

THE COUNTRY NETWORKER

REACHING ACROSS AUSTRALIA



ACROSS THE COUNTRY



John

IN THIS EDITION OF COUNTRY NETWORKER WE HAVE A REPORT OF DAVID PHILLIPS'S ROAD JOURNEY AND THE PEOPLE HE MET ALONG THE WAY. READ ON AND YOU'LL DISCOVER ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A MEMBER OF CN.

WE ALSO HAVE A BOOK REVIEW OF "MONA OF THE MANOR" THAT LLYLE WROTE. I'M ALSO A BIG FAN OF ARMISTEAD MAUPIN, AND I AGREE WITH LLYLE'S OPINION OF HIS WRITING.

AND SOON THIS YEAR WILL BE OVER!

SO, MERRY CHRISTMAS / HAPPY HANUKKAH / ENJOY THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS!!

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CONTACT US

COUNTRY NETWORKER

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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!



president's report



Jeffrey P.

Hello Members,
Welcome to the November/December Networker. This is our main communication tool with all our members. You will find lots of interesting articles and information within this publication, and I encourage you to read it from cover to cover.

We will have had our AGM by the time this reaches you so the results of all elections and motions passed will be found elsewhere.

Whilst reading a copy of the Star Observer for September 2024 I came across a small but interesting article on aging. I know many of us are retiring and aging gracefully, but that does not mean that we have to stop doing the things we love, but also take up new and interesting challenges. In the article by Peter Benn "Aging Without Boredom" he writes of an interesting challenge that he and his partner became involved in. It got me thinking after I read the article that we all need to be like Peter and not to settle back into dull boring lives. To do exciting things is good for our soul and makes us feel alive and wanting to do more. \my partner Pete and I love to go to Sydney every so often and go to a show. Recently we saw "Sunset Boulevard" at the Opera House after enjoying a delightful dinner at a restaurant on the harbour facing the "coathanger" (Harbour Bridge). Great show and it was a great night. We always plan to do something fresh and entertaining when we travel to Sydney. The article by Peter can be found elsewhere in the Networker and as Peter asks, "What's your new revelation going to be?"

Another interesting article by Positive Life NSW, I found in QNews New South Wales is entitled "Let Them Know". It is about that awkward situation you have when you discover you have an STI and need to tell your partner and your sex partners the news of your STI. Over our partnership together Pete and I have both been in this situation. It is easier when you both contract the STI, but you still have to tell those you have played with. Not an easy task. The STI involved going to the Clinic for the test and fronting up to the chemist for the treatment. All very embarrassing but these things happen. Please don't hide the fact you have an STI, tell your partner and those you have played with.

To all new members welcome to Country Network. To those on the sick list we wish you a speedy recovery and hope that you are up and about very soon.

Play safe and grow old gracefully.

Jeff

Jeffrey P. Sproal

President



AGM Election Results.

On Sunday October 20th we held our AGM for 2024. The minutes of the AGM will be published in a later Networker, but for now the names of the new executive.

President: Jeffrey P. Sproal Email: president@countrynetwork.com.au

Vice President: Craig Bowen Email: craig@countrynetwork.com.au

Secretary: Paul Ward Email: secretary@countrynetwork.com.au

Treasurer: David Turner Email: treasurer@countrynetwork.com.au

Membership Vacant

Facebook Admin: Bernie Gregory Email: bernie@countrynetwork.com.au

Committee Members

Editor Networker John Holden Email: editor@countrynetwork.com.au

Ian Howells Email: earthisred@gmail.com

Returning Officer Lindsay Sheppard Email: marlinshepp@dodo.com.au

David Peplow Email: davidpeplow@countrynetwork.com.au

By clicking on the link it will take you to the following articles from Emen8

What should you do if you've missed a dose of PrEP?

