



# RIGHT ON

GRADUAL IMPROVEMENTS KEEP THE WEDGETAIL SLIDE-ON AHEAD OF ITS GAME. WE CHECK OUT THE LATEST ADVANCEMENTS.  
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It is no accident that camper manufacturers which evolve their products hold their positions of leadership within the industry. This drove the success of Japanese automobiles in the 1960s and 70s and has gone on to shape the whole automotive industry.

Wedgetail Campers, launched in 2009, is a top-of-the-line manufacturer of slide-on campers. Ongoing fine-tuning has resulted in the company's order book being filled out to the end of 2017 after attending just four shows this year.

All the metalwork is laser cut, and the frame welded with most external panels and internal cabinetry fitted in a jig to keep tolerances tight. The package is then transferred to a heavy steel bench for finishing off.

Wedgetail also makes light, sturdy ute trays with under-tray storage pods to increase functionality of the whole package, which has a five-year structural warranty.

### BALANCING THE SCALES

The biggest investment has been in the area of weight reduction. This is a significant factor for slide-ons, which can push a vehicle's weight to its GVM. Three years ago, the Wedgetail weighed in at about 650kg Tare, but popular additions add weight. Without any thought to trimming the bulk, it would probably tip the scales around 800kg. However, judicious improvements have shed 115kg, so that it sits at around 685kg (depending on fitout) now, with efforts flowing as far as to the rear pod hinges, which were cut from 2mm to 1.5mm.



The demonstration Mazda BT50 XT tow tug that this review Wedgetail was fitted to had a 1640kg load capacity, thanks to a 300kg GVM upgrade. Removing 685kg for the camper and an additional 158kg for the trays and pods, that left a healthy 797kg of load capacity for fuel, water, two people, food, clothing and so on.

Wedgetail prides itself on its self-sustaining campers. A moveable 200W solar panel up top that's easily removed prior to opening the camper out delivers an 11A charge.

The marine-carpeted rear storage pod that forms the floor is a handy location for poles, chairs, table, cables and hoses and has been organised with a top shelf for grey and drinking water hoses, 240V lead, solar cable and the like. There is also a series of clips for poles and spreader bars, a bracket for the step rail (yes, there's a handrail for the access steps) as well as bulk space for ground matting, awning pieces, and a table and chairs. The pod can be easily accessed from underneath even when the camper is open.

### ESTABLISHING CAMP

Setup remains simple. Undo two clips and winch down the rear pod to form the floor. Open the side hatch and pull out the side steps and drop in the hand rail. Undo two clips on the driver's side and winch over the roof, with a cordless drill or by hand, assisted by a large strut and the newly-relocated pulleys. The tropical roof deploys with the canvas.

As the roof folds over, it forms a bed and

shades the external kitchen. Two cables provide a combined capacity of 1.5t for the extension, independent of the two fold-down legs.

Step inside and insert the four loose poles and extend the four captured poles and you are nearly done. The rear entry is now protected by a two-piece pole bracing an awning extension, to shield the entry from the rain. Job done.

The exterior kitchen has been changed, with the front passenger side box adjusted to fit a custom-designed and more energy efficient 85L EvaKool fridge/freezer that draws between 1.8-2.2A. The pivot mechanism now uses a nylon rotating bearing and lightweight aluminium mount to save on weight. A filtered air intake circulates air around the fridge and helps to pressurise the camper interior to keep it dust-free. There's also a large 650x250mm mirror on the inside of the fridge locker access door.

An upgrade of the lower kitchen storage locker addresses the lack of workable bench space, which I noted in a previous review. The Sizzler barbecue swings out on an arm and rotates beyond the bench, freeing up preparation space and improving access to the tap. This also improves access to the storage behind and makes room for the new 15L storage box.

Under the overhanging rooftop is room for up to 8.5m of clothesline. A slide-in 2.2x2.5m canvas extension can help partially enclose that undercover area or increase it to 4.4x2.5m. Optional walls are available for the latter arrangement.

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Wedgetail reduced excess weight so travellers could enjoy modern camping comforts in a slide-on form; Once the handrails are in place, you can use a cordless drill to set up the tent; The bed forms a hard top cover for the kitchen.

### MEASURING UP

#### HITS

- > Australian made
- > Quality engineering and finish
- > Roomy interior
- > Excellent kitchen

#### MISSES

- > Nothing that I can see



## CTA RATING

1. FIT FOR INTENDED PURPOSE 4
2. INNOVATION 5
3. SELF-SUFFICIENCY 4
4. QUALITY OF FINISH 5
5. BUILD QUALITY 5
6. OFFROAD-ABILITY 5
7. COMFORTS 4
8. EASE OF USE 5
9. VALUE FOR MONEY 5
10. X-FACTOR 4

### INTERNAL COMFORTS

The internal space seems cavernous. There is a comfortably-sized eating nook for two, a huge Laminex-finished benchtop, a cooktop, a glass-topped stainless steel sink with separate drainer and cutting board, easy access to the fridge and all the storage around the external kitchen, vinyl flooring and the space heater.

The shower is roomy, with a 2m height and 1200x550-650mm floor area (depending on your ute). You still access the Porta Potti from behind a vinyl curtain, but Wedgetail has added diffused light near the shower taps to avoid casting unfortunate silhouettes on the surrounding walls.

Waste water from the shower and the internal sink can now be collected in a bucket, or, more politically correctly, in the 35L grey water tank via a supplied hose.

