



# Drive to aid the disabled

By Chris Boulous

ALMOST 100 people from across NSW will drive themselves into the hearts of others when they tackle the remote wilderness of the Victorian high country for charity.

The group of four-wheel-drive enthusiasts will attempt to raise \$100,000 for Northcott Disability Services when they head south on Sunday for the week-long journey.

Leading the convoy will be Parramatta resident David Dennis, whose stepson Ben Keyte regularly uses Northcott's range of services.

"Ben has a condition called arthrogryposis, which means he has been confined to a wheelchair for mobility his whole life because he has had no muscle growth," Mr Dennis said.

"I've been driving four-wheel-drives my entire life and the best thing we do is fund-raising. So to raise money for something close to home is pretty special. Last year we had to postpone because of bushfires, so I am really looking forward to it."

The trip is set up by not-for-profit organisation, Drive 4 Life, which created the 4WD tour to raise funds to support those in need. And after observing first-hand the support 19-year-old Ben Keyte receives from Northcott, Drive 4 Life founder Mick Whitehead was quick to nominate the Parramatta disability service.

"When we learned about Ben's situation and how much Northcott has helped, I knew I had to do this



**People helping people: David Dennis and Ben Keyte (wheelchair) at Northcott on Tuesday.**

fund-raiser for Northcott. We've got a lot out of competitive four-wheel driving and it's great to give something back," Mr Whitehead said.

"Our goal is to reach the \$100,000 fund-raising target and to also show the public that not all 4WD owners are irresponsible members of society."

All funds raised will go to support the Northcott Equipment Solutions equipment loan pool that provides equipment and support to people with disabilities across NSW and the ACT.

Northcott supports more than 6000 people with disabilities and their families or carers across NSW and the ACT, including physical, intellectual, sensory and acquired disabilities.



## Driving for charity

**DI BARTOK**

DAVID Dennis was thinking of his stepson as he conquered the Victorian wilderness in his four-wheel-drive vehicle recently.

The Parramatta resident was part of a team for Drive 4 Life, an organisation set up by a group of 4WD enthusiasts to raise funds for children and adults with disabilities.

This week, the group presented Northcott Disability Services at Parramatta with a \$100,000 cheque, raised from its 4WD for

Wheelchairs Victorian High Country Tour 2008.

A record 85 vehicles took part with each person involved paying \$1000.

The remaining funds were donated by an unnamed person.

For Mr Dennis, having Northcott as the beneficiary was an incentive as his 19-year-old stepson, Ben Keyte, has arthrogryposis – a condition characterised by immobility to one or more of his joints.

Mr Keyte uses a wheelchair for mobility

with the support of Northcott Disability Services.

Mr Dennis's friend Mick Whitehead, the founder of Drive 4 Life, had heard about the work of Northcott through Mr Keyte's experience and wanted to help.

"When we learnt about Ben's unique situation and how much Northcott has helped, I knew I had to do this fundraiser for Northcott," Mr Whitehead said.

Mr Dennis's personal connection to Northcott motivated him to take part.



**Four-wheel-drivers Mick Whitehead, Allan McLellan, Kylie Pike and Chris Bates have raised \$100,000 for Northcott Disability Services.**

Picture: PHIL BLATCH ABB16592



# Cause drives drivers

CHERRYBROOK resident Chris Bates has helped raise \$100,000 for Northcott Disability Service, after he and a few mates went four-wheel-driving through the Victorian high country.

Mr Bates is part of Drive 4 Life, a group of four-wheel-drive enthusiasts who help to raise money for people with disabilities.

A record 85 vehicles took part in the second year of the competition.

The trek ran from April 20-25, with each driver and tour guide donating \$1000.

Mr Bates started the organisation with his friend Mick Whitehead after they both realised how expensive it was to look after a disabled child.

Their friend David Dennis has a son with arthrogryposis, a condition which causes

immobility in one or more joints.

