions from readers.

**Rod Bruem** [editor@timetoroam.com.au](mailto:editor@timetoroam.com.au)

### 1 Futuristic camper – from the 1930s

Some of Australia's best known caravan and camper trailer manufacturers originally started out in a backyard.

But here's betting none showed quite the sophistication of this particular camper on their first effort.

Such is the preciseness in the joinery, you wouldn't get a better result from today's highly sophisticated computer-driven cutting equipment.

It's had several owners over the years, each one speculating as to who may have built it back in the late 1930s.

Some suspect it was a builder or an architect because of the stunning design and clever use of cupboards and storage.

Perhaps it was an engineer, because of the complex way in which it comes together.

With such exquisite joinery, certainly, a

→ continued page 19







(Top left) "Daisy" the backyard wonder – story page 19 (Above) John Hogan's Plonk (Below) 1930s raw but sophisticated camper.



## 2 Is it a Caravan? Is it a boat? No, it's Plonk!

John Hogan fell in love with his compact 1994 Regal caravan four years ago, took it on two laps around Australia, then started making plans to build the ultimate "off road" vehicle.

The idea actually came to him on his travels, whenever he and his travelling companion Polly camped close to water.

"Being in the caravan gave us a similar feeling to a small yacht due to its limited space and the rear door. We would usually park each night facing the weather, which is just what a boat does at anchor. We started looking at rivers and dams with the idea of taking to the water."

Returning to Sydney to catch up with family, John was soon in touch with a company making boats for oyster farmers.

"A visit to their workshop and an hour or so of discussion convinced me that I would have them build an aluminium punt to a very tight tolerance to allow me to insert my caravan inside the hull.

"I then began the task of cutting it off its rather rusty steel chassis and making a number of →



modifications. It proved to be a very major task as I discovered a vast amount of rot in the timber framework. The job was made even more difficult due to the fact that I continued living in the caravan throughout the conversion.”

And so Plonk was born, the name having nothing to do with wine, in case you were wondering.

“It’s mainly to do with the fact that we could plonk her in the water anywhere we chose.”

Despite being a land lubber for most of its life, John says Plonk performs surprisingly well on water.

“I have encountered reasonably adverse conditions and have never felt out of control.”

Throughout the conversion, John said he always aimed to keep his much-loved caravan as close to original as possible.

Necessary additions include an ensuite bathroom and grey water tank.

The pop top has become a roof-top aluminium “moon deck” and John has rigged up his own steering system, allowing him to take in the view from up top while controlling and the five-horse power motor at the rear.

Also up top are two solar panels powering the electrics on board, including a 47 litre fridge/freezer and an entertainment system -for nights when weather doesn’t allow for roof-top star-gazing.

Plonk is fitted with navigation lights as well as travelling lights for on

the road, not to mention life jackets, boat hook, ropes and paddles.

John says Plonk has taken to water like the proverbial duck, having already set a record for being the first caravan to complete a 14km circumnavigation of Admiralty Island in the Trinity Inlet at Cairns.

Another more recent trip has seen Plonk travel down the Hawkesbury in NSW from Windsor to the Brooklyn Bridge.

“Best of all is you can always easily choose your neighbours when you’re on the water. If you find yourself near someone too noisy, you just pull up anchor and find a nice quiet backwater.”

John looks forward to spending many more happy days and romantic nights on board Plonk.

“I’ve spent many delightful nights on the water. It’s such a treat to wake during the night or early in the morning and look at the reflections on the still water or to see the mist hanging mystically by, the moon glistening on the water or the sun rising!”

Capturing that magic, John devised and trademarked the name “aquadisiac” with the aim of possibly working with a caravan manufacturer to go into production at some stage.

“On the road and the water I am constantly stopped and quizzed by interested folk wanting to know more about Plonk. I could have sold her many times over!”

(Above) John Hogan and Plonk  
(Below) More of the intricate detail of the 1930s camper



# MEET THE COVER MODEL

## 3 It's a backyard wonder

Back in the 1950s, as many as one-in-two caravans on Australian roads were built or assembled in the backyard.

Wollongong caravan collector Richard Potter's pride and joy "Daisy" would have to be one of the most outstanding vans from that era still in use today.

In fact it was Daisy that kicked off Richard's caravan collecting hobby. He now has 14 in his collection and had to buy a warehouse to store them all.

Originally christened "Jabiru", it was designed and built in 1958 by Ron Davie, a panel beater from Urunga NSW.

Legend has it Ron raced to get the caravan finished in time for his Christmas holidays that year, however there are no signs he cut any corners in the design and finish.

"This is an unusual van as it has a tubular steel chassis with cross braces and the cladding is 3/8 marine ply which is the outside and inside lining, which has very little in the way of insulating properties," Richard says.

"It has a double bed at the back that can be folded up as a lounge and a dining table at the front which can be folded down into a large single bed. It also has provisions for a single stretcher bed to go above the single bed."

Richard purchased Daisy in 1993 and has enjoyed many long caravanning trips in the years since, more often than not using an FJ Holden ute as the tow vehicle.

"We like to use our caravans and Daisy is often used for family holidays a couple of times a year, having travelled many a happy mile."



Daniel Linnet

← Futuristic Camper from page 16

master carpenter had to be involved.

Quite possibly it was built by a master tradesman with all of these skills, because every one of these elements is outstanding.

What we do know is the current owner Peter Gill bought the camper a few years ago from an elderly gentleman called Brian Sirl who had inherited it from his uncle Jack Nybeck.

Jack had bought the camper in the 1950s and with help of his brother Ren, put as much time and effort into restoring it as the original owner spent building it.

It was re-painted and re-canvassed and some the parts had to be replaced. Jack lived in Bega NSW and worked for the county council and as a sleeper cutter. Jack and Ren Nybeck spent a lot of time enjoying the camper, fishing by the Bega River for many years.

As he got older and had nowhere to keep it, Brian sold it to current owner Peter Gill who's also spent some time on restoration, including having it re-registered for the first time in 30 years.

"It's really is a 'one off vehicle' in great condition. It has an annex all around, a very cute vintage retro look and it folds out with up to two beds," Peter says.

"There's a centre fold out table, lots of cupboards and cubbyholes for storage, a good paint job and it's in good working order."

The time has come for Peter to also part with the camper and he's looking for a new custodian to treasure this truly amazing and historical piece of camping history.

*(Editor's note: If you're interested, you can find Peter's details in the classified directory of this issue)* ♦

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# It's a Modern Mystery

## TRACING THE HISTORY BEHIND WA'S GREAT CLASSIC CARAVAN BUILDER

**The West Australian State Library has some amazing photographs of the WA-built Modern Caravans of the 1950s, but information is a little harder to come by.**

The archive pictures reproduced here show big sleek caravans you'd almost think were imported from the west coast of the USA rather than built on our own west coast in the 1950s. Perth at that time had a population of just 350,000.

Features that stand out include louvre and port-hole windows, full size kitchen appliances, lush furnishings and fancy

cabinetry. They also boasted aluminium frames – well before the big east coast manufacturers caught on.

The 20 foot-plus vans in the archive photos taken at a Perth show would have required a big American V8 to tow them back then. The display also shows kit packages for do-it-yourself handymen – an option popular with many van builders at the time.

By the 1960s there were plenty of compact Modern models available, all with the same striking design features now sought after by the new breed of vintage van enthusiasts today.

According to chat forums on

popular Aussie vintage van sites [vintagecaravansforum.com](http://vintagecaravansforum.com) and [ourtouringpast.com](http://ourtouringpast.com), Modern was the brainchild of a Yugoslav immigrant, but even his name goes unrecorded.

They were built at a prominent factory on the busy corner intersection of Wanneroo Road and Royal Streets in the suburb of Tuart Hill – the exact location is stamped on the ID plate of each.

By the 1970s Modern was also building large and lavish looking slide-on motorhomes and the WA Library archive shows an impressive model mounted on the back of a Toyota Dyna truck.

→ continued page 26





# Mellow Yellow

By **Susan and Keith Hall**

**Gabby Bray is not exactly someone you'd describe as 'modern'. She admits to leading a 'retro' life since about the age of 15 and has been dressing in classic outfits from the 50s and 60s for the best part of a decade.**

The original inspiration came from the music from the era, especially the Beatles, but interest soon spread to all manner of objects (from the era) and collectables from the era ranging from Tupperware to a Modern caravan.

"Back then things were really made to last," she says.

