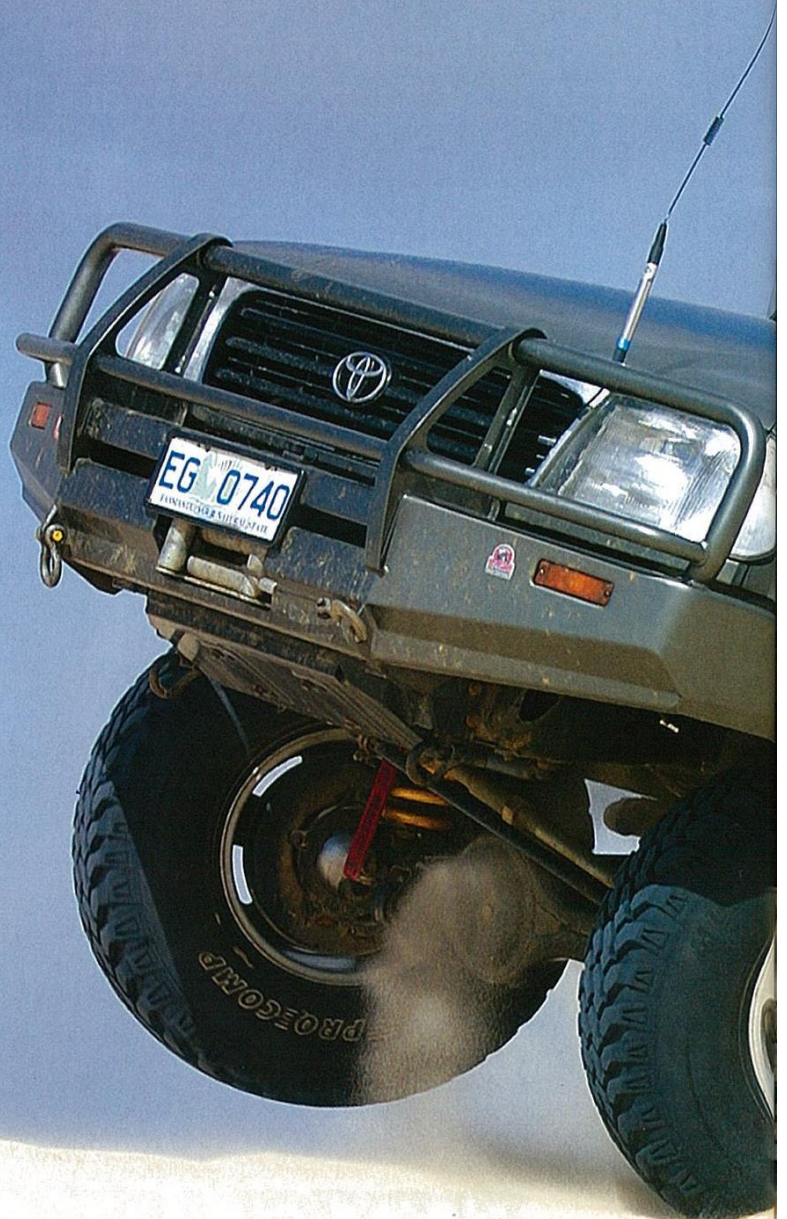
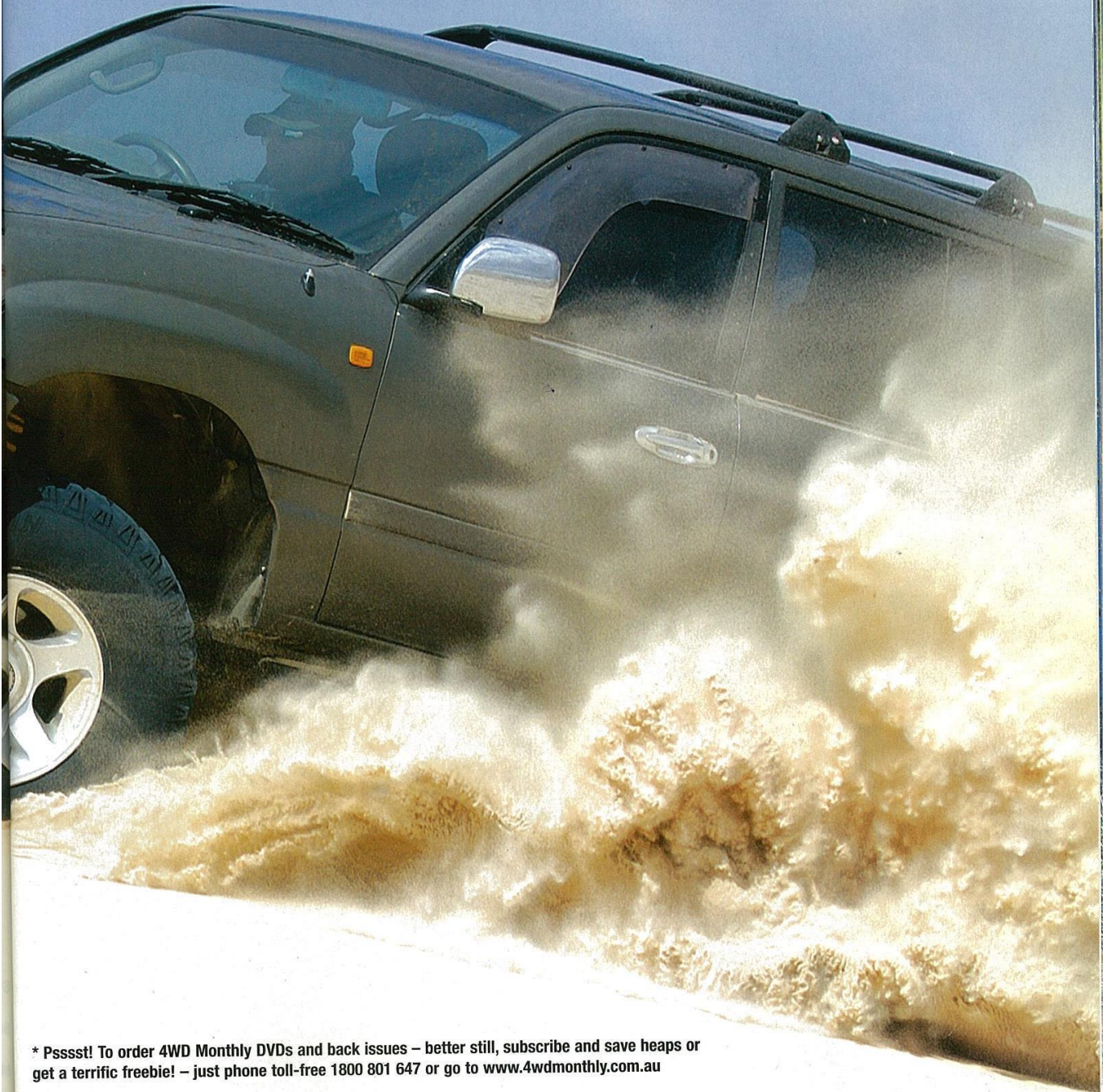