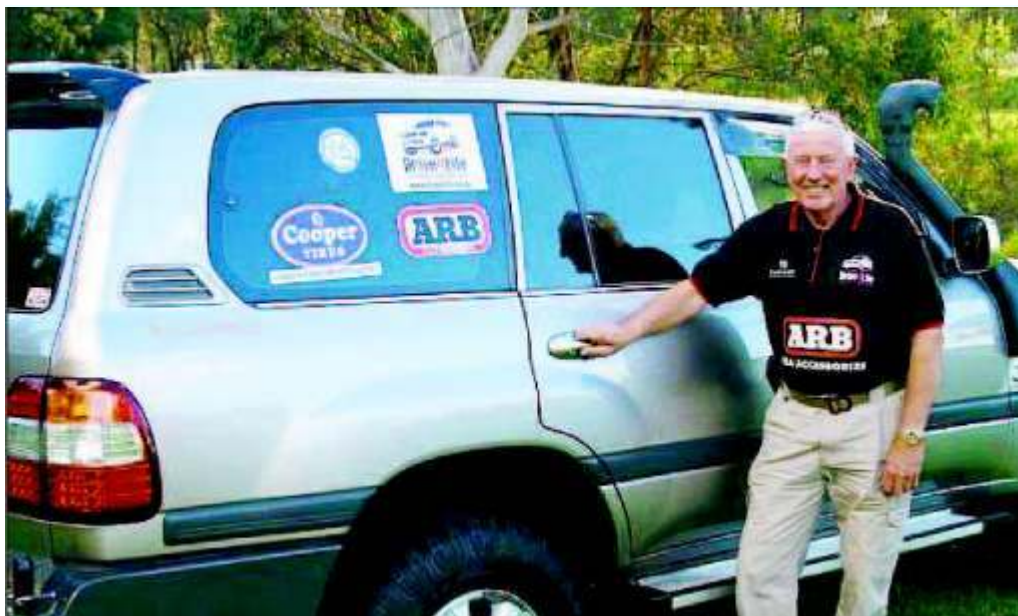
Mr Dennis' son, Ben Keyte uses a wheelchair and relies on the support of Northcott Disability Services.

"When we learned about Ben's unique situation and how much Northcott has helped, I knew I had to do this fundraiser for Northcott," Mr Bates said.

Mr Bates also hopes the charity drive will help to change a few people's minds on four-wheel-drive owners.

"It's great to give something back and also show the public that not all 4WD owners are irresponsible members of society."

Four-wheel drivers who would like to help disabled adults and children can visit [www.drive4life.com.au](http://www.drive4life.com.au)



Chris Bates raised more than \$100,000 as part of Drive 4 Life.





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### Wheels in motion

A GROUP of 4WD enthusiasts has donated \$100,000 to North Parramatta's Northcott Disability Services. The non-profit group Drive 4 Life organised 4WD for Wheelchairs, an event which saw 85 vehicles take part in a tour through Victoria's high country.

Founder Mick Whitehead created the event two years ago after seeing his friend's son, Ben Keyte, battle arthrogryposis. This condition causes immobility in joints.

Pictured are: Chris Bates, Corey Webster and Mick Whitehead.

Photo: Wolter Peeters



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## Raising funds the driving force in bush

EPPING resident Jason Dymock and a group of four-wheel drive enthusiasts conquered the remote wilderness of the Victorian High Country – and raised \$100,000 for Northcott Disability Services in the process.

“It was such an enjoyable experience to take part in and it is even more gratifying to know that the money will directly support children and adults with a disability,” Mr Dymock said.

The adventure was organised by Drive 4 Life, an Australian not-for-profit organisation set up by 4WD enthusiasts to raise funds for children and adults

with a disability. In its second year, a record 85 vehicles took part in the event titled 4WD for Wheelchairs.

Funds were raised through each of the vehicles, including the group leaders and organisers, paying a \$1000 donation to register. One member topped up the total to the \$100,000 target.

The tour began after Mick Whitehead saw the costs and support required for Ben Keyte, the son of close friend David Dennis, who lives with arthrogryposis – a condition that is characterised by immobility in one or more of his joints.

