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Caravan show promotes RV innovation

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Inaugural Innovation and Technology Gallery at Melbourne caravan show highlights latest trends and advances in Australian RV industry

The Australian RV industry is not generally regarded as a leader when it comes to adopting the latest technology or innovations, particularly when the design and construction of many modern caravans date back as far as the 1970s.

But the industry is starting to catch up, with increasing use of electronic and computer technologies, lightweight composite materials and construction methods adopted from the automotive and aviation industries.

To highlight some of the latest advances in the RV and outdoor leisure industries, an Innovation and Technology Gallery was introduced for the first time at the 2012 Victorian Caravan, Camping & Touring Supershow.

Located on the second floor of the Caulfield Racecourse Grandstand building, the small display of 14 products provided a glimpse of some of the clever and exciting products available to consumers either now or in the near future.

While not all were ground-breaking – note Rola's roof racks for pop-top caravans and the latest design Porta Pottis – some were potentially game-changing like the [AL-KO electronic stability control system](#) for caravans with electric brakes.

Other products were designed to work with the latest, must-have smart phones and tablets, like Fusion Electronics' cutting edge audio/entertainment systems that can be controlled remotely via an iPad.

Folding maps and rearview mirrors are also being made redundant by forward-thinking companies like VMS, Polaris and Dometic-Waeco which now offer the likes of front and rear reversing cameras and on- and off-road satellite navigation systems.

Heating and cooling systems for RVs are also becoming smaller, lighter and more efficient, with Truma displaying its Aventa dual action heater and cooler which at 33.5kg, is claimed to be the slimmest air distributor on the market.

While Air Command's compact, 2.2kW Jabiru reverse cycle air-con has been designed for do-it-yourself installation in small caravans or campers.

RV interior decor is another area that is starting to reflect contemporary trends. Gerflor's Texline range of floor coverings is said to provide the comfort and looks of carpet with the durability of vinyl. What's more, it's 100 per cent recyclable.

Already fitted to a number of locally-manufactured caravans, the NCE Advance Collections range of interior finishings are designed to be long-lasting and lightweight and are available in a range of modern colours.

Reducing fuel use is another priority for today's tourers. To turn your fuel-guzzling tow vehicle into a money saving machine, the Australian LPG warehouse has an LPGiQ diesel/LPG conversion system which helps reduce fuel costs while increasing engine power.

Robert Lucas, the CEO of the Caravan Trade & Industries Association of Victoria, which has organised the annual Melbourne show for the last 58 years, said the role of the Innovation Gallery was to highlight products for their originality and innovation, not just novelty.

"When we're talking about innovation and the caravan industry, those two words don't often go together," Lucas explained. "But we would argue that in the RV lifestyle space, the caravan industry is very innovative, to the extent that we move consistently with consumer needs and wants.

"Particularly with our component manufacturers and caravan manufacturers consistently doing research and development, and making sure the caravans are lighter and stronger and better. And that's a message that doesn't often get told, so this year we've introduced the Innovation Gallery as one way to start to highlight those innovations that are happening."

While the inaugural Innovation Gallery didn't exactly bring all "the latest concepts under the one roof" as the organisers promised, Lucas said the plan was to expand the concept and look at including cutting-edge RVs as part of a larger display at next year's show.

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