

THE COUNTRY NETWORKER

REACHING ACROSS AUSTRALIA

MAY/JUN 2024



ACROSS THE COUNTRY



new email



CONTACT US

COUNTRY NETWORKER

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!.

Thanks to the people at Emen8, this issue of Country Networker includes two articles. One explains why you needn't worry about getting HIV from mozzie bites, and the other is about hookup apps.

We also have information from UNSW about antibiotic-resistant STIs and how you might be able to help.

For those who knew or have met Philip Carswell:

CARSWELL, Philip James (Phil) OAM

1953-2024

From an early age, Phil was a dedicated activist and fierce advocate for LGBTIQ+ communities and people living with HIV. He went on to become the Founding President of the Victorian AIDS Council (now Thorne Harbour Health). Phil's longstanding service to community health was recognised in 2015 when he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia. Our deepest sympathies go out to Phil's family and husband Ian Cherry.

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Editor

*We acknowledge and pay respect to the past, present and future
Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation in which we work, play and live.*



president's report

Hello members,



This will be my last report for a while as Pete and I fly out of Sydney bound for Singapore and then Phuket where we will be relaxing and viewing the scenery for 8 weeks. We plan to spend a week in Cambodia at Siem Reap where we will be touring the temples and the countryside. Whilst in Siem Reap we will be staying in a gay men's resort which will be a first for both of us. The name of the Resort is MEN'S Resort & Spa (Gay Hotel). Will let you know what it is like on our return, or you could join our Facebook page as we will be posting pictures and reports on the page. We are also visiting the River Khwae Bridge, and staying in Kanchanaburi City for several days.

But that is not all, on our return to lovely downtown Laurieton, we will pack our winter woollies and head south to Melbourne where we will attend the International Convention of Lions Clubs International. We will also be visiting family and friends while in Vic.

I would also like to welcome Paul Ward who is our new Secretary. Welcome aboard Paul and do enjoy your time as Secretary. Paul can be contacted at secretary@countrynetwork.com.au His bio is elsewhere in the Networker.

Another welcome goes to Darren Murdoch who is our new Website Manager. Darren hails from Coffs Harbour. Welcome aboard Darren, and he can be contacted at darren@countrynetwork.com.au

A big welcome to our new members who are listed elsewhere in the Networker. I do hope you are enjoying finding your way round our website and have read some of the interesting articles that can be found there.

While I am away Llyle, our Membership Coordinator is looking after Sips and Slips. Those of you who haven't joined us yet, keep a lookout for Llyle's friendly invite that will land in you email box some time on a Friday. The discussions are a great deal of fun.

I will finish with a poem from a Blog by Mr Cox

Hung - Ecstatic Path

How do you know when your heart is ready?

You who long to be touched

with love and kindness

Deeply and tenderly

You who yearn to be cared for

Honoured and seen

In all of your vulnerable nakedness...

Come lay down here

Breathe into the wanting





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?

[Read More →](#)

Move beyond the fear
Awake to the desire
Surrender to the pain and trembling pleasure
Release into ecstasy and serenity
Embrace intimacy
Be fragile and powerful
Come, come, come
Rest your body here next to me
I touch you
Feel you
Lay my hands on your head, heart, cock
And all the parts of you
With nothing more or less than Love
Now with all the courage within, say to yourself
"Oh yes, my heart is ready."
From The HaPenis Project

To those not feeling the best, get well soon so you can get back out there and enjoy life.

Jeffrey P. Sproal

President

email: president@countrynetwork.com.au

mobile: 0412 651 429

Your gay doctor online Available 7 days a week

Get started online heyfella.com.au



PrEP Online

Online phone appointment
Includes STI screening & consult



STI Test

Get tested easily with an online request. Australia wide



Doctor Consultation

Get the health advice you need quickly, discreetly & conveniently



Online Prescriptions

Sent to your phone as an eScript.
Take to any pharmacy



Same day phone appointments



Gay doctors for gay men – no awkward consults



All online & save time. No waiting rooms.



membership update

Welcome new members!

First Name	Last Name	Suburb/Town	State	Date Joined
Colin	Armstrong	Mooroopna	VIC	19/03/2024
James	England	Doncaster East	VIC	24/03/2024
Brian	McCurich	Barrabba	NSW	4/04/2024



Lyle Wentworth

Membership Coordinator



Many people, if not all people will, at some time encounter an emotional crisis while in a relationship at home as a partner, parent, at work or socially and it is at times like these that a person will seek a counsellor.



