

THE COUNTRY NETWORKER

REACHING ACROSS AUSTRALIA

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2024



ACROSS THE COUNTRY



John Holden

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!

Do you like the front cover of this edition of Country Networker? Al Campbell took the photo of the cocky who came for a cup of seed. The bird is wild, not from a cage.

Perhaps you also have a photo you'd like to share?

The front cover of the previous edition of Networker displayed the brilliant red autumn leaves of a "lipstick Maple", Acer rubrum is the botanical name. It's growing a few doors down from where I live, in Melbourne. Neighbours were saying that the cold weather brought out the rich colour.

I have unusual tastes in music. If you have Spotify, have a listen to the following and let me know if you like them. It'd be nice to know that there was someone else in CN with a similar taste in music to me.

Never Leave by Helsloot

Crusade-Club Edit by Gabry Ponte

Sweet Dreams by Perfect Pitch, Rocco

Tell Me Why-Vocal Club Mix by Supermode

John Holden

editor@countrynetwork.com.au



president's report



Jeffrey P. Sproat

Hello Members,

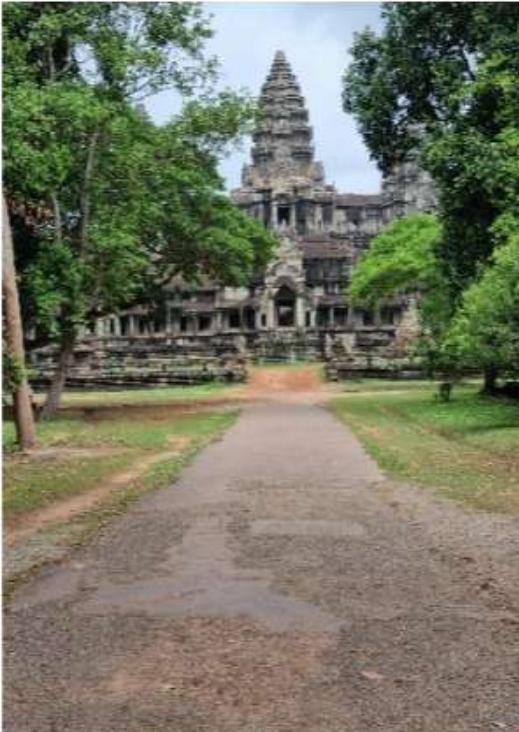
Welcome to the September/October edition of the Country Networker.

After two months away from the coal face it is good to be back with Country Network. My thanks to Craig, Paul and Llyle and all committee members who kept the ship afloat so to speak while I was away.

Pete and I spent most of our time in Thailand with a visit to Siem Reap, Cambodia and the temples. Angkor Wat is the largest religious monument in the world, the most ancient and perhaps the most well-known. It's an incredible, sprawling complex of temples located on the outskirts of Siem Reap, dating back to the 12th century (aptly named Angkor Wat, "City of Temples" in Khmer).

We stayed at a gay resort and had a guide for our three days of temple visiting. It was a superb time, and I would highly recommend you visit Siem Reap and the temples if you visit Cambodia. Wonderful people and wonderful food. As with all organisations, there is always something that will go wrong.

Recently we came to the end of the financial year and that was time when everyone had to pay their dues to renew their membership with Country Network. Unfortunately, we ran into a small problem. With changeover back in 2022/2023, there was a group of members who were transferred to the Country Network Plan. There were other members, who were left on the annual plan. We had to move those on the Annual Plan over to the Country Network Plan. My thanks to all on the Annual Plan who accepted the move and changed with little or no fuss. All members of Country Network are now on the correct plan and hopefully we won't have that problem next year when we come to pay our dues. We did lose some members who, through no fault of their own, forgot to change or renew their credit card. We have written several times to these people and eventually we have had to remove them from membership, as we have had no response. It is sad to see them go.





president's report

AGM

Our Current Committee

Executive:

President: Jeffrey Sproal
Vice President: Craig Bowen
Treasurer: David Turner
Secretary: Paul Ward

Committee:

Network Editor: John Holden
M'ship Coordinator: Llyle Wentworth
Returning Officer: Lindsay Sheppard
David Peplow
Ian Howells

Our AGM this year is once again set to be a zoom meeting. This will be held on Sunday the 20th October at 5:00pm. I urge you all to keep this date free and join us for this zoom meeting, where we will hold our elections and hear our reports. It would be great to have as many members as possible attend the Zoom meeting.

