



A Word of Awning!

Get you awning ready for summer with
the help of our resident Techspert
from **Southern Spirit Campervans...**



A properly installed and working awning is a boon to summertime travel. However most units, especially smaller/lighter weight ones, aren't up to strong winds or heavy rain, so take care where and when you use them.

Summer is coming and it's good to find a shady spot under your awning to help make the most of outdoor living. The majority of campervans and motorhomes in Australia have what's known as a box awning and the most popular brands are **Thule Omnistor**, **Dometic** and **Fiamma**. Box awnings are designed to protect the awning tarp when not in use. You can find models with manual pull-out or wind-out mechanisms and even a 12 V motor to extend and rewind the awning. Also, with some models you can retro fit a 12 V motor if desired. Usually they set up with their legs on the ground or in brackets on the side of your vehicle.

One of the most popular box awnings is the Fiamma F45 and we'll use it as the example in this article. As much as owners love the benefits of awnings – especially in summer – it's rare they take a close look or take care of them until the day the awning is not working properly. Follow these tips to help avoid that day!

Wind carefully

When the awning has been wound in check the front and rear. You may discover that while the front end (lead bar) is sitting flush in the closed position the other end is still sticking out (see photo). This means the awning is winding-in unequally. It is important for the awning to close properly to ensure it's secure while driving and also to protect the tarp and mechanism. If that's the case try this:

TIP 1: Extend the awning around 0.5 m and check that the legs are properly clipped into the storage position and lying flat in the inside of the lead bar.

TIP 2: [Click Here](#) for a video guide from Fiamma about fixing closing issues.

Keep it Clean

Another problem is that over time the awning tarp might get smelly and you'll find mildew in several areas.



Tear-Aid is an excellent product that can greatly extend a damaged awning's life.

TIP 1: If you have to rewind the awning while wet make sure that as soon as possible you wind it out again in good weather and let it dry. Another option is to wipe it dry shortly after being closed wet, then let it dry thoroughly at the first opportunity.

TIP 2: Give your awning an occasional wash. Don't use a high pressure cleaner; instead, give it a hand wash on both side with some mild soapy water and include some drops of tea tree oil, which is anti-fungal. To reach the upper side more easily set the awning up on a steep angle. Just don't forget to let the tarp dry thoroughly after the wash. Additional you can spray and wipe the awning with some vinyl tarp rejuvenating spray for future protection.

Lubricate!

If the legs won't clip easy into the storage position or their operation is getting a bit stiff this might be due to a lack of lubrication or the wrong type of lubricant being previously used (grease can trap dirt particles in the mechanisms). In the worst cases the legs/mechanism have been forced in the wrong directions and are slightly bent, either by strong winds or human handling.

TIP: Where you see dirt and old sticky grease, remove it completely. Use a non-grease-based lubricant and operate the awning a few times to ensure the lubrication penetrates all the way into the mechanisms. Then have another close look and carefully operate: You might see a slightly bent or damaged part is causing the issues. We have had good experience with a can of Lanolin spray in these situations.

Holes?

Check the tarp for small rips and holes. Once the tarp has been damaged, wind and further use will make these small little rips larger over time and a complete tarp replacement can be expensive.

TIP: If you spot damage fix it straight away. We have used in the last years for urgent repair purposes **Tear Aid Type B**. The repair kit can be purchased for under \$15 and has the benefit of not only being clear, it doesn't become gummy. And when applied from both sides the awning often lasts a long time.

Box Damage

The outside of the box awning – especially the front and rear caps – often suffer after a while from slide impacts and scratches (like when you 'touch' a tree branch when parking). Also, UV light can make the plastics brittle.

TIP: For small scratches use a plastic polisher after cleaning the caps. A spray-and-wipe UV protector is a good way keep the plastic parts of your awning in a good shape, too. There are several suitable products like **303 Aerospace** and others on the market that can be used

Clips

The wall mounting clips for the legs on the side of the vehicle can often be hard to open and close.

TIP 1: Check they sit on a flat surface. On some vehicles the brackets are positioned where the body panel is slight curved and this can cause difficulties fitting the legs in. If that's the case talk to a trusted RV repairer to see if the problem can be fixed.

TIP 2: Clean and lubricate the holding clips.

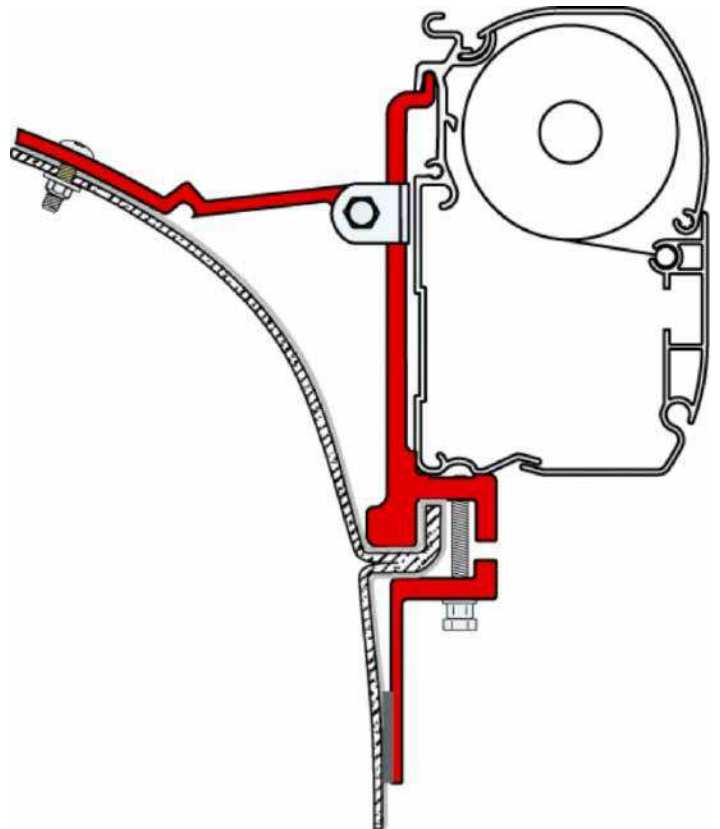
TIP 3: Change the plastic clips to the more sturdy solid aluminium ones that you can buy from your Fiamma Dealer.

Things To Watch Out For!

For the longevity of any awning:

- Don't use your awning in storms and strong winds and rain. It's best to enjoy it in calm weather and/or very light rain
- Don't leave your awning set up and go away for a long time. The weather might change, which can harm it
- Use an awning rafter (tensioning rod) to reduce flapping in the wind, especially on larger awnings

- Make sure you awning legs are pegged down to the ground
- Don't manoeuvre your vehicle while the awning is out or even partly extended!



Ask The Techspert!

If you have any maintenance questions or problems email us at techtalk@imotorhome.com.au and we'll see what we can sort out. Please include photos as well as a description of any problems and we'll share them and the answers with all our readers.