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ISSN 2203-8027



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REVIEWED

Winnebago's breakthrough Aussie caravan





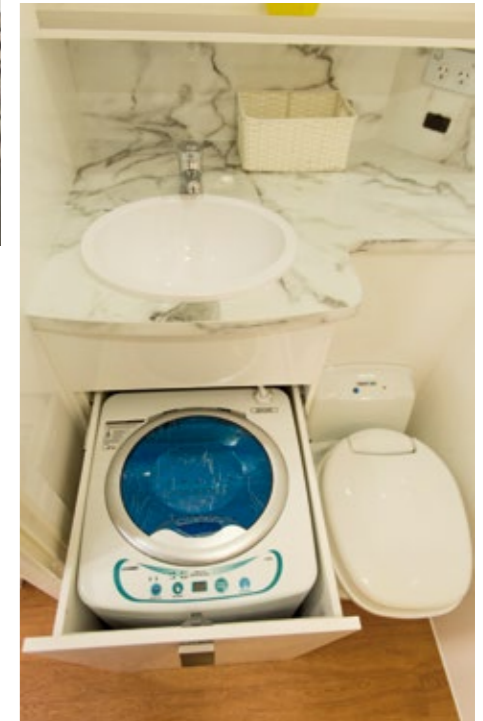
Building a better Winnebago

Queenslanders take on the world's biggest RV brand and come up with something impressive.



TRIED + TESTED

Tested: Winnebago Burke **Review by:** Rod Bruem **RRP \$66,490**



Not since the glory days of Chesney has Queensland really been on the map when it comes to caravan manufacturing in a big way.

That may all be about to change with the launch of Winnebago Australia's first local-built range of caravans.

It's almost two years since the world's biggest name in RV manufacturing re-entered the Australian and NZ markets by way of an agreement with Brisbane's Trouchets family.

The Trouchets started out hiring camper vans in the 1980s and eventually took their Apollo brand worldwide, which is how they came to get to know Winnebago.

When the new Winnebago Australia range was launched last year, the initial plan was

import caravans from the US and build Winnebago motorhomes in Brisbane. The Trouchets had been successfully building motorhomes there for nearly a decade, mostly under the Talvor brand. More recently they'd also built limited numbers of Talvor caravans.

Now they've decided to take the plunge into caravan manufacturing under the Winnebago banner and they're planning it on a big scale; hiring staff, buying new manufacturing equipment. They even snared a new production boss, Kevin Edwards, from Jayco.

So a lot now rests on how Aussie caravan buyers react to the first

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WINNEBAGO BURKE



Dimensions

Length 7400
Height 3035



Weights

Tare weight 2000kgs



Key Features

190 litre fridge
Microwave
Electric/gas hotplate
Rangehood with exterior outlet
3.6kw air conditioning
Filtered water drinking system
2.5kg top loader washing machine
164 litre water storage
32 inch HD TV



Brisbane-built Winnebago caravan.

The Burke (named after the western Queensland river) is the first of two models being launched this year and it doesn't disappoint.

The seamless all composite finish is the standard you'd normally find in ocean going yachts. Sure there are others who can make the same boast (Queensland's Seachange caravans come to mind) however few aspire to mass produce in the way Winnebago now does.

There's a single composite sandwich sheet for all the walls, the roof and the floor. That makes it solid, light and fully insulated. Laminated gel coated finish inside and out. The only ply you'll find is in some of the cabinetry – and even that's a class above anything else.

The van is fitted with quality gear throughout including the local gal-dipped chassis, AL-Ko suspension and running gear, Dometic European-style

windows and Camec sound system.

As you walk around the Burke (looking beyond the striking Winnebago logo) there are all the features you'd expect in a luxury van. Upfront there's a checker plate steel gravel guard, twin 15 inch alloy wheels (with a spare on the rear bumper), outdoor shower, awning and picnic table. There are speakers for the sound system under the awning and both TV and power plugs.

The company's motorhome building experience shows though in how they've thought of the little things like LED-lit grab rails to make getting in and out the door easy and quality European latches on the interior cupboards.

As you step inside, what strikes you right away is the spaciousness. This comes from the slide out which Winnebago Australia decided to employ to make the central living area of the van expand, rather than deploy it on the bed like some others do.

Slide outs have been flavor of the month with caravan buyers for a few years now. Because they are big heavy moving parts, they are also features that can be plagued with problems over time.

The Winnebago slide out is fully imported from the US parent - possibly the world's biggest manufacturer of slide outs. It's solid and dependable.

The space itself holds a comfortable lounge that folds down into a double bed. With a queen bed at the front of the van, it comfortably sleeps two adults and two children.

Winnebago Australia says the US company did have a hand in the design, but Big W logo aside, this van bears little resemblance to the US imports it started out with a year ago.

The interior is bright and well laid out. There's heaps of well thought out storage, a great rear ensuite complete with a sliding pull out washing machine, which comes as standard. I could go on listing inclusions, but let's just say the list is impressive and worth checking out.

Verdict

If Winnebago Australia can maintain this build quality while ramping up production, it will set a new standard in local RV production.

An early show of confidence comes in the form of a two-year construction warranty, which is double the industry norm.

The Troughets business journey has been an interesting one and this next chapter under the Winnebago banner will certainly be one to watch. 📌

Further details: gowinnebago.com.au