Before we get started, let's sort something out. You've seen our latest off-road adventure DVD, Discover Tasmania, right? (You haven't? Geez, better get one* pronto before your 4WD mates find out, or they'll leave you behind on their next weekender!) And you've read Roothy's great three-part yarn about the trip - it was in issues 70, 71 and 72, remember? (If you're a 4WD Monthly newbie and missed it, you might still be able to get those back issues*.) Okay. Glad we're clear on that score. I didn't want to assume you knew something about this great custom fourby and its owner if you didn't have a clue what I was rabbiting on about. So, you know that Brian Imlach is one of two expert guides on Discover Tasmania. And he drives a 100 Series LandCruiser. And he's a foundation member of the Devonport 4WD Club. And Tassie's rugged north-west coast is his local off-road playground. And he can catch and cook a cray that'll melt in your mouth. And before you tuck into his 'red devil' stew, it's smart to check where the dunny is... (Only joking, Brian!) What you probably don't know is how this Devonport legend got where he is in the 4WD caper, and what makes his 'Cruiser so special. Now read on...



DEVONPORT DEVIL



* Pssst! To order 4WD Monthly DVDs and back issues – better still, subscribe and save heaps or get a terrific freebie! – just phone toll-free 1800 801 647 or go to www.4wdmonthly.com.au

