



# AgrAbility Australia Newsletter

## Dean Hearne's story. A Change of Direction....

This is Dean's story ...'Being brought up on my parents farm I always wanted to be a farmer and was achieving my dream. In January 1989 there was a hiccup when a surfing accident left me with a spinal cord injury confining me to a wheelchair with a C5-6 quadriplegia, yet I was determined to continue farming. It took nearly 2 years but with the support of family and friends we modified two 4WD tractors with lifts and controls allowing me to continue farming. I could drive a car with hand controls and Wym's wheelchair hoist plus a 4 wheel motorbike, altered to suit for mustering etc. I continued farming until in June 1999 the farm was sold and my parents and I retired to the outskirts of Dalby. I was 35 years old—what would I do now?



I decided I wanted to see Australia, so I set to work designing a caravan to suit my needs. The caravan was built by Kendron in Brisbane and the lift on the back was fitted with the help of Aion Engineering, conveniently located next door to me in Dalby. The caravan has turning room inside, air conditioning, TV, stove etc, 12 volt system with gas hot water and external shower which I use at the back on the lift deck with screens put around. I tow the van with my Falcon wagon, the van allows me to pull up wherever I want without restrictions on disability facilities.



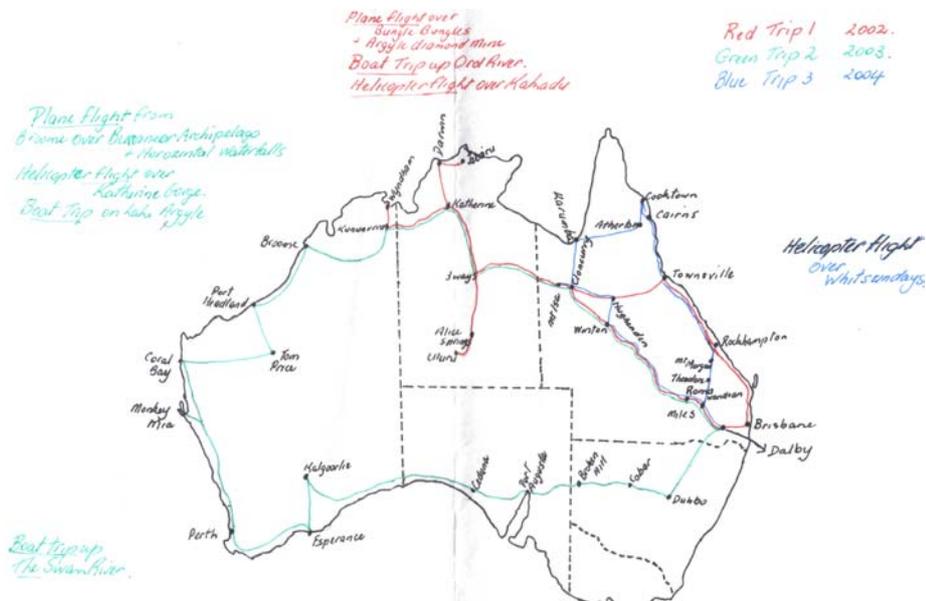
We have done 3 trips so far, in 2002, 2003 and 2004 all shown on the map, each trip we have done plane or helicopter flights and boat trips where I can't go with the car. We found people and tourism operators willing to help as long as I was willing to have a go!. Mind you I am 6 ft 1 tall and heavy.



I have a fishing boat and ramps set up to allow me to go fishing. The big seat in the boat slides from one side to the other to centralise weight, I am able to transfer from car to chair and into the boat. There are 2 electric (12 volt) fishing rods installed to help me catch fish with limited hand function.

The 2005 caravan trip is hopefully down through NSW and the Great Ocean Road in March/April—can't wait!!...

Dean is available to talk about suitable camping grounds and accessible holiday destinations if you are planning a trip.





**Independence:**

I wheel to my car, using the remote control I unlock the door, open sliding door, deploy ramp, wheel up ramp which is fairly steep and requires a run up taking care as there isn't a lot of spare width. Wheel into drivers position and chair is locked into position with automatic floor locking devices which work a bit like hooking a trailer onto a prime mover, there is a pin mounted under my chair which locks onto floor mounts as I wheel into the drivers position. Then with toggle switches mounted on the steering column I lift the ramp, shut the door, bring back rest around behind the chair and it locks into position, put the seat belt on, start the car and off we go. To exit the car I do this all in reverse - as ramp is going down the air is released from the rear suspension lowering the vehicle to within 5 inches of ground level for easier exit/entry.

**Remote Features:**

The remote system that came with the vehicle was not adequate, requiring the operator to be located beside the vehicle and in the correct position. Since then I have had a viper car security system installed, they guarantee the remote device to work for up to 100 feet, which it does and further.

The other feature is the remote start which is great for hot days. I stop the car with the air conditioner still on, I then can start the car from inside shops/office and let the car run for a few minutes to cool down before I enter.

**Seating:**

I usually drive with the two middle seats out this means I can still carry four passengers. It is possible to easily clip extra seats, they can be wheeled up the ramp and locked into key holed plates on the floor, this only takes a couple of minutes. If I was not in car three bucket seats could be fitted allowing the vehicle to carry up to seven people. With me driving it is easy to put one extra seat in behind the front passenger after I have entered the car, although it has to be taken out before I exit the vehicle. Another good feature is the front passenger seat can easily be put in the drivers position for able bodied people to drive (handy when out and have had too much to drink). Then my chair can be restrained in the front passenger position by anchoring the wheel chair with retractable straps on the floor, similar to ordinary tie downs.

**Capital Special Vehicles**

This company made the modifications, Rodney reported them to be quite difficult to work with and were some 8 months behind schedule with the delivery date, however they were very good with the warranty as the actuator (electric motor that lifts and deploys the exit/entry ramp) and the relay needed to be replaced, as well as the electric motor which puts the handbrake on/off.

**Fuel:**

Fuel consumption is high about 5kms/litre. In addition parts for the Voyager are quite expensive, for example to fit and replace the front brake pads it was \$280.00.

**Parking:**

Parking with side load you need to be very careful where you park, normal disabled parks are not wide enough to let you open the ramp if the car park beside is occupied. I find parking curb side the best option as no one can park you in and it becomes nearly a flat exit/entry as ramp is rested on the footpath.

## FOR SALE

### Yamaha 225cc All Terrain Vehicle 2WD

Hand control modifications for rear braking and gear shift, throttle control altered for wrist pressure. Has car seat and a belly seatbelt. Tyres near new and only second set on the bike. The bike has been well maintained and kept undercover.

Price \$5500.00



### Camper Trailer

King single bed, large door each side of bed located at wheel chair height, fully screened, full annex on one side, roof on the other side. Fold down ramps at back for wheel chair storage etc, light inside, registered until Feb 2005.

Price \$3750.00

### Tractor Lift

Previously fitted to a Versatile tractor the lift has a 12 volt winch, lifting both the person and the chair to cabin height allowing easy transfer into the cabin.

Price is negotiable.

*All inquiries please contact Dean Hearne on phone 07 4669 7774.*

