

# THE COUNTRY NETWORKER

REACHING ACROSS AUSTRALIA



MOUNT KOSCIUSZKO.

# President Report

Hello to all members,

Well, Christmas and the New Year is over, and I do hope you have survived the feasting and drinking and are now back into the process of getting rid of those kilo friends you picked up during that time.

I am looking forward to 2025 with Country Network, hoping to see the association progress and our membership grow. Wouldn't it be great if we also had a number of new activities commenced within the group. If you have an idea and would like to start an activity, talk to us and we will offer help in getting you started. Many great things in Country Network started when 3 or 4 blokes came together whether it be for a meal or a morning coffee. From these small seeds things will grow, and I encourage you to get involved in 2025.

One of the things I would like to see this year is a face to face gathering in October for our AGM. I have begun making enquiries around the Yarrawonga/Mulwala area. This places it in an area where the bulk of the membership reside. If I can't find anything in this area, I will look at the Echuca area.

Your membership of Country Network requires you to keep confidential the names of members within the organization and not to pass on information about members to a third party. We had an incident recently where a member of Country Network passed a contact number to an outside party and that outside party contacted a member of Country Network with a proposal of a sexual nature. This caused some distress with the member and unfortunately, they resigned from the organization. I ask that all members respect the privacy of others and do not divulge private information of members unless you have asked that member first.

It looks like we will have someone to look after the Sips and Slips of a Sunday. This is our regular chat session, which happens on a Sunday night at 5pm. It is easy to join the session, as you click on the link in the email that is sent out. Just follow the onscreen instructions and the moderator will let you join the chat. All things pertinent to blokes are discussed and new members are always welcome.

To all our sick and not feeling too well members, I wish you a speedy recovery and do hope you are up and about soon.

Hugs

Jeff

President CN

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# EDITORIAL

So, another year is over.

Was it Maggie Smith, in her role as Aunt Augusta in the 1972 film *Travels with My Aunt*, who said that one should always grow old disgracefully? That sounds like good advice to me.

After all, as the aphorism goes: when you're on your death-bed, you won't be wishing you spent more time in the office.

My grandmother was a milder version of Augusta. Granny would stay up late watching TV whenever she felt like it. Sometimes, her dinner would consist of two or three helpings of dessert, and she loved chocolate. Mostly though, Granny ate healthy meals, and she lived to the age of 97. I remember two things she said to me. The first was "Don't worry about getting older, dear. Don't think about it; it's going to happen no matter what. Just do what you want to do and don't worry about what other people say." The second was "Promise me that you'll never go out with a bold girl". That promise was very easy to keep. No offence to 'bold girls'!

Watch this....

*Black Doves* is a suspenseful British spy thriller, that you can watch on Netflix. It stars the fabulous Keira Knightley and the fabulous Ben Wishaw. Need I say more?

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

The House With A Thousand Stairs  
by Garrick Jones

Warrambool.

In Gamilaraay, the language of the Kamilaroi peoples of north-western New South Wales, it's the word for The Milky Way. It's also the name of Peter Dixon's homestead and sheep station, situated in the lee of the Liverpool Ranges.

