



Amongst all the doom and gloom in our COVID-infected economy at the moment, there is a ray of sunshine and it comes in the form of Sun Power Motorhomes, a customised motorhome manufacturing company based in Brisbane.

The brainchild and labour of love of Alan and Hannah Jenkins, the company has been around for six years and, despite the devastating effects of COVID-19, it's going from strength to strength by custom fitting and modifying motorhomes.

"We have fared well during this pandemic because we are a small

outfit," said Alan. "We've had no real hiccups apart from taking the usual precautions like social distancing and providing hand sanitiser.

"We did close for a week when I got sick and we had to test the whole crew for COVID-19. But we were all negative.

"Apart from that, the virus hasn't affected the business too much.

"The biggest impact has been on extended projects. We had quotes in the pipeline, but that work dropped off because people, understandably, wanted to wait and see what was going to happen."

Alan comes from a dairy farm

background, so he's pretty handy on the tools. When he left the farm and moved to Brisbane, he also switched careers, doing solar power installations on homes, then fabrication work for a motorhome conversion company.

Six years ago he branched out on his own, adding his knowledge and passion for solar power, to create Sun Power Motorhomes.

Obviously solar power is a big selling point in his motorhome conversions. He loves the fact that by adding solar power, his customers can get away and stay away for as long as they have food and water.

HOW DOES THE CONVERSION WORK?

"Customers bring vehicles to us and we fit them out," he said. "We work on everything from tiny RVs to 58-seat coaches.

"Usually customers will see a vehicle and decide it's right for them. Then they'll bring it in, and we talk about what we can do to turn it into the perfect motorhome.

"Everyone wants something different and that's exactly what we give them."

The Sun Power team includes Alan and his wife Hannah, Patrick the main cabinet maker and Rev whose

specialty is hatches, among lots of other stuff.

As well as grey nomads, they look after families, modifying many Toyota Ducatos, Sprinters and Gravians to cater for children.

Based in Brisbane, naturally lots of their customers are Queenslanders but they have also modified vans for customers in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. They are even doing work on an RV for a couple from New Zealand.

"It doesn't look like they will be getting back here any time soon, so we are storing it for them," Alan said.

Coasters are probably the most

popular vehicle Sun Power fits out, but modifications are not limited to only those. They have worked on Fiat Ducatos, Sprinters and Gravians to name just a few, and have even fitted out a refrigerated van.

"From the outside it looked just like a refrigerated van but on the inside it was pretty special," Alan said.

"Support vehicles are another type we work on. Vehicles for council workers, for example. And we made a mobile classroom for the Churchill

Left to right: Toyota Coasters, probably Sun Power's most popular model to modify; Matilda, a mobile classroom for Churchill Education



Education, and, just recently, refitted that as a motorhome.”

Fit-outs for 4WDs are also becoming popular, with the vehicles sent out for 4x4 work before Sun Power does the inside custom work.

As well as custom modifications, Sun Power offers a range of other services.

“Some people have no idea how or where to source the basic vehicle,” Alan said. “I can help with that. We offer to go out and test drive vehicles to see if there are any alarm bells ringing. And I have a mate who can do the same for big rigs like buses.

“Some people find the vehicle but don’t know where to start with modifications. But, we do about 20 conversions a year, so we have plenty of ideas and experience.”

WHAT ABOUT THE COST?

How much you pay depends on what you want done and the size of the vehicle.

Alan said they have high-quality builds that are functional and look great.

“As a general starting point, you’re probably looking at about \$55,000 for a Coaster fit-out,” he said. “That’s after you buy the vehicle.

“If we replace windows and add panelling and insulation, add a motorhome door and larger appliances, the price goes up accordingly.

“The vehicle itself — as a rough guide — might cost between \$5000 and \$15,000 for a 1996 model Coaster. So, for a 2010 model, you might be looking at anywhere from \$35,000 to \$50,000 plus the fit-out.”



Clockwise from top left: The Sun Power crew returning to the factory floor; the Man Bus; inside the Man Bus; That’s a lot of solar power



Clockwise from top right: Building battery setups to suit individual needs; the Matilda classroom; Inside another Man Bus; A coaster in the making; The Sun Power factory floor



FUTURE PLANS

For anyone wanting to do a DIY modification, Sun Power is also there to help. Alan and the team will offer advice or a few ideas and can help source parts.

They sometimes have motorhomes for sale as well, but only vehicles that they have converted and usually that's just a favour to their customers, and they don't work on commissions.

Down the track, Hannah and Alan will look into hiring motorhomes once they can sort out insurance. Storing and managing motorhomes for customers could also be on the cards.


After a custom modification, spending a lot of time discussing customer needs and then completing customers'

modifications, Alan believes the best-case scenario is to never 'have' to see his customers again — said tongue in cheek of course.

"That means everything is done according to our customer's requirements," he said.

"We spend extra time to get it right the first time and make sure it all lasts and we guarantee our work. I have never had a customer come back with any major faults."

Hannah said, "A lot of customers become part of the family and tend to pop in when passing through for a chat or coffee to let us know about their travels."

"It's such a joy to be able to fulfill their dreams and to get them out on the road travelling. We love what we do here at Sun Power Motorhomes." 



From top: A coaster's kitchen area; An Iveco mid-transformation