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IAN GLOVER, editor of *Overlander* magazine, is nobody's rookie when it comes to four-wheel driving. His involvement with off-road vehicles in general and Toyota Land Cruisers in particular goes back 15 years: "My first experience with Cruisers was with utes in rural New South Wales around the time when Cruisers were starting to knock Land-Rovers on the head. I noticed that the blokes I knew on the land were beginning to make the switch. Previously they had been committed to Land-Rovers — they'd always had Landies — but they started to look at Cruisers."

A couple of years later, one of Ian's mates bought an FJ 55 Cruiser station wagon. "I was still in conventional vehicles and I noticed the places he could get to were much further from the madding than you could get with a car. He and his wife could sleep in the back. They had no need of a tent or motel bills or any of that stuff." Ian was sold on 4WD by then. All that held him back was a general insufficiency of the folding material that comes in handy for buying things. But this younger Ian Glover was eyeing off the future. He had started his journalistic career and was doing some freelance work with *Overlander* magazine.

"My re-acquaintance with Cruisers was in the form of an expedition I organised to retrace Oxley's exploration of the Macquarie River. It was to celebrate the 150th anniversary, so this must have been in 1978. The expedition took six months to plan and took in everything — cross-country on horses, bushwalking, canoeing. We used inflatables with and without engines. We went from the Blue Mountains to the Macquarie Marshes, northwest of Warren. On the 4WD sections we used a pair of Cruisers — an FJ 55 and a diesel tray-top. They were also used as support vehicles."

Ian Glover's freelance work for *Overlander* at that time involved him in some pretty gritty long-range expeditions and wedged him behind numerous plastic-rimmed wheels. "At the tail-end of my freelancing, I did a trip in a diesel tray-top through a lot of Queensland National Parks. This

was a fairly long trip, about four weeks on the road. The story was on what Queensland National Parks could offer and it was after I got back from this — so impressed with the Cruiser's reliability and performance — that my father and I bought this vehicle for use on Dad's property at Gulgong: you know, the town on the ten dollar note! It had been a loan vehicle from Thiess."

Apart from all these overlanding trips, Ian also made forays of his own up to the country around Bourke — "my old stamping ground". By then the Landy had lost plenty of ground to the Cruiser, and Japanese four-wheel drives in general were becoming the rule rather than the exception.

When Ian was appointed Editor of this august (or is it January?) publication, he inherited a BJ 40 Cruiser — that's the four-cylinder, short wheelbase petrol variety, for those of you not the full bottle on Toyota nomenclature. This was the company car! "And it had been everywhere," says Ian. "Over the Simpson. Over Sturt's Stony Desert." Naturally the change of editorship did not provide a quick way into the quiet life for this tough little machine. "When I took over it continued to do expeditions and *Overlander* travel stories."

The kilometres kept rolling under the tyres and *Overlander* kept rolling off the presses. Then, in 1981, Toyota introduced a much more civilised version of the Land Cruiser, the Series 60. It became *Overlander's* 4WDOTY. Ian takes up the story: "Thiess thought it would be a good idea if the Editor of *Overlander* were to drive a Series 60 on a regular basis, use it for trips and report on it. The company offered me a 12-month loan." Naturally, Thiess was confident the Cruiser would prove reliable. "There were no constraints on what I could write about it": *Overlander* would certainly **not** have accepted a loan vehicle had there been any strings attached, so to speak. Ian had the choice of an FJ or HJ, but chose the diesel version. "Diesel was on the way up at that stage and I thought it

would be of more value to our readers." So the HJ 60 arrived on the scene.

"One thing I found was that very little modification was necessary." The vehicle came from Thiess with a steel bullbar and a perspex insect shield ("which does work — it's designed to shoot insects over the top, so they're not splattering on the windscreen all the time"). There was a Hayman-Reese towbar with load-distributing hitch (a Thiess option), Nippondenso air (also a Thiess option) and stereo. "What I did was to replace the shocks all round with OME gas and I replaced the standard Road Trak Major tyres and split rims. After trying a variety of tyres I ended up with Dick Cepek's Kevlar-belted X-C radials. These are American: Kevlar (or Aramid) is lighter than steel but just as strong and gives better rolling resistance." The vehicle also sports a chrome-framed roof rack with the bars set into the roof.