Information: [drive4life.com.au](http://drive4life.com.au)



**Northcott client  
Corey Webster at  
the cheque  
presentation with  
Drive 4 Life  
representatives  
Chris Bates (left)  
and Mick  
Whitehead, who  
launched the event  
for 4WD enthusiasts  
two years ago.**



# Driving a hard bargain

By Jo Arblaster

THEY are out in the bush, roughing it at night and enduring a bone-jarring ride during the day. And they pay for the privilege.

Vineyard four-wheel-drive centre owner Duncan Scott recently led a group of four-wheel-drive enthusiasts on an adventure into the remote wilderness of the Victorian high country.

Ninety-five cars followed him on a 100 per cent off-road driving experience and raised \$100,000 for Northcote Disability Services.

Covering 100 to 120 kilometres each day, driving for up to eight hours, the annual Drive 4 Life followed dirt roads and forestry tracks for 600 kilometres.

"It wasn't a race, it was more for people who've got four-wheel-drives and probably aren't aware of what they're capable of," he said.

"It was also to show people part of the country that a lot of people might be afraid to go to by themselves but with a group and detailed mapping it wasn't that hard to negotiate."

The tour was the second

organised by Drive 4 Life, an Australian non-profit organisation established by a group of four-wheel-drive enthusiasts who created the event to raise funds for people with disabilities.

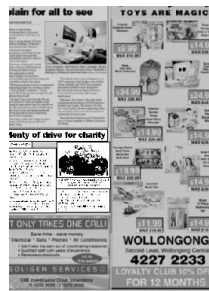
The slogan for this year's four-wheel-drive for Wheelchairs Victorian High Country Tour was: "Your wheels gets them their wheels."

"Paying \$1000 per vehicle to take part, the idea is that four-wheel drivers are putting something back into the community," he said.



**Driving for disability:** Duncan Scott can't wait to take part in next year's tour.

**Picture:** Natalie Spiteri



# Plenty of drive for charity

By NATHAN SIMPSON

Four Wollongong four-wheel drive enthusiasts didn't take a back seat when it came to raising \$100,000.

The awesome foursome - Tony Bourke, Warren Coury, Di Paziak and Scott Munn - tallied the kilometres and raked in the cash for Northcott Disability Services.

The charity 4WD tour was organised by Drive 4 Life, and travelled through the Victorian countryside.

Drive 4 Life is a non-profit organisation set up by a group of 4WD enthusiasts to support children and adults with a disability.

Wollongong's Warren Coury said the event was an enormous success and an amazing adventure.

"It was such an enjoyable experience to take part in and it is even more gratifying to know that the money will directly support children and adults with a disability," he said.



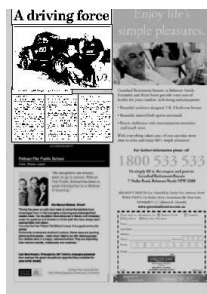
A charity 4WD tour, organised by Drive 4 Life, managed to raise \$100,000 for Northcott Disability Services.

"I can't wait to take part in the tour next year and help to exceed this year's achievement."

A record 85 vehicles took part in the event, where funds were raised by individuals and a \$1000 entry fee.

Log onto [www.drive4life.com.au](http://www.drive4life.com.au) for more information.





# A driving force

CATHERINE Hill Bay couple Dennis and Kerry McGregor have turned their private hobby of 25 years into a hugely successful money-spinner for charity Northcott.

The McGregors are part of the Drive 4 Life group which raised \$100,000 for Northcott Disability Services last month through its *4WD for Wheelchairs* tour of the Victorian High Country.

Eighty-five 4WD enthusiasts took part in the tour, including the McGregors and their hardy Nissan Pa-

trol. Mr McGregor said he could sense goodwill and camaraderie from the participants throughout the four days.

"It was such an enjoyable experience to take part in and it was even more gratifying to know that the money will directly support children and adults with a disability," Mr McGregor said.

"It's also an opportunity to put four-wheel drivers in the good books. There are a lot of roughies around in

our sport and we're not all like that."

Funds were raised through a \$1000 registration fee donated by participants.

