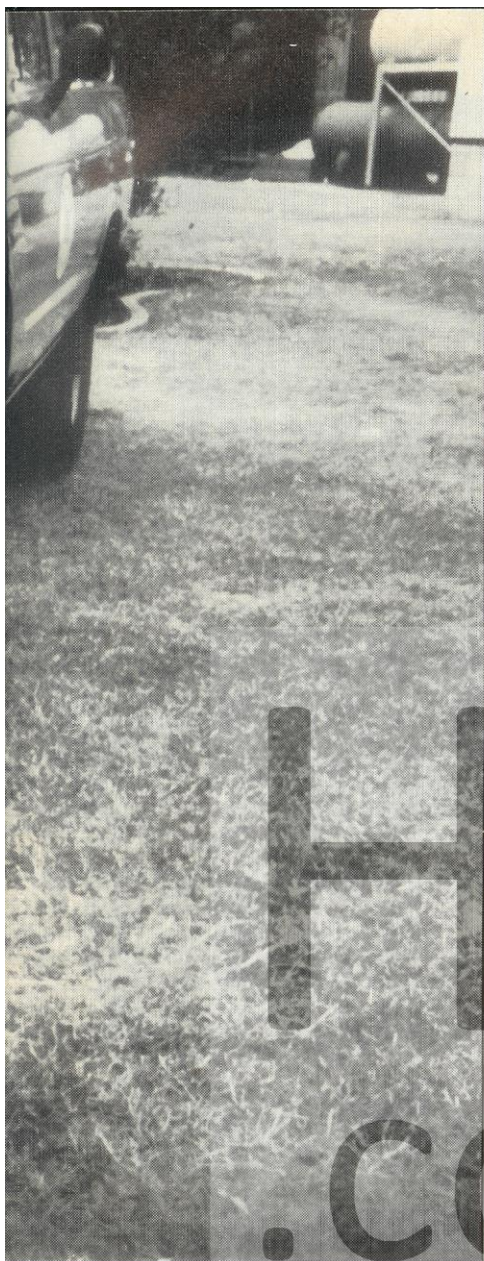




...ask the
**Leyland
Brothers**

The Leyland Brothers are well known to practically everyone who's had access to a television set, and over the years, they've been all over Australia in many different sorts of 4WDs. JOHN WRIGHT reports on their latest acquisitions.



Left: Thiess managing director Bob Johnston presenting the Leyland Series 60.

comfortable seats, a decent turn of speed, fair dinkum brakes or the option of automatic transmission. In those days nobody even dreamt of power steering in such a vehicle!

The Toyota Series 60 Cruisers are highly civilised all-roads devices. This is clearly something the Leyland Brothers appreciate greatly.

"Over all those years we've tried most of the well known 4WDs that have been around. We got tired of travelling 'round in a rugged box. We were looking for a bit of comfort. Our Land Cruisers are standard model station wagons, but they're very comfortable. They have the added advantage of being easy to clean. We just drive them home and wash them down."

The Leyland Brothers acquired their first two Series 60 Toyotas at the end of 1981. They chose diesels because, in Mal's words, "We're used to diesel power. You get great torque down low and more engine braking. In rugged country this is a big plus for diesels. A manual gearbox in conjunction with a diesel engine is my idea of a very good combination."

Have they had any problems?

"One time we must have got some dirty fuel," says Mal Leyland. "The fuel filter got clogged. A new filter solved the problem."

Two years might not sound a very long test of any vehicle's durability, but consider where these vehicles are taken and the conditions under which they operate. In this time they have clocked up about 60,000 clicks.

"We stick close to the recommended service intervals and we always service them before we go away. After all, each trip is somewhere between 6000 and 10,000 kilometres. We work them hard. We never go away without a full load."

But does all this prove anything? Would any other contemporary 4WD be less reliable? (I phrase the question gently, not wanting Mal Leyland to feel pressured into making judgements about other vehicles).

"I **know** some aren't. Look, we went to Central Australia in a nameless vehicle — I don't want to say what it was. We took two top-of-the-range station wagons. On both the battery fitting came adrift. On both the radiators came adrift. Welds broke. Window winders came off in our hands. We had to run round with screwdrivers and spanners making sure everything was tight. But that

wasn't enough. We had to get parts welded."

These might all sound like small things. But when you're somewhere past the middle of nowhere, it's not reassuring to have even something as trivial as a window winder fall off. After all, if that's not fitted properly or can't stand the rough going, who is to say what important components might not be up to the task?

"Now we just check over the vehicles once before we go away," says Mal Leyland. "And again when we get back. On the Toyotas, even the window winders don't work loose. The self-tappers don't work loose, either. We've never had a four-wheel drive like that before."

Previous machines had delivered some dramatic moments.

"We have even had axles break. In one case it was clearly the fault of the manufacturer because the axle hadn't been machined to the right size. It snapped off in the middle of the desert. Because this vehicle had automatic transmission, we didn't tow it. It finished up costing up \$1700 plus five days lost time. Our vehicles have got to be reliable. It's like a magazine deadline. You just have to do the job in time. Since we switched to Toyota we've never had anything hold us up."

"From a television point of view, the Land Cruiser is a very unspectacular vehicle because it always gets through. People haven't seen us getting out of trouble and that would make good viewing, I'm sure. We just get through."

Is the Land Cruiser superior to other 4WD wagons in the rough?

"I think most 4WDs perform similarly when it comes to getting through things. You have to look at needs. We have to carry loads and our vehicles must do the same things when they are laden. We need clearance. Sometimes we do bottom the Series 60s at the rear but it's always the tow-bar. We've never damaged anything."