Positions on the Committee are now open, and I am asking members to consider nominating for a position on the Committee. The positions are President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Chair and 4 general Committee Members.

Nominations close on **Monday 30th September** at close of business. Nomination forms will be emailed out to members early August.

My thanks to all those members (77 of you) who returned the survey sent out by Membership Chair Llyle. There was a wealth of information in your answers and the Committee will discuss the results at the August committee meeting.

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.

Jeff
President, Country Network.

To all of our members
born in September and
October, we wish you
the happiest of days!





membership report



Lyle Wentworth

Hello Members,

Well, July and August proved to be challenging with member renewals, and the odd technical hitch, as reported by Jeff in the President's report. After the settling period, we have again been gathering new members.

Initially, it didn't look too promising there for a while but mostly the members that cancelled their memberships were those that joined in and around June – just prior to the full membership being paid. That is not to say that we didn't lose some long time memberships, we did, but we fully expect to recover from that.

As the membership stands to date, we have:

Fully paid members	248
Free members (ie. life membership)	13
Bringing the total membership to	262

New members since 15/7/2024 to 25/8/2024 include:

Name	Suburb	State
Gary Walker	Glen Innes	NSW
David Phillips	Brunswick Heads	NSW
Neil Mitchell	Kincumber	NSW
Brian Baker	Brown's Creek	NSW
Sean Monaghetti	Forster	NSW

Please reach out and make them welcome.

Our events calendar on the website is now operating. It's great to support our membership and events. Try introducing new people into the group or even organise your own event.

Events

Remember that event grants are available year round. If you would like to create an event and receive a grant to assist the event come to life, there is an event application available on our website or drop an email to events@countrynetwork.com





member travels

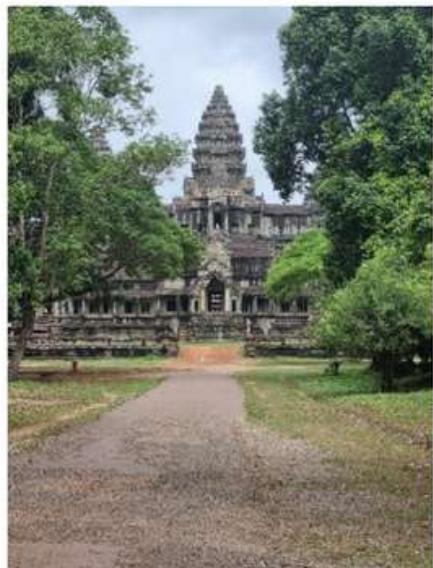
While we were in Thailand for 8 long weeks, we decided to visit Cambodia and look at the fabulous temples that can be found there. We flew into the Siem Reap International Airport, that had been built by the Chinese only a few years before and were picked up by our driver and taken to our accommodation in downtown Siem Reap. The airport was amazing and about an hour from Siem Reap. The Chinese built a double lane highway from the airport to the city.



We were staying in a gay resort, first time for both of us and we discovered that staying in an all-men's resort was fantastic. There was a complete sauna and steam room setup, swimming pool and massage rooms. The local lads were allowed to visit, which I might add was eye watering as well as the nude massage with the masseur.

The pic above is Jeff and Pete in a tuk-tuk going for joy ride around Siem Reap. While we were there, we had arranged to have a Guide, Car, and Driver for our use to be taken around to the different Temples, that surround Siem Reap. The furthest was 25 kms from the town.

Angkor Wat is a temple complex in the province of Siem Reap, Cambodia originally dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu in the 12th century CE. It is among the largest religious buildings ever created, second only to the Temple of Karnak at Thebes, Egypt and, some claim, even larger.



Angkor Wat is a temple complex in the province of Siem Reap, Cambodia originally dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu in the 12th century CE. It is among the largest religious buildings ever created, second only to the Temple of Karnak at Thebes, Egypt and, some claim, even larger.

Its name means "City of the Temple", and it was created as a physical manifestation of human interaction with the realm of the gods. The spires represent the mountains of eternity and the moat the eternal waters. It was built using 1.5 million cubic metres of sand and silt in the 12th century CE under the reign of the Khmer emperor Suryavarman II (1113–1150 CE) as a grand Hindu temple expressing the monarch's dedication to Vishnu.