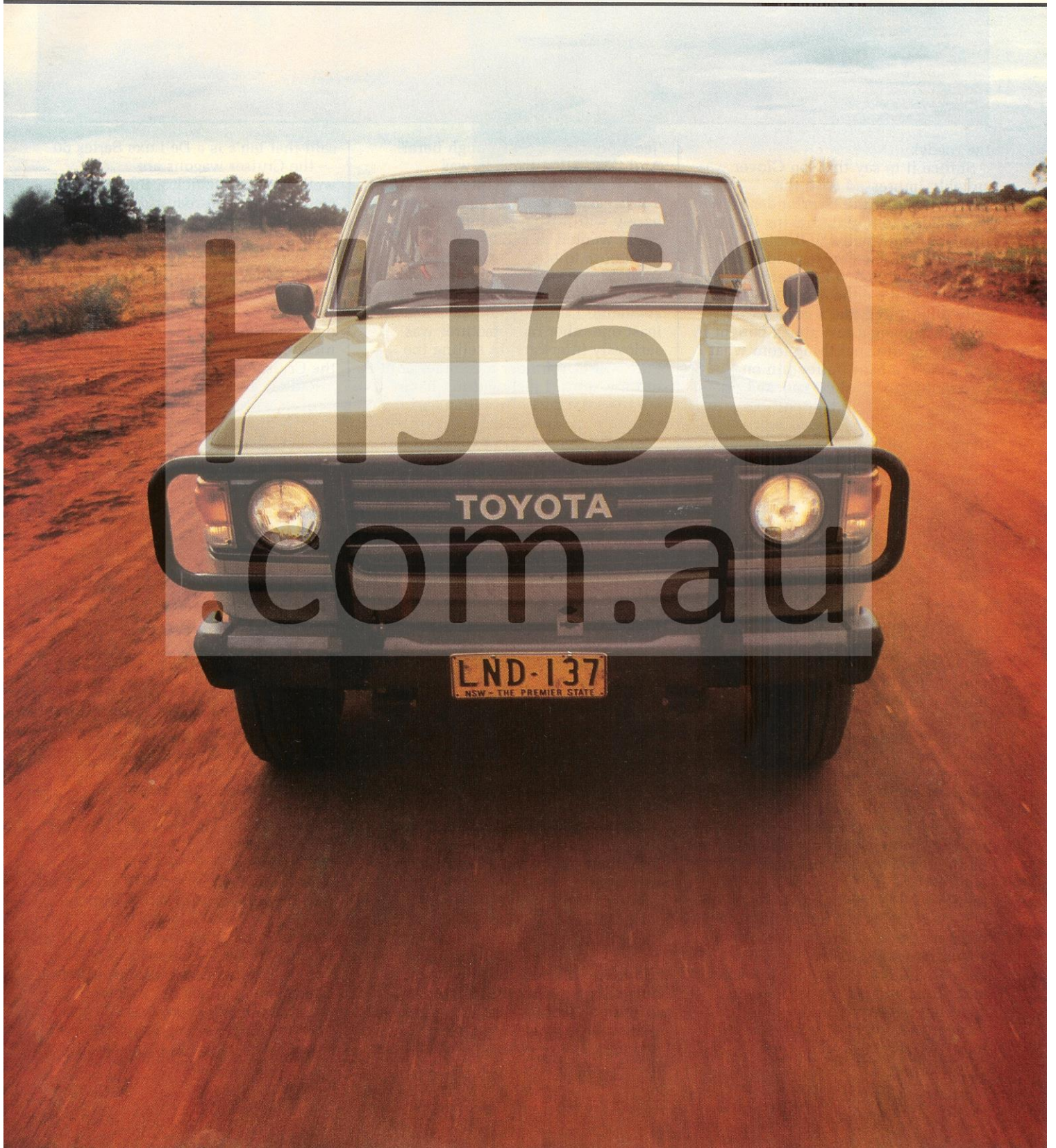
"It's been a lot of places. It's had to handle a variety of conditions, both in product tests and *Overlander* travel stories. It has also been a TV star when I took a team from Channel Seven away to do a story on the drought."

