



# FREE WHEELING

February 2025



Photo taken by Sally Higgs

Official Newsletter of the  
Victorian Four Wheel  
Drive Club Inc

Registration No  
A0002184F

## Meeting Details



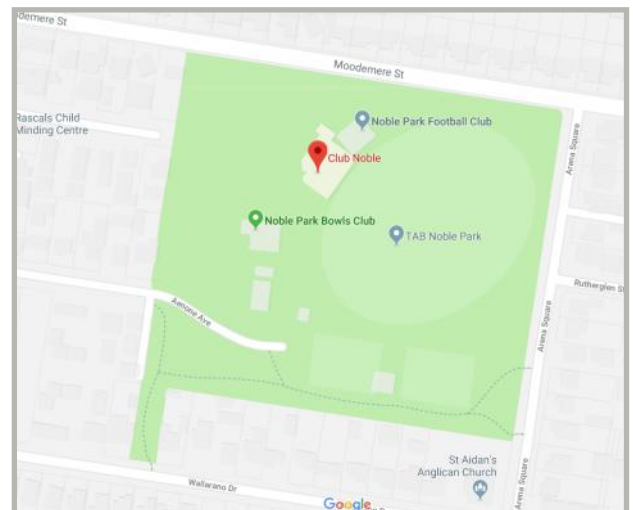
### VFWDC General Meeting Details & Venue

The club meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30PM with the following exceptions:

No meeting at Club Noble in January.

#### Club Noble Address

Blue and Gold Room  
Club Noble  
46-56 Moodemere Street  
Noble Park  
Melways ref: 89 D4



**This month's meeting will be held on Wednesday 5th February at 7.30pm.**

# Club Committee

## 2024-2025

President	Neville Van Leeuwen	<a href="mailto:president@vfwdc.com">president@vfwdc.com</a>
Vice President	Ken Kilby	<a href="mailto:vicepres@vfwdc.com">vicepres@vfwdc.com</a>
Secretary	Steve Miller	<a href="mailto:secretary@vfwdc.com">secretary@vfwdc.com</a>
Treasurer	Ly Ho	<a href="mailto:treasurer@vfwdc.com">treasurer@vfwdc.com</a>

## General Committee

Trip Coordinator	Andy McCarthy	<a href="mailto:trips@vfwdc.com">trips@vfwdc.com</a>
Magazine Editor		<a href="mailto:editor@vfwdc.com">editor@vfwdc.com</a>
Association Delegate	Dennis Alphonsus	<a href="mailto:delegate@vfwdc.com">delegate@vfwdc.com</a>

## Support Positions to Committee

Web Manager	Ben Whitworth	<a href="mailto:web@vfwdc.com">web@vfwdc.com</a>
Training officer	Phillip Griffith	
Merchandise	Suzy Whitford	<a href="mailto:merchandise@vfwdc.com">merchandise@vfwdc.com</a>

## Club Details

Registered Name	Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club
Registration Number	A002184F
Correspondence Address	PO Box 778 Dandenong VIC 3174
Email	<a href="mailto:secretary@vfwdc.com">secretary@vfwdc.com</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.vfwdc.com">www.vfwdc.com</a>

The Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club is an affiliated club of [Four Wheel Drive Victoria](http://www.fwdvictoria.org.au) - [www.fwdvictoria.org.au](http://www.fwdvictoria.org.au)

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hi All,

Hoping everyone has enjoyed the Christmas / New Years period and managed to get some time away from the normal routine.

I am excited to go into 2025, we already have a few trips planned as well as the Driver Training and Trip Leader training. If you have any trips planned, please let Andy know.

Unfortunately, my Australia Day Wanderings had to be postponed due to low numbers in part, as well as myself suffering from some extended back and neck problems. I will find a weekend a bit later this year to go and do this.

We are also trying to get a few guest speakers in so more to come on this once we finalise some arrangements. If you would like to hear from anyone, reach out with your ideas.

At our next committee meeting (mid Feb) we are hoping to put together the Social/ events calendar for the year. If you have ideas for any events, please reach out.

## Help Needed

The club needs some extra help, so please carefully consider if you can help with any of the below. Please reach out to a committee member if you can help here.

- **Magazine Editor** - Need someone with a bit of IT skills to help with our magazine. The magazine is a vital part of our club, and the committee will assist you to do this.

### And some easy/fun ones

- Trip leaders—plan and run a trip
- Put forward any suggestions on where you want to see a trip to, or ideas for our meeting (Guest speakers etc)

Don't forget that our meetings are now starting at **7.30pm**, so hope to see you all on the 5/02/25. If you can join us for dinner before hand. There is usually a group coming from 6pm onwards.

Neville Van Leeuwen

VFWDC President

president@vfwdc.com

M: 0472 680 482

# Club Calendar

## February

Wednesday 5th		General Meeting		7:30pm Club Noble
Wednesday 19th		Committee Meeting (Virtual)		7:30pm

## March

Saturday 1st		Trip Leader Training Day		Sally
Wednesday 5th		General Meeting		
Friday 7th		Big Desert Wanderings Part 3		Sally
Monday 10th		Labour Day		
Wednesday 12th		Proficiency Training–Theory		Phil
Saturday 15th		Proficiency Training–Practical		Phil
Wednesday 19th		Committee Meeting		

## April

Wednesday 2nd		General Meeting		7:30pm Club Noble
Wednesday 16th		Committee Meeting		
Thursday 17th		Eyre Peninsula		Sally
Friday 18th		Good Friday		
Monday 21st		Easter Monday		
Friday 25th		Anzac Day		