MAXIFECT
Maximising Interpersonal Effectiveness



Ian Howells BSw, MC.

Ian has many years experience as a social worker empowering people on the back of an understanding that no significant learning takes place without a significant relationship.

Those relationships could be personal, work related, social or political and that there are many environmental factors that have an influence on those relationships.

It is on this premise that inspired Ian in a counselling role.

Phone 1300 181 291

Email info@maxifect.com.au

Web www.maxifect.com.au (being built)

**STRESSED?
DEPRESSED?
ANXIOUS?**

Phone 1300181291
Book a 30 minute **FREE**
information session





secretary update



Paul Ward

Secretary

Hello and greetings from Caboolture, Queensland. I have the honour of joining our team as secretary of Country Network.

I'm a baby boomer and a Sydney boy at heart although I have been around the place. I've lived in: Bathurst, Bowral, Mittagong, Homebush, St Mary's, Mulgoa, Bateau Bay and Umina Beach, Hillsdale, Coogee, Kensington, Matraville and Randwick in NSW, also North Melbourne, Aspendale and Mernda in Victoria. Moving to the sunshine state for a better climate, I lived on Bribie Island for a while but my husband, Cheng, and I are now settled in Caboolture, the land of the Carpet Snake. Cheng commutes to work by train to Kelvin Grove while I get to do some housework. I'm a retired adult educator, hospitality worker, aged care worker and back in the day a youth worker. Oh, and I've lived in Papua New Guinea, Madang and Bougainville, where I was a volunteer.

Some of you may have heard of my recent autobiography, "Suffocated by Church - A gay man's journey to freedom"?

While in an 'old peoples' home' at Bateau Bay, I was on the residents committee, once as Vice President and later as Secretary. The Country Network will offer me different challenges, but I am sure I can step up and do my small part.

Look out for me on our Facebook page and please contact me via my CN address - paul@countrynetwork.com.au



our community



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY



UNSW
Kirby Institute



UNSW
SYDNEY

Are you concerned about antibiotic resistant STIs?

We want to talk to gay and bi+ men, trans and gender diverse people, and other men in these networks, about STIs and resistance to antibiotic treatment.

To participate in this study, you need to be:

- 18 years old or over
- Identify as a gay or bi+ man, trans or gender diverse person, or a man who is part of these networks*
- Living in Australia

Click on the link to find out more and to register your interest.

You will receive a gift voucher for your time.



*Please see the Participant Information Sheet in the linked survey for more information on participation and sampling

<https://tinyurl.com/399zuaab>



Wagga Mardi Gras

As some of you may know, Wagga Mardi Gras was on in early March. A couple of us headed up for the weekend to join in the celebrations.

While the Wagga MG is still relatively new, it is great to see more and more regional towns hosting GLBTIQ+ events, raising awareness and visibility of our community.

The highlight of the weekend was a rainbow parade featuring around 52 floats that journeyed down Bayliss Street, culminating in a free after-party at the Victory Memorial Gardens. The parade even saw a contingent of 78ers who had travelled to Wagga.

The parade was well attended, with many locals, as well as local businesses and groups joining the festivities, most dressing up to get in the spirit of Mardi Gras.

The Wagga MG is held in early March, so if you can make it next year, please consider going and supporting the local community.

