



## Newsletter No. 43 February 2017

### *G'Day, Outback Vic here*

Well, the holidays have come and gone and its almost March 2017. Time flies when you are having fun, that's for sure. Here at GDT we have been hard at work over the holiday period and leading into the New Year. And we have more exciting news on another incredible trip to take place in 2018 and a very special fund raising outback adventure that I am spear heading in August 2017. So let's catch up on what's going down.



### *Christmas trips*

Over the Christmas New Year period we had two high country trips being conducted and one 4 day Snowy Mtns trip. The Snowy trip presented a couple of issues even before we took off from Jindabyne, with a couple of the main tracks that we regularly use remaining closed after the Winter as Parks Victoria did not have time to get in there and grade the tracks, rebuilding subsided roads and clearing fallen trees. Fortunately I know the Snowy Mtns area quite well, and have driven virtually every track down there, so with advice from the helpful local park rangers I devised a couple of new routes to get around the closed tracks, and Tony Davys, the trip leader, was able to deliver another superb 4 days away. New Year in the Snowy Mountains is a unique way to see in the New Year.

Once again a couple of our clients took the time to email me after the trip to let me know what a great time they had. As human beings we love to receive pats on the back,

and even though, in this case, Tony did all the front line work, it makes me very pleased that we are delivering such a great experience for everyone. Here is a sample of one of the emails I received.

*Hello Vic*

*Narelle & I have just returned from the Man from Snowy River Tour. We had a great time touring with Great Divide Tours.*

*Our tour leader was Tony Davys. Vic, you are lucky to have Tony in your company. He brings a wealth of knowledge on 4x4 driving coupled with excellent people management skills. All participants were given individual advice and encouragement when required and their questions answered sincerely. I classify Tony a master of his craft, a AAA Plus rating.*

*A couple of highlights on our trip for me were firstly, helping him out of a spot of bother at Native Dog Flat and secondly sharing the fly rod at Buckwong Hut.*



**And here is proof of the helping hand that Tony referred to, a broken shock on the GDT 100 series being changed mid trip, and Tony**

**Davy's found his short arms were a disadvantage when trying to reach the top shock mounts. Thanks to all those that assisted Tony.**

*This was our second tour with Great Divide Tours in six weeks. Australia has many fine places to visit and I can't suggest a better way to see our country by travelling with your company.*

*We will certainly keep Great Divide Tours in mind for future travel plans.*

*Regards, Tony and Narelle*

This was followed by our 7 day non camper trailer trip with Tony backing up to lead it after his 4 day Snowy trip.

It too proved to be a big hit with everyone if the following email is anything to go by:-

Hi Vic,

Wanted to call out Tony for his superb leadership of the Vic High Tour. I would like commend Tony for being a great tour leader. He's a lovely bloke, good fun always happy to chat and joke around the fire, great with kids and super flexible and helpful. I'm sure you know this already and it's probably why you hired him.

I'm sure it's not easy being Mr Happy all the time but he put everyone at ease and made the experience really very enjoyable, keen to try new trails, confident in the group and as a result we saw heaps more this year and felt we'd 'tested' the car and ourselves .

Please thank him and share the feedback

Chris



**Mr Happy (Tony) the centre of attention on Mt Blue Rag**

And it seems Mr Happy finds this tour guiding a natural environment with this email arriving on my desktop regarding the trip he led in late November.

Dear Great Divide Team,

My wife, brother and sister in-law and I have just returned from the Victorian High country and I needed to email you to express our thoughts of our amazing week.

Our host, guide, comedian, wildlife educator, teacher, mentor and now I hope friend Tony was, and is nothing short of just amazing. Tony from the first time we all met him at the briefing put everyone at ease and guided us through what the next 7 days would have in store.

Throughout our adventure Tony led with professionalism and confidence and his mastery of his craft is a credit to him, at every turn he knew where we were heading and provided the information pertinent to the specific location.

The sights and locations we visited will stay with us forever as will the challenges we all worked through as a team. I thought I was a very experience 4wd driver, however I certainly learnt a lot.

The organisation from GDT down to the fine details was fantastic and left nothing to chance. I have and will recommend GDT to

everyone who will listen and WE WILL BE BACK.

Please pass our heartfelt thanks to Tony and the Great Divide support team.

Andrew



**Tony's high country convoy**

In the meantime Dave was leading our 7 day High Country camper trailer trip between Christmas and New year and he experienced some rather heavy rain whilst down in Talbotville. So much so that he had to make the decision to move camp as it was expected that the Crooked River would break its banks and possibly flood where the group was camped. It's always a difficult decision to ask everyone to move camp once they have settled in for few days and become somewhat established in the one spot. But the word we received from the Ranger in Dargo was that over 100mm of rain had fallen in the catchment of the Crooked River and previously that meant a rather severe flood would wash down the valley. Well, you guessed it, Dave asked everyone to move to higher ground and the river remained at a low level, nothing wrong with being over cautious, just imagine if we had ignored the advice and had our gear washed away!