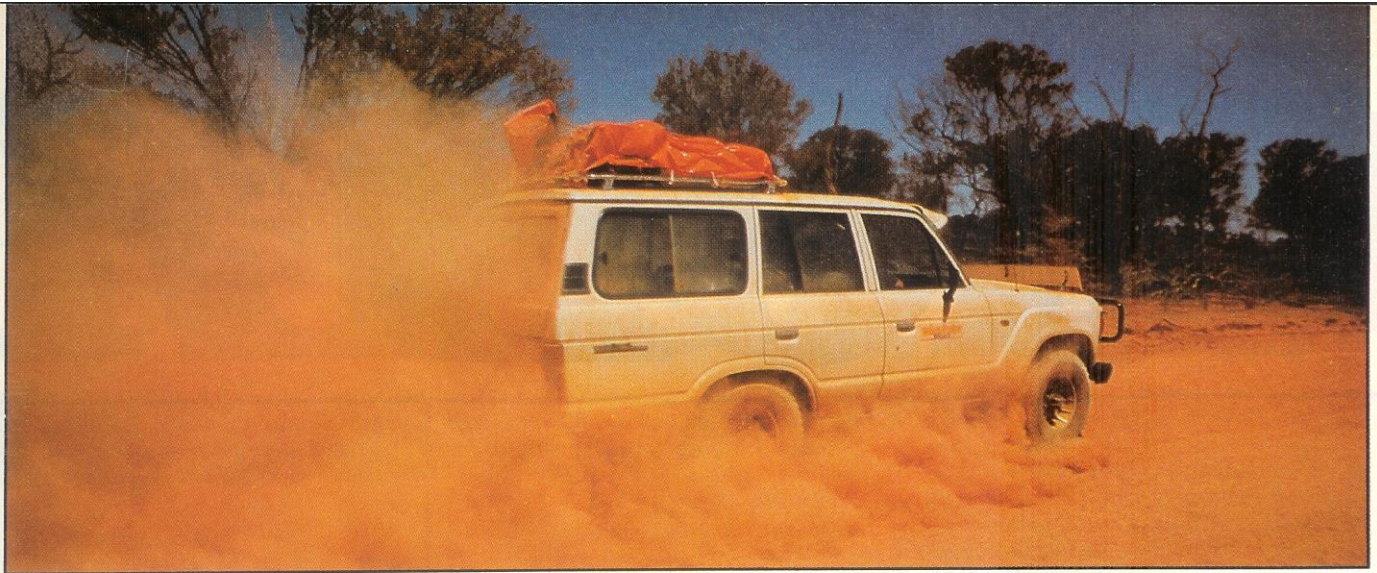
"Now," says Ian particularly pensively and then pausing for some seconds, "what's gone wrong with it?" Another, longer, pause. "On that Seven trip up through the Channel country of southwestern Queensland and northwestern New South Wales — because I overloaded it with a dozen jerries of diesel, recovery gear, food, TV cameras and supplies for six men for two weeks — it did a set of rear springs on the cattle station tracks." You could say the semi-elliptics more or less inverted their profile. "Thiess railed a replacement pair into Bourke and we were on the road again within 24 hours." This was not special treatment for *Overlander* or Channel Seven. Thiess' policy is to bring spare parts in by air from Japan if necessary in critical vehicle-off-the-road situations. After all, an all-roads vehicle is of no use if it can't take to

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JOHN WRIGHT looks at the vehicles that have kept Ian Glover coming back for more ... for 15 years.





the roads!

