

Preparing your trailer for an outback trip

Just a short note on boat trailer maintenance before you head off to the 25th Anniversary Lake Eyre Yacht Club Regatta. Why are we writing this? We build trailers in a small country town and have seen many problems that could have been avoided if the trailer was checked before heading off, especially on a long trip over rough roads.

A few things to look for before heading off:

- Check the frame for cracks and rust particularly around the mudguards, mast supports and roller supports. Dig into the rust a little to see if it is just surface rust or if it goes deeper.
- Check the suspension for wear i.e. springs including mounts and bushes, pins or bolts. When checking the springs look for broken leaves and excessive rust between the leaves as this can cause the leaves to break. Check the centre bolt and U bolts are tight. If the trailer has bushes check for wear and replace if necessary
- Axle, hubs and bearings. Consider using marine seals as these keep out more dust, mud and water even if the trailer doesn't go in the water for unloading the boat. Any hubs which get submersed should have bearing buddies and greased just prior to unloading so the hub is pressurised. All bearings should be at least checked and repacked with grease if not replaced before departure.
- Wheels and tyres checked, including spares. All wheel nuts loosened and then retightened to ensure you can change a wheel without breaking or stripping wheel studs on the trip. Use appropriate tyre pressure, checking when tyre is cold.
- Lights- LED lights are preferable as less chance of breakage. Check that the wiring and lights are protected from stone damage from both the trailer wheels and vehicle wheels. Put in some electrical tape as a precaution.
- Consider a stone guard, particularly for wagons to prevent back window damage, if practical. Make sure the towing vehicle has suitable mudflaps.
- DO NOT OVERLOAD THE TRAILER. Check axle, spring and tyre ratings if adding additional boats or weight is added to the trailer. In Victoria, non braked trailers have a gross vehicle mass (GVM) of 750kg. You will find the trailer GVM and tare on the VIN plate attached to the trailer or on the registration label.

This is just a suggestion for preparing your trailer. Hopefully this might prevent a break down in the middle of no where and everyone will get to the regatta and home again without incident.

Anyone with queries is welcome to contact us for information or tips on trailers: Vince and Nette from Cobden Tools and Trailers ph 03 55952040 B/H mobile 0407052231

PS Last year we took a few spares which were used on the way home, this year we will take some too but hopefully they wont be needed.

Bob also suggests:

- Light truck tyres on your trailer last far longer on rough outback roads
- When you stop for a break feel the warmth of your hubs. If they are a lot hotter than normal remove and inspect/regrease the bearings or replace with the spare set you always carry with you. Much better than losing a wheel (as I did in April 2011).
- Again when having a break check for new cracks, particularly on mast supports. New masts are expensive and hard to come by in the outback. After several breakages I now carry mine on the vehicles roof.