



EVER *faithful*

*We talk to three
Evernew-owning couples
who use their vans in
quite different ways.*

WORDS MICHAEL BROWNING
PICS JOE PRESS AND MICHAEL BROWNING

If there is one thing that most owners of the 7000 Evernews built over the last 50 years have in common, it is a deep admiration of their caravans, which as well as being their constant travelling companions over all types of roads, are often their permanent homes.

This has probably given Evernew more word-of-mouth on-the-road 'salesmen' than any other Australian caravan company, accounting for up to 80 per cent of sales, along with an envied re-sale value independently judged as the industry's best.





Home base

Ron and Bev Hall are retired 'parkies' towing a 2006 Evernew 900 Series.

For Ron and Bev Hall, their 2006 Evernew 900 Series caravan is a lot more than their constant travelling companion; it and its Evernew predecessor have been their home since they sold their caravan park in Goulburn, Vic, 15 years ago.

"People ask us whether we miss having a home base," explained Ron, "but I can never understand why. A house to me is work. Bev at times misses having her own little garden, but I say to her 'we have the biggest garden in the world out there!' In compensation, we have freedom that most people only dream of."

Their decision to purchase an Evernew in the first place came after 15 years spent running caravan parks, initially a holiday park in Rosebud on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula.

"As 'parkies' you see a lot of caravans come and go and talk to a lot of people," said Ron. "I found that most Evernew owners I talked to would go back to buy another one."

"They regard them as good value-for-money caravans, built properly to last, and you rarely hear of any troubles they have had. When you do it's usually some propriety component, not something of Evernew's making. I've yet to meet someone who will criticise their Evernew. They always give them a fair rap."

So when the Halls decided to sell up in 1998 and hit the road, they visited Evernew HQ in Melbourne and sat down with co-founder Bruce Bailey to tell him exactly what they wanted.

"Bruce doesn't see eye to eye with everyone," explained Ron, "You can go to him with your plans and while he'll try to accommodate everything you want as best he can, he won't build something that won't tow properly or meet his standards. But that's what we really like about him and his son-in-law, Darren, who builds the vans."

After eight happy and trouble-free years with their first Evernew, Ron and Bev were back in 2006 to spec their current van and Bruce initially didn't want to build what they wanted.

"Because this is also our home,

we found the hanging space in the standard 900 Series layout wasn't big enough for us," said Bev. "So we asked Bruce to replace the rear ensuite with a full walk-in robe."

"Bruce went crook at us," said Ron, taking up the story. "He said we should have one because this was the trend with all caravans of this size and not having an ensuite would affect its re-sale value, but eventually we both compromised."

"Now we have a toilet with a vanity in our van, but no shower, and the wardrobe we wanted is in the back! We don't miss the shower as being old parkies we enjoy meeting and chatting with people at the shower block."

The other reason the Halls were happy to dispense with their ensuite was weight, as their four-door Prado was capped to towing 2.5t and their new Evernew's Tare weight was 2020kg.

"This didn't leave us much margin for the things you need to carry when your caravan is your home," said Bev. "But now we have a new two-door Prado that can tow 3t, so the pressure is off. If we were buying another Evernew we'd probably leave the shower in now!"

Their Evernew also has conventional 'rocker' leaf-spring suspension "because Bruce said this would probably be best for our travels, which are mainly on bitumen", while it rides on 15in wheels.

Ron is from Melbourne but Bev is a Perth girl, so their Evernew has taken them to most places in southern Australia and 21 times across the Nullarbor!

"Nothing made by Evernew has ever broken in all that time," said Ron.

They plan their travels six to eight months ahead, often stopping for days in small country towns to meet and chat with locals over coffee and spending some winters in Alice Springs, but to date they have not travelled north of Rockhampton.

"That leaves a lot of Australia to travel," smiled Ron. "But we have plenty of time before I 'retire', which is when I reach the age when I can't tow a caravan!"



Blacktop beauty

Don and Val Macvean's 21ft 3in van hasn't missed a beat since they bought it in 1997.

