

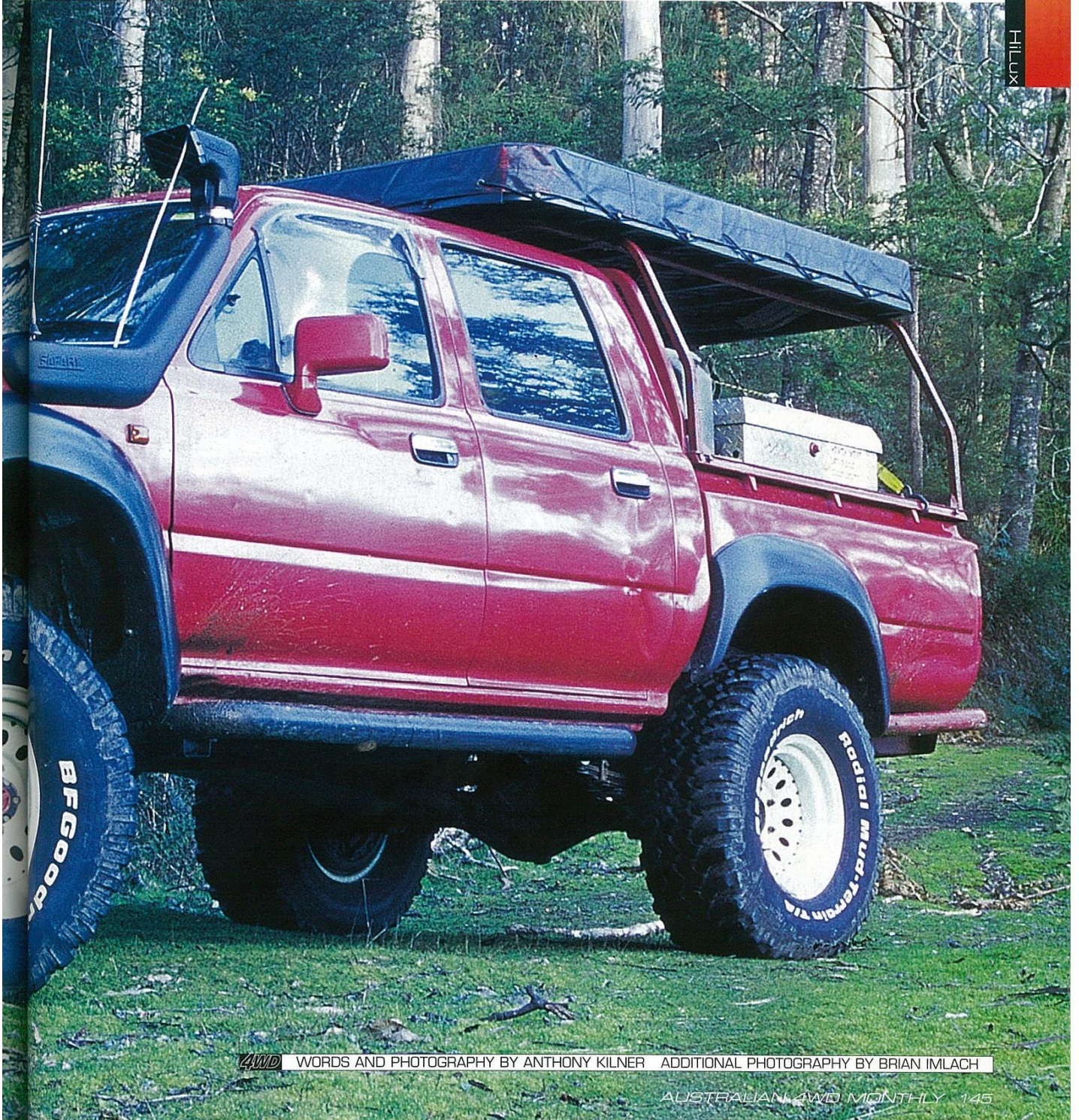
PLAY HARD

PLAY

Brian Imlach has proved owning a competition and touring vehicle in one is a great way to get the best of both off-roading worlds



