



Newsletter No. 40 May 2016

*G'Day, Outback Vic here*

Okay, pick your selves up off the floor, I know, it was a bit of shock, but yes, this is my second newsletter this year and the year is only just 5 months old. Don't worry I doubt that I am setting a standard, in fact, looking at my calendar over the next few months, I'll be lucky to have time to shower let alone write another newsletter.



As you know, the purpose of my newsletters is to keep you up to date with what's going on with Great Divide Tours, share our love of Australia through our adventures and provide some tips that might help you with your travels, 4wd driving and vehicle preparations.

Well, as I'm about to head outback for at least 5 weeks I decided to get another newsletter out post haste. Besides, there is some really cool stuff to talk about, a couple of amazing trips coming up that you just should get your selves onto and big news in regard to my 2017 New Zealand tour. So let's get on with it!

*Past trips*

*New Zealand 2016*

I was literally running out the door to get over to New Zealand when I issued my last Newsletter, so let's start with how it went this year.

We all flew into Christchurch on 27 February, it is amazing to think that from Sydney you can fly quicker to Christchurch than you can to Perth. Just 3 hrs across the ditch, as I found out, it wasn't long enough to watch the new James Bond movie, so I had to catch the last 10 mins on the way back!

Christchurch had had a couple of small earthquakes just prior to our arrival and small tremors were still occurring at the rate of 3 a day, I felt a small one that evening.

We collected our hired Toyota Hilux's and headed off to Queenstown to start our 7 day 4wd trip. We had 8 vehicles in total plus our guide Steve Beston. This trip was quite different to the previous 6 trips I had taken over there. The highlight was the fact that we had to load our Hilux's onto a barge to transport them across Lake Wakatipu at Queenstown, this was then followed by a 9 hour 4wd drive trip to cover just 45 k's of breathtaking mountain and valley tracks.



The end of our 9 hour 4wd trip to Mt Nicholas

The next few days involved some more gentle tracks but included some great opportunities to meet the station owners and watch them go about their work or sit down and have a cuppa with us, this proved to be a highlight for many on the trip.

We also did a couple of mainstream tourist things too such as visit the most southern part of the mainland and a beautiful waterfall. But in true Steve Beston and GDT fashion we kept the best to last with an amazing 4wd track up a river valley past lots of cows to eventually climb over one of NZ's tallest mountain ranges. Even our veteran guide Wayne Desmond, who was on the trip with his lovely wife Belinda, was heard to exclaim over the UHF at the steepness of the track and the breathtaking views. I have included a few photos from the trip, as they say a picture tells a thousand words.



**We saw this amazing waterfall this year**

BUT, the big news is, I only today spoke with Steve Beston about our trip in 2017, once again he and I have put our collective thinking caps on and we will be offering a mind blowing 4wd trip in March 2017 which will include all of the most scenic tacks we have done to date, including that amazing boat trip across the Lake at Queenstown and that 45 k 4wd journey. I now have the itinerary so drop me an email at [info@4wd.net.au](mailto:info@4wd.net.au) if you would like to receive a copy. I'm already excited about this trip!



**There is nothing like our 4wd trips to New Zealand**



**Poor Steve, even looks like Vic**

### *GPS Course*

No sooner had I returned from NZ, 3 days later, and we had our GPS course on at Bayview which was presented by Brian Sommerville from GPSOZ. We had 14 people attend for a great day of learning about the origins of GPS's, map reading and plotting courses etc. Amongst the 14 people we had about 12 different types of GPS

units, so this prompted the idea of running a specific course for users of the HEMA Navigators as they seem to be the most prolific. This HEMA specific course will be held on Saturday 7 May at Bayview, with Brian again conducting it.



This is what it will cover:

*A comprehensive training session that covers the use of EziOzi 4WD Off Road Navigation (main emphasis) and iGO Street Navigation.*

*In 4WD navigation become an expert in changing and finding the best map adding your own maps creating and planning a route working with waypoints saving, deleting and changing track logs intro to Hema Navigator Explorer Windows Software*

*In Street Navigation learn about the Map Screen - what does it all mean, customisation, Routes - how to find places, multiple stops, find POIs Quick Find How to update maps*

*This 3 Hour course is offered at \$75per GPS unit, so if there are two of you with one HEMA Navigator GPS, the cost is just \$75.*

To enrol in this course just drop Vic or Jenny and email at [info@4wd.net.au](mailto:info@4wd.net.au). It is the day before Mother's Day so it would make a great Mother's Day present, 3 hours of learning followed by lunch or dinner overlooking beautiful Pittwater, what more could a Mum ask for?