## VFWDC General Meeting Minutes

Date: 04/12/2024  
 Time: 8:00pm – 9:49pm  
 Location: Club Noble  
 Next Meeting: 7:30pm Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Topic	Discussion and Outcomes	Speaker
Open Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome to everyone and Ben Bartlet</li> <li>Apologies: Ben, Jason, Andy, Matt</li> <li>Absent: None noted</li> </ul>	Neville
Minutes from previous months club meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Matters arising from previous minutes for meeting on the 06/11/2024: Nil</li> <li>Minutes from previous meeting accepted:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accepted: Ken</li> <li>Seconded: Suzy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Neville
General Announcements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nil</li> </ul>	Neville
Guests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No visitors</li> <li>Sabre Off Road                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ben Barlett – Managing Director and a Founder</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Neville
Correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variety Children Fund Raiser 4WD trip for May 2025. Email received 03/12/2024</li> </ul>	Neville
Tonight's Guest Speaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sabre Off Road                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ben Barlett – Managing Director</li> <li>Steve Hanbury</li> <li>Andy Hibbert</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No straps other than a tree strap</li> <li>No metal shackles</li> <li>All products tested to destruction</li> <li>All items numbered and rated</li> <li>Specialise in soft shackles, kinetic ropes, winch extension ropes and accessories.</li> <li>Initially sold most products overseas until 2020 when they began marketing at home and now have over 100 stores carrying their product.</li> <li>Many of Sabre products are cut resistant, especially the soft shackles.</li> <li>Technora sheaths greatly enhance the cut resistance of Sabre products.</li> </ul>	Ben Bartlett

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kinetic ropes have 50% more stretch – Stretch 30% of their length compared to snatch straps which stretch 20% of their length.</li> <li>• It is important to match kinetic ropes to the job. Over rated ropes won't stretch and therefore won't work properly</li> <li>• Kinetic ropes are double braided and as long as core is not exposed, will function properly.</li> <li>• Recommended videos by Robert Pepper</li> <li>• Explained how to use soft shackles as alternative recovery points</li> </ul> <p>Great talk by Ben</p>	
Treasurer's Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per written report from Ly Ho – Written report will be in next issue of the club's magazine.</li> <li>• Closing cash position \$4,358.98</li> <li>• Closing consolidated position \$10,785.42</li> <li>• Motion to accept this month's Treasurer 's Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepted: Stuart</li> <li>• Seconded: Anne</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ly
Association News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on any Association news – Couple of emails received</li> <li>• Reviewing new website Revolutionize being touted by FWDV</li> <li>• Several new sponsors for FWDV</li> </ul>	Dennis
Upcoming Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22-29/12/2024 - Orphans Christmas Trip – Trip Leader: Sally &amp; Tristan – Talbotsville, Blue Rag, 28/12-Billy Goats, Azioka Spur</li> </ul>	Sally
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fishing trip at Woodside – Trip Leader: Steven Card - date to be advised in January 2025 – depends on when fish are running.</li> </ul>	Steve Card
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24/01/2025 to 27/01/2025 - Australia Day Trip – Trip Leader: Neville - Blue Rag, Talbotsville, Basalt track, Crooked River, Azeika Spur – Arrive Friday, return Sunday</li> </ul>	Neville
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 01/03/2025 Trip Leader Training - Looking for Expression of Interest – to be held in Clayton (Approx 4 hrs)</li> </ul>	Sally and Tristan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 03/2025 Driver Training Course - Request for Expressions of Interest</li> <li>• Some club members expressed interest in doing refresher course for those who have previously done training.</li> <li>• Query from members about doing training a second time ... members indicated they are happy to pay for 2nd training trip (Refresher trip ?)</li> <li>• Committee to consider and provide response</li> </ul>	Phil
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 07-09/03/2025 Labour Weekend – Desert Trip – Trip Leaders are Sally and Tristan</li> </ul>	Sally
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminder to have an up-to-date Personal Information Form in our vehicle</li> <li>• Reminder to submit trip forms. If a trip form is not submitted, the trip is NOT a sanctioned trip (ie no insurance etc)</li> </ul>	Carried Forward

Merchandise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50th Anniversary polo shirts and jackets have arrived and available for those who have not yet collected their shirt and or jacket.</li> <li>Old merchandise to be cleared. Everyone is welcome to take advantage of discounted prices.</li> <li>There are x8 2025 VFWDC calendar still available.</li> </ul>	Suzy
Intermission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intermission including 50 th Anniversary Cake</li> </ul>	9:20pm— 9:38pm
Trip Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CANCELLED due to expected poor weather - 1 st December 2024, 11:00 am Sunday – Christmas Lunch at Jells Park. Had a BBQ atNevilles place instead.</li> </ul>	Neville
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 th Nov 2024 – Day trip starting and finishing at Walhalla, A lot of other vehicle. Thompson crossing was very busy. Everyone made it across. Checked out Walhalla. See trip report in club magazine “Free Wheeling”.</li> </ul>	Suzy
Items proposed for the February 2025 Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	Neville
General Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As of 1 st meeting of 2025 which will be on the 5th February 2025 (No club meeting in January), club meetings will commence at 7:30pm for a three month trial. The committee will then review how this was received and decide if it should be a permanent feature. And contributions to the club</li> <li>Appreciation award for Marie and Stuart for all their effort</li> </ul>	Neville
Raffle	Prizes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>250m roll of light rope</li> <li>Makita cordless coffee maker</li> <li>Sabre 8 tonne kinetic recovery rope</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winners: orange D64, orange A69, orange A46</li> </ul>	
Next General Meeting	Wednesday 05/02/2025, 7:30pm at Club Noble (Upper floor meeting room)	
Meeting Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9:49pm</li> </ul>	Neville
Minutes taken by:		Steven Miller



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## Treasurer's Report November 2024

<u>Cheque A/C`</u> Opening Balance as at 01/11/2024	\$4,293.38	
Add: Raffle	\$52.00	
Merchandise Sales	\$220.00	
Membership Fees	\$170.00	
Less: Catering Costs	-\$28.40	
Association Fees - FWDV	-\$348.00	
Closing Balance as at 30/11/2024		\$4,358.98
<u>Term Deposit</u> Opening Balance as at 01/11/2024	\$6,388.14	
Closing Balance as at 30/11/2024		\$6,388.14
<u>Petty Cash</u> Opening Balance as at 01/11/2024	\$38.30	
Closing Balance as at 30/11/2024		<u>\$38.30</u>
<b>Consolidated Closing Cash Position</b>		<b><u>\$10,785.42</u></b>

