

# THE COUNTRY NETWORKER

REACHING ACROSS AUSTRALIA

MARCH/APRIL 2025

GROWTH

ACROSS THE COUNTRY





A vibrant landscape photograph of a rocky canyon. In the foreground, a small rainbow is visible on the right side, arching over a rocky path. The canyon walls are made of layered, reddish-brown rock. A large, gnarled tree trunk is on the left, and another tree is visible in the distance. The sky is blue with some clouds.

# Calling all photographers!

## The Country Networker cover photo.

**Would you like your landscape photograph featured on the cover of the Country Networker?**

Send your Australian Landscape photos to [editor@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:editor@countrynetwork.com.au) and the best photo each month will be chosen as the cover photo for the magazine.

Photos should be in portrait orientation if possible, and not contain identifiable people.

Show off your part of the world to other Country Network members.

Please also include a short introduction about your photo, a little about yourself and where the photo was taken.

So get clicking and we look forward to featuring the winning photograph on the cover of the next issue of the Country Networker.





## CONTACT US

### COUNTRY NETWORKER

[editor@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:editor@countrynetwork.com.au)

Write a book review, Report on a group activity. It doesn't have to be a literary masterpiece, but of interest to our members

Any article ideas are accepted for review. Our member interests are wide and varied, so share your favourite topic with our members!.

The film *Queer*, starring Daniel Craig (James Bond) will be opening soon. The film is based on the novel of the same name, which was written by William S Burroughs in 1952, but not published until 1985.

*Queer*, a blurb:

Lee, a solitary American in Mexico City, falls for a beautiful, elusive former soldier. Journeying together into the jungle, Lee sees, for the first time, the possibility of a relationship.

## EDITORIAL

*John Holden.*  
Editor

## DESIGN

I'm afraid that I can't do both the newsletter and the Sunday Zoom session, so Zoom is up for grabs. If you'd like to be our Zoom Scheduler and Host, speak to Jeff Sproal, who'll give you all the training you'll need.

*John*

Editor

## CONTRIBUTORS

*Jeffrey Sproal*  
*Paul Ward*  
*Cliff Moores*  
*Colin Armstrong*  
*Michael Gordon*



# president's report

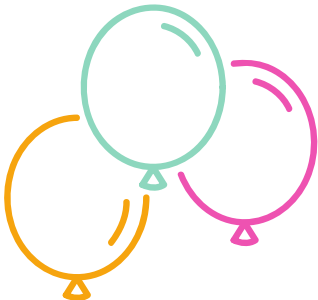


Hello members,

Welcome to our new and not so new Country Networker. There are several new items in this Networker. We thought it time that you got to look at your CN Committee, so you can put a face to a name. The committee is hardworking and is at all times looking for ways to update and improve Country Network.

Late last year we decided to move our bank accounts to the Westpac Bank as we were not satisfied with the service we were getting from the ANZ Bank. This has been a long and convoluted change and hopefully all will now proceed smoothly.

As you would have read in our previous Networker we have been looking at venues for our next AGM. We have to keep in mind where the majority of our members reside and find a venue that members can travel to easily. I am pleased to announce that we have settled on a venue on the Murray River. Our AGM for 2025 will be held at the Mulwala Resort, Mulwala. The dates being October 3rd to October 7th. We have placed a deposit on a number of rooms. All rooms are priced at \$150.00 per night. At the moment I am getting the booking form organized and I hope to have it out by the end of February all going well.



I am very much looking forward to seeing you on Friday 3rd October at Mulwala. We have not had a face to face AGM for several years and like a lot of members I am looking forward to renewing old friendships and meeting the newer members of Country Network. We will have outings planned for Sunday and Monday that we as a group can enjoy. There is lots to do in the area and I am sure we will have a fabulous weekend in Mulwala.



Recently John Holden took on the role of convener of our Sunday night Sips and Slips. Sadly John has to forgo the pleasure and once again we are looking for someone to take on the job of convener of Sips and Slips. If you would like to accept a small job please get in touch with me at [jeffrey@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:jeffrey@countrynetwork.com.au)

To all our sick members we wish you a speedy recovery and hope to see you up and about very soon. Special wishes to VP Craig who has been in the thick of things lately. Get well soon mate.