### ***Stockton Beach tour 20 March 2016***

The next day we had a fully booked Stockton Beach trip on, again run by our master of Stockton, Alex ably assisted by my nephew Ty Widman. Alex is keeping very quiet about what occurred on this trip, I suspect he was bogged again, but has paid off everyone to keep quiet about it. Seriously, Alex reckons it was the best trip ever.

### ***Barrington Tops 27-28 February***

Speaking of Alex and his best trip ever, he is also the master of Barrington and he led this trip in late February, I asked him to file a report, here it is, believe it or not.

**For some unknown reason, whenever we have a Barrington Tops Trip planned, the heavens open and on my recent trip up into the region in February, the heavens did not disappoint. The local farmers were rejoicing but I was secretly anxious knowing what was ahead. No such thing as bad weather I said to my flock of fantastic customer's just bad weather! Yeah right. So we headed off into the wilderness and the weather was actually perfect apart from a few spots of rain. Dust suppressant I quacked over the UHF. Of course the minute we were committed into the mountain range, the heavens opened up to the point we could not see a foot in front of us. Yup. No such thing as bad weather unless you are not in**

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the middle of a forest heading downhill and the track turns into a river with bog holes and ruts that could eat a tractor.

So off we went and tackled one of the most challenging 4WD tracks in what I would say was extremely challenging conditions and yup, we all pulled through with no problems other than a massive smile on our faces.

We then pulled up to a great spot for lunch and on cue, the sun came out to warm our souls. After a quick bite we headed off again heading towards Barrington Tops and as soon as we passed the Dog Fence the heavens opened up again. We reached camp at about 4pm, we always get to camp at 4pm, (just ask any customer that does a trip with me) and our camp looked like a swimming pool.

I had to think fast. We were now on top of the mountain near the Scone Road with no place to camp. It was getting dark, you could not see a thing due to the rainfall, and I had to find a place to camp. No problem I said, so we continued on our way until we reached our "PLAN G" campsite called Pole Blue Campsite. Not only was the area well drained allowing great camping, it included great toilets and a communal shelter with a fire place and two gas BBQ's. So we all set up our tents and I built a fantastic fire to warm our souls. The night was spent around the fire, spinning yarns and enjoying

each other's company until we all retired for a well earned rest.

The following day was fantastic. The sun was out as we made way towards Mungo Brush where we all enjoyed a sensational day on the beach.

So was this the best ever trip? Yup and I can't wait to get back out there and enjoy another fantastic trip. Oops. Did I say enjoy. I mean. I can't wait to get back out on the tools for another day of hard work! Shhhhhh. Don't tell Vic but I would pay him to let me work for him! See you on the next one! Alex (Corpy)

Well, there you go, Alex will work for nothing, he reckons he already does. By the way, the next Barrington Trip is scheduled for 14-15 May, it is already fully booked, and because this one is accommodated with no chance of a wet camp site Alex is allowing Wayne and Jenny to lead it. But Alex will be back again on 19-20 November for another best ever, wet Barrington trip.

#### *Easter Man From Snowy river trip*

I have offered this 4 day trip through the Snowy Mtns every Easter since about 1993, it is an iconic trip which can be challenging and at times scary if the weather changes nasty, but most of the time it is simply fantastic. Ian Bragg led this one for us and he put a few words together on it.

We had a GREAT trip. It was pouring with rain as we headed to Jindabyne to start our trip, and right on cue the clouds lifted and disappeared, never to return for the rest of the weekend. (I think Sydney was quite wet?) We had a really pleasant drive along the Snowy river before we selected low range. Arriving at a lookout we discovered one of the

crew had a lighter load as some items had escaped through an [self] opening canopy rear window!. We had to go back and collect all the 'litter' since we are so eco friendly. Sadly the back window didn't survive a later nudge from the 'chilly bin' in the back of the ute, whoops. A reminder to all that loads need to be restrained even in a ute tray. The following day we ascended a tricky section of the Cobberas Track after reviewing available lines, required driving techniques and tyre pressures. Everyone made it. Phew, and away we went.