We met up with Gabby at a vintage caravan get-together in the southwest of Western Australia where she was camping with husband Carey and baby Lucille in their yellow-striped 1973 Modern caravan, towed with a yellow Holden from the same era.

The folding chairs were yellow and the interior of the caravan was kitted out with a yellow theme.

Gabby explained that her first car happened to be yellow and she liked it so much, she's had a fascination for the colour ever since.





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Gabby and Carey Bray (Centre) in their 1973 Modern with original interior. The large club lounge at the rear can fold into a double bed.

When she started looking for a yellow tow car, she found that there was already one in the family. Carey's uncle owned an immaculate 1977 HX and he was soon convinced to part with it.

The interior has been reupholstered to match the original brown colour and still has the original visor and venetian blinds. It has a 202 cubic inch (3.2 litre) 6-cylinder engine and Gabby drives it for fun on weekends.

Soon she set out to find a retro caravan to go with the car and thought perhaps it was a bit much to insist on it being in her favourite colour. But luck was on her side. She found what she was looking for online, went along for a look and found that it had a bright yellow stripe. Some things are just meant to be.

As a plus, it came with the original receipts and manual. Gabby is just the second owner.

We caught up with the Brays they were on their maiden journey and having a great time meeting other vintage caravan enthusiasts.

Since then they've been on outings every couple of months, towing with a yellow Hyundai Tucson when the HX needs a rest.

Gabby doesn't just go retro for events – it is part of her daily lifestyle. She always →

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Above: More from the 'Mellow Yellow' collection including 1977 Kingswood Gabby obtained from her uncle.

wears the retro clothing, which she buys at op shops, fairs, vintage clothing stores, online and then alters to her own taste. She also makes outfits for baby Lucille.

She loves rummaging around for bargains in the op shops in WA's wheatbelt towns.

"I found a formal ballgown that fitted and a matching handbag. Both were yellow and half Perth prices."

While Gabby and Carey live in a contemporary home, they admit to having two rooms filled with retro gear and kitchen cupboards stocked with Tupperware galore.

The Modern caravan however is something of a yellow time capsule.

"The interior is original except for the

fridge – we couldn't get the old one to work, but did try. When we got it, the melamine crockery set was green but I replaced it with a yellow set.

"The electric bar heater is original, as is the yellow Laminex table with wood grain look trim. The curtains are original, including the lace and the caravan has original light fittings. There's a TV stand, which was probably installed by the first owner and we now use it to hold an old radio."


The gas stove with flue is original and Gabby proudly boasted to having used it to cook the previous evening's dinner. Next she was planning to try cooking a roast on the stovetop in Rena Ware, 1970s cookware which is like two fry pans that fit together to

create a vacuum.

The van also has a wardrobe, long narrow mirror, a diner which converts into a bed and a double bed at the rear which folds up to make a very large club lounge.

But what really catches your attention is all the memorabilia. As well as the yellow melamine crockery, Tupperware and old cooking appliances, there's a yellow plastic shopping basket still used for shopping trips, plastic canisters, anodised aluminium wine goblets and an old picnic basket that originally held a thermos or two, but is now used as Gabby's handbag.

To top it all off, there's caravan shaped cushions and pot holder she made herself.

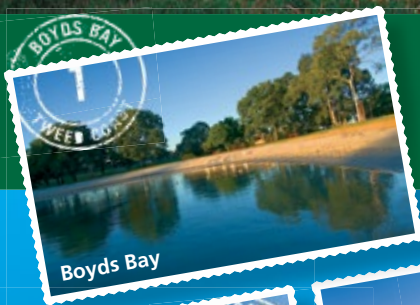
The caravan may be a Modern but Gabby's rig is anything but. 



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*"Your holiday home on the Coast"*

→ from page 20


Modern's largest caravan had a triple axle and was advertised as "The Rolls Royce of caravans, without the big price tag".

The few records available suggest the company struggled along for many years in the small WA market, with the owner finally retiring off the proceeds of the sale of the factory site on Wanneroo Road.

Modern's quality reputation and design heritage have been inherited by the WA based Coromal company which today has far greater success tackling the national market.

**Do you have more information on the history of Modern Caravans?**

We'd love to hear from you.

Contact us at: [info@timetoroam.com.au](mailto:info@timetoroam.com.au) 



A selection of modern caravans from the 1950s through to the 1970s. The stylish curves and unique features including louver and port-hole windows make them popular with today's collectors, although the early models are difficult to find.

Black and White photos courtesy State Library of Western Australia





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# Heritage brand, quality marque

**Tested Longreach Seabreeze Report by Seb Stephens**

MILLARD IS ONE OF THE GREAT NAMES IN THE AUSTRALIAN CARAVAN BUSINESS, WITH THE CURRENT OWNERS FOCUSED ON PUTTING QUALITY BACK INTO THE BRAND.



Hugh Bialas

**Garry Willer and Hugh Bialas rescued the Millard business from receivership almost a decade ago, then four years ago moved to a new manufacturing facility in the Sydney suburb of Ingleburn.**

It's not far from where Millard's have been built for almost 70 years, possibly holding the record for longevity of all of Australia's caravan brands.

The plant at Ingleburn is a niche operation compared to 1970s and early 1980s when hundreds of Millards rolled off the massive assembly line at the former Viscount factory, just up the road in Liverpool.

Garry and Hugh are working to re-apply some of the tried and proven quality measures back into the production line, while at the same time ensuring the complete Millard model range has the latest designs and finishes.

The team around 30 employees is made up of specialist tradespeople, with three full-time plumbers and electricians along with specialist cabinet makers and upholsterers. Working together they turn out between 15 and 20 mostly custom-finished vans per month in three broad model ranges starting with the Sunseeker at the budget end, then the mid-level Longreach and the luxury Pinnacle.

The company also owns the York heritage caravan trademark and builds slide-on camper units suitable for one tonne flat bed trucks under both the York and Millard brands.

As was the case in years gone by, buyers are welcome to come and take a tour of the complex to see what goes into the manufacturing.

It really is a sight to see as everything is done on site; the chassis, the frames, the furniture and cabinet making even the



A Millard Brochure from the late 1960s (top) along with the 2013 version

upholstery. On the day of our visit, the upholsterers are hard at it making up leather seating using full cow hides. There's no cutting corners here.

As one of the long-term workers quietly suggested to me, while Millard has been around for 66 years, there hasn't always been the same exacting attention to detail.

"Before we were building Hyundai (quality), now we make Mercedes Benz," he said somewhat slyly.

The motoring comparison is apt given Garry has a background in motor racing and Hugh began his career working at the Porsche motor plant in Germany. He stayed for nine years before going to Ferrari in Italy. It was a long apprenticeship in precision manufacturing and the Millard workforce is keenly aware of Hugh's standards.

While proud of Millard's Australian manufacturing heritage, he's not been backwards in injecting a little European style and quality into the vans and travels to the major European RV show in Dusseldorf each year to check out what's new.

"We source the best materials with a quality that will last, for example we pay \$7.50 for each of the →

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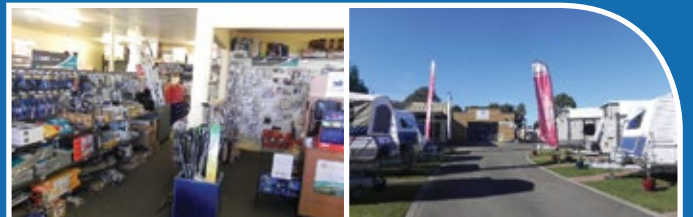


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cupboard door locks, when we could get inferior one for \$1.50. Likewise we use all Italian laminates.”

Millard is one of a handful of Australian caravan builders still using all aluminium frames. The chassis is made from 3mm thick all Australian blue steel which is galvanised in a hot dip process.

Eight out of ten of vans sold by Millard are equipped with off-road specifications, including 15 inch wheels and Cruise Master independent suspension. On the Longreach, there’s chequer plate stainless sheets on the front and sides, as well as under-floor metal sheeting for stone protection. Even the two water tanks are protected by a plywood and metal casing.

Extraordinary work goes into making the interior furniture. The frames are all full timber, with any plywood used given a polyester coating for water resistance. The furniture is compressed in a vacuum press, a construction technique common back in the industry in the 1970s, but not used so much today. It is then riveted, stapled and glued to the walls of each van.

The external aluminium sheeting is fixed to plywood for added strength and insulation. “We use all Australian-made aluminium that is patterned and rolled

here in the factory. It is much stronger and durable than anything imported,” Hugh said.