And we received this email from a Father and Son party on this strip with Dave Fullerton as their guide.

*Dear Vic and wonderful team*

*Where do I start*

*Its been a few weeks since I arrived back home and I have had time to reflect on what a fantastic experience me and my dad had.*

*My dad and myself were not disappointed. This trip had it all, the weather on the first day was freezing cold with about one meter visibility heading up to Hotham due to frosty fog but heading into Talbotville for our first campsite the rain stopped so we could set up camp and they were the only two days of wet weather.*

*And then YES the high country turned it on tracks dried a little, sun was out rivers were flowing and the breathtaking views were amazing not to mention the amazing 4x4 tracks which kept all of us on our toes.*

*I was lucky enough to meet some amazing people with a lot of different interests but one thing in common was four wheel driving.*

*And just finally Vic, what a professional and informative guide Dave was even when the itinerary had to change due to weather conditions we all felt safe and informed.*

*My dad is still going on about how good it was so 10 out of 10 Great Divide what a memorable experience.*

*Cheers Corey and Max (dad)*

So you see why I've been doing this job for 28 years now, being able to show off our great country and help people get to experience it is certainly a joy. I do pass on these emails to the respective guides so they can enjoy that feeling I get of being patted on the back too.

Of course we don't always please everyone but in 28 years of running tours and driver training courses and having at least 30,000 clients over that time, I could count on only one hand the complaints we have received. Everyone is different and we always listen to

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the feedback, some we agree with, some we don't, but what we do has been molded by a love of our country and sharing it with good decent people.

### *Lots of driver training courses too*

The year may only be 7 weeks old but we have already trained in excess of 80 people in the art of 4wd driving. With many attending our regular weekend courses but also quite a few opting for our individual training courses. These individual training courses are quite intense as you might imagine, for both the trainee and the trainer. Tony and I share the duties on these and we certainly see some great results from this unique training situation. Crikey! Imagine being stuck with me for a full day and all my dad jokes!



Last week we had the opportunity to provide 4wd training to a group from the Aust Defence Force, these people are being sent on a special mission overseas to assist those less fortunate than ourselves and the country they are working in is renowned for its wet roads and massive bog holes. We have had this contract for a while now, so much so that we established extra bog holes at our training centre to demonstrate the various means of driving through muddy areas.

Some of these techniques I have developed myself over the many years of four wheel driving and training, and have not read of them elsewhere, so I'm proud to own them. It is fabulous to see the drivers going from

that look of "I'm Bogged" to "No I'm not" after a few words of wisdom. I call it "The last thing I want to do is perform a vehicle recovery " technique. Those of you that have attended our training will know about the Wiggles and the Launch Control, those that don't, well you know who to call. 02 99131395.

### *New Zealand here we come*

In just three weeks I'll be in New Zealand on our annual 4wd tag-along around the glorious mountain scenery of the South Island. Easily one of the most beautiful countries I have ever seen and just 3 hours across the ditch too. We fly into Christchurch where they too have had some bad bushfires literally in the hills visible from the city. But fires and dry weather is not the major concern, you see last week they had big snow falls across the very tracks that we will be using, come to think of it, our own High Country had snow falls this week too, I know because Tony is down there now leading yet another 7 day trip through the mountains. So it looks like apart from the simply stunning scenery, great 4wd tracks, amazing food and mix of accommodation that we always enjoy during our NZ tour, this year might actually get some snow driving, now that is exciting!



**I'll be here in two weeks time, you could be here with me in March 2018.**

You can find out if this really happens by simply following Great Divide Tours on

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Facebook, I know, social media is killing us, but used correctly and it can help you keep abreast of things in virtual real time. Whenever I get wifi connection I'll be uploading photos and video clips from my NZ trip, make sure you check it out to make your selves really envious.

### *Going to Africa*



To add to my crazy busy life, as soon as I get back from NZ I'm hopping on the flying Kangaroo for 14 hours to Johannesburg and then another plane to a place called Windhoek, yep, I'd never heard of it either until a few months ago. There will be myself, Ian Sheppard, one of my other great guides, and five adventurous couples who will be met by our Africa tour guide and we set off into the lion, elephant and rhino infested landscape of Namibia. Perhaps that is why my wife, Julie, isn't coming on this trip? She reckons she can handle the wild kiwis in New Zealand, but a wild bull elephant on heat raging through our tents at night, well that is a different story. Or maybe, as she says, "What? Go away 3 weeks before our daughter gets married and miss all the anxiety? You must be joking Vic!"

So I have a 14 hour flight over to Africa and then 18 days of swatting wilderbeast (they are like mozzies aren't they?) and then another 14 hour flight back home to write the Father of the Bride speech.

