



# All Australian

Innovation and customer satisfaction is the focus for Southern Cross' locally made fifth-wheelers

**M**any people think fifth-wheelers are those large three-storey RVs that are normally towed behind big American utilities and trucks. But now they are discovering a new breed of fifth-wheeler that is more suited to a wider variety of tow vehicles, including very popular dual cabs.

There are many advantages to fifth-wheelers that include providing more space and internal fit out options, as

well as easier towing and reversing (the weight is directly over the rear axle). The team at Southern Cross Caravans consider themselves innovators of the Australian built fifth-wheeler, and have a real passion for them.

Starting in 1972 as a general engineering and fabrication outfit, the then named Action Fabrications, owned and operated by the Beattie family, evolved over time into Easy Traveller Trailers, a horse float and trailer manufacturing operation. The patented JR anti-scramble design they

offered quickly became a favourite in the equine industry, earning the family business a valuable reputation. Barry, John and the team began to work together to design a fifth-wheeler style of caravan.

Fast forward to 2006 and Southern Cross Caravans was born, instantly earning an enviable status within the RV world for its high levels of design, construction, fit and finish of its products. Launching a highly informative website, [www.southerncrosscaravans.com.au](http://www.southerncrosscaravans.com.au), that offers a full description



The team make an effort to work cohesively, in order to streamline their processes

of their range and services, the team have already made an impact on the RV industry. The range that Southern Cross Caravans manufacture is impressive, starting at the Wanderer model, which can be towed by a standard Commodore or Falcon ute, going right up to the range topping Ultimate Expedition.

John says a lot of people think fifth-wheelers are far too big to tow with a normal vehicle. While this is often true, he says his team now manufacture a number of models that are smaller, more manoeuvrable, and able to be towed by a wider variety of vehicles.

The Southern Cross family really wear their hearts on their sleeves, designing, manufacturing and selling their prized range in-house. Owners even enjoy a great deal of camaraderie over a yearly get together held by the Beattie family. With their fleet of fifth-wheeler models and caravans expanding at a



A team member working on a customer's van

rapid rate, we thought we would take a look at how Southern Cross Caravans go about business.

## GETTING TECHNICAL

The team really focus on keeping a high level of attention to detail. That way, they always produce the best product they can, in the best time they can. John is particularly proud of the fact that they have managed to keep most of their production either in house, by manufacturing their own suspension systems and frames, or within the Australian market.

The Beattie family are passionate about Australian produced goods, and believe they can often provide a higher level of quality and attention to detail. Gaining an insight into the technical aspects of their production process really gives you an idea of the kind of level of professionalism Southern Cross is striving for.

The composite panels used in construction of the fifth-wheelers are all cut to size using Computer Assisted Drawing technology, as per the requirements of each caravan build. The team work with each customer to ensure they get everything they need in their van, and nothing they don't. Starting with a range of common base plans, the caravans are then fitted to spec, meaning your van is number one of one. Southern Cross offers a range of sizes to meet the needs of all RVers.

"What a lot of people don't know", John said, "is that our smaller Wanderer and Expedition models can be towed by standard mid-sized utes – there is no need to upgrade to a bigger tow vehicle to get a quality touring package".

The additional space provided by the gooseneck tow hitch system allows for some real space increases inside, which has been taken full advantage of in the design process. Rather than a dinette in a centred position, as you would find in a conventional caravan, Southern Cross opted to fit it inside the gooseneck space – creating an abundance of room in the central area of the van. This allows for a galley style kitchen to be included in the design, and for the



The team at Southern Cross Caravans are passionate about keeping as much as they can in Australia

The fifth-wheelers tow well as the weight is over the axle of the tow vehicle





John and his team are true believers in the fifth-wheeler style of van. They are confident they can tackle most of the unsealed highways around Australia

master suite and en suite to be placed at the rear of the van.

Quality components are applied to the build of each van to ensure they last the distance while travelling around Australia. John is particularly satisfied with the airbag suspension that is standard fitment on Expedition models. Manufactured in house, the team can keep a close eye on their development and function. This way, customers deal direct with the manufacturer of many of the parts of the caravan – as Southern Cross manufactures most of the components they use. This is a great asset to the company, and provides customers with expert advice, peace of mind and extra dollars at the end of the day.

## THE FINISHED PRODUCT

While the physical construction of the caravans has played an important part in the development of Southern Cross, the Beattie family have been smart in realising the importance of the services around the construction, such as sales advice and after sale support. One such example is engineering services. Southern Cross offer to fit the tow hitch to your tow vehicle, ensuring a complete holiday package from start to finish.

With this in mind, John says the office and administration staff at Southern Cross do a great job in assisting customers and the team in the workshop. Some innovative design detail is represented in the build-up of the fifth-wheelers, some of which John believes greatly improves the overall space inside the vans as well as their towing mechanisms. He believes the end results speak for themselves, as do the many satisfied customers that are happy to vouch for their vans quality. When taking a look, it's hard not to agree. ■



Spacious layouts are facilitated by the fifth-wheeler van shape



One of the in-house manufactured airbag suspension units that Southern Cross offer to customers



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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