**Track assessment on the Snowy Trip**

The rest of the day traversed some great tracks that others seemed to be struggling to drive. The GDT group took it all in their stride with not a wheel put wrong. Our special campsite for two nights was empty upon arrival and a comfortable stay was had. The weather continued to stay dry as we travelled to places like the Davies High Plain, Mt Gibbo (cloud blowing through with a morning temp of bl^%dy cold) and Mt Pinnibar where the there was no wind for a change. The views were drop dead gorgeous, of course. Don't say GDT don't deliver! The drive home was uneventful and I even got let someone else do the driving for the last part. What a great weekend with great company!

You see, what Ian was alluding too was that just as he was approaching Cooma his rear diff went bang, punching a rather unique, bolt like, outline in the outer casing, so his trusty 100 series was flat towed back to Canberra for surgery, thank goodness it didn't happen on the 4wd tracks. We highly recommend everyone has the top road assistance cover such as NRMA Premium Classic Care just in case these unforeseen things occur.



**Our happy campers at Davies Hut**

### *High country trips in April x 2*

The 7 day high country trips that we offer are by far our most popular, most become booked out well in advance of the scheduled date. In fact our 7 day trip over the school holidays in April was booked out by September last year! So we put on a second trip immediately after it which also filled by mid February.



**High Country giant**

Unfortunately for Wayne Desmond who has led these trips since Noah first learnt to row,

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he was told by his doctor he had to rest a bit, so we threw the young kiwi, Tony into the fray. To make things a little trickier for Tony, due to the calm weather, Parks Victoria took the opportunity during the first trip to conduct some major hazard reduction burns around Talbotville. This effectively closed all the tracks we use on the last 3 days and even the delightful Talbotville camping area. It was a shame their timing for the hazard reduction corresponded with the NSW school holidays, but I guess they have to take the opportunities when they arise.

Via some hasty map studying, my knowledge of the area and Tony's ability to talk to and charm almost anyone, between us we devised a fantastic final three days for the first tour group.



#### **Camp at Talbotville**

By the second tour the smoke had cleared and so had the tracks. In fact, Billy Goat Bluff track, which was near impossible to get up after the Easter onslaught, had been graded making it now driveable once again and Tony was able to experience this iconic track with his second tour.

Judging by the feedback I have received from some of our customers, it was the best trip ever, note that Alex! See the comments below.

Hi Vic

We recently completed your Victorian High Country tour and it was fantastic.

We are still revelling in the memories of it.

In particular we wanted to say, your leader Tony was outstanding. He would appear to be a great asset to your company, and that in all directions.

Kind Regards

Edward and Frances Wall

But wait there is more

Vic

We did the 10 to 16 April Victorian High Country trip with Tony. We had a great time and left with a greater understanding of just what our car could do and now have the confidence to venture further off road than we had before. It wouldn't have been as much fun if we didn't have the calibre of your guide Tony - he instilled our confidence in him from day 1 in a fun but disciplined manner with never a harsh word. You are lucky to have an operator like him in your team.

Thanks again - and I am sure you will see us back again on one of your other trips in the future.

Kind regards

Peter and Renate Lees

Thanks guys for taking the time to email me and a big thanks to Tony for doing an outstanding job.



## *Ridges and Rivers tour ANZAC weekend*

People often ask me what is my succession plan for GDT, given that I have two beautiful daughters, who, let's face it, have no interest in sleeping in a swag, wrestling a crocodile in Arnhem Land or winching through knee deep mud. Well luckily my brother has two strong able bodied and surprisingly intelligent sons (apologies to my brother) Ty and Greg, Greg has become a new dad of recent and like most of us suddenly found all his time taken up with the new addition to his family. Ty on the other hand is getting married next March, so I'm giving him as much outdoor experience that I can before he too is distracted by husbandly duties. So it was with great anticipation that I asked Ty to lead his first trip (bet the customers didn't know that!) over the ANZAC weekend. Well, it seems he had a pretty good time and even staged a vehicle immobilisation (his own) so he could practise his 4wd recovery techniques, well done Ty, always improving one's skills.

A few short words from Ty on the trip.

*Deua national park has lovely Forest tracks.*

*At times some challenging tracks that may require recovery gear or vehicle modifications to make tackling the tracks easier.*

*Bendethera valley camp ground is a place to relax around a camp fire while the wild kangaroos, wombat & Birdlife roam around you.*

*This would have to be one of the most relaxing camp grounds in NSW.*

Well Ty, you certainly have the passion for 4wd driving and camping and fortunately not the verbal diarrhoea that your Uncle suffers from!