HARDER



4WD WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANTHONY KILNER ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN IMLACH

AUSTRALIAN 4WD MONTHLY 145

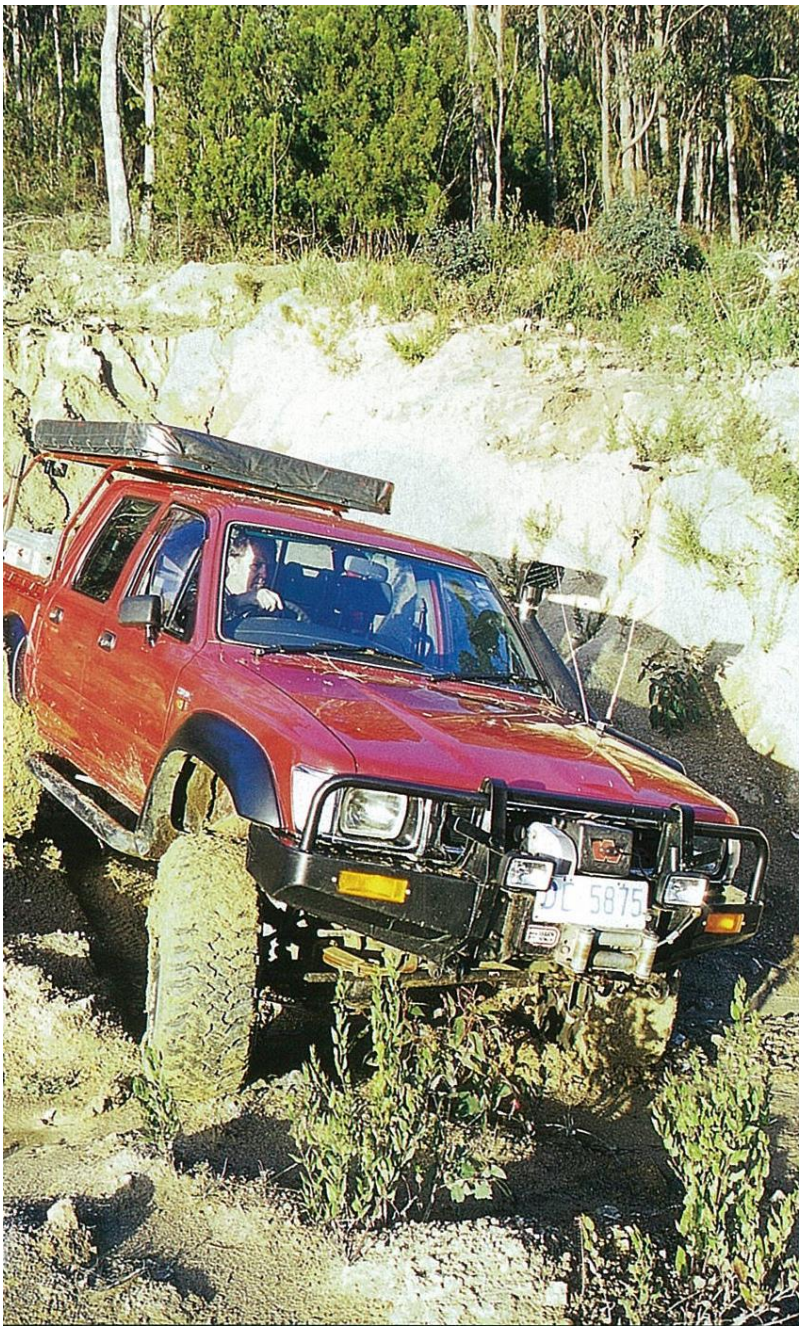
Having a competition-specific vehicle seems to be the way the 4WD fraternity is going these days. Big bucks are spent modifying rigs to handle the various competitions around Australia, and when the comp is over, they are wheeled into the garage to be made ready for the next event.

In many cases these owners have a second fourby for general use or touring. However, having a fourby that can be quickly converted from tourer to competition vehicle is what Brian Imlach, of Devonport in Tassie, started building back in 1992.