Don and Val Macvean prefer to stick to made roads in their beautifully kept 21ft 3in (more about that extra three inches later) 1997 Evernew, in which they have now travelled an estimated 108,000km to almost every part of Australia.

"We've been able to see an enormous amount of the country without leaving the bitumen," Don explained, unfolding a large map of Australia crisscrossed with lines showing their many trips. "And when we want to explore an area like the Bungle Bungles, we simply unhitch our 4WD and take our tent."

They first heard of Evernew while standing in a queue at Brisbane's Expo in 1992 as Don was approaching his retirement.

"We were talking to a lady about buying a caravan and she said, 'You're so lucky coming from Victoria – you have Evernew.' We had never heard of them, but she said that she and her husband had one after owning two other makes of van and hadn't looked back."

Don and Val did their homework, went to Melbourne and bought their first Evernew – a pop-top – that they towed behind their Volvo for 45,000km. But after five years they

decided to get a bigger caravan and a 4WD – a Land-Rover Discovery II diesel – to haul it and went back to Evernew with their design.

"I wanted to incorporate a washing machine in our new van," said Val, referring to a time before this then-luxury feature became commonplace in larger caravans. "But our 21ft van design was 3in too short to fit it in."

"But to our surprise, Bruce simply said 'of course we can' and built what we wanted 3in longer! So we ended up with 'my' van and he ended up with customers for life. It's very much our van and reflects our tastes."

"We've been back since to have various changes and modifications made and it has never been a problem. They have willingly accommodated most things we have asked for."

Don and Val said the best feature about both their Evernews was that they had been free of problems.

"We've never had to have a leak fixed or suffered a breakage," said Val.

"That means a lot when you are on the road as much as we are, as you can be confident that what is behind you will stay there in one piece and return home with you!"

Experience counts

Tom and Joan Harding get about Australia with a 2005 19-footer – their fourth Evernew so far!

Tom Harding knows a thing or two about caravans, having spent 30 years building up a business – Harding Caravan Services – to repair and service all makes and models before he handed over to his son and retired around 13 years ago.

So after owning a Jayco, a Traveller and two Romas, it's interesting to note that his last four caravans have all been Evernews, including his current 2005 model E-Series.

"While I was running the business I was doing reciprocal business with a number of caravan manufacturers," Tom explained. "So I ended up purchasing their vans. But when I retired I had a free choice and I have stuck with Evernew ever since

because Bruce Bailey's caravans suit my style of activity."

By 'my style', Tom means principally offroad travel, "more non-bitumen than bitumen".

"I want the ability to take my caravans anywhere there's a line on a map," he said, and much of the estimated 70,000km he and his wife, Joan, have covered in their current 19ft (5.8m) Evernew have been well off the blacktop, often leading tag-along inland tours.

Typically this might include traversing central Australia on the 1126km Great Central Road, which runs from Yulara, NT, to Laverton, WA, a journey Tom and his Evernews have been very familiar with behind his late

model Land Rover Discovery II diesel.

"That's one of most notorious areas where people say you don't take a caravan," he said. "Let's say it is certainly not on the caravanners' 'roads most travelled' list, but we have never had a problem.

"By their nature, all Evernew vans are capable of this. Bruce doesn't need to use the term 'offroad' as all his vans are built to take that sort of stuff. They are what I would call a 'reliable build'. They have very uniform quality.

"Despite most of its travel being offroad, our Evernew is still performing as well today as when it was new. The secret is to drive according to the conditions."

Tom has chosen the layout of each of his Evernews with Bruce Bailey

and they have worked so well that invariably a member of one of his tag-along tours offers to buy his... hence the four Evernews!

"When you have owned about 10 caravans, repaired caravans for a living and travelled as much as I have, you know what works and what doesn't," said Tom.

"I always add my own 'bullet-proofing' under every van, but the Evernew has the integrity to start with that many other vans lack.

"Word of mouth is the most powerful advertisement and seeing these caravans work in harsh conditions is very convincing. That's why people keep buying my vans and I keep coming back to Bruce!" 