Speaking of which, there seems to be a bit of pressure on me with this so called epic

speech that I'm going to deliver. A couple of weeks ago my daughter, Emma, arranged a small engagement party where the prospective parents-in-law could get to meet each other. Well of course that went off famously, I told the new Father and Mother in my family a couple of my classic jokes, and they seemed quite impressed that their son was marrying the daughter of a loose cannon. But that's not what is putting the pressure on the F O B (Father of the Bride) speech, no, it was the comment from Emma's bestest girlfriend who has lived through all my Dad speeches at the various 18<sup>th</sup>s 21<sup>st</sup>s etc etc, you see, it seems I have an admiring crowd of young ladies (all friends of Emma) who just can't wait to hear me spill the beans on Emma in yet another Fatherly speech. Obviously they delight in seeing their bestest buddy cringe, squirm and forever face the embarrassment that only a loving Dad can unintentionally inflict on his beloved daughter. I'll let you know if she is still talking to me after the wedding.



**Proud parents with the soon to be married couple.**

### *High Country accommodated trips*

In my last Newsletter just a couple of months ago (Crikey! I'm almost making these Newsletters a habit) I gave you details on a 7 day accommodated trip into the Victorian High Country. I mentioned then that I had put this on because there was so much interest in the Accommodated outback trip that I planned for September this year.

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Well I thought I may have been a little ambitious by identifying three separate trips to the high country, one in March and the second in May and the third in early December. OK, so you guys proved me wrong. This is what has happened since early December when I announced these 7 day high country accommodated tours.



**Tall timbers, we actually go right past Timbertop school.**

The March trip is now fully booked, so I put a second trip on immediately after it, and now it too is fully booked. The May trip is also fully booked, so I have put a second trip on in May from 13-20 May 2017, and yes I do have a couple of spots still available on it. The December trip is going a little slow by these standards, with just 5 bookings which translates to three vacancies. So it seems the idea of seeing the high country without the hassle of camping and cooking is rather appealing, don't worry I'm taking note of this and I'm already planning some other destinations for similar accommodated trips into great 4wd locations. Anyone keen on the Flinders Ranges or maybe an accommodated trip around Tassie? Watch this space as they say, or drop me an email to be put on the list and get first opportunity to join us. Anyway, these are in the pipeline for 2018.

### *The best place I've ever visited*

If I had a dollar for every time I've been asked that, well I could almost afford to camp at the Ayers Rock camp ground. Whilst I've been to about 90% of our great

country, and there are some standout places such as Arnhem Land, the High Country, the Flinders, the Hamersley Ranges and the turquoise waters around Monkey Mia, there is one trip I did back in 1998 that clearly stands head and shoulders above all the rest. In 1998 I and couple of friends/customers embarked on a 7 day cruise from Broome to the Mitchell Plateau. This was one of those trips that was simply amazing.

I've pondered doing it again for several years now, but the cost of the cruises these days was simply out of my league. Last week, whilst sweltering in 45 degree heat at the Newcastle Show I had the chance to speak to Eddy, the owner of Odyssey Expedition, a beautiful 85 foot catamaran style boat that cruises the Kimberley coast.



Anyway, one thing led to another and now I am happy to say that I'll be going back to cruise the Kimberley coast in August 2018. I won't deny that this is an expensive trip, and some would say it is a once in a lifetime experience. But given how beautiful I know that coastline is, how great the fishing is, how amazing sleeping on a boat and watching the sunset over the western seas and then watch the sunrise over the golden sandstone cliffs of the Kimberley coast really is, I want share it with you.

So here is the deal. I have booked the Odyssey Explorer for a 9 Day Cruise commencing in Broome on 2 August 2018 and concluding on 10 August on a pristine beach on the Mitchell plateau where a

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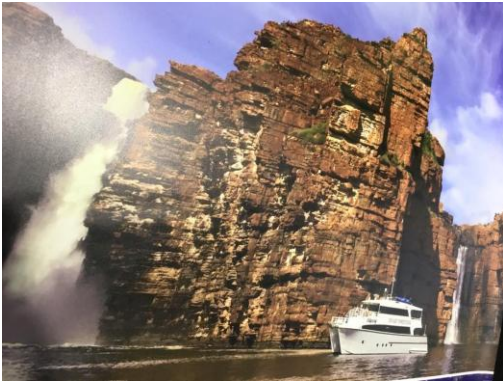
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helicopter will pick us up and fly us over the Mitchell Falls before we board a light plane at the Mitchell Falls air strip which then flies us back to Broome down the coast we have just cruised up.

On top of this I have negotiated a discounted price for my customers with a saving of \$600 for a couple. I mentioned this on the Great Divide Tours Facebook site only last week (see told you that you should follow me on Facebook) and I already have 4 couples booked in to join me and Julie on this trip of a lifetime.