<https://emen8.com.au/health/sexual-health/what-should-you-do-if-youve-missed-a-dose-of-prep/>

Gay thespians: A queer history of musical theatre

<https://emen8.com.au/lifestyle/entertainment/gay-thespians-a-queer-history-of-musical-theatre/>



Book Review

Mona of the Manor

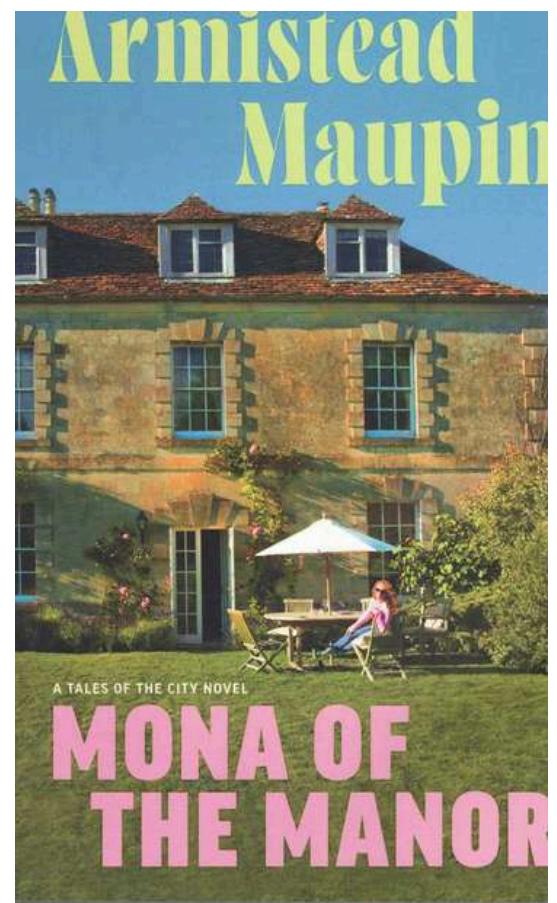
Finally, after many years, Armistead Maupin has released his latest work, *Mona of the Manor*. For those that may not know his works, Armistead Maupin is the author of *Tales of the City*, *More Tales of the City*, *Further Tales of the City*, *Babycakes*, *Significant Others*, *Sure of you*, *Maybe the Moon*, *The Night Listener*, *Michael Tolliver Lives*, *Mary Ann in Autumn*, *The Days of Anna Madrigal*, and now, finally, *Mona of the Manor*.

Armistead's journey of these books started initially as a column in the short-lived San Francisco edition of Marin County's *Pacific Sun* weekly in 1974 before being picked up by the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1976. The column became so popular, that he transferred them into the greatness of novels that they are today.

The first three of the above mentioned works have been made into three television miniseries starring Olympia Dukakis and Laura Linney. Robin Williams and Toni Collette starred in the feature film titled *The Night Listener*.

Reading all of the books will drive your emotions crazy and leave you wanting more! There is definitely something in them that we can all relate to, sadness, happiness, relationships, breakups, AIDS epidemic, and hope. If you have read all of the others, you can't miss this one.

I initially read the first book over 40 years ago and fell in love with the characters and their stories.



The books are centred around the trials and tribulations of residents at 28 Barbary Lane San Francisco. Each book provides an engaging glance into the lives of many people living in the Bay area and their quest for romance, acceptance, love and life.

Mona of the Manor is essentially a 'catch-up' of what Mona has been doing since she left Barbary Lane. I'm not going to spoil anything by giving away the plot, but I'm happy to mention that several of the 'old crew' are featured and many more remembered. It truly is a great read.

As with all of his novels, they each lean into the other and provide a cohesive work where you are eagerly waiting to see what happens next. You feel very much a part of the characters lives.

Like me, I'm sure you will fall in love with the works. If you haven't read them, do yourself a favour and get onto it. But, read them in order as listed above as they are sequential. Enjoy



Bed Hopping South.

As a new member I would like to share my recent travel experience down to Victoria as a guest of various wonderful hosts. I sold my house in Brunswick Heads and in the interim period had nowhere to live so I packed up my car and headed off southward. My first stop which was two days was with Michael Gordon in the lovely NSW Tablelands Town Armidale. Michael a delightful friendly man who was experiencing health issues resulting from a recent disastrous trip to Germany where his medication was lost. Michael was more than hospitable considering his circumstances and even showed me around town, including the Gallery (New England Art Society) memorial parks, and dinner out. The least I could do was mow his lawn! I bid farewell to Michael who was on the improve and took a delightful route through to Gloucester.