# Jeff

President Country Network  
[jeffrey@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:jeffrey@countrynetwork.com.au)



## **Adding a picture to your profile!**

You may have noticed that some members have added their photo to their member profile. Want to know how?

Adding a photo to your member profile is simple and quick.

Simply click on the 'Your Account' button in the top right-hand corner of the website.

Then click on 'edit your profile', from there, all you need to do is click on the empty profile image and upload a photo!

Don't forget to scroll to the bottom of the page and click UPDATE PROFILE. If you do not do this nothing will change on your profile.

Here are some quick tips for your best profile pic:

- A square, cropped photo will help centre your image. Unfortunately, you can't move the image within the circle.
- A close-up, clear face photo is great, but If you're shy, don't worry your photo can be anything that represents you. (Keep it clean!)
- Profiles with photos are listed first in the member profile listing, so if you want to network and meet more Country Network members, make sure you have a profile photo.
-



# 2025 AGM



## 2025 AGM 3rd to 7th October 2025 MULWALA, NSW

*Keep the date free!*

The AGM will be held in Mulwala this year which is just over the border from Yarrawonga. Mulwala is in NSW.

During the early 1950's the Returned Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia was a very strong Sub Branch in Yarrawonga. It was this Sub Branch that pursued the development of a social club for the local community and RSL members. Due to licensing restrictions within Victoria the Sub Branch considered the option for establishing a licensed club for its members over the river in NSW where, at the time, the court appeared to be more sympathetic to the establishment of social and welfare bodies. The Mulwala & District Services Club was formed and purchased the property upon which the Club now stands.

Over the next two years a considerable number of working bees were held to establish washrooms, billiards and games rooms and extensions. Due to continued complications in obtaining a license, in February 1960, the original Club was disbanded and reconstituted as the Mulwala & District Services Club Ltd. It was this body that continued to pursue its application through the Licensing Board of NSW for a liquor license and this was granted on the 2nd August 1960.

On the 16th August 1960, the Mulwala & District Services Club Ltd, with license in hand, placed its first order for beer and ordered its first two poker machines. It was the Yarrawonga Mulwala Sub Branch of the RSL which saw the birth. Today it is a thriving Club which will make us welcome in October.





Mulwala and Districts  
Services Club 1960







EXPERIENCE THE MIGHTY MURRAY &  
LAKE MULWALA WITH OUR FLEET



**P.S. CUMBEROONA**  
"Experience The Mighty Murray."



**THE SIENNA DAISY**





# committee news

For those of you who are wondering what the committee have been getting up to since October 2024, here is a bit of the breakdown:



- Continued to develop and update our website.
- Developed a new brand for CN with a new look and feel.
- Reviewed and updated the Country Network constitution to make it more relevant.
- Registered Country Network as a charity – this will allow us to apply for grants and be more involved in the community.
- Made the decision to have the AGM at Mulwala in October.
- Decided to change our bank to Westpac after many years with ANZ.
- Discussed Public Liability Insurance – ongoing.

As always, we would love to hear from you and let us know if there are any other changes that you would like to see. Any ideas are welcome. Please email Jeffrey at [president@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:president@countrynetwork.com.au)

MEMBER EVENTS

countrynetwork  
*Connecting Men Across Australia*

UPCOMING ARE WE MISSING AN EVENT?

LET US KNOW!

EVENTS FOR MARCH

To keep our Facebook group & Website updated,  
please advise of  
any events you have planned.

😊  
Thank You

Please let us know at [events@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:events@countrynetwork.com.au) if your event does not appear on the website or on our Private Members Facebook page.





# meet your committee



*Jeffrey*

President

My name is Jeffrey P. Sproal. The P stands for Paul and not any of the other derogatory names that people think up. I live with my partner Peter in an over 55's gated village in Laurieton. This is not an old folk's home as some of my Country Network friends prefer to call it. It is the Laurieton Kew Residential Resort.

I joined the Committee because I wanted to revitalize and rejuvenate the Committee. One of the major things I wanted to do was to set Country Network up with a new modern website that would reflect the needs and wants of our members. I am so happy that this is well on the way to being achieved.

I am a Coffee Bitch at the Laurieton Resort where I make the best coffees.