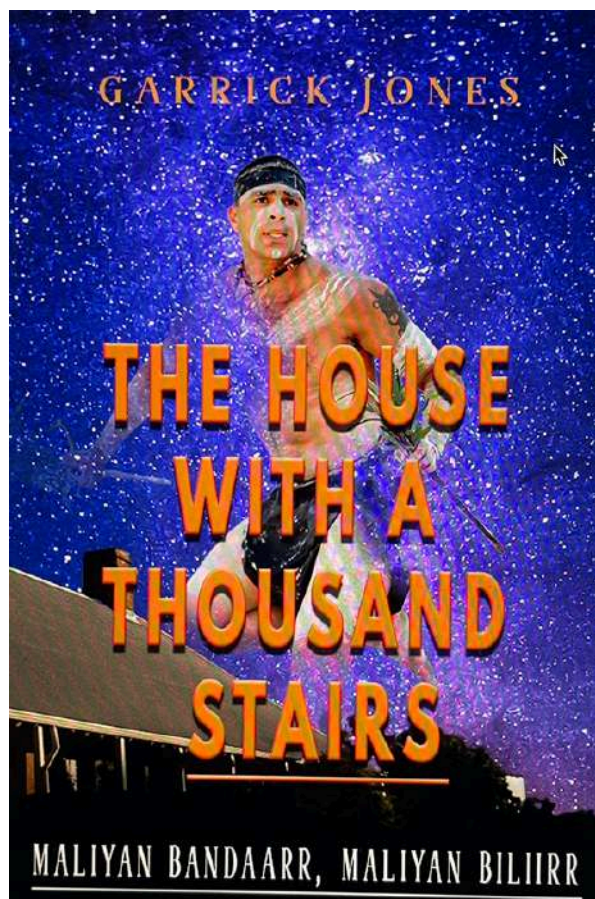
In 1947, Peter returns from war, his parents and younger brother dead, the property de-stocked and his older brother, Ron, having emptied out the family bank account and nowhere to be found.

The House With a Thousand Stairs is the story of a young man, scarred both on the inside and the outside, trying to re-establish what once was a prosperous and thriving sheep station with the help of his neighbours and his childhood friend, Frank Hunter, the local Indigenous policeman.

Enveloped by the world of Indigenous spirituality, the Kamilaroi system of animal guides and totems, Peter and Frank discover the true nature of their predestined friendship, one defined by the stars, the ancestral spirits, and Baiame, the Creator God and Sky Father of The Dreaming. Maliyan bandaarr, maliyan biliirr.

I really enjoyed this book. I thought the plot was well developed, and the characters were interesting.

John Holden





# countrynetwork

*Connecting Men Across Australia*



## **Expressions of Interest The Camperdown Cup Race**

Neil Warner has asked to put out a feeler for members who likes the gallops and a bit of a punt and would be interested in going to Camperdown.

**Saturday January 18th 2025 for the Camperdown Cup.**

Information is available on the Camperdown Cup website.  
<https://country.racing.com/camperdown/calendar/camperdown-cup>

Camperdown can be reached by Vline and shuttle buses  
run from the station to the race track

Apparently there is an opportunity to reserve tables to create a social atmosphere and Neil would like to book these when he gets some feedback from members and friends.

**If you are interested, please contact Neil on 0419 551 245**

**Members in Victoria or visiting a proposed event for January 2025.  
Our member Neil Warner is seeking expressions of interest from  
members who may wish to attend this event with him.**

- **The Camperdown Cup Race**
- **Saturday 18th of January 2025 information.**
- **<https://country.racing.com/camper.../calendar/camperdown-cup>.**
- **Please ring Neil Warner 0419551245 if you are interested in attending.**

# Spring Road Trip.

For those who may not know us, Cheng and I met a few years back and I moved south to Melbourne from the NSW Central Coast to live with him. He is Malaysian born Australian who joyfully became an Australian Citizen back in 2018. We moved up to Caboolture late in 2022. I'm happily retired while he's an IT professional.

Cheng and I recently took advantage of some time off to venture out around South East Queensland and the NSW border region. We called it a mini-lap as it took just 10 days to cover five very different locations.

First off was the most peaceful and quiet camping grounds at Lake Moogara where we parked by the lake under some beautiful trees and listened to ducks, swans and pelicans on the water while several multi coloured lorikeets visited as well.

Two days later we arrived at Queen Mary Falls on the Scenic Rim . Getting there was a bit of an adventure as we reached a point in the road facing a sign which read: Narrow, steep and windy road next 10 km not suitable for trucks, caravans, trailers or oversize vehicles. To emphasise the point the road had a very narrow fenced off entrance! We decided not to tempt fate and turned back on a roundabout trip. The falls are breathtaking and refreshing falling 50 metres I'd say. The walking track has two approaches, the one we took involved a gentle slope down but a steep set of stairs up toward the end. Next time we plan to go down the stairs first!