The remainder of the donation was supplied by 4WD accessory and manufacturing firm ARB and Cooper Tires, both of which donated surplus sponsorship funds to bring the total funds raised to \$100,000.

Mr McGregor said plans were under way for next year's event, which he hoped would be even bigger and better.



Dennis and Kerry McGregor helped raise \$100,000.





**OFF-ROADING**

**Lifestyle**

# Highland tour raises \$100k for charity

Off-roading enthusiasts have raised \$100,000 for charity after a 4WD tour. The Drive 4 Life project, run by a group of Sydney-based 4WD enthusiasts, raised the funds on its second charity tour around Victoria's High Country.

Organisers said 88 4WD crews spent a week touring in the name of a good time and a good cause.

The participants donated \$100,000 to Northcott Disability Services to aid in the supply of specialised equipment.

All of the participants' \$1000 entry fee went to Northcott, the remainder coming from an anonymous donation.

Running costs for the tour were covered by sponsors including ARB 4WD Accessories, Cooper Tires, IGA Supermarkets and Overlander 4WD magazine; officials and organisers donated their time and expertise.

One of Drive 4 Life's founders and organisers, Mick Whitehead, said: "We are over the moon to have reached our fundraising goal of \$100,000, and are pleased to know that the money will directly support children and adults

with a disability.

"We can't wait to take part in the tour next year and increase this target."

The five-day tour started in the hamlet of Harrietville near Bright, at the foot of the mountains, and took in many of the historical and spectacular sights of Victoria's High Country.

Much of this part of the country is regenerating after the devastating bushfires of the summer of 2006-07, which led to the cancellation of the planned Drive 4 Life tour last year.

Even the seasoned 4WDers on the trip still marvel at the ever-changing landscape of the High Country but, for most on this trip, it was their first opportunity to appreciate the vistas a 4WD vehicle can take you to.

The participants included Steve and Jenny Philips, of Ballarat, who said they had only begun "getting out and about again" in their LandCruiser in the past 12 months.

The couple know only too well the difficulties faced by parents and carers looking after people with disabilities.

Their son, James, was injured in an

accident in 1993 as a three-year-old and has required constant care since.

"We've only just been able to get away," said Jenny of their trip with Drive 4 Life.

"We were so keen to come; we know how hard it is to get the gear. There is so much red tape."

Other participants travelled from as far as Cairns and mid-western Queensland, and Esperance in Western Australia, as well as many from Sydney and Melbourne.

Most of the group leaders were from the 4WD industry, and all paid their entry fee and donated their time.

It was their experience and expertise that made Drive 4 Life so appealing for many participants taking their 4WD off-road for the first time.

Some were back after being a part of the first D4L tour in 2006, and many are already making plans for the next tour in 2009.

**More on Drive 4 Life and plans for 2009, see [www.drive4life.com.au](http://www.drive4life.com.au)**



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For a cause: The Drive 4 Life group tackles the hills in Victoria's high country to raise money for Northcott Disability Services



Keen: Steve and Jenny Philips



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## Drivers hit top gear

MANLY residents Eugene and Celia Barry led 85 four-wheel drive enthusiasts from across Australia on an adventure to conquer the remote wilderness of the Victorian High Country and raised \$100,000 for Northcott Disability Services while doing it. The tour was organised by Drive 4 Life, a group of 4WD enthusiasts who created the event to raise funds for children and adults with a disability. For information on the organisation and its adventure, or taking part in next year's event, see [www.drive4life.com.au](http://www.drive4life.com.au).





## Overlander 4WD

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## DRIVE 4 LIFE A RAGING SUCCESS

This year's second Drive 4 Life charity event was an enormous success, so much so that organisers were proud to announce that they had raised an impressive \$100,000 dollars for their charity of choice the Northcott Society. Drive 4 Life representatives Mick Whitehead and Chris Bates presented Northcott with the \$100,000 cheque at the Northcott

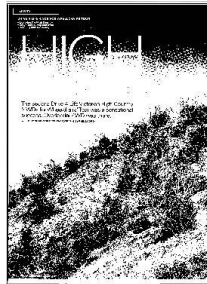
Conference and Function Centre on May 5.

