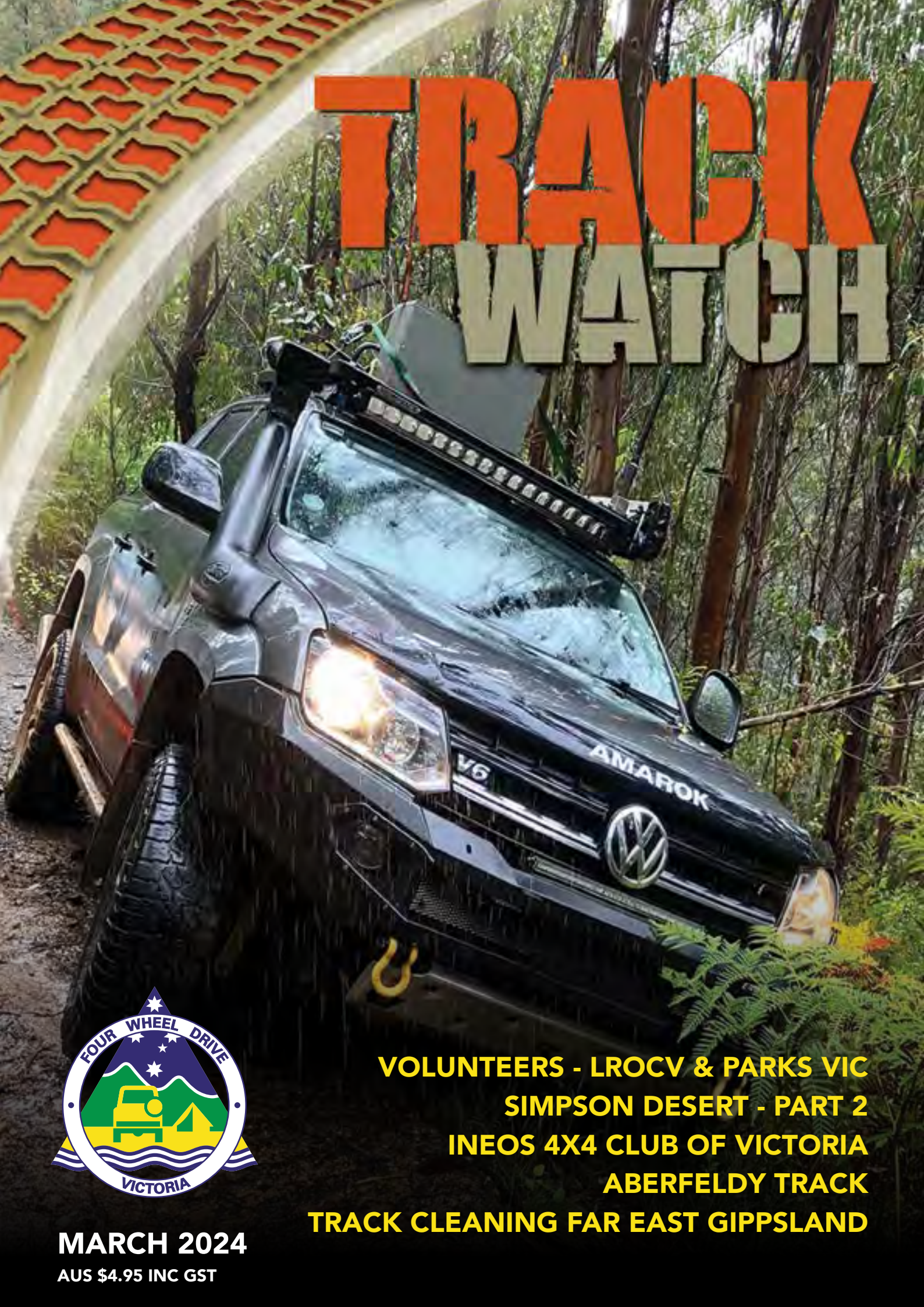


# TRACK WATCH



**VOLUNTEERS - LROCV & PARKS VIC  
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(Just Mates Amarak Club of Vic 4WD Club)

**Office Administrator** Jo Somerfield (Pajero 4WD Club)

**Accounts** Di Hodgson

**Projects & Events Officer** Daniel Whitby

**RTO Compliance** Micah Spedding

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10th May for June 2024 issue

9th August for September 2024 issue

7th November for December 2024 issue

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In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

**W**elcome to 2024 with a summer that is becoming more and more unpredictable



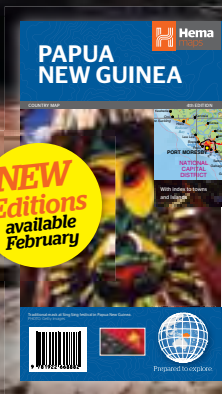
as time goes on. We are into the bushfire season so make sure you prepare your trips with that in mind. The Land Rover Owners Club of Victoria conducted their annual 4x4 Show at Lardner Park south of Drouin again this year. We were extremely pleased to see that the Victorian land managers, DEECA, and Parks Victoria our partners in the Victorian Advisory Committee to the Minister of Environment as well as the Office of the Conservation Regulator were all there and extremely well represented. A very successful show indeed.

The most pressing issues we have at the moment are that Wayne Hevey is retiring in July this year and a replacement is becoming very important. The Board has employed a specialist HR Company to source the right person to head up a Not-for-Profit organisation. We will never find another Wayne so the right person must be sourced. It is intended for that person to have a long-term handover so it will be prudent to employ that person around April. We are predominantly interested in someone from within the FWDV fraternity with the right skills to manage the Association.

The next issue is the recent VEAC report covering Central Highlands from Melbourne East to approximately Walhalla North to Seymour and West to Alexandra. In our view we need to investigate if it maintains an unknown agenda for the future of the Victorian State forests and the like which may be amalgamated into National Parks. However, the Board has decided to 'go in hard' on this one to establish the full agenda within this report. This matter is high on the agenda of the Victorian Advisory Committee which we share with DEECA and Parks Victoria. Should you read the report and find anything that bothers you please contact the FWDV office and register your observations or complaints. At this moment we are concerned that

# NEW PRODUCTS AND EDITIONS

# 2024



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### Great Desert Tracks Atlas & Guide

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if the State forests turn into National Parks, it will affect camping, and the carrying of dogs, firearms, and chainsaws. The Gunaikurnai, Taungurung, and Yorta Yorta communities are very supportive of FWDV and very happy for us to continue with our 4x4 vocation in their districts. FWDV is very conscious of reconciliation with the Koori communities and is partnering with them to ensure their traditional needs are supported and respected.