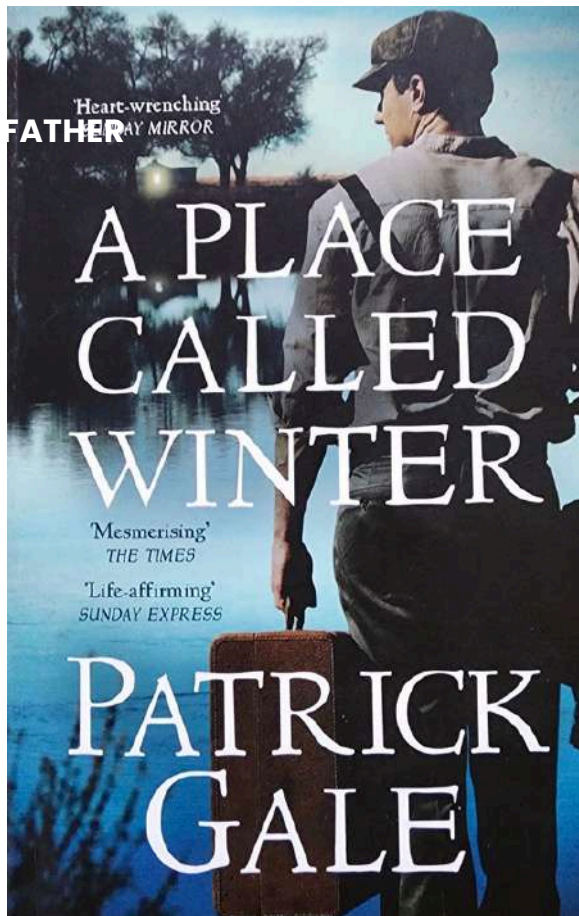


happenings





on the page



“A Place Called Winter”

by Patrick Gale, a prolific and much-praised author.

I loved this book. It's one I want to keep, to read again.

Gale based this story on his mother's grandfather, Harry Cane, who in the early nineteenth-hundreds, left his wife, young daughter and his comfortable life in England to go to Canada, ostensibly to become a farmer.

For Harry was attracted to men, so had to live his life with the ever-present threat of discovery by the wrong people, and laws were harsh.

Harry also had to deal with the hardships of the Canadian prairies, but he also finds love.

Praise for “A Place Called Winter:

Bold, moving, intensely erotic – Patricia Dunker

One of the finest writers of his generation – Barbara Gowdy

...delicious novel of illicit love and bold reinvention – Armistead Maupin



ONLINE AND LOOKING? A GUIDE TO HOOK-UP APPS FOR GAY AND BI GUYS

By Emen8

So, you're ready to take the plunge into the world of virtually hooking up.

Getting started can be both exciting and daunting, so we've reviewed some gay dating apps available in Australia for you to try.

Start slow, download one and ease your way into chatting. You may need help [rejecting someone respectfully](#) or some [sexting tips](#).

Before you download and get in the swing of things, [book yourself in](#) for a regular sexual health test in case you get lucky! And be prepared for some fun with enough [PrEP](#) or [HIV treatment meds](#), [condoms](#) and lube.

There are plenty of gay apps out there, with some popular among certain tribes in the gay zoo. Whether you're a hairy bear, side pig or fem-top otter, we'll find the right app to get you bred in captivity... or even find love — whatever you want, there's an app for it

Feeld

[Feeld](#) is a dating app for all genders and sexualities, focused on more meaningful connections. It is popular among [non-monogamous](#) folk (people with multiple partners or open relationships), trans and gender diverse users and bi+ communities.

Features:

- Profile swipe layout
- Partner connection tools – pair your profile with your partner's, create group chats
- Feeld IRL – meet up with other Feeld members at events
- Free Membership – you can't see who liked you or add private photos visible to your connections
- Majestic Membership \$16.99 per month.

Best for: ethically non-monogamous couples, bi+, trans and gender diverse folk

Grindr

The melodic trill of a Grindr notification is a sure-fire way to turn heads. With over [13.5 million monthly active users](#), it's no surprise that Grindr is a popular choice for gay and bi guys. It's developed its own language of one-word questions such as 'into?' (what are your kinks?) or 'hung?' (do you have a big cock?), and love it or hate it — it's evolved its own subculture and stereotypes. You'll understand when you encounter [these guys](#) on there!





our community

Features:

- Location-based grid layout
- Private picture albums to share spicy photos (with consent).
- Filters (age, online now, fresh, tags, position) and tribes (bear, jock, leather, otter, twink)
- Sexual health testing reminders every three months
- Popular for chatting and making friends, especially when travelling
- Free Membership – ads, limited profile views and filters and no expiring photos
- XTRA \$29.99 per month or Grindr Unlimited \$56.99 per month.

Best for: NSA (no-strings-attached) or regular fun and chat.

GROWLR

For bears and cubs looking for more fuzzy cuddles, GROWLR is an app that caters for the bear community (hairy, plus-sized gay and bi men).