The Longreach Seabreeze model as tested, sells for around the \$74,000 mark and comes with most of the extras you’d expect in caravan at that price, only the quality is very apparent even to a first-time buyer. Among the standard inclusions inside are air conditioning, a 184 litre fridge, microwave and 2.2kg washing machine.

Our test model had striking red leather and laminate finishes, providing a stark contrast to the all-too common dull brown and wood grain look finishes you seem to see too much of. It’s a fresh, almost retro look from the 1970s – perhaps Millard is on to something here?

The other feature instantly noticeable is the height of the ceiling – it’s a full six foot six inches on the old scale, so there’s no skulking around in this baby, even if you’re a pro basketballer.

The layout is very straightforward and typical of the current fashion with the kitchen facilities neatly packaged along one wall in the centre of the van opposite to where you enter, then there’s a trifold table with comfy leather seats opposite the galley kitchen.

Folding back the table, whipping the flat

screen TV on and sinking into the leather seats with a cool drink, my mind turns to whether I might be able to persuade Millard’s aforementioned upholsterers to knock me up a lounge suite for home.

Upfront is the queen-size bed with lift up storage underneath and wardrobes either side.

The ensuite is at the rear, with a full height linen cupboard and shower. It is well laid out and just seems more spacious than most.

Camden Caravans, the supplier of our test vehicle, said some Millard buyers regularly came back to trade up – some as many as four or five times as they seek to get the latest extra’s or just make a few changes to suit their lifestyle.

Tested: **Longreach Seabreeze**  
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- > Fresh and impressive design and finishes

cons 

- > She's a big baby and you'd need a decent tow vehicle
- > Solar panels are an \$800 extra



(Opposite page) The colour laminate finishes available on the Longreach provide a bright contrast (Bottom left) The aluminium frames coming together in the Ingleburn factory (bottom centre) "Unbreakable Aussie blue steel chassis"

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# Project of Passion

Tested **Vista RV Crossover camper** Report and Photos by **David Cook**

THE VISTA RV CROSSOVER HAS RAPIDLY GAINED A REPUTATION AS A LUXURY OUTBACK TOURING CAMPER THAT CAN AND WILL GO JUST ABOUT ANYWHERE



Louie and Lorraine Cretella.

**The world of camper trailers, probably more than any other sector of the recreational vehicle industry, has become an arms race in recent years. In most cases this arises from the camper trailer being a relatively recent phenomenon and starting from a fairly fundamental base, but it's also come from a handful of entrepreneurial manufacturers who have looked at what was being served up for the marketplace and saying, "Surely we can do better than this."**

One such manufacturer is Louie Cretella and wife Lorraine, who five years ago decided their very successful company manufacturing electrical switchboards and similar items could branch out into an area in which they had a greater personal

interest: camper trailers.

Louie started tinkering with a hard floor camper design, adapting the paradigm that he saw all about him, but then he came across some interesting data.

"It was a sort of diary kept by a man who manufactured flip-over campers, and he recorded the wish list – or whinge list as I call it – of his customers," Lou told us. "I went through Mr X's diary and what kept coming up was that you tend to get sick of the canvas after a while, especially when it's wet.

"Our prototype that we were working on was a big, king-sized flip-over hard floor camper trailer and I asked myself what are we doing here? We'd just be head butting all the kings that have been at it for years and giving the customers more canvas. The way I read it, when you've got rid of the kids and it's just mum and dad going touring, where they're not staying put too long and are often setting up and packing up every day, it's the canvas that's the killer.





“That’s when we started remassaging the concept and that’s how we came up with the Vista Crossover you see today, it’s not a caravan and it’s not a flip-over camper, it doesn’t have the compulsory canvas, and we promote it on the lack of that canvas. You can turn up at a camp site and it’s blowing a gale, drizzling rain and you can simply run to the back, undo a couple of latches, step inside and push the roof up.

“If the bed’s made and you’re happy to sit on it then you’re right, but you have the option to flip over the foot of the bed and up comes the table and you can sit upright at a table. There are facilities to be able to reheat on a portable stove at a small kitchenette, with its own sink. It was designed to be practical and comfortable.”

The Vista has long gone past the stage of interest at a distance, and now there’s a steady flow of orders coming to the Cretella’s Bayswater, Melbourne factory.

So what is it that’s struck such a chord with the buying public? It isn’t a bargain basement price, because the level of technical sophistication and finish that come with the Vista RV comes at a cost that puts it out of the reach of many.

What a Vista customer gets comes in

many forms.

“We wanted something that looked tough and space age, and aerodynamic, but we also wanted that military tough look. If you look at the exterior of the Vista there’s a similarity with military gear, like a Hummer or a Land Rover, with everything riveted together – and to put them in perspective rivets are stronger than welds. But we also wanted comfort inside for the girls, and we knew that if we could win the women over we were more than half way there.

“We wanted to make it user friendly, so whether you’re strong or not so strong, tall or short, there’s nothing on the Vista that you can’t operate on your own. Everything opens and shuts easily; the user simplicity of the design is important. Everything is intuitive and easy.

“There’s plenty of storage, inside and out, and we wanted the ability for it to be able to go anywhere, and that’s why it has the footprint it does. It’s no wider than your tow car, no higher than most cars and tracks in the same wheel tracks as most cars.

“It’s dedicated to harsh offroad conditions, if that’s what you want. Anywhere that you’re able to and allowed to drive with a car, the Vista is able to go. Australia has some of the

harsh off-road conditions in the world, especially the corrugations. Our benchmark trailer, the first one off the production line, has done 82,500 kilometres, it’s been around Australia about four times and we offer it on loan to all manner of people, from outback mapping people to magazine reviewers. It’s had a tough life, and a few scrapes. We use it as a selling point in the factory, and the only things that have been replaced on it are its second coupling, tyres (twice) plus the brakes and bearings.”

There are three models in the Vista RV Crossover range: the original Vista RV Crossover, the smaller and more basic TVK (Touring Van Kompact) and the recently introduced and now extremely popular XL.

All the Vista campers are built on a super-tough hot dip galvanized chassis, the basis of all good offroad campers. The suspension is independent, based on a pair of sophisticated asymmetric lateral links each located by two unequal length longitudinal control arms, HD coil springs and Koni shock absorbers.

The original Crossover has the basic form of a small caravan, but with the external kitchen that pretty much defines the camper trailer concept. There is a large queen-sized bed that can fold back on itself →

and under which is a table and two bench seats. Headroom is created by tilting up the roof, and there is a wealth of storage areas beneath seats, in cupboards, and a full length robe for long clothes.

While there's a small kitchenette internally there's a large pull out external stainless steel kitchen, with two-burner stove with wind break, cutlery and crockery drawers, stainless sink and power tap. Being able to cook outside is one of the pleasures of enjoying the bush and which has served to make camper trailers so popular with those who love camping.

Externally there are a number of other lockable storage bays, carrying capacity for up to four jerry cans and 9kg of gas storage. The body is a fibreglass roof with fibreglass and ply composite side walls. The front and rear of the van are composed of sheet metal components, riveted together for strength and as mounting points for a range of components.

There are full 12V and 240V electrical systems, with a 100Ah battery, smart charger and all-LED lighting inside and out.

Options include a fold-up rear mounted

solar panel, rear shower room, roof hatch, CTek DC-DC charger, inverter, inner spring mattress, pantry on the inside of the access door, extra water tank, full length side canvas awning to replace the standard triangular sail awning and end walls and much more.

The TVK was designed as a minimalist version of the Crossover, with the body shortened from the standard 4.9 metres to 4.5 metres, the weight reduced from 1150 to 1050 kg but the ball weight going up from 120kg to 170kg.

The Newly released Crossover XL has proven very popular with customers. It is 300mm longer, at 5.2 metres, for added room inside, which raises the tare weight to 1220kg but the payload dropping by 50kg.