That leaves just room for 5 more couples or 10 singles or a mix thereof. So I'm putting it out there to my Newsletter recipients, if you are keen to do this with me in August 2018, contact me immediately and confirm your spot with a 10% deposit. I have attached the itinerary and all the details to the email with this newsletter and the link to the cruise on my website is here <http://www.4wd.net.au/4wd-tours/extended-safaris/cruise-the-kimberley-coast>

### *Accommodated Outback Icons trip*

As mentioned earlier the idea of running accommodated trips had never really occurred to me, sure we have a couple of weekend trips which are accommodated, but going away for a week or longer and being pampered and fed each night instead of camping was not really on my radar. Well it is now, and so it seems it is on your wavelength too. This is how the current

bookings stand for our Outback Icons Accommodated tours in 2017.

**Trip 1** 6-14 September 2017 Fully booked Reserves being taken

**Trip 2** 14- 22 September 2017 One spot left

**Trip 3** 16-24 September 2017 - two spots available.



**After a drive like this down the Birdsville track it will be great to relax in a motel room and have someone else cook you dinner.**

So if you are thinking of seeing the outback, all the way out to Birdsville via White Cliffs, Cameron Corner, Innamincka and driving the Birdsville Track to Marree and the Prairie hotel in the Flinders, don't leave it too much longer as it looks like we will be fully booked for these trips in no time.

Each trip is fully accommodated in hotels, motels or shearing sheds with dinner and breakfast provided. Ask me for the itinerary via email and I'll send it to you, remember we have just 3 spots remaining for 2017.

### *Doing it for Charity*

OK, it is rather obvious that after 28 years of offering 4wd tag-along tours and 4wd training, that Great Divide Tours has really established itself in the Australian 4wd scene. That is something I am truly proud off and I also recognise that its success could not be achieved without a fantastic group of guys and girls that work for me.

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Whilst I may still owe a bit to the bank who, after all, bank rolled the construction of what I believe to be the best 4wd training centre in Australia, it is time I started giving a bit back. So when I was approached by one of my customers to help get a fund raising car rally going for the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia I jumped at the opportunity. Known as the Vic Widman Super 4wd Adventure Challenge it is taking place from 30 July to 6 August 2017.

Prostate Cancer is another hideous cancer that affects more men than will let on. The idea for this, the first of what we hope will be an annual event, is to raise at least \$30,000 for the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia. My role, apart from lending my name to support the event, includes designing the rally route, accompanying the rally and providing as much media as I can through my various networks. I would also like to think I might be able to convince some of you to join us on this fun filled event and perhaps find some sponsors that would also donate some badly needed cash to help raise our donation above our goal.



**I'll be taking the charity drive over Big Red**

So I've designed the route starting in Cobar and heading out to Birdsville via Cameron Corner and Innamincka and then to Big Red with a day trip into the Simpson Desert. Then we will bring you back to Broken Hill via the Birdsville Track, Marree, Farina and Rawnsley Park in the Flinders Ranges. I have the full backing of an organisation

known as Charity Car Events who are experts at arranging the various car rallies that you may have heard such as the Variety Bash and Going for the Doctor Rally. The difference with this is, it is designed for 4wd vehicles and is an opportunity to see the outback and raise some funds for a very worthwhile cause.

I have attached our preliminary flyer on the event to this email with this newsletter, and you can obtain more details by emailing <http://charitycarevents.com.au/pcfally/> or simply contact me and I'll be happy to help out with your inquiry.

We are aiming for just 20 4wd drives in this the first year and have already booked the accommodation at the various overnight stops, so it will be a first in best dressed situation until the accommodation runs out, no problem if it does, as there is plenty of camping at each overnight stop as well.

#### **Bushfire season**

We all know that 2016 was a rather wet year across most of NSW and as result there was a lot of grass and vegetation growth. Then with the approach of Summer it was clear that we could have a bad fire season. It looks like some of these fears have come to light with two major fires in recent weeks one out near Dunedoo and another near Queanbeyan.

These were primarily grass fires which with high winds and long hot days proved to be very fast moving. Sadly both fires claimed several homes and some fire fighters were injured but thankfully no-one lost their lives. Of course the impact on those farmers that lost their homes, their livestock and their fencing will be enormous and we can only pray that their luck will turn around in these very dark times for them.

The fire at Queanbeyan and another smaller grass fire near Tarago on the Braidwood to Goulburn Road were deceptively close to

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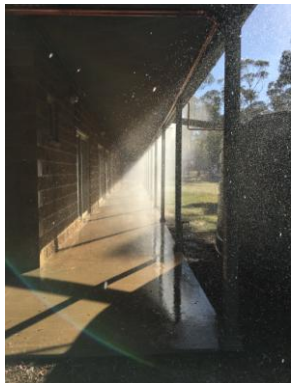


my training centre near Braidwood. In fact only 20 kilometres as the crow flies and that is nothing in the wrong weather conditions.

