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MITSUBISHI DELICA

**REAL 4WD**

# NOT SO DELICATE

Proof that with the right mods, even a people mover can be a tough tourer

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**A**s off-road enthusiasts, it's hard not to turn your head when you see an out of the ordinary 4WD drive past. This, of course, sparks the curiosity and we begin to think things like, 'I wonder where that thing can go?'. Well strap yourselves in because we are about to show you an almost ideal left of field family touring set-up in the form of a Mitsubishi Delica.

Owner Bruce purchased the 2000-model Delica back in 2009 when it was bog stock. Bruce is a sparky by trade and works as a Business Development Manager in the solar power industry, which means he has to have enough room to cart equipment around for work. "I owned a 4WD ute that I used for both work and play," Bruce says. "Unfortunately, one day I had it loaded up with my work gear and somebody helped themselves and stole almost everything. After that I decided I needed something that was 4WD capable but had enough room inside to keep my gear secure. The Delica was perfect for what I needed."

When it's not being daily driven, the Delica turns into a

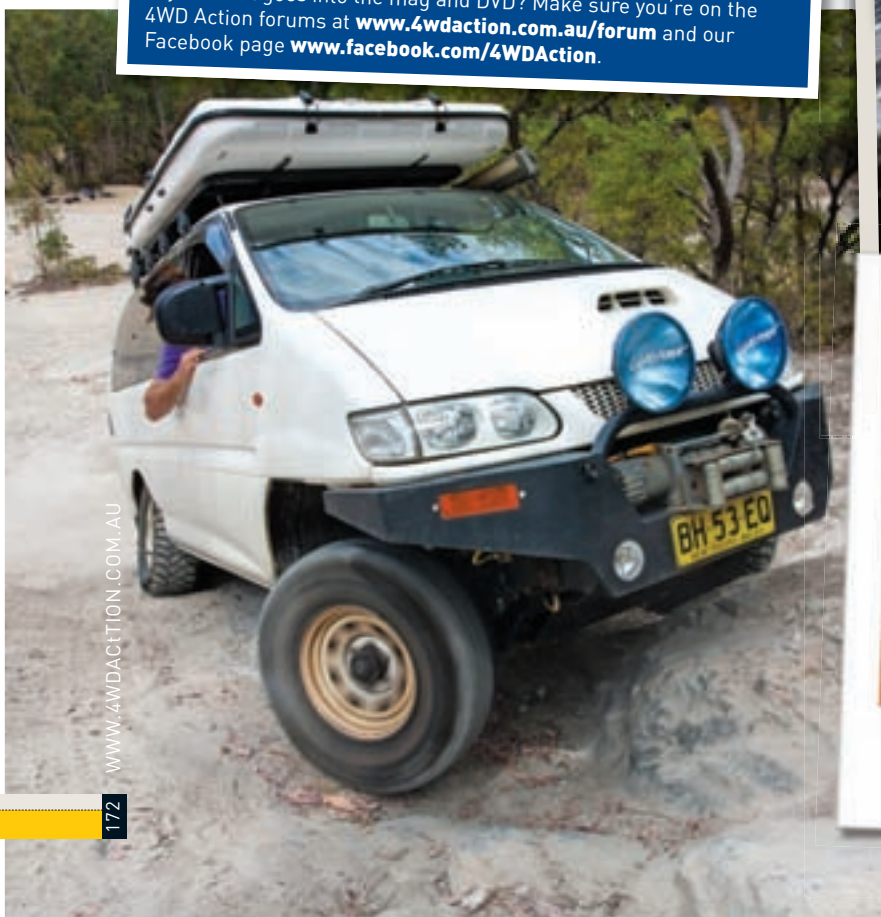
weekend getaway machine for him and the whole family. He's lucky enough to be a local of Stockton Beach, which means he is never too far away from the Watagans State Forest either.

With such a beaut touring set-up, you can guarantee it has been used for just that. Recently, Bruce and his family packed up and headed out to the Simpson Desert for a huge four weeks. "My favourite spot would have to be Lake Gairdner in South Australia," Bruce says. "After testing the Delica out on that trip, I now know that it's set up to go just about anywhere and can still be comfortable."

"The best advice I could offer to someone looking into modifying a Delica is to sign up to the Delicaclub online forum. There's a huge amount of information available for just about everything you want to know." Bruce tells us that next up is Cape York and a trip around Tasmania. Okay, Bruce has made us all jealous enough with his travel itinerary, so let's get into the details and see what makes his Delica so special. *4WD*

## AS VOTED BY YOU!

We put a photo of this tough Deli up on Facebook, with a challenge – 3000 'likes' and we'd feature it in the mag. And with a total just shy of 5,000, you've spoken, so here it is! Want to have your say on what goes into the mag and DVD? Make sure you're on the 4WD Action forums at [www.4wdaction.com.au/forum](http://www.4wdaction.com.au/forum) and our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/4WDAction](http://www.facebook.com/4WDAction).