Features:

- Grid-style layout for nearby and global bears
- Live feature to join streams from popular users around the world
- Galleries to view hot, new, and different tribe members
- Send a 'shout' to all users in a defined area for the last week (5km for \$7.99)
- Free Membership – ads, limited profile views, no private videos or photos
- GROWLR Pro \$22.99 per month.

Best for: bears, chubs and chasers

Hornet

Looking to whet your stinger? Hornet might be the app for you. Marketed as 'your queer social network', Hornet offers a different way to connect with gay and bi guys.

Features:

- The feed (like Facebook or Instagram) allows you to share posts, videos and livestream with followers, users, and influencers.
- Search the grid for users nearby and filter by age, verification status and language
- Free Membership – ads and limited photos and profiles
- Hornet Premium \$19.99 per month.

Best for: social media



our community

Jack'd

With a slightly smaller following, Jack'd is a gay dating app that promotes diversity in its users. Jack'd has more users from different backgrounds, body types and experience levels. It's a great option for gay, bi and questioning guys from migrant backgrounds or who are not in the gay scene.

Features:

- Profile swipe-based layout
- Discover global profiles with an unpaid membership
- You can browse anonymously, which is great for discreet or questioning members.
- Free Membership — ads, limited chat history, albums, profiles and no videos or anonymous
- Jack'd Pro \$19.99 per month.

Best for: BIPOC and questioning communities

Manhunt

A blast from the past, Manhunt is one of the older apps on this list, having launched in 2001. Despite its vintage, it's still being used widely and is popular among gay and bi guys 40+. It also has an uncensored browser site that allows you to upload nudes in your profile. Its primary purpose is sex.

Features:

- Location-based 'men grid'
- Buddy list to keep track of your favourite fb
- Video chat for virtually hooking up
- Explicit gay content and porn
- Free membership — limited video chat, photos and buddies list
- Manhunt VIP \$23.99 per month.

Best for: NSA fun for guys over 40

Recon

With its crimson and black app design, Recon creates a darkroom online environment for gay and bi men with fetishes. Whether you're a pup or pig, into leather or bondage, Recon has all kinksters in the LGBTQ community begging for more.

Features:

- Browse the recon feed to see who had cruised you and keep up with Recon's fetish magazine
- Add followers and message profiles nearby and online
- Describe your kinks and position by level of passivity or activeness.
- Free membership — limited profiles, gallery photos, and no premium search
- Recon Premium \$19.99 per month.

Best for: people with kinks



our community

Scruff

Not just for pup lovers, Scruff is another popular preference for gay dating. As the name suggests, it celebrates guys with beards and body hair. It is also more popular with guys who are 35+.

Features:

- Profile swipe layout — match with people you both want to meet
- Discover nearby and most popular guys and usage in cities around the world
- Explore LGBTQ events near you
- Free Membership — limited blocks, profiles, woofs, looks, match stacks, password options, and no profile notes or insights
- Scruff Pro \$19.99 per month.

Best for: travellers ('visiting' profiles) and hairy dudes

Taimi

Taimi is a dating app for all LGBTQ+ identities, which values the fluidity and diversity of sexuality. It does not have an 'ideal' user like many other apps but has specific chats for gay and bi dating.

Features:

- Profile swipe layout
- Taimi cards allow you to create a profile with photos (both private spicy and public ones) and your Instagram and Spotify
- Diamond dates — a weekly selection of profiles chosen for you
- Free membership — limited diamond dates, like views, actions, rainbow likes, skips and global explore
- Taimi Bronze \$5.99 per month, Taimi Silver \$14.99 per month, Taimi Gold \$34.99 per month.

Best for: nonbinary folk, queer and trans guys into guys

Sniffies

Only recently launched in Australia (but quickly growing), Sniffies is a unique cruising app. The name 'Sniffies' hopes to inspire all to explore their fetishes.

Features:

- Immersive map style layout — profiles appear on a map of your area (they don't show your exact location)
- Cruising locations and gay areas report 'Sniffies' at location
- Makes it easier to host group activities.
- Free membership — ads, no cruising updates, multiple profile photos, pin chats or profiles, host groups, travel mode, discreet mode, add places
- Sniffies plus \$21.99 per month.

Best for: NSA kinky fun and groups



CLEARING THE AIR ON MOSQUITOES: CAN MOZZIES TRANSMIT HIV?

