



Seachange keeps boat builder afloat

GLEN NORRIS

THEY have ruled the waves for half a century, now the famous boat-building Haines family are aiming to become kings of the road.

The family business, founded in the late 1950s by the late John Haines, has started manufacturing up-market off-road caravans from its Wacol factory, largely targeting cashed-up "grey nomads".

The Haines Group produces about four Seachange caravans a month, with a full order book until July.

The caravans sell for \$90,000 to \$120,000.

Haines's diversification comes as other Queensland caravan manufacturers such as Kedron and Sunland ride a wave of demand for off-road recreational vehicles. Queensland has the largest number of caravan manufacturers after market leader Victoria.

Haines Group chief executive John Haines said his father had always wanted to manufacture caravans but was always too busy with boats. Mr Haines snr died in 2009. When a downturn hit the boating in-

dustry several years ago and interest in caravanning holidays revived, the family-owned group saw the chance to diversify.

"The boat business has been doing it tough over the last eight years," Mr Haines said. "I needed to keep my workers busy – they are highly skilled and I want to keep them."

Haines is one of the few manufacturers to make all components in-house.

"Keeping it in-house is a vital part of the business," Mr Haines said. "We believe in keeping people in jobs and creating jobs for people."



RIGHT ROAD: Haines Group chief executive John Haines says the family-owned company has been able to survive tough times in the boat-building industry by manufacturing caravans.

Picture: STEVE POHLNER



RIGHT ROYAL ADVENTURES

RACT drives into environmental tourism market

TASMANIA'S peak motoring group has emerged as a major player in the burgeoning adventure tourism industry, pitching four new proposed ventures for national parks and World Heritage Areas.

The RACT, which promises its members "right royal service", has plans for a floating hotel in the Gordon River, a walking tour using cabins at Cape Sorell, upmarket van sites with ensuites at Freycinet Lodge, and huts and walking tracks on Schouten Island.

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RACT projects pass first test

ANNE MATHER

A FLOATING hotel in the Gordon River and chic caravan sites at Freycinet are among a raft of eco-tourism ventures planned by Tasmania's peak motoring group,

The RACT has submitted four new tourism ventures to the State Government, two of which have proceeded to the second stage of the Government's expressions of interest process for development in reserves.

The two RACT projects which have progressed for further consideration are an extension of Freycinet Lodge and new cabins at Cape Sorell.

The projects are among six ventures that have reached stage two, the Government announced yesterday.

This brings the number of projects on the cards for

National Parks and World Heritage areas to 21.

The RACT's planned Freycinet Lodge extension would see the development of 12 larger cabins and 12 caravan sites across the road from the existing lodge.

The up-market caravan and motorhome sites would be powered, and each would have private ensuite toilet and

bathroom facilities. The other RACT project involves new cabins at Cape Sorell, just south of the Cape Sorell lighthouse off Macquarie Harbour.

As well as the cabins, the proposal would require two new jetties in Macquarie Harbour and a series of walking tracks in the area.

RACT chief executive Harvey Lennon said the organisation had submitted two other proposals which did not progress to stage two, but the RACT would reconsider their plans with a view to resubmitting them.

One of the projects involves a floating hotel at St Johns Falls on the Gordon River, which tourists would reach by air or a small boat.

The RACT's other rejected proposal was for huts and walking tracks at Schouten Island on the East Coast.

Mr Lennon said the RACT wanted to broaden from its current range of traditional accommodation into more eco-tourism ventures.

Tasmanian Conservation Trust director Peter McGlone said the Government needed to set a limit on how much new accommodation should be permitted in World Heritage areas.

NEW ECO PROPOSALS

- **Cape Sorell Walks:** Two cabins near Cape Sorell Lighthouse and two jetties to be built at Macquarie Harbour for guided walks. Applicant: Adrian Sampson, RACT.
- **Freycinet Lodge extension:** Twelve powered sites for motor homes with private ensuite facilities, plus 12 new cabins. Applicant: Adrian Sampson, RACT.
- **Heli-canyoning at Cradle Mountain:** Thrill seekers flow into a remote gorge by helicopter to abseil down waterfalls. Applicant: Anthony O'Hern.
- **Kayaking, flyfishing and bushwalking at Hall's Island, Lake Malbena:** Tourists flown by seaplane to a luxury camp on the island. Applicants: Daniel and Simone Hackett.
- **Project Point Adventure:** Trek across remote World Heritage forests to the north of the Huon River, with a helicopter drop-off at Gallagher Plateau. Applicant: Mark Direen.
- **Freycinet Eco Retreat Walk:** 12km circular walk starting and finishing at Mt Paul in the Freycinet National Park. Applicants: Virginia Cowie and Phillipa Denne.