Since then, Brian competed in the inaugural Outback Challenge in 1999, placing 22nd overall, and is rapt to have completed the event and not broken anything on his HiLux. In what is regarded as one of the toughest long-distance 4WD events in Australia, just surviving rates a huge mention. Over the years there's also been a raft of local competitions and rallies in Brian's home state of Tasmania.

SUSPENSION

Sorting the suspension and articulation required from the leaf-sprung 'Lux didn't present too many problems. Brian aimed for a modest 2.5in lift with a softer ride for unladen work. Ultimate Suspension supplied the two-stage leaf springs and the De Carbon shocks to do the job. For touring, however, the load is greater and the back end of the 'Lux sagged a bit too much. As it is difficult to compensate for any load – whether touring or towing – without having several sets of leaf springs, Polyair bags were reluctantly fitted on the rear with independent air lines to adjust the load evenly. While the package is not radical, it has proven itself to work in most off-road situations, and Brian has not regretted fitting the Polyair bags, finding them to work a treat for all terrain types.



ENGINE AND DRIVETRAIN

Brian is one of those typical Tassie larrikins who quietly goes around behind the scenes doing what he has to do without a great deal of fanfare. It was, therefore, no surprise to fellow club members when he purchased the HiLux and decided to ditch the 40,000km-old 4Y petrol motor and drop in a V6 from the General's stable.

Locating the motor wasn't hard, but fitting the V6 presented a few problems. The starting point was Marks 4WD Adaptors for a conversion kit consisting of a bell housing adaptor kit, engine mounts, flywheel and heavy-duty clutch and pressure plate.

For fuel delivery there was a high-pressure pump and surge tank along with fuel relay brackets and carbon canister kit. Electrically, a tach interface kit, interface wiring loom and speed sensor were added. Depending on the conversion, there is a host of other bits and pieces available. This allows the owner to customise the conversion properly and meet the dreaded engineer's certification criteria.

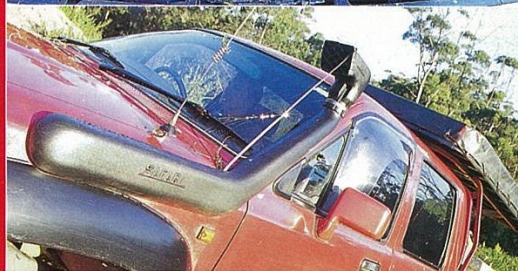
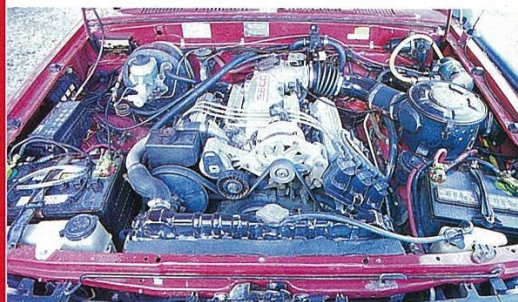
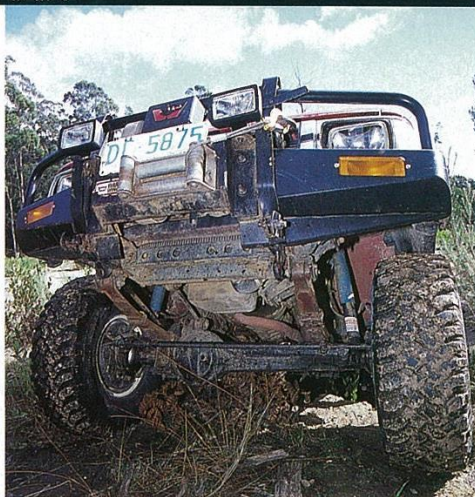
Well-known Tassie off-road racing identity Peter Murfett was responsible for plucking and stuffing the newer V6, which only had 30,000km on the clock. The conversion went smoothly until it was time to mount the air-conditioning. Air-con is a luxury for comp work, but for touring, especially in Central Australia (one of Brian's favourite places), it's a must. After adapting the metric fittings and mucking about with bracketry, the air-con was finally mounted. A set of extractors was fitted along with a 3in purpose-built exhaust system. Pumping power to the starter motor is a 75Ah N70ZZ Supercharge battery, which is joined with a Supercharge 100Ah D70Z deep-cycle for winching, and running the fridge, lights and other camping gear. The charge from the standard Holden 60A alternator runs through a Piranha electronic ignition system that swaps the charge from the main battery to the auxiliary battery as required.