**The group on their way to camp**



**Lots of flex on the Ridges and Rivers tour.**

## *Lake Eyre in Flood tour - Trip 1*

As you may know I only announced this trip in my last Newsletter following good local rain over Lake Eyre in December and January. It quickly filled, both the trip and the Lake. I have just returned (last Saturday) from the first of two scheduled trips. As I type this newsletter, Wayne and Jenny have the second group out at Halligan Bay after their flight over the lake on Wednesday.

Of course it was the best trip ever, just ask Alex. We covered a lot of ground in just one week, that is for sure, but everyone agreed, having the opportunity to see water in Lake Eyre was rather special. Our route out west

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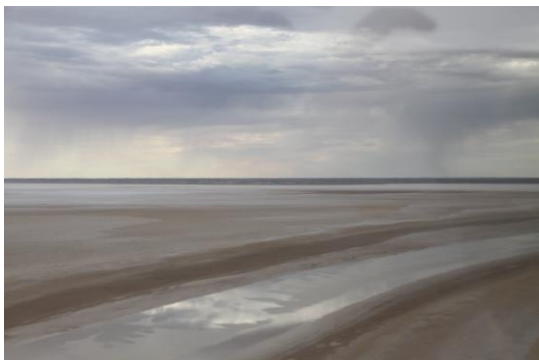
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from Sydney took us off the beaten track via Willandra Station, Menindee and Woomera, we enjoyed a great night underground in Coober Pedy before hitting William Creek for our 2 hour flight over the Lake.

From my perspective there wasn't as much water in it as I expected, this demonstrates how quickly it evaporates, but what was outstanding were the patterns in the Lake's surface, with just millimetres of water covering it, you could easily see the salty lake crust just below the water surface, and from 500 feet the patterns in the salt with the clouds reflecting in the water were spectacular.

The drive out to Halligan Bay and the view from the new camping area complete with toilet and shaded tables was also brilliant. Have a look at the photos that follow.



**Amazing patterns in the Lakes surface**

### *Never drive on a clay pan/salt lake*

Or I could title this, a funny thing happened on the way to Coober Pedy. There we were merrily driving up the most boring road in Australia with 8 vehicles tagging along when a call over the UHF came in "All for Adventure, do you have a winch" Well, I could have kept driving because who in their right mind would confuse me for Jason from All for Adventure? But clearly someone needed help so I just had to oblige. It turns out that a crocodile taxidermist from Pakistan (I kid you not!) had left the Stuart Highway, crossed a small sand dune and driven onto a clay pan, why? I have no idea!

He had walked back to the highway and flagged down another passing motorist who attempted to snatch him out and he too became bogged in the clay pan. By the time we got there several other onlookers had gathered and one had an old snatch strap tied (with a knot) to some tie down straps hooked up to the second vehicle with non rated hooks, despite my exclamations of don't do it, he did. Fortunately, and who knows how, nothing broke but the car remained stuck in the mud. By now I was more forceful and stepped in and said stop!





**Lucky I had a 30m winch strap extension**  
I had to position the 200 series so it wasn't on the clay pan to attempt a winch recovery. This meant I needed my 30 metre winch strap extension, my Dynamic winch rope doubled back through a snatch block and my bridle to connect it back to my 200, and of course about half a dozen rated shackles in the equation and three air breaks, I think the onlookers were a little amazed as to how much recovery gear I kept pulling out of the ORS drawers in the back of the 200.

I must admit, whilst winching from the driver's seat, I was hiding down low behind the A pillar in case anything let go. The strap seemed to stretch for an eternity before finally the first recovery vehicle began to move. With its driver assisting by driving, it eventually lifted out of the now half metre deep ruts in the clay pan.

Then we repositioned everything, lengthened the winch rope a little to reach our Taxidermist friend and after another 30 mins, some spade work and some heaving and huffing & puffing from the onlookers, he was free of his sticky situation.



**What were you doing out there?**

The whole exercise took an hour and a half, and I have to say I think we were lucky to get them out and lucky nothing broke. So next time I get a call for help up the Stuart Hwy, well, I'll do the right thing and lend a hand. It has also changed my thinking on the worth of electric winches, whilst a manual winch will always work and is a lot cheaper, I am very glad I could get to a straight on approach in order to use my electric winch, I hate to think how long it would have taken with the hand winch and have no doubt I would have needed to use two snatch blocks to make it possible to physically move the winch handle.