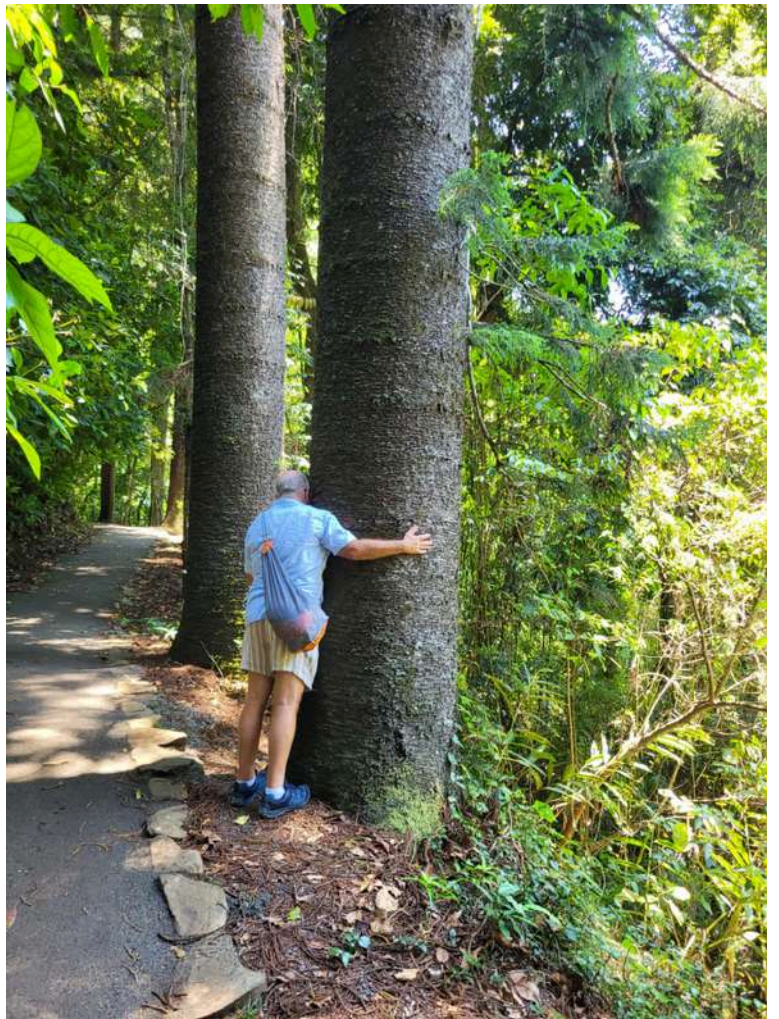
Next two nights were spent in Girraween National Park which literally hangs over the border above NSW. Another quiet spot with a few other happy campers and day visitors. If you are ever lucky enough to visit, take everything including a portable shower. The creek is – shall we say – refreshing! We were blessed to see scores of kangaroos and wallabies and a few other creatures in the bush. I found the granite outcrops and remote location a peaceful and at times spiritual experience as I tried to imagine how the original inhabitants may have lived by the river among the tall trees and impressive rocks.

Historic Tenterfield, home of the nation was our next port of call. An otherwise non-descript town becomes of interest if you are keen on the early history of the formation of the Federation of Australia. Think – Henry Parkes and Banjo Patterson and a person called Matilda.

Nimbin, for those who may not have ventured there – well let's say – it's different. We enjoyed a beautiful healthy breakfast and coffee while sitting looking out at the passing parade of locals and tourists. "Cookies, cookies" murmured the woman sitting at the pedestrian crossing. I'm sure they had 'special herbal' qualities! The road in and out is a bit of a windy one but worth it for the Nimbin experience.