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## Treasurer's Report December 2024

<u>Cheque A/C`</u> Opening Balance as at 01/12/2024	\$4,358.98	
Add: Merchandise Sales	\$85.00	
Less: Catering Costs	-\$130.00	
Raffle Prizes	-\$50.00	
Closing Balance as at 31/12/2024		\$4,263.98
<u>Term Deposit</u> Opening Balance as at 01/12/2024	\$6,388.14	
Closing Balance as at 31/12/2024		\$6,388.14
<u>Petty Cash</u> Opening Balance as at 01/12/2024	\$38.30	
Closing Balance as at 31/12/2024		\$38.30
<b>Consolidated Closing Cash Position</b>		<b><u>\$10,690.42</u></b>

## **NEW General Meeting start time**

Starting this year, the general meeting's start time will commence at 7:30PM at Club Noble.

## **Merchandise**

See the Merchandise section for *updated prices and gear*.

We currently have a range of merchandise in stock, and the list of available items can be found on the pages below. If you are interested, please feel free to speak to one of the committee members during the general meeting or email us at [committee@vfwdc.com](mailto:committee@vfwdc.com).

## **2025 Calendars for sale**

Our very first club calendars will be for sale at the upcoming meeting. \$20 each with limited stock

**Discount Offer:** The club is offering a discount of \$5 off your membership for each trip you have organized and run since March 1st, 2024, up to a maximum of \$20 per couple. Please mention any trips you have led when you reply.

# Merchandise

## 50th Anniversary Jacket

Cost - \$70.00

Sizes - XL, 3XL



## Reversible Vest

Cost - \$20.00

Sizes - S, M, L, 2XL, 5XL



## Drivers Jacket

Cost - \$40.00

Sizes - S, M, L, XL, 3XL



## Zip up Hoodie

Cost - \$20.00

Sizes - S, M, L



# Merchandise

Scarf / Beanie / Cap / Stubbie

Holder

Cost - \$5.00 each



Please visit our website at [VFWDC.com](http://VFWDC.com) to view all our current membership forms and club policies.

For all new and renewal of memberships, please complete [the online form here](#)

If you are looking for a Temporary Membership, please complete the online form, [which can be found here.](#)

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us via the Club Secretary on [secretary@vfwdc.com](mailto:secretary@vfwdc.com)

## Payments:

Payment can be made via Bank Transfer. The details are as follows:

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<b>Account Name:</b>	Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club Inc
<b>BSB:</b>	633108
<b>Account No:</b>	111761979

Please ensure your transfer includes your name as provided on the membership application and renewal form in the reference.





Once you have made your payment/transfer, please send your completed membership application and renewal form to [treasurer@vfwdc.com](mailto:treasurer@vfwdc.com) or you can present it to the Treasurer at any general meeting.

**Thank you for choosing the Victorian Four Wheel Drive Club**

If you are interested in joining [Club Noble](#) where we hold our monthly meetings, their application form can be found [here](#).

# Track Classifications

[Four Wheel Drive Victoria](#) have a track grading classification scale which has been developed to assist in advising Trip Leaders and participants on 4WD trips of the type of tracks that they can expect to encounter. On most trips participants can expect that a variety of tracks will be traversed each with an appropriate rating. Trip Leaders should advise participants of the range of track ratings expected to be encountered on the planned route. The following classifications will assist in determining an overall Trip Rating:

Considerations	Easy	Medium	Difficult	Very Difficult
<b>Overall Description</b>	All Wheel Drive and High Range 4WD. Novice Drivers	Mainly High range 4WD but Low range required. Some 4WD experience recommended.	Significant Low range 4WD with standard 4WD ground clearance. Should have 4WD driver training.	Low range 4WD with High ground clearance. Experienced Drivers
<b>Advisory Sign</b>				
<b>Expected terrain and track conditions</b>	Mostly unsealed roads with no obstacles and minor gradients.	Tracks with some steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy sections. May have shallow water crossings.	Tracks with frequent steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy sections. Possible water crossings.	Tracks with frequent very steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy sections. May have difficult river crossings.
<b>Vehicle suitability</b>	All wheel Drive and High Range 4WD. Can be low clearance with single range and road tyres.	Suitable for medium clearance vehicles with dual range and all terrain or road tyres.	Suitable for medium to high clearance vehicles with dual range and all terrain tyres.	Suitable for high clearance vehicles with dual range and tyres suitable for the terrain. (Mud Terrain tyres).
<b>Recovery equipment</b>			Recovery equipment required.	Winch / Recovery equipment required.
<b>Driver Training / Experience</b>	Suitable for novice drivers.	Recommended that drivers have experience or 4WD training. Recommended to be done in groups of vehicles.	Recommended for drivers with reasonable experience or 4WD training. To be done in groups of vehicles.	Drivers with extensive experience and advanced training should only attempt as there are several technical challenges. Recommended to be done in groups of four or more vehicles.
<b>Weather</b>	May be difficult in wet conditions.	Will be more difficult in wet conditions.	Will be more difficult in wet conditions.	Will be more difficult in wet conditions.