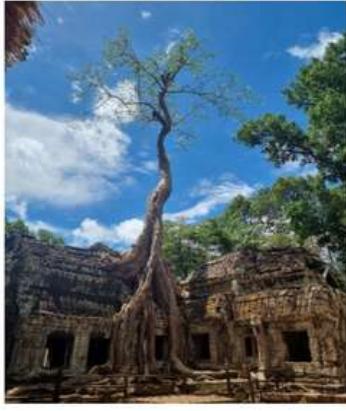
The temple covers 162.6 hectares with a central tower 65 m high. The surrounding moat is 200 m wide running a perimeter of just over 5 km with a depth of 4 m. Its function as a Hindu temple fell out of use in the late 13th century CE, and it was taken over by Buddhist monks.



In its time, it was the grandest complex in the region, the centre of the Khmer Empire, but had been largely abandoned by the 16th century CE and was taken by the surrounding jungle. The site in the 19th century CE, was cleared of the overgrowth, and restoration efforts were commenced.

Note: CE is an abbreviation for Common Era. It means the same as AD (Anno Domini) & represents the time from year 1 onward.





The amazing thing about this temple were the trees growing up through the structure. The trees must be left where they are growing, as to remove them would bring the temple crashing down

The temple is dedicated to Shiva, one of the principal deities in Hinduism and is renowned for its intricate carvings which are often regarded as some of the finest examples found throughout the temples of Cambodia.

Banteay Srei Temple. This magnificent temple was built by one of the Kings in the middle of the 11th century, before the city of Angkor Thom was established. Originally a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva, it was converted into a Buddhist temple in the late 15th Century, and a huge reclining Buddha (nine meters tall by 70 meters long) was added to the west side of the temple's second level around this time. The stone carvings on this temple were amazing in their 3D relief



On our last day we visited Phnom Kulen National Park about 80 kms from Siem Reap. On the mountain top lies a giant buddha carved from the stone. It is worshipped and revered as sacred by the people of Cambodia. Cambodia is predominantly Buddhist with 80% of the population being Theravada Buddhist, the rest being Christian, Islam, atheism, or animism. Hinduism was at the peak under the Khmer Empire and was the official religion of the state, until the 14th-century after the conversion of the royal family to Theravada Buddhism. Phnom Kulen is considered a holy mountain in Cambodia, of special religious significance to Hindus and Buddhists who come to the mountain in pilgrimage.



We visited the Preah Ang Thom Pagoda on top of Phnom Kulen mountain, a sacred site in Cambodia.

In Phnom Kulen National Park is Kbal Spean a river with stone carvings in the riverbed. It's also referred to as the Valley of a 1000 Lingas. The river flows over the Kulen Waterfall then onto the Siem Reap river. This river was a canal dug by the Khymers all those years ago to float the huge stones needed in the temple building.

Jeff swimming in the sacred river of 100 Lingas below the waterfall.



A 'linga', is a phallic carving representing the god Shiva. It is a religious symbol in Hinduism representing Shiva as the generative power, all of existence, all creativity and fertility at every cosmic level.

Jeff & Pete.



Beats and bathrooms: significance of the beat in Australia's gay history

By Oli McAuslan, Feature through Emen8

Leaves crunch under heavy boots. A sideways glance at a burly man exiting the dilapidated toilet block. Eyes from a guy at the cracked basin. A nod from the pungent urinal. Subtle moans muffled by sneakers-on-tiles in the far cubicle.

The gay beat. A dark place with a sticky past, a shelter for anonymity, and the set for so many stories of connection and lust. A quintessential site in the history of gay culture in Australia.

We'll take you to some of the popular local beats, tell you their histories and frequenters and show how significant they are for guys into guys from past to present.



What is a gay beat?

'Gay beat' is an Australian term for public places such as bathrooms and parks where gay, bisexual, and other men go to meet other guys for sex.

The word 'beat' parodies the regular path walked by police officers or sex workers. Gay and bi+ men adopted this to refer to places they would regularly attend for sex. For example, 'The Wall' was a popular beat in Darlinghurst, where guys and male sex workers would 'cruise' or pick up guys.

The thrill of sex at a gay beat

While public sex was not uncommon here, the beat often served as a meeting point for gay and bi+ men, who would go somewhere private to hook up. Darlinghurst's 'The Wall', for instance, allowed for standing and posing, a way of meeting and picking up other men before the age of dating apps. Guys liked the appeal of a beat for the anonymity it provided, the thrill of having sex in public and the often more rugged clientele.

