

Caravan

Talk

Caravans are a great investment for all sorts of reasons!



This eighties model Franklin is worth nearly as much today as when purchased new!

Remember the sinking feeling you got when you valued your car for trade in purpose? It's worth HOW MUCH, YOU ARE JOKING! A 50% depreciation rate within five years is not uncommon for conventional motor vehicles. Well the great news is that this scenario does not apply to your van. In fact the resale value of caravans consistently surprises people. Consider a 1985 Jayco 16' Pop Top bought for around \$8,000 in 1985. This van in good condition would sell for around \$6000 today. The same style of van bought in 2001 for around \$20,000 would bring you close to \$18,000 today and what about the 1990 Wind Up Camper you bought for \$12,500? Believe or not it's still worth near to that figure today!

Whilst we shouldn't expect our caravans to

appreciate in value, it ought to give us a nice warm feeling to know that they are at least maintaining their value in nominal terms. Particularly whilst we are able to enjoy all the lifestyle benefits and cost effective holidays they provide us at the same time.

This should encourage you to firstly, ensure you adequately maintain your caravan, particularly in relation to reseal and prevention of water damage and secondly consider the cost effectiveness of refurbishment rather than replacement. If the layout still suits your purposes then modernisation will increase the pleasure and practicality of your holiday. Here is a small selection of common upgrades.

- Install a 12 volt battery
- Fit a new front protective matting and window protector
- Replace the floor coverings
- Replace the upholstery and cushions
- Install a Roll Out Awning
- Install a lift up bed assembly
- Update to Electric Brakes
- Fit a new Security Door

In some cases we have even replaced the entire caravan aluminium to make the van look brand new. We had a situation where a customer came in to check progress on their caravan and walked right past it without recognising their "new" van.

Thanks to Ray Walker, Sales Manager Bayswater Jayco for the historic and current van price details.

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Website Update:

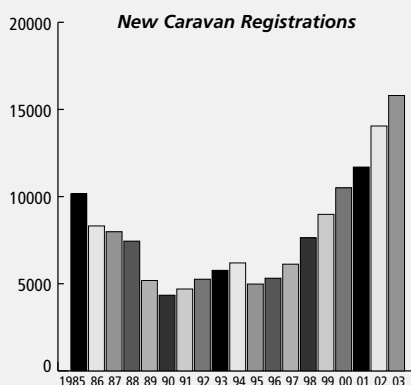
www.hardingscaravans.com.au

The following articles are now available on the website for your perusal.

- Towbar Selection
- Electric Brakes
- Auxiliary Wiring Circuits
- Level Rides
- Sway Controls
- Access Doors
- Camec Doors
- Battery Installations
- Front Matting
- Roll Out Awnings
- Under Body Spray
- Caravan Refrigeration
- Accessories and Equipment Checklist
- Reversing Techniques
- Hitch Up Checklist

Did you know?

- That there are in excess of 1,000 National Parks, State Forest or Reserve areas in Australia, many with facilities to accommodate a stay in your caravan? Go and find them!
- That new caravan registrations slumped by 50% between 1985 and 1992 but then trebled to 2003 the graph tells the story.
- That there are 140,000 tourist holiday sites in Australia That equates to 51 million available site nights per year. Of those around 19 million are utilised at an average occupancy rate of only 37% Why then can't you always get a site when you want one? Because we all want to travel at the same time!



Workshop news & Information

User Tips for The Hayman Reese Weight Distribution Hitch.

The famous WDH is your primary piece of towing equipment.

As a load sharing device it spreads the weight of the caravan over all wheels of the car to restore front wheel road traction, braking and control. The bottom line is improved safety. It is especially well engineered and easy to use, however the following tips, comments and answers to frequently asked questions accumulated from our experience can make it even more user friendly for you.