I mentioned last newsletter that I was having a sprinkler system installed on my training centre at Braidwood, the Bushfirepro system to be exact

[http://www.bushfirepro.com/bushfire\\_sprinkler\\_systems.htm](http://www.bushfirepro.com/bushfire_sprinkler_systems.htm) .

Well its now in place and is very impressive when its activated. Here are a couple of photos I took on the day ot was installed.



**The sprinkler system envelopes the building in water**

The system is fully automatic too, with the ability to self start on detecting excessive smoke or heat. Whilst I feel far more comfortable about the possibility of the centre and those in it surviving a bush fire, I still feel very vulnerable when I walk around the property on these blistering hot days and realise that we would lose all our trees and vegetation, the family of kangaroos that have made Castle View their home and the many birds that wake me up early each morning.



**Even the water tanks are protected**

Bushfire is the devil in Australia, so please remember when out camping make sure your camp fire is fully extinguished when you leave it, if you are a smoker never discard a cigarette butt out the 4wd window and for that matter don't even ash it out the window, I've seen people do this at night and you can see the spark trail from the hot ash fly through the air.

### *Luke King Racing*

As you know I sponsor my nephew Luke King in the Toyota 86 racing series and we believe this year he has a very good chance of being in the top 3 of the championship and possibly even taking it out.



**2017 could be the year Luke King wins the series, with your help.**

But motor racing is very expensive, Luke plans to purchase his own 86 for this year as in the long run leasing a race car for each round is just lost money. I asked him to do a budget on what it will cost to enter each of the five rounds which are run in conjunction with the V8 Supercars, and have to say I was a little astounded at what it costs to enter these races, get yourself and your pit crew to them and pay all the costs associated with it. In short it is about \$20,000 per round, so with five rounds, Luke needs \$100,000 to just compete (after he purchases the car). So we are looking for sponsors for his car.

If your business wishes to get plenty of TV time, being at the pointy end of each race we can guarantee plenty of TV coverage, along with Luke's natural media skills, (he already

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has television and radio time booked in for this season) his car will be the perfect medium for promoting your business, please contact me and I will email what we can do in return for your help.

### *What is a recovery point?*

This is becoming a real issue with 4wdrives. We all know that we must use correctly rated recovery gear when performing a snatch or winch recovery. Failure to do so can lead to serious injury or death. But the connection of the rated recovery gear to the vehicle is equally important. Here in lies the problem, identification of what is a rated recovery point on a 4wd is becoming more and more complex.

In fact, when we look at a recovery point the general rule was that if it pointed straight down it was known as a tie down point and was to be used for transporting a vehicle only, if the hook or loop pointed forward that was generally considered to be a recovery point and suitable for using in a snatch or winch recovery. However, it is impossible to determine by just looking at a recovery point if it is actually engineered correctly for a load that a recovery might exert on it. Identifying that correct welding and materials in the recovery steel loop have been used is not something we should guess at knowing that a person's life might depend on it. So in recent times I have referred the individual owner to their owner's manual to determine what the manufacturer actually says about the recovery points.

Now this is where it gets interesting. I have found that many points on a 4wd that have previously been considered recovery points are not actually endorsed by the manufacturer of the vehicle. A common statement is "to be used for towing purposes only". Towing is not a recovery, and in fact some manufacturers even state, "for towing only, not to be used for vehicle recovery".

It seems to me that the manufacturers also don't wish to categorically state that the vehicle can be recovered using the points that are fitted to the vehicle. This is a case of protecting oneself in case of legal action by an injured party.

The most intriguing owner's manual I have read belongs to the Land Rover products. Their manual clearly states that what looks like a recovery point cannot be used for recovery, it is a towing point, unless the owner attends one of their own Land Rover Experience days. So my question is, and perhaps a Landrover owner out there that has attended a Land Rover Experience day can answer for me, how does attending a Landrover Experience day suddenly change a point on the vehicle that the manufacturer says can't be used for a recovery into a point that can be?

At my training courses we go out of our way to avoid recoveries at all times. This is achieved through appropriate assessment of the track, appropriate training on how to drive the track and understanding how to use the 4wd features of the particular vehicle to your advantage. Then we demonstrate numerous techniques that we have learnt over the years to get a seemingly bogged vehicle out of a situation without reverting to performing a recovery.



**Does your 4wd manufacture state that your vehicle has a recovery point?**

If all that fails, we usually hand the driver a shovel and yes, that often does the trick. If a recovery is required, especially one using a snatch strap, we now employ the softly softly approach which works 99% of the time. In a winching exercise we ensure that the load on the winch is reduced to its minimum through clearing obstacles from under the vehicle, lifting the vehicle off the grounded sections of the chassis by building ramps for the tyres to follow etc. Keeping the load on the recovery gear and the recovery points to the minimum is the key to a safe recovery.