Beat-goers developed secret signals to communicate they were looking for sex. Queer communities have a rich history of these secret languages, such as the infamous gay slang Polari, lesbian carabiner signalling, and the handkerchief code. For beats, especially those in public toilets, one might tap their foot or swipe their hand under the stall to signal their intent to cruise.

History of the beat in Australia

The development of the gay beat may owe itself to the English practice of 'cottageing'. It refers to sex between men in a public toilet, which historically resembled a small cottage. The first recorded 'glory hole' – a hole in between cubicles used to have anonymous anal or oral sex – traces back to 18th-century London.

In Australia, evidence of a gay beat in Naarm (Melbourne) on the corner of Swanston and Lonsdale streets dates back to the 1860s. A similar 'haunt' was recorded on Bourke Street in Gadigal (Sydney) by the scandal sheet 'The Scorpion' in 1895.

This history, however, is bleak and marked by discrimination against the men attended beats. Much of the evidence we have of early gay beats comes in the form of arrests and prosecutions of men under laws that criminalised homosexuality.

Today, while there is no specific offence for having sex in public, it can lead to charges related to indecent behaviour/exposure, which carry different penalties in each state and territory of Australia. Given the risk, take care of your physical safety when attending beats. While less common now, violence can occur at beats. Take steps such as letting a friend know where you are going (or better yet, bringing them with you!), getting to know the area online beforehand, and not bringing valuables.





The significance of the gay beat

1. A private space for exploring sexuality

The beat, especially those in parks and toilets, enabled men young and old to engage in sex with other men in relative anonymity. Private stalls and gloryholes in hidden spots away from gay venues meant that guys could engage in oral and anal sex with less risk of being recognised and outed.

Digital exhibition Cruising the Bush tells a story about a beat called 'the Teardrop' in Western Sydney. The speaker talks positively of their exciting foray into cruising, suggesting that "casual encounters became a way for them to explore their sexuality" while living at home with their conservative parents

2. A sense of community

In a podcast for West Australian museum Boola Bardip, Neil Buckley related how the beats in Boorloo (Perth) were not just used for sex but also enabled conversation and community building.

"And I remember at Swanbourne, there used to be a beat patrol by the Western Australia AIDS Council [now WAAC]. At Easter time, they used to come down, you know, with the bunny rabbit ears and...set up a barbecue."

Like WAAC, many community organisations born out of the HIV epidemic also attended beats and sex-on-premises venues (SOPVs) to provide essential information about safe sex practices for men. These days, there are plenty of options to take charge of your sexual health at beats and SOPVs. Make sure you have an HIV prevention method (condoms, PrEP or an undetectable viral load) in place before attending a beat and test every three months.

3. A lasting legacy

Gay beats around Australia have impacted the way communities of gay and bi+ men have developed, interacted, connected, and derived pleasure. While the gay beat may have served a particular purpose in times before Gay Liberation and decriminalisation, their practices continue to be found in modern gay life. Nowadays, beats and cruisers can be found online with apps such as Sniffies, Squirt and BBRT.

Even with the rights gay and bi+ men benefit from today, beat culture continues to be the subject of controversy. In 2018, Neil Buckley donated a toilet door with a glory hole cut into it from Gosnells train station – a popular beat in Boorloo (Perth) – to the Western Australian Museum. While Buckley saw the exhibit as an important element of gay culture and the historic relationship between beats and the HIV epidemic, others called it 'tacky' and 'insensitive'.

Despite its negative backlash, the gay beat is nonetheless an important piece of history for gay and bi+ men in Australia. If you're keen on getting into the beat scene, check out Down An' Dirty's guide to navigating beats safely.

So, if you stumble across a cut-out gloryhole in a mangy public toilet, remember those who came before you!





Did you know we have a secret group?

Our Facebook group is a secret group open only to financial members of Country Network – That's you!

Our Facebook group is a great way to get to know other members in a more informal social online environment.

Joining is easy! Click the link below to get started.

facebook.com/groups/CountryNetworkAustralia

When you request to join you will need to answer a couple of quick questions, including letting the administrators know your actual name, as per our member system, if it is different to the name you use on Facebook.

We understand that for privacy reasons people use aliases on social media, however we do need to reconcile our member database with our Facebook group



members in order to keep all our members as safe as possible online. Our secret Facebook group is different to our Public Facebook page, which can be found [here!](#)

The use of our secret Facebook group is governed by our Terms and Conditions of membership which are shown below.

