



## Newsletter No. 36 October 2014

### *What have we been up to?*

Well we have just come out of our most successful outback touring season ever, but that's not all, we have some big news on many fronts in this newsletter including some new faces for Great Divide Tours, new trips a new radio show and a new TV show. Excited? I sure am!

### *Vic's 200 series*

A lot of people have expressed to me their interest in the 200 series and what I've done to it. To recap, I purchased a Landcruiser GXL twin turbo diesel through Chatswood Toyota in February 2014. It went straight to Artarmon Automotive (9439 2995) to be transformed into a true outback touring vehicle. Between them and several other 4wd outlets the cruiser came back to me in early April. A shake down weekend run proved that the GVM upgrade on the suspension was too soft, so it had even heavier duty rear springs from Lovells slotted in. Then we tackled the Madigan Line in May in the Simpson Desert, possibly the hardest 4wd track in the desert (definitely in fact).



I was not satisfied with the soft sprung suspension, so we changed the rear shocks from Lovells to Bilstein and the Cruiser took us out to Birdsville for the Big Red concert and then up north to Arnhem Land, back through the Red Centre to the Flinders Ranges and finally home after 3 months

away. With 26,000k's in just 5 months, the new 200 had certainly had a work out.

My verdict? A magic vehicle to drive on the long distance outback roads for sure. But I still think the suspension is a bit soft, be aware it does weigh 4 tonne fully loaded!

Before I headed up to Arnhem Land I had the Taipan exhaust and Unichip fitted. Holy cow! What a performance increase this gave me. There is about 90% more grunt than I really need, but when you pull out to overtake a road train measuring 55 metres long, you just ease the throttle down and hang on, and then you are past, in a blink of an eye. Too easy!



But, the big question was, did the exhaust etc save you fuel Vic? Yes it sure did, about 1-2 litres per 100k's on road and up to 4 litres per 100k's in soft going. Was there too much power off road? Only if you didn't use it correctly, now I just select the gear I want and gently ease on the throttle, makes driving everywhere very easy. If I were towing a big van etc, this upgrade would be awesome. Is it worth doing? My advice is, don't do it just to save fuel, the dollars and cents will take a while to recoup, but if you want easier outback touring, less time on the wrong side of the road and enough power to scare anyone else nearby (did I really say that?) then you will be happy with this investment.

As for the suspension? Well it is an ongoing saga, I have now fitted Polyair Bags to the rear springs and will take it for run next week to see if that makes it ride any better (still too soft for more liking) and if that fails, I had a long talk to my old mate Ken O'Keefe from Ultimate Suspension and he reckons he has all the gear to make it work better for me, that would be the 4<sup>th</sup> attempt to get it right, so if it comes to that let's hope it does the trick.

### *A review of our outback trips*

We have had plenty on, so let me start with my own trips. I led our amazing Arnhem Land trip for the 5<sup>th</sup> time since we pioneered taking tag-alongs into this incredible part of Australia. It wouldn't be fair to those that have come with us previously to say that this was the best trip ever, in fact, every Arnhem Land trip is unique and special in its own way. It is actually really difficult to find the words that do this trip justice.

How do you describe something that most people have never experienced before? How do I describe the amazing sunsets we witnessed every night at Cobourg, the thrill of the hunt when our aboriginal friends at Baghetti took us buffalo hunting, the rescue mission to help a couple of bogged local nurses near Nhulunbuy, being visited by Nike the 4 metre crocodile at Bawaka, driving the remote and beautiful beaches of Cape Arnhem and feeding the school children on the beach as they joined us on our cultural tour with John David at Baniyala.

Take a look at the photos at the end of this newsletter as a photo tells a thousand words. And I've uploaded a lot more into the Gallery section on my website so take a look here

also

<http://www.4wd.net.au/album/index.html>

Then I drove from the top of Australia to the bottom and led our 12 day Flinders Ranges tour. We only had 3 participants on this trip and I keep asking myself why isn't this trip more popular? Honestly, if you like scenery,

four wheel driving and great camp sites this is the perfect trip. We had a lot of wildflowers too and this added to the amazing scenery.