"This has been a project of passion," Louie concluded. "Our bread and butter business of manufacturing component parts for other businesses means we don't ever get to finish the job and turn the switch on. Now, with the Vista RV we not only get to finish the whole job but we get to put the smiles on people's faces when we hand over the keys. The job satisfaction is ten-fold." ♦

### Vista RV Crossover XL

#### Trailer Specifications

Length:	<b>5200mm</b>
Width:	<b>1900mm</b>
Height:	<b>2150mm</b>
Weight:	<b>1220kg Tare and 1620kg GTM</b>
Ball weight:	<b>120kg</b>
Price:	<b>From \$59,890</b>

Full specifications at [www.vistarv.com.au](http://www.vistarv.com.au)

#### pros

- > Durability and strength
- > Camper benefits with caravan comforts
- > Great suspension
- > Wide range of options
- > Heaps of storage

#### cons

- > Price – but you get what you pay for
- > Optional extras that really should be standard
- > Minimal front stone protection

## OR YOU MAY LIKE TO TRY



### ECHO 4X4 KAVANGO

The Echo 4X4 Kavango is one of several South African-based camper trailers on the market in Australia. All have been forged in an offroad climate very similar to that in Australia and feature excellent build quality. All Echo trailers are CAD designed, robot welded and feature packed. To assist in compliance and to meet market desires, Echo fit Australian independent suspensions, couplings and electrical and gas fitouts. The Kavango offers larger interior space at the cost of more set-up and pack-up time due to the pullout front bed. **Price \$50,000.**



### BOLWELL EDGE

The Bolwell Edge created something of a stir in Camper Trailer circles when it was released three years ago. The stylish moulded insulated double skin body sits on a sturdy chassis with independent suspension, internal as well as external kitchens, Fusion CD radio and iPod sound system and 19 inch TV, 140 litre Waeco fridge, gas hot water system, 105Ah battery, and Bolwell's Flexwing Awning with front and rear extensions make this an attractive option. Bolwell claim full offroad capability for the Edge and at a tare weight of 1260kg it is comparable to the Vista but has a smaller load capacity. **Price \$59,000.**



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# Optimum Performer

Tested **Jayco Optimum 27** Report by **iMotorhome.com.au**

## JAYCO'S OPTIMUM MOTORHOME DELIVERS GREAT VALUE FOR MONEY

**Jayco builds just about everything in the RV world, this year even entering the fifth-wheeler market. Mostly known for caravans and camper trailers, the company established itself in the budget end of the motorhome market quite a few years ago, but more recently has moved upmarket with the Optimum range.**

Our review motorhome, which came from Jayco Sydney, is based on a Fiat Ducato and is the second longest model in the range at 8.375m (27feet), only being topped by the 8.7m (28 feet) Iveco Daily rig.

### THE VEHICLE

The Ducato-powered Optimum has gross weight of 5000kg and uses a special Al-Ko motorhome chassis. This is what gives the Optimum the unusual

tandem rear axles. It's not the usual lazy axle arrangement, however, because the Ducato is front-wheel drive.

Other standout features are the dual slide-outs on the offside. Jayco has opted for a slightly less complex engineering arrangement in terms of body structure by having two smaller slide-outs instead of a single large one. All the expected comfort and safety items are fitted to the driver's cab, including air bags on both sides, while there are plenty of storage pockets around the cab for everything from water bottles to clipboards – but no cup holders!

For the body Jayco use a vacuum bonded ply/aluminium frame/fibreglass structure, along with moulded fibreglass components for the over-cab and cab surround. Underneath, a timber framed/polystyrene/ply sandwich-panel structure is used for the floor. Stylish and flush glazed Dometic windows are used all round and the Dometic door comes with a Crimsafe security screen. The power operated

Carefree Eclipse awning is operated by a switch just inside the door and it mostly covers the external living items: picnic table, entertainment unit and slide-out barbeque.

The Optimum has a slightly raised floor inside that gives quite a bit of space for external bins: three along the offside and the same number along the nearside. Two are taken by gas cylinders and the barbeque, but that still leaves plenty of space. Being low, however, they are a bit awkward to get at, especially those under the opened slide-outs.

### ON THE ROAD

One of the slightly deceptive things about the Optimum is that its length of 8.38 m might give the impression of it being a difficult to drive. Once on the road, apart from remembering not to cut corners and to maintain good overtaking distances, driving really isn't difficult. Manoeuvring in caravan parks, car parks and the like is a different matter. But the large external



rear view mirrors and twin rear-view cameras (the camera screen being where the internal rear view mirror used to be) makes those tasks relatively easy.

The 180 Multijet model Ducato comes with a powerful 3.0-litre turbo-diesel that is a good match for this motorhome. So too is the six-speed automated manual transmission (AMT), which seems to shift more smoothly through the gears in heavier motorhomes like this. One thing to keep in mind with the Al-Ko chassis is that it sits fairly low and whilst coping with most normal road conditions there is sometimes a problem with sharp undulations in driveways and the like.

## LIVING INSIDE

The double slide-out certainly adds considerably to the interior space of the Optimum and for quick roadside stops you can use the kitchen and dinette without opening the slide-outs. However, the east-west bed in the rear blocks the walkway and to use the bathroom means lifting the bed, which is hinged at the back. Swivelling cab seats have been used, so getting to-and-from the cab is quite easy. Both cab

seats and the dinette seats are leather upholstered, too.

Jayco has opted for the Euro look with its curved doors and fittings, including the shower cubicle. Curtains are fitted to all windows, except the bathroom and kitchen. Being a large motorhome there are plenty of storage lockers, lipped shelves and cupboards, with the cupboard and locker handles relatively easy for older fingers. Large windows all-round give an even wash of natural light, as do the multiple LED light fittings at night. Generally speaking the light switches are in obvious places, although one or two are a bit oddly located. Ditto the power sockets, both 240 V and 12 V.

Being a luxury motorhome the Optimum comes with just about everything, including a satellite TV system. Internal 12-volt electrics are powered by just a single deep cycle battery – which seems penny-pinching – that is charged by both a mains charger and a 120 W solar panel. For everything there are two control panels, one in a locker above the dinette with water tank gauges, 12V and 240V master switches and hot water controls. The other is at the end of the overhead lockers by the entry door, which

has slide-out and awning switches along with various light rockers and the solar panel regulator.

## LOUNGING AROUND

Although not meshed together the L-shaped dinette and the swivelled cab seats both offer comfortable places to sit and relax. For TV viewing the upper cupboard beside the entry door is fully wired for a flat screen TV, but unlike the bedroom, there is no mounting bracket fitted. The latter can be seen from either the bed or the front cab seats and also the dinette seat, but probably only comfortably for one person. For eating, the oval table is reasonably sized but only mounted on a fixed single pole.

## TIME TO EAT

No surprises at the kitchen bench, except that there isn't a great deal of working area. It does come with three drawers, a cupboard, wire basket pantry and two overhead lockers, but part of the cupboard space is taken by the hot water heater. Naturally, there is also space for a four burner (three gas, one electric) cooktop and stainless steel sink. Other kitchen →

essentials, like the Dometic two-door 186-litre fridge (with microwave oven above) are located in the front slide-out, between the dinette and driver's cab.

## AFTER HOURS

With its head in the offside slide-out, the fully extended bed measures 2.03 m x 1.48 m. Certainly a very comfortable length for sure, but the slight problem is that with the extension bolster in position, the slide-out cannot be fully closed up. Without the bolster, the bed loses about 200mm.

Keeping clean is easy in the full width rear bathroom. I liked the circular shower; it's a bit space saving and looks very modern. Also circular is the centrally mounted wash basin, with cupboard below. That still left space for a much narrower floor cupboard, overhead locker, offside Thetford cassette toilet and rear offside corner washing machine.

## THE VERDICT


The dual slide-outs add a considerable amount of interior space while just about everything opens and shuts at the touch of a button.

Being one of Jayco's top-line models you'd naturally expect the Optimum to come with just about everything and it's certainly well equipped, but some things – like the single house battery – mystify.

In real estate terms the Jayco Optimum certainly delivers.

Manufacturer **Jayco**  
 Model **Optimum**  
 Price on road NSW **\$173,680 as tested**

**Full report and specs at**  
[www.imotorhome.com.au](http://www.imotorhome.com.au)

Available from Jayco's nation-wide network of dealers including the following Time to Roam distributors: Watsons Caravans Port Macquarie & Coffs Harbour NSW, Jayco Gold Coast and Jayco QLD and Australian Caravan Co SA. 

## pros

- > Classy looking motorhome
- > Given length, not difficult to drive
- > Two slide-outs; spacious living area
- > Good storage areas inside and out
- > Two rear-view cameras
- > Light, bright interior
- > Easy-to-grab door handles

## cons

- > Single house battery
- > External storage bins quite low
- > Fixed table for dinette
- > Smallish kitchen
- > Basic cab radio
- > Some attention to finish required

## OR YOU MAY LIKE TO TRY



### TRAKKA TRAKKAWAY 860

Stylish, elegant and beautifully engineered, the Trakkaway 860 eschews the weight and complexity of slideouts for brilliant design to deliver a world-class motorhome for two. Riding on the same tandem-axle ALKO chassis and powered by the same Fiat Ducato as the Jayco, what it lacks in total living space it more than makes up for with quality and innovation. It's dearer, at about **\$210,000** on the road, but well worth the extra spend.