By Emen8

The tangy, nose-turning scent of mozzie repellent is the perfume of Aussie summer.

As the weather (like our saunas) gets steamier and wetter, mosquitoes are multiplying. So, what risks do these tiny vampires pose? Can mozzies transmit HIV? And what can you do to protect yourself this hot gay summer? We're here to clear the air on mosquitoes. Can you get HIV from a mosquito bite?

You're wondering if that annoying buzzing that's been keeping you awake all night is going to pass on HIV? The answer is no.

Mosquitoes cannot carry HIV, as they don't have CD4 cells (T-cells) like us. Since CD4 cells are what enable HIV to survive and replicate in humans, mosquitoes cannot acquire it. Did you know that when a mosquito bites you, it leaves saliva, not blood (which is what makes them itchy!) This means they cannot transfer HIV from person to person as their saliva does not carry HIV.

And even if you did finally slap the crap out of that bugger that's been eating you alive, the blood would not carry enough HIV to transmit to humans. So, there's no need for any nightmares starring Louie the Fly anytime soon.

HIV stigmatisation

HIV transmission via mosquitoes, is just one example of a misunderstanding of HIV and how it is transmitted.

HIV has long been subject to misunderstandings, many that are harmful to people living with HIV. News correspondent Karl Schmid is one such person, who talked with us about his experiences after disclosing his HIV status. He deals with stigma such as people viewing him as promiscuous or dirty. Karl suggests that stigma "... comes back to again the lack of education. I think we're finally starting to break down barriers."

He continues:

"People go 'well, how are you going to end stigma?' We're going to talk about it. ... my HIV status is not a reason to be scared of me anymore. ... But instead of asking me whether I'm 'clean', ask me what my sexual health status is."





our community

Anxiety around HIV and its transmission has a long history within and outside of the gay community. But so has our advances in understanding about HIV. We know that people living with HIV who maintain an undetectable viral load cannot pass on the virus. By educating ourselves and talking openly about HIV we can reduce the stigma towards people who live with the virus.

Let's listen up and brush up on some HIV basics.

How is HIV transmitted?

Mosquitoes don't spread HIV and neither does touching, kissing, or sharing eating utensils with a person living with HIV. HIV transmission most commonly occurs by fucking without a condom, or by sharing injecting equipment.

What do you need to know about these mozzies then? And what can you do to minimise risk?

What are mosquito-borne viruses?

Mosquito-borne viruses are diseases that are transmitted by mosquitoes to humans. The WHO explains that mosquitoes can contract some viruses by ingesting the blood of an infected host (human or animal) – though this doesn't apply to HIV. They can then pass the virus onto another host.

You might know mosquito-borne viruses such as Malaria and Zika. However, there's no need to panic-buy Aeroguard as many of these viruses are preventable with simple measures.

Risk

Areas that have been affected by flooding may be at a higher risk of mosquito-borne viruses. Check out the links at the bottom of this article to get info from your local health authority.

Prevention

Some household measures that have been recommended include:

- Covering up by wearing long, loose-fitting clothing – mosquitoes can bite through tight clothing.
- Use mosquito repellents containing Picaridin or DEET on all exposed skin.
- Limiting outdoor activity – especially at dusk and dawn.
- Using 'knockdown' fly spray, mosquito coils or plug-in repellent while sitting or eating outdoors.
- Removing water sources where mosquitoes can breed around the home or a campsite.
- Making sure windows are fitted with mosquito netting or screens.
-

For more information about mosquito-borne viruses and available vaccines visit your state, territory or federal health sites



happenings

Find out about all upcoming events in the following locations:

- Country Network Private Facebook Group
- Country Network website

Don't forget if you would like to organise an event: contact our events coordinator, events@countrynetwork.com.au

It's great to see new events popping up around the country!

Don't forget, anyone can start an event in their area, it's really easy and we will support you by letting all members in your area know about your new event.

There is an easy to follow guide to hosting an event found [HERE](#). To get started just fill out the [event submission form](#) and we will help you with the rest, it's that easy!

Happy Networking

Events Coordinator

Event Grants

Country Network is excited to introduce Event Grants. This is a brand-new concept where we provide members with a financial grant to arrange an event in Country Network (CN).