Managing the Snap Up Bracket Safety Pins

When the spring bars are under load it is very important not to remove the safety pin holding the snap up bracket in the up position until you have pipe handle in place and have it firmly in your grasp. The bracket and bar could otherwise swing down at high speed and cause serious damage to your foot.

Use of The Jockey Wheel to help hitch up the bars

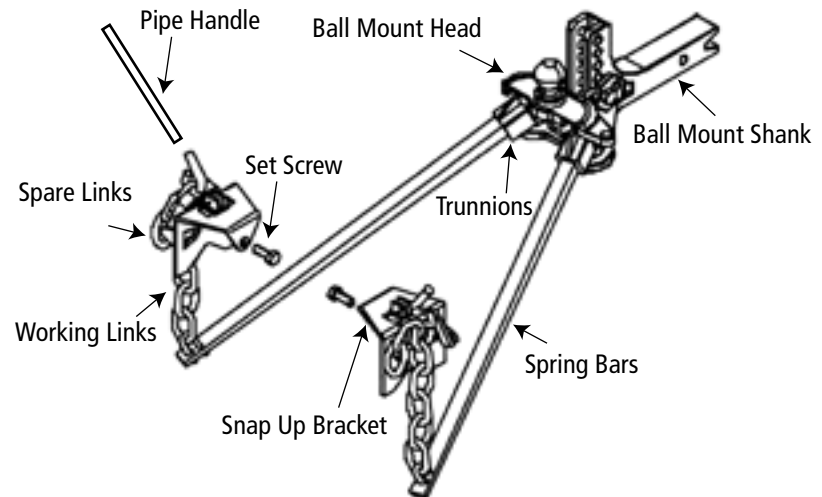
Using the Jockey Wheel to carry some load can help to reduce the pressure on your back when hitching the bars up. Attach the caravan to the car then wind the jockey wheel up to raise the back of the car above its normal height. This changes the angle of the ballmount and will make it easier to hitch up the spring bars.

NB: This will only work if you have a jockey wheel clamp in the middle of the A-Frame. Otherwise the clamp will foul one bar. If you don't, ask us to fit one at your next service.

How much pressure or how many links should I have on the bars?

It is very common to be asked: "How much weight should I put on the bars?" or "Which link should I use?"

Whilst there is no answer to suit everyone we do have some good guidelines to follow. Firstly the spring bars should be under a "good deal" of pressure. It should take some amount of effort to hitch up the snap up bracket and there must be a need to use the handle. Secondly we would like to see a little bit of bend in the bar when under load to satisfy us they are working. Remember, if they have no weight on them they will



not be transferring weight forward to the cars front wheels and therefore not doing the job you purchased then for. Thirdly, the number of links can be tricky to calculate depending upon the rig's tow height, mount position of the coupling and set up of the Ballmount. Hayman Reese specify the minimum number of "working links" to be four. These are the chain links actually under load. At least four are required to give the spring bar the scope it needs to move forwards and backwards when you turn a corner. Hardings will aim for at least five working links so that you have the option of adjustment whilst on your trip.

The effect of undulating terrain and turning corners:

Sometimes you may find yourself in a situation where the pressure on the spring bars is extreme or tiny. This could be normal depending upon the terrain or position of the car. If you park in a "dip" with the front of the car up, the angle of the ballmount will create extreme pressure on the bars. Conversely if you park on a "crest" with the nose of the car pointing down this will cause a temporary reduction of weight on the bars. Sometimes you can use this situation to your advantage, but being aware of why it occurs is important. A similar scenario happens when the rig is not straight. The bar on the outside will have much more strain on it than the inside one. Be careful it does not catch you unawares and break your toe when unhitching!

Wearing Components and noise

As you turn a corner the T shaped tip of the spring bar (The Trunnion) rubs directly on the steel of the ballmount head. This can create an annoying squeaking noise from the grinding of metal on metal. A drop of heavy lubricant on the top and bottom trunnion tips will eliminate this noise and make your trip more enjoyable. Because of the forces on these components you should also expect to see wear on both the trunnions and around the bottom hole of the ballmount.

