

The Nullarbor Plain: Pure Australia

The myths:

- Danger
- Isolation
- Repetitive and Boring Landscape
- A need to carry lots of spare fuel
- Expecting to receive a “medal of valor” and a handshake from the mayor at the “exit gate” on completion

The reality:

- First Class road, wide and well surfaced
- Road houses on average every 150km
- Grass lands, forests and of course the Bight!
- No Brass Bands, Marching Girls or official welcome parties at the other end!

Like most travellers we conditioned ourselves to travel rather than tour over the Nullarbor Plain, planning to cover 600 km per day rather than our usual 250-450 kilometres. Next time we make the journey that will change because it is a stretch to genuinely enjoy rather than endure. Stop at one of the many roadside camp grounds (you will not be alone!) or choose the fine caravan parks on route. And don't miss the Great Australian Bight, which is nothing less than spectacular. You may not arrive as a Whale admirer but you will leave as one if you catch “The Head of the Bight” between June & October. It must rate in the top of Australia's natural attractions.

Toms Basic Caravan Spares Kit

- Globes & Fuses
- Duct Tape
- Strong Cord
- Suitable Jack
- Silicone
- Mallet/Axe
- Bushman's Saw
- Octopus Straps of various lengths
- Water Tap fittings
- Cordless Drill & attachments
- WD 40
- Silicone Spray (for rollout awning)
- Groundsheet
- Insulation Tape
- Coil on Tie Wire
- Spare Pegs
- Spade
- Rubber Boots
- Extra Power Lead
- Assorted Screws
- 12 volt Trouble Light
- Vaseline
- Spare Keys
- Comprehensive First Aid Kit
- Basic Tool Kit

Add these items for Off Bitumen or Remote Touring

- Spare Wheel Bearings
- Spare Spring
- “U” Bolts & Nuts
- Water Tank Hosing & Clamps
- Spare Electric Brake Magnet & Arm
- Additional Spare Tyre
- Spare Wheel Studs & Nuts
- Comprehensive Tool Kit
- Hack Saw
- 12 Volt Soldering Iron & Wire
- Another member to your party

And don't forget your Sidewind Jack

- The safe and easy way to change a tyre on your caravan
- No crawling underneath
- Cannot slip despite the ground surface
- Only available from Hardings

Tom & Doreen's Notes

As promised we can now bring the answers to a number of critical questions raised during their recent trip around Australia. For Instance:

Q. How do you perfect Kangaroo Stew?

A. Don't use the supply collected roadside. They are usually over tenderised and flyblown.

Q. Is the fishing really that good?

A. Score card –Tom nil, Doreen two 60cm plus Barra caught whilst Tom slept in the deckchair on waters edge. Further evidence to confound the traditional theory of males as “hunter gatherers!”

Q. What are the 16 ways to pluck an Emu?

A. Never mind plucking them, how do you catch them?

Q. What is the true holding tank capacity of a Cassette Toilet?

A. On one occasion, not as much as we thought! Despite that mishap it's still man & woman's best friend.

Q. Should we have gone to London after all?

A. Absolutely NOT. Comparing the exchange rate to petrol price, we got real value for money.

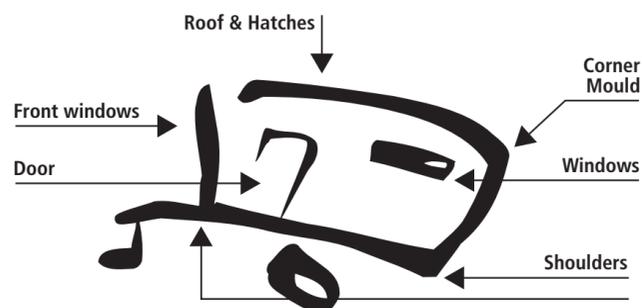
Q. Would the Maverick make it back?

A. It Did! Proudly, but it has now been subpoenaed back into service as the HCS workshop vehicle.

And finally if they returned, would Tom & Doreen still be talking to each other?