## **My name is Craig Bowen.**

was born in Brisbane the only child educated at the Anglican boys Grammar School into the insurance industry when I was 17 years old and worked in that industry all my working life until I retired. I worked in New Zealand Chile Argentina, Brazil, New York London, Paris, Dubai and Bangkok I have three adult daughters and I have four grandchildren and one due in seven days I now live in Brisbane

I join Country Network when somebody told me about it. I joined the committee so I could increase the membership. I believe that if every person bought one person in a year we could grow this fellowship to over 1000 members but we've gotta get people interested in bringing other people to this fellowship.

I Am I past district governor of Rotary international and it was governor in 2006 2007 I was also international director of AIDS in Africa 2008 2010. I am now the international president of the LGBTQ Fellowship within Rotary .

Jeff wanted me to talk about something about kinky about

Me I don't know what that word means ha ha ha ha and I wouldn't tell you anyway.



*Craig*

Vice President

## **My name is Paul Ward**

I live in Caboolture with my husband Cheng. I joined the Country Network Committee because I like committees and the President asked me nicely.

I am now the Secretary of CN and I also want to spread the word about Country Network.

I'm a novelist and passionate about Climate Breakdown. I also have a Bachelor of Theology.

**Scroll to page 20 and read a blurb about my book.**



*Paul*

Secretary







# meet your committee

## **My name is David John Peplow (known as Dave)**



David

I live in Coffs Harbour NSW. I first joined the committee during a Country Network AGM in Wodonga in 2019 after my partner was made a life member of Country Network for his contribution to Country Network for opening up Facebook to Country Network and its members.

Hopefully, that the new younger fresh committee will take Country Network into the future as it was stagnating over the years with Covid, so far with the new website its starting to look great.

I met my partner in 1960 in London UK we lived on and off together in London, then both joined the same ship, a Shell Tanker and sailed the world, eventually coming back ashore in the UK where we lived until 1969 then we emigrated as 10 pound POMs to Australia, we lived in Sydney, then to Tasmania where we bought a farm, and a takeaway business, then back to the mainland to retire gracefully in Coffs Harbour – I am still with the same partner!

You get less for murder – just a thought LOL

## **My name is John Holden**



John

I live in Malvern East, in Melbourne, where I am a slave to a cat. I like reading, mainly fiction, especially fiction with gay characters.

I joined the committee because I wanted to contribute to CN.

What do I hope to achieve? (I hate that question) Finding a husband would be a good start.

I have successfully completed 14,839 games of FreeCell (a card game that came with my iPad). And no, I'm not an addict, I'm just slightly obsessive and I don't want to stop.

## **Hi, My name is Ian Howells and I am** Area coordinator for the Northern Territory.

Where you live – Darwin

What you hope to achieve –

I want to lift the Country Network profile in the NT. Currently the LGBTIQ+ profile is significant in the Northern Territory and I see Country Network more suitable and appealing to those men who choose to be, for personal reasons, 'quieter in their politics' but who also look for friendships, support and connection. I have regular contact with two established social groups, who regularly get reminded of the existence of CN. I see other opportunities to promote CN at events such as, the Annual Australia Day Ute Run, the Northern Territory Annual Rodeo, The Darwin Turf Club, Annual Seniors Expo, The Royal Darwin Agricultural Show and Gay Pride Day events.

Something quirky – I have an alter-ego, 'The Duchess of Darwin'. Her Grace makes appearances at occasional public events that warrant regal attendance.



Ian







# meet your committee



Colin

## Hi, My name is Colin Armstrong

I recently moved from St Kilda in Melbourne to a place called Tootgarook on the Mornington Peninsula purely for lifestyle and being semi retired and to have calmer and relaxed days to enjoy. I live just over the road from the Beach, so my daily beach walks are truly wonderful.

This is my second time on the committee but in different roles, I had to leave previously due to pressures of family life and responsibilities and something had to give and it was CN. But recently I have returned as Membership Coordinator and I am looking forward to the role and working with the committee again. I like to give back to and work with the community particularly the LGBTIQA+ community to bring engagement understanding and positivity for mature men in our community. Good mental health is so important as we mature.

Not sure it's quirky !! I enjoy theatre and the arts and once had a weekly Arts program on JOY 94.9 in Melbourne. I have been a Cruise Director on the P.S. Murray Princess sailing out of Mannum SA. I love walking and try and keep fit by walking 10 -12 km's a day and enjoy cooking and gardening. I always wanted to organise a Gay group walking in the Sydney Mardi Gras !!! Hope to do that one day soon.