# 50th anniversary of legal gay sex in Australia

**2025** marks the 50 anniversary of the start of decriminalisation of consensual homosexual activity in Australia. South Australia was the first Australian state to do so and with ground-breaking law, for the English-speaking world, to set an age of consent equal to that of heterosexuals.



Front page of *The Advertiser* (Adelaide newspaper) the morning after the legislation was passed by the South Australian Parliament, 18 September 1975. Source SA Library microfiche.

Peter Duncan MP (Labor) introduced his gay law reform Bill in 1973, before he became Attorney-General, but it took SA Parliament another two years to pass it, after an intervening election in which some obstructionist Upper House LCL (Liberal Country League) MPs lost their seats. Some opponents were closeted gay parliamentarians. Of course, this did not happen in a vacuum. England and Wales had partially decriminalised "consensual sex between men in private" in 1967, but the age of consent was 21, and more than 2 people was not considered "private". Likewise in Canada in 1969. Even in South Australia there had been earlier attempts at reform. Don Dunstan (Labor) when he was Attorney-General in SA wanted reform in 1965 but he couldn't get the proposal past caucus. Murray Hill (Liberal) introduced a Bill to Parliament in 1972 shortly after Dr. George (Ian) Duncan (no relation to Peter Duncan) was thrown into the River Torrens in Adelaide and drowned, speculated to be by off-duty police officers poofster bashing. The Hill Bill was severely amended by parliamentary conservatives; consequently, gays could still be hauled before the courts, but could claim as a defence that it was "in private" – that is to say, the onus



of proof of innocence was on the defendants, contrary to well-established legal principles.

But decriminalisation had already occurred in France in 1791 (184 years, nearly two centuries, before Australia), and many non-English speaking countries decriminalised gay sex in the 19th century, including the Ottoman Empire and many European and South American countries.

Napoleon Bonaparte took gay law reform throughout Europe in his conquests, so that in the Netherlands decriminalisation occurred in 1811. We see the legacy of that today in that former French and Dutch colonies did not criminalise homosexuality (with exceptions after independence) but English colonies did (for example, never illegal: Indonesia, Laos, Vietnam. Illegal until recently: Singapore, India, Fiji, Hong Kong. Still illegal: Malaysia). It begs the question: why did it take English-speaking countries so long? Would gays in Australia have been better off if Napoleon had invaded New South Wales, as he had plans to do according to the book *French designs on colonial New South Wales*<sup>1</sup>?

Those of us that lived in Australia through the early 1970s will remember the kaffuffle caused by the anti-authoritarian *Little red school book* (original version 1969 in Danish<sup>2</sup>) which was the catalyst that ended book censorship in Australia after the election of the Whitlam (Labor) Government in 1972. The book's call to critical thinking is even more relevant today. Furthermore, it had an affirmative view of homosexuality and predicted same-sex marriage (31 years before it first happened in the Netherlands).

It is hard to believe now, that before the Duncan legislation, gay men could be sentenced to imprisonment, whipping, hard labour, have their names and details published in *The Advertiser*, lose their jobs, and be surveilled by ASIO.

Australians, gays in particular, owe Peter Duncan a huge debt of gratitude. We would do well to remember all other straight allies in our battles for legality. Remarkably, 50 years after passing of his gay law reform Bill, Peter Duncan is still alive, because at the time of his reform passing he was only 30.

Yet today there are still many reforms needed, especially in former British colonies especially where criminalisation is worsening (think Uganda, Ghana); and it's still illegal in Australia's nearest neighbour, the former Australian colony of Papua New Guinea.