A. Yes, but with slightly louder voices!

Resealing to Protect your Caravan Investment



It may have been a dry summer in many parts of Australia, however we continue to repair leaking and water-damaged caravans.

It is a distressing sight for the owner to see their van with aluminium removed and rot revealed beneath. Often just small symptoms can be clues to significant damage behind the cladding. Dark stains in corners, around windows and hatches or moisture sitting on window sills and ledges should be a catalyst for investigation. Sometimes water entry points may be obvious: cracked or missing sealant under moulds, flaking silicon on the roof or missing screws or rivets. But leaks are usually not specific and more likely result from the sealant being at the end of its life and no longer effective.

“It is our job to advise you to reseal before it absolutely needs doing, otherwise our recommendation is too late!”

Prevention is better (and cheaper) than cure!

By ten years of age every caravan must be inspected for sealant deterioration. Unfortunately some material becomes vulnerable as early as 6 to 8 years. Sealants used in the last 5 years are proving generally more durable; nevertheless inspect that stored or unused van regularly.

About the reseal process:

To perform a full reseal we remove every window, all vertical corner moulds, all surface sealant on the roof, body top or pop top the caravan door and all vent fittings and access door etc. All these items need to be cleaned up and replaced with new sealant between them and the body. Sometimes we need to scour the old sealant off and then repaint portions of the caravan. It is a laborious, time consuming and costly process but one absolutely critical to it's future!

What sealant is used?

A silicone made by Rhodia, called V4 or 5CLM Neutral cure with a high joint movement capacity. If you would like to purchase the material from us to do the job yourself it sells for \$12.50 per tube.

How much does it cost?

For a 16' caravan or pop top expect a full reseal to price up towards \$2,000. However whenever we make a sealant recommendation we always prioritise the critical areas so that you can attend to the job in stages if you choose to. Maybe the corner moulds this year and the windows next year etc.

Autumn / Winter 2002

Caravan Talk

Hardings Caravan Services

The one that got away!

Earlier this year I was distressed to hear from a customer who had, quite simply an awful caravanning holiday because of inadequate towing equipment on their rig. The van was unstable and swayed at low speeds, the discomfort and tension from the driver and passenger were extreme and the holiday turned into a series of very expensive and frustrating “pit stops” to distant service centres in an effort to rectify the situation. The precious holiday time was spoiled and the van was returned to Melbourne where last heard of it was “to be sold”.

Further imagine my absolute dismay in finding that Hardings specified the equipment! We fitted a four bar level ride system to a rig that really needed a hitch receiver on the car and heavy-duty weight distributing hitch. We told the customer that this was adequate and did not make the recommendation for them to go to the next level. What a disaster!

The cost of approximately \$1,100 to fit a new towbar and level ride system now

appears minute in comparison to of the cost of “not doing it”. Furthermore it hurts us to know that one oversight in an area that we have traditionally worked so hard has had such dire consequences. But let us be quite clear about the outcome. It will not happen again! We will double our efforts to put you on the road in the best possible shape, with the same equipment that Tom Harding or Greg Harding would use if we were towing your rig and we will absolutely not shy away from making the right recommendation to you because of the expense.

Enough Said.



“Kids and a Caravan Holiday – Just Perfect!”

The Caravan Show: Its all happening at Caulfield Racecourse.

Yes, The Show has relocated from The Melbourne Exhibition Centre (primarily because of spiralling costs that would have resulted in ridiculous admission prices) and this has allowed more exhibitors and a larger display. Arrive early to take advantage of the free parking before 11.00am. This will also allow plenty of time to explore the various indoor and outdoor displays that are based in and around the Grandstand. Whatever you do don't miss The Hardings Stand that is situated on the second level. Sit down and listen to our towing information sessions, get answers to your questions or just say g'day. This year should also see the biggest ever representation from the State Tourist Bodies and Caravan Parks, so a fantastic opportunity exists to collect up to the minute literature to help you plan your trip!

