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Achtung CAMPER!

BESPOKE VW CAMPERVANS FOR INDIVIDUALS...

DRIVEN - FIAT DUCATO AUTO VAN | READER - VW VAN BUILD PT 2
TECH - BATTERY RECHARGING | PRODUCTS - COFFEE TO GO

TESTED: ACHTUNG CAMPER VW T6.1



ACHTUNG CAMPER!

by Richard Robertson



Attention VW campervan buyers, German-born Achtung Camper is out to change the way you buy and design your next vehicle...

It's not often we get to bring you a new Australian recreational vehicle manufacturer, so when we do it's worth paying attention.

Achtung Camper, based in Geelong, has been around for five years or so and isn't actually 'new', but it is different. It's also well worth finding out about.

Originally from Germany, founder Ronny Probandt says he started out with a love of cutting-edge design and a background in the highest quality workmanship, and coupled it with his passion for campervan travel. Ronny and partner Tania Differding met in 2004, in nearby Torquay, and two weeks later set off on a year-long trip around Australia in a 1983 Toyota Tarago. Complete with curtains made from bed sheets and a cheap esky filled with ice, it was to be the start of something very special.

"This was the beginning of our obsession with campervan travel and the freedom that owning a campervan brings. And so Achtung Camper was born! Today, not much has changed, we still make sure we take each new demo campervan and motorhome for at least one long 'test drive', trying out new features and thinking up future innovations to make life on the road easier than ever".

The couple's stated goal is to make Achtung Camper's vehicles the most innovative, durable and stylish on the market – and they're off to a good start. From those humble beginnings Achtung Camper has grown into a solid business with a loyal following and just recently moved into a main-road showroom on Geelong's busy Mercer Street. Not only providing High Street visibility, the move gives more space and lets customers call-in during office hours to inspect the products and meet the team.



VW T6.1

Being German and obsessed with quality and attention to detail, it's no surprise Ronny builds new campervan conversions using Volkswagen's ubiquitous Transporter van. Interestingly, after years of making campervans, Achtung Camper has released its first motorhome – a conversion of the new VW Crafter of course – but that's another story for another time...

New to Australia this year, the T6.1 is really a 'dead van walking' as it's due to be replaced by the all-new VW T7 sometime in 2022 (although when we'll see it is another matter). You can expect an electric T7 too, which should be a very interesting machine. In the meantime, the T6.1 is as good as a small van gets and at once feels both happily familiar but interestingly new. It was only in the March issue I reported on the T6.1 for the first time, in the form of Trakka's Trakkadu 450 AT – a hairy-chested 4x4 version for serious off-road exploration and very different to Achtung Camper's test machine. To save reinventing the wheel, here's some of what I wrote in that review about the T6.1:

Subtle styling cues aside, the T6.1 update is primarily focused on technology. According to Volkswagen,

"The line-up features a range of standard safety and convenience items that include front assist with city emergency brake, crosswind assist, side assist including blindspot monitoring and rear traffic alert, multi-collision brake and, in some models, the intuitive digital cockpit".

The other notable development is a power increase for the top-spec version of the 2.0-litre bi-turbo diesel: Its output climbs to 146kW/450Nm (from 132kW/400Nm) and it's only available with the 7-speed DSG auto gearbox, although with the option of 4Motion all-wheel drive. Except for one very basic model, the standard engine of the T6.1 is a 110kW/340NM single-turbo version of the 2.0-litre diesel, available with a 6-speed manual (2WD only) or 7-speed DSG auto in two or all-wheel drive.

Like all European auto-manufacturers these days, Volkswagen plays the options game at purchase time. That means to experience a new T6.1 at its best you need to dig deeper and tick all the boxes, and there are plenty to choose from. While there's no doubt the new Transporter T6.1 is a premium product, there are



a number of unexpected omissions, like digital climate control, keyless entry and push-button start, even as options. There's a new infotainment system with Apple Car Play, but oddly, AM and digital radio are missing (AM is important in the bush for emergency updates). And in a taste of things to come, VW's dash-mounted USB ports are now the tiny USB-C type rather than the bigger USB-As most of us use. Fortunately, a simple adapter cable is available.

While not yet tested in Australia, in December 2020 the VW T6.1 came out on top as the safest commercial van in Europe from a field of 19, and was awarded the Euro NCAP Gold Medal. Like all VWs, the T6.1 now comes with a 5 year unlimited kilometre warranty and the option of a pre-purchased service plan that keeps running costs affordable.