Getting power from the engine to the gearbox was handled via a heavy-duty Holden V8 clutch plate and V6 pressure plate, which have given Brian few problems over the last five years. The gearbox and transfer case are standard Tojo items and have handled the V6 conversion well. Brian passed on the auto option, because he reckons the clutch gives more feel to the vehicle, especially in tight situations.

Currently, Brian has an ARB Air Locker fitted to the front diff with manual-locking hubs. The ratios are untouched, as he's kept the tyre size to 33in. A standard Tojo LSD drives the rear wheels. Brian reckons this combo has worked well so far, but has a rear Air Locker in his sights for the future.

Getting plenty of cool air into the intake system is handled via a Safari snorkel, while a Finer Filter keeps dust out of the V6. The snorkel was fitted by Brian and offers security when negotiating some of the deep-water crossings found in Tassie.

With the standard radiator, Brian found things heating up too much during extended hard comp work. It also ran hot when towing a trailer full of quad-bikes down the west-coast sands, which are notoriously taxing on cooling systems in a standard vehicle, let alone a modified one. After tracking down and fitting a diesel HiLux radiator, which is larger than the petrol version, and whacking on a bigger thermo fan, the 'Lux stayed cooler for longer and didn't overheat during the hardcore stuff.



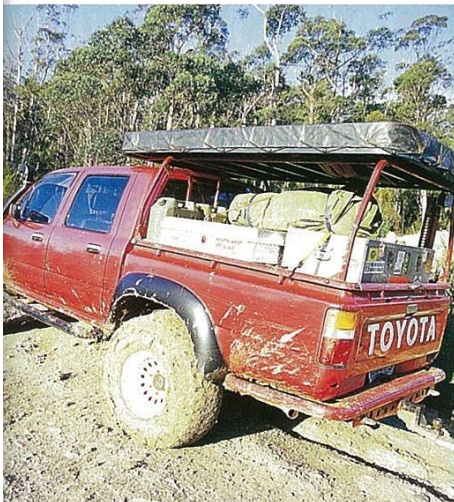


Being able to rapidly transform the 'Lux from competition lion to touring kitten has required some work, culminating in a six-week journey from Tassie, up through the Diamantina and down the Canning Stock Route in 2002. This was definitely one of the best trips Brian's had with the 'Lux and proves that just because you've got a modified fourby for comp work, you don't have to stay at home when your mates are all off touring.

BARWORK

A new TJM bar was sourced and the cradle modified to handle the 8000lb Warn winch. Extra gusseting was also required to strengthen the bar so that the Warn pulled the vehicle out of a bog from the chassis, rather than risk pulling off the front bar. Winch cable holders were fixed to the bar, along with mounts for the driving lights.

Brian made up some 3in tubular steel sliders at home and bolted them on. He has no hesitation bouncing the Hilux over rocks and logs, knowing the sliders will protect the sills. A new ARB rear step bar was fitted, which allows for towing a trailer while offering rear-end protection. Tubular steel rack bars were built and bolted into the tub with an aluminium rack. This enables the tent and other light gear to be carried up at roof height for touring. A large canvas cover over the top of the rack protects everything from the weather.