The Toolangi Quarry Training Centre is all but ready for training for clubs and commercial organisations. We have one hurdle to jump over and that is the Fire Report. Once that issue is closed out, we can install our building and toilets on the plot. DEECA is already using it for training their heavy machine operators which augurs well for us as they are creating the training tracks we need. Training will begin there this year. In general, we are looking at March as the starting date for us to leave the

current training facility and start up our permanent Training Facility at Toolangi as soon as is practicably possible.

The final issue is the purchase of a factory to convert into an office for FWDV and Club meeting rooms with break-out areas to relax and conduct informal meetings and the like. Already we have three (3) clubs indicating their desire to meet at the venue along with FWDV and LROC Vic. So have a good thought about what your club wishes to do with regards to renting a meeting room for your club meetings and special events.

This year is turning into a positive one for FWDV with the Building & Training Projects we are investing in for the future of this great Association.

Keep the shiny side up Tread Lightly leave tracks and take photos on your trips this coming year.

**Eric Bishop**  
President

**2024 TRAINING COURSES**

**BOOK ONLINE**

Four Wheel Drive Victoria is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO21605) offering non-accredited Proficiency 4WD training and a range of Accredited 4wd and Chainsaw courses. Open to all club members, the general public and corporate organisations. Browse courses and book online at [www.fwdvictoria.org.au/training](http://www.fwdvictoria.org.au/training) Call the office (03) 9874 7222 for further information

**PROFICIENCY COURSES**

19th March – PC240319 – Theory	28th May – PC240528 – Theory
23rd March – PC240319 – Practical	1st June – PC240528 – Practical
9th April – PC240409 – Theory	2nd July – PC240702 – Theory
13th April – PC240409 – Practical	6th July – PC240702 – Practical

**Training Course Refund Policy**  
Situations occur where for various reasons courses are cancelled by Four Wheel Drive Victoria (FWDV) or students need to cancel. Below describes the refund policy that is applicable.  
**Fee refunds:** If students are unable to attend the course that they are registered for the following refund fees below apply:  

- 30 days prior - less 10% of course cost;
- 29 days to 15 days - less 25% of course cost;
- 14 days to 8 days - less 50% of course cost;
- 7 days prior - no refund allowed.

*Refund applications must be made in writing to FWDV.*  
 FWDV agree that they will allow for one transfer in a 12 month period to another course date without penalty, with a minimum of 8 days notice.

**Transfer to other courses:** Students can transfer to any other course up to 8 working days prior to commencement at no cost. Students transferring to another course 7 working days or less prior to commencement will be required to pay a transfer fee of \$50.  
**Course Cancellations:** FWDV will make a full refund of all fees paid should a course be discontinued. FWDV reserves the right to cancel a course if a minimum number of participants are not achieved or for Occupational Health and Safety reasons. Should the students desire to take an alternative course with FWDV, fees will be fully transferable to that course, for one transfer in a 12 month period. In the event of a course for which the student was enrolled being unavailable or no acceptable alternative course is available, fees are fully refundable.

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## FROM FWDV CEO



I hope you all had a tremendous Christmas and new year holiday break, with the hope that this year will be sensationally better than the last! We have jumped out of the blocks again this year with things happening at a rapid rate.

Quotes for training are pouring in, training itself has already started in earnest and we are looking forward to using the Toolangi facility in the very near future!

The office has come to life with Jo Somerfield getting used to how things happen in all sorts of ways. Daniel has been very active in assisting us to take control of our IT requirements, along with a knowledgeable IT expert we have engaged. This gives us better control of our own destiny going forward whilst saving money at the same time.

We have just been informed that after years of pursuing, we have now been given ownership of our own trademark / logo which is excellent to finally have secured.

I would ask that members look at the "VEAC Assessment of the values of state forests in the Central Highlands", which can be found on our website via the link provided. If the clubs could then formulate their submissions and email them to the office, they will be combined into the final submission to be submitted when the consultation period is announced.

The search continues for suitable premises for us to purchase as our permanent base, after a couple

of false starts, we still haven't found the one which suits all our needs. The search will continue until we do.

Our new Environment Minister Hon. Steve Dimopoulos has not found the time to meet with us just yet but as always, we won't give up trying to bring this about at the very earliest occasion.

We have three new members on our board, Ian Fletcher has taken on the role as Secretary and John Toogood and Athol Clayton have become ordinary members. We look forward to working with them and advancing our profile with their inclusion.

We have shows happening early this year with the LROCV show already run by the time this magazine is produced. This next show is at the Mornington racetrack from the 8th until the 11th March, where the Peninsula 4X4 and Port Phillip 4wd clubs will assist us in representing the association. Yarra Glen racetrack hosts the Outdoor Living and Caravan Expo with the Yarra Valley 4wd Club in attendance on our behalf from 22nd - 24th March. The Ballarat expo is happening from 5th until 7th April with the Ballarat 4wd Club representing us there. Please feel free to visit either or all these events if you have the chance.

We are looking to find out if any clubs have a significant anniversary this year, please let us know if you have any coming up. The association is looking forward to next year which sees us celebrating our 50th year milestone.

**Wayne Hevey**  
CEO



Photo: Mark Currie, Everest Club of Victoria



# THREE DAY VOLUNTEER WORK WITH PARKS VICTORIA

BY: GREG ROSE

**T**hunder rumbled down the deep valley, echoing off the rocky walls, large raindrops splashed on the rocks and there were a few moments of hail. Members of the Land Rover Owners Club of Gippsland were standing looking over the scene from Dimmicks Lookout off Howitt Road. The group was halfway through a three day volunteer activity with Parks Victoria.