Have a look at your owner's manual and see what it actually says about what you believe are your recovery points, I reckon 90% of them will say, for towing purposes only!

### ***So what is the answer if this is the case?***

There are now purpose built engineered recovery points available for most makes and models of 4wd. You may see the bright red steel hooks attached to the underside of the front of some 4wd's. Provided the attachment of these is performed satisfactorily one assumes that this is then a safe recovery anchor point. The down side of all of this is the high expense of these purpose made recovery points. I have seen these range from \$80 to \$495 each without the labour to attach them correctly to your chassis rails.

To be honest, I have enough trouble convincing people they should purchase a rated Bow shackle at just \$6 each let alone then tell them they need two recovery points that will cost them close to \$500 each! I simply don't understand why a piece of steel would cost that much and the problem is the average Joe Blow in the street will baulk at that expense. So when he gets stuck, he uses his non rated recovery point and if it breaks someone gets seriously hurt or killed.

If vehicle manufacturers are going to market 4wd's as go anywhere vehicles (which

they all do) they also need to grow some you know whats, and provide them with approved recovery points. By the way, don't get me started on the total lack of recovery points at the rear of most 4wd's and a similar absence of them on so called off road trailers and vans.

### ***Enjoy a weekend away***

Whilst many of our longer outback 4wd tours for 2017 are already fully booked we have seen a slowdown in bookings for some of our weekend trips of recent. So here is a little reminder of what we have coming up.

**This coming weekend 25-26 February** the lovable and likeable Alex is taking a tour up into the beautiful Barrington Tops north of Newcastle. We have combined some great 4wd tracks with a fabulous camping experience high in the crisp mountain air for our Saturday night camp. Then on Sunday we will bring you down off the mountains and out to the sea. We will tour through the Myall Lakes area and hit the beaches north of Tea Gardens to enjoy the pristine waters whilst we munch on lunch at this fabulous beach side location. The trip concludes at Tea Gardens around 4pm on Sunday, the cost is only \$450 per vehicle for two people and this is a camping weekend. We have 3 vehicles booked in thus far so if you are looking for a great 4wd escape this weekend drop me an email.



**Camping in Barrington Tops is magic**



### **11-12 March Brindabella Escape**

Another great camping trip this time led by Jenny and Wayne. We explore the mountains south east of Canberra, camp amongst the Brumbies on the snow plains at Coolamon and then do some great 4wd tracks through the Brindabella Ranges. This one costs just \$450 per vehicle for two people also.



**You are very likely to see wild brumbies on the Brindabella tour.**

### **25-26 March Abercrombie and Hill End tour**

This trip is led by the likeable country lad Greg Dickinson and takes you on a gold rush through the Turon River to Hill End before coming south to Oberon where we stay in a delightful motel for the night with dinner and breakfast supplied. Then on Sunday we will explore the fabulous Abercrombie National Park with its steep tracks, beautiful river side camp sites and oddly named locations such as the Sink, the Beach and the Licking Hole. This tour costs \$690 per vehicle for two people and includes your accommodation, dinner and breakfast.

To book any of these trips just go to [www.4wd.net.au](http://www.4wd.net.au) or drop Jenny or myself an email at [info@4wd.net.au](mailto:info@4wd.net.au) or give us a call on 02 99131395.

### *The return of our snow tours*

A few years ago we were running a 3 day snow tour over the first weekend in August, this usually corresponded with the NSW

Bank Holiday. Well, its back, and this time we have booked some great accommodation in a lovely motel in Tumbarumba for two nights along with the great meals they will provide for dinner and breakfast.

During the day we will search out as much snow driving as is possible, some years we just have great 4wd touring to offer whilst at other times we find ourselves driving in blizzards. Either way we guarantee a fun weekend. We will even have a Christmas in August evening and you will be encouraged to bring a gift for each other as you never know but the man in the big red suit might just make an appearance.



**This is going to be a fabulous long weekend of snow fun**

All the details are on our website, so start booking this great fun weekend asap to avoid missing it, Christmas in August only comes around once a year.

### *A real outback adventure or two*

I'm writing about these two trips because the bookings are a little quiet and we need a few more to make them money spinners for me, well at least I'm honest.

Having said that, it does make me wonder why some trips are fully booked out well in advance whilst others are often sluggish. What I put it down to is that not everyone knows about some of the incredible places that we visit, places like the Simpson Desert, Cape York and the Kimberley are well

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known and most likely on everyone's bucket list for outback travel. But let me share with you why two of my best outback trips should also join this list.