1. Country Network runs a Private Facebook group which is available to financial members only, and a Public Facebook page which is accessible to both members and the general public. Administrators appointed by the Country Network Committee control both pages.
2. The Private Facebook group provides a platform for all paid members to post discussions, events, stories or anything else deemed relevant and of interest to fellow members. To join the private Facebook page, click: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CountryNetworkAustralia> The Administrator must approve your request.
3. The Public Facebook page is used to create awareness of Country Network in the public domain.
4. Members may only post material on either the Facebook page or group that:
 - Complies with Australian law or regulations.
 - Does not contravene this document.
 - Members must not post anything that:
 - Includes any personal or private contact details of any member unless that member provides prior approval.
 - Includes a photo of a fellow member without the member's prior approval.
 - May be deemed to be offensive to fellow members.
 - Is a personal attack or accusation against fellow members, named or not.





member only news continued

- Is hearsay or gossip that may be deemed prejudicial to the interests of Country Network.
- Incites disputes, or is considered impertinent, or that may bully or harass a member.
- Brings Country Network into disrepute.
- May be considered offensive or defamatory to a third party.
- The Facebook Administrator reserves the right, without retribution, to remove any post deemed to be inappropriate, offensive or unsuitable.

5. The author of any post removed by an Administrator may respectfully contact an administrator for reasons of removal by sending a direct message to the Facebook group or page. The author may also raise a grievance with the Committee if they do not agree with the action to remove the post. (See section on Grievances).

6. Repeated breaches may result in the suspension or banning of a member's access to Country Network Facebook page or group, and/or any other appropriate action as deemed suitable by the Country Network committee.

The Country Network Facebook group is YOUR group, so have fun, meet other members and don't forget to show some love to the Group administrators who work hard to keep things running smoothly.

Member Resources

Support services

Adult

Lifeline: 13 11 14 | Text 0477 13 11 14
lifeline.org.au
Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467
suicidecallbackservice.org.au
Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636
beyondblue.org.au/forums
MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978
mensline.org.au
StandBy Support After Suicide
1300 727 247

Youth

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
kidshelpline.com.au
headspace: 1800 650 890
headspace.org.au
ReachOut: ReachOut.com

Other resources

Head to Health: mental health portal
headtohealth.gov.au
Life in Mind: suicide prevention portal
lifeinmindaustralia.com.au
SANE: 1800 187 263 (10am-10pm)
online forums: saneforums.org

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: 13YARN.org.au or 13 92 76
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex: 1800 184 527 qlife.org.au
Culturally and linguistically diverse: embracementalhealth.org.au



mindframe.org.au



Have you thought of volunteering?

The Country Network organisation is run by volunteers. With our AGM looming, it's a good time to consider if you have time to volunteer into Country Network. Volunteers are important and very much appreciated. As well as bringing local knowledge, enthusiasm and skills to our organisation, volunteer involvement reflects acceptance and ownership of our group within the community.

There's always something you can do!



Classifieds



For Sale

This fabulous camper trailer is now available for sale, comprising:

Queen Size bed

Sleeps up to 8 people

Pull out kitchen

Spare Tyre

2015 Model in good condition

No Leaks no repairs

Located in Rushworth (Vic.)

Registered until 20/0/25

\$4000 or nearest offer

Genuine buyers & Pick Up only please

Contact: 0400 576 321



Free service for members

If you have something you would like to buy, sell, swap or trade why not list with us?

send your email (with photographs) to editor@countrynetwork.com.au



Good to know

Remember:

Many of our members are happy to host you or act as a guide when you are travelling.

This is great, especially if you are travelling alone or feel lonely.

Check out our members only page on the website, log in and view **member profiles**

A great way to meet new friends

JOIN THE
FACEBOOK
PRIVATE
(MEMBERS
ONLY)
PAGE

facebook.com/groups/CountryNetworkAsutralia

A G M

**Meeting
20 Oct 24
5pm**

**Review my membership
Profile**

Add a photo

Update my hobbies and interests
Is my phone number right?

Can I host?

Can I guide?

Do they have my D.O.B?

*I must try to
remember to write an
article for the next
edition of the
Networker!*



comedy corner

I'm not allowed to shop at Woolworths anymore!