According to Mal Leyland, another thing that gives Toyota an edge over the competition is the dealer network.

"Wherever you go there's a dealer. The only time we had to get anything for one of our Cruisers it was that fuel filter I mentioned. We happened to be in a remote area, but we only had to travel 80 km before we reached a dealership. In another make of vehicle, we once had a power-steering drive-belt break. We had to use a piece of untravelled rope, wrapped up in a continuous splice, as a temporary measure. We drove through nine towns

WANT TO KNOW how reliable the Toyota Land Cruiser is? Ask the Leyland Brothers. If you were unfamiliar with the far-flung exploits of Mal and Mike, you might think that sounds a bit like asking the Holden Brothers to tell you whether or not the Falcon is any good. But the Leyland Brothers are not even distantly related to those chaps who make Land-Rovers!

I asked the Leyland Brothers. Or, rather, I asked Mal Leyland. They now own three diesel Land Cruiser station wagons.

"We've had quite a lot of 4WD vehicles," says Mal. "It's 20 years since we made our first film."

Back in the early Sixties, of course, four-wheel drive vehicles were just that and no more. They were as rough in their own nature as the terrain they were designed to tackle. Forget

before we found a dealer. A Valiant power-steering belt was the closest thing we could find before we got the right part. It was such a strange size that nothing fitted."

If you've watched any of the Leyland Brothers' films, you will know what kind of Australia they traverse. Deserts. Sandhills. Mountains. Rocky country in the Kimberleys. Fraser Island. The Victorian high plains. Not a bad sort of road test route! On one trip they had nine flat tyres in 100 km. "We went out to Beagle Bay, where Charles Darwin came with his ship, HMS *Beagle*. We had two spare tyres only." It is easy to see why the Leyland Brothers always carry at least one extra spare. The high-lift jacks make life easier but there is still a limit to the amount of fun you can have repairing punctures.

By the way, Mal has some comments on the subject of wheels. He is not keen on widders. "I'd always rather go up in diameter than out in width to get that bigger footprint. We've got a 1942 Dodge weapons carrier with 20-inch wheels. It's got huge, narrow tyres and never gets bogged. Wide tyres achieve nothing other than straining the components of a vehicle. I've been there and tried all that before. We used wide tyres when they were a novelty. We had lots of breakdowns — axles, differentials, wheel bearings. The breakdowns were due to extra leverage."

I guess when you're bush, cosmetics don't count for that much. The Leyland Brothers' Toyotas are fairly close to standard. All are red with brown trim. (They don't have wide wheels!) They have been completely rustproofed. ("The car stinks for a fortnight, but it's worth having done!") They have also been Armour-Glazed to help them stand up to the steady rude stare of the Australian sun and the full blast of tropical downpours. Mal and Mike Leyland equip their vehicles with two batteries so that they can recharge their camera and make any extra electrical demands they might need to. And if the batteries lose their charge? The Leyland Brothers carry a 50-watt petrol-powered generator just in case.

For such purposes, the choice of HJ Series 60 rather than FJ seems sensible. With such huge loads on board, the extra slogging power counts for plenty. And, unlike many diesel 4WDs — or cars, for that matter — the HJ60 cruises well on the highway. In fact, Thiess Toyota recommends a



Above: Chief general manager John Conomos with the Leyland Brothers on the occasion of their purchase.

cruising speed of 110 km/h for the diesel, just 5 km/h less than for the petrol version.

"We do a lot of highway running (well, they've got to get the wilderness, after all) so we needed pretty reasonable highway performance. Another great thing about diesels is that they are good in wet weather. You've got to get the Land Cruiser into deep water before you snuff it. Of course you've got to make sure that the air intake is above the water-line."

Not that the Leyland Brothers are one-eyed about diesels. "If you were going into sandhills a lot, petrol would be better," says Mal. "But diesel is better for the desert because you get double the range. We get 20-22 miles per gallon (about 12-14 1/100 km), no matter how hard we work the vehicles. This is the big advantage of diesel work. Up in the Kimberleys, when it's stinking hot and we've got the air conditioning on the whole time, we can still get as much as 25 to 28 miles per gallon in low range."

Such figures might seem difficult to believe, but Mal Leyland assures me that they are true!

"Also, we do have to carry fuel and it is safer to carry it in a diesel vehicle. Jerry cans are the only thing — anything else is stupidity. We don't like carrying them on the roof because you've got too much weight up high. We carry two cans laid flat on the roof and this extends our range greatly. But with a petrol vehicle you'd need

eight cans."

One modification they are considering is an extra long-range tank mounted underneath. This would eliminate the need to carry jerry cans. Previously the Leyland Brothers have modified their 4WDs extensively but the Toyotas have required very little alteration from standard specification.

The Series 60 is plainly a most effective design. It shows in little, but significant ways.

"The air filters never seem to get clogged up," says Mal. "The air intake drags air in from up near the grille rather than from underneath the bonnet. So it's less dusty. In fact the air comes from right next to the headlight at the leading edge of the vehicle. It's the best thing I've ever seen. I'm always amazed when we do a service check because the filters stay clean. On one of our vehicles we've never changed it. I couldn't see the point in buying a new filter."

"Proof of the effectiveness of this air intake system can be seen most clearly in bulldust conditions," says Mal. "When you look at the vehicle side-on, it will be surrounded in bulldust, except for the very front. There will be dust under the bonnet, but the grille will be clearly visible in front of the bulldust cloud."

Well, I guess you could say that the Land Cruiser is pretty good when it comes to cutting through the bulldust! 