Onwards to Bowral where I booked a hotel then to the dual border townships of Albury Wodonga to be greeted by Peter Kennett who was highly recommended to me by Neil Warner (CNA Legend) I was tired and needing of a good bed and nourishment. Well to say I was treated like a Queen was an understatement. Amazing food, including rissoles and a passion-fruit sponge which melted in my mouth. Peter was the best host and could not have done any more for me. He did my washing and connected me to other Country Network Members in the Albury Wodonga area. I enjoyed a ride on the rail trail to Tallangatta and as Peter was raised there, he met me out at the town for coffee then proceeded to drive me around the old, relocated town and give me a comprehensive history of the region. Peter has in a short time become a great friend and support for me during my journey of grief after losing my life partner to cancer 4 years ago. My stay with Peter Kennett was so enjoyable I went back to stay with him on my return journey home for two nights and attended the Albury Wodonga Country Network Luncheon at the Albury Golf Club. An enjoyable event.

Once I arrived in Melbourne I stayed with my sister, visited family and my eldest niece who just gave birth to Aurora, baby girl. From Drouin I went and met Neil Warner and his partner Bob and Jack Russell Boof, who have a charming home in Emerald in the Dandenong ranges, an area I know well from lots of cycling when I lived in Melbourne. There were lots of laughs and banter about life in general and Neil gave me a rundown of his time involved in Country Network over the years. Neil is slightly competitive, with everything so I will keep that in mind for the next meet. Good luck with the renovation and your new chapter in life mate. Sorry about the Cats Bob. Boof, I want to adopt. Took him walking and he kept chasing rabbits which is just what they do.





A long way east of Melbourne is a beautiful coastal oasis known as Mallacoota. I was lucky enough to meet one of the most interesting men I have ever met, John Roy. One of life's true gentlemen and scholar. I stayed with John in his lovely home overlooking the coast for two days and in that time, we shared our passion of music, classical, and shared cooking dishes together and discussed our life journey. John even invited me to his exercise class which I thoroughly enjoyed and did with gusto by trying to show up the older local dudes. I experienced Beanies a wonderful coffee van located next to the Community Hall (remember the 2019 Fires evacuation) and enjoyed coffee with a likeminded businessman full of laughs and a big heart. I built and owned a coffee van just north of Byron Bay for 7 years and operated out of a truck stop on the Pacific Motorway, so we shared our passion of coffee and story of our respective entrepreneurship. John was also a lovely warm host who guided me on a lovely coastal bush hike and gave me a guide to spotting native tulips. John Roy opened up his home for me and made me feel more than welcome. Thank you, John Roy, I will be back one day, I am sure. I loved my time in Mallacoota. Get there if you have not been and see the beautiful National Parks, go fishing and enjoy the outdoors. So that is my story of my maiden Country Network Bed Hop south to Victoria. I am sure from this experience more await. I am happy to host members in Brunswick Heads and in Brisbane from early next year.

David Phillips. CN Member Brunswick Heads NSW.



FEELING ISOLATED

Recently Country Network has lost two stalwarts of the association, in Llyle Wentworth and Phillip Jones.

Llyle was our Membership Coordinator and a member of the CN Committee.

Recently he took over as Admin of our Website after the departure of Cameron Sharp. Llyle was also our host of Sips and Slips and his cheeky character endeared him to those that came on for the Sunday afternoon discussion.

Phillip was a past member of the CN Committee and produced the CN Networker for a time. Phillip also hosted the Sunday afternoon chat session Sips and Slips.

Both these members contributed much to the life and times of Country Network.

What I do want to talk about was the manner of their deaths. Llyle passed away at his home after having a medical procedure. He had his brother-in-law staying with him as he recuperated at home. Phillip on the other hand passed away in his home, but Phillip died a lonely death from a heart attack. He was 67 years old, had very few close friends, was estranged from his family and these factors contributed to his body not being found till several weeks after his death.

Many of you wrote to me after being notified of Phillips passing and many of you were upset by the fact that Phillip died alone.