**We have a local guide who was there during the testing etc to guide us around Maralinga**

The Maralinga and Beyond tour from 9-27 May 2017 obviously visits Maralinga. Now you may or may not have heard of Maralinga, and if you have heard of it you may wonder if its safe to go there. Maralinga saw the British carry out no less than 7 atomic bomb tests in the 1950's. It is place that very little is known about and yes it was off limits until they cleaned up the area. The people who live out there now are still regularly tested for radiation and it is claimed there are actually lower levels of radiation at Maralinga now than in our usual places of work and play. So I felt it was safe enough to visit and your guide Ian Bragg, has been there four times now and he still doesn't raise the bar on the radiation detector.

OK, I should take this seriously, please I assure you there is no risk of radiation. But I can also assure you that you will be absolutely fascinated by the local tour guide who takes us around Maralinga showing where the various English, Australian and US personnel lived and worked, there were hundreds of them out there in the 1950's. But as the name of this trip suggests it is much more than just Maralinga. To start with we take you to one of my favourite

locations, Mt Ive Station and the beautiful salt lake of Lake Gairdner. We then traverse down the equally interesting Googs Track which sees us cross over 100 sand dunes on our way to some of the best beach driving in the country around Ceduna and Fowlers Bay.



**Driving the Anne Beadell Highway into WA**

After Maralinga we get to follow the Anne Beadell Hwy, one of the many roads built by Len Beadell and his Gunbarrel Construction party, which crosses through some very remote country in far west Sth Australia and into WA. Then before we finish the trip at Ayers Rock we visit another of those bucket list locations, Surveyor Generals Corner where WA/NT and SA all meet. This one is on aboriginal land and requires a special permit and accompaniment by an Elder from the local community which we arrange on your behalf. We already have 5 bookings on this trip, so the trip is definitely going ahead, if you would like to have a look at the detailed itinerary just drop me an email at [info@4wd.net.au](mailto:info@4wd.net.au)

### **The Madigan Line**

This is another fascinating tour that we offer which suffers from the fact that most people don't know anything about it. As is often the case with my trips they are designed around our early explorers or events in history. This one traces the route taken by Cecil Madigan when he and a small team of men and camels walked across the northern section of the Simpson Desert from Old Andado

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station to Birdsville. It does travel through very remote country, in fact I personally think it is now more enjoyable than the traditional crossings on the Simpson Desert via the French Line etc.



**The sand dunes along the Madigan Line are amongst the best I have seen**

We are following just two wheel tracks and due to the lack of traffic it does not suffer from the corrugations and moguls that are commonly found elsewhere in the desert making this a an enjoyable 4wd experience. After the 10 day desert crossing, we don't rush it, we also track down through Innamincka and Cameron Corner rounding off a fantastic outback experience. This trip is taking place from **14-30 June 2017**. This trip has just one booking thus far and we do need 4 to be able to make it happen, this may be the last year we run it too for a while so please consider joining us. I can send you the detailed itinerary also if you wish.



**Nothing equals the freedom of the wide open desert**

### *What else is coming up*

Here is a short list of what we also have available for you over the next few months:-

**11-12 March** 2 day camping trip in the Brindabella Ranges – with 4 spots available.

**19 March** Stockton day trip with Alex with 5 spots available.

**18-19 March** A two day Advanced 4wd training course with 3 spots available.

**25-26 March** The two day accommodated Hill End/Abercrombie 4wd trip with 6 spots available.

**9 April** our Cox and Kowmung River day trip out of Sydney with 6 spots available.

**9-15 April** our 7 day camping Victorian High Country trip with 5 spots available.

**14-17 April** Our 4 day Easter camping trip in the Snowy Mtns with 5 spots available.

**16 April** a one day trip around Lithgow to the Cliffs and Canyons with 6 spots available.

### **And our Outback trips?**

This is the current availability on our longer outback trips through the Winter period for 2017, if you are thinking of joining us this Winter please book early as many of our trips are either full or almost fully booked:-

**9-27 May** our fantastic Maralinga and Beyond tour with 3 spots available.

**23 May to 5 June** our 14 day Simpson Desert Safari with just 4 spots remaining.

**14-30 June** our trip across the Madigan Line in the northern Simpson Desert with 6 spots available.

**30/6-11/7/17** The Big Red Bash, just 2 spots remain.

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**10-28 August** our amazing Arnhem Land trip has just 2 spots remaining.

**17 August to 4 September** our 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape York trip has one spot remaining, be quick for this one.