The club has enjoyed a long and positive relationship with the Foothills and Southern Alps Team of Parks Victoria. On this occasion we were base camped at Thomastown, beside the beautiful Shaw Creek. Some of our group arrived a day early and selected the campsite with the most of the nine volunteers arriving early on the following day. There were six club members' vehicles; an ex-military Perentie, a 200 series Land Cruiser and four Land Rover Discovery 4s. Our PV Ranger, Wayne, has been with us on many of our adventures in the Alpine National Park. We could hear him well before he arrived, as the trailer he was towing bounced and rattled, on the rough road. Our camping arrangements included a couple of camper trailers, some tents and one person sleeping comfortably in their wagon. We set up a small insect proof tent for food preparation and Wayne brought along a gazebo in case we had rain.

All our volunteers had been logged onto Parkweb prior to the activity and had the required Working With Children cards. On day one, after the necessary

safety briefing, we went onto Kelly Lane. Wayne had all the equipment we needed plus any safety gear that members might not have. The track would be opened early, from its extended Seasonal Closure once we had completed our work.

There is a large grassy camping area a short distance along the track. This was to be our first work area. Brush cutters and the mower were fuelled and we set to work. Many of us wore gaiters as it was the time of year when the creekside reptile population are out and about. Moving to McMichaels Hut, we had a short break for lunch, at the picnic table we had made on a previous volunteer activity. Then we mowed and brush cut grass in readiness for visitors after the opening. The hut was cleaned and any rubbish in the area was collected. We moved to Kellys Hut. The same work was carried out at that location. It was pleasing to note that there was not much rubbish to be removed, just a few small bags. On our first club volunteer run along Kelly Lane, with PV in November 2012, we filled a tandem trailer and 6x4 trailer with rubbish from in and around the two huts.

Back at camp we enjoyed pre dinner nibbles and then a delicious meal cooked on the campfire by club members. The food for the meal was paid for by the club. We always invite the PV folk we work with to share the meal. After homemade apple slice and custard, we all had a reasonably early night.

Starting early on day two we headed up Howitt





Road to the carpark at the trailhead of the walking track to Gantner Hut and beyond. It showed the enthusiasm of our volunteers that one, who couldn't make it to the first day, left home at 4:00 a.m. to be with us for the start of day two. The decision had been made to start at the northern end of the road as the weather was looking threatening and we could move our work sites south if the storm broke. When work completed there, we went to Howitt Hut and got out the brush cutters, mower and chainsaws and cleaned up that area.

It's interesting the people you meet in the Alps. At the top of Zeka Spur, on Howitt Road, I stopped to talk to a very adventurous gentleman who was riding the whole 5330km length of the National Trail, starting in Healesville and hoping to finish in Cooktown after eighteen months of continuous horseback travel. On the way to Howitt Hut, I also stopped to talk to two bush walkers and suggested that if they made it to the hut, I'd make them a real coffee. Sure enough they arrived and the coffee was made as promised and they enjoyed the hot brew as we worked around the hut.

After the work at Howitt Hut and surrounds was completed, we headed to Guys Hut carpark. A team from Melbourne Zoo had just set up their tents as a base of operations for survey work. We carefully worked avoiding their camp as rain approached.

The next work site was to be Dimmicks Lookout where this story began. Safety concerns with working on wet ground and the threat of a severe electrical storm, caused Wayne to call the day's work to an end.

Back at camp the area was dry. As is the Parks Victoria, Foothills and Southern Alps folks' tradition, as a thank-you to the club volunteers, Wayne provided a barbecue dinner with a variety of salads that went down very well after all the work.

On day three we concentrated our work efforts on Thomastown and the camping areas just over the Shaw Creek bridge. All tasks were completed before lunch in order for Melbourne based members to get home at a respectable time. The early finish also allowed Wayne to travel to the work centre in Heyfield and clean the PV Ford Ranger, trailer and all the equipment.

It had been a fantastic activity. Everyone worked hard, but nobody over did it or had any injuries. The camaraderie was excellent and there was a great atmosphere around the campfire. It is gratifying for club members to leave the Park in top condition for all users to enjoy. The spin off is that the volunteering leaves all participants feeling recharged after a few days in the bush.

Our volunteer hours will be submitted to Four Wheel Drive Victoria to add to the tally of good work done by so many clubs throughout the state.

Craig Murray, our club's liaison person with Parks Victoria planned the activity months in advance. Thanks to Wayne from Parks Victoria for keeping us safe and the equipment in top condition for the three days. The club is also thankful to the whole Foothills and Southern Alps Team for the support they have given us over so many years.



BY: CLUB MEMBERS

PHOTOS BY: JEFF CAVANAGH

# SIMPSON DESERT DOUBLE CROSSING PART 2

**Day 8:** Said goodbye to Old Andado and headed north toward the Mac Clarke Conservation Reserve and the start of the Madigan Line. Once past the reserve the going was quite a bit slower with some decent washouts in some sections and some rough patches. As we went further east and approached the start of the dunes the track became more sandy and smoother.

As we approached the morning tea stop, one of the Prados started slowing at times as though a brake had been applied. When we pulled up and following inspection, it was found that the right rear wheel was extremely hot. So, out with the tarp and jack and off with the wheel and brake rotor. The handbrake assembly had come apart and was jamming inside the drum. With help from the team the loose bits were removed and the cable end secured inside the drum.

The Prado was able to continue, minus one handbrake.

We continued into the dunes with a stop for a photo shoot at Camp 5. Up to this point the dunes weren't too bad but got taller and more cut up as we travelled further east, stopping at Madigan Camp 6 for the night.

**Day 9:** Set out once more toward the Hay River. The dunes were becoming increasingly more challenging with soft sand and scalloped holes and some were also cut about on the eastern side, which we found strange considering it was a one-way track.

Along this section about camp 8 or 9 we came across two 79 Series Cruisers, one of which had its rear wheel removed.

We found out that it had a failed wheel bearing and a third vehicle had gone back to Alice Springs for a replacement. The vehicle had only 120,000 km on the clock and this was the fourth bearing failure on the same wheel!

After lunch we detoured off the track to an oval

## Old Andado Homestead

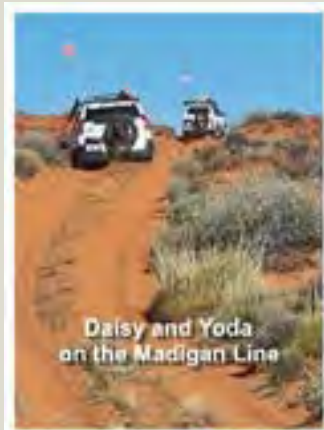


shaped claypan which is aptly called "The Football Field" The track to the claypan was extremely rough for most of the 5.9km which made it very slow going.