Following on from the well attended first event and having to postpone due to the high country fires, the second annual charity off road event was attended by 88 vehicles and managed to reach the magic \$100,000 dollar mark as well.

"We are over the moon to have reached our fundraising goal of \$100,000 and are pleased to know that the money will directly support children and adults with a disability," Drive 4 Life's Mick Whitehead said. "We can't wait to take part in the tour next year and increase this target."

You can read elsewhere in this issue about the event and congratulations to all who organised and attended what is sure to become a 'must do' journey on the annual offroad calendar.





**Overlander 4WD**

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**4WDFEATURE**

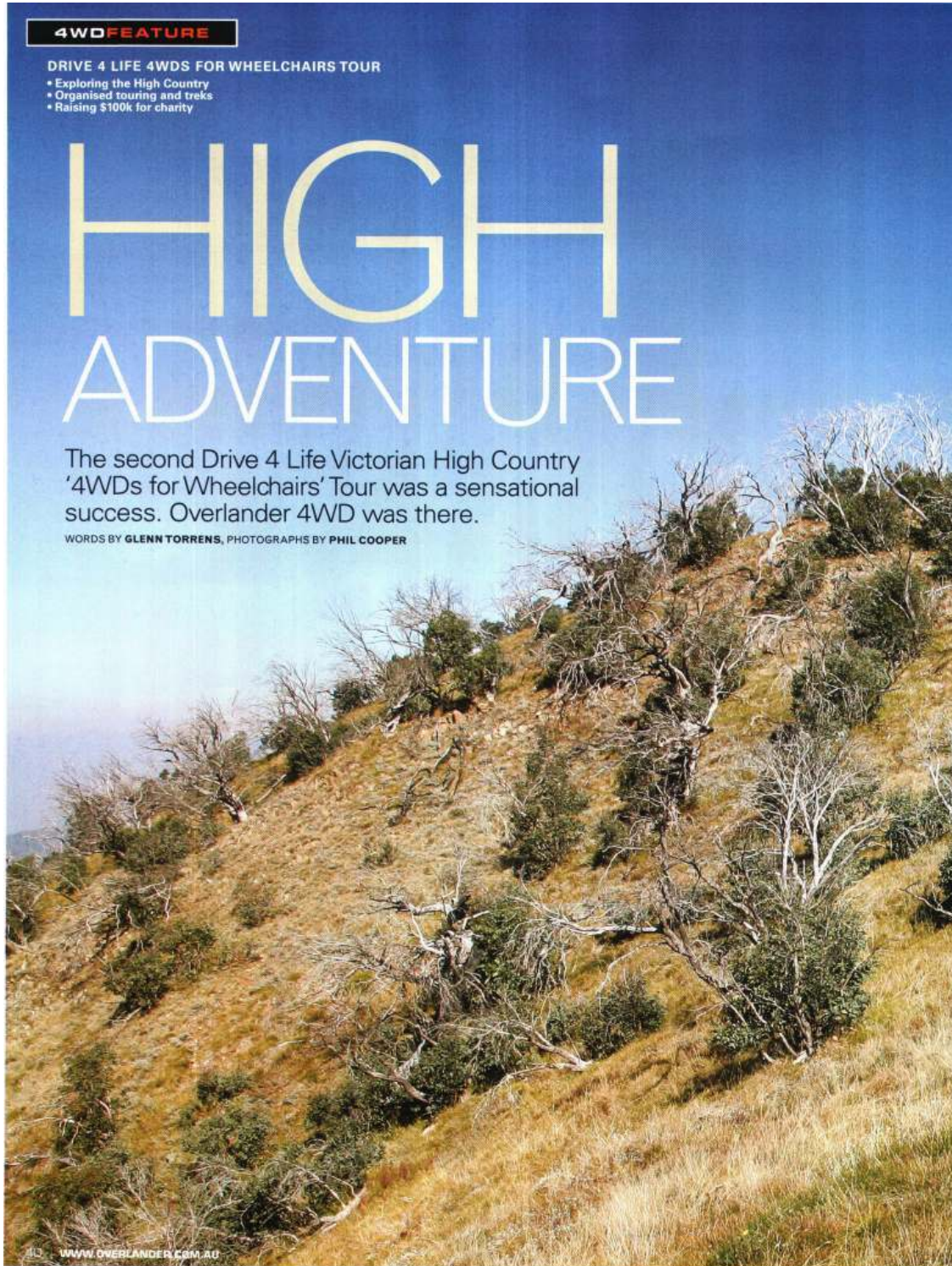
**DRIVE 4 LIFE 4WDS FOR WHEELCHAIRS TOUR**