In this edition:

Editorial

Diary Dates

2002 Caravan & Camping Show

Sway Controls

The Nullarbor Plain

Update on Towing Regulations

Caravanners Irritations

Product Review: Towing Mirrors

Tom's caravan spares kit

Book Review: Camping Guide to Vic & NSW

Rear Window Protection

Resealing

Diary dates:

- **Melbourne Caravan & Camping Show**
April 23rd to 29th 2002. 10am to 6pm every day (including Anzac Day).
Friday & Saturday until 9pm.
Adults \$14 Seniors \$9 Children U/15 Free.
- **Get To Know Your Caravan Seminar**
Saturday 18th May 2002 at Our Bayswater Workshop 2.00pm to 5.00pm.
Cost \$25 per head. A must for new or intending caravanners. Ring us now for an application form, then rush it back to us because the session will book out!
- **Leisurefest Spring Show at Sandown Racecourse**
Friday 25th Oct to Sunday 27th Oct 2002.
- **Driver Training with Tom Harding**
A ¾ day session in your car and caravan. Watch your confidence grow! Available by arrangement after the start of August 2002. Cost: \$275.

Hardings provide you with all the necessary products and services for your caravan.

- Accessories and spare parts
- Towbars, level rides and sway controls
- Electric brake controls
- Caravan repairs
- Trailer Parts
- Camper trailer windup service and repairs
- Resealing
- Caravan refrigeration & stove service
- Caravanners education programs
- Brakes and undercarriage servicing
- Caravan travel resources
- Chassis upgrades and repairs
- Aerolite chassis strengthening
- Sway problems corrected
- Caravanners advice
- Insurance repairs
- Caravan insurance
- Solar equipment & installations
- Curtains made for your caravan
- Upholstery service
- Lino and carpet laid
- Jacking systems

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Workshop news & information

Sway Controls: What you need to know.

The Hayman Reese Sway Control counteracts any "unauthorised" movement of the caravan ensuring that it tracks tightly behind the tow vehicle even in difficult towing conditions.

Sway will be the result of one of two scenarios.

Firstly, a caravan will sway if the car lets it! In other words if the car is unstable the caravan will be able to adversely move around. An appropriate weight distributing hitch (level rides) will reduce caravan sway by improving the stability and road grip of the car ensuring that the van does what it is told. So make sure your level rides are up to the mark!

Secondly, external factors that can make a caravan sway such as:

- Cross Winds
- Overtaking Road Trains
- Loose Road Surfaces
- Too much weight at the rear of the van
- Wheels running off the edge of the road

The Hayman Reese Sway Control is an additional piece of safety equipment used in conjunction with heavy duty level rides to counter these situations. The bigger the caravan the greater becomes its importance.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Who should use it? The following is a rule of thumb guide as to when a sway control is appropriate:

- Any tandem axle Caravan/Pop Top behind a sedan type car.
- Any Caravan 18' or bigger regardless of the tow vehicle.
- An older style Caravan with a high square front.
- A Caravan/Pop Top with low ball weight
- A Caravan/Pop Top with a mini bike or equivalent on the rear bumper.
- For any caravanner who has experienced an on road incident and wants more confidence in their rig.
- New Caravanners.
- Anyone who thinks that sway is a normal part of caravan towing.



A sway control unit may have prevented this accident from occurring

PS. It is assumed in the above situations that a heavy duty level ride system is already in use.

How does it work? The sway control attaches between the towing vehicle and the caravan and has a sliding bar that comes and goes within the body of the unit. Pressure is applied onto the bar by a clamp which acts as dampener to movement. Whilst the turning motion of the car can make the bar move, the caravan of its own accord cannot. Make sure you have a look at our demonstration unit in the showroom at Bayswater.

I have a two bar lightweight level ride system; can the sway control be fitted? Yes it can, however we would recommend firstly rectifying the cause of the sway which is likely to be instability in the car. Upgrade to the Hayman Reese weight distributing hitch system to improve the cars handling. Remember, stabilise the car and immediately reduce sway. Use the guide above to assess the need for a sway control in addition to the heavy-duty level rides.