SEATS 2-5



SLEEPS 2 - 4



DIMENSIONS

SWB LENGTH 4.9M
LWB LENGTH 5.3M



STARTING PRICE
\$75K



AVERAGE PRICE
\$90K

THE ACHTUNG CAMPER CAMPERVAN IS A VEHICLE CLOSE TO OUR HEARTS, AND TRUE TO OUR VALUES.

Have one vehicle and use it often. Sell your "other" car. Have a vehicle that's easy to drive in the city, supermarket, school pickup and easy to drive into campgrounds. The beauty of vanning is simplicity.

Achtung Choices

That's basically the T6.1 side of things dealt with and it's where Achtung Camper's – let's call them AT – vehicle options differ from other manufacturers. Usually, when you buy a campervan or motorhome, you buy a specific model built on a specific vehicle. Perhaps there will be a few vehicle options aside from decor and trim choices, but otherwise you get what the manufacturer dictates. However, that's not the case with AT...

Its purchase process has two main steps, with the first involving specifying the VWT 6.1 model and options you want. For example, choose between short or long wheelbase, engine output, colour, window arrangement and a whole list of options. You can do the initial work online through the AT website (although you'll want to talk to them directly for very specific options) and they will come back to you with a quote for your highly personalised VWT6.1.

The second step is for the fit-out: AT has three conversion layouts – Nature Lover, Social Butterfly and Long Weekender – and a wide range of options, and once you work through them you then get a separate quote for the conversion. You then add it to the vehicle price to get the final costing for your (probably unique) campervan.

While it might sound a bit convoluted, what it gives the buyer is absolute control over the vehicle specification and interior, and complete transparency on pricing. AT says its starting price for a complete van is around \$75,000, with an average of \$90,000, although you can go a long way north of that if desired.

STEP 1

CHOOSE YOUR VAN

The Volkswagen Transporter is the vehicle of choice for our Campervan Conversions. It has a 5 year unlimited km warranty with a high quality build that matches our campervan conversions in its wide range of features available, comfortable driving experience and longevity.

At Achtung Camper we don't do packages so you don't have to pay for a whole lot of vehicle extras you'll never use. We'll order you the Volkswagen Transporter you want to your specific vehicle requirements. Pay your \$2000 vehicle deposit and your van is ordered and on its way.

[DOWNLOAD VWT6.1 BROCHURE](#)

STEP 2

CHOOSE YOUR CAMPERVAN FEATURES

YOU'VE ORDERED YOUR VAN – NOW IT'S TIME TO BUILD YOUR OWN CAMPERVAN!

At Achtung Camper, we understand that everyone travels differently, so all of our campervan features are optional. Tailor your campervan to your travelling style by choosing only the features you'll use and none that you won't! Our campervan conversions are available in three basic conversion packages/layouts which are all starting points for your base conversion. From these starting points you can add and remove campervan features to suit your needs and budget.

[CONVERSION ESTIMATE TOOL](#)

STEP 3

CHOOSE YOUR COLOURS

NOW FOR THE FUN PART!

At no extra cost you can be your own interior designer by choosing the colour scheme for your campervan. Suit your style and choose from an array of colour options for your upholstery, cabinetry, walls, keyline... The list goes on. Think of the possibilities!

Upholstery – visit [warrick.com.au/seats](#) and choose any heavy domestic or commercial fabric from the yellow or orange price ranges.

Cabinetry keyline – Choose any colour you can think of for the thin line that runs between the bench top and cabinetry beneath it.

Cabinetry – Choose from one of the following colours for your cabinetry, and another for your bench top.

Interior lining/carpet – Choose from a range of neutrals for the walls/interior.

Talk to us about having your campervan personalised on the outside to match the unique style of your campervan interior.

The test campervan was a long-wheelbase front-wheel drive T6.1 with the 110kW/340Nm engine and 7-speed DSG auto for a price of around \$56,000. Coupled with its Nature Lover conversion (closest to a standard campervan fit-out) and various options, the total price worked out at \$107,000 plus on-roads.