"It is both sad and alarming to learn this and for me, and possibly others, significant in the message of 'isolation' as we get older." (Peter B). "You have raised a very important question, and I have taken all your thoughts seriously." (Warren K) "That is sad. I did not know him but think to myself of dying alone because I live on my own. I play golf and when I am not there, they are ringing me to ask if I am playing golf. I have one brother left and he doesn't talk to me because I am gay, but I have a lot of friends in Darwin. Lots of love. John xx" Here in Deepwater we're just organising some type of rota to check on people at risk (health wise} and single people over 60. Don't know yet how it will work. (Jim C). When Pete and I were living in Port Fairy we were asked to lead a walking group of elderly shut-ins and those that needed some type of exercise and friendship. We walked and talked and after our walk we went to a local café for a coffee and chat. This was facilitated by the local Community House in Port Fairy.

These are some of the thoughts members sent and it got me to thinking about dying and in particular dying alone. I know there are many members who live by themselves, many in isolation because of family issues, being gay out and proud and those of us who are still in the closet and suffering the loneliness that brings. As we grow older, and many of us experience isolation as a group. We as members of Country Network as a whole, as well as individuals living in our villages, towns and cities, are obligated to assure a certain degree of well-being and care among and for our fellow individuals. If we are caring for each other and looking out for our friends, it can then be said, individuals have a right not to die a lonely death. Phillip died a lonely death and that is something we felt badly about.



What can we do as a group?

There have already been some suggestions made; start a rota group where you look after those who are vulnerable in your community. Start a group where gay and straight people can meet for a coffee and thus keep in contact. Encourage those who you know lead an isolated life to join groups within the town. But I think above all you need to encourage those people to have friends. Not acquaintances, but close personal friends who will look after their welfare. If they don't see you around, they come knocking on your door or ring you on the phone. Phillip had friends, but they were not close friends who would seek him out if he didn't turn up at a gathering. Pete and I are close to an 80-year-old member of Country Network living in Laurieton. We see him at least 3 times a week and are also in touch by phone and messages. You do not have to live with them, but you must be aware that you haven't seen or heard from them for a couple of days, and you should make that commitment to follow up and contact them.

Another place where help could be available to start a group meeting is the Community House. They have access to many groups within the town and would be able to help. Charlie Helyar runs a Community House in Horsham, and I am sure Charlie has a wealth of knowledge and would be able to offer advice. Our member in Deepwater NSW is part of a group where they are setting up a group to contact those that are at risk health wise and are over 60. Becoming part of a group, being active in the area in which you live all helps with getting rid of the feeling of isolation.

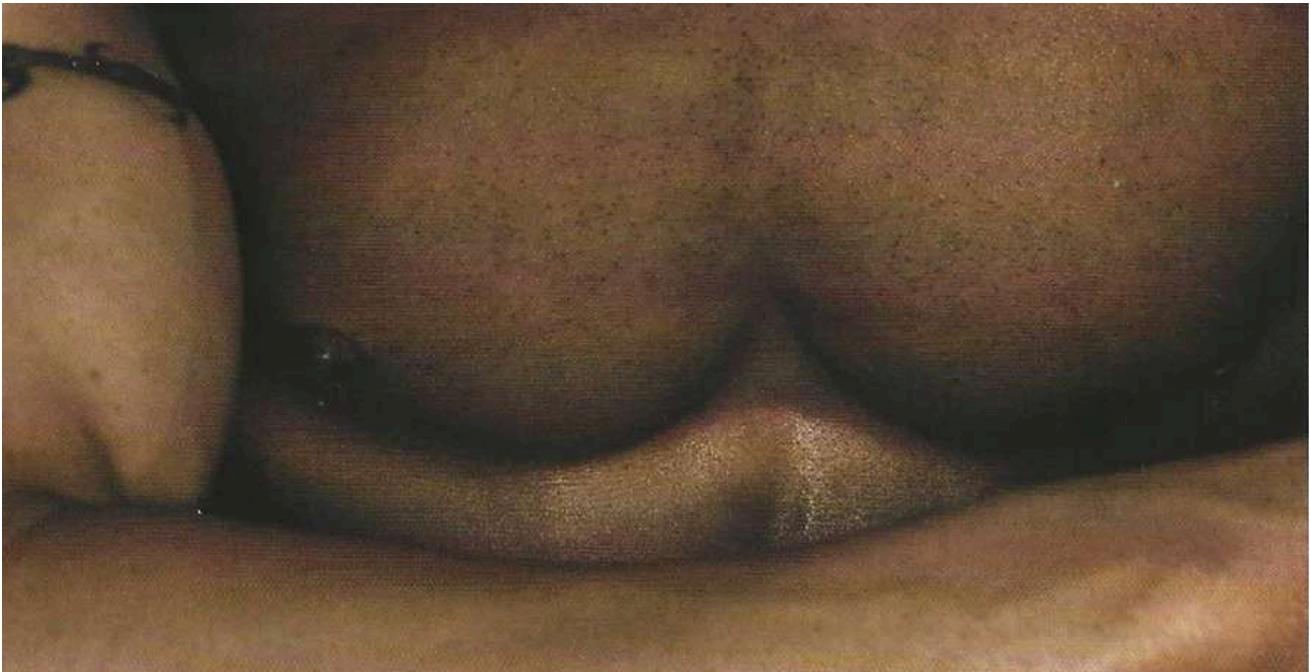
Another suggestion from member Lindsay is that we float the idea of Country Network members connecting with one other Country Network member who they will commit to ring every day/ 2nd day or whatever they feel will work for them, maybe a couple of times a week. I think this will build friendships and set up a way of us caring for each other. This is something that happens in some communities run by the Red Cross. It in effect only needs a quick call, say in the morning at a set time determined by mutual agreement which says, "Hi Max just checking that you are OK" This way both are caring for each other.