Whilst scalloping of this bottom hole causes occasional distress to customers we are more anxious if there are no signs of wear because it may imply too little pressure on the bars or incorrect head adjustment.

Scraping the Bars or Ballmount

Are you scraping your hitch on driveways or speed humps? This can be the result of a number of factors but usually something can be done to eliminate this annoying situation. Firstly you need to understand that the hitch height is very much determined by the height of the caravan. If the van is low so will be the hitch. Unless we raise your van or at least mount the coupling higher on a block it will be case of maximising the available ground clearance. Usually adjusting the head to achieve five working links will provide at least 150mm clearance under the tail of the spring bar. If on the other hand it is the ballmount shank which is hitting the ground then consider cutting of any surplus under the head, or where appropriate changing over to a different shank.

Maintenance and storage

Happily there is virtually no ongoing maintenance required for your weight distribution hitch other than a periodic inspection for fatigue and wear. Keep the parts dry to reduce rust and check the towball nut is nice and tight before use. Note: Did you know that the snap up bracket provides a useful storage means for the ballmount. Open the bracket and slide the shank in. Better still if you ask us to tack weld the snap up bracket to your caravan A-Frame and use a lockable hitch pin you have secure and convenient storage location.

Changing cars or caravans and the need to reset.

A change in car or caravan will require a reset of the ballmount head height and or angle to ensure your van travels level and with a suitable amount of pressure on the bars. This is usually a quick and simple task but sometimes a new component is required as a result of different heights or caravan weights etc. A good example of this is the common need for a lower drop

shank if you change from a sedan to a Four Wheel Drive, which usually has a higher, hitch receiver. Allow an hour or so for this job and once completed we will road test it with you for a thorough demonstration.

My Ballmount Shank sticks out too far! What can be done

Some hitch receiver towbars have the pin hole for the ballmount behind the bumper. This means that the shank sticks a long way out past the back of the car. We are regularly asked whether it is OK to drill another hole and slide it further in. The answer is yes. We can do this job for you but it is not as simple as you might think, as accuracy is the key.

Suggested List of Spares

Two Spare chain "U" Bolts	\$8
Two Spare Snap Up Bracket Safety Pins	\$6
One Spare Lifting Handle	\$8
One Spare Shank Pin & "R" Clip	\$12
On The Ball Lube	\$10
Hayman Reese Multi-Fit Spanner (suits every bolt in the kit including towball)	\$10

Following are prices for the Weight Distributing Hitch and Modifications etc.

Hayman Reese Weight Distributing Hitch Prices	
Supply and Fit 250 kg Weight Distribution Hitch	\$585
Weld central jockey wheel clamp for easier hitch up	\$60
Weld raised central jockey wheel clamp for easier hitch up	\$100
Raise your single beam axle caravan 50mm or 75mm for improved clearance	\$550
Raise your tandem beam axle caravan 50 mm or 75 mm for improved clearance	\$850
Raise your single beam axle caravan 100mm for improved clearance.	\$275
Raise your tandem beam axle caravan 100mm for improved clearance.	\$500
Raise the caravan coupling and snap up brackets 50mm on blocks for improved clearance	\$300
Reset the Hitch after a change of car or caravan.	\$85
Reset the Hitch (In conjunction with a service)	\$45
Drill a new hole in the ballmount shank	\$50

The Friction Sway Control

The Sway Control makes a surprising amount of difference to your rig by acting as a dampener against any "unauthorised" movement of the caravan. If your van is affected by overtaking trucks or windy days then join the many happy Hardings customers who enjoy the safety and comfort benefits of a Friction Sway Control.

Following are our user tips and responses to Frequently Asked Questions.

How tight do I tension the handle?