As a side note to this story, they had waved down another motorist and asked them to send help (a tow truck) from the next roadhouse (Glendambo) which never arrived, so don't rely on everyone to do the right thing. But above all, don't drive on a clay pan or salt lake that is wet!

### *Driver Training*

It has also been a very busy time for us down at our Braidwood driver training centre, with a series of Introductory and Camper trailer courses taking place since late February. On top of this we have had half a dozen separate individual training courses booked over the past 2 months. It seems more and more people are seeing the advantage of a personalised one on one training course.

In addition to this we had two large Corporate groups attend the 4wd training including the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Defence Force, we have tailored our courses to meet their specific needs, which includes setting up some quite intricate winching exercises which see the groups split into two teams to solve a similar problem using the recovery gear.

We are also very lucky to have exclusive access to an unsealed airport where we can conduct off highway emergency braking and swerve control, this is proving quite popular

with our corporate groups. We have several more of these groups booked over the coming months.

### *Driver Training Works*

Whilst the training centre is getting plenty of work, I'm always looking at ways of improving it. Over the past month we have been able to do just that. It has been quite dry down at Braidwood allowing the bog holes and water crossings to dry out. This provided a window of opportunity to get into these obstacles with a Bob Cat and small dozer to clean them out. Some of the bogs were becoming impassable and needed some attention. We also needed some scrub clearing and a couple of new tracks to facilitate some of the exercises we are now running.

So after just two days of work with all the machinery, we now have three new bog holes, a much larger water crossing and a very realistic rocky water crossing. Of course we are still reliant on the heavens raining down on us to provide the necessary water to make the bogs slippery, the water crossing half decent and our new rocky river bed a real river bed. But its only a matter of time before this occurs.



**Wayne reckons he filled the crossing with rocks by hand, but I'm not so sure?**



Bearing in mind our dependence on the supply of water, especially for our mud driving exercises, I have had a level area cleared above the mud holes where eventually I will construct a shed with a large water tank. The water tank will be strategically placed to allow us to empty water from it into our mud driving course. That is all in the future, and I'll keep you informed on the progress of this next phase of training centre improvements.

### *What is coming up?*

#### *Maralinga trip*

I leave on Sunday to head back to Port Augusta where I will meet up with everyone for this amazing trip. We will leave Port A on Tuesday 3 May and spend 22 days exploring the Gawler Ranges, Googs Track, the beaches around Fowlers Bay, Maralinga and its atomic test site, Emu and the Anne Beadell Hwy, the Great Central road and Surveyor General's Corner, then along the Sandy Blight Junction Rd and the Gary Junction Rd and finally down through the Finke gorge with its beautiful red cliffs and still billabongs. This is going to be an amazing journey and I hope to be able to schedule it again for next year.

#### *Simpson Desert tours Full!*

Both our Simpson Desert trips in May and July are now fully booked, Dave Fullerton will be leading the first one in May followed by Ian Sheppard on the July trip. We are

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already getting bookings for 2017, so if you are thinking of joining us don't hesitate.

### *Canning Stock Route 2016 and finally 2017*

Our 2016 trip departs Ayers Rock on 15 June we have just 2 spots left if you are considering joining us. Thought to be the most remote 4wd track in the world, it is also a place of great beauty and amazing desert scenes. I have had a lot of inquiries about whether we will run a CSR trip in 2017 and I am very pleased to say that yes we will! Tony the Kiwi will be leading the 2017 trip in July next year, details on this trip will be on my website by the end of next week, but if you wish to book it, I recommend you just email me, as I already have 5 on a wait list for it.



**The most isolated 4wd track in the world**

### *Big Red Bash We still have tickets!*

The Bash is sold out and the public can no longer purchase tickets to it, but we can! So if you are thinking of joining our amazing 11 day tag-along to and from the music concert that rocks the Desert, drop me an email at [info@4wd.net.au](mailto:info@4wd.net.au) The price of our tag-along includes your entry tickets to the concert, it is going to be an amazing trip. My first trip is fully booked, but we now have Ty and Wayne Desmond leading the second trip which also kicks off from Cobar from 1 July.