Understand that you are not the only gay in the village, there are probably more, and your life can only improve by becoming more involved. Let us all as Country Network members look after and care for each other thus ensuring none of us die a lonely death. Cherish your friends one and all.

Jeffrey P Sproal

P.S. If you have any ideas on the above, please feel free to contact me at:
president@countrynetwork.com.au





LET THEM KNOW

Disclosing an STI to a partner is something to do safely, in your own time, on your own terms, in your own way ..

WORDS Positive Life NSW

When you need to tell a partner, a hot hook-up or injecting partner, that you've picked up a sexually transmitted infection (STI) and that they also might need to get tested, it can be an uncertain or awkward conversation to have.

What do you say? How do you tell them? How are they going to react? and can you trust them?

This process called disclosure or notification can feel difficult or even embarrassing, especially if you're unfamiliar with doing this. Whether it's a partner, lover, friend-with-benefits or fuckbuddy, this conversation can be daunting to work out the words to use or how much detail to share.

Giving it a miss is the easy way out. If you care about the health of your partners, this is a crucial conversation to have so they can also get tested and if possibly treated. Many partners and lovers are grateful to have been told, so they can take care of their own health, let other partners know or even be there as a support for you.

Today there's a range of options to share this news with people who need to know. Normally, telling your partners is carried out by yourself with the support of a nurse, social worker or doctor at the clinic where you were diagnosed. Of course, depending on the relationship, you might prefer to raise the topic yourself with your partner.



You can also let them know through an anonymous SMS from a website, like

www.letthemknow.org.au, www.bettertoknow.org.au or

www.thedramadownunder.info/let-them-know/

Positive Life NSW offers another option. We have people (peers) who've been in your shoes and can support you when you're ready to notify a sex or injecting partner.

We're here to support you when you're ready, whether it's an STI, hepatitis C (HCV) or even HIV.

This can be done in your own time, on your own terms, in your own way. Whether you want advice on how to work out who you need to talk with, brainstorm some ideas, or rank the order of risk among your casual or regular sex partners, reach out. Telling partners about an STI diagnosis can be confronting. Our peers know that disclosure can be challenging, so we're going to ensure there's information tailored for 'high-risk' situations where you feel there might be physical, social or sexual violence, so your safety is the top priority. Being in control, means feeling better about yourself, and your partners are likely to respect your disclosure.

Contact Positive Life NSW if you're looking for support or if you have any questions or concerns about HIV diagnosis and disclosure on (02) 8357 8386, 1800 245 677 (freecall) or email contact@positivelife.org.au.



Positive Life is the representative body for all people living with HIV in NSW.



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.