We headed back to the Madigan Line and made it to Camp 12 at 5pm after a hard day of driving.

**Day 10:** We set out on our last day on the Madigan Line. More of the bigger dunes as we headed through Camps 13 and 14 on the way to The Hay River track at Camp 15. We arrived at the Hay/Madigan Junction at lunchtime, which brought an end to our time on the Western section of the Madigan.

Our original plan was to travel the complete Madigan Line but with the Eastern Section still impassable we turned south down the Hay River Track to eventually join up with the QAA Line just east of Poeppel Corner. We travelled in the swale between the dunes, sometimes through a hazy mirage



We found a suitable clearing beside the track and settled in with another pleasant evening around the fire.

**Day 11:** We continued south on the Hay River track. Along this section we came across a group of 6-wheel drive Mercedes tour buses from Outback Spirit Tours. One had blown the Torque Converter and was waiting for a recovery vehicle from Jervois Station Roadhouse. Big \$\$\$ recovery.

It was easy going until we turned west across some more very steep dunes with soft sand and rough tracks on both the up slope and down slope. The first one caught a couple of us by surprise as we approached them a bit too casually with not enough go pedal.

After crossing the dunes, turned south again for the 60k run to the QAA line. The road surface was variable with some sections of smooth gravel and many sections of rough corrugations and much dust.... Oops,



hazy mirage.

We eventually reached the salt lake at the end of the Hay River track and turned once more towards Birdsville over the familiar dunes of the QAA line. We camped beside the track 23km west of the Qld/NT border.

**Day 12:** It was an easy drive over the remaining dunes to the Eyre Creek western bypass track. Along one section of the track was what we called the “Camel Graveyard”. Beside the track were the bleached bones of at least a dozen camels, possibly the result of a cull many years ago.

As we turned east once more and got closer to Eyre Creek the landscape became much greener, and the birdlife was more prolific, a result of the now receding floodwaters. The natural beauty of this area was amazing.

We arrived at Eyre Creek at lunchtime, set up camp and spent a lazy afternoon relaxing and taking a dip on the cool waters of the creek. That night following dinner, we sat around our final campfire chatting about the trip.

**Day 13:** Journey’s End Awakening to the soothing sound of the rippling waters of Eyre

Creek and the twittering of the birds, we prepared for our final leg of this unforgettable journey. As the rising sun lit up a glow on the horizon, with the tree lined banks of Eyre Creek in the foreground it was a magnificent sight to behold. The Simpson Desert is certainly a place of contrasts, from red sand and spinifex to colourful patches of wildflowers and the tranquil setting of Eyre Creek.

We headed for the final run into Birdsville. As we made our way south, we passed parallel to the creek and the many picturesque lagoons formed by the past floodwaters. Once again, we marveled at the beauty of nature in this vast country of ours.

As we reached the QAA Line once more, we regrouped for the run over the final sand dunes to Big Red. After we descended the last dune before Big Red, we stopped for morning tea. After the break we made our way across to the foot of Big Red to test our skills against the steeper tracks.

When our fun and games and group photo were all done, we made our way down to the plain area to restore our tyre pressures to normal before the run into Birdsville. After refuelling, a few of us set up camp at the caravan park while a couple opted for the comfort of motel accommodation.



After 6 days of rough camping, the hot showers and amenities of the Birdsville Caravan Park were most welcome. Later that afternoon, all cleaned up and looking presentable we gathered once more at the iconic Birdsville Pub for our farewell dinner.

Eventually it was time to say our goodbyes.. Over the past two weeks we had lived and played together, however all things must come to an end, and so regrettably our journey was finally over.

Personal Reflections (courtesy of our current President, Jeff Cavanagh)

This trip was my fourth visit to the big sand-pit, yet I never cease to wonder at the absolute clarity of the sky each night. Every star seems to shine more brightly and the milky way is an absolute delight to see.

The desert wild flowers, growing after two years of bountiful rainfall turned some parts of the desert into glorious multicoloured gardens. This display, courtesy of Mother Nature, was admired by all.





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# WELCOME TO THE INEOS 4X4 CLUB OF VICTORIA



BY: MARCEL GOMPERT

On Saturday the 21st of October 2023 the INEOS 4X4 Club of Victoria was born. A group of 18 early adopters of the INEOS Grenadier got together at the head office of INEOS Automotive group for Australia. The meeting was organised by Marcel Gomperts, long time 4X4 enthusiast and current member of the Werribee District 4WD Club, and Justin Hocevar, Head of Region INEOS Automotive Australia Pacific. Marcel opened the meeting, after the mandatory information was delivered, Justin was introduced. Justin told of the processes and what it took to get a vehicle from concept to consumer, the failings such as lack of communication with early adopters and the ultimate of seeing the vehicle in the flesh and on the road.

The meeting went well, and the inaugural committee was formed. The meeting accepted that “the club” will adopt and adhere to FWDV and become a valuable member of the association. The paperwork was presented to FWDV and accepted, as such we’re sure that we can contribute to the overall health of the four-wheel driving fraternity.

Not resting on our laurels 2 weeks later the first trip with the newly formed INEOS 4X4 Club of Victoria inc. to the Victorian High Country, took place. We would base camp in the Buckland Valley at Headrace Flat campground. Melbourne Cup Weekend is always a busy time. We were therefore prepared to get there early and stake out our little patch. Little did we realise that the church group next to us would swell to

49 members. They turned out to be a great neighbour. After the mandatory introductions, vehicle inspections. The camp was setup, wood was gathered, fire stoked, food prepared, and the coldies poured. The tales of why and how we all got to be Grenadier owners. In all 6 grenadiers were in camp and one Prado from the Werribee club.

On Saturday our first drive had to be to Blue Rag Range. A quick trip up to Hotham on the bitumen, some photos, then onto Dargo Plains Rd and time to air down. Continued our trip onto Blue Rag. Some of the owners had never been on a 4WD trip, so this was a steep learning curve and required some coaching along the way. The INEOS caused quite a commotion atop Blue Rag, some recognising the INEOS others saying that it



must be a new Defender. Even misinformation such as “this is the INEOS, it’s a defender chassis with a BMW engine.”