### SUNLINER DECK

Another tandem-axle chassis/Fiat Ducato combination, the Deck, which Sunliner unveiled at the Melbourne RV Show this year, has a revolutionary deck (think small balcony) that's big enough for a table and chairs that extends from the side, just aft of the driver's cab door. It also has a kerb-side bedroom slideout and is an exciting and innovative motorhome. Priced around **\$200,000** on the road.



### PARADISE INTEGRITY

Paradise is renowned for outside-the-box design innovation and bringing Gold Coast bling to the staid world of motorhomes. Beautifully built with impeccable attention to detail, all Paradise Motor Homes are truly something special. The Integrity Series starts in the same price range as the Optimum and rides on the popular Iveco Daily cab-chassis, with a single rear axle. All models are luxury on wheels and the top models, while dearer, have a huge slideout and amazing living room. Prices from **\$160,000**.



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# My Top Five

WHEN YOU ARE ON THE ROAD YOUR FELLOW TRAVELLERS ARE OFTEN THE BEST SOURCES OF INFORMATION. WITH THAT IN MIND, TIME TO ROAM ASKED FREQUENT AUSSIE TRAVELLER **NIGEL SMITH** TO SHARE HIS PICK OF FAVOURITE CAMPING SPOTS –FROM SOME NOT SO FAMOUS NOR WELL-TRAVELLED CORNERS OF THE COUNTRY.



## 1

### Farina Station SA – Rich in outback history

The town of Marree is the southern marshalling point for three of Australia's great overland tracks the Oodnadatta

Track, the Birdsville Track and the Strzelecki Track. Except as a provisioning stop, most people will push past the township north or south to the tracks or the Flinders Ranges.

It's worth treating yourself to a scenic break immersed in history at Farina Station. It's a working cattle station with a wonderfully peaceful and grassy camping ground. For just \$5 per person per night, you get a scenic

setting a short walk (about 1km) from the abandoned ruins of Farina township.

The campsite itself is simple with BBQ and fire pit, some composting toilets and one of the more character-filled ablution blocks I've come across. Built from railway sleepers of the original Ghan railway line, you only get to enjoy a hot shower after putting in a bit of effort by getting a fire going under the traditional donkey. It takes longer, but somehow feels even better!

This is a very relaxed location for travellers to pull up for the night. If you are interested in history, birdlife and some great photographic opportunities then you could quite easily while away a day or two here. Thanks to some huge efforts of volunteers over the years, the township is easy to walk around and has some

good interpretative signage. Check at the station to see if there is a tour available. If time is tight then you can certainly see the highlights in a couple of hours before you hit the road again in the morning.

With the stunning sunrises and sunsets of the Outback, it's both a historian's and a photographer's dream.

**Farina Station:** [www.farinastation.com.au](http://www.farinastation.com.au)

**Camping fee:** \$5 per person per night

**Firewood:** BYO or available for sale; only use in the firepits or BBQ stands.

**Location:** Approx: 130km north of Parachilna, 53km south of Marree.

**Suitable for:** caravans, smaller RVs and campervans.

**Dog friendly**





# 2

## Barn Hill WA – Stunning ocean views

Barn Hill is easily overlooked for some of the better known locations on Eighty Mile Beach, immediately to the north. However, this scenic spot looking out to the Indian Ocean has a peaceful charm all its own. Arriving at the tin shed office next to, of all things, a bowling green, you can't help but notice that on one night of the week there is live music (very low key), that you can pre-order homemade pizzas from the station owners (heaven) and you have a pick of stunning spots overlooking the ocean, or set further back among the shade of the gum trees.

Selecting a spot at the end of the campground, our pitch overlooked the length of the beach. It was an exposed spot but at that time of year the wind was pleasantly cooling. The activities here tend to the simple, as they do along this stretch of the WA coast. Fishing, walking, swimming (if you're happy with some strong surf)...and simply lapping up the view over a good book and a chilled glass of your favourite sav blanc.

There are "modern" ablutions facilities but I liked the ones that were nearest to us. A row of open-to-the-sky shower stalls (if you want hot water, then choose one of the other blocks) where you can wash away the salt and the sand at the end of the day under the glorious blue of the sky.

**Barn Hill:** [www.barnhill.com.au](http://www.barnhill.com.au)

**Fees:** \$22-\$35

**Firewood:** BYO or available for sale

**Location:** Approx: 128kms south of Broome.

**Suitable for:** caravans, RVs and campervans.

**Dog friendly**

# 3

## Green Mountains/O'Reilly's and Binna Burra QLD – A walk on the wild side.

Along the popular coastal trek between NSW and QLD, the major drawcards of the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and, further south, Byron Bay can cause people to bypass the stunning Lamington National Park.

With primeval sub-tropical rainforest and a fantastic network of bushwalking trails (allowing for everything from a stroll to a long day-hike) it is a very special area. The reason I have included two campsite options is that they are both hard to beat in respect of location. Green Mountains, on the Western edge of the park is a well-run National Parks site. From this side of the Park you get views across the Kerry Valley over the McPherson's Range and the Great Dividing Range. Wonderful at sunset. Shifting focus over to Binna Burra and its more Easterly location, many of the walks from here will give you striking views across rainforest clad valleys and hills to the sky-scraping towers of the Gold Coast.

The access road to the Green Mountain camping ground is not suitable for caravans, and they are not accommodated at this National Park site. However, if you were to stay at the privately run Binna Burra and take a day trip over to this area, then you get to widen your choice of walking options. You can also enjoy lunch at the privately run O'Reilly's resort next to the campsite.

The fact that both sites have resorts right next to them does have advantages. There are restaurants, cafes and health spas, great for a muscle-easing massage after a hard days walk.

The main attractions here are the rainforest, the wildlife and the walking. Deep among the huge trees and thick vegetation you come across beautiful creeks, waterfalls and glades. If you are lucky, you may also come across the ridiculously colourful Lamington Crayfish. We came across one just sitting on a pathway, about 200 metres uphill from the nearest water.

**Green Mountains/O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat:** [www.nprsr.qld.gov.au](http://www.nprsr.qld.gov.au) and [www.oreillys.com.au](http://www.oreillys.com.au)

A 90 minute drive west from the Gold Coast and less than 2 hours drive south west of Brisbane.

**Camping fees:** \$5.45 per person per night, of \$21.80 for a family group per night. Hot and cold showers, water (boil or treat before drinking), no open fires, no dogs. No caravans at this site.

**Binna Burra:** [www.binnaburralodge.com.au](http://www.binnaburralodge.com.au)  
45km from Surfers Paradise, 90kms from Brisbane.

**Powered:** \$35 for two people

**Unpowered:** \$28 for two people.

**Firewood:** available for sale, or BYO.

**No pets**



# 4

## Tom Groggins NSW – Mighty Murray Magic

My first trip to the Snowies in the summer was a revelation. What I'd previously thought of as a winter weekend

ski-destination transformed in my mind to a strikingly beautiful and rugged walking and touring destination. There are several great caravan parks on the shores of Lake Jindabyne, but if you want a waterfront site with a difference, then take a trip along the twists of the Alpine Way beyond Thredbo to Tom Groggins campsite.

This is a basic National Park site, so bring all your essentials with you. However, your reward will be the chance to camp on the banks of the Murray where it is still evolving from a creek to a river. With the peaks of the Snowy Mountains rising all about you, on a hot summer's day a cooling soak in the river is such a treat. The air is startlingly fresh, the water crystal clear and the views wonderful.

A word of warning (and an admission) – the road from Thredbo is steep and windy. Our first visit to Tom Groggins wasn't planned; it was simply the first place we could safely stop after cooking our brakes on the way down. Happily the NRMA were able to fetch us a new set of brake pads from Thredbo and fit them the next day, but it was a sharp reminder to drive using the braking power of the engine and not rely on the brakes for these long winding descents. Not my proudest driving moment, but that particular cloud (...of smoke as the brakes glowed red hot) did have a silver lining in the shape of a stay at a very pretty spot on the banks of the river.