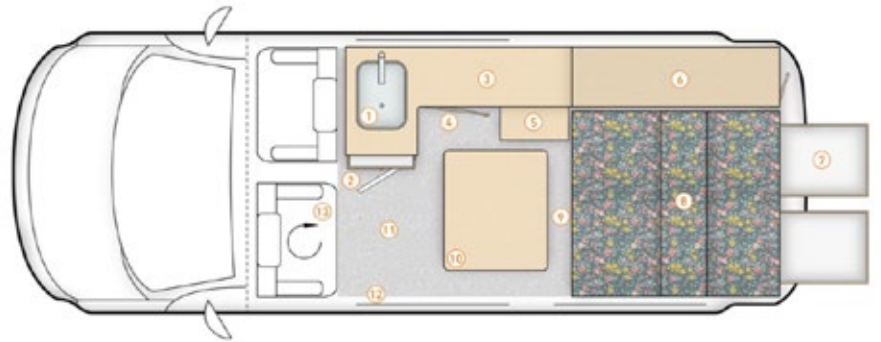
Achtung Conversions

There are only so many ways to arrange things inside a box and just occasionally I'm surprised and delighted by the innovation fresh minds bring to the challenge.

As mentioned, the test vehicle had the Nature Lover conversion and it's basically what you'd expect in a standard fit-out. The Social Butterfly is a variation of the first, with a little less cupboard space and equipment, and more relaxation room, while the Long Weekender is a minimalist design for shorter trips and day use. Whichever you choose, all are highly practical in their own ways.

There's nothing fussy or frilly about AT's conversions; rather, they are practical and pragmatic designs providing space efficiency and comfort. Achtung Camper also helps out with DIY projects on customers' VW Transporters, from insulation to electrics, seat swivels and even pop-top roofs. They also supply VanEssa 'Mobilcamping' modular campervan systems for those on more of a budget or only needing occasional campervan capabilities.

1. LWB VW TRANSPORTER - Full Cabinetry (Day)



3. LWB VW TRANSPORTER - Hybrid (Day)



5. LWB VW TRANSPORTER - Long Weekender (Day)



Achtung Camper's regular VW conversions are fully insulated and built using lightweight Maxi Film birch plywood from MaxiPLY in Melbourne.

According to its website, "Maxi film is a premium exterior-grade birch plywood, covered with a smooth melamine film on both sides that is weather and moisture proof and resists abrasion and damage from commonly used chemicals, meaning no maintenance is required".

There are eight cabinetry colours, from 'Transparent' like the test vehicle to bright red, yellow or blue (imagine!) and others in between.

You also choose any accenting colour for the under-benchtap 'keyline', which is painted on for an added touch of style. Additionally, there are four colour choices of carpet lining for the walls and roof. But the really wild bit comes with fabrics: You can choose any heavy domestic or commercial fabric from select ranges from Warwick, one of the worlds leading fabric and textile wholesalers, and the possibilities are mind-blowing!

Given the options, it's unlikely two Achtung Camper vehicles are ever the same, nor likely to be. If you're seeking to stamp your individuality on your campervan, this is the company for you.





Achtung Camper

The test camper's interior was finished in Transparent (aka woodgrain) Maxiply. The layout was conventional, with a rear bed-seat and a driver's-side run of cabinets encompassing the kitchen and for general storage. The roof was rear-hinged for maximum headroom up-front, and an optional roof bed was fitted. Unusually, to access the roof-bed a small section of the cab roof had been cut away, which had the added benefit of making through-cab access easier.

Standard equipment on a Nature Lover includes a rear-hinged European-style lift-up roof with storage shelf, Dometic 3m awning, vinyl-over-ply flooring, blackout curtains, privacy/Thermo Matts for front windows, bed-seat (no seatbelts), custom inside/outside table, specific cabinetry including fitted mirrors and a pull-out bench, additional back cabinet, under-bed storage cavities, 130 Ah sealed deep-cycle battery with charger, Bluetooth battery monitor, 240V outlet, 3 x 12V outlets, touch LED lighting, 2 x LED reading lights,

150W portable solar blanket, SMEV stainless steel sink with mixer tap and inbuilt chopping board, 55L freshwater tank, 50L Waeco CR-50 12V compressor fridge, Primus Kinja 2-burner outdoor stove, external shower, Porta Potty with brackets, Thule outdoor rubbish bin and even CMCA membership!

Options fitted to the test van included a 180W slimline solar panel (in place of the solar blanket, but not good if fitting roof racks), upgraded 65L Waeco fridge, Webasto diesel space heater and hot water system, Scirocco 12V fan, rear drawers under the bed, colour-matched roof and a flyscreen on the sliding side door. It also had a Bluetooth projector/speaker, Voltronic water gauge, battery management system with display, Dinosaur Designs soap dish (essential!), passenger seat swivel base, roof bed with LED reading light, portable Ecoheat induction cooker with special kitchen mount and a 1600W inverter, LED awning strip light and possibly a little more.