**4-15 September** our fabulous Flinders Ranges tour has just 4 spots remaining.

**14-22 September** Outback Icons trip has just one spot available.

**16-24 September** the 3<sup>rd</sup> Outback Icons trip has 2 spots available.



**The Flinders Ranges tour in September is designed to catch the best of the wild flowers.**

The following trips are now **fully booked**, sorry but you missed out, look at our **2018 calendar of trips**:-

**3-16 July** 14 day Simpson trip is now fully booked.

**9 July – 3 August** Kimberley tour fully booked.

**10 July – 4 August** Canning Stock Route fully booked

**27 July – 14 August** Cape York fully booked.

**11 August to 5 September** our 2<sup>nd</sup> Kimberley tour is now fully booked also.

### *2018 trip calendar now available!*

I know it seems crazy to be already talking about 2018, but with many of our 2017 outback trips already fully subscribed, we have designed our 2018 calendar and began circulating it at the recent Newcastle and Illawarra Camping shows. I have attached it to the email with this newsletter for your reference; all dates are on my website also [www.4wd.net.au](http://www.4wd.net.au)

### *4wd shows we'll be at*

We just did Newcastle and Illawarra shows and the next show for us is the Rosehill Supershow in late April. Please note this show has been reduced from its normal 10 day format and will be held over 6 days including ANZAC day and one weekend only of 29-30 April, look for us in our usual spot in the JR Fleming stand on level 2. I'll be fresh back from my Africa trip and on 28 April my daughter's wedding, so I can tell you firsthand how much I embarrassed her, if I make it back from those marauding elephants!



**You won't miss our display at the Rosehill show, just look for Big Red**

### *Vic keeps writing and talking*

As you may now know I am doing a lot of writing for the on-line magazine Unsealed 4x4 and the current issue has the first part of my two part yarn on my trip up Cape York in 1981 in my Subaru 4wd, makes for some interesting reading. This issue also has a

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listicle (new magazine speak for a list article) of my favourite secret camping sites, as if I was going to expose them, "What's that?, You will pay me how much, OK then". Try the link below to access each of them.



**I was 27 years old and about to drive this Subaru to the Jardine River on Cape York.**

Here is the link to the Cape York yarn <http://unsealed4x4.com.au/issue033/#110> and here is the link to those secret campsites, hope it works, if it doesn't, its because they are still a secret. <http://unsealed4x4.com.au/issue033/#214>

Don't forget you can also catch my Camp Site of the Week radio segment on Lifestyle Radio 954AM every Friday afternoon around 3.15pm. I regularly post the podcasts on the GDT Facebook site also. Or download the Lifestyle Radio App to your smart phone and you can tune in every Friday to learn about my favourite camping locations.



**One of Vic's secret camp sites revealed in Unsealed 4x4**

### *Do it yourself with a little help from Vic*

OK, so I understand that not everyone needs me or one of my great guides to lead them on their trip around Australia. So did you know that I also provide a trip itinerary writing service? Over the year's I have travelled over about 90% of Australia and have certainly learnt a lot about where to go, what to see and how long it takes. But also these days there is a heap of information available on-line for anyone planning such a trip, whether it be the big lap or a run up the Red Centre.

The problem, is, if you haven't actually been out there previously or you are time poor because you are working flat out so you can have a few months/weeks off to live your dream it can be really difficult to know where to go how long it will take and what the must see locations are.

That's where my itinerary writing service comes in. Now previously I wasn't very smart and I would write each of these day by day itineraries (some were over 200 days long!) designed specifically for the individual, I wasn't very smart because these could take me up to a week to write, all for \$200, I was quickly going broke doing that. So now I have approached it a different way. I have set itineraries that you can purchase from me. For example, I have a clockwise around Australia itinerary and an anticlockwise itinerary, each well over 200 days long. I also have an itinerary for a trip up the Red Centre all the way from Port Augusta to Darwin and of course my itineraries take you to all the must see locations as well as the little known 4wd locations.

Each itinerary details, how far you need to drive each day, which way to go, how long it will take, what there is to see, where to camp, what road conditions might be like, what map covers the area and then each day includes hyperlinks to the various locations I



recommend such as National Parks, caravan parks and the local visitor centre. See, I've done all the work for you.

So now all you need to do is drop me an email requesting to purchase one or more of these itineraries and I simply email it to you. You can use it to plan your trip or just follow my recommendations for each day. The hyperlink to a multitude of additional websites expands the information available tenfold. Saves you doing the searching and, as the document is a word document, you can add to it as you wish and simply have it sitting on your ipad as you travel, almost like having Outback Vic sitting in the back seat guiding you, ok so that is not such a great idea!

The cost of these itineraries is \$200 each for the trips around the mainland and \$150 for the track notes up the middle of the Red Centre. You can order them through my website or drop me an email or give me a call, too easy.



**I can help you find this great drive in central Australia.**

### *Stay safe*

I hope this newsletter finds you well and if travelling please stay safe, If I've inspired you to join us, great, that was the whole idea. If I survive the New Zealand snow, Africa and its randy elephants and the wrath of my daughter at her wedding look out for my next newsletter in May. In the meantime, checkout the Kimberley Cruise itinerary attached to this email and have a think about

visiting the place that I rate at the top of my most beautiful spots ever visited.

Regards

Vic Widman



**Alex doing his thing on Stockton Beach in January 2017**



**Hard at work in the High Country**



**Santa warming up for our snow tour**

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