### Tom Groggins:

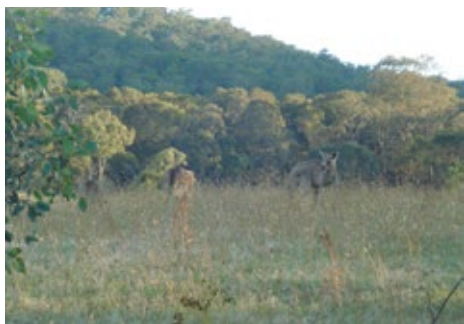
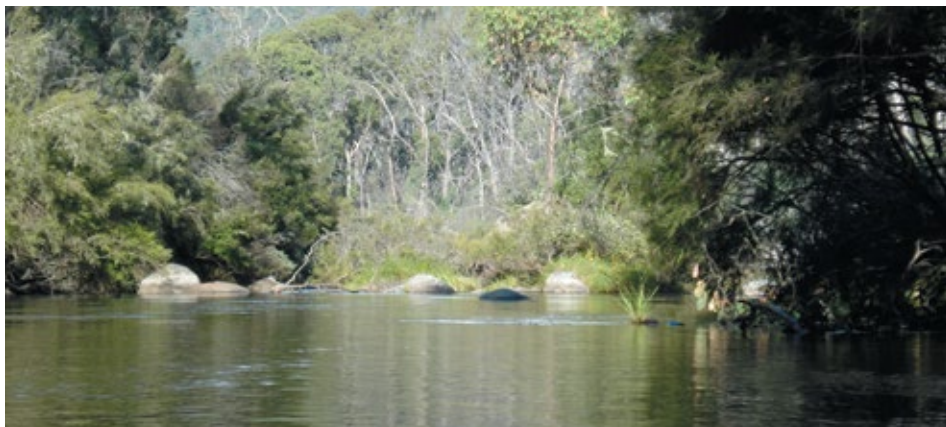
Access via the Alpine Way; not recommended for large campervans and trailers.

**Fees:** Free camping, though you will need a valid National Parks entry permit

**Facilities:** Non-flush toilets, BYO wood and water from the river (requires treating)

**No pets**

**Trout fishing**



# 5

## Pink Lakes VIC – Unforgettable sunsets

As a base to explore the Murray Sunset National Park, or as a stopover on a longer trip, Pink Lakes is worth visiting simply for the breathtaking sunrise and sunset.

The Pink Lake in question (Lake Crosbie is the main campground) is one of a group of near waterless salt lakes, with a pink tinge. On a windless day, ideally with a few clouds in the sky, the shifting colours and reflections are quite beautiful. This is a simple National Park site, about 20km down a dirt road from the nearest bitumen. However, it's good quality and flat, so easily accessible.

The one word of warning – at the end of



any hot, dry period, the feral bees in the area are drawn to any moisture like moths to a flame. The trouble is that unlike moths these guys pack a nasty sting.

Unless you plan to do some 4WD exploration of the park, this is only a quick stopover. However, it is such a strikingly beautiful spot that if I'm ever in the area at the right time of year, I would choose Pink Lakes over any number of more "comfortable" spots.

**Pink Lakes:**

60km west of Ouyen, along the Mallee Highway. Turn onto an all-weather gravel road for 13km to the main camping areas.

**Facilities:** Non-flush toilets.No water.

**Fires in firepits only** – BYO firewood (except during total fires bans)

**Like to share your Top Five with Time to Roam Australia readers?**

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South Tweed Caravans 1980s



2013 Barton Johnson in the sales yard

## South Tweed Caravan Sales

The Johnston family were avid caravanners and their son, Barton Johnston had an all absorbing interest in caravans from an early age. So much so, that he persuaded his father Ted to start a Caravan Business in Tweed Heads in December 1978.

The yard was set up with 10 new Coronet caravans and it was three long months before the first unit was sold. Three months later Coronet ceased trading altogether.

After taking over the dealership of premium Golf caravans the business took off, winning sales awards and becoming the longest selling dealer for Golf.

Barton played a major role as the business continued to grow. He diversified into hiring and repairing caravans and

opened a spare parts and accessories shop, even selling re-locatable homes for a period.

After the unfortunate demise of Golf caravans in 2009 the firm secured a dealership with iconic Millard Caravans as well as concentrating on selling quality second hand caravans and Hans trailers

Many customers are return buyers having bought a succession of new vans over the years. One thing has never changed, that is the relaxed, down to earth attitude, courtesy and personal service of Barton and staff.

➔ **South Tweed Caravan Sales 24**  
**Minjungbal Drive Tweed Heads South**  
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The men's grooming kit is from Dr Hunter and contains an Original Body Cleanser, a Hair Wash and a Rosewater & Glycerine Hand Creme. The ladies travel packs contain one each of Mor Cosmetics scented Italian Blood Orange Triple Milled Soap, Lip Macaron and Hand Cream.  
[www.calenluca.com.au](http://www.calenluca.com.au)

➔ **One travel pack will go to the first three readers who like our Facebook page and send us a message mentioning Calenluca**

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ORS drawers they can be tailor made in

many different configurations to suit a whole range of fridges and vehicles. They will fit to your vehicle without the need to drill any holes and will retain that factory finished "new car look". Offroad Systems can also help if you want to build your own with their huge range of do-it-yourself drawer frames and parts. They also manufacture a range of accessories including ORS fridge slides, stainless steel water tanks, security boxes, cargo barriers, cargo barrier shelves, drawer top tables and drawer divisions to name a few.

➔ **Check out their website**  
**www.offroadsystems.com.au** or give  
**the guys a call on 02 4647 6322.**



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Using 50% re-refined base stock, Valvoline NextGen is an engine oil that is technically advanced, environmentally responsible and suitable for most vehicles.

**More info at [www.valvolinenextgen.com.au](http://www.valvolinenextgen.com.au)**

## Ironman 4x4 Load Plus Helper Springs



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Load Plus is the most economical leaf spring upgrade available, providing the benefits of better load handling, while enabling easy return to stock suspension characteristics when desired, and can be easily fitted at home with basic equipment.

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Terms and Conditions:

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- Prize valid until 30 June 2014;
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- Advanced booking is required for this prize redemption

# Brisbane Caravan & Camping Show June 5-11



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Andrew & Emma Withers



Andrew & Sarah Caravans Coffs



Coffs Show organiser Peter Grinmo



Dane & Simone Alling



Ironman David Lamont



Karen & James Kaufman



Lars Zehnder



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Ron Burton



## 4WD Caravan & Camping & Marine Show Lismore Showgrounds July 19-21

Here are some of the faces from one of the largest outdoor leisure events in regional New South Wales, now in its 16th year. The show is organised by the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter team assisted by a large group of dedicated volunteers. All proceeds go to the rescue service.

**Photos – Therese Schier, Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter, Northern Region**



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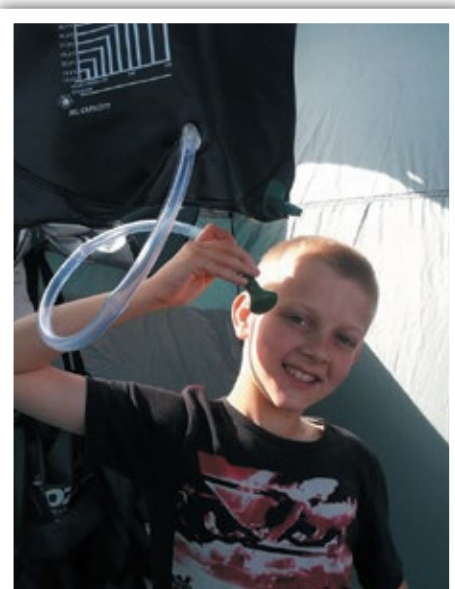
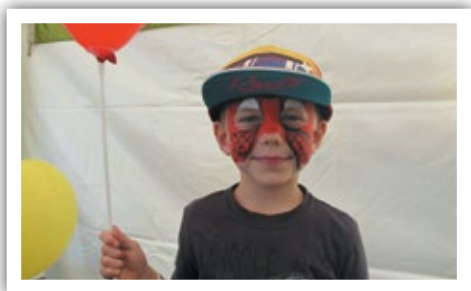
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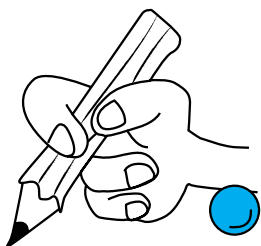


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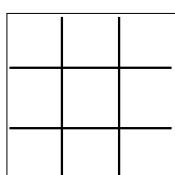
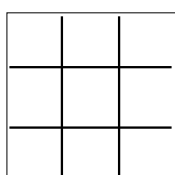
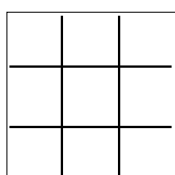
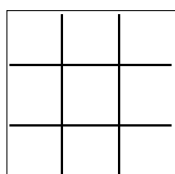
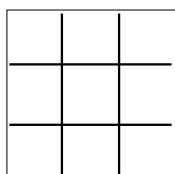
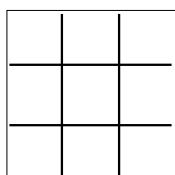
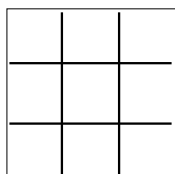
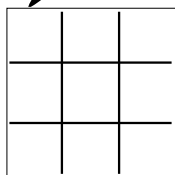
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## Tie-Tac-Toe

Find a partner. One person will be 'X' and the one will be 'O'.  
Take turns placing your symbols into the spaces on a grid.  
The first person to get three of their symbols in a horizontal, vertical or diagonal line wins the game.