- Exploring the High Country
- Organised touring and treks
- Raising \$100k for charity

# HIGH ADVENTURE

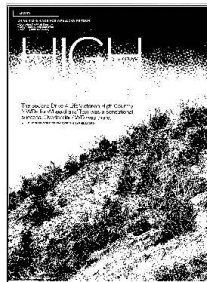
The second Drive 4 Life Victorian High Country '4WDS for Wheelchairs' Tour was a sensational success. Overlander 4WD was there.

WORDS BY **GLENN TORRENS**, PHOTOGRAPHS BY **PHIL COOPER**



[WWW.OVERLANDER.COM.AU](http://WWW.OVERLANDER.COM.AU)





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It was smiles all round when 88 4WDs congregated in Harrietville in the Victorian High Country for the second Drive 4 Life '4WDs for Wheelchairs' Tour. The first event in 2006 raised \$74,000 for the Northcott Society to provide mobility aids for kids, but Mother Nature's fiery character forced postponement of the second event until April 2008. The pushed-back date made the organisers and participants even more determined to reach their target and allowed the event to be run in cooler conditions.

Overlander 4WD is an event sponsor, so we tagged along with the entrants who were split into 10 groups. Over the 5 days of the tour each of the groups would see plenty of High Country highlights on the trip such as Craig's Hut, Mount Blue Rag and Billy Goat Bluff.

Even though the event officially began on Monday morning, the Snowline Hotel/Motel in Harrietville welcomed many of us for beers and cheers on Sunday night. Some participants had travelled from as far as Cairns and mid-western Queensland, and Esperance in WA.

The first day dawned crisp and bright but with a hint of smoke in the air due to local control burning. We were to tag along with the camper trailer group, who were following a course specially tailored to be less demanding than the other groups' treks. As such, it was a relatively easy day over rough but two-wheel drive roads. Our destination was a delightful grassed campsite by the Crooked River in the abandoned

OVERLANDER 4WD 07.08





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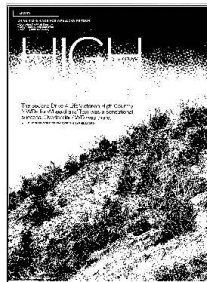
gold mining district of Talbotville. This valley was home to around 10,000 people during the gold rush of the 1850s but after the last residents left in the 1940s, not much remains of the bygone gold era apart from some incongruously-scattered piles of gravel and machinery.

Being the first night, there was a big campfire and introductions all round. We all had a laugh around the campfire recalling the first 'incident' of the trek – when two of our group followed 'convoy procedure' with such determination that they, and the string of 4WDs, trailers and one caravan behind them, were led into a cattle mustering area by a farmer's ute!

The next day, we joined another group, establishing our basic routine for the rest of our week. Day two was scheduled to be more challenging for the drivers and a lot more invigorating for passengers, with spectacular views. And the challenges began early with one vehicle popping a coolant hose a couple of kilometres from our camp. The vehicle behind it in convoy noticed clouds of steam before it entered the first creek of the day, and by radio called for investigation. Luckily, spares were on hand and with minimal coaching, the owner had his vehicle going







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again – with creek water as coolant – in less than half an hour. Of course, there was plenty of good-natured assistance from the remainder of the convoy who had milled around to watch and lend a hand.

