

## **Do you care for your canvas?**

Canvas is one of the most widely utilised fabrics in the caravanning, camping and 4WD industries. Canvas allows manufacturers to easily produce tents, swags and a multitude of bags and covers. The flexibility of canvas also allows for the custom production of canopies, annexes and awnings for almost any RV. Therefore canvas care is equally important for travellers looking to make the most of their investment in caravanning or camping gear. Want some extra space in your tent or RV? Canvas is a good option.

## **Canvas features**

As with most things, you only get what you pay for and believe it or not Australian canvas is one of the best. This is not just a patriotic plug, Australian canvas is waterproofed by completely immersing it in a waterproofing and anti-mould solution before manufacture. Waterproofing should last for around five years if looked after. Imported canvas is usually only brushed with the waterproofing solution afterwards. The longevity and waterproofing of Australian canvas is legendary.

Most widely used on tents and camper/tent trailers, canvas comes in various thicknesses measured in ounces, i.e. 12 ounce. Each has specific uses and the thickest is not necessarily the best. **Tip:** check the UV protection on a canvas product you are looking to buy. There is no point having only some of your tent or trailer protected while the rest is affected by the sun.

It is best if the canvas products are double stitched poly-cotton. Poly-cotton allows the strength of the polyester to blend with the cotton content and produce a superior product both strong and breathable. A breathable fabric allows air to flow through the fabric without sacrificing waterproofing which ultimately creates a more comfortable product to live, rest and sleep in.

## **Pre-trip care**

Before going away on your maiden trip, a good option is to 'weather' your canvas by setting it up in the backyard for a day and night to expose it to the dewy air and possibly a man-made shower from the garden hose. This moisture allows the cotton stitching to expand and swell which closes up the stitching holes, further waterproofing the product.

## **Post-trip care**

When you get back from your trip, set up your tent or trailer again and hose it down. Wash off any dirt or animal droppings as soon as possible before they degrade the canvas. If damp leaves are left in your canvas when it is packed away, they can start to decompose and possibly stain your canvas. Tent pegs can also leave rust marks if they are wrapped inside a tent or trailer, so use a designated tent peg bag.

If you do end up with mouldy canvas, don't panic! Rectify it as soon as possible with a mould treatment from a specialty store, however it will need to be re-waterproofed just to be sure. Waterproofing can be re-applied to aging canvas for around \$100 or you can do it yourself with a special water based solution and paint brush or spray equipment. Any other repairs should be done as soon as possible by a specialist, ready for next time. A wooden box is a good place to store your canvas product as it keeps it free of moisture and away from mice.

**Tip:** avoid using aerosol cans around the canvas, this includes hairspray, deodorant and also aero guard. If you do your washing inside your tent or trailer, small splashes of detergent can affect the waterproofing on the canvas.

The use can determine the care of the canvas but store it clean and dry and it will serve you well.