There is a large remotely-dimmed striplight in the roof that's sheltered to provide diffused illumination in the bed area, and reading lights which are all fed from the optional 100Ah lithium battery. Compared to the 105Ah AGM option, the lithium battery provides faster recharging, a 30A capacity increase due to greater discharging proficiency, and 17kg in weight saving.

Our review camper had a Redarc 30A



battery management system but the option of a new Enerdrive system with a 100Ah or 125Ah battery is about to become available. Charging is also assisted by a 50A Anderson plug from the vehicle's alternator.

Four 12V sockets are included with all battery setups but the extra capacity of a lithium battery allows for an extra dual 2.4A USB port. There is also a 240V inlet and double 240V outlet.

The eating nook is comfy for its size, and now features softer back and firmer seat cushions. The bed is a camper-queen innerspring design with two bottom layers removed to save on weight, and a roomy vinyl cover to encompass a mattress topper, doona or whatever bedclothes you might wish to use.

The end of the bed cover nearest the front wall can be strapped up to the spreader bar above, to keep the bedding off the wall to avoid getting damp.

The whole camper offers a surprising amount of thermal protection with the tropical roof, the heavily-insulated fibreglass bed-base/ roof (at 33kg, about 20kg less than before) and 25mm of lining in all the exposed walls of the camper body to further minimise condensation. Seven windows with mesh (two with plastic inserts and four with curtains)

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Elevated views and a second station for cooking inside; The 2m shower cubicle sits above a tray that drains to a 35L grey water tank; The porta-potti toilet sits in the cubicle as well, with diffused light to avoid unfortunate shadows on the wall; You can access the fridge-freezer from inside and out. Note the plastic drawers that add convenience.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The electric stands are operated via remote; External lockers are covered by an awning; A bracket for the optional Transcool air-conditioner delivers comfort out on the desert tracks.



## CTA SPECS

### WEDGETAIL CAMPERS

#### > TRAILER

**Tare** 685kg  
**Chassis** 60x40mm, 40x40mm and 50x25mm RHS aluminium  
**Body** Marine-grade aluminium and fibreglass  
**Wheel/tyre** 16in alloy  
**Style** Side-fold slide-on

#### > DIMENSIONS

**Box size** 1790x2500x1220mm  
**Tent size** 3400x3600mm plus 3000x2200mm

#### > ACCESSORIES

**Gas cylinders** 2x4kg  
**Water** 1x90L; 1x35L grey wayer  
**Cooktop** Sizzler barbecue plus two-burner stovetop  
**Kitchen** Laminated aluminium  
**Battery** 1x100Ah lithium

#### > PRICE AS SHOWN

\$67,773 (NSW)

#### > ENQUIRIES

To enquire about this camper, visit [www.campertraileraustralia.com.au/spec](http://www.campertraileraustralia.com.au/spec) or phone (02) 8315 0754

#### > CAMPERTRAILERAUSTRALIA.COM.AU

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throughout circulate air from any direction. As the camper sits up on a tray back, clear of the ground, it's well placed to provide panoramic views and capture a breeze.

The 14L Truma UltraRapid Gas/Electric hot water unit is under the eating nook for easy maintenance. The Trumatic E2400 space heater is also here and uses about 170g of gas per hour. The two 4kg gas cylinders will last quite a while with this setup.

Though not required, there is now a gas detection alarm which turns on with the fridge circuit, so it's always on. The main water tank holds 90L but can be optioned up to 180L.

There is also a mains pressure water inlet.

The front cupboard inside will carry a 2kVA generator, but Wedgetail said that since fitting the solar panel and offering the lithium battery, its customers request these less. So Wedgetail makes a bracket and bag for a Transcool 12V evaporative air-conditioner, which does a good job of keeping you cool in bed at night, most especially in dry desert air.

Weather, vermin or opportunistic snoopers for that matter are somewhat deterred by the half-height entry door and sliding security screen that padlocks to a shackle. The new extremely tough and durable paint finish is

similar to what's used for a ute liner minus the thickeners to provide high resistance to scratches and chips.

As a slide-on, the Wedgetail stands free of the vehicle on legs. The model on review came with electrical stands, which are easier than the original hand-operated mechanical stands (also included). Both types connect to the same brackets and the electric stands, which come with manual override, use just 1A to lift the camper clear of the vehicle's tray via remote.

There are diagonal bracing bars for both stand types as a safeguard against fore-aft wobbling, and additional lateral braces so that when on concrete optional wheels can be inserted under each leg to push the free-standing camper around.

The legs can be used individually or as a pair to level up the camper on sloping ground even when attached to the vehicle.

### THE VERDICT

There's no beating about the bush, the Wedgetail comes at a premium. At its most basic it starts at \$47,714, but it was \$67,773 as reviewed, which we were told is pretty much the way most go out.

But it's one hell of a camper, and if you consider the 15 month waiting list, it is evident others agree. It's well thought out, innovative and classy. If you're into slide-ons you'd be hard-pressed to find something better. **ETA**

## WEDGETAIL INSPIRATION



Company founder David Hazlewood stumbled upon the name of his camper part way through the original build.

"I was reading a book about Australian birds, and it struck me that a description of the wedgetail seemed to suit our new camper. Its natural home is all of Australia and it doesn't like big towns. It also helped that the camper has a wedge tail," he explained with a smile.

Wedgetail has gone on to enjoy considerable success under Hazlewood's guidance, keeping a tight control on quality and continually improving his products.

"I don't look at others," he concluded, "I



run my own race. I constantly improve the product based on customer feedback and what I regard as constructive comments so that I can feel happy that we are doing our best and that our customers' purchase is the best that it can be.

