

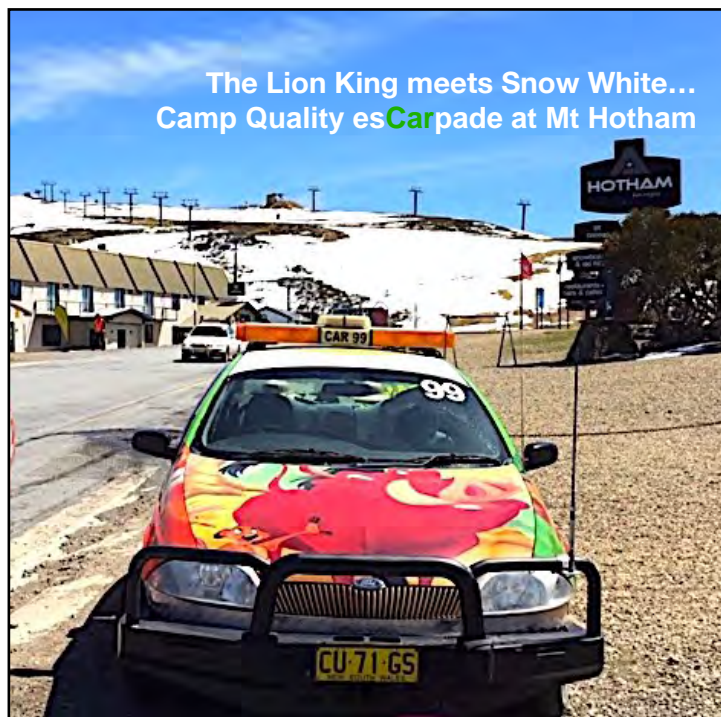
## Bill van Diemen, Brian Nicholson and their Camp Quality esCarpade October 20 - 26

Seven days, two states, 48 old cars, searing heat, freezing cold, 3000km of dusty roads, flies - sounds like fun? Talk to Bill van Diemen and Brian Nicholson and they will give you an unreserved "Yes!"

Throw into the mix that Bill and Brian, club members from the Southern Tablelands Region, helped raise nearly a million dollars for a wonderful cause, they caught up with old friends, made new friends, and had heaps of fun along the way - and you get the idea that the Camp Quality esCarpade might just be a really good thing.

This was Bill's sixth 'bash' (and Brian's first) since he started in 2013. Cars have to be at least 20 years old and there's no prize for guessing what his first drive was.... Of course, it was a Morris Minor ('Doris the Morris'). Since then he has driven a Commodore, Fairmont, Fairlane, and an AU Falcon this year.

The Camp Quality esCarpade is a fund raising activity to help children aged 0-13 cope with the daily ups and downs of dealing with cancer. This year's bash started in Wangaratta on Sunday 20 October, driving through Sale, Bendigo to Mt Gambier (for a rest/repair day on the



Wednesday), then up through Renmark, Horsham, and finishing in Echuca on Saturday 26 October.

The really gruelling part was that 80% of the 3100km covered was on dirt roads. "It was so dusty on some roads that we were eating dirt - and flies!" admitted Brian, "But I'd do it all again because it's just such a good cause."

Schools were visited en route - which is where the 'dressed up' cars - and dressed up competitors - came to the fore. The themed cars and entrants, dressed in themes school children could relate to, entertained the children while the Camp Quality puppet show helped educate them about cancer.

There were 48 entrants' cars, six Camp Quality officials, medical and mechanics cars, plus another six team-support vehicles, so 60 cars in all on the road (that's a lot of dust!). One of those cars was a 1999 Ford Falcon AU.

One for the family album: Bill van Diemen (left) and Brian Nicholson pose next to *The Lion King* (note Brian's safety boots)





## Spectacular scenery in the Victorian high country



The car was bought for \$600, unregistered, from Mittagong Auto Wreckers. It had sat under a tree for some years and had a bit of rust, but not too much. Ray Selby helped a lot with getting the car ready, ably assisted by Keith Beare.

Bill and Brian with Camp Quality mascot 'Giggles'

One or two things are must-have items, such as obvious safety gear, spare petrol, spare parts, sump guard, roof lights (so others can see your car in the dust), rear-facing spot light, 2 CB radios (one hand-held), fire extinguisher, first aid kit, mud flaps, jacking plates, front-and-rear towing capacity, high-vis vests, trip computer, etc, etc. Who pays for all this? And for the car? "The esCarpade contestant" said Bill. "It costs a lot just to get a car ready; the money comes out of our pockets, not from sponsorship."

In saying that, Brian kicked in quite a bit towards the car, including \$2500 to have the *Lion King* wrap put onto the car, and another large donation came from Brian's daughter and son-in-law.

The 2019 bash took the contestants through and across lots of different terrains,



from 4WD forest trails to open plains, from Mt Hotham and freezing snow to 38 degree temperatures at Mt Gambier - and dust. "In places it was just like white talcum powder, so thick you could hardly see" said Brian.

Apart from the dust and flies, there was just a little bit of fun had along the way. 'Fun stops' in the middle of no-where were a regular event, mostly supported by local CWAs and Lions Clubs. Some overnight stops had a theme night, like a 'blue' night





Wild animals and wild themes: the bash had everything, from animals on the road, to school visits, to dress-up nights - and all for an excellent cause, the Camp Quality esCarpade 2019

at Mt gambier and the 'farmyard night' in Echuca.

And the entry cost for all this fun? Every entrant had to raise at least \$5000 as their entry 'fee'. Bill and Brian went above-and-beyond, raising about \$8000. They were part of the five-car 'Team Illawarra', which raised \$40,000. "In all we raised \$968,100 for children and their families living with cancer, so everyone's a winner!" declared Bill.

Mittagong RSL, an old school mate who runs Strategic Formwork, and Repco Mittagong were Bill and Brian's major sponsors.

Plans are already under way for 2020. Bill and wife Carmel will team up, while Brian has started planning his own bash attempt. Camp Quality have already started, too, with the route starting in Inverell, then north to Rockhampton and back south to Lismore.

How did Bill get into esCarpade bashes in the first place? In his own words: "About 20 years ago, a neighbour had a child who went through cancer. I couldn't do anything then but once the kids had finished high school, it was time to get involved."

So, are there any sponsors out there for Bill and Brian's 'fun' next year?

Story and photos: Bill van Diemen and Brian Nicholson







The many landscapes on esCarpade