4WD WORDS BY MIKE JACOBSON

OUTSIDE STORY

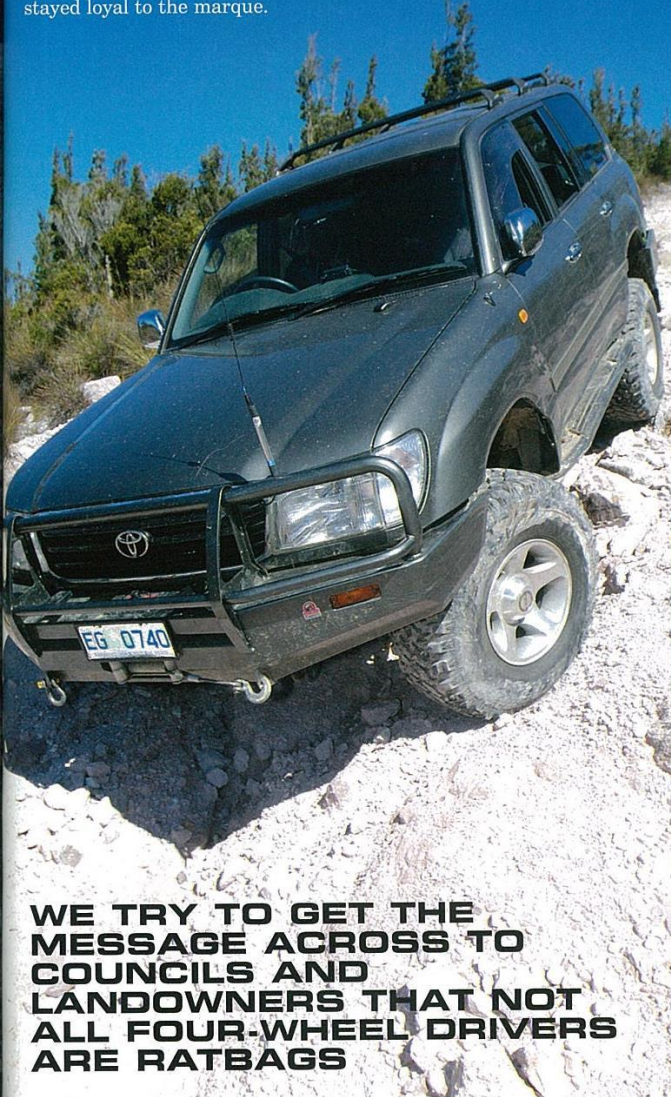
As 4WD Monthly customs go, Brian's 100 Series is a long way from the most modified one we've seen. For starters, its only diff lock is the factory one in the transfer case. Yet, on Discover Tasmania this truck went damned close to matching the ones with twin lockers. That speaks volumes about how well it's set up. And how well the Devonport Devil steers it.

Brian didn't become that good overnight, of course. "I started off in the Devonport 4WD Club as a teenager," he said. "That would've been in the late-1960s. By the '70s I was doing competitions – rallies and challenges – in a short-wheelbase 40 Series. In the '80s I was more into long-distance adventure trips to Central Australia and Cape York." (Cutting-edge stuff 20-odd years ago.)

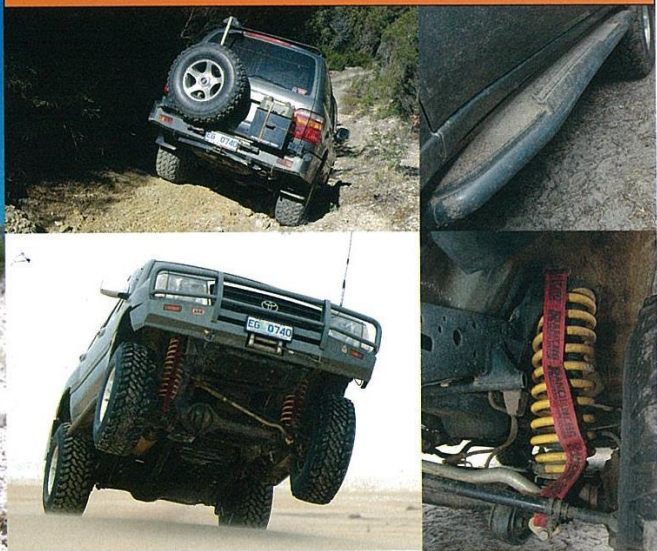
Later, married with teenage kids, Brian kept his trips closer to home and not quite so adventurous. Not that there's any shortage of tough tracks in Tassie! And now that the kids have grown up, Brian's back into the challenging drives. "The club does a lot of work re-opening old disused tracks, especially in the old mining areas," he said. "We try to get the message across to councils and landowners that not all four-wheel drivers are ratbags."

For that sort of work, you need a truck that won't go weak in the CVs at the sight of a rutted, slippery hill. So, when Brian was in the market for a new wagon in 2000, he bought a 100 Series. Having already owned three 40s, an 80 and a HiLux, it's no surprise that he stayed loyal to the marque.