It was also a good opportunity for our group leader for the day, Darren McRae to impart a bit of knowledge on the assembled group. "Preventative maintenance is a very, very good idea," he explained. "It's a good idea to have all your hoses replaced every few years or 100,000km or so and keep the old ones in your truck as spares." That's common sense for many of us but those words were pearls of wisdom for some of the less experienced members – some were absolute first timers to 4WDing - of the group. By the way, the faithful Nissan Patrol had 400,000 on its clock so could be excused for its hiccup!

A lot of the day was spent grinding along in low range, with spectacular views everywhere as we headed toward the spectacular Billy Goat Bluff – a narrow spit of rock not much wider than the track that it traverses - and our campsite at Horseyard Flat. With the approach to Billy Goat Bluff rising

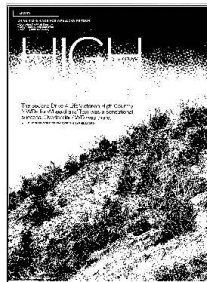
nearly 1600m (from 400 to around 2000m altitude) in just seven kilometres, the driving terrain in the dying hours of the second day was challenging. Too challenging for one vehicle, as it turned out – it kneeled down on its suspension just before we reached our camp. Luckily, it could be limped to a 2WD-standard road where a tow truck was organised via the group leader's sat-phone. Disappointing, yes, but the situation could have been much worse if the suspension had failed earlier in the day while we were in much tougher low range terrain.

It's no secret that the High Country lost a lot of its appeal to travellers after the 2003 fires (and again after fires in late 2006 that caused postponement of the second Drive 4 Life event). As a result, many local businesses suffered. Some were physically damaged by fire, then they and many others lost income as travellers chose other areas to explore – and other places to spend their holiday money.

But the High Country has sprung back to life. Parks Victoria and other authorities have done a sensational job of rectifying tracks and facilities and Mother Nature is slowly but surely







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### THEY DID IT!

With the slogan 'Your wheels will get them theirs' the Drive 4 Life concept is simple – get a bunch of 4WDers together for a tag-along trek with a difference, and 'rattle the can' for charity. But it's a big task and proudly organised by a committee comprising long-term 4WDers Mick Whitehead, Norm Needham, Chris Bates, Dave and Deb Dennis, Celia and Eugene Barry, Dennis and Kerry McGregor and Overlander editor Matt Raudonikis.

Hundreds of hours of planning and reconnaissance goes into this event. Even as Overlander 4WD's representative, I must say I was honestly impressed with the organisation and instructions provided; the 4WDing, off-road rallying/comp and personnel management experience of various members of the committee (and team leaders) really shines through in the fuss-free way the trek runs.

The Drive 4 Life event wouldn't have been possible without the support of principal sponsor ARB Corporation and sponsors Cooper Tires, Hema Maps, Mail Marketing Works and IGA Supermarkets. Other businesses who assisted include Snowline Hotel/Motel (Harrietville), Mannell Motors (Thornleigh NSW), Total Care 4WD (Seven Hills NSW), Macquarie 4x4 Centre (Vineyard NSW) and ATS 4x4 (Geelong Vic).



painting the place green again. And, as mentioned by several of the group leaders either around the campfire or over the radio, for the first time in recorded history it's possible to see into some of the valleys from the peaks that have been hemmed in by stands of trees since time immemorial.

There's plenty of human heritage to be found, too, with most of the groups passing by or staying at several of the many cattlemen's huts that dot the High Country. A highlight for many participants was the restored Craig's Hut, the original movie-set building from the classic Man From Snowy River movies. Built in 1981 and shored-up in the 1990s, it was lost during the 2006 fires but re-opened in January this year after a huge rebuilding effort.

But it's not all good news. Due to the challenging weather

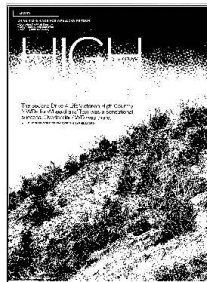
conditions and a short growing season, the fragile Alpine environment takes decades to come back to form. In fact, many areas may never been the same as they once were, due to the murderous nature of the intensely hot fires. Whole mountains of trees, unaccustomed to such fierce heat, will forever remain stark, dead poles. In some places, a new and different hierarchy of plants has established itself with time and nature already giving the burnt areas a new identity. Unfortunately, in some places weeds are the most prevalent new residents.