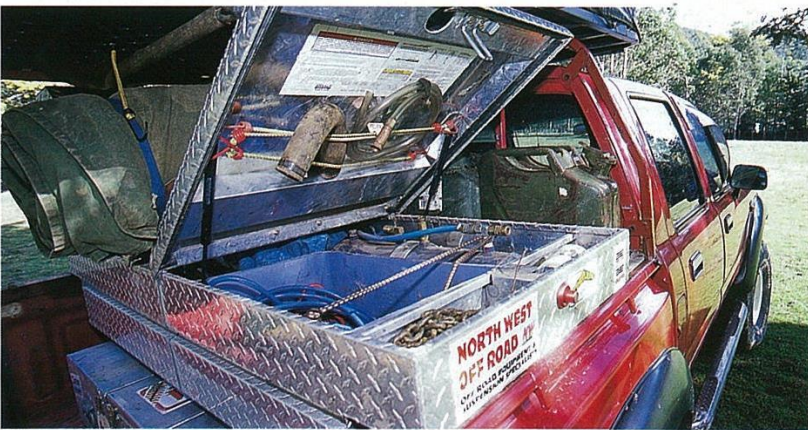
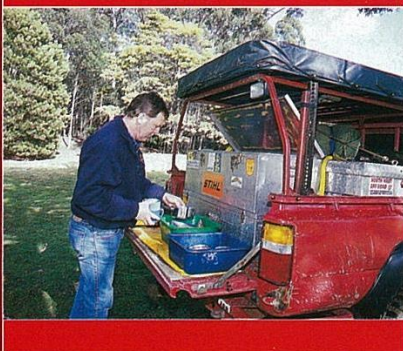


TASSIE BRED

Tasmania offers a plethora of destinations, from the soft sands of the west coast, to the Queenstown mountains and the mud in the guts around the north and north-west. They are all popular trips, and as a long-time member of the Devonport 4WD Club, Brian's spent a bucket-load of time out exploring and re-opening disused 4WD tracks, as well as plenty of time relaxing on the west coast diving and fishing.

TRAY MODS

Apart from the rollbar/roof-rack, Brian has handled touring requirements with a cut and modified Weather Guard aluminium box mounted to the Tojo's tub. There are access doors on both sides with gas struts to hold up the lids, and they're lockable to house the chainsaw and other gear safely inside. The top of this box has a couple of eyelets in the lid, which means the swag can be tied to the box and left there without hindering access. Between the Weather Guard box and the back window of the dual-cab, an aluminium holder allows four jerry cans for fuel or water. The weight is as low as possible and in the centre of the Tojo. This, combined with the 130L auxiliary fuel tank, gives a range of around 1200km. To change the 'Lux from a tourer to a comp vehicle, Brian has an array of boxes that pack up in the back of the tray like a big jigsaw puzzle. Each box houses certain gear such as a cooking box with the stove and gas bottle, food boxes and so on. Brian's idea was to have everything needed for cooking and general living easily accessed without the need to strip the back to reach required items. The system also allows Brian to remove the boxes and leave them at camp. This equipment and other gear is then secure from the notorious Tassie animals that roam the inland areas, while getting rid of excess weight for touring on the beach. A shortened Hi-Lift jack bolts onto the rollbar on the rear driver's side of the tray. The underside of the mesh-floored roof-rack has a shovel strapped to it and a light can be quickly attached for night-time use.