**I climbed to the top of Rawnsley Bluff**



**Spectacular scenery in the Flinders**

We also had two trips into the Kimberley Region led by Wayne and Chris. It would be difficult not to be impressed by the Kimberley region and the feedback has been superb from both trips. In the meantime Dave (Coity to his mates) took a group up Cape York. In Coity's own words, this was the best group he had ever taken away. BUT! Everyone voted the stop at Chili beach as being woeful. It appears there was a large amount of algae washed up on the beach and the stench was something else. Of course this was out of Coity's control, but in the event of it occurring again next year, Coity is working on an alternative campsite. We are lucky, as Coity (Dave) has been visiting Cape York for many years now and has a vast knowledge of the area so we have unleashed him on our itinerary to make it even better for 2015.

### *No rest for the wicked*

Before I even made it back home from the Arnhem Land and Flinders tours we had received another booking from the Dept of Defence for delivery of a driver training course. So Tony and I drove straight to Braidwood and took care of business. I should add that this also included us preparing meals for a dozen people. Now before you laugh, let me assure you that Tony is a pretty good cook and worked his magic by preparing a beautiful roast dinner for the first night. It was my turn on the second evening to display my culinary aptitude, so I ordered pizza!

It was time to head home and put Tony back on his plane back to New Zealand (if you missed my last Newsletter, Tony is the guy who I hire the 4wdrives from for our New Zealand tours and I have asked him to run a few trips for me over the Winter season).

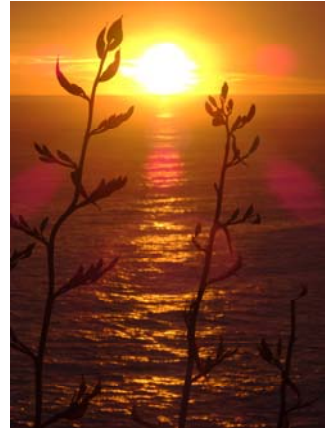


**Tony loves fishing**

### *4WD training*

That wasn't the end of the 4wd training for me however, and after just 4 days at home, I was back down at Braidwood to deliver another of our courses to the Aust Federal Police, followed by a visit from members of the Jeep clubs who were holding a Jamboree at nearby Bungendore. This took me through to the following Sunday and then I dashed home and on Monday morning boarded a plane to Norfolk Island. Not for a holiday, no way, I had been asked to deliver 4wd training to the Parks Australia personnel on the Island. I know, a rotten job, but someone

had to do it. The biggest down side is there was only one plane in on Monday and one plane out on Friday, shucks, I had to stay for 5 days! Norfolk is a beautiful place and everyone should have a holiday on it.



**Sunset from Norfolk Island**

During my week on the Island we also experienced the Blood Moon eclipse, which looked fantastic in the clear night sky, I believe Sydney missed out on seeing it due to cloud cover.

Got me thinking how good would it be to be camped in the outback when one of these total eclipses takes place, anyone have any idea when this might occur?



**NI is absolutely beautiful**

Anyway, after nearly 3 months away from home I finally landed back here, yes the dog bit me, and now I've had a bit of time to catch up on a few things, like writing this newsletter.

### *Vic's on radio 2GB*

I know that could be dangerous, but I suggest you tune in and judge for yourself. Following the footy season, their Continuous Call team is having a bit of a rest. As it turns out, one of the team members, otherwise known as The Duck, is a keen four wheel driver. He suggested to management (Hadley and Singo I guess) that a 4wd, camping and caravan show was overdue, so they gave him an hour on Saturday afternoon to prove if it was worthwhile.