We parted company with our Day 2 group at the Zeka Spur Track and waited for the next group of 4WDs to come along. Simply sitting there with a stand of snow gums beside us,

fluffy clouds in the blue sky above and peace and quiet all around, again makes me realise just how lucky we are in Australia to have such beautiful terrain to explore.







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As it turned out, our 'new' group was already having lunch just up the road and group leaders Karen and Kevin, having been advised by radio where we would most likely be waiting, soon found us. Then we skipped again to another group that was to be camping at nearby Howitt Hut.

This group decided to cut the day short due to the fact that one of their number had to drive to town to buy more fuel. But it was happy and settled Rob from Queensland and team who we found at Howitt Hut just after dusk. The group's scheduled destination was a campground in the Wonnangatta Valley, but the lads finished the day early, rather than take the risk of having one vehicle play catch up after sundown, and decided to cook up a feast and have a few laughs.

As we discovered the next morning, 'calling it a day' early was a good decision. The track into the Wonnangatta Valley wouldn't have been much fun alone in daylight, let alone after dark, especially if something went wrong – as it did to one of

the vehicle's front shocks during the morning's descent. Once again, a bush fix-up and a tailgate-brewed coffee or three saw the convoy going again in a little less than one hour.

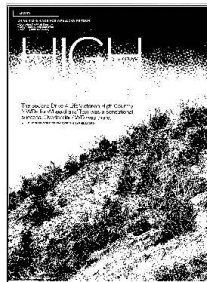
With the group, we arrived back at Talbotville on Thursday afternoon after another sensational day of trekking, but a little disappointed that we hadn't caught up with every group of participants. So if you were there and we didn't catch up with you, sorry we didn't get to say G'day and thanks for playing your part!

There was to be another highlight on Friday – the climb to Blue Rag, another one of the iconic destinations of the trek. As luck would have it, it was our turn for dramas, with mechanical maladies sticking their grubby mitts onto our vehicle on the last few car lengths of the last climb on the last day of the trek. It was a frustrating end to the week, but it could have been worse...

Presentations were held back at the Snowline Motel on Friday night, where a very proud Mick, Chris and Norm presented a cheque to the trek's beneficiary, the Northcott







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### REAL LIFE

Steve and Jenny Philips' smiles hide years of hardship. The Ballarat couple (pictured right) know only too well the difficulties faced by parents and carers looking after people with disabilities: their son James was injured in an accident in 1993 as a three-year-old and has required constant care since. They admit they have only begun getting out and about again in their Land Cruiser in the last 12-months as their son approaches 18 and adulthood. "We've only just been able to get away," said Jenny of their trek with Drive 4 Life. That, readers, means 15 years of little or no holidays and a constant struggle to source appropriate care and equipment for their son. "We were so keen to come [and support the event] as we know how hard it is to get the equipment. There is so much red tape."



Society. Let me tell you, there was a bloody big cheer as everyone in the crowd realised they were looking at a cheque for one hundred big ones. Yep, \$100,000.

Just before the Harrietville Social Club cranked up their trailer-mounted BBQ to feed everyone, the 'good sport' prizes were awarded. Before the trek, each group leader had been asked to keep a lookout for deserving people to win one of 10 snatch straps and ARB Road Atlases. The prizes went to 20 appreciative couples and families, immortalised for such legendary acts as following the farm truck into a farm, rather than the 'real' convoy!

The \$100K and fun awards ceremony was a sensational

end to a sensational week and planning for next year's event unofficially began over a few beers on Friday night with discussion about a possible route and including a special 'family group' route.

Forget, for a moment, that this was a charity cruise. It was also one of the best ways for first-time or less-confident 4WDers – singles, couples or a family – to experience one of Australia's iconic touring destinations. As far as tag-along tours go, the 'donation' fee of \$1000 per vehicle is pretty sharp value and the \$100,000 raised is a sensational bonus.

Scratch it in your diary for April next year – it really is a terrific week with benefits all round. 