On the way back down from Blue Rag we decided to take the shortcut back to Buckland via Gunns Track. The first few hundred meters are ok but then the track becomes very rocky, with sharp loose scaly rock. Halfway up the first steep climb, we came across another car towing a trailer but they were clearly not getting up the hill no matter what they tried. We got out of our INEOS Grenadiers and checked on the driver, he admitted to being stuck and unable to proceed, he was hoping we could tow him along up the hill. After a quick check found his tyre pressure to be at 55psi and unlikely to go anywhere with that. We retrieved our deflator and lowered his pressure to 25psi for a start. With a quick bit of teaching and lending of experience, we got him going and advised them it might be worth taking up a 4WD course such as the courses Four Wheel Drive Victoria offer. The whole experience turned out to be a great lesson not just for the driver of ute but also for our those in our club who are new

to four wheel driving. We made it back to camp with another story to be told.

A couple more owners turned up through the day on Saturday, unable to get there early to join our trip. Sunday was our ladies day, they wanted to attend to some shopping, some of us attended the Myrtleford Show and Shine. Early day back at camp saw a few ales downed and bottles of grape juice poured with more stories told.

Monday was to be our big drive across to the iconic Dargo Hotel via Tea Tree Spur track and Crooked River.

The Dargo hotel was buzzing with locals and enthusiasts alike, the story of how, what and why the INEOS Grenadier exist was told at least a dozen times. Many wanting to have a gaze inside the unit and most the comments were positive. Many called others to come and have a look, stick their head into our vehicles. It was at that time we realised that my front number plate was missing, surely disappeared into Crooked River, never to be seen again. However, through the power of social media the plate was found and will be on its way back.

As usual the meals were fantastic at the Dargo Hotel, we finished our meals at 7.30pm and made our way back to camp. We followed each other down the Dargo Plains Road, aired up at Hotham, to make our way back to camp. Arriving back at camp around 10.30pm. After a 14 hour day everyone headed for bed and there were no complaints.

Tuesday morning, time to pack up and head home. Stories to tell, memories to be had and new friends made.

Our newly formed club will be open to INEOS owners (full membership) and non-INEOS members (associate membership). For more information search on Facebook for INEOS 4X4 Club Victoria or contact Marcel Gomperts (president) on 0438 38 38 00



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# ABERFELDY TRACK MAINTENANCE TRIP 14

BY: MAT MASON

Each year The Amarok Club of Victoria, along with other 4WD Clubs, venture into the Aberfeldy region to help maintain the hundred plus historical sites that make up the 'Aberfeldy Track' historic touring route on behalf of West Gippsland Relic Mining and Heritage Protection Inc and DEECA. This year, the trip ran over the first weekend of December hoping for some fine weather. Unfortunately, those hopes were dashed.

The trip up to Aberfeldy was a testament to the power of nature as the Walhalla area was pummeled with nearly 300mm of rain and wild winds since Tuesday. We passed dozens of minor land slips, some just filling the roadside gutters while others covered the road.

This little tree fern found itself upright, by the side of the road after sliding down the hill, the Eucalypt sapling not so lucky. A few kilometers up the road, the mud had covered the road completely and was dragged for hundreds of metres by vehicles plowing their way through. Trees were down at regular intervals but thankfully, DEECA had been through the day before and cut a path for us.

The Thompson River at the Walhalla Bridge has often provided river crossing practice as we can normally drive through and along its length. This trip, the river was somewhat more feisty. Stringers Creek, usually a trickle that runs through Walhalla and into the Thompson, was a grade 3 rapid.



Anybody silly enough to brave it however, would have been booked for breaking the speed limit through the town.

Michael, Mohamed and I met in Walhalla and made our way to The Springs campground, cleaning up a couple of historical sites on the way to save us from having to back-track too far in the morning. It had been raining most of the way there but offered us a brief respite for some of our setup time. The campground is a little over 1000m in elevation, and well into the clouds, so we pulled into an eerily still and quiet camp.



Priority one was getting the campfire to the stage where it evaporated raindrops before they got anywhere near close enough to douse the flames. Next, we got ourselves set up, dodging the rain as best as we could. Shortly after that, out came the red wine, Sheep Dog peanut butter whiskey and a little cooker and we all sat and watched the fire obstinately battle the rain, which it did successfully until we all retired.

Allan and Aaron rolled into camp a few hours later while an extended dinner was underway and got themselves set up and under the shelter in time to share a bite, a sip and numerous yarns. While the ever-present rain was a hinderance, the real issue was the mud. The ground had exceeded its saturation point days ago so the runoff created rivulets everywhere. The grassed areas were like a peat bog and almost immediately became mud





when walked upon. We quickly had to make peace with it rather than trying to find grassy pathways to move around camp. It wasn't long before everybody 'embraced the wet' and we all settled in to enjoying just being out there.

Saturday morning revealed a few disgruntled campers who were deprived of sleep by the constant rain and heavy drops falling from the trees at irregular intervals all night. Our fire pit had become a large bowl of coal soup overnight so there was no morning fire. Nonetheless, after a coffee or tea and breakfast we loaded up and set off to meet Sam and Justin at Holmedale.

The morning briefing covered off our objectives for the day as well as the obligatory issues of compliance and safety before we all donned our HiHis and PPE and rolled out to maintain the vegetation and clean the 19 historical sites in the area designated the responsibility of the Amarok Club.

Our only mishap for the day was when I got a little too close to the edge of a track that was softened by all the rain and collapsed, tilting my Rok precariously. The slide was arrested by a little tree thankfully and we were able to winch out with a safety cable on rear to prevent the back end from sliding down hill as the front winched out.

For the first time in Amarok history, after hitting the tree, the left hand wing mirror rotated rather than snapping off, as can be seen in the photo to the left as the mirror faces in the wrong direction. Winning!

Mishaps behind us, we were able to leapfrog in groups from site to site, protecting them from the upcoming fire season, as hard as that was to imagine at the time.

Some remedial work was necessary on some sites due to damage from vandalism or the weather but for the most part, our maintenance work was straightforward and progressed at a rate not

dissimilar to that experienced without the rain and mud.