I was approached to advertise on the show, but of course in my usual unashamed fashion, I suggested I should be given a segment to talk about all the great 4wd tracks that exist out there in the outback. We had a meeting and they agreed!! Yep, I also had to buy some advertising, but the Duck is really enjoying my input (he must be because he keeps asking for more). So tune into radio 2GB 873 on the AM dial between 4-5pm each Saturday or go to [www.2gb.com](http://www.2gb.com) and look up the Caravan, Camping and 4WD show and listen to my segment on their podcast. I'm usually on around 4.45pm each Saturday. Better still, ring in and tell them about some of the great places you have been to, there are some great prizes being given away each week too for the best call.



**Yep, a great face for radio**

(I was actually at this place - Captain Cook's memorial) on Norfolk Island when the Duck from 2GB rang me) PS, that is Julie with me, she's the better looking one.

### *And a TV show*

Well, I'm helping with the sponsorship of it not starring in it, seems I have great face for radio only. Starting November 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1pm on Channel 10 there is a brand new 4wd show called the Off Road Adventure Show. This has been the brain child of Rick O'Brien and David Luke formerly from 4WD Action but thankfully a lot more grown up these days. I've seen these boys in action during their filming and have to say it looks pretty good and sensible. Let's hope it's not a big advert for the sponsors (actually I wish it was given I am one) but I'm sure it won't be. Instead it should be a pretty good show about places you can go and things you can see and do with a 4WD. I've even put in my two bob's worth with what is called "Vic's hot spot", now doesn't that conjure up some unpleasant images!! Anyway, see if you can catch the show or at least tape it starting Sunday 2 November at 1pm on channel 10.

### *A job offer*

I do get a lot of people contacting me who want to work for me, they all think I have the best job in the world, of course it's still just a job to me (NOT!). As you know I asked Tony from New Zealand if he would like to join the team for a 3 month stint each year to run some of my outback tours pending the semi retirement of Wayne Desmond (incidentally, I don't think WD40 likes semi retirement because he is now back doing a few big trips for me). Anyway, whilst spending close to 3 months with Tony driving half way around Australia we had plenty of time to talk and discuss things.



**A couple of good looking roosters**

The end result I have made a permanent job offer to Tony. Starting in early 2015 Tony will move his entire family, Helen, his wife, and their twin boys to Australia and will be taking up residence in Braidwood town. Tony will care take the training property for me, help run my 4wd training courses and of course lead several outback tours each year. This is a very big undertaking for him and his family, they are currently going through the process of selling all their worldly goods in Christchurch, selling the family home and moving to a new country to live.

Ever since the Christchurch earthquake Tony's 4wd hire business has struggled, the hidden cost of these natural disasters. Tony is not only an avid outdoors person, he is a very keen hunter and fisher, and has tramped all over the South Island pursuing this interest.

He has some rather impressive qualifications too including a Degree in Tourism - officially called a Bachelor of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management and a Masters degree in Applied Science, specialising in Wildlife Management, gosh, GDT finally has someone with real credentials rather than just a love for the outback.

Of course the Outback is all rather foreign to this former dairy farmer from the mountains of the Sth Island, but he is learning very fast and has already seen more of the outback than most Aussies.

Tony is looking to rent a home in Braidwood for his family and is coming over with Helen in early November to show her where they intend to live, talk to Braidwood school about the schooling for their twin boys and hopefully find a nice home to rent. In the meantime, he will of course need a 4wd to use on the trips etc so I'm on the hunt for a low mileage 100 series Landcruiser for him.

### *Up the Middle*

On our way from Arnhem Land to the Flinders Ranges I wanted to show Tony one of the most beautiful locations that I know

of in Central Australia. So after a brief stopover in Alice to get the 200 series serviced (therein lies a tale, Peter Kittle Toyota are hopeless, I ended up taking the 200 to a friend of Jeff Browne's, formerly from Mt Dare and now managing the Tennant Creek Caravan Park, thanks Jeff).