LINKS TO IMPORTANT COMMUNITY SERVICES.

Country Network
<https://countrynetwork.com.au>

Qtopia Sydney
<https://qtopiasydney.com.au>

Rainbow Directory South Australia
<https://www.rainbowdirectorysa.com.au/results.php>

Victorian Pride Centre
<https://pridecentre.org.au>

Do you know of something that should be here? Email information to:
editor@countrynetwork.com.au



Area coordinators report WA.

I would like to thank the President, Executive Committee and all those who have contributed to Country Network being able to continue throughout the year. I totally understand the sacrifices and hard work that is done by a few for many.

WA is no exception to the rest of the country trying to survive and continue. Our membership has dropped from about 30 to 15. I'm still offering members a chance to attend any Prime Timer events in an endeavour to give them some social outings and a chance to meet other people. Very few people take up this offer. We are faced with the tyranny of distance in WA. With such vast distances to travel, very few people are travelling to Perth and vice versa, with the result we tend to lose communication with each other in the country.

Our annual visit to Myalup Pines, (see photo above – 2024), about 1 1/2 hours travel from Perth, organised by Rick Shell in Esperance is great event. We spent almost a week in the basic cottages and travelled around as a group. We kept it low key and members can join in or follow their own plans. I find most people are happy to work together, so this doesn't present any problems. This year in March we had eight people spread over 2 cottages. We visited the nude beach at Bunbury, played cards, read books, chatted, and viewed some of the local attractions. A very relaxing and enjoyable event.

Every month we have a morning coffee session on a Sunday, a luncheon on a Tuesday and an evening restaurant meal on a Wednesday at different venues. A couple of times a year we have a gay movie afternoon at the MG Car Club headquarters in Bayswater.

In August, we arranged a visit to Time Piece Creations, a training workshop for people who are interested in repairing old clocks and watches. Very fascinating as our digital age has overtaken some of the old skills in this field. We are planning an Oktoberfest at Graham and Steve's home to be held on the last Sunday in October. Members are encouraged to dress in their lederhosen.

A special big thank you to Bernie for maintaining our Facebook page for many years.

As we all know, Country Network is a great way of meeting new people and certainly Richard and I have met some fantastic men in our travels. So, members, please hang in there and if we all work together, we can keep this great organisation going.

Cliff Moores

Area Co-ordinator, WA





The WA Boys at Myalup Pines 2024



Tasmanian LGBTIQA Events for November 2024

These events are not Country Network events, but our members are invited to attend.

Friday 1st Queer Drinks Launceston 5pm
Royal Oak 14 Brisbane St. Launceston

Tuesday 5th Pride Coffee Queenstown 1.30pm
Tracks Cafe Queenstown RSVP garry@workingitout.org.au

Pride Coffee Rosebery 10.30am
Rosebery Neighbourhood House RSVP garry@workingitout.org.au
Spencer's Coffee Hobart Friendz 10am
145a East Derwent Hwy. Lindisfarne contact Rod hobartfriendz@gmail.com

Wednesday 6th Pride Coffee Deloraine 10.30am
Deloraine Deli Deloraine RSVP garry@workingitout.org.au
D.S Coffee Huonville Friendz 10am
12 Main Street Huonville contact Rod hobartfriendz@gmail.com

Monday 11th Pride Coffee Burnie 10.30am
Cafe Europa Burnie RSVP garry@workingitout.org.au

Tuesday 12th Spencer's Coffee Hobart Friendz 10am
145a East Derwent Hwy Lindisfarne contact Rod hobartfriendz@gmail.com

Wednesday 13th D.S Coffee Huonville Friendz 10am
D S Coffee House 12 Main Street Huonville contact Rod hobartfriendz@gmail.com
Pride Coffee Launceston 10.30am
Earthy Eats 19 Kingsway Launceston RSVP north@workingitout.org.au

Thursday 14th Pride Coffee Devonport 10.30am
The Laneway Devonport RSVP garry@workingitout.org.au

Tuesday 19th Pride Coffee Smithton 10.30am
Hugo's Brew&Chew Smithton RSVP garry@workingitout.org.au
Spencer's Coffee Hobart Friendz 10am
145a East Derwent Hwy Lindisfarne contact Rod hobartfriendz@gmail.com