### *In the footsteps of Burke & Wills*

From 4-22 September our own Alex will be leading this simply amazing trip. Starting in Melbourne at the very point that the original Burke and Wills Expedition party commenced their epic journey, our trip will trace their entire route from Melbourne to Camp 119 on the Gulf of Carpentaria.

This will be a stunning trip, cloaked in history and wrapped around some of the best outback roads, sights and experiences that you will ever see. We have 3 vehicles booked on the trip thus far and I can't wax on lyrically enough to tell you just how good this trip will be. If you are looking for something that encapsulates the essence of our explorers and our great country, think about joining Alex on this trip in September.



**Retracing the Burke & Wills tragic expedition**

### *Arnhem Land 17 August to 4 September 2016*

This is our second trip into Arnhem Land this year with the first one already fully booked, we have 4 bookings on it thus far so that leaves just 4 spots remaining. It is of course an incredible trip that will take you to places that you simply cannot enjoy or access without your GDT guide. Drop me an email for a detailed itinerary [info@4wd.net.au](mailto:info@4wd.net.au)



### *Vic is on prime time radio as of 6 May*

I've been part of radio 2GB Caravan Camping and 4WD show since its inception way back in October 2014. During that time the show has blitzed its competitors and out ranked all comers in its afternoon time slot on Saturdays during Summer and its Saturday night shift through the footy season. But as of 6 May a big change is taking place with the show leaving 2GB and going over to 2UE 954 on your AM radio.

But what is more news worthy is the new time slot, it will be on during prime time drive time radio hours of 3pm to 6pm every Friday. Just perfect for those of you heading home or heading away after a long week at work. Whilst my track talk segments attempt to shed some light of what there is to see and do out there in our great country, its fair to say the show format is one of having a good laugh, talking a lot of nonsense, poking fun at everything, especially me at times, and generally making listeners feel good and having a laugh.



I'm not exactly sure how I'll do the first three Fridays given I'll be deep in the Australian outback, but even if I don't make the airways for the first few shows you can rest assured as soon as I'm in phone range I'll be on air looking to pass on some of my vast knowledge and incredibly bad Dad jokes.

### *Unsealed section*

After finishing my time with Overlander magazine, the editor at Pat Callinan's

Unsealed 4x4 on-line magazine asked me to write a couple of articles, so I did. Well, they must have liked them, and they did look pretty good in the digital format magazine, but I am biased. Anyway, they asked me if I had any more material. Well, that could have been a facetious question, but I have since written another half dozen yarns soon to begin appearing in Unsealed 4x4, you just have to google it and join up and it is emailed to you each month free of charge. Of course my impending trip way out west is going to give me a truck load more material so keep an eye out for it too throughout the rest of this year.

### *Facebook, We're on it*

Like it or loathe it, the real facts are that I have embraced it totally, especially when I'm away on tour. As soon as I get some phone coverage you will see me pounding away on my iphone, putting up the latest photos and video clips from my adventures, keeping you up to date on track and weather conditions along with the odd cream bun and chicken parmy. Just have a look at the Great Divide Tours facebook page over the past couple of months, you will see clips from the plane over Lake Eyre, some incredible scenery from New Zealand and even the making of our new rocky river crossing at the 4wd training centre. And of course next week I'll be at it again as I lead our 22 day Maralinga trip and update Facebook with all the amazing things we will be seeing and doing. Here is the link to it <https://www.facebook.com/Great-Divide-Tours-153808191334980/>

### *Follow us on our trips*

All of my outback trips are tracked via our Spot Trackers, have a look at this link <http://www.4wd.net.au/4wd-tours/follow-us-on-our-trips> and see where we went on our recent Lake Eyre trips, or follow my progress from 3 May on the Maralinga trip, it is amazing technology that updates our position every

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10 mins and translates it to a Google map so you can see exactly where we are exploring and camping.

### *Another birthday in the outback and another milestone for Vic*

On the 19<sup>th</sup> May I will be celebrating my 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday, this time I'll be at Surveyor Generals Corner, one of the places I've had on my bucket list for a while. Then just a few days after this I'm hoping to accomplish another massive milestone in my wonderful life of exploring Australia, I plan to make my 21<sup>st</sup> crossing of the Simpson Desert.

Which track I intend to take to notch up this milestone is yet to be decided, you see, we are in negotiations at present to possibly access a track that has only been used twice before, if we are successful I'm hoping to include this amazing new route across the desert on my calendar of trips for 2017, as they say, watch this space, or better still follow me on my Spot Tracker.