Two South Australian Parliamentarians have set up a committee to coordinate events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of gay law reform. If you have any suggestions, contact them at:

- Hon Ian Hunter MLC (Labor) [hunter.office@parliament.sa.gov.au](mailto:hunter.office@parliament.sa.gov.au)

Hon Robert Simms MLC (SA Greens) [Simms.Office@parliament.sa.gov.au](mailto:Simms.Office@parliament.sa.gov.au)

*Written by Bart van der Wel*

<sup>1</sup> Jean Fornasiero and John West-Sooby (2014), *French designs on colonial New South Wales*. François Péron's memoir on the English settlement in New Holland, Van Diemen's Land and the archipelagos of the Great Pacific Ocean. Friends of the State Library of South Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Søren Hansen and Jesper Jensen (1969), *Der lille rode bog for skoleelever*  
Translated from the Danish by Berit Thornberry.

# ChillOut Festival

📍 Festival Hub, 94 Vincent Street, Daylesford, Victoria, 3460



Four days of performances, music, theatre, drag, community events, and local food and wine over the Labour Day long weekend in the LGBTQIA+ capital of regional Victoria.

From humble beginnings in 1997, ChillOut Festival has grown to become Australia's largest and longest running Queer Country Pride festival. This year their theme is "Boots and Bling"!



We left lovely Laurieton on 15th November for our extended road trip to Victoria to catch up with family and friends. That night we dined with Rob (Area Coordinator Albury/Wodonga) and John Matheson. The next day we headed to Colac to stay with family.



Sunday 17th November, we travelled out to Beeac where Country Network members had gathered at the country residence of Bob from Beeac.



Great day of feasting and renewing old friendships. Bob has a wonderful garden surrounding his residence. This is one of the wonderful things about Country Network, that on occasions like this you get to renew those friendships and meet new members to our group. We hadn't seen a number of the members for quite some time, and it was wonderful to shake the hand and then go into a hug. Some of those meetings were boisterous while others were gentlemanly in their welcome. After talking and hugging, walking the grounds the barbeques were fired up and the meat cooked. Salads were in abundance, all prepared by Bob and his helpers and the sweets were delicious.



Late in the afternoon members prepared to return to their homes. Some had a long trip back to Melbourne, others around Geelong. Pete and I travelled back to the depths and wilds of the Otway Ranges where Cousin Bob lived the quiet life with friend Neil when they were not in living in Emerald. After a meal we said our goodbyes and with Pete driving very carefully through the bush we got back to Colac and the safety of our bed. It was a great day and to meet so many friends again was a bonus.



The rest of our trip was around Port Fairy and Warrnambool where friends and family lived. We did have one excursion to Port Campbell where we stayed in the NRMA Caravan Park in a comfortable cabin. On the Saturday night we drove to Peterborough to attend the 80th birthday of Ronald, a very old and close friend of Pete's. This was a great night where the alcohol and food was in abundance. Back in Warrnambool we had a visit from old friend Rob C and his new partner. It was great to meet Brenton and get to know him in the short time we were together.



We left for the long trip home, overnighing in Gundagai then onto Sydney where we stayed with Tonka, our wedding celebrant. Stayed in Sydney Saturday night and went to see Jesus Christ Superstar. Wonderful show and full of memories for me having seen it first in Melbourne many, many years ago. We were back in our bed in lovely Laurieton after three weeks away on the road. It is so good to drop into one's own bed after being away. However, the two kilos that came home with me is going to take some shifting so it's back to the gym and watching the food intake.



The following are links to articles published by Emen8.

They are placed here for your information and to help you travel through this gay old world as a gay man.

To access the article please click on the link and you will be magically transported to finding a gay friendly therapist or any one of the other items.

Editor.

How to find the right gay-friendly therapist for you

<https://emen8.com.au/health/mental-wellbeing/how-to-find-the-right-gay-friendly-therapist-for-you/>

Travelling internationally with HIV

<https://emen8.com.au/travel-and-party/overseas/travelling-internationally-hiv/>

All the benefits: Our guide to maintaining a regular FB

<https://emen8.com.au/sex-and-dating/dating-and-relationships/all-the-benefits-our-guide-to-maintaining-a-regular-fb/>