This camper was due for delivery after I'd played with it (that's confidence for you!) and featured very Australian-themed upholstery on the bed-seat. Festooned with brightly coloured native flora, it was as far removed from normal campervan fabrics as you could imagine. Combined with the natural plywood finish it gave the interior a warm and somewhat 'old-world' feel, reminiscent of a loved retro caravan.

The real star of the interior, however, was what AT call the Rock and Roll bed-seat. When not providing 2m x 1.2m of sleeping space (the generous width is because the side cabinet is relatively narrow), it is effectively double sided, push-me-pull-you-style, and provides seating for two on the inside, plus a seat for two at the back! Optionally seat-belt equipped for travelling, it's an inspired piece of design that easily folds down at bedtime, but during the day can provide interior seating out of the weather and/or a seat for two right at the back, from which to soak in the views and fresh air, under the protection of the tailgate. Brilliant...



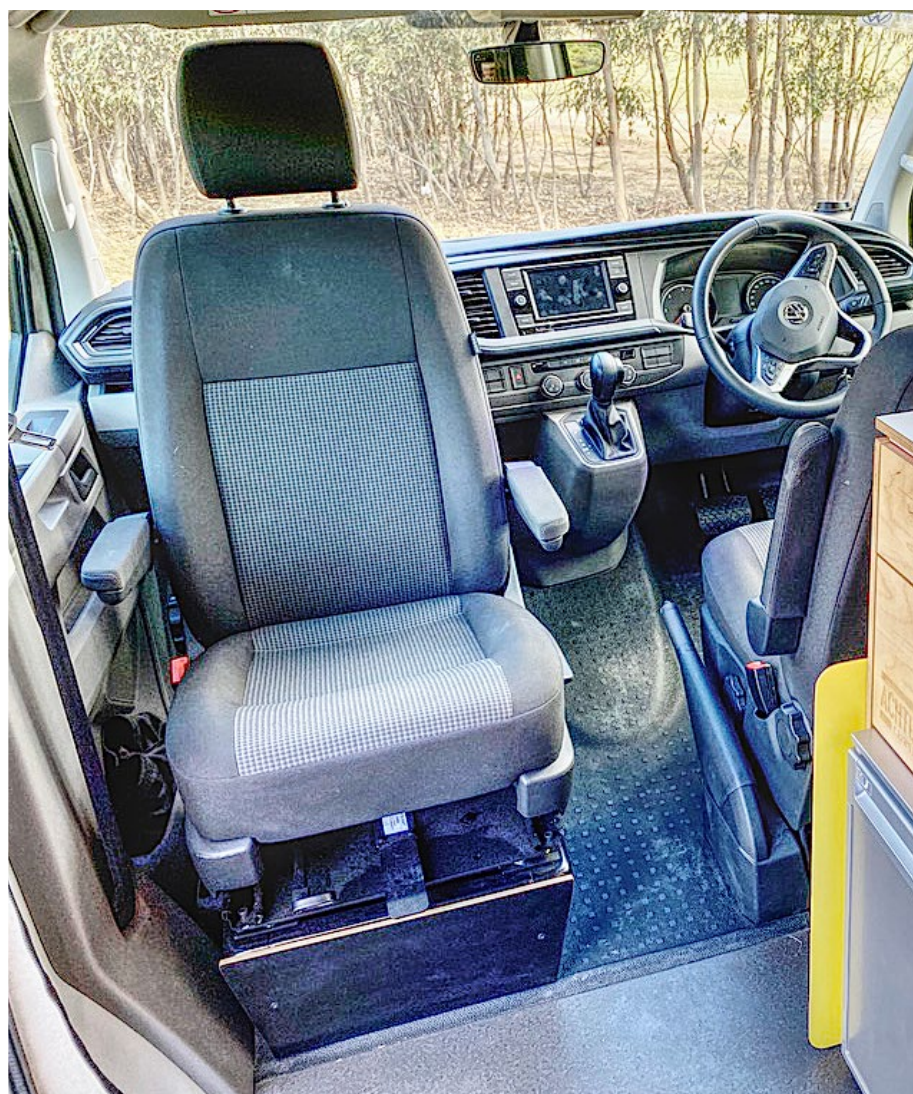
Love the tiny Bluetooth 'can' projector/speaker, which simply clips to the ceiling and projects onto a portable cinema screen (and can also be used outside).



Another great piece of gear was the portable freestanding table, which can be used inside and out. A small, poll-mounted table with a reasonably sized square top, its greatest feature is the base: This had three sturdy legs that fold for storage, but when extended, individually adjust to the level of the ground, thus providing a stable, level table.