Not far into the afternoon, we had done our last site and Sam decided to head back home while the rest of us headed back to camp. Saturday's campfire was built on a rise rather than in a pit and was soon looking healthy. Justin found himself a space and set up and well all settled in for the afternoon.

Not long after we all sat down, we had our first sign that the rain might actually stop at some point. What a novelty it was to stand outside the shelter without getting wet and being able to see more than 50m. We had some drizzle on and off for the evening, but the rain, it seemed, was coming to an end and allowed us all to enjoy dinner and the campfire without being rained on.

After some entertaining conversation about religion, politics, troubles at home and abroad and other such conspiracies, the evening concluded at a very civilized hour with some supper snacks and port for those who a partial to it.

We rose on Sunday morning to dry skies and even some sun in short bursts which enabled us to dry out most of our gear before packing it up. Sounder sleep was had by those deprived of it the night before. The campfire was brought back to life with a little help, as were campers with bacon, eggs and steaming cuppas. A leisurely morning saw everybody filter out of camp as they dried out well enough to pack up. By early afternoon, the camp had emptied, and we all set out toward home.

This year a huge thank you is due to Sam, Allan, Arron, Michael, Mohamed and Justin; working through rain which refused to abate all day, the group managed to get the work done to a standard beyond my expectations, given the conditions. It was a fantastic job. It was a great weekend despite the weather. Rudi from West Gippsland Inc. also passed on his thanks and congratulations for a terrific job after flicking through the report and photos of the maintained sites.







# ANNUAL FAR EAST GIPPSLAND TRACK CLEARING WITH PARKS VICTORIA

19 TO 22 OCTOBER 2023

## By Prue Hasler (RRCV, Pajero 4WD Club, LROCV)

Thirty participants from the Pajero 4WD Club, the Range Rover Club of Victoria, the Land Rover Owners Club of Victoria and the Friends of Errinundra travelled to Bendoc from Melbourne (475kms), Gippsland, New South Wales and the North East of Victoria to assist Parks Victoria with the clearing of seasonally closed tracks in the Errinundra, Snowy River and Norther Alpine National Parks and providing assessments of some damaged tracks with Parks Victoria Rangers.

After the past few years when Covid and stormy weather made planning for the long running track clearing event difficult, this year all plans were successful.

A number of people enjoyed a Friday night dinner at the Bendoc Hotel, camping at Wilsons Hut was enjoyed by all and the weather was fine.

After a big day on the tracks on the Saturday, and with community links established over the years, the local community invited the track clearers for a Saturday night dinner, ecology talk and film night.

Sunday morning many returned to Bendoc from the camp at Wilsons Hut for the interesting presentation by the Bendoc Team Leader Parks Ranger, Gary Bellesini on his 6 week deployment to Canada to fight fires.

Many thanks must go to Parks Victoria Rangers,



Gary Bellesini and David Butterworth who we have worked with for many of the last 18 years for the very positive relationship we have built up over that time. Tony Jambu from the Pajero 4WD Club has been instrumental in much of the planning and enthusiastic promotion of the event over many years which has also contributed to the success of the annual event.

## By Andrew Mortlock (Pajero 4WD Club)

We converged on Far East Gippsland for the annual Track Clearing weekend. And what a weekend it was, up there with the best I have experienced in 12 years of being involved with this activity. A weekend of teamwork, innovation, camaraderie and hard work and coming together with like-minded folks from multiple 4WD clubs to achieve a common objective.

A small group of us went to East Gippsland a couple of days early to answer the call and help the Park Rangers with a couple of specific tasks. We split into 2 smaller groups and my group had the



job of escorting 2 engineers and 2 Park Rangers to a culvert half way across the iconic Deddick Trail so they could assess it for future works. Easy, right? Yeah, nup. The Deddick Trail had been seasonally closed for 5 months and the elements had taken their toll, including multiple fallen trees of various sizes along the length of the trail. The chainsaws roared and the sweat poured. The engineers would not have gotten anywhere near the culvert without our help and it was extremely satisfying to have achieved the objective and to have also cleared the track in readiness for the season opening.

The second group went with another 2 Parks Rangers to perform assessment work on the Bowen Trail and its suitability to be opened after recent works on the track.

We all camped together that night and shared our stories.

The second day was ours to enjoy together and it was decided to drive and clear the Mt Tingaringy trail in the Alpine National Park. Another great day, highlighted by the views from the summit of Mt Tingaringy across to Mt Kosciusko and the Main Range, still covered in snow.

The weekend saw the arrival of the rest of the team, consisting of members from the Pajero, Land Rover Owners and Range Rover clubs plus 3 members of Friends of Errinundra

Saturday morning we met at the Parks office in Bendoc for a morning briefing from the Rangers and divided into 3 groups, tasked with clearing 3 specific sections of Errinundra National Park. Wow, there is



some big big timber in Errinundra! My group was led by Parks Victoria Team Leader Ranger Gary Bellesini and we worked as a team to remove some extremely large fallen trees from the tracks in the northern part of the park, using a combination of chain sawing and innovative winching (has anyone heard of the Spanish Burton winching technique?). A great day and the Rangers were very appreciative of our help.

We all converged on Bendoc that night for the traditional BBQ put on by the local community as a way of thanking us for our efforts. We also enjoyed a very interesting and informative presentation by Rena, a local Ecologist and Errinundra authority. Fun fact...areas of the Errinundra have not been burnt by wildfire for 8,000 years due to its natural retention of water.

All in all it was a weekend that will remain in my memory and further enhances the special relationship we have built with the Rangers and local community of Far East Gippsland.

**By Ellen-Jane Browne (LROCV & RRCV)**

Friday a few weeks ago saw me head east towards Bendoc and an overnight camp at Wilson Hut. The road east, though long, is one of those glorious trips that takes you through the heart of Gippsland with the magic of the Great Divide always sitting to your left. It also allows you to experience Gippsland to the fullest, with the plains of Central Gippsland shifting constantly from open farm land to magnificent and ancient forests, and as you move further east the country changes to mountains and

old and new forests. As a Gippslander, the drive is one of renewal and a constant reminder of the fragility of our ancient land.