Then on our way south we explored the Owen Springs Conservation Reserve near Orange Creek and then the real gem was our drive down the Finke Gorge and river. Just Tony and I in the 200 series in one of the most beautiful locations in Australia, no! it wasn't romantic, but certainly rewarding from the point of doing exactly what we love to do, drive great tracks, see amazing scenery and camp out in the wilderness.



**The drive through the Finke gorge is one of the best in the country**

The highlight had to be the fact that we slept on our stretches under the awning beside the 200 series and around midnight a lone dingo came up and had a look at us. Tony was convinced he was going to be taken!



**The dingo took my Tony!**

We also dropped into Coober Pedy, slept underground and I showed him the beautiful Breakaways at sunset, gosh we live in an amazing country.

Anyway, this got me thinking about a trip I led about 4 years ago, called Up the Middle, and, yep, you guessed it, its back on next June. Starting in Port Augusta we will visit Mt Ive station, the Gawler Ranges, Lake Gairdner, Tarcoola, Coober Pedy, the Breakaways and the Painted Desert, Mulga Park on the Gunbarrel Hwy, Ayers Rock, Kings Canyon, the Finke Gorge, Owen Springs, Alice, Ruby Gap and then drive the Binns track to Tower Hill and the Davenport Ranges with a great camp on Policeman's Waterhole, the trip will conclude after a visit to Devils Marbles at Tennant Creek.

To see more details have a look here <http://www.4wd.net.au/Up-The-Middle.html> or email me and I can send you the detailed itinerary.



**Up the Middle will be an amazing trip**

### *Adventure Film Festival and High Country Trek with Vic*

Each February the town of Bright hosts the Adventure Film Festival. This is held in the town over 3 days and showcases amateur style films shot by amateur adventure seekers as they do all sorts of amazing journeys around the world. The Festival also features several presentations by these adventure seekers. It is the type of thing that I have always wanted to visit, but given it is in the heart of the High Country I also thought I should combine it with my own Adventure. So it's now on. See here <http://www.4wd.net.au/Adventure%20Film%20High%20Country%20Trek.html> .



### **Join Vic on his Adventure Film Festival High Country trip in February**

Immediately following the Festival we will set out for a 4wd adventure that will encompass many many tracks that we have not included in our usual high country treks. Some of which I have not driven for several years and some not at all (as yet). The trek will visit places like Wonnangatta, Howitt Hutt, Mt Wellington, the Pinnacles, Dargo, Haunted Stream and the Deddick trail in the Snowy Mtns. If you have already done the high country with us, this trip might be of interest, you know how spectacular that region is, and what amazing 4wd driving it provides, so think about joining me from 13-22 February 2015.

### *More High country trips*

Our regular High Country trips are proving to be very popular this season, we have one spot remaining on the trip departing **23 November 2014** and two spots on the trip departing **30 November 2014**. Then between Christmas and New Year, the Camper Trailer High country trip departing 28 December is fully booked so we have slotted in another trip departing Bright on **31 December 2014** which is our only trip over the Christmas period that now has vacancies as the trip departing 4 January 2015 is also fully booked.



**Join us on the roof top of Australia**

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So if you are thinking of doing the High Country over the Christmas break take a look at

[http://www.4wd.net.au/Victorian\\_High\\_Country\\_Camper.html](http://www.4wd.net.au/Victorian_High_Country_Camper.html)

If you don't need to travel in the holiday period don't forget we have our Camper Trailer friendly High Country trip departing Bright on 15 February 2015.

But wait there is more:-

We also have our **Man from Snowy River** trip over the New Year period too.