## PROPOSED CLUB TRIP DATA FORM

DESTINATION	<b>Trip Leader Training Day</b>
LEADER/CONTACT NO.	NAME: Sally MOB: 0435 782 207
DATE	1st March 2025
MEETING PLACE / TIME	Alykan Electrical Solutions Offices at Factory 11/ 35 Garden Road 8:30am to 1pm (finish time depending on how long we chat and plan)
GRADE  <b>Please adhere to new trip classifications</b>	Easy
TRIP ACTIVITY DETAILS	<p>This event is all about trip leading. How we go about preparing and running a trip.</p> <p><b>Before the trip</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forms</li> <li>• Sources of Information</li> <li>• Maps</li> <li>• Navigation devices</li> <li>• Deciding on grade of trip</li> <li>• Communicating with trip members</li> <li>• Fuel Planning</li> <li>• Gear Required for trip</li> </ul> <p><b>During the trip</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dealing with plan changes</li> <li>• Incidents on a trip</li> </ul> <p><b>After the trip</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip reports</li> </ul>
VEHICLE LIMITS	No vehicle limits. Max number of people that meeting room hold will be 15
DISTANCE BETWEEN SUPPLIES	We have tea and coffee making facilities and also happy to put on a BBQ brekkie and lunch with a small donation for the food.
EQUIPMENT REQUIRED	Bring your maps, navigation devices and ideas on where you want to run a trip to
MAPS REQUIRED	Any that you want to bring along. I will have my maps and HEMA
RADIO CHANNEL CB / UHF	12





## PROPOSED CLUB TRIP DATA FORM

DESTINATION	<b>Proficiency Training</b>
LEADER/CONTACT NO.	Phil Griffith – 0419 865 472 Ashley Martin -0428 134 999 John Partridge – 0405 058 079
DATE	Theory – Wed 12th March – 7.30pm start Practical – Friday 14th March– Sunday 16th March
MEETING PLACE / TIME	Theory – Noble Park Football Club, Blue and Gold Room Practical – Service Centre Officer (Princess Hwy) Friday @5pm / Saturday @7.30am
GRADE	WET: Easy / Medium DRY: Easy Medium
	<b>Please adhere to new trip classifications</b>
TRIP ACTIVITY DETAILS	<p>The Club encourages all members to participate in a proficiency course to ensure the basic fundamentals of 4-wheel driving are gained.</p> <p>Theory provides an overview of the tread lightly principles, vehicles dynamics and functions, tackling various terrains along with other subjects. This provides the background for the practical weekend.</p> <p>Practical we run through individual vehicles and differences, basic recovery equipment and recap some of the theory (including homework). We then begin the practical side running through several techniques to ensure safe vehicle recovery when in difficult situations. Once all participants are confident with these, we hit the tracks to put all the theory into practice.</p> <p>Sunday will be a leisurely start then we will traverse a number of tracks which allow you to become familiar with your vehicles' capabilities and gain further confidence. We should be finished by 2 o'clock arriving back to Melbourne around 4.</p> <p>As with past participants the weekend provides confidence to safely 4WD either with the club or friends</p>
VEHICLE LIMITS	MINIMUM: 4 MAXIMUM: 8
APPROX KMS Meeting place to destination	300 kms (approx.)
LAST AVAILABLE FUEL	PETROL: Moe
EQUIPMENT REQUIRED	Theory - pen and concentration  Practical - You will need to be self-sufficient for camping and have your brain switched on!
MAPS REQUIRED	<a href="https://goo.gl/maps/GTrQDz5RLHS2">https://goo.gl/maps/GTrQDz5RLHS2</a>
RADIO CHANNEL CB / UHF	UHF 12 to start with and then move if its busy



## PROPOSED CLUB TRIP DATA FORM

DESTINATION	<b>Big Desert Wanderings Part 3</b>
LEADER/CONTACT NO.	NAME: Sally and Tristan Sally 0435 782 207 Tristan 0468 958 444
DATE	Friday 7th – Monday 10th March
MEETING PLACE / TIME	BP Calder Park outbound 8am for 8:30am departure
GRADE	WET: Medium DRY: Easy
TRIP ACTIVITY DETAILS	<b>Please adhere to new trip classifications</b> We still have more tracks to explore so we will head to Blue Gum campsite (no facilities) on Friday 7th to base camp for the weekend. Camper Trailers are able to get into the site with a couple of dunes to climb to get into it. Friday and Saturday will be exploring Big Desert and also having a go at Big Dune again. We will head into Pinaroo for a fuel top up at some stage. Head home on Monday
VEHICLE LIMITS	MINIMUM: 3 MAXIMUM: 10
APPROX KMS	611KM
Meeting place to destination	
LAST AVAILABLE FUEL	PETROL: Ouyen DIESEL: Ouyen
DISTANCE BETWEEN SUPPLIES	250km
EQUIPMENT REQUIRED	Recovery Gear Camping equipment that makes you self-sufficient for 4 days. Food and Drinks You may need additional fuel depending on fuel tank size.
MAPS REQUIRED	VIC Desert Maps Hema Maps
RADIO CHANNEL CB / UHF	Channel 12



## PROPOSED CLUB TRIP DATA FORM

DESTINATION	<b>Eyre Peninsula</b>
LEADER/CONTACT NO.	NAME: Sally and Tristan Sally: 0435782207 Tristan: 0468958444
DATE	Thursday April 17th to Sunday April 27th
MEETING PLACE / TIME	BP Calder Park Outbound 8am
GRADE	WET: Easy/ Medium DRY: Easy/ Medium
	<b>Please adhere to new trip classifications</b>
TRIP ACTIVITY DETAILS	A quick Tour of the Eyre Peninsula to explore and see what we can find. Day 1: Transit day - Melbourne to Renmark Area Day 2: Transit day - Renmark Area to Kimba/ Darke Peak Day 3: 4 Wheel Drive Darke Peak and then head to Pildappa Rock and across to Streaky Bay Day 4: Streaky Bay, Cape Bauer, Murphy's Haystacks and look along the coast until we reach Coodlie Park Eco Resort Day 5: Stay at Coodlie Park Eco Resort and day trip out to Talia Caves, the Tub and woolshed caves Day 6: travel to Coffin Bay national park Day 7: Check out Coffin Bay National Park and area and may-be find some oysters and do a tour Day 8: Lincoln National Park Day 9: Sleaford – Wanna track through to Port Lincoln and find some more seafood Day 10: Transit Day - Start to travel home so head through to Adelaide Day 11: Transit Day - Head home from Adelaide.
VEHICLE LIMITS	MINIMUM: 3 MAXIMUM: 6
APPROX KMS Meeting place to destination	1500km from starting point to furthest destination. Total trip is around 3500km
LAST AVAILABLE FUEL	Petrol and Diesel will be available along the way. We are stopping in or travelling through a lot of towns and furthest fuel is about 100km from where we are staying.
DISTANCE BETWEEN SUPPLIES	Maximum distance between supplies is around 300km.
EQUIPMENT REQUIRED	Touring set up with 4-wheel drive capability. I have managed to find some good four-wheel drive tracks that range from steep and rocky to sandy beach and dune tracks so full recovery gear is a must. Camper trailers are welcome but there will be some off-road travel with them on.
MAPS REQUIRED	Eyre Peninsula. Trip leader will have all the maps for the area.
RADIO CHANNEL CB / UHF	12

