

4X4 TASMANIA



**A Guide to Four Wheel Driving
and Recreation in Tasmania**



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Ultimate Hilux

Mark Norris tells us the ups and downs involved when turning a standard Hilux into the *Ultimate Hilux*.



My nephew Michael and I have been putting in the many endless hours to complete this project, and it seem's to have been going on for years, and other than a few minor things will soon be finished.

I own a small engineering and 4WD business in northern Tasmania called Tas Repair & Welding - 4 Wheel Drive Accessories, which

deals with customers in the private sector as well as car dealers throughout the state whether it's a bullbar, aluminium tray, boat alterations or some custom work as in the photo's of our Hilux, which we specialise in. Some of the customers that come into the business in East Devonport reckon it is the ultimate Hilux, and can't wait to get the camera out to

take a photo or tell some one about it.

As well as being a great advertisement for the business, I've had people come from all around Tasmania to see it, and quite often tourists that are travelling past call in to have a look and can't believe their eyes.

Anyway enough of the present, it all started on a Saturday back in 1991 with a 1983 Toyota Hilux, a fairly standard vehicle, 69,000km, wide wheels but body wise not quite what I wanted. The cab had no rust and the panels were pretty straight and fitted with the ever reliable 3Y motor.

The first part to go was the ute back showing signs of rust around the tail gate and tray, the paint-work suffering from wear and tear and replacement no longer considered.

The only way was to spend money on it either way, so we pulled of the back to reveal the chassis in perfect order ready for the next stage, but what do we do. A flat tray really would be handy at times, but just wouldn't do. I had something better in mind, to change the side style ute into a step side ute, American style.

First in keeping with the shape and style of the hilux, great care would have to be taken not to get it out of proportion and above all waste

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money. First I worked on the guards. Unable to buy them locally, and guards imported don't lend themselves to the fitting of flares or wider 35" tyres which had a three fold affect. The flares fitted would first in making them ridged along the leading edge of the guard and providing protection to it. Another affect was providing some style to it. All this took weeks to complete and to get it right.

With the mould being taken so as to be able to make the guards out of fibreglass before the tray could even be started. It's the guard that you see the most of, and if it didn't look right, all the trouble would have been wasted.

Most of the trays that have been built to this style have been made with a wooden floor, which is something that doesn't lend itself to the low maintenance that I was looking for in this project, hence the ribbed floor. The tray was made out of flat sheet to give it strength and durability. Using zinc seal protected steel and galv. in the tail gate with checkerplate aluminium covering it.

With the tray finished and the tail gate swung, the next thing was where to put the spare tyre because it wouldn't fit between the chassis rails under the tray. Enter a customised tyre carrier with jerry can holder made of steel, and a customised twin tube bumper made of aluminium and polished.

Flares were made out of fibreglass for the rear in keeping with the front ones, designed and made by myself.

A custom alloy bull bar, side steps, 3" roll bar and suspension were to follow, the later wasn't so



successful. I sent the springs to a spring works in Launceston to get reset hoping that the rest would be a cost alternative to new ones. I was later to regret this, as it was to lead to a chain of events that would destroy 12 months work and my ute.

After hiring a trailer to tow the ute to Launceston followed by an accident which felt like the last straw, twelve or more months down the line and it was just about finished.

With the suspension I have kept it as simple as possible. Lighter springs give more wheel travel, but doesn't do much to keep the vehicle standing tall so 50mm set in the springs + poly air springs all round. (A product that we have fitted to alot of 4WD's). Set the pressure to suit the terrain and also solves the problem with spring sag.

To finish off the Hilux sits on 6 BullDog gas long travel shocks, and the ride, better wheel travel off road can be varied. With tyres there was not alot to pick from, but BF Goodrich by far suit the Hilux.

The engine part was easy as we do conversions. A trusty Holden 4.2 and a 450 Holley is the better, I feel, of the V8 conversions. It's quite bullet proof and the parts are fairly easy to get and are alot cheaper than V6 set-ups. But as with all conversions, if you want more power, respect your drive line system, or your conversion will take on a whole new meaning.

So it's taken a bit over 2 years to rebuild it and a small fortune to boot, stops and starts, disappointing moments I could write a book on it.

Many thanks go to those that have given encouragement to turn a near impossible situation in to a great looking vehicle.

Body Work & Graphics.....Slatters Bodyworks
Tyres and Rims Speedy Tyres
Eull Dog Shocks....4way Suspensions

All conversion work and accessories were carried out at Tas Repair and Welding 4WD Accessories.

Mark Norris □