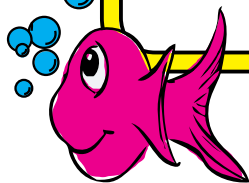


## Word Search

Circle all the words you can find from the list provided.  
Remember the words can be horizontal, vertical or diagonal.

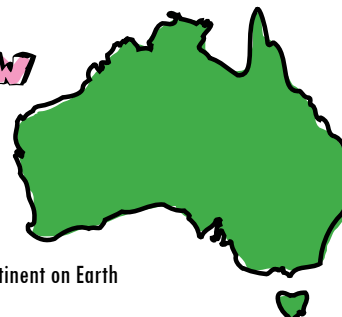
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Z O P N G O A N N A L Q U E B G Q Q Q T G  
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W A M K A M T L P A D H G E P H X U G B T  
S D A U A N I B R O W N S N A K E Z X M Z  
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B E S M C O O R R U W Z R J I R A F U Q H  
E L U P Z J R P R O C R E U J E H A P E I  
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J D A C V P R L T N T A T H O Z C R T M M  
P O R K U Q A V L A E S W H G L T Y A E E  
Q C G W J J V L X J Y R H M N B V P L L V  
H O L H Y U T G A A J S I R I S Y E P M V  
C R I A Z B H U B O Z P T G D T V N H G H  
I C D L F N L B H I K E E R C S Y G O P V  
M C E E V R Y I K R B L S K K C A U X U I  
W X R A Y N J W B F D I H P G L C I Z K L  
B I M A G P I E G Q W C A Q T J G N L I X  
L R Y N G C Z L Y K M A R N C P D M D G F  
T O O C I D N A B Y U N K V D G T T C C B

- |               |                   |               |              |
|---------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Bandicoot     | Echidna           | Humpack Whale | Pelican      |
| Bilby         | Emu               | Kangaroo      | Platypus     |
| Box Jellyfish | Fairy Penguin     | Koala         | Possum       |
| Brown Snake   | Galah             | Kookaburra    | Quokka       |
| Crocodile     | Goanna            | Magpie        | Seal         |
| Dingo         | Great White Shark | Numbat        | Sugar Glider |
|               |                   |               | Wallaby      |



## Did You Know

Australia's National Flower is the Golden Wattle  
Australia is the only country in the whole world that is also a continent  
Australia's tallest mountain is Mt Kosciuszko which is 2228 metres tall.  
70 per cent of the population live in the 10 largest cities  
The Australian mainland is the largest island and the smallest, flattest continent on Earth





### Caravan art

Clare Urquhart is a 3D artist who lives and works on the NSW North Coast. She has an obsession with vintage caravans and always endeavours to include them in her work.

'Fly Away Home' – pictured here, is one of her works that featured at a recent exhibition in Ballina NSW.

Info: [www.earthfirespirit.com](http://www.earthfirespirit.com)

### Toying with Caravans By Alan Stevens

Charles Kempster and William Lowe founded Kemlows Diecasting Products Ltd in 1946 with the intention of producing a range of diecast miniature toys from premises in London.

However, the toy manufacturing side of the business was short lived and the company quickly moved from its original customer base into engineered components and the automotive sector.

Kemlows continues today as a manufacturer of larger casting projects, covering all industries and casting users. Thus the early Kemlows toys are very collectable and their caravan is considered quite rare.

Further Kemlow background can be found in the 2009 publication by Paul Brooks – The illustrated Kemlows story.

Alan Stevens is an avid collector and caravan historian. He can be contacted at [www.vintagecaravanhire.com.au](http://www.vintagecaravanhire.com.au)



### Branxton NSW 2335

For decades the Lions Club of Branxton has used some black humour to remind drivers to take care while passing through this Hunter Valley town, soon to be bypassed with a new expressway. There is no caravan park at Branxton either, although we recommend the Valley Vineyard Tourist Park at nearby Cessnock as a great base from which to explore Branxton and the wine country.



**Have you seen a funny sign while roaming Australia?  
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## SPRING HIGHLIGHTS



### Tall ships – International Fleet Review

**Adelaide: August 20- September 1**

**Melbourne (Williamstown):  
September 6-15**

**Hobart: September 20-25**

**Jervis Bay: October 2-4**

**Sydney: October 3-5**

The world's majestic tall ships converge on Australia to celebrate 100 years since the first entry of the Royal Australian Navy Fleet into Sydney Harbour. The three month festival program brings together people from all corners of the globe in a celebration of sail, with street parades and festivals in every port, culminating in the International Fleet Review in Sydney.  
Info: [www.tallshipfestival2013.com](http://www.tallshipfestival2013.com)



### Boomerang Festival

**Byron Bay, October 4-6**

A new festival bringing together the best of Australia's indigenous artists and performers launches in October. Leading musicians Gurrumul and Archie Roach headline what promises to be three exceptional days of music, dance, theatre, comedy, film and visual arts from Australian Indigenous culture and around the world. Local custodians, Arakwal clan will take to the dance stage grounds on the lands of the Bundjalung, welcoming

all to beautiful Byron Shire and flying in from N.E. Arnhem Land will be the Chooky Dancers one of many dance performances from around Australia and the world.

Info: [www.boomerangfestival.com.au](http://www.boomerangfestival.com.au)

**A free double pass worth \$400 is available for the first interested reader to message Time to Roam on Facebook and mention the Boomerang Festival.**

### Museum of the Long Weekend

**Canberra October 18-20**

Classic Caravans from all corners of the continent head to Canberra in October for what promises to be one of the most colourful arts events in the city's centenary program. A circle of 30 vans will come together around a campfire on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin with a collection of holiday memorabilia assembled on their journey from far-flung corners of the continent. Each caravan will be opened to the public and hosted by its owner.  
Info: [www.longweekend.bighart.org](http://www.longweekend.bighart.org)



# National Caravan & Camping Shows

The show circuit moves north with the sun this season, with Australian Events hosting Caravan Camping Expos in Maryborough, Rockhampton, Mackay and Townsville. Australian Events Show organiser Bob Carroll said each event brings major retailers in the sector together, so buyers can compare and get a great deal. "Four big events in four key regional centres will deliver tremendous variety and people will certainly be able to buy at the right price with good savings to be had on most models," he said. "We have worked hard to bring together the very best manufacturers and retailers of the biggest range of

leisure vehicles and take them to regional Queensland. We also make sure that each event has a major camping gear sale, fishing gear, motoring and 4x4 accessories."

## Dates and locations:

**Maryborough Showgrounds August 16 to 18, Rockhampton Showgrounds August 23 to 25, Townsville Entertainment Centre September 7 and 8 and Mackay Showgrounds September 13 to 15.**

Complete details at:  
[www.australianevents.com.au](http://www.australianevents.com.au)

**Border RV and Camping Expo**  
Wodonga Racecourse, August 16-18  
Info: [www.borderexpo.com.au](http://www.borderexpo.com.au)



**Penrith Caravan, Camping and Holiday Expo Penrith Panthers,**  
September 6-8  
Info: [www.penrithsupershow.com.au](http://www.penrithsupershow.com.au)

**Melbourne Leisurefest**  
Sandown Racecourse, October 3-6  
Info: [www.melbourneleisurefest.com.au](http://www.melbourneleisurefest.com.au)

## NSW

### September 23, 28-29

#### Tiptoe through the tulips

Springtime is magic in the NSW Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands. In Bowral, Tulip Time celebrates its 53rd festival. The weekend of September 28 and 29 will feature a Street Fair with floats, vintage cars, marching bands and the Tulips After Dark celebrations in Corbett Gardens with visitors being entertained with live music throughout. In the Blue Mountains, join the Botanic Garden Horticulturist on a guided walk discovering the magnificent waratahs on display at Mount Tomah on September 23rd. Places are limited and bookings are essential.

