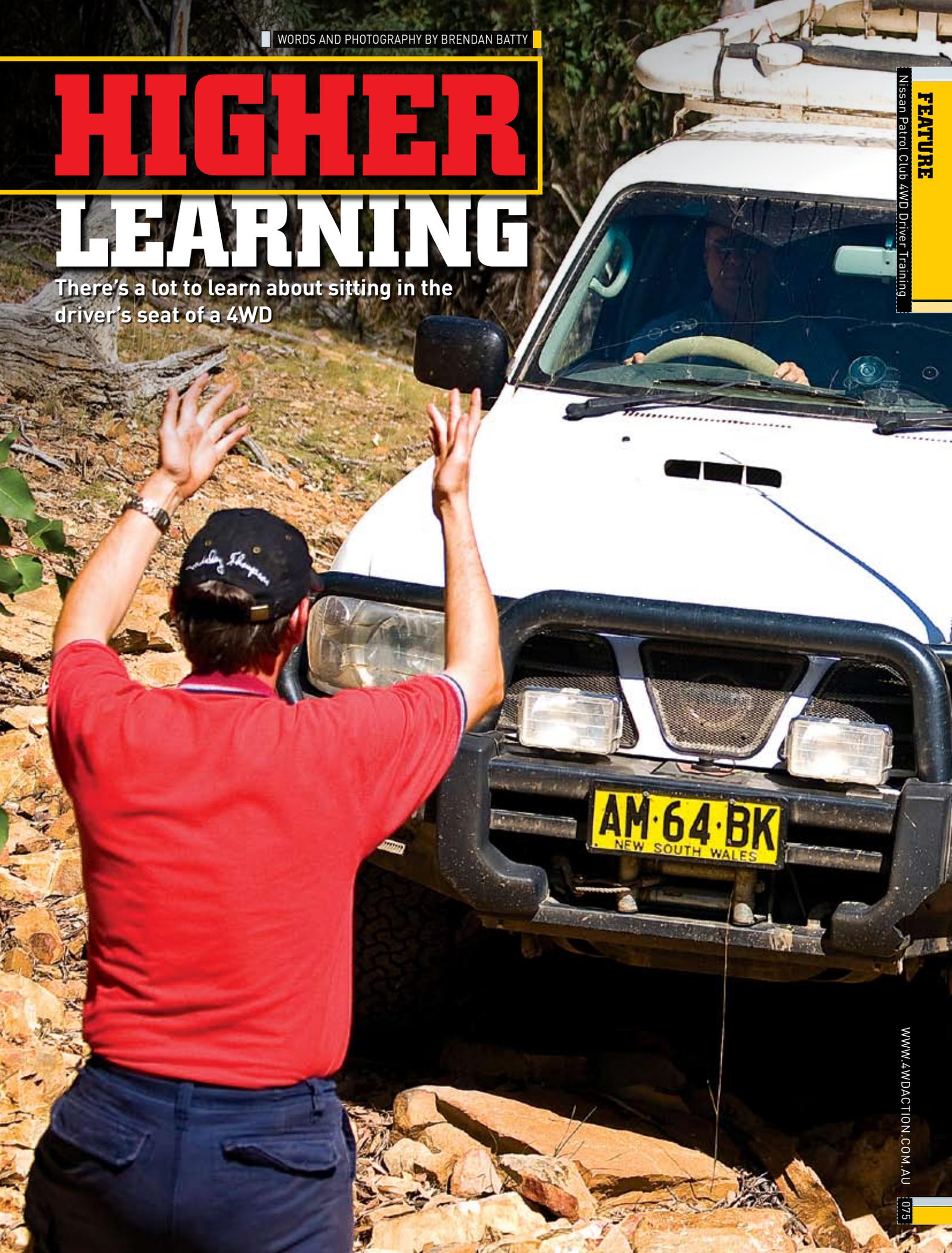


HIGHER LEARNING

There's a lot to learn about sitting in the driver's seat of a 4WD

FEATURE
Nissan Patrol Club 4WD Driver Training



Hey Brendan, the Nissan Patrol Club is running its driver training course in a few weeks. I want you to go.”

“Are you trying to tell me something, Glenn?” So, after a 5am start to get to the Nissan Patrol Club’s Windellema property by 8:45am, I lined up with 18 other vehicles for the start of a two-day Introduction to 4WDing course.

The Nissan Patrol 4WD Club of NSW and ACT has been around since 1976. Although membership is no longer restricted to only owners of Nissan Patrols, there was definitely no shortage of the hardy wagons in all stages of modification.

The weekend is compulsory for all members who wish to take part in club trips. It is designed to create a level playing field, so that when out in the bush everyone is confident in the basics of 4WDing. A lot of effort is also made to ensure even those who are experienced 4WDers have fun and still learn a thing or two.

The weekend started with a rundown of how to sit in your car correctly. It may sound condescending, but embarrassingly, I had to make a few adjustments when I hopped into the Shorty. Once we were all properly seated, we were shown around the club’s 94-hectare property.

The boundary track takes in a lot of different terrain. There is everything from narrow and winding eucalypt forest tracks, dusty corrugated roads and even rocky and rutted sections.

At each major obstacle, the trainers guide their protégés through and make sure the correct lines are taken. Then, they give each driver a quick brief of what they did well or could improve on.

At various points throughout the day, we were all stopped and head trainer Chris told us all about accessorising and modifying our 4WDs, tackling steep declines and negotiating rock steps. For a bloke who is a life member of the Toyota LandCruiser Club and turned up in a Kluger, he sure knows his stuff about 4WDing in Nissans.



LAURA ↓



Q. How did you get into 4WDing?

A. My boyfriend Steve (I was driving his Patrol this weekend) and my brother-in-law Brad both really love 4WDing. I also love camping, so it seemed like a lot of fun.

Q. How did Steve react when you punctured one of his tyres 20 minutes into the weekend?

A. Ha ha! He was really good about it. He actually punctured a tyre on the way home, so I guess we are even.

Q. What was the best part of the driver training?

A. I found it amazing what the car could drive over with so little effort. It all seems quite easy.

Q. What was the most useful thing you learnt from the weekend?

A. I learnt the need to use side mirrors more often, especially on tight tricky bits.

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That night we all headed down to the Loaded Dog pub in Tarago for a cheap feed and refreshingly cold amber ale. This is a great chance to wind down after a long day's driving and tell lies about the tracks we have done and places we've visited.

The next day we got to sleep in until 9am (well, I did anyway) and the morning was occupied with a session on recovery gear and recovery points. With over 38 years experience 4WDing, Chris sure has a few stories to tell.

That afternoon, we all gathered around a few mock-up recoveries (not that a Patrol would ever need recovering) and a lot of the class gained experience using snatch straps, hand winches and electric winches.

For those interested in doing a 4WD training course, going through a local club is a great idea. The Nissan guys include it as part of their initial membership fee and it is also a great way to make new friends and find people to go 4WDing with. For more information, check out www.nissanpatrolclub.org.

ANDREW AND KRISTINE



- Q. Why did you join the Nissan Patrol 4WD Club over others out there?**
A. I have been involved in other clubs and knew some people in this one.
- Q. What do you enjoy most about 4WDing?**
A. Being out of the city environment, it gets me away from my computer.
- Q. What was the best part of the driver training?**
A. Picking up that little bit of extra knowledge. I have been 4WDing for a little while so it was great way to learn even more.
- Q. What was the most useful thing you learnt from the weekend?**
A. The info on water crossings and keeping your engine dry was great.

THOSE WHO ARE EXPERIENCED 4WDERS HAVE FUN AND STILL LEARN A THING OR TWO