The most common question asked by sway control owners is: How much do I tension the pressure handle? Unfortunately there is no clear cut quantifiable answer to this but there are some guidelines to follow. Firstly, keep in mind when they are new the product is stiff and will take some time to loosen up. The tensioning handle feels tight even with negligible pressure applied to it. Tighten it until it feels firm. Then tighten it another revolution. Keep in mind that it is virtually impossible to cause damage by over tightening it unless you use an extension pipe on the handle. Ultimately it becomes a matter of "feel" for you. If you experience some movement of the van from turbulence, stop as soon as possible and tighten the tensioning handle one full revolution. Experiment and don't be backwards about applying plenty of pressure. Expect the unit to need more revolutions on the handle when it has run in and loosened up.

What's with The Noise?

Sometimes when they are new the Friction Sway Control can make quite a metallic thumping noise or groaning as you turn a corner. To overcome this, simply rub a small quantity of dry soap onto the steel slide bar. This eliminates the noise without compromising the performance of the sway control

Reversing Requirements

It is important to remember that if you are reversing into a very tight caravan site or driveway you should release the pressure from the tensioning handle. Failure to do this could bend the slide bar or distort the ball adaptor plate on the ballmount. A normal right angle bend up to 90 degrees is not a problem but a tight backwards angle less than 90 degrees requires the disengagement of the unit. This is a situation where you would also be inclined to remove your levelling bars before commencing the reversing. Travelling forwards will not cause a problem in any circumstances.

Maintenance

The Friction Sway Control should be stored in a dry environment to prevent rust affecting the uncoated mild steel slide bar. If you leave it in the caravan's front boot wrap it in a towel or Hessian bag to protect it from moisture. Periodic lubrication of the tensioning bolts is also important. Apply oil



or light grease to the fine threaded bolts to help prevent them from seizing. Do this at the start of your trip or monthly whilst on the road. And don't forget that if you hear that awful groaning noise when turning a corner a light rub of dry soap on the slide bar will fix it.

Changing cars or caravans

If you change your caravan and are reluctant to take the sway control ball adaptor off the A-Frame and leave holes, never mind, we will simply fit a new one to your next van. Furthermore a change of car should not present a problem because usually you keep the hitch component and fit it to your new vehicle. Easy!

Installation Prices for The Friction Sway Control

Supply and Fit Friction Sway Control, complete.	\$395
Supply and Fit New Ball Adaptor Plate to Caravan only	\$100
Fit only Friction Sway Control supplied by others	\$125

Frequently asked questions:

Do I need to empty my water tank for storage?

No, the common black plastic water tanks are very effective water storage devices. Water can sit in there for months and months and still be as good as the day you filled the tank. Now if the van has been in storage for a couple of years however, a flush out before use might be a good idea.

How often should I get the van serviced?

Hardings recommend a service somewhere between 10,000 and 15,000 kilometres subject to regularity of use. An infrequently used caravan should be serviced at least every three years.

My caravan handbrake seems ineffective.

Is this normal?

Whilst the effectiveness of handbrakes varies according to the cable route the short story is: You cannot rely on them. If you are unhitching your van on a slope please chock the wheels before it comes off the towball. Handbrake cables need to be adjusted so that it is quite an effort to reach the next "click" This should maximise the park brake performance.

Do I need to jack the van off the wheels between trips?

No, if you are using the van every couple of months or so we suggest don't bother. However if your van is not going to be used for the next six months then easing the load off the tyres and springs is worth considering. Put some bricks or adjustable stands (Stakka Jacks \$22 each) towards the rear of the chassis rails and wind up the jockey wheel. No need to lift the tyres off the ground just ease the load off. The tyres and springs will appreciate this!