Yesterday I was there buying a large bag of Purina dog biscuits for my loyal pet, Barbie, the Wonder Dog, who weighs 42kg. I was in the check-out queue when a woman behind me asked if I had a dog. What did she think I had, an elephant? So, because I'm retired and have little to do, on impulse I told her that no, I didn't have a dog, I was starting the Purina Diet again.

I added that I probably shouldn't, because I ended up in the hospital last time, but that I'd lost 20 kilos before I woke up in an emergency ward with tubes and drips everywhere. I told her that it was essentially a Perfect Diet and that the way that it works is to load your jacket pockets with Purina Nuggets and simply eat one or two every time you feel hungry. The food is nutritionally complete, so it works well, and I was going to try it again.

(I must mention here that practically everyone listening was now enthralled with my story.)

Horrified, she asked if I ended up in intensive care because the dog food poisoned me. I told her no, I stopped to pee on a lamp post and a car hit me.

I thought the man behind her was on the verge of a heart attack from laughing so intensely.

Woolworths won't let me shop there anymore.

A pirate walked into a bar and the bartender said

"Hey, I haven't seen you in a while, what happened?

You look terrible!"

"What do you mean?" said the pirate, "I feel fine."

Bartender: "What about the wooden leg? You didn't have that before."

Pirate: 'Well, we were in a battle and I got hit with a cannon ball, but I'm fine now."

Bartender: "Well, ok, but what about that hook? What happened to your hand?"

Pirate: "We were in another battle. I boarded a ship and got into a sword fight. My hand was cut off. I got fitted with a hook. I'm fine, really..."

Bartender: "What about that eye patch?"

Pirate: "Oh, one day we were at sea and a flock of birds flew over. I looked up and one of them shit in my eye."

Bartender: "You're kidding, you lost an eye just from bird shit?"

Pirate: "It was my first day with the hook."

A chihuahua, a doberman & a german shepherd are in a bar having a drink when a great looking female collie come up to them & says, "Whoever can say liver & cheese in a sentence can have me."

So the Doberman says, "I love liver & cheese."

The collie replies; "That's not good enough."

The shepherd says, "I hate liver & cheese."

She says, "That's not creative enough."

Finally, the chihuahua says ,Liver alone...cheese mine."

**Do you have a joke
that you'd like to
share?**

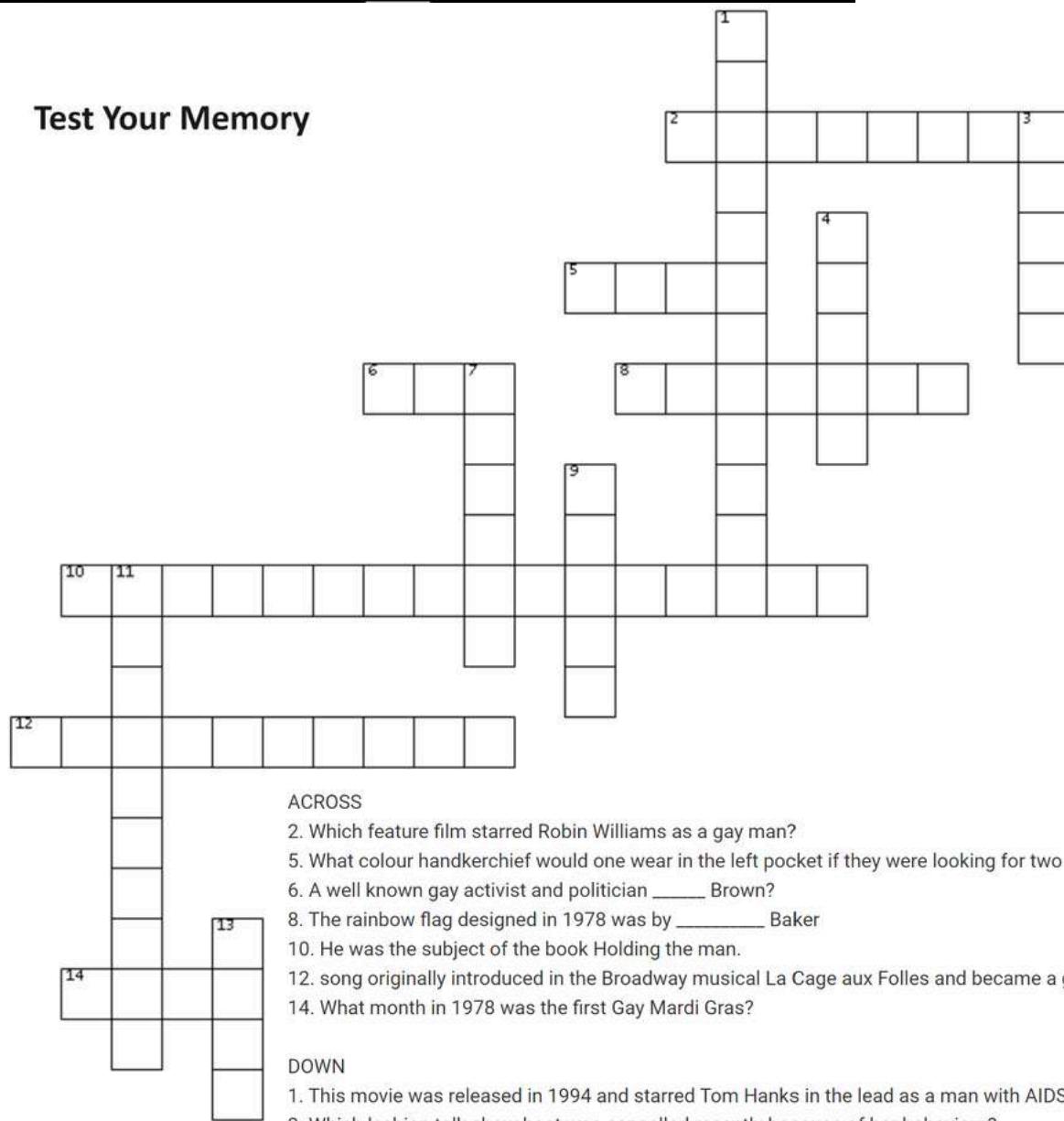
Send your jokes to
editor@countrynetwork.com.au





