

KennedyKapers

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Stephen and Kelly Kennedy have been camping for years. Now, with two kidlets under their feet, they have had a special Royal Flair off-roader built to do some serious touring

Stephen Kennedy is a bit of an outdoor lover. He loves four-wheel-driving, he loves dirt bike riding and he loves swaggin' it while travelling. Stephen's wife Kelly loves pretty much all the same things, so it was no surprise to see these two hook up, get married and start travelling.

Both Stephen and Kelly's families spent their holidays camping; one lot at Heathcote every year and the other at Lake Hume. Both Stephen and Kelly were over staying in one spot year in and year out, so they started touring at every opportunity.

In between travelling, there was a business to run for Stephen and then the house to sort out. Then, along came Cassidy who is now four and the very young Jess who was just four-months old when we caught up with the family.

Stephen and Kelly have travelled to the Cape, cruised across the Simpson, battled with the Bight over the years and progressed to a van to try things out from that perspective. Their first van was a 14ft Windsor Rapid, and they used it for 18 months before deciding that they needed something bigger with Cassidy on the scene and Jess on the way.

Ten months later, the Kennedys are preparing to head out on their first Royal Flair excursion to meet with friends in Bright before heading towards Yarrowonga for a further 10 days of touring fun. During this trip, they will





When not travelling, the rig lives in the yard

discover what works and what doesn't with the new van, sort out any teething issues and start preparing for the bigger, longer adventure to some of the more remote parts of Australia.

Their future itinerary definitely includes the Oodnadatta Track and maybe a burger from the famous Pink Roadhouse!

DESIGNING A VAN

Having spent 18 months in the Rapid, both Stephen and Kelly were keen to explore what was out there in the caravan market that would be more comfortable and practical for touring, especially given the family was growing.

Stephen went to work looking at floor plans, researching on the net for products and finding out as much about them as possible. As a mechanic, Stephen had a good idea of what would and wouldn't work for them. Having the van as practical as possible and being able to carry his motorbike and pushbikes were just a couple of the extras he looked into.

Of course, no marriage could last without guidance and help from a good woman. Kelly reiterated that a healthy marriage is based on good communication skills and understanding each other's needs. She put it to me this way, "Stephen got to handle the boy bits and I got to handle all the girl bits".

There is no room for fights with that statement. It worked, though, and now the Kennedys have a van to be proud of.

They looked at vans from Evernew, Supreme and a few others before settling with a Royal Flair. With notes in hand, the couple descended on the Ian Grant Caravans stand at the Melbourne show. They had a floor plan that Stephen designed and just happened to meet Bill Deralis, MD of Royal Flair.

Bill was impressed with the groundwork the guys had done, and with a few small mods and extras, the deal was done. The Kennedys can't speak highly enough of the way Royal Flair and Ian Grant Caravans treated them and organised the van.

Stephen's design was based on building a van to go where they wanted.

He didn't want to come home saying that they hadn't gone to a special spot because they couldn't get there with the van. Stephen's statement was along the lines of 'why miss the adventure if you don't have to?'

In addition to the bike mounting, some of the extras built into this van include triple bunks on the front wall for the two kids and a third if need be. If the Kennedys ever sell the van, the bottom bunks can be converted back to a couch if required.

There is a full queen-size bed and power package to be fully independent while travelling, and of course, suspension to handle the rigours of dirt road touring.

There are so many mods in and around this van, it would take pages to jot them all down. Suffice to say, this is one very special touring van. From the high-mounted BBQ up front to the sat dish and Foxtel, there's plenty to gander at with this van.

One special way of knowing the Kennedys' van from behind is a wheel cover with a great picture of Whiskey



Stephen loves the storage bins



A slide-out BBQ is handy for family cooking



Plenty of storage for the family



A great motto for all tourers



It's a big step up for the Kennedys

the dog. He doesn't travel with them too often, but they miss him when they do head off and this is a nice reminder.

Of course, being a mechanic, Stephen was all over the van like a rash when he got it to ensure it was perfect. The other half of the package, according to Stephen, is the tow vehicle.

The Kennedys own a 2003 100 Series turbo-diesel LandCruiser, which has also been 'Stephenised'. The engine has been chipped and modified to produce figures of around 191kW at the back wheels and 560Nm of torque, which will easily handle the 2.6t Royal Flair.

The 'Cruiser has been set up for independent touring as well, which means there is no limit to where this adventurous family can travel.

The Kennedy's little exercise proves that with the right communication, plenty of research and tons of patience, there's no reason you can't get a van and tow vehicle that will suit you down to the ground and provide you with memories that will last a lifetime. ■