Departing Jindabyne on **29 December** and exploring the beautiful Snowy Mtns Region with some great 4wd driving and even better camp sites. This is a 4 day trip ending back at Jindabyne on New Year's day, see here

[http://www.4wd.net.au/Man from Snowy River.html](http://www.4wd.net.au/Man_from_Snowy_River.html)

### *Camp Oven Cooking course – 22 November 2014*

We've had 5 couples thus far book in for this great day. I've now added a special course on bush welding for the participants due to a special request from Marion Hudson. The plan at present is as follows, arrive at my driver training centre from 10 am. At 11 am we will give you some basic instruction in GPS use and then after lunch Wayne Brady will show those that wish to have a go how to bush weld using a couple of car batteries. Then we'll fire up the fire pit and Jenny is going to show you how to make a pizza and damper in the camp oven.

While we enjoy this for afternoon tea, we will start getting the coals ready for the camp oven cooking. You are encouraged to bring your own camp oven, but if you don't have one, no problem as we will have our own available also. Jenny will demonstrate how to prepare the camp ovens and the food and then we will cook up a beautiful roast dinner for all to enjoy.



**Roast pork anyone?**

I reckon you should also bring your camera and tripod so we can show you how to do some night photography after dark.

We still have plenty of spots available for this great day so check it out here and drop me an email if you would like to join us

<http://www.4wd.net.au/Camp%20Oven%20Cooking%20and%20GPS%20course.html>



**Camp Oven baked damper yum!**

### *New Zealand Tour on again next year*

I now have 6 bookings for Best of the Best New Zealand tour commencing 22 March 2015 and we can take just 3 more. So if you were thinking about doing this one with me, don't miss out, it is going to be absolutely outstanding, I can guarantee that! And, I'm working on something truly special. How about a hot lap in a Porsche around their Highlands Track in the beautiful town of Cromwell?

See here for all the details and email me for a detailed itinerary  
[http://www.4wd.net.au/9\\_day\\_NZ.html](http://www.4wd.net.au/9_day_NZ.html)

Remember, this is virtually all inclusive, you just step off the plane in Christchurch and

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from there on everything else is taken care of, we get you to your motel, we arrange the hire 4wd drives, all the accommodation for the whole trip, dinner each night, guided tour, access to places no-one else can get to and the most amazing scenery throughout the whole 10 days.



**You will not be disappointed by our New Zealand 4wd tour in March 2015**

### *What other trips are coming up?*

During November we have a few trips which you might be keen to join us on. We have just 4 spots left on our great Stockton Beach trip on **9 November**, this has to be one of the most fun 4wd drives locations for the whole family.



**We have some great beach driving on both the Stockton tour and the Barrington Tops trip**

Over the weekend of **8-9 November** we have our Brindabella Ranges tour. This trip is just behind Canberra, and extends down into the northern section of the Snowy Mtns. We camp Saturday night near Coolamon Homestead amongst the beautiful snow gums and always sight some wild brumbies. I've got just 2 spots remaining on this great weekend escape. See here for more details

[http://www.4wd.net.au/Brindabella\\_Ranges.html](http://www.4wd.net.au/Brindabella_Ranges.html)

On **16 November** we have a day trip to the western part of the Blue Mountains and specifically to the Gardens of Stone National Park, we call it our Cliffs & Canyons Tour. We've got 4 spots remaining on this great one day trip out of Sydney.

Then on **22-23 November** Alex is taking another group on one of his favourite tours up into Barrington Tops. This one is a camping trip and we will camp high in the tops, on Sunday Alex will take you down to the coast for some beach driving on the Myall Lakes beach front, a perfect place now that the weather is warming up, I've got 4 spots remaining on this one too.

See

[http://www.4wd.net.au/Barrington\\_Tops\\_Adventure.html](http://www.4wd.net.au/Barrington_Tops_Adventure.html)



**Barrington Tops can be exciting**

You can also keep up to date with what trips we have coming up each month by just visiting our website [www.4wd.net.au](http://www.4wd.net.au) where I keep the home page updated with what's coming up trip wise. This is updated every couple of weeks, so it's a quick ready reckoner and will help you decide what to do for a break from the rat race of normal life.