Puzzle Page

Test Your Memory



ACROSS

2. Which feature film starred Robin Williams as a gay man?
5. What colour handkerchief would one wear in the left pocket if they were looking for two people?
6. A well known gay activist and politician _____ Brown?
8. The rainbow flag designed in 1978 was by _____ Baker
10. He was the subject of the book Holding the man.
12. song originally introduced in the Broadway musical La Cage aux Folles and became a gay anthem
14. What month in 1978 was the first Gay Mardi Gras?

DOWN

1. This movie was released in 1994 and starred Tom Hanks in the lead as a man with AIDS.
3. Which lesbian talk show host was cancelled recently because of her behaviour?
4. In gay terminology what is a slender, hairy member of the bear community with a passive personality known as?
7. Top, side or?
9. Known by it's short name, which is Melbourne's Premiere men only night club?
11. Who was best known for Molly's melodrama?
13. What would you be doing if you were cruising?

**Your gay doctor online
Available 7 days a week**

Get started online heyfella.com.au

 **HeyFella**



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.



happenings

Keeping up with what's happening is an important part of what we do. If you are aware of anything of interest going on around you and your area feel free to let us know. Contact Bernie at events@countrynetwork.com.au

SEPTEMBER 2024

Darwin, NT.

Pride events take place each year in Darwin (during September). For more information contact <https://topendpride.com.au/contact>

NOVEMBER 2024

Adelaide, SA,

Pride events in Adelaide [Adelaide](https://www.prideadelaide.org/about) November 2, 2024. More information at <https://www.prideadelaide.org/about>

Perth, WA.

In Western Australia, the fast-growing PrideFEST takes place each November, offering dozens of events in and around Perth, including a parade and Fairday.
Contact Pride WA Pride pride@pridewa.com.au

DECEMBER 2024

Lismore, N.S.W.

Based in Lismore in northern New South Wales (about a three-hour drive south of Brisbane), Tropical Fruits is a non-profit LGBTQIA+ social group that has been throwing fantastic parties since the 1980s. The group's New Year's Eve festival attracts queer revellers from across Australia, and other events are held throughout the year.
Tropical Fruits Contact (02) 6622 6440

FEBRUARY 2025

Dandenong Ranges, VIC.

Don't miss Gaytimes, a music and camping festival held in February in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges, just over an hour's drive from Melbourne. For more information contact <https://www.gaytimes.com.au/>

Pin this notice to your fridge or notice board

Reminder



AGM
Zoom meeting
20/10/2024

4.30 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86351357865?pwd=7M1TIjTQbc5TVoWT6y56pkNgW4aVCA.1>

Meeting ID: 863 5135 7865
Passcode: 576388