Will the rig feel different? Yes the caravan will feel tighter even in general towing despite its real benefit in a difficult situation. In fact a common response from sway control owners is: "how different the

rig feels on the occasion that they connect the unit but forget to tension it!"

Does the sway control allow me to reverse freely? Routine backing is not a problem however the unit should be removed for full lock reversing, say into a very tight caravan site.

Does it take long to remove when uncoupling the van? The sway control is held on with two "R" clips that are removed within a minute. It takes about the same amount of time to connect as one levelling bar.

How much does it cost and what is involved in the installation? \$350 and one hour of your time with car and caravan.

I already have a sway control unit, how much do I tighten the tensioning handle? Turn the handle clockwise to tighten it as much as you can by hand. Then release it anti-clockwise by one quarter of a turn.

What maintenance is required? Just an occasional lube of the tensioning handle bolt.

Towing Mirrors, You can't live with them, You can't live without them!

As Important as any other piece of towing equipment are your mirrors. Inadequate or unstable towing mirrors will give you an incomplete picture of other vehicles and obstacles around you. In contrast a wide and firm pair (of mirrors!) will give a sense of security and confidence because you know it is safe to move left or right and you know where your van is tracking in relation to the bitumen edge. Apply our tests. Can you see the back corners of your caravan in your extension mirrors? Are they stable enough to withstand a wind gust from a truck? Do they shimmer to the extent that you are unsure whether there is one car or one hundred cars behind you?...How did you rate? ...Poorly? It may be time to upgrade.



Ora Clip On

Choose from the following list of options.

Sedan Clip On: \$37.50 pair. Lightweight plastic construction and rubber strap. For: Inexpensive & compact. Against: Flimsy, Vibrate, Usually impede electricians on vehicle mirror, Not suitable for wider vans, Regular replacement of rubber straps required. Not suitable for side mirrors which taper to a point.

4WD Clip On: \$55 pair. Plastic construction and rubber strap. For: Wide mouth fitting to suit larger mirrors, inexpensive & compact. Against: see above.

Ora Clip On: \$129 pair. Teflon construction with convenient tensioning knobs. For: Advanced design allows a more positive attachment to vehicles mirror. The mirror head may be very quickly removed from the mounting bracket. Wider mount arms and magnetic stabilisers available at extra cost. Ora mirrors provide good width. All components very durable. Suit most vehicles. Against: More costly, being heavier they may stress the vehicles external mirror.

Enzo Magnetic: \$250 pair. Magnetic pad onto the vehicles door along with a finger probe into the door down the window seal. For: Can be a useful option with difficult car mirrors, very quick to fit & remove, wide and stable. Against: Expensive, will not suit

all vehicles and the finger probe can have a habit of popping out of the window track when you wind the glass up and down. (I understand the manufacturer is bringing out a new tensioning strap to overcome this problem)

Universal Fender Mount: \$75 pair. The old fashioned "A" frame mount mirror that clamps between the under edge of the mudguard and into the bonnet track. For: Good value, firm, wide and easy to fit. Against: Bulky when not in use, late model cars drivers side windscreen pillars may impede a clear view requiring a tilt of the head to see the mirror face. Note: the common perception that these always scratch the car is not true, particularly when we supply some additional protective matting!

Door Mounted "Truck Mirrors" \$230 pair. Extra large mirrors clamped onto the vehicles door with seat belt type webbing and a ratchet mechanism to tighten them. For: Very wide and firm, adjustable width and easy to fit. Against: Doesn't suit all vehicles and a little pricey.

Confused? Don't be so hard on yourself! Just bring your vehicle out to sunny Bayswater and experiment. We will supply you with a wheelbarrow full of different options and you can have a play! It is worth going to the trouble of getting it right because good mirrors will make an enormous difference!