TV series to drive tourism

SANDY HOSTS: John 'Roothy' Rooth, Glen 'Gleno' Hadden and Ken 'Kenn' Hindley at Fraser Island during filming of LowRange TV.

PHOTOS: CONTRIBUTED

TRAVEL BOOST: 4WD adventure films promote Fraser Island, Burrum Coast

PRODUCERS of a new off-road adventure film series featuring Fraser Island and the Burrum Coast have forecast a likely surge in four-wheel drive tourism for the region.

More than 30,000 DVDs of the LowRange TV episodes filmed have sold via online purchases and distribution via BCF and outdoor living stores.

National interest in the documentary was fuelled in part because it has been made by a legend in the world of four-wheel drive adventure, John "Roothy" Rooth.

Rooth said the feedback from fans about the Fraser Island and Burrum Coast epi-

sode had been amazing, with many saying they were now planning trips to the region.

"We are all about encouraging people to get out and see more of the country and showing them how easy it can be for anyone with a four-wheel drive and some commonsense," he said.

"Sales of SUV vehicles are at a record high in Australia so more families than ever before have the opportunity for off-road adventure."

Rooth and his sidekicks, Glen "Gleno" Hadden and Ken "Kenno" Hindley, have teamed up for LowRange TV.

It features the three mates exploring Australia in their four-wheel drives, camping,

fishing, surfing and cooking up a storm as they travel off the beaten track.

They hired a crack crew to film their adventures for episodes of LowRange TV, which are then edited and released on DVD.

Episode 1 featured a return to a familiar stomping

ground for Rooth and the boys on Fraser Island, then explored the Burrum Coast up to Bundaberg and the beautiful Bulburin National Park.

The series combines educational aspects of off-road driving, bush cooking tips, fishing and more to appeal to both



devoted four-wheel drive enthusiasts and first-timers wanting to make more use of their family vehicle.

The LowRange team filmed its second episode in Victoria. It is available from the LowRange website, www.lowrange.tv and BCF stores.

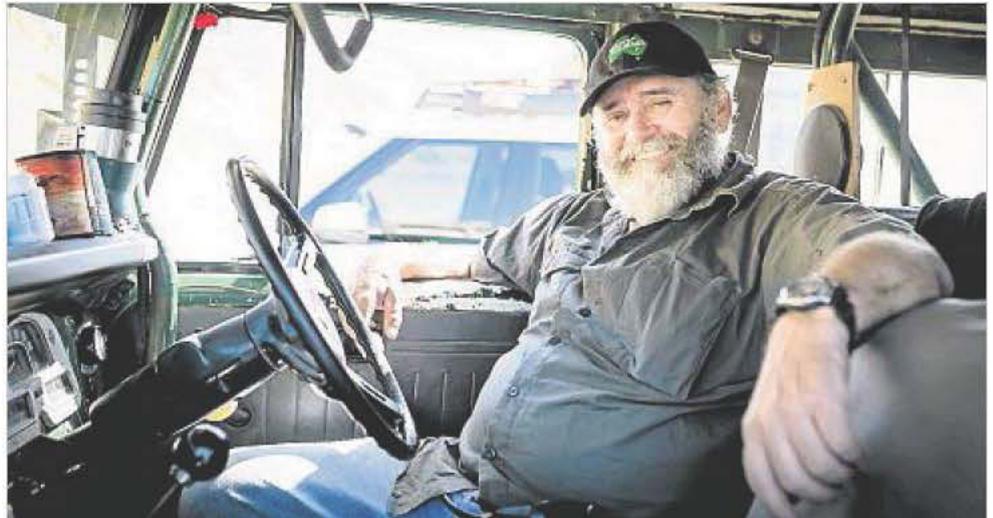
↘ SUV SALES

What's driving car sales in Australia?

■ In 2014, SUV sales in Australia hit a record high. They accounted for more than 30% of the new-car market. In 2007 it was only 18%.

■ Industry experts believe the shift towards SUVs will continue in 2015 and forecast a similar sales result of 1.1 million vehicles.

■ Utility vehicles continued to climb the sales ladder, boosted by mining and building sectors and the arrival of more car-like workhorses that serve as family cars and recreational vehicles on weekends.



John Rooth is one of the producers of a new off-road film series.

↘ OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Where are they driving to?

■ Australia has more than 500 national parks. More than 28 million hectares of land is designated as national parkland, accounting for almost 4% of Australia's land areas.

■ A further 6% of Australia is protected and includes state forests, nature parks and conservation reserves.

■ The nature-based tourism sector contributes \$23 billion to the Australian economy each year.