## Trip Report: Orphan's Christmas at Talbotville

**Date:** 23rd December 2024

**Trip By:** Sally and Tristan

**Report:** Sally

### Participants:

1. Sally and Tristan - Nissan Patrol Y62 (Trip Leader)
2. Lynton - Jeep Wrangler
3. Sushant Aggarwal - Hilux
4. Steve, Francine and James Dishon - Ford Everest
5. Steve Card—Mitsubishi Pajero
6. Andy—Mitsubishi Challenger
7. Michael—Ford Ranger
8. Anthony and Emma (guests)

NOTE: Some of the stories that are talked about in this report may not have happened on the precise day they are written about. It was such a relaxing 8 days away and we packed a lot in that time became immaterial so the memory is a bit vague.

Wahoo, the end of the year has arrived and we can now turn off our phones. We left home mid morning to head to Talbotville for our week away and we were about 20 mins into our holiday when we returned home as we had left the fishing gear behind and as we were intending on having some lazy fishing days at camp this was a key piece of equipment.

The drive to Dargo was uneventful and as we pulled into Dargo it was very quiet with not a lot of people around. This was to be expected as it was a few days before Christmas. We headed up the hill out of Dargo heading for McMillans road and when we pulled off the bitumen we aired down.

McMillans Road is normally a 2WD access road with smooth clay base and rocky gravel in other sections. This time it was rutted out clay all the way through to Grant. This is the worst that we have seen the track so we took our time heading into Talbotville.

As we got closer and we had not come across anyone we got very hopeful that we would not have many people and we would get our favourite spot right down by the river. When we were almost at the bottom we got a glimpse of a few caravans and a very empty Talbotville. We pulled into camp and headed straight for our spot on the river

and we were very excited to find no one there. We found out later on that the spot was vacated just that morning.



We set up the camper trailer and we sure had a room with a view! There were only a couple of other groups of campers around and it was one of the quietest times we have seen. We had a relaxing evening until the middle of the night when we had a huge thunder and lightning storm. The lightning was so bright it was daylight in the camper trailer and the thunder was so huge and close that the ground was shaking as it rolled around the hills. We were expecting a little bit of rain but it was way more than a few mm's. We were nice and dry so it was great just listening to the thunder and the rain.

### **Monday 23rd**

We awoke from the night of rain to an overcast day. We finished setting up camp and just pottered around for the day. I set up Starlink as Lynton and Sushi were going to be arriving today. We spoke to campers near us that also had a Y62 Patrol that Tristan had chatted to in an online group so that was nice to find out how different set ups work for people.

Sushi and Lynton arrived mid afternoon and got set up. We lazed in the river and chatted to the group that had a lot of caravans. They come to Talbotville every Christmas and have done for over 25 years.

I also put up Christmas Lights onto the camper trailer. Just because we are camping does not mean we miss out on the trimmings.

Sushi took on cooking duties for tonight. He set up his cooking table and started to prepare all the ingredients. Chef Sushi was in the house and did he cook up a storm. He

cooked us a beautiful paneer curry from scratch over the fire and fried up roti with some yummy ghee. It was AMAZING!!









## Tuesday 24th

Our plan for the week was to have a day at camp and a day 4 wheel driving so today was a 4 wheel driving day. We thought we would start with a nice loop that has lots of river crossings, some good climbs and descents so we headed up Crooked River onto Bull Town Spur and then back down Collingwood Spur back to camp.

Sushi had not done this kind of 4 wheel driving before so was excited for the track. We started our first river crossing straight out of camp and it was the first type of trip for the Patrol too. We came to a very rutted area and we just went to the left and carried on, the back kicked out a bit but with a bit of power we just bumped over it and carried on. We for some reason did not warn Sushi about it and the next thing we hear is ah Sushi is stuck. We went back to help him out and found the Hilux having a nap in the ruts. The back had bumped into the rut and then when he tried to get out of it the front pulled round into the rut as well.

We first tried to pull him out backwards with the mighty Jeep and winch but it soon became apparent that was not the way to go as a few clips came undone on the bumper. Whilst Sushi is going to get a bull bar soon he was not quite ready to get one!





We set up a bridle and snatch strap to the Patrol and we gave it a few nice pulls and it popped out of the rut. The full recovery gear kit was all soft which is the first time we have done a recovery with no metal involved which is awesome. Sushi came out with a big grin on his face.

We carried on up the river and crossed it around 30 odd times. There are some great spots to stop and have a look so we took the opportunity to take a photo with all the cars.



There were a couple of tricky river crossings with steep and rutted entries and exits. We had to choose our lines with the Patrol due to no lift on it yet. The last crossing we got to was a very steep rock face with some interesting holes which made it a challenge. We got out to walk it and to work out the best route to take. Tristan carefully guided the Patrol down with no issues. Sushi got to the top and was like, ah, am I going to be able to actually do this. We were like, absolutely, you can do this, we will help you.

Lynton took on the spotter role and he guided Sushi down the entry to the river without damage and another Big Grin on Sushi's face.



No sooner had we completed this crossing we were then into the climb of Bull Town Spur. This is a nice steady climb with some good rock faces, whoopy doos and just nice climbing. We stopped at the helipad to have a look around before the next climb up to McMillans Road.



Once we got to the top of Bulltown Spur we hung a left onto McMillans road and then it was off to Collingwood Spur for a nice descent. We checked out the view out to Billy Goats Bluff track and had a nice drive down the hill. Then we headed back to camp. Tristan had found another crossing than the normal crossing we do into camp so we turned down the track just before Talbotville where they have opened up more camping on the other side of the river and we then went through the river and back into camp.