### *2015 Trip Calendar*

Another great way to keep in touch with our calendar of events is to download a copy of our 2015 trip calendar from our website here <http://www.4wd.net.au/trip-calendar.htm> and if I remember to do it I have attached a copy of it to this Newsletter email.

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### *A new day trip out of Sydney*

It has been a long time coming but we have now found a new day trip close to Sydney to add to our list of tours. In fact, I just got back from surveying it yesterday. We are calling it our Devil's Rock tour and it will commence at Wiseman's Ferry and follow the old convict road northwards before venturing into Yengo National Park. Devil's Rock has some amazing rock engravings etched into the sandstone outcrop up to 2000 years ago. This will be an easy 4wd trip, but it will provide a great escape from the city, and will show you some great historic and cultural aspects of our own back yard. Check out my website and trip calendar for the tour dates.



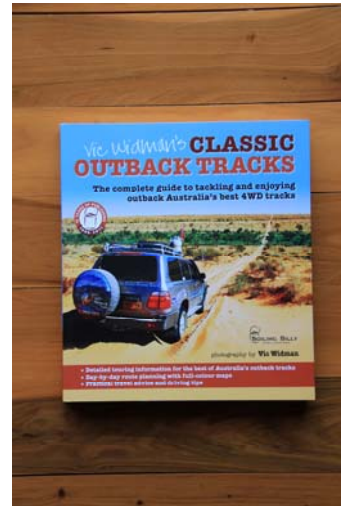
**Look what we found!**

But wait there is more! Or at least I hope so, over the next few weeks I'll be doing some more research in the hope to add yet another new day tour to our calendar, keep an eye on the Great Divide Tours Facebook page and our website for more on this too.

### *Christmas gift ideas*

It is scary to think that Christmas is just 2 months away, every year we do a lot of gift vouchers for Christmas presents, so have a think about doing this for your four wheel drive fan or friend. We can do gift vouchers for any trip or driver training course to any value from \$50 up to the full tour or course fee, you just name the amount you wish to spend. Drop me an email with the details of who it is for and who it is from and we can email back a beautiful Christmas themed gift voucher. We do them for birthdays too, I just did one for someone's 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

Or if you want a great book or DVD check out my shop at <http://www.4wd.net.au/vics-shop.htm>



**Vic has a range of his books and DVD's that would make great Christmas presents**

### *Outback trips next year already filling*

No pressure here BUT, if you are thinking of joining us on one of outback trips in 2015 may I suggest you get in early. I already have the following trips fully booked, Arnhem Land, Kimberley and Cape York, fortunately I can now offer a second date for each of these (be warned the 2<sup>nd</sup> Arnhem Land tour only has 3 vacancies remaining).

As for my other outback safaris this is what we have left:-

- Madigan Line in May - 7 spots
- Up the Middle in June - 8 spots
- Simpson Desert in June/July - 3 spots
- Big Red Concert tour in July - 8 spots
- Canning Stock Route in July - 6 spots
- Flinders Ranges in Sept - 8 spots

I do have detailed day by day itineraries for each of these trips, so if you would like more information just drop me an email.

### *Trusting*

Last Newsletter I related the story of the American family I met over a few email exchanges and how I helped them find a 4wdrive and a trailer for a 12 month long holiday around Australia.

Well they are safely on their way now after a rather tumultuous start. They picked up the Landcruiser I had located for them from Artarmon Automotive with all the great after market gear affixed to it and picked up their brand new Cub Supamatic trailer and returned to the Narrabeen Lakeside Caravan Park in early August. At this time Sydney experienced its wettest August on record with very strong winds, the weather soon made life very difficult under canvas, and apart from one extremely windy storm causing some minor damage to the trailer, which was then fixed, they weathered it all in their stride.