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Not a whole lot of room in the engine bay, so it's important to use what you have effectively

## UNDER THE BONNET

Looking into the engine bay, you'll see a 2.8L four-cylinder turbo-diesel engine with a factory fitted top-mount intercooler. The 2.8L diesel is the same engine that can be found in some Mitsubishi Pajeros, which means parts are readily available.

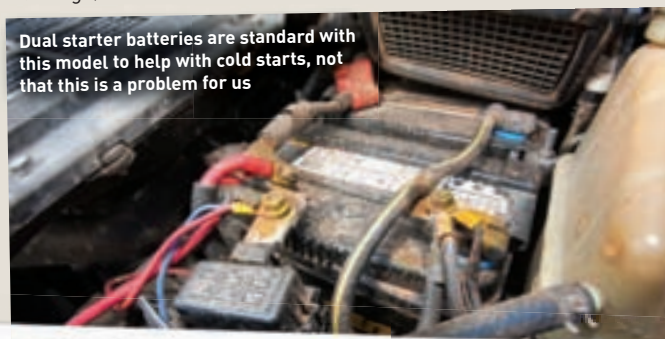
Fitted next to the engine are dual starter batteries. Surprisingly, it's a standard option that came with some Delicas. Since they are imported from Japan, they're built to endure the cold weather and the dual-battery set-up helps during cold starts. Of course, you're not likely to encounter such cold environments in Australia, but the second battery is a handy addition nonetheless, especially when coupled with a third auxiliary battery. Yep, this Delica has more batteries than most!

To take advantage of the small amount of space left in the engine bay, Bruce has fitted an ARB compressor to the firewall behind the air filter box. To save him from popping the bonnet every time he wants to use his compressor, Bruce has run an airline to the front of the vehicle and mounted it onto the bullbar.

Keeping enough fuel on board to travel over long distances is something that every tourer needs to be able to do. To solve the problem on the Delica, Bruce has replaced the standard 75L fuel tank with a custom 135L long-range tank from RPM Tanks.

"The next thing I want to do is add a snorkel," he says. "I noticed that I was getting quite a bit of dust in the airbox during our Simpson trip, which was to be expected, but I think a snorkel would help to cut down on that. It also adds peace of mind when doing deeper water crossings, because I have had a few near misses."

Dual starter batteries are standard with this model to help with cold starts, not that this is a problem for us





## EXTERIOR

The first thing that stands out on this 4WD is the custom bullbar. "There aren't many bullbars available," Bruce says. "I'd seen this one around, and when I found out that the owner was looking at getting rid of it, I jumped on the chance to buy it."

Mounted into the bullbar is a 9000lb Ironman 4x4 winch to help get Bruce out of any tricky situations he might come across. On top of the bullbar is a set of Lightforce driving lights that light the way for Bruce. "Under the front I had a custom bashplate," Bruce says. "It was made by t0me, which specialises in Delica bits and pieces. The bashplate is really essential on these vehicles, as the engine sits quite low and is vulnerable to damage underneath."

When driving the sand dunes of the Simpson Desert, it is important to have a sand flag visible to let other drivers know where you are. Knowing this, Bruce fitted a threaded bolt to the bullbar, where he can screw his sand flag on whenever he needs it.

On top of the vehicle, he has fitted a full-length roof cage, which is where the James Baroud rooftop tent is mounted. "I honestly couldn't recommend the rooftop tent more," Bruce says. "It makes any trip comfortable, it only takes two minutes to set up, and all of your bedding is already inside. It also keeps the dust out really well, which is nice after you have been in the dust all day."

On the side of the roof rack is an OZtrail awning Bruce has mounted LED strip lights underneath to make night-time activities like cooking a little bit easier. "Before we left on our big trip, I had to figure out a way to carry an extra spare tyre," he says. "I decided to knock up a spare tyre carrier quickly before I left and mounted it onto the towbar. I'm happy with the way it turned out, and along with the spare mounted underneath the vehicle, it means I'm able to carry both without losing any normally usable space."



Pull up to a campsite, unclip the four sides and you have yourself a made bed. You've got to love the simplicity



Rather than opening the bonnet when you want to use your compressor, you can just plug an airline into the bullbar



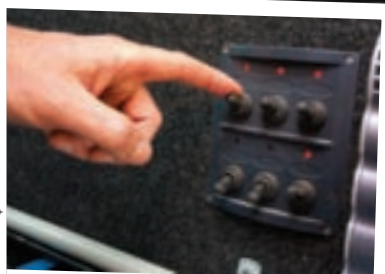
The T0me bash plate keeps all of the most important bits safe







Everything has its own place and there's still a ton of room left



The switches allow Bruce to isolate any accessory in the vehicle



You can tell that Bruce loves his Drifta drawer set-up

## INTERIOR

The interior is where the Delica really comes into its own. It started life as an eight-seater, but it didn't take Bruce long to rip the back seats out to make room for a cargo barrier and Drifta drawer system, reducing the Delica down to a four-seater.