We then headed to the river for a swim. We had a few floaties from Kmart. A tube, a Crocodile (who became known as Croccie) and an Avocado.

The days have blended into one so this may have happened a day earlier but we got the

tube going first and we were floating up and down the river, it was flowing slow enough you could easily go backwards and forwards. Sushi had his first river floating experience. A bit later on Tristan was just leaning on the tube chatting to people in the water and the next thing a seam burst and he had a blowout. Glitter from inside the tube went everywhere!

Not to worry we still had Croccie and Avo to float around on. I knew there was a reason for buying more than 2 floaties.

I spotted another Patriot Camper so of course I had to have a chat to see where they had taken it and how they liked it. We got a few ideas on some things we will change from them.

Then we had a lazy night around the fire which is why we love going camping!

### **Wednesday 25th - CHRISTMAS DAY!!**

A lazy wake up today to celebrate Christmas Day. we jumped on Starlink to call family and friends and wish them a wonderful day and then it was onto getting the fire going early so we could cook roast chicken for lunch.

We set up the hexa tarp to give us some more undercover space and while I was having a nap Tristan, Lynton and Sushie played a game of Monopoly Deal.

Our roast chicken and salad for Christmas Lunch was beautiful and we also had meringues with strawberries and ice cream and eating it out in the bush seemed to make it way tastier too!

Michael arrived just after lunch and he suspected he was having air conditioning issues as it was a very hot trip for him. His suspicions were confirmed the next day in the 35 plus deg heat.

We then headed to the river for another swim. We spent a good couple of hours swimming every day. The water hole at Talbotville is fantastic and is over your head in places. It was incredibly relaxing just bobbing around chatting to all the different people who were camping.









Thursday was going to be a total fire ban day which came into effect at midnight. I had gone to bed but the others stayed up to have the fire going for as long as they could. Tristan got a bucket of water ready to put the fire out before midnight. While he was sitting there he heard a splash. He got his torch out to see what was going on. He had never caught a trout... until now when he caught 4 of them. They were all fingerlings but he caught 4 trout just by scooping the bucket. He returned them to the river and promptly scooped another one up. So he caught 5 trout on this trip.

We did not end up using the fishing gear on this trip as the river was teeming with life and the fish had way too much food so decided it was not going to be a good fishing trip. Well, who knew that all you needed was a bucket.

## Thursday 26th

We awoke to the start of a very hot day. Sushi packed up as he was heading back home. Our plan was to go from Talbotville across to Harrison's Cut and then head into Dargo to have lunch, meet Andy, who was arriving and farewell Sushi.

We headed up McMillans Road to Dargo High Plains Road, turned right and headed to Downey track and then onto Matheson Road. It was graded as an Easy track on Hema. As we got onto Matheson we heard a call on the radio saying that a person was commencing the climb on Matheson as a heads up. We replied saying that is ok we will pull over and wait for them to come. It was about then that I started thinking hmm... I wonder if this is true to label or are we going to have some fun!

We stopped and chatted to the car when we met him. He said the climb was steep and shaley so we were up for some fun. We commenced the descent and it was definitely steep and we were finding the Patrol was scraping over the whoopy doos. So this meant for some creative four wheel driving to get down. It would be a fun and interesting climb so that is on the list for the next trip.

We got to the bottom of the hill and then turned right and then I realised I had missed the turn to Harrisons Cut. So a back up was required and we then found Harrison's Cut. A group were camped on the road by it which looked very uncomfortable. The beach was great and the cut was incredible. The gold miners cut out the hill to divert the river to help find gold. It was a feat of engineering and well worth the trip to visit it.

We headed down Upper Dargo Road and there are lots of beautiful camp sites which is good to know for future trips. The campsites were definitely not full though.





Michael was struggling in the heat as his air conditioning had failed him so he was trying to manage the dust and the windows to get air... on a nearly 38 deg day.

We met Andy at the Dargo Pub. We ordered lunch and relaxed in the cool air. The pub was empty, basically just us and a couple and one other group. We had a nice lunch and then farewelled Sushi.

Michael decided to head back to camp as he was just too hot. Andy, Lynton and us went home a different way to what we have done before. We headed back towards Talbotville and turned off onto Grady's track, we followed it through to Link track, Hibeneria

Track and then onto Randall's Track. We stopped at the top of Randall's track which provides some amazing views. There were some incredibly steep sections of the track where looking at the track you could see the bottom. As is usual the photos do not do it justice. We then got to Crooked River track and then headed back into Talbotville.





It was then off to the river to cool off and relax. No fires tonight due to total fire ban so we just relaxed, had a few drinks and tried to solve the problems of the world.

Another story from I am not sure which day but it seems to fit here... Tristan and I was still in the river and the others had gone back to camp when we had 2 guys come over and ask for Tristan and we were like yeah that's us. Michael had spoken to them and they were having issues with their gas bottle and their weber Q. We had made the change on the regulator that they needed so Tristan was like, we will come over once we are finished swimming and help out. The basically did a gas bottle swap and then a couple of hours later they came back over with a plate of roasted quail for Tristan and Michael for helping out.

We headed to bed and it was still super hot. I woke up around 12:30am to the sound of wind starting to build up. I listened to it for awhile and then thought that its getting stronger and I don't think "Croccie" and "Avo" had been secured so I got up and went outside. I laid the chairs down under the tarp in case they got blown over, I turned around to pick up Croccie and the next thing the wind got really loud and I was whacked in the back of the head with a pole from the tarp set up and the tarp was whipping around. I tried to get it to the ground so it did not blow away and then next thing I look up and see the brand new awning we had installed just before Christmas fully invert on top of the camper trailer.

I yelled for Tristan to come out and he got up to help repack the awning so it did not get more damaged. We saw lights all around the campsite and I went to check on closest campers and the managed to get gazebo cover off but did not take down the frame and the frame got twisted up in the wind. Lynton's table got blown into the river bank and "Croccie" was gone :(

It was basically a mini tornado that went through the camp site. We went to bed and it had got super hot and humid. 2 hours later we had thunder and lightning and rain and then the cold front came through and it finally cooled down.