## Hi, my name is Lindsay Sheppard

I am a committee member and Area Coordinator for the NSW North Coast. I live in Old Bar on the Mid North Coast of N.S.W. near Taree. I am a proud owner of a 69 yr. old vintage car, a 1956 Vauxhall Velox which I have the pleasure of driving regularly.

I joined the committee to make a contribution and support the work of Country Network as I believe it has an important role in connecting gay guys across the country. I have met and made some great friends.

I believe I have a great sense of humour and I love to share funny stories.



David

Treasurer

## My name is David Turner

I am a committee member and Treasurer of Country Network. I live in Melbourne and am still working hard. I have enjoyed meeting and socialising with many other men during my membership with Country Network. I like to spend some of my spare time keeping an eye on various share market prices and learning to read the trends. I love our country and like to travel when time permits. I am a proud non smoker nowadays after 47 years of being prisoner to the terrible habit, and I generally like to maintain my health and wellbeing.





# membership update

Our current membership stands at 276 active members, 8 life members and 7 off line members.

Since the dreaded covid, when we lost a number of members, and also the switch to the new membership program we are steadily regaining our pre covid numbers.

Our members are scattered over Australia, all states and territories being represented.

It is pleasing to see members from small country towns join our organization as that was the reason for our birth. Our Founders noted that there were isolated men in country towns and these days isolated men are to be found in the larger cities of all states also.



## Welcome new members

Take a moment to say hi to all our new members, either in our facebook group or via the member profile section of our website!

TOD SMITH  
LEIGH SHAW  
TOM O'CONNELL  
PAUL XYZ  
DAVID HANDFORD  
JASON WHITTAKER  
MICHAEL SANG  
MARTIN NICHOLS  
COLIN ARMSTRONG  
TONY LIEV  
AIDAN HALL  
STEVE KEATH  
RICHARD GLYNN  
BRUCE WHACKETT

JOHN PAYTEN  
KYM KELLY  
PAUL HEAPS  
JAMES BATTISCOMBE  
STEPHEN HINE  
COLIN CONNOLLY  
TROY CAVERHILL  
CHRISTOPHER LOCKWOOD  
GARY HARRINGTON  
PATRICK BELL  
BEN O'DEA  
ROSS TREVELYAN  
TRENT DAVIS  
BRIAN HASTIE

## Invite a friend!

**Why not invite a friend to join Country Network?**

**Country Network is a great place to introduce your mates to other great guys around Australia.**

**When they sign up, ask them to mention your name!**

**We're always looking for more members to join and experience the fun and friendship of the Network.**





Hi, allow me to introduce myself. I am Colin Armstrong, Country Network Membership Coordinator. I just thought I would bring you a glimpse of 'The Peninsula' where I live opposite the beach. It is truly a piece of paradise, where I enjoy walking the Bay Trail each day. Whether you are in Melbourne or planning a visit and would like a day trip to see a piece of 'paradise', there is much to offer, including wineries, golf, beach walks, Arthurs Seat, Somers Beach and Point Nepean. If you want more info and I can be of assistance - reach out to me at [colin@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:colin@countrynetwork.com.au)







# member etiquette



## A Gentle Reminder

Just a gentle reminder that Country Network is a space for all members to feel comfortable, welcome and safe.

We are a social group that promotes and fosters networking and friendship among male-identifying members of the LGBTIQ+ community across Australia.

We have recently updated the Member Protocols and they are available [here](#).

If you are connecting with a member via their profile, please remember to provide as much information about yourself as possible to ensure that the other member feels comfortable knowing who you are and why you are contacting them.

The other member is under no obligation to accept your contact and may choose to either ignore your message or reply with a polite decline if they wish.

As a reminder, please familiarise yourself with these sections of the Member Protocols.

### BEHAVIOUR

1. Country Network is a safe space for all members and requires all members to embrace our core values of courtesy, respect, and tolerance for each other.
2. Country Network does not make any moral judgment on individual members' lifestyle, behaviour or actions, provided the member complies with Australian law or regulations and does not contravene the Member Protocols.
3. Members should appreciate that other members may have issues, incidents or situations in their lives of which others may not be aware. Please support members where possible and respect a member's request or wish.
4. All members must respect and support all other members' privacy, the extent of openness about and disclosure of themselves and their life/sexuality provided the member complies with Australian law or regulations and does not contravene the Member Protocols.