Info: [www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au)  
& [www.tuliptime.net.au](http://www.tuliptime.net.au)

### Grafton September 15-16

#### Gate To Plate

Experience regional cuisine including Yamba Prawns, Woolli Oysters Palmers Island Mulloway, o Challacombe Strawberries and Yulgibar Santa Getrudis. You will be able to sample it all through producer stalls and a six course degustation lunch, food trail and masterclass.

Info [www.gatetoplate.com.au](http://www.gatetoplate.com.au)

### September 13-28

#### Mudgee Wine and Food Festival

Celebration of the food, produce and wine of the Mudgee region which encompasses weeks of events and attractions in the town. Info: [www.mudgeewine.com.au](http://www.mudgeewine.com.au)

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### August 17-18

#### Barossa Gourmet Weekend

Over 20 wineries showcase their finest wines paired with heart-warming food and the best of SA live entertainment. Info: [www.barossagourmetweekend.com.au](http://www.barossagourmetweekend.com.au)

### Flinders Ranges September 7-October 7

#### A Brush with Art

The Flinders Ranges will be alive with colour with 15 exhibitions throughout the event spread over more than 1,000 kilometres. Info: [www.abrushwithart.com.au](http://www.abrushwithart.com.au)

### October 4-13, Kangaroo Island

#### Kangaroo Island Art Feast

An annual celebration of the Island's art, food and wine, held at venues island-wide. [www.kangarooislandartfeast.com.au](http://www.kangarooislandartfeast.com.au)

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### August 21-25

#### CinéfestOZ Busselton

Filmmakers, actors and film lovers will head to the South West for the sixth annual CinéfestOZ. Over five days, the event will showcase the best of Australian and French films as well as filmmaker forums, premieres and free community screenings. Info: [cinefestoz.com](http://cinefestoz.com)

## QUEENSLAND

### August 29- September 1

#### Noosa Jazz Festival

One of Australia's most popular Jazz industry gatherings bringing the cream of Australian and International artists together, producing an impressive four-day celebration. Info: [www.noosajazz.com.au](http://www.noosajazz.com.au)

### September 6-7

#### Birdsville Races

Held every year since 1882, the Birdsville Race meeting is one of Australia's most iconic outback events. Visiting campers see the town population swell from 100 to 5000 for the two-day event. Info [www.birdsvillerraces.com](http://www.birdsvillerraces.com)

### September 6-8

#### Festival of the Golden Shears – Jondaryan

The Festival of the Golden Shears showcases the history and heritage that helped shape the Darling Downs regions. Over three days people will recreate life from the late 1800s. Experience the Woolshed in full steam with 20 shearing stands. Info: [www.goldenshearsfestival.com/](http://www.goldenshearsfestival.com/)

### September 25-28

#### Outback Festival – Winton

Entertainment, arts and community spirit of regional Queensland including the popular Australian Dunny Derby. Info: [www.outbackfestival.org/](http://www.outbackfestival.org/)


 A photograph of Peter Garrett, a man with a shaved head wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt, standing in his office. He is smiling and leaning on a large, rolled-up green canvas bag (a swag) that sits on a desk. The office has a large window on the left showing a view of a city, a computer monitor, and a bookshelf filled with books and framed photos in the background.
 

# Hitting the road again

PETER GARRETT IS  
LOOKING FORWARD  
TO SPENDING MORE  
TIME IN THE BUSH  
NOW HIS TIME AS  
A FEDERAL MP IS  
COMING TO AN END.

Whatever you might have thought of his time in Canberra, there's no denying this giant man has left his mark on the country over decades in public life including his time as a celebrated musician and environmental activist.

Tucked away in his electorate office, Peter always kept a swag ready to go camping under the stars when the opportunity arose. In fact he's had one at the ready since his early days touring with Midnight Oil.

Now he's dusted it off and getting ready to take some time out. His post-politics bucket list includes the goal of swimming in every one of the world's oceans.

"I'll leave the job with no regrets. My swag will leave the office with me and I hope I get the opportunity to get some red desert dust on it in 2014."

#### **Did you go camping when you were young?**

I love being outside and camping, especially in remote Australia, is one of my great joys.

In my early years, I lived on Sydney's North Shore and began camping with the local cubs and boy scouts. We used to go to Ku-Ring-Gai Chase National Park – Coal and Candle Creek was a favourite camping site. We carried old heavy canvas tents to and from our camp sites.

These early camping experiences taught me the basics about site preparation, fire safety and how important it is to choose your gear carefully.

During Midnight Oil's Blackfella/Whitefella outback tour in the mid-1980s, we travelled by road from Mutitjulu near Uluru to Docker River, Warakurna, Kintore, Papunya and Yuendumu. The road trip continued in the north of the NT, and we drove and camped at lots of places including Maningrida, Yirrkala and Wadeye.

This outback tour had a strong influence on the band and its music and strengthened my deep appreciation of remote Australia.

My first swag was knocked up by a Chinese man who toured with the band in the 1980s



Opposite page: Peter Garrett prepares to leave his office for the final time with his swag. (Photo by Daniel Linnet)

Above Top: Peter leading Midnight Oil at concerts in the late 1970s along with the Head Injuries album cover from 1976 (centre).

Bottom: Touring with Midnight Oil touring in the 1980s, Peter developed a love for outback camping. (Photo by Ken Duncan)

as a roustabout. I used that swag for a few years until it wore out.

Even as a Federal Minister on occasions I would hive off into the bush and sleep in the swag instead of staying in a hotel – much to the consternation of my advisors.

**Where do you go camping today?**

I retain a yearning to spend time in the Australian outback and go there as often as possible.

Nowadays, I like to go camping with a group of close friends. We usually swag it and cook on a camp oven, with Jack Absalom’s cook book in hand – and I like to have a decent map of the stars handy in the glove box.

My favourite camping destination is anywhere alongside the Great Sandy Desert in the north of Western Australia. The Laramine trail and the Western McDonald ranges are also among my favourite outback destinations. Just incredible.

I love stargazing and watching out for supernovas. I wish I could lie out and do that

all the time.

I try to keep my eyes open as long as I can when I’d go to sleep because your eyes adjust to the light you see more of the stars

**How important do you think ecotourism is to conservation?**

I think ecotourism is going to be increasingly important in both understanding how to live in a way which doesn’t damage the environment and also in expanding people’s interaction with our natural areas and it’s also an area of tourism that is very attractive to young people and also people who don’t necessarily want a high-end short term tourism experience. They want something a little more like ‘slow food’ like ‘slow tourism’. It’s actually pretty enjoyable to go at that pace.

The final thing is that Australia has such extraordinarily diverse and unique natural landscapes and so there are huge opportunities. Local communities in these areas can build sustainable economies on the back of hosting people in environments

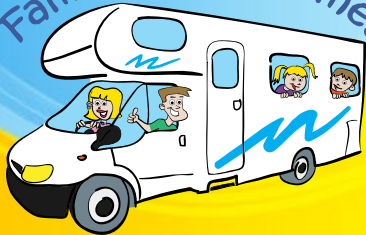
that require a high degree of ecological awareness and sensitivity, but that’s a good thing. I think many people who visit Australia would like the opportunity to be in those sorts of places, whether it’s kayaking on the Myall Lakes, up in Kuranda rainforest or skirting around the bottom of the Simpson and a whole heap of other places I can think of from the top of my head. The opportunities are there. I think that it’s really essential for people to recognise that Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people who are living on ‘country’ are bringing a heavy weight of disadvantage with them and that travelling through ‘peoples’ country talking with them and having a good experience needs to be done with a high awareness of the cultural connections that people have to the land. I’ve had some tremendous cultural experiences through programs and projects that local people have running. It’s brilliant. ♦



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**Enquiries: Ph Peter 0427942246 or 0264951040**  
 Or [petegill@exemail.com.au](mailto:petegill@exemail.com.au) to request additional photos



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