



# TASSIE TOPPER

## Roothy finds a tray-top camper that handles the rough stuff with ease

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**B**ig Jim Coulsen has over 40 years of experience in the canvas industry, and he's one of the few blokes around who is actually qualified as a tent maker. He's real proud of his canvas creations and you can tell by looking at anything that comes out of his Carrum Downs factory. Whether it is a swag, tent or camper trailer, he is big on quality and strength.

Jim's Outback camper trailers are legendary and loaded with unique ideas and practical touches. Being an outdoors man, Jim has plenty of product experience in the real world outside the showroom – the sort that means a bloke knows what works and what doesn't.

So, he has a hell of a lot in common with his old mate Greg Bullivant. Greg is one of those

knock-around blokes who has a name for being able to think out a project and get the construction just right. A natural engineer, he's best known for the aluminium boats built at his factory in Albury, but he can turn a hand to anything.

During one of their annual fishing trips up the Murray – held on a special aluminium punt Greg built that I think they call 'The Floating Fridge' – Jim mentioned that he had a lot of call for tray-top campers. While the ones he built so far worked well, they were too heavy.

By the time they were fitted out, the steel bodies wound up weighing around 800kg plus. Although well within the capabilities of a good 4WD tray back, this meant owners had to fit airbags or heavier springs to keep them level. His customers kept asking for them, but Jim just figured the



The kitchen lid flips up and the benchtop with stove slides out ready to use in less than a minute. You can grab a cuppa or lunch on the side of the track without having to unpack anything. It's dead simple to stay organised with this set-up and you can see everything too. The sink is a simple bucket with water gravity fed from the tank and stainless steel rods hold the plastic buckets in place – too easy!



design could be improved. So, Greg, no doubt inspired by the can he just cracked, suggested they make the body out of aluminium. Being the sort of blokes who make things happen, that's exactly what they did. After some refinement, the new Outback Tray Topper was released at the 2006 Melbourne 4WD & Camping Show. It was an instant hit with serious campers – the fair dinkum ones who want long-term comfort away from the crowds!

The aluminium body is superbly strong, aerodynamic (keeping it protected by the ute cab in heavy bush as well as saving fuel), dust and waterproof (as we proved in Tasmania, this thing will go anywhere) and constructed to last a lifetime of bush camping. However, the big thing is the weight. All up, including canvas, awning and stainless steel water tank, the Tray Topper weighs in at only 320kg! That means you are not

compromising your truck's ability to go seriously off-road. The camper roof is solid – no wet canvas to pack on your bed after a storm – and braced so you can pack stuff on top if required. However, the biggest advantage to my mind is the fact that the roof flips up about as quickly as the average car bonnet. When it's time to camp, you flick a couple of latches, open the rear door, unfold the ladder, step in and flick the roof up. Put the brace in place and that's it – bedtime.

In the real world of long-distance touring, you can be comfortable anywhere from a roadside pull over to the paddock over the road from the pub in a Tray Topper. You can camp on a beach in the Gulf or climb sand hills and perch on top. Anywhere you can park the truck, you can set up camp in about a minute flat.

Impressed? I am, big time. The Outback Tray Topper has opened up a whole new world of comfortable camping possibilities – literally. It can go places a



If you know Jimbo and Greg, you know that fridge access is important. The slide pulls out and drops down to lock, which makes access even easier. No more standing on tippy-toes trying to feel what's in the fridge. Now you can see it and grab it



With the solid roof, you can leave the beds made up and they'll stay dry and dust free. Standard mattresses are nice thick foam, but there's also an innerspring option. Either way, this bedroom is awesome. It has full flyscreens either side for plenty of ventilation in the tropics and it is beaut being nice and high



On the opposite side to the kitchen, it's almost all dust/waterproof storage space and dead easy to access through either of the two doors. Note how they give a degree of rain protection too when they're up – that's the sort of thing an all-weather camper loves

**AD**



Four AL-KO corner jacks can be wound up to lift the Tray Topper off the truck, so you can leave it set up and head to town for more beer if you really have to. These are over engineered to buggery to support a mere 320kg between them

camper trailer couldn't and be ready to use before the other guys have unrolled their swags. Add in the other practical ideas Jim and Greg have put in to every aspect of this beast, and then consider the terrific construction and great materials. It's no wonder there's been a six week or more wait to get one since Outback introduced it.

This is the camper for the seriously off-road couple. Because it sits on the tray, you can tow a boat or a trailer with the dirt bikes (or a palette load of Crownies), or whatever behind. Can you imagine six months up the Cape and across the Gulf country with a Tray Topper and your tinny? Wow, that would be living the good life! ■■■

## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>MODEL:</b>	Outback Tray Topper
<b>PRICE:</b>	\$16,800 (includes awning)
<b>WEIGHT:</b>	320kg dry
<b>WATER:</b>	60L stainless steel tank, gravity fed (12V pump is optional)
<b>POWER:</b>	Three fluoro lights, Syntec charger, 140Ah deep-cycle battery, Anderson plug to vehicle
<b>COOKING:</b>	Full pull-out kitchen, two-burner stovetop with glass lid, 4.5kg LPG bottle in gas locker
<b>STORAGE:</b>	Heaps!
<b>AVAILABLE FROM:</b>	Outback Camper Trailers 552 Frankston-Dandenong Road Carrum Downs VIC 3201

Open Monday to Friday 8.00am - 5.30pm  
Saturday 8.00am - 1.00pm  
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**ANYWHERE YOU CAN PARK  
THE TRUCK, YOU CAN  
SET UP CAMP**



A canvas awning is standard, but there's as much optional canvas available as you can imagine. That means serious long-term camping possibilities because you can bring the tinny in under the shade and rebuild the motor too. Ooh, ain't it lovely?