If you're thinking Brian's truck looks pretty standard on the outside, well... it is. He isn't one for raiding the accessories catalogues, and it's pretty clear that anything he hasn't got, he hasn't needed. Naturally, there's the ARB Deluxe steel winch bar with a Warn 9000lb low-mount. The winch is adequate, but Brian's thinking of getting a stronger one. Aside from a Kaymar bar and spare-wheel carrier – no self-respecting 100 owner would leave the spare underneath! – the only other back-end mod is an aluminium light pole that Brian made. A fairly straightforward job considering Brian's business, GP Glass, is in the aluminium window business. The ARB side steps are steel, not showy alloy. Ditto the scrub bars, although they haven't saved the 100 from what Brian calls "custom scratched paint"! One surprise is that there's no snorkel, but look at the water-crossing photo. Those waves are covering the wheel rims, but they're not even touching the bumper. Even so, a snorkel's on Brian's wish list. No extra driving lights, either. They'd be nice in the Chrissy stocking too!



WE TRY TO GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS TO COUNCILS AND LANDOWNERS THAT NOT ALL FOUR-WHEEL DRIVERS ARE RATBAGS



SPRINGS 'N' THINGS

Most people are satisfied with a big-name aftermarket suspension kit. Not Brian. This expert off-roader knows exactly how he wants his 100 to handle and ride, on- and off-road. The turning point came when he was planning a WA trip. It took no fewer than four different combinations of springs and shocks to make him completely happy.

"I wanted a 4in lift that would take the extra weight for that trip," he said. "One set-up only lasted until the first roundabout I came to. It swayed so much that I drove straight back! But we had to do it by trial and error." Brian settled on custom King front springs and Old Man Emu back ones, with custom The Ultimate Suspension shocks all-round. Retaining straps keep the tall coils in place at full stretch, which tends to happen when Brian gets excited driving on dunes! The bump stops now sit on extension blocks, and a 3" castor correction kit makes the front end obey the tiller. There are still swaybars to stop the high-riding 'Cruiser going 'A over T' without warning. They're adjustable, more to bridge the chasm between the mounting points than for day-to-day tuning.

"It's a bit harsh empty, but gee it works well loaded up," Brian said. "It never bottoms out on bumps!"

Brian gave a pat on the back to Peter Holman and Duncan "Knobber" McCreddie from North West Off Road in Devonport (www.nwoffroad.com.au).



HE DID CONSIDER BUYING A GU... FOR ABOUT FIVE SECONDS

He did consider buying a GU... for about five seconds. "There's nothing wrong with the Patrol, but I've always been a Toyota man," he said. "They hold their resale value, and you see them everywhere. If yours breaks down, there's bound to be a farmer nearby with a couple of old ones in his shed with enough parts to get you going again."

"Anyway, if I bought a Nissan after all those Toyotas, people here would call me 'two bags' – one for each head, to hide my embarrassment!" (What's that, Darling? You don't get the joke? Oh, never mind...)

The original 100 Series – the one with rigid axles all-round, not the later independent-front-end version – has as much wheel travel as any production model around. Bump up that genetic off-road ability a notch with aftermarket springs and shocks, and you've got a truck that'll go just about anywhere.

Brian's is an RV, the now-discontinued base model of the full-time range, between the part-time Standard van and the mid-spec GXL. Just like Haydn Meyers, whose custom Prado 90 RV featured in last month's issue, Brian was happy to do without the GXL's electric windows, ABS and airbags. "The \$10,000 I saved not getting that bullshit paid for things I really needed, like the bullbar, rear bar, side steps and winch," he said.

And it's a 4.5L six-cylinder petrol. "I like petrols more than diesels," he said. "They have plenty of power, which is good for short, sharp hillclimbs and soft sand."

A couple of things set Brian apart from the mob. One is his never-say-die attitude; the sort that made him try four – that's right, four – suspension combinations to get the result he was looking for (see Springs 'n' things). The other's the way he prefers to test his driving skill rather than let technology do all the hard work (see Down the Driveline).

Goodonya, Brian! **4WD**



DOWN THE DRIVELINE

Everything's stock in the driveline until you get right to the end – the tyres. Even then, they're 'only' 315/70 ProComp Mud-Terrains on aftermarket 10in alloys. Obviously, they do the job, otherwise Brian wouldn't be using 'em! Even with its great articulation, this 100 occasionally loses traction. When that happens, the open front diff and notoriously loose Toyota rear LSD let the offending tyres spin. But that isn't too often. Brian listed diff locks under 'Future plans' on our technical-info sheet. When I reminded him, though, he backtracked to "Maybe". "You've got to know your limitations," he said. "With lockers, some of the skill factor disappears, and I enjoy the challenge of testing myself and my vehicle." Hear! Hear!