Finally Miranda, Jay and their twin 5 year old boys, Lake and Finn set off up north with one of my detailed itineraries in hand. They went inland to escape the wet weather and eventually made their way to Cairns. It was a little late in the season but they decided to have a crack at Cape York. They have just returned from the Cape after a very adventurous trip including a slight delay in the notorious Nolan's Brook, but the Cruiser has been dried out and all is well.

As you read this they are on their way through Central Queensland towards Birdsville and down the Birdsville Track towards Adelaide. From there, over summer, they will explore the lower half of Australia before heading back up north again next autumn. You can follow their very exciting adventures on Facebook at Miles from Brooklyn

### *For sale*

Well, my wife, Julie, said sell it or I'll take it to the tip. You see I have the same problem as my brother-in-law (no not my sister, yes, he is married to her and yes she is my sister, but that is not our problem) you see, I am a bit of a hoarder. So under my house in what I affectionately call the dungeon (used to keep pesky boys away from my daughters) I have accumulated a lot of things related to 4wdrives. So much so that it is now difficult to move. So I'm trying to flog them off.

I have for sale the following items, give me a call if you need anything.

A brand new VMS 700HDsII portable GPS system (I'm now sponsored by HEMA)  
\$450

5 brand new Dunlop Grandtrek tyres off my FJ cruiser, never used - \$500 the lot

An Off Road storage system consisting of drawers and shelves suitable for a Pajero - \$500

Cargo barrier to suit a Pajero - \$200

A brand new winch cable off a Premier winch, never used - \$200

Standard springs and shocks x 4 off a 200 series Land cruiser never used - \$500 the lot

A swag that I've never slept in but did pack it away wet, so it has some mould staining, otherwise it is like new - \$200

I also have a huge number of 4wd magazines and whilst I don't want to get rid of all of them I do have about 20 years of 4wd Action Magazines and I'll give these away to anyone who wants them just give me a call on 02 9913 1395 for any of the above.



**The ORS storage system is complete with everything \$500**



**The cargo barrier suits a Pajero \$200**



**The brand new steel electric winch cable  
\$200**

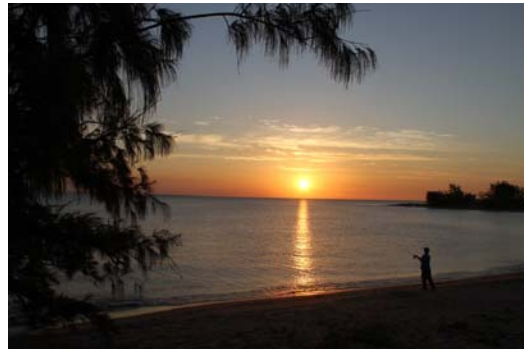
**Photos from Arnhem Land**



**Crossing the Wilton River**



**The VMS GPS normal retail around \$700  
yours for just \$450**



**The view from our camp at Cobourg**



**FJ Cruiser tyres brand new \$100 each x 5**

See lots more fantastic photos here  
<http://www.4wd.net.au/album/Arnhem%20Land%202014/index.html>

*That's all for now*

Please stay safe and be kind to each other and tell your family you love them. And if I don't get the chance to issue another Newsletter before Christmas have a Merry Christmas and make sure you put up some Christmas lights too!



**Fresh fish for dinner**

Vic, Julie, Wayne D, Wayne B & Jenny, Alex, Brian D, Dave & Irene, Richard, Greg & Helen, Ian B & Skippy/Yarn/Ian, Chris, Greg & Ty Widman, Dave Fullerton, Brian S and Tony.



**The resident croc at Bawaka**

**GREAT DIVIDE TOURS**



**Turtle nest on Cape Arnhem**



**Looks beautiful, but can you see the crocodile slide?**



**John David showing us a parrot fish**



**We are the only 4wd tag-along company that gets access to this part of Arnhem Land**



**Plenty of wild buffalo to be seen**



**Arnhem Land is great but our Flinders trip is a lot closer and equally spectacular**



**Beach driving in East Arnhem Land**