5. Country Network members may not always share similar views and opinions, but all member's views and opinions should be respected, provided the member complies with Australian law or regulations and does not contravene the Member Protocols.

6. Any non-members at Country Network events are the responsibility of either the event organiser or the member who invited them. They are expected to follow member protocols and behaviours outlined in the Member Protocols.

7. Country Network does not tolerate or accept the following:

- Discrimination, including, but not limited to, discrimination based on race, age, nationality, sexual orientation, sexual identity, employment, disability, religion, and political belief.
- Abusive, coercive and bullying behaviour.
- Harassment, including, but not limited to, unwanted attention/advances and inappropriate behaviour.

#### GRIEVANCES

1. A grievance may include, but is not limited to, discrimination, harassment, a disagreement and inappropriate/offensive behaviour.

2. Any member who may have a grievance or concern with any member and/or matter can complete a Grievance Form which is available in the Member Only section of the Country Network website. ([countrynetwork.com.au/member-report-form](http://countrynetwork.com.au/member-report-form)).

3. The committee will deal with the matter in an objective, sensitive and confidential manner.



Anyone who identifies as a man is welcome at Bent Couch Counselling, where they will find a supportive and therapeutic setting. In addition to online group support sessions geared specifically towards men, I also provide individual online counselling sessions for those who require it.

I'm compassionate, deal with insight and empathy and I can assist other men in dealing with these and similar challenges. By dealing with my own personal experiences to seek inner healing, it has allowed me to find purpose in helping others.

**Shaun Williams**  
**Counsellor & Facilitator**  
**0499 487 492**

**Bent Couch Counselling. "Let's Connect"**  
[www.bentcouch.com](http://www.bentcouch.com) | [admin@bentcouch.com](mailto:admin@bentcouch.com)





# MYALUP PINES ADVENTURE

## 10 - 14th MARCH 2025



### Hi Country Networkers

Ric Shell from Esperance has booked cottages for anyone who would like to join us. We've done this before and always had a great time. Come and join us for a relaxing week (or part of a week) at Myalup Pines which are cottages run by the Lions Club.

### MYALUP PINES COTTAGES

We plan to hold another adventure at Myalup Pines, 150 kms south of Perth. Take the left hand turn into Forestry Road, Myalup which is the main turn off to Harvey when travelling between Perth and Bunbury. The cottages are on the left about 3 kms from the turnoff and it is signposted. They hold up to 8 people per cottage.

Date: Arrive about 2.00 pm or later, on Monday 10th March and depart by 10.00 am on Friday, 14th March. You can book in for the whole period, or part of this period.

What to Bring: Summer clothes, bed linen, your favourite pillow, a light blanket. Personal items such as a towel, toothbrush, soap, sun block etc., and medication. It's sure to be hot but sometimes a little cool in the evening. Bring your own drinks for however long you are staying. There is a bottleshop next to the IGA store in Harvey.



### Program:

We keep a very casual program and people organise themselves in what they would like to do. You may wish to join a group who are visiting areas nearby or you may be happy to have a quiet time in the cottage. We keep one night aside to have a dress up night. You can dress in absolutely anything you choose. We ask people not to go naked outside the cottages in case we have to share the area with others. But inside the cottages you can dress as casual as you wish.

### Catering:

A couple of us will organise the first meal on Monday evening. On Tuesday we will discuss the menu for the week or part thereof and will go shopping in Harvey to get supplies from the IGA. Harvey is only 14 kms from the Myalup Pines Cottages. We ask people not to bring food as it's better to plan at the location, unless you have specific dietary needs. We will have tea, coffee, milk and breakfast cereal in the cottages and shop for whatever other food items we need. If you forget anything, Harvey has a very good selection of goods. Places to see: Bunbury is 39 kms from Myalup Pines so we may pay a visit to the Bunbury clothes optional beach and/or a walk around the city. Myalup has a very nice beach to swim or fish at, about 10kms from the cottages. Harvey Dam has trout and redfin fishing, but you need a licence. The Harvey Cheese Factory is interesting; Lake Preston and Yalgorup National Park are ideal for bird watching, bush walking and nature study. Whittaker's Mill Site is 18km north of Myalup, once an old mill town, is now a popular rest spot for travellers with BBQ's and tables. Another favourite is Gnomesville in the Ferguson Valley.