What a night it was

## **Friday 27th**

Tristan woke up and headed out to see if he could find "Croccie" and he did find him. He was down river by about 300m upside down and fully intact which was great as it was going to be a lazy day around camp for us.



Lynton, Andy and Michael left early to head up the Blue Rag Range since they were so close to it and they had either done it but had no view due to clouds or had not been before. I had said its best to leave early so you can beat the crowds.

We fixed up the tarp after the crazy night before and then just pottered around. We spent a lot of time in the river floating around. We met a couple from South Australia who were out exploring and we chatted about where to go and what to do in the area. They had had a nightmare 6 hours of winching on Mt Sunday so were a bit wary of the tracks by themselves so we said they could join us when we did Billy Goats Bluff track.

It had become a bit of an ongoing joke that I would head off to go to the toilet, then not come back for an hour as I had met some people and were talking to them and then I would return to camp with friends. I had met some people that I had spoken to online about their Patriot Camper so they came over, I met a guy who was into winch trucks and was visiting with his kids, a young guy travelling with his girlfriend but wanted to know some tracks, a family travelling and had not been to the area (This one was due to me trying to block off space for more of our group) It was great meeting and talking to people with the deisre to get out an enjoy this beautiful land.

Lynton, Steve and Andy came back from Blue Rag. They had had a good trip and not run into too many people.

Steve, Francine and James arrived in the afternoon and got their camper trailer set up and then Steve Card arrived in the evening after driving from Sydney, he was kind enough to go into Dargo to get some more beer for Lynton :-)

### **Saturday 28th**

An early start today so we could try and beat the crowds around Billy Goats bluff track. We were joined by Anthony and Emma from South Australia. We headed down crooked river and all the river crossings were low which made it an easy trip. We did the classic river crossing at kingwell bridge before we left for the iconic Billy Goats Bluff Track.

We regrouped at the bottom of the track and had a quick chat about the track. It had been recently graded so was going to be steep but not too much of an issue. We commenced the climb and it was steep, shaley and had no major ruts. You can see where they are all going to form soon enough.

We stopped at the helipad and checked out the next part of the track to see if we were going to meet anyone, we also scanned the radio as well and no one could be seen so we headed on up.

There was a remarkable number of turn outs that had been cut into the track which makes the track a lot safer that it has been. Still incredibly steep.

We got to the pinch at the top and that is where we met a couple of cars having coffee and another group wanting to head down. Once photos were taken we manoeuvred around the other vehicles and then we carried onto the Pinnacles.



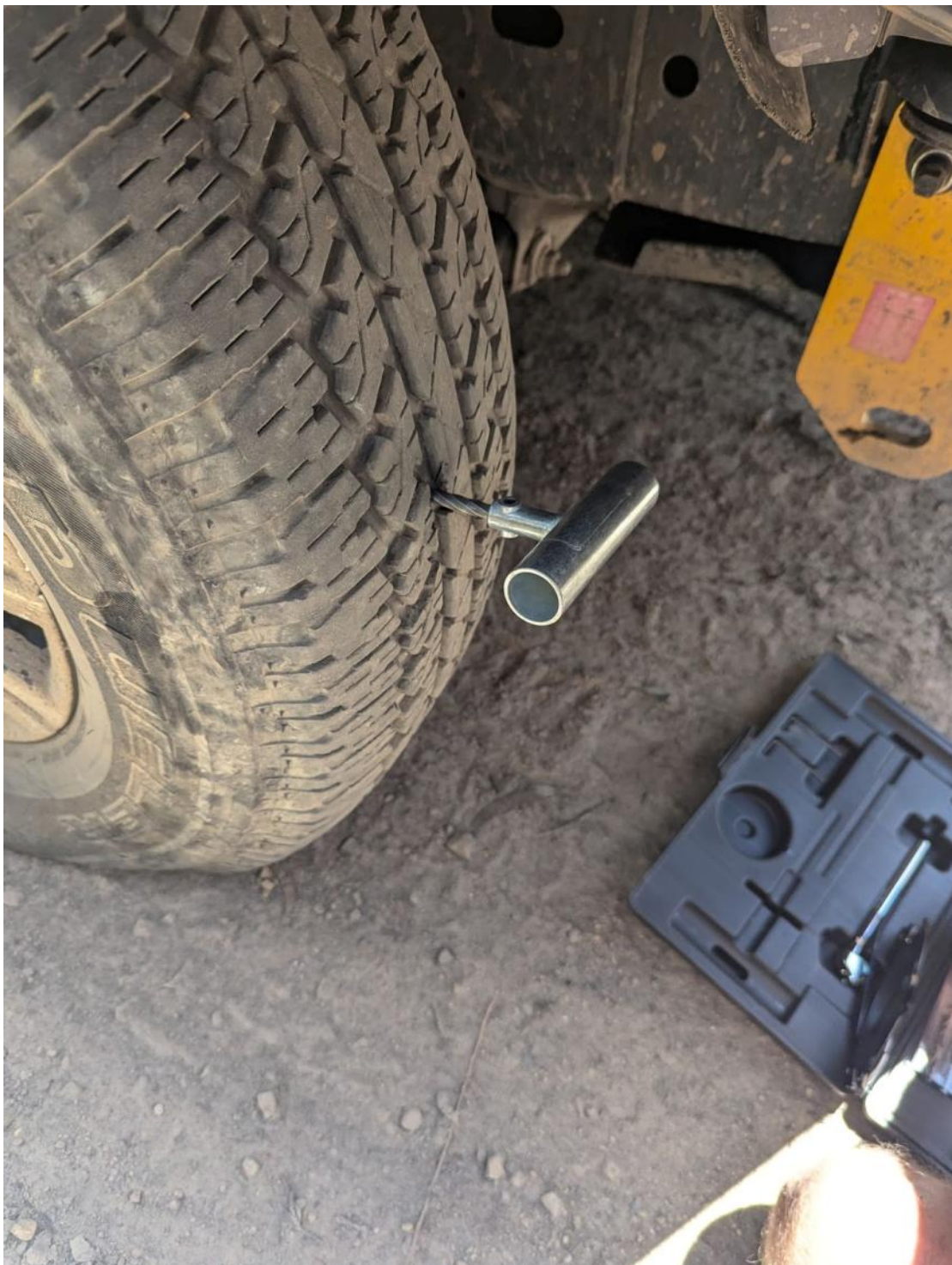


We had managed to get Lynton to the Pinnacles car park on a trip once before but it was cloudy and almost dark so we did not go out to the fire look out. So this time when we got to the car park we said to him, sorry its closed due to fire operations... the look on his face was classic. It was not infact closed and was a beautiful day that we could see as far as the eye could see.