### *A couple of Apps to assist you on your travels.*

Well actually there are quite a few I've been using of late, some are free and some have a small fee attached.

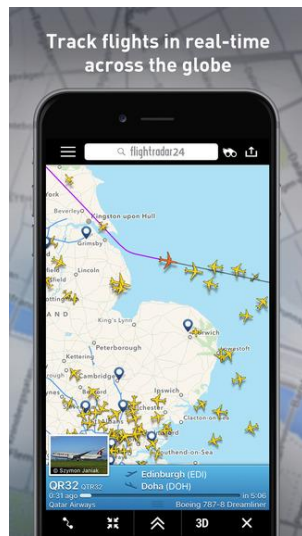
**CampAspect** was developed by one of my customers, it allows you to determine which way is North when you get into camp, shows you the trajectory of the sun, great if you are trying to

avoid it or find it for your solar panels and shows you the time of sunrise and sunset, I referred to this often on my recent Lake Eyre trip so we knew how much daylight (and fly time, did I mention the flies were bad?) we had remaining before making camp. It also has a spirit level built into it which has proved quite handy when trying to be on the level with someone or something.



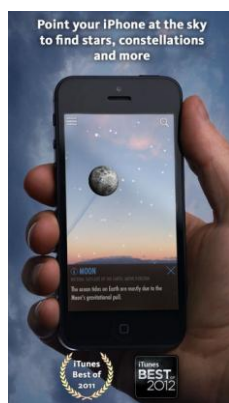
The latest App I started using courtesy of one of my customers, Duncan Guy and many others on my Lake Eyre trip is **FlightRadar24**, I have the payable app at just \$5 but it gives a bit more detail than the free app. What does it do? Well, you know when you are driving along or sitting in camp and you see a plane pass overhead high in the sky? Well this App identifies the plane for you, tells you where it has come from and where it is going, flight time and flight number and even the type of plane. A bit of fun that takes away the mystery of all those UFO's we see. BTW, enlarge the map to the world, you will be blown away at how many planes are in the sky at any one time, then zoom into somewhere like LA airport and see 100 times more

planes appear as you zoom in, mind boggling how they don't all bump into each other!



I've also recently added **Wiki Camps** to my iPhone, this lists most known campsites and can prove to be quite handy if you are looking for somewhere to camp in unfamiliar territory.

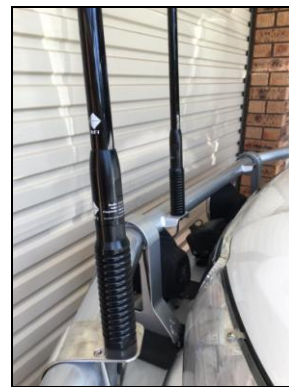
Another great App for when you are out camping is **SkyView**, this one shows you and names the stars you can see in the sky, you can have fun following the space shuttle across the sky, identify Mars, Jupiter Saturn etc and generally stare at the night sky from your swag even longer than before.



Finally **Fuel calculator** instantly tells you what economy you are getting, just load in the fuel used for the distance travelled and up pops your litres per 100k's, the 200 series on the Lake Eyre trip scored a low of 15.3L/100k and a high of 16.8 L/100k's, of course this app could make you weep a little too!

### *New Product test*

I was approached by Ian Ferrett (pronounced Feray, like in Targay) at the Queanbeyan 4wd show and he suggested I should try his companies UHF and mobile phone aerials. So I did. I have now used them in the High Country and on the Lake Eyre trip, and you know what, they are darn good! With the UHF aerials I'm definitely getting better coverage than with my previous aerials, their design is also more robust too and with the printed circuit style cable inside the strong fibreglass casing, I can't see how the cable will ever break.



**I'm pretty impressed with my RFI aerials**

The mobile phone external aerial mated to the phone through the Bury phone cradle has been a revelation. Where previously I had no signal I'm now getting 2-3 bars, where others have none I have at least one bar, enough to send a text if I need to. Brilliant bit of gear IMHO. As it turns out the RFI comms



aerials are used by all our emergency services, so I guess that means they must be ok. For more details on them contact Ian at RF Industries, [ian.ferret@rfi.com.au](mailto:ian.ferret@rfi.com.au)

### *Grid Iron in Australia? What the?*

Yep, that's exactly what I said too when one of my younger grandnephews (I had to google that to work out the relationship) (My sisters' daughter's son) by the name of Blake King said he wanted to be a grid iron player. From as young as 10 years he had this strange fixation on American football. He would practise throwing a ball over his house on the Central Coast into a wheelie bin on the other side of it, and he rarely missed!