An option I really liked was the drink-can-sized Bluetooth projector and speaker that displays on a portable cinema screen. It can be set-up inside on the roof or basically anywhere outside, and doubles as a music speaker when you're not streaming movies or your favourite TV show. Talk about mobile cinema! Other thoughtful touches included the mirror at the back, right above where the plug-and-play shower connects, the (optional) deep drawers underneath the rear of the bed-seat, the simple but effective magazine rack with bungee cords, neat windows surrounds and the discreet Achtung Camper logo on the drawer above the fridge.

About the only design disappointment was just a single swivelling cab seat – the passenger's – due to the driver's seat proximity to the kitchen cabinet/table stowage/house battery. While it's no problem for a solo traveller, for couples I reckon many would happily sacrifice cabinet length for a swivelling driver's seat. I certainly would. The swivelling seat is actually an option and at first that surprised me, but given the bespoke nature of AT's fit-outs it's perfectly understandable.



The only equipment omission I can see and would question is a permanent grey water tank. True, a portable 23L Fiamma grey tank is optionally available, but in this age of environmental sensitivity the sight of any waste water draining from an RV doesn't do our cause any favours.



Optional deep storage drawers are a must, really...



The optional induction cooker has a special drawer mount for indoor use.



There's a lot of storage in this fit-out, which also comes with a Porta Potty.



Slimline side cupboards provide a 1.2m-wide bed that's also 2m long.



The rear-facing seat is a beauty and protected by the tailgate. Note plug-n-play shower.



The bed-seat easily folds and there's good rear access. Mirror is a nice touch, too.



What I Think

Achtung Camper is a genuine breathe of fresh air in the Australian RV scene. No ho-hum, run-of-the-mill campervan, this is a quality conversion that oozes thoughtful design, attention to detail and quality, both in component choices and the build.

Meanwhile, VW's T6.1 is the gold standard in campervan base vehicles, offering a combination of style, safety and driving pleasure the others can't match. It continues Volkswagen's Kombi legacy and makes for a worthy successor to those iconic pop-tops, which unwittingly created a legend that continues to entice.

Combined, this match-made-in-Geelong is one campervan buyers ignore at their peril. Ideal for solo travellers, couples or families with small kids, Achtung Camper's VW T6.1 conversion is quirkily different, individual and deserves 'attention' on any RV shopping list... 🚐

SPECS

GENERAL	
Make	Achtung Camper
Model	Nature Lover (with Extras)
Type	Campervan
Berths	2
Approved Seating	2
Licence	Car
VEHICLE	
Make/Model	VW LWB T6.1
Engine	2.0-litre 4-cylinder turbo-diesel
Power	110 kW @ 3250-3750 rpm
Torque	340 Nm @ 1500-3000 rpm
Transmission/Drive	7-speed DSG auto/Front-Wheel Drive
Safety	Airbags, ABS, ETC, etc
Fuel/AdBlue	80L
WEIGHTS	
Tare Weight	2260kg
Gross Vehicle Mass	3000kg
Braked Towing Capacity	2500kg
DIMENSIONS	
Overall Length	5.30m (17' 5")
Overall Width	2.30m (7' 7")
Overall Height	2.04m (6' 8")
Internal Height (roof raised)	2.00m (6' 6") est
Bed - Main	2.00m x 1.20m (6' 6" x 4')
Bed - Roof	2.01m x 1.10m (6' 6" x 3' 7") (optional)
EQUIPMENT	
Slide-Out	No
Awning	Wind-out
Entry Steps	No
Cooker	Primus portable 2-burner (optional)
Rangehood	No
Sink	SMEV Stainless steel with mixer tap
Fridge	Waeco 50L 12V standard (Waeco 65L fitted)
Microwave	No
Lighting	12V LED
12 V Sockets/USB Outlets	Yes
Air Conditioner	Cab
Space Heater	Webasto Evo5 (optional)
Hot Water System	Webasto Evo5 (optional)
Toilet	Porta Potty
Shower	External hot/cold
CAPACITIES	
Batteries	1 x 130AH Deep Cycle
Solar	180W rooftop (150W Blanket standard)
LPG	N/A
Fresh Water	55L
Grey Water (optional)	23L
Hot Water	15L
Toilet	9.8L
PRICE	
As tested	A\$107,000 plus on-roads
Warranty	VW 5-ys/unlimited km. AT 3-ys

Pros...

VW T6.1

Highly customisable
Transparent purchase

Value

Quality

Thoughtful design

Well priced

Individual

Cons...

No internal cooker
as standard

Grey tank optional

No driver's seat swivel
option

Contact

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