### Entertainment:

Phone reception is poor inside the cottage, but there are a couple of spots outside where you can pick up a signal. There is no TV, so we take card games/board games or sit around and chat. If you have a particular game or games you enjoy, bring it/them along.

### Cost:

The cost varies, depending on the number of people sharing in the cottage. We estimate \$35 per person, per night. Food is also variable, but we estimate about \$80 for the week, and will be slightly less if you are not staying the full week.

### BOOK YOUR PLACE:

Ric Shell in Esperance from Country Network is taking bookings for this adventure. Please contact Ric on 08 9071 2338 or mobile: 0407 633 056 or email: [ric.shell@bigpond.com](mailto:ric.shell@bigpond.com) ASAP so he can plan the accommodation.

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE. Contact Ric or myself if you have any problems or questions.

Hugs

Cliff Moores

Area Co-ordinator WA

Country Network

(Mob: 0422 799 729)







**Emen8 launched in May 2017 as Australia's biggest and boldest online sexual health and wellbeing initiative for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men.**

The following two articles once you click on them should take you to a read about gay cruises and coming out later in life. They are both from Emen8, a blog that is worth following.

**I'M ON A BOAT... WITH 2,000 GUYS: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO GAY CRUISES**

[HTTPS://EMEN8.COM.AU/TRAVEL-AND-PARTY/OVERSEAS/IM-ON-A-BOAT-WITH-2000-GUYS-A-BEGINNERS-GUIDE-TO-GAY-CRUISES/](https://emen8.com.au/travel-and-party/overseas/im-on-a-boat-with-2000-guys-a-beginners-guide-to-gay-cruises/)

**WHAT TO EXPECT COMING OUT LATER IN LIFE**

[HTTPS://EMEN8.COM.AU/LIFESTYLE/LGBT-PEOPLE-AND-CULTURE/WHAT-TO-EXPECT-COMING-OUT-LATER-IN-LIFE/](https://emen8.com.au/lifestyle/lgbt-people-and-culture/what-to-expect-coming-out-later-in-life/)

[Learn more](#)



## Support services

### Adult

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14

[lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)

**Suicide Call Back Service:** 1300 659 467

[suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

**Beyond Blue:** 1300 224 636

[beyondblue.org.au/forums](http://beyondblue.org.au/forums)

**MensLine Australia:** 1300 789 978

[mensline.org.au](http://mensline.org.au)

### Youth

**Kids Helpline:** 1800 551 800

[kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)

**headspace:** 1800 650 890

[headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

**ReachOut:** [ReachOut.com](http://ReachOut.com)

### Other resources

**Head to Health:** mental health portal

[headtohealth.gov.au](http://headtohealth.gov.au)

**Life in Mind:** suicide prevention portal

[lifeinmind.org.au](http://lifeinmind.org.au)

**SANE:** online forums [saneforums.org](http://saneforums.org)

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander:** [healthinonet.ecu.edu.au](http://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au)

**Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex:** 1800 184 527 [qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au)

**Culturally and linguistically diverse:** [embracementalhealth.org.au](http://embracementalhealth.org.au)



**Mindframe**

An initiative of



**EVERYMIND**



**@MindframeMedia**

**[mindframe.org.au](http://mindframe.org.au)**



# pot luck

Hey boys, don't get caught out with a *store-bought* biscuits  
Oh the *horror!!* Too sweeeeetttttt!!

Home made biscuits are easy to make. Pete and I set up an assembly line and away we go.

I am in charge of preparing the mixture using a blender and a mix master.

Pete the creative one then makes the biscuits. He takes a tea spoonful, flattens them with a fork and places them in the oven.

Once out of the oven after 17 minutes he places them on a cooling tray. Later they are transferred to our biscuit tins.



Preheat oven to 170°C. Line an oven tray with baking paper.

Use an electric mixer to cream the butter and sugar. After it reaches a nice creamy/white colour, beat in an egg.

Place the dried fruit of your choice in the blender and chop until in small pieces. Believe me you don't want big chunks of ginger.

Once the fruit is chopped tip into the mixer and mix in. Add the sifted flour and mix. Once you have a soft dough remove from bowl so the next mixture can be prepared.