But the real adventure begins in Orbost, the last bit of civilisation before you head into the remote lands of the Errinundra Plateau and the Great Divide. It is 82km from Orbost to Bendoc, a fantastic drive... on a bike or in a sports car... but in a Defender it could be considered a challenge, despite being sealed most of the way. However, driving slowly has its advantages and one does get to see first hand the largest temperate rainforest on mainland Australia. If you have never driven this road I would strongly recommend the drive, and with a few magical campsites along the way it is something to enjoy. This time round the impact of the bush fires of 2020 was clearly evident, with many, many dead trees providing a constant reminder of how harsh the fires had been.

I reached Bendoc and a few kilometres later Wilson Hut. An old worker's hut, restored sometime ago, but on a beautiful wooded plain where the silence was deafening. A great campsite, about as far from our capital city as one can go in East Gippsland. But a great place to catch up with RRCV, LROCV and Pajero friends and members. A cosy fire and incredible stars made for a lovely night.

Saturday morning saw us gather at the Parks Victoria Office in Bendoc for a full briefing and assignment of our teams. Three teams... our brief to assist in the clearing of trees from tracks due to be opened over Cup Weekend. Having done this in the



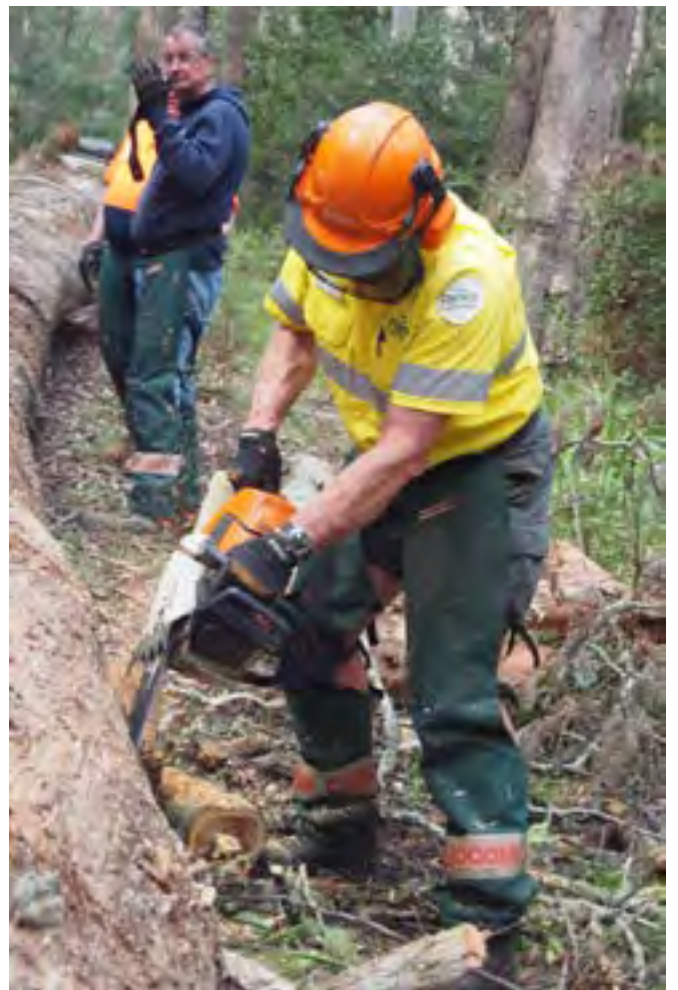


past, I had imagined a few medium sized logs and lots of debris. I was right on the later, but medium the logs they were not. We faced three significant sets of trees over the course of the day, the scale of which was... surely we need a bulldozer! But no, the incredible skill of Parks Victoria and the Pajero lads saw me watch in awe as these ancient monoliths were sawn and removed through hard work and the magic of pulleys! A sight to behold and one of which we could all be proud. There was plenty of work for those of us on the side... thus is you have ever considered could I help, the answer is, without a doubt?

Along the way we were surrounded by the beauty of the Errinundra. It is about a far east as one can go in Victoria, hence it is rarely visited. But it is worthy of a visit, because no matter how many times I visit I still enjoy everything it has to offer. The giant trees, ferns and deep gullies, with occasional vistas going for miles make for a wonderful journey. This time round the East Gippsland Waratah were in flower... with a sea of red flowers adding to the joy.

It was a great day, followed a fantastic evening barbecue, a really interesting discussion on the biodiversity of the land upon which had travelled, and a film (with ice creams at interval), put on by the Bendoc community.

Another wonderful night at Wilson Hut and Sunday morning saw us gather to hear a little about fire fighting as an Australian volunteer in Canada. A great discussion and somewhat different to our own experience. But worthy of the listen.



**By David Jenkinson (LROCV)**

The middle of October is time to think about track clearing after the winter rain and wind. It was the first time, for many years that I had been on one of Prue and John's regular trips to Far East



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Gippsland. They are joint affairs between LROCV, the Range Rover Club and the Pajero clubs.

We all gathered at the Bendoc Parks Victoria offices for a 9:00 o'clock start, met by four Rangers. After signing in and going through the safety briefing we divided into three groups dependent on whether we wanted to do a strenuous walk up Mount Ellery, a long trip up towards the Ada Divide Track and Goolengook, or a technical trip dealing with three very large trees in the National Park. I chose the large trees, along with the winching experts from the Pajero club. We headed off toward Errinundra, clearing a few small trees till we reached the first of the three trees, which had managed to lay its 30 m length along the track with almost enough room for a vehicle alongside. The few branches were quickly cleared and it was time for the Pajero winching team to get to work, with the plan of moving the trunk sideways to the edge of the track. The winching vehicle was moved alongside the trunk so that the cable could be passed diagonally over the tree, through a pulley anchored with a trunk protector to a convenient tree at one end. This managed to roll the root ball over through half a revolution, which got it almost to the tracks edge. The other end was of the trunk was much closer to the edge, so the whole trunk was moved sideways by nearly two metres with a single winch pull. Time taken 30 minutes.

Next it was onto the really big one, at least 1.5 metres high, and straight across the track. So the plan was to cut a large chink out of the middle then turn it through 90 degrees and drag it off the track. The first part of the plan was quickly executed with a couple of substantial and sharp chain saws. The next part required a lot of teamwork and two vehicles using a Spanish Burton rig. One vehicle acted as the anchor and the other winched through

two pulleys and so the trunk weighing several tons was dragged through 90 degrees off the track. It took two moves of the anchor vehicle to enable a reasonably straight pull off the tree as it changed position, but all done after one hour.