The Drifta drawers are an effective way for Bruce to keep all of his gear organised in the back, and even includes a small table to make cooking easy. Next to the drawers is an ARB 78L fridge/freezer mounted to a fridge slide, which you can bet came in handy during the four-week trip throughout the Simmo.

"One of my favourite mods has to be the 1500W pure wave inverter," Bruce says. "It's installed behind the cargo barrier and allows me to have a 240V AC outlet on the drawers. It's bloody good to pull up and plug in the kettle to make a coffee; it also keeps the wife happy! I also added six extra 12V outlets, three in the front and three in the back."

Mounted next to the inverter on the cargo barrier and behind the rear seat is a Redarc battery management system. This system makes sure that all batteries are charging when possible, whether it's by solar power, AC power or DC from the alternator. It also allows you to have a monitor and control system, which Bruce has mounted below the dash. He has also added a switch panel beside the battery management system that ensures he can isolate any of the accessories, rather than waste precious battery life. Under the Redarc you'll find an 80L water tank plumbed to a tap at the rear of the vehicle.

Taking care of the communications is a Wauxun hand-held UHF with a holder beside the gearstick. The handy part about this set-up is it can be easily picked up and used outside of the 4WD.

To keep him on the track, Bruce has an iPad fitted to a RAM mount with the Hema Maps application installed. Supporting the iPad's GPS function is a GNS 5870, which is a small Bluetooth-operated device that allows it to connect to satellite navigation even when it's not in internet range. "The iPad is perfect for touring," Bruce says. "Not only can you navigate by using it, you also have internet access and games if anybody gets bored on a long stretch of track."

On the driver's side A-pillar, Bruce has mounted his Tyredog display, which lets him see the tyre pressures in each of the tyres around the vehicle. This set-up is tops because it means you can monitor any slow leaks that have developed.



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## SUSPENSION AND DRIVELINE

When Bruce first purchased the Delica, the suspension was looking a little rundown. "The suspension was a bit soft and I needed to carry my work gear," he says. "I used an Ironman 4x4 2in lift kit that was to suit a Delica off-the-shelf, even though the Pajero driveline is basically the same. It was at this point that I caught the modification bug and a simple upgrade of suspension turned into a full touring build-up. With the heavy-duty torsion bars in the front and Ironman 4x4 2in coil springs in the rear it's comfortable and can handle the weight from my equipment."

Of course, with so much storage space inside, it allows you to load up more gear than usual, and more gear means more weight. So, Bruce had to install a set of airbags into the rear coils before his big Simpson Desert trip. "The airbags were really easy to install," he says. "You basically remove the coil springs, drop the airbags inside the springs and re-install them. I don't use the airbags during day-to-day driving, but when it's fully loaded I normally put a couple of PSI in, just to help take the load off."

Keeping contact with the dirt are 31in Mickey Thompson Baja Claws on 15in steel wheels. "I was having a bit of trouble with the tyres scrubbing on the guards when turning," Bruce explains. "The way I solved this was cutting the guards. It was really easy. All I needed to do was turn the tyres onto full lock and mark where they were scrubbing. Once it was all marked out, I just got the grinder out, trimmed the fat away and gave it a lick of paint to stop it rusting. I was surprised at how well it turned out to be honest. The hardest part is getting over the fear of using a grinder on your 4WD!"

Another handy thing Bruce has done is added a Tyredog tyre pressure monitoring system. This set-up uses sensors that you install onto each wheel, which send a wireless signal back to the display on your dash and tell you what tyre pressures you're currently running. Perfect for keeping an eye on your tyres when you're in the thick of it off-road.

He tells us that he is happy with the set-up, but he has a couple of things on his list, like a set of front and rear diff lockers. Bruce says he has seen a local Delica owner who has installed an 8in lift that flexes like crazy. Come on Bruce, we know you want it!



Want to know what your batteries are doing? Just look here

## THANKS

Bruce would like to say thanks to his wife Fiona for putting up with him, Col and Cheryl Parkes, and his daughter Jessica for not eating too much desert sand when he 'accidentally' left his window down.

He also needs to throw a special mention out to Solar Australia for paying the bills, Luke from Difta Kitchens, and James Baroud Roof Top Tents Australia.

## RUNDOWN

**VEHICLE:** 2000 Mitsubishi Delica

**ENGINE:** 2.8L turbo-diesel

**GEARBOX:** Four-speed automatic

**4WD ACTIVATION:** Part-time

**SUSPENSION:**

FRONT: 2in Ironman shocks with heavy-duty torsion bars

REAR: 2in Ironman coils, Ironman shocks and airbags

**TYRES:** 31in Mickey Thompson Baja Claws

**WHEELS:** 15in steel wheels

**OTHER GOOD GEAR:** James Baroud rooftop tent, rear spare carrier, 1500W 12V to 240V inverter, 135L long-range fuel tank, Difta drawers



You can bet that the Ironman suspension and the airbags all got a good workout through these tracks

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