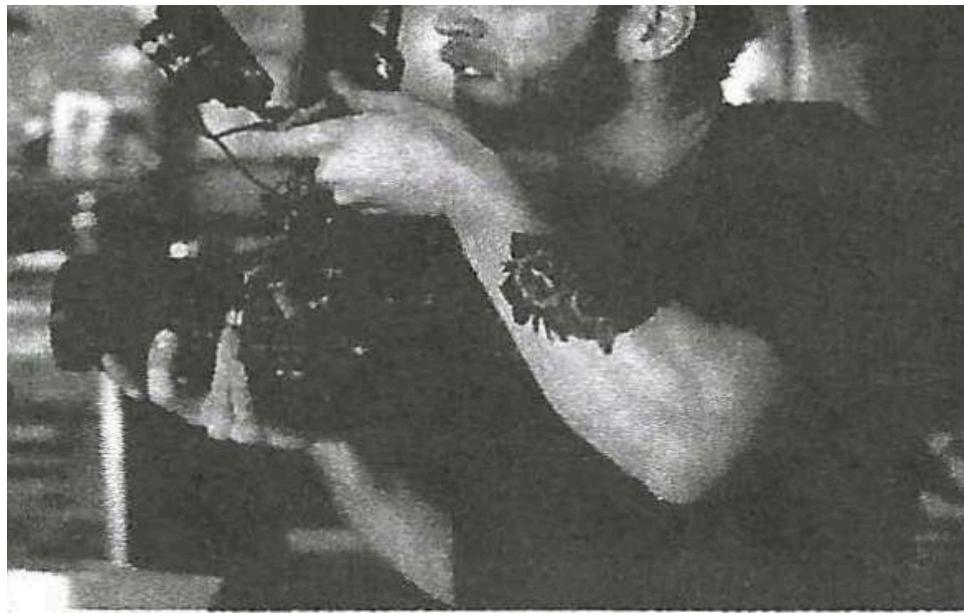
Wednesday 20th D.S Coffee Huonville Friendz 10am
D.S Coffee House 12Main Street Huonville contact Rod hobartfriendz@gmail.com

Friday 22nd Pride Coffee Ulverstone 10.30am
Hey Buddy West Ulverstone RSVP garry@workingitout.org.au

Tuesday 26th Spencer's Coffee Hobart Friendz 10am
145a East Derwent Hwy. Lindisfarne contact Rod hobartfriendz@gmail.com

Wednesday 27th D.S.Coffee Huonville Friendz 10am
D.S Coffee House 12 Main Street Huonville contact Rod hobartfriendz@gmail.com





AGEING WITHOUT BOREDOM

As we age and retire we need new social activities, new friends, and new experiences to stimulate and challenge our mental health to prevent stagnation. But what can I do to find and make new friends, you ask? Recently, I volunteered to play 'Dead Body 2' as an extra in a student film – no money involved, just the opportunity to do something different. It was an experience that got me and my partner out of our comfort zone. The casting included a predominance of 'vintage' older men, so we knew we would be comfortable in that setting. It also allowed us to experience a fully functioning film set, including at locations we would not usually have had the opportunity to be at. And because the plot involved older folk, we soon discovered that we knew some other extras, resulting in unexpected camaraderie. It did involve some cold locations, giving up social life for a few days, and not knowing much about what our characters would do. However, we also had the opportunity to support the young generation of students who are the filmmakers of the future. Some will make gay-themed movies, while others will not. What we did give was our support as they learned on the job. We could have said, "No, we're too busy going to lunches or binge-watching the latest television series". But by saying "yes", we discovered a previously unimagined world of enjoyment and interest. Over these few days, I gained new friends, talked with interesting people, gained new insight into my limited acting (or non-acting) ability, visited unusual locations and laughed a lot.