Next it was time for lunch at the Frosty Hollow camp and picnic spot, and onto the last tree. This was a tangle of large branches across the track, which just needed a lot of cuts with chainsaws and many hands to move the logs. It still took around 50 minutes.

While the Parks Victoria Ranger, Gary Bellesini managed the day, he stood back and let the Pajero Club manage the winching operations. I was extremely impressed by their level expertise, equipment, teamwork, planning and safety approach. It all made for a great day out in the bush.

So with all the main objectives it was back to Bendoc for dinner. Bendoc is a tiny little place of maybe 50 people, but has a great little community centre, even offering showers to travellers. We were treated to a dinner, a talk from a local from Goongerah about the flora and fauna of the Errinundra and a film.

The Errinundra is a fascinating place to visit. It is one of last places in Victoria where you can see old growth forest from pre-settlement times. Most of it is on a plateau so the tracks were relatively easy.





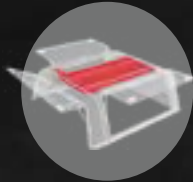
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## Watt's next for 4WDs?

There's no denying it, with the changes in how we travel and technology, the global automotive industry is now well into the transition from internal combustion engines to fully electric power. But the big question is, what effect will this have on the Australian 4WD industry given the unique challenges the Australian environment poses.

2023 represented the biggest year on record for electric vehicles in Victoria, with over 87,000 vehicles sold (RACV, 2024). In terms of the wider vehicle market, electric vehicles were 7.2% of all new vehicles sold (16.2% if you include hybrids). It's fair to say that electric vehicles are being plugged in at more garages around the country. But the question is, why, is there such increasing rates of adoption compared to the Australian off-road market? There may be a few explanations for this.

1. Off road SUVs and Utes are bigger, heavier and require a lot of torque to take on the challenges on our 4x4 tracks. Once you add in the towing

capacity and the payloads required from your average weekend trip, this just adds to a long list of features for manufacturers to get right. This requires a lot of research and development, which could pull valuable resources from the lucrative passenger vehicle development.

2. Compared to an internal combustion engine, the weight of electric vehicles is heavily impacted by the battery requirements. This increases the stresses on the vehicle to a comparable petrol or diesel 4WD, which can have a domino effect on the critical vehicle components, such as the chassis, the suspension and even the tyres to account for the increased GVM. Development in battery technology efficiency will certainly need to push forward, to level out the playing field.
3. Range is probably the number one concern for anyone reading this, as range can represent the biggest fear for a driver taking their 4WD into the bush. How far will my battery take



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me without charging facilities? What if I need to tow my trailer? This then takes you back to the previous point, how big do you make the battery without it greatly affecting the vehicles performance on or off road?

4. The Australian market, while growing, is still quite a small market for global EV manufacturers and with no major locally produced manufacturers, Australia is not seen as a high priority market for off-road EVs right now. As seen with Teslas decision not to send the Cybertruck to our shores.

The good news is, there are quite a few fully-electric vehicles on the not too distant horizon. Most of the major manufacturers have produced concepts or are planning to release vehicles in the market later year. The three most likely contenders are BYD, Mercedes Benz and LDV, so keep an eye on those.

5. There is also the challenge of spare parts and the cost of repairs. A shortage of specialised repairers for electric vehicles, will take time to skill up and as a result, the average time and cost to repair an electric vehicle will be higher than your standard petrol/diesel equivalent. The good news is, this will drop in the years to come as more vehicles enter the market.

Even now, many four wheel drive users, will have a car for town and the rig to take offroad and on trips. In the short term, I think we will see many members will consider an electric vehicle for running errands in town but will turn to the tried and tested internal combustion engine. This isn't to say that electric 4x4's won't have their place, but each person will need to consider what they are trying to achieve before making the switch.



## The Lifesaving Benefits of Blood and Plasma Donations for the Over 50s

In a world that often seems to move at an increasingly rapid pace, the act of giving back to the community has proven to be a powerful way for individuals to make a positive impact. To celebrate the Lifeblood Team already donating 50 donations in 2024, it's worth looking at the benefits for older blood and plasma donors.

### The Lifesaving Impact

A heartfelt thank you goes out to the Four Wheel Drive Lifeblood Team. In 2023, their collective effort resulted in an astounding 267 donations, saving the lives of 801 individuals. Donating blood takes just an hour, and the impact is immeasurable.

### Physical Health Benefits for Donors

Each donation includes thorough physical checks and blood tests. Great for people who wait until they are sick to see their doctor, or maybe just relying on annual check-ups. For regular donors, this means potential irregularities or changes in health are detected early, leading to prompt medical attention. What's even more convenient is that donors receive their health check results directly through the Donate Blood app, empowering them with crucial insights into their well-being. It's a win-win – contribute to the community and keep tabs on your health with each life-saving donation.

For those aged 50 and above, engaging in regular blood and plasma donations can have significant health benefits. Donating blood helps reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases by promoting healthy blood flow and maintaining optimal blood viscosity. Moreover, it stimulates the production of new blood cells, which can be particularly beneficial for older individuals.

Plasma donations, in particular, can be a game-changer. Plasma is rich in antibodies and proteins, contributing to a strengthened immune system. This becomes increasingly crucial as individuals age and may experience a decline in immune function. By donating plasma, older donors actively contribute to their own well-being while saving lives.

### How to Get Involved

Jump on the website [www.lifeblood.com.au](http://www.lifeblood.com.au) or phone 131495 to book a donation.

Joining the Four Wheel Drive Lifeblood Team not only fosters a sense of community but also provides a unique opportunity to make a collective impact. The camaraderie among team members creates a supportive environment where individuals efforts count towards something bigger. Simply mention the team at your next donation or join online.

For those who want to take it a step further, organizing a presentation or group donation activity within your club can be a rewarding experience. Reach out to Ash from Lifeblood at [ahales@redcrossblood.org.au](mailto:ahales@redcrossblood.org.au) for assistance or resources. Let's make 2024 our biggest year yet.

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