New Products

The Fridge Switch could be the answer to the prayers of all caravanners that have flattened their car battery by leaving the caravan fridge running on 12 volts for some time with the engine off. Fridgeswitch has an inbuilt electronic motion and vibration sensor. This automatically switches on when you are travelling and turns off when you stop. The switch is usually installed at the rear of the fridge and interrupts the 12 volt wire from the plug. All you need is a heavy duty auxiliary wire in the car and Fridgeswitch does the rest. Efficient 12 volts to the fridge whilst you are travelling and no draw on the cars battery when you stop. Supply only price \$75. Supply and Fit price \$150

Caravan Covers: Finally, a caravan cover at a realistic price with all the features:

- Breathable, so moisture can escape
- UV Stabilised, for longer life
- Soft, non scratch material
- Reinforced roof corners for maximum durability
- Quick Release tie straps
- Elastic stitched hem for neat fitting

Come in to our premises and see one on a caravan, you'll be impressed. Priced as per table below.

Suits Caravan or Pop Top Size as Below	
4.8m to 5.5m (16' to 18')	\$395
5.6m to 6.1m (18' to 20')	\$415
6.2m to 6.7m (20' to 22')	\$435

Fiona Harding talks

Caravanning with Kids

"Two out of three of our children learnt to ride bikes at a caravan park. The holiday gave us the chance to give them the 'little bit' often needed to give them the confidence to ride their two wheelers. Since then 'cruising' the caravan park is a much enjoyed activity. Whilst the overwhelming majority of cars are looking out for children within the park confines I felt better after we fitted the orange flags on poles to their bikes. This was a great visual benefit especially when speeding around corners blinded by parked cars"

"On the way to our destination we ask each of the kids for three things they would like to do on this holiday. The answers usually are surprisingly modest eg. Have a daily ice cream or play a new game they brought along. Sure, sometimes the right of veto comes into play but less often than you may expect. Once noted we make sure we keep the promise. This sets the scene for a good start to the holiday".

Don't forget to include what Mum and Dad want too - it is everyone's holiday!



Tom's Outback Travel Notes

During May, June & July 2004 I escorted 18 caravan rigs on their first outback experiences. On three separate trips we travelled through Leigh Creek, Marree, Oodnadatta, Innamincka, Birdsville, Cameron Corner and many other locations in between. It was a time of controlled adventure, camaraderie and confidence building. Final responses varied from: "I'm glad I've done that and seen the real centre" to "How soon we can go again?" Here is just a taste of some of our experiences and travel notes.

After leaving the bitumen you quickly become aware of the value of CB Radios. Helpful information is easily passed through the convoy: "Single vehicle speeding through", "Rough approach to cattle grid over the crest", "5 Emus on the right" just to name a few examples.

We would seek out creek line campsites, defined by river red gums, dry beds and occasional water holes. These locations are often rich in history; Milparinka for example is prominent for its role in Sturt's exploration party to the fabled "inland sea" in 1854. Take in the colours of a genuine Australian outback sunset before enjoying a communal camp oven roast. Then slip away from the campfire into the night to absorb the genuine isolation and silence of the country. Follow the glow back to the fire and join the rest of the party enjoying fresh damper and a hot drink.

Over our travels we encountered a range of scenery, ever changing but always spectacular, even if for its nothingness. Distant ranges, wandering creeks, tussocks, scrub and salts all add to the contrast.

In this country the key driving tip is to travel at a speed to suit the conditions. Anticipate somewhere between 20 kph to 60 kph. One comment heard was "I've never travelled so slowly and enjoyed it so much"

Preparation for these trips was cautious without being onerous. A Four Wheel Drive Vehicle is mandatory along with a slightly above average caravan height. This is to negotiate crowns in the road center due to soft tracks and dips over cattle grids and wash a ways. A sway control is an important item to maintain control on loose road surfaces and underbody protection from stones is a must if you expect your water tank to last more than a day or two.

Those who tagged along on one of last years trips were exposed to caravanning in the outback Tom Harding style. Many of them are now planning their own trip this year with another party of travelling mates. They will have a great time doing it their way!