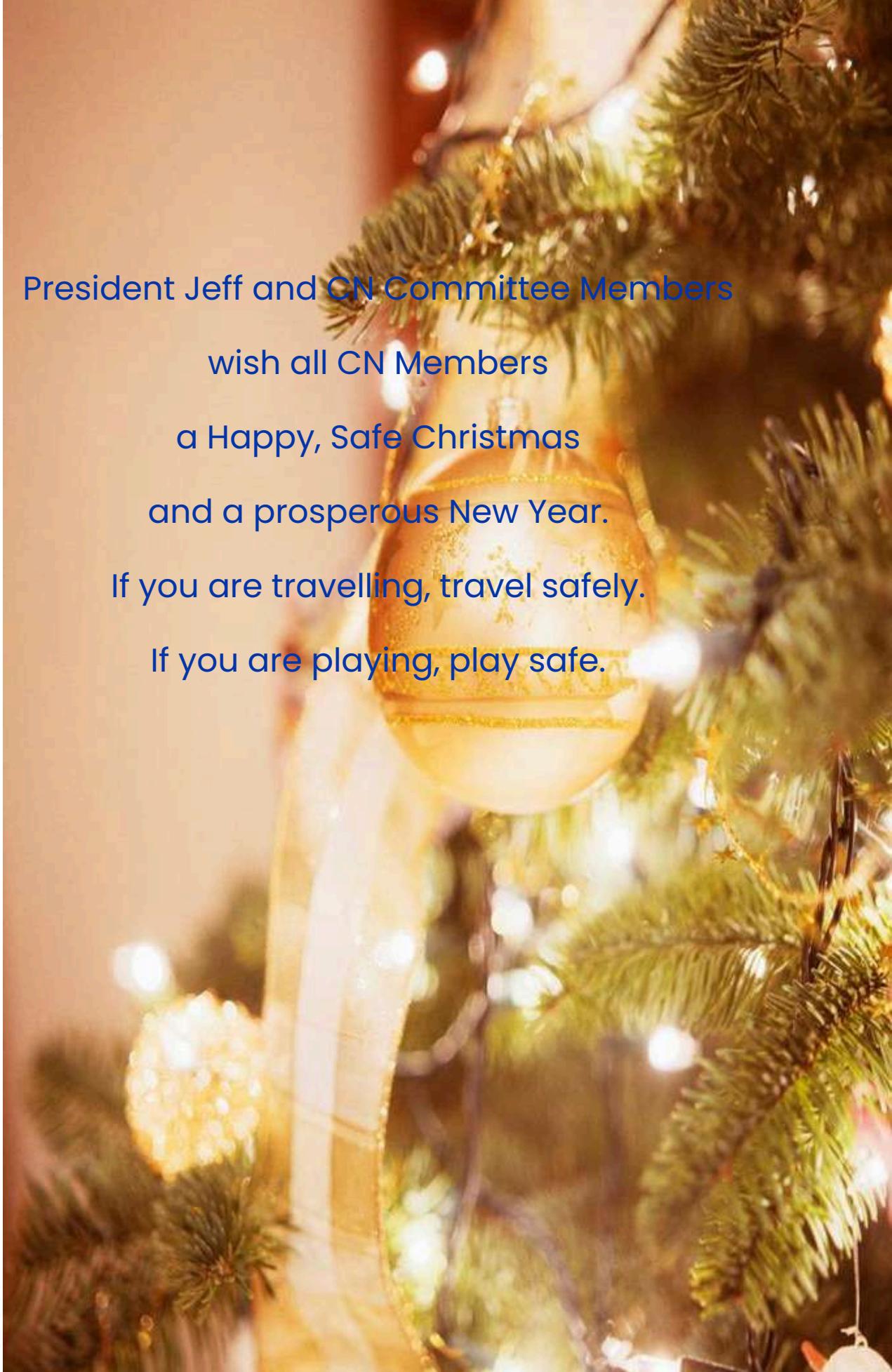
Therefore, when next you're presented with what you perceive as an unusual 'opportunity' to participate in something new or unusual, do yourself a favour and say "yes" – you're sure to find interest and discovery you hadn't thought of.

Right now, I have the world premiere to look forward to, and that's something a month ago was unimaginable!

WHAT'S YOUR REVELATION GOING TO BE.

The above authored by Peter Benn.





President Jeff and CN Committee Members
wish all CN Members
a Happy, Safe Christmas
and a prosperous New Year.
If you are travelling, travel safely.
If you are playing, play safe.