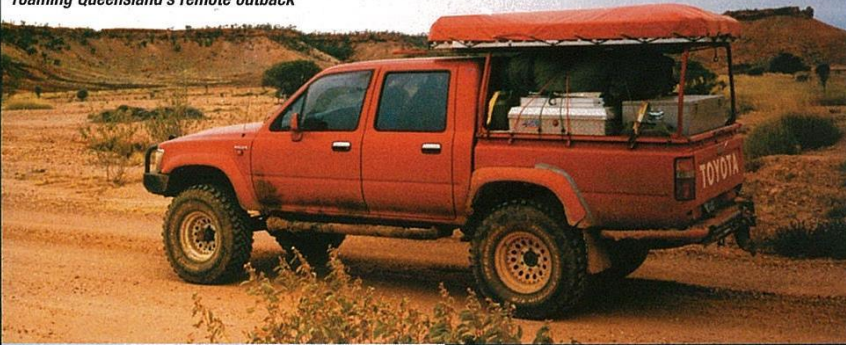
CABIN WORKS

Inside, the cabin is almost standard. The CD player/radio unit and UHF in the dash have been mounted for practicality and not looks. The seats have been repadded and the covers fitted to protect them. The major cabin work has been done on the boxes that have been built in the back. The rear seat was removed and replaced with two timber-framed, carpet-covered boxes that house all kinds of gear from tyre-repair stuff to spare hoses and belts, jumper leads and more. Access is via a lift-up door on either side, where the contents are listed in text. On the back wall of the cabin, the six-stacker CD unit is mounted just above the floor of the storage system, and above that is the Alpine amplifier. Brian hopes these are high enough to stay above the water line if he sinks the 'Lux. There are also canvas bags hanging up to hold maps, books and the like, while dual-fire extinguishers are fastened to the back wall on each side of the cabin. The Chescold fridge can be mounted on top of the flat storage boxes and on either side depending on the gear Brian is carrying. Brian reckons the Chescold is great for extended camping in the bush, as it runs on gas very efficiently, although it does struggle in extreme heat (not much of a problem in Tassie, but more so up north).

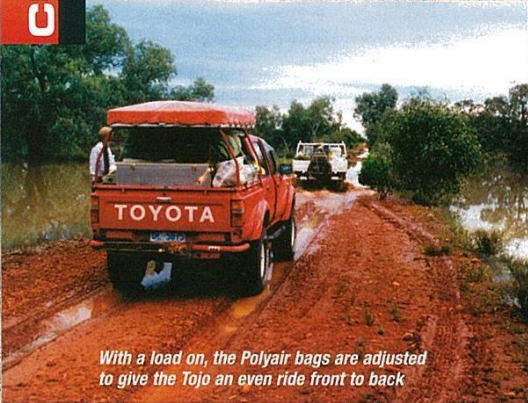
HILUX

CUSTOM

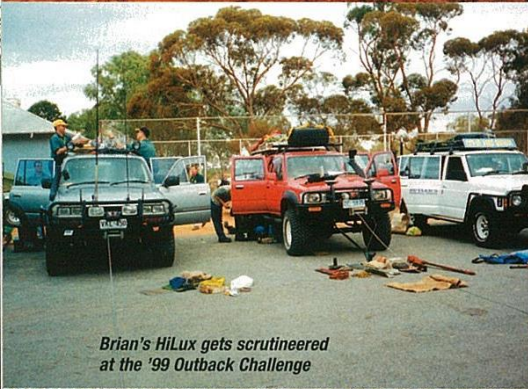
In touring trim, Brian's 'Lux is at home roaming Queensland's remote outback



Brian has a few plans left for the HiLux, mainly to bring it back to a decent condition. Years of comp work along with touring central Oz and playing on the hardest tracks Tassie has to offer has taken its toll on the Tojo. Over the next year or so, Brian's going to start fixing her up again and hopefully get a heap more service out of the old girl. Mind you, he's got a 100 Series as a backup fourby, so if the 'Lux does spend some time in the garage being repaired, he can still head off-road. **4WD**



With a load on, the Polyair bags are adjusted to give the Tojo an even ride front to back



Brian's HiLux gets scrutineered at the '99 Outback Challenge



BRIEFLY

VEHICLE:	'92 Toyota HiLux dual-cab
OWNER:	Brian Imlach
ENGINE:	Holden 3.8L V6 EFI
GEARBOX:	Toyota 5-speed manual
FRONT SUSPENSION:	Ultimate leaf springs with 2.5in lift and Ultimate De Carbon shocks
REAR SUSPENSION:	Ultimate leaf springs with Polyair Bags, 2.5in lift and Ultimate De Carbon shocks
WHEELS AND TYRES:	15x8in steel rims with 33x12.5R15 BFG Mud Terrains



THE AUSTRALIAN 4WD MONTHLY



THANKS

Brian heaped praise on Peter and Nobber from North West Off Road 4X4 Accessories in Spreyton, near Devonport, for their help and advice with getting the accessories fitted, and on Peter Murfett Mechanical for the engine swap and other mods. He's also pretty grateful to his wife, Maureen, who allows him his toys and the time away from home playing.