Caravanners Irritations:

Some things were sent to try us caravanners, here are a few of them and what to do about them.

• 15-amp power inlets and electrical leads with oversized pins.

The classic bewilderer for new caravanners. All you want to do is plug the caravan in at home. Is that too much to ask?.... Consider your caravan as a heavy duty "electrical appliance" Because you may need more than 10 amps of power in the van for heaters and microwaves etc it is set up on a 15-amp circuit. Caravan parks cater for this but not your house. It only has 10-amp outlets and that is why you can't plug the lead in. The strictly correct procedure is to install a 15-amp outlet at home at considerable expense. Talk to caravanners about alternate solutions to the problem.

• **Low Jockey Wheel Clamps** that don't allow you to get the wheel in place on some sites. Now there's one we can fix. By raising the clamp on the A-Frame up on a block and/or welding an extra non-slip dimple or rib on the jockey wheel outer casing will give you the extra flexibility you need to overcome this irritation.

• Does your trailer ball mount rattle in the car's towbar?

If so we will fit an anti rattle set screw free of charge when you pick up your caravan after your next service. This involves drilling a hole in the square tube towbar section and tapping it to accommodate a tensioning nut.

• Do you have to lie on the ground to plug your caravan lead in to the electrical socket on the car?

If so get us to relocate the socket! In conjunction with your next service this also may be free of charge or only a small cost which will improve your holiday enjoyment.

• Aggressive Electric Brakes.

Please don't put up with grabbing brakes. Get them fixed. It will usually be a brake lining related problem or a temperamental brake controller that is difficult to adjust. PHONE US NOW to make an appointment for a free road test and diagnosis.

• Leaking Front Boot on your caravan?

Sorry we are only human, we can't fix everything!

Book Review. Camping Guide to Victoria

Camping Guide to New South Wales

Boiling Billy Publications have produced these excellent little books that detail over 500 free or low cost campsites in Vic or NSW. Best of all is the information about each site regarding facilities, how to get there and caravan access. For example here is a sample on The Tom Groggin camping area in The Kosciusko National Park.

"Located 24km west of Thredbo. Signposted access via Alpine Way. NB. Caravan access from Khancoban only. Large grassy area beside Upper Murray River. Popular in summer. Good trout fishing. 4WD access to Alpine NP (Vic). Water from river – boil first. Bring Firewood."

Other information in symbolic form told me that you needed to pay for the site, a Ranger visited, bathroom facilities existed, fires were permitted, it was suitable for bushwalking and swimming and no dogs were allowed.

These books are great value at under \$20 and are available now at Hardings.

Update on Towing Regulations:

Our State Industry Association, CIA (Vic Trades Division) recently wrote to Vic Roads seeking their views on the current legislation relating to Tow Ball Weights. In response from David Anderson, CEO it was stated that:

"A vehicle manufacturer may set a limit on the weight imposed on the tow ball with the intention of preserving the integrity of the vehicle's suspension, brake balance, or to ensure acceptable handling characteristics for the combination.

The Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 1999 and the Road Rules Victoria set general requirements that a combination be safe and controllable, but are silent in relation to the maximum weight imposed on the tow ball. As a consequence, the manufacturers recommendation in relation to the maximum weight on the tow ball is not specifically enforceable. However to ensure a combination is safe and controllable, any such recommendation should be observed."

Clearly Vic Roads are recommending that the ball weight limit should be observed, but are questioning whether a breach constitutes an issue in terms of legislation. Of course this interpretation may not be applicable in other states of Australia but it does provide an interesting insight into Vic Road's perspective on the matter.

In the meantime Hardings recommendations have not changed.

- Comply with the vehicles maximum tow weight.
- Know what your current situation is in terms of ball weight.
- Set yourself up with the absolute best towing equipment.
- Do your homework before you buy your car or van.

PS. If you would like a copy of our last newsletter where we had a more lengthy discussion on tow weight regulations please phone us now and request the Spring 2001 edition.