Roll a tea spoonful of dough into a ball, and flatten with your hands or a fork.

Place on oven trays with baking paper. Allow for spreading. Bake in a moderately hot oven (170 degrees) for 17 minutes.

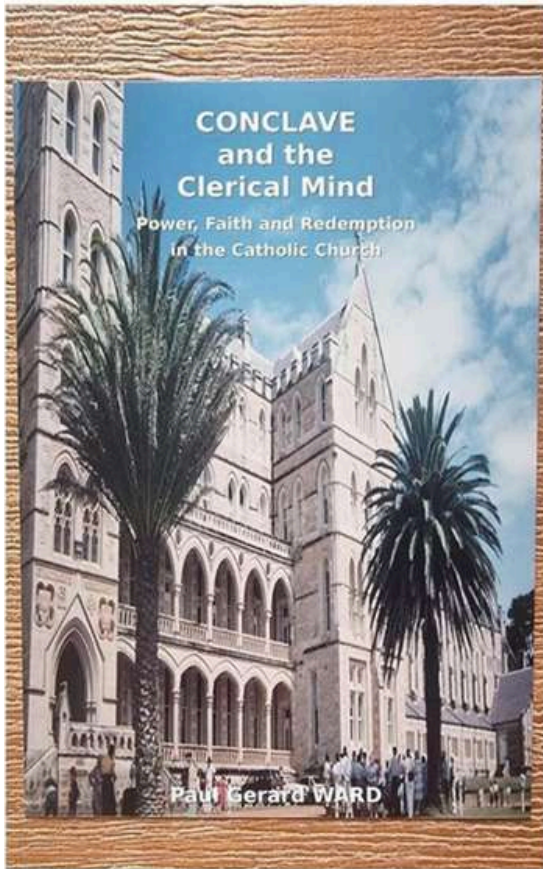
Once cooked place on cooling rack to cool and then into the biscuit tins

**125 grams butter**  
**1/2 to 3/4 cup of castor sugar**  
**1 egg**  
**2 cups of self raising flour**  
**sifted.**  
**1 1/2 cups of: apricots, raisins,**  
**macadamia nuts, naked**  
**ginger or any other type of**  
**dried fruit**





## on the page



We've all heard the stories—the scandals of clergy abuse exposed by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. For many, those headlines felt distant, almost unreal. But for some of us, they weren't just stories; they were lived experiences.

At 18, I was drawn into the control of a powerful clergyman, the Brother Superior of a monastery in Western Sydney. Under the guise of spiritual leadership, he manipulated, exploited, and crossed unforgivable boundaries. Behind closed doors, I saw firsthand how power and authority could be twisted into tools of harm. The monastery was part of a religious group called the Society of St Gerard Majella, led by a man named John Sweeney. While many may not know his name, his crimes—and those of others in the Society—were revealed through the tireless work of the Royal Commission. Sweeney and two others, including the man who controlled me, were eventually convicted and jailed.

In my book, *Conclave and the Clerical Mind*, I share my story—not to dwell on the pain but to show what happens when power goes unchecked, and justice finally steps in. This is more than a personal account; it's a window into the wider story of the abuse of power and the resilience it takes to rise above it. For anyone who's ever wondered what really happened behind the walls of the Catholic Church, this book shines a light on the shadows. If you've been angered by the injustice and moved by the courage of survivors.

This is a story you'll want to read.

.....  
Paul

The book is available through [Amazon.com.au](https://www.amazon.com.au) **Conclave**

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## The Stoics by Ryan Holiday

This book was given to me as a Christmas gift, and I have found it an invaluable source of helpful and inspiring information.

The basis of the book are daily philosophical quotes, 366 in all, allowing for a leap year. The majority of the quotes can be attributed to mainly three ancient Greek and Roman philosophers; namely Marcus Aurelius, Seneca and Epictetus. Each quote is interpreted by American author Ryan Holiday, who surprisingly expands on each quote by either using an ancient setting to interpret the quote or even a modern American one, where he occasionally draws on American politicians or sports stars as contemporary examples. In this manner he has set the daily quote as a daily lesson on how to behave in certain situations. Much of it is common sense, but the philosophers' quotes are reinforced through the daily entries and cover many situations.

The book helps the reader to face adversity and be grateful for the good things in one's life. I keenly recommend this book to other Country Network members.

Michael Gordon