Unknown to me there are several grid iron football teams in Australia and although young and at the time and pint sized, Blake was playing the game of his dreams. Fast forward 7 years to today and Blake is now 17 years old and has just been selected to represent Australia in the World Championship Grid Iron Games to be held in China in July this year.

Problem is he has to raise \$5000 to be able to afford to get over there. So here is a plea to anyone out there wishing to support a young fella who is pursuing his dream as hard as, no, make that harder than Jarryd Hayne. I have personally donated \$1000 to help young Blake and with the support of his family and close friends he only needs another \$2000 to make it all happen, so if you would like to help please go to <https://www.gofundme.com/blakesdream-NFL> you know if you could just donate as little as \$5 we would probably

get Blake on his way to realising his dream.

Here is part of Blake's story, more can be read on the above link.

Blake has dedicated the majority of his high school life working towards a career in American Football, known as Gridiron or NFL. Blake trained for two years before being of the acceptable age to play in the Junior ranks of NSW competition. He made the switch from Rugby League to Gridiron at the age of 14 and has never looked back. Blake has attended numerous camps with specialised American coaches and in 2015 he was the youngest player to represent NSW at the state championships held in WA. His commitment to training is inspirational.



**Help Blake get to China  
Don't laugh, I had hair like that too  
when I was 17, didn't you?**

### *And another super star from the King family*

My sisters' daughters' other son, Luke King has been pursuing his own aspirations even longer than young Blake, he wanted to be a motor racing driver, so when he was 10 years old I help fund his first Go Kart. Over the following years Luke competed in many Go Kart championships having great success.

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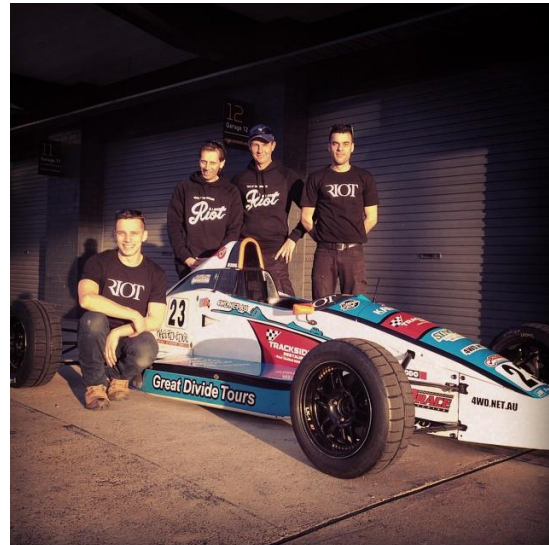
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Then when he was allowed to race in the big time he went on to drive Series production and then Formula Ford, raising his own funds and with a little help from his sponsors and Great Divide Tours. Finally this year Luke got the big break he has been looking for. He has been offered a drive in the new Toyota 86 series which kicks off next month at Winton Raceway.

There are 5 race meetings scheduled this year, all corresponding with the V8 Supercar Rounds including Bathurst, Eastern Creek and Homebush and all guaranteed TV time on Foxtel and some via Channel 10. Over the years his various forms of motor sport vehicles have carried the [www.4wd.net.au](http://www.4wd.net.au) sponsorship logo, now he is in the big time, the sponsorship costs are much higher, but that hasn't stopped me trying to buy some panel space to keep supporting another great young kid who prefers to do something with his life rather than booze, drugs and bludge off society.

I know how hard Luke has worked to achieve this goal and mate I wish you well and hope you continue to smash them (err... well maybe that wasn't a good choice of words). If you own a business keen on supporting a young gun in the dawn of his motor racing career, contact <http://brianhiltonmotorsport.com.au/> or me and I'll make it happen for you and Luke.



**That's Luke King far left**

Well that's it for now, as you see lots going on, lots about to go on and even more going to go on.

I'm off to Maralinga now, but if you have any questions on anything related to anything I know anything about, please feel free to email me at [info@4wd.net.au](mailto:info@4wd.net.au) and stay safe.

Regards

Vic Widman



**I reckon we will do this next year in New Zealand!**