Suffice it to say that Ian Glover was suitably impressed with the performance of the Overlander HJ 60. He decided to buy it, making the decision about halfway through the loan period. The Cruiser had already done around 25,000 kilometres at this stage. Now it's done 40,000. "The only other thing that's gone wrong with it happened just after I bought it. It is a very unusual thing from what I can gather: a bent pulley pin on the airconditioning pulley knocked out the airconditioning belt and the power steering belt when it finally broke. But the drive belt was fine. This occurred about 60 km north of Bourke." The Series 60 experienced both breakdowns out the back of Bourke, as if to emphasise the importance of good service back-up. "The power steering going was a bit of a handful, especially with the wider wheels. It was OK on a dead straight road, but over the Bell's Line of Road it was a real effort. But it was reassuring to find that it **could** still be driven. With an American-made ram system, non-variable power steering, you can forget it once the belt breaks — you're off the road!"

The invisible hand of Murphy must have been around somewhere, because it was with the power steering belt broken that Ian had to tackle one of the most difficult 4WD routes he has ever come across. "We were going to the Enngonia Races, and had to drive to the homestead we were staying at. When we arrived, there was not a square inch of the vehicle not covered with mud. I mean three **inches** of mud, and I'm talking about the totality of the vehicle, including the roof. We did the trip at night-time and if I'd seen the conditions in daylight, I would have turned back. I had to return the following morning and I thought,

'Jeez, how did I get through here?' " And that little escapade was performed *sans* power steering!

It is easy to see that Ian has been happy with his HJ 60. But what I really wanted to know was, why did he choose to buy it rather than something else? Was it mainly because the Toyota was there and available? Certainly not, says Ian. At least one other manufacturer was seriously interested in selling the Editor of *Overlander* a vehicle. "But I did my sums. I just couldn't have afforded the cost of running and maintaining that vehicle. Take the diff centre, for example. Now you are most unlikely to break one. But, if you do, it will cost you \$500 on the Cruiser and \$1500 on the other vehicle. That's some difference.

As well as being light and cheap on parts, the HJ 60 is almost astonishingly thrifty on fuel. "I'm not an easy-footed driver," says Ian matter-of-factly. "In fact, I'm a flat-footed driver." Well, perhaps more fleet-footed than flat-footed! "Round the city, I get 22 miles per gallon." (For all you modern thinkers, that translates to roughly 14 litres per 100 clicks.) On trips, hustled along somewhere between 110 and 130, the Cruiser improves its performance to 10 l/100 km (29 mpg). Ian admits he would prefer to own a petrol model, but he does find consolation in the diesel's frugality. For an oil-burner, the performance isn't bad, either, with an indicated 140 available on flat roads. "I'm likely to change it for a petrol version of the coil-sprung wagon that should be out in 12 to 18 months' time. But, until then, the Series 60 will do me fine."

When you consider the diverse demands Ian Glover and *Overlander* impose on a vehicle, it is impressive that so little needed changing. In standard form — though it should be

said that Ian's is a De Luxe Series 60 — the Cruiser wagons are well-balanced vehicles. But Ian wanted better on-road ride and handling to suit his press-on driving style and the huge bitumen distances he covers. "I wanted it to behave pretty much as a car does and the modifications have achieved that result." The Old Man Emu gas dampers tie down the suspension nicely, without detracting at all from the Cruiser's formidable 4WD capacity.

Radials are now standard fitment on Cruiser wagons, so a change in rubber is no longer necessary. Nevertheless, Ian is quite satisfied with his choice of the (very pricey) Dick Cepek Kevlar-belted boots. The wider footprint comes in handy when you do lots of driving in the mud, he reckons. Because these tyres are much lighter, they also reduce unsprung weight.

When all is said and done, there are several makes of 4WD that could satisfactorily fill Ian Glover's needs. Some are as comfortable. Quite a few are faster. One or two offer just as much room. But no other single machine offers quite that balance of sound design, reliability, affordable spare parts and widespread service back-up. Not only is the Series 60 a well thought-out design, but Thiess Toyota provides the consistent follow-through that four-wheel drive owners particularly need. That's what swings the balance Toyota's way. And that explains why the Land Cruiser wagon made an impressive expedition into the ranks of top-selling cars in 1982.

"One other thing," says Ian. Smiling broadly now. "It is the sort of vehicle you don't feel uncomfortable escorting female companions in." "Do you mean that it passes as a car?" I ask. "It more than passes! You don't even need a step-ladder to climb into it." 