I will be "on the road again" in mid June and there is scope for a small group of friends to join me for around fourteen days as I travel through Hay, Menindee, White Cliffs, Milparinka, Cameron Corner, and on to Innamincka. From there you choose your own route home or on to other destinations. If you are interested in keeping me company drop me a line as an expression of interest to Tom Harding, C/- 6 The Nook Bayswater

This is not an official tour as such. There is no charge to come along and all parties' travel entirely at their own risk.

Tom Harding

Lidio and Annette's A Van in 'The Painted Desert'



Fact or Fiction: What do you think?

"Every Caravan Must Have Two Safety Chains"

According to the VicRoads Vehicles Standards Section 24 Towbars and Couplings (For Light Trailers)

"Although the standards for registration require that at least one safety chain be fitted to trailers less than 2.5 tonnes gross mass, VicRoads recommends that the towbar be fitted with attachments designed to accommodate two safety chains.

So whilst it is not a legal requirement, it is a recommendation. I guess in relation to our original question (it is fact or is it fiction?) The answer lies somewhere in between.

Diary Dates

- **Caravan Show**
Caulfield Racecourse Wednesday April 27th to Tuesday May 3rd Come and see us on Level 1 in the grandstand.
- **Get to know your caravan seminar.**
Saturday May 28th and Saturday August 6th, 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm at our Workshop, Bayswater. Our popular Saturday afternoon seminar is ideal for new and intending caravanners.
- **Leisure Fest**
Sandown Racecourse Friday September 30th to Sunday October 2nd.

Routine Jobs for Hardings: What do you need done?

Undercarriage Service	This vital procedure prepares the running gear of your van for the next 10,000 to 15,000 kilometres of travel. We clean and repack the wheel bearings, lube and adjust your brakes, lubricate jacks, jockey wheels and suspension points along with a thorough inspection of springs chassis points and tyres.	\$165 Single Axle \$195 Tandem.
✓ Hayman Reese Towbars	Hardings are an authorised stockist and installer of the best quality towbars in the business.	POA
Electric Brake Controllers	Hardings will supply and fit an electric brake controller into your car whilst you wait. We can offer you a choice of units and can discuss the alternatives from a user's perspective. Don't forget you will probably require an auxiliary wire to run the caravan fridge and lights. We'll fix this also.	From \$275
✓ Raise your van	Hardings know all the options for raising your caravan to achieve improved ground clearance at your level rides or to protect your rear jacks and door.	From \$300
Battery Installation	Expand your travel horizons with a battery in your caravan. Whether you want an occasional overnighiter or a month away from power Hardings can design a system to suit your needs	From \$350
✓ Air Conditioners	Hardings can advise you of the options that are available and what issues they present to your caravan. Be it split system, ducted, pop top roof top or caravan roof top we have fitted them all.	Price from \$2000
Front Matting Upgrade	If the front of your caravan is looking a bit tired let us replace the front protective stone matting. New style pleated vinyl is attractive and durable. It can 10 years off the age of your van. (Check out the pictures on our website)	Priced from \$500
✓ Reseal	Don't ignore this critical task. Ask us to comment on sealant condition next time you are in for service. Expect some recommendation for reseal as the van ages beyond five years.	\$POA
Under Body Spray	Hardings apply a bituminous sealer to the underside of your caravan floor and chassis. The sealer forms a rubber like coating protecting against floor delaminating, stone damage and corrosion. You will never have to get under the van with a wire brush again.	Priced from \$350
✓ Bike Rack Mounting	If there is room Hardings will find a way to mount your bike rack on the van. Options usually include on the towbar, A-Frame or Rear Bumper. Let us discuss the implications of each spot as they affect your caravan.	From \$100 plus bike rack.

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
- Lift up Beds
- Caravanners education programs
- Brakes and undercarriage servicing
- Chassis upgrades and repairs
- Aerolite chassis strengthening
- Sway problems corrected
- Improved Lighting
- Bumper Bars
- Outback Preparation
- Caravanners advice
- Insurance repairs
- Solar equipment & installations
- Jacking systems
- Raise your Van
- New pop top vinyls



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