As we got to the Pinnacles by 10am we now could see the traffic starting to go up and down Billy Goats so we decided to go down to Dargo another way. We tried to find a track I had seen on roof top maps but it was closed so we went to Castlehill Track. We had done this track earlier in the year and thought it would be all ok for the Patrol. Well we did kind of forget some challenging sections. We worked our way down the hill and had some good fun.

We met some on coming cars and while we shuffled around Tristan backed into a group of small bushes to get out of the way. Once they passed we got back out on the track and the next thing our front tyre lost a heap of air pressure so we stopped and we found a decent sized hole in the tyre. We were not really up for a full tyre change so we grabbed out tyre repair kit out. At the same time we had a vehicle catch up with us so I went up to it to say sorry we have a tyre issue which we will get sorted as soon as we can.



We carried on down junction spur track and there was some nice steps and some interesting sections. We crossed a few creeks and then we came round the corner and I was like ah oh, I remember this track and it is really not for a stock patrol with no lift... we were committed so Tristan commenced the climb and was having a lot of fun negotiating the ruts, steps and climb.. We then came round another corner to a massive climb up rock steps and huge ruts. We slipped off the ruts and came down hard on the passenger side but we just had to keep moving as it was a decent climb and we could not lose momentum. The steps and ruts were lots of fun and the Patrol just ate it all up. We got to the top and surveyed the damage. Just the rock slider bent so much we could not open the rear door. Nothing that jumping on it could not fix.

The rest of the group made their way up slowly and all had big grins on their faces after achieving a challenging climb. We then headed down trail track to go into Dargo. We heard on the radio is it good to come up and we said yes and then we broke up and could not hear them. I felt bad as I was not aware that we had someone join our group so I hope they had fun and got out ok and if by chance you are reading this my apologies. We had gone along way before I realised.

Anthony and Emma then left us to head back up to Kingwell Bridge and to go back to camp that way and we headed into Dargo for another lunch. This time the pub was busier and was about half full inside but empty outside. I hope that got more visitors as the week went on.

Then it was back to camp. When we got to the top of McMillans Road Lynton wanted to head to Bulltown Spur and do it in the reverse so he, Andy and Michael went down the spur and Steve, Steve and us we headed back to camp.

They arrived back just after 5pm and had a great time. We were bobbing in the river again.

Anthony and Emma joined us around the fire for more good chats, magic fire and talking about all things four wheel driving. They live not far from Big Desert so might join us on that adventure.

We had cooked up some food in our camp oven and I was trying to clean it so tipped it upside down on the fire for a bit to burn it out. I then pulled it off and was wiping out the insides giving it a good clean when I slipped and my arm came into contact with the burning hot steel of the camp oven and gave myself an very good burn. So off to the river to soak it. We then filled a bucket of water so I could sit with my arm in the water for awhile. I then got burn aid gel and dressed the burn. It was not pretty and still have a decent mark on my arm. It was comforting to know that I had a good first aid kit when it happened. Ironically we had literally just finished a conversation on why I don't tend to cook on the fire... for the exact reason is that there is a high chance i will burn myself.

### **Sunday 29th**

So following on from the misadventure of my burn the night before, Andy gets up in the morning and he has his fingers all taped up. Ah what happened to you?? Well Andy had packed up to go to bed and he had tripped over near his tent, got his finger caught in his chair and dislocated his finger. It was the most accidents I had seen in a trip in awhile.

Sunday was a day to relax around camp. Steve C had to head home as he was going back to work the next day so he packed up and then headed off. We were all just pottering around camp and then the discussion of I wonder what Basalt South track is actually like.

Tristan jumped in with Lynton in the Jeep because of what we had heard with the ruts and the Patrols with lifts not having much success we thought best to not take it. Andy was I haven't seen it so happy to go and have a look and then Steve D and Michael joined him. They were all ready to stop at the bottom and walk it all.

I stayed back at camp as that is one track I am not keen on. I just relaxed and watched from a far. After a bit of time I could see puffs of dust from the track and was I think they have gone up. Tristan and Lynton got to the bottom of the rutted section and thought we can do this so carried on up. Andy followed. They both scrambled their way up to the top and then came back down.

While they were gone I had a visit from John, Ashley and Anthony. They were passing through so we caught up on the tracks and adventures they were having. Everyone then got back from Basalt South with big grins on their face so they gave an update on the track before John, Ashley and Anthony headed up Crooked River and on to their next campsite.

We had another family set up camp beside us from Queensland so we chatted to them about all the great places they can see and do in the area.

### **Monday 30th**

Early get up and headed home.

Andy was up early and headed off, Michael was not far behind. Lynton headed off followed by us and Steve D and family left with us as we both had camper trailers so Lynton was the forward vehicle if any traffic was coming down the narrow section on McMillans road. We got into Dargo around 8:30am so had breakkie, filled up the tyres with air and then we headed home. We were home early afternoon with plenty of time to unpack and relax.

We had a wonderful week and it was great to be able to share it with so many different people. It was a fantastic way to finish the year.

# **We need your help on and off the tracks**



**If you have some spare time  
please consider joining the committee.  
Your club needs you— do it for your club!**

**Contact your Committee...**