Why are we doing this?

We would love to see our members come together, get to know each other better, and spend some face-to-face time. And hopefully encourage you to arrange more events.

What do I need to do?

All you have to do is arrange an event for your fellow CN members.

What sort of event?

It could be anything, but some ideas could include:

- Weekends away
- Attending a LGBTI festival or large annual event in your area
- Camping
- 4WDing
- Fishing
- Bushwalking
- Caravanning
- Winery tours
- Photography weekend
- Christmas get-together
- A tour of a historic area or an area of natural beauty.

The list is endless so feel free to use your imagination.



event grants

What else do I need to know?

We are open to hearing all your ideas, but there are a few guidelines as to what sort of an event:

- It needs to be open to all CN members and be inclusive.
- It needs to be something that all members would be comfortable attending and participating in.
- It needs to have a focus on country/rural Australia.
- It needs to be easily accessible by car, public transport etc. Or you can provide lifts or car share.
- It needs to be something substantial like a weekend away, not a coffee morning, pub night or lunch.
- It needs to have a minimum of five people.

How much is the grant?

The amount will vary depending on how many people attend your event, the number of overall submissions we receive and the overall costs of your event, but as a general guideline, we will offer between \$500 to \$1000 as a grant. The money, to be shared among all event attendees, can go towards accommodation, food, transport, general costs etc. However, you can't claim more than the event cost.

What do I do next?

Just submit the following event details by 15th October 2023 via email to president@countrynetwork.com.au

- Event idea
- Location
- Type of accommodation (if applicable)
- Time of year (approx. is okay)
- Number of people you require to attend, or hope to attend (approx.)
- Planned/possible activities for the event.

Don't worry if you cannot get your idea to us by October. We will have other rounds of Event Grants over the 2023/34 year.

Note - if you want to arrange an event before the cut-off date, we are happy to consider your submission earlier.

What else do I have to do?

The event organiser or an attendee will need to write a short article for the CN newsletter (100-200 words) plus supply some photos within a month of the event happening.

What if I have some questions?

If you have any questions or would like to run an idea past someone, please contact President Jeff on 0412 651 429 or at president@countrynetwork.com.au



correspondence

AN OPEN EMAIL FROM PAUL WARD, CABOOLTURE QUEENSLAND

Dear Jeff et al,

Thanks for your email and all it contains.

So sad to hear about Colin having to withdraw from his secretarial activities. Please wish him well for Cheng and myself.

A national membership of 303. From my limited experience of 2 or 3 years, we all seem to be of the Baby Boomer generation or older. Would that be correct Jeff?

I know our local organiser Rodger is around 90 and others are in their 70s and 80s.

It would seem that the younger generations in their 30s to 50s, let alone the 20 something cohort, are simply not into a CN style of social group. Long gone are the days when we Gays were on the fringe of society and had to hide ourselves and meet in homes for fear of social ridicule and shame. Now, sure we can meet for meals or social events in pubs and parks. Though some still cringe when asked by a waiter or maitreD the nature of our gathering. (Just saying, there are still social hangovers from the 60s ...)

My point is: the 2020s may be the decade that we as older men, in a world of social media and video calls, have to sadly face a winding down, a phasing out, of our long beloved organization.

Is it possible to exist, not as a State registered organisation, but simply as an online group?

Re the Sydney Mardi Gras. A difficult topic.

The 78ers and similar groups (floats) have a proud history which they bring to the parade. Others are family support groups for younger LGBTQIA+ people. Others are simply corporate marketing groups. A niece of mine, Amy, is in her 30s and a founder of the Australian Asexuals. She works hard to raise awareness of the A in LGBTQIA.

I'm not sure how a float for the CN would work, especially as we are a national group with an Australia wide membership of 303, and the Mardi Gras is obviously Sydney based. I guess that would be a yearlong commitment for a team of parade organisers. Honestly, I doubt the idea would have legs at the current time.

Perhaps a group of us could arrange to gather together as a social event next Mardi Gras? We are 'thinking about' going next year as a one off.

Jeff, I sincerely hope you are feeling better now you've sent out your rant. It's good for people to write their thoughts and feelings. Hugs.

PS, I'm one who usually opens CN emails, though I rarely acknowledge or respond to them.

Please take my words in kindness.