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the **basin**
BULLET

the voice of desert channels queensland



desert
channels
QUEENSLAND

Stock Routes...

asset or liability?

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AS I SEE IT

EDITORIAL

THE FEMALE HOLDS, AND HAS ALWAYS HELD, THE PRE-EMINENT POSITION as the giver and nurturer of life ... Mother Earth, Mother Nature ... mother. Gaia, the Mother Goddess, was the Ancient Greek goddess personifying the Earth.

Not only did Ancient Greece give rise to a pantheon of gods, it gave us the roots of our Western philosophy through the likes of Aristotle and Socrates. These two doyens of thought are largely responsible for the patriarchal social and religious beliefs that dominate the modern world. Aristotle subscribed to Socrates' belief that a woman was halfway between man and animal, and that being born a woman was divine punishment.

Alexander the Great's desire to unite his two empires, Greece and Egypt, saw the latter's gender equality overturned by Alexander's adherence to Aristotle's teachings. This subjugation of women flowed through to the Roman Empire, and created fertile ground for the rise of Christianity among the repressed women of the Realm.

It wasn't until about the fourth century that male Christian leaders distorted the scriptures to support and increase their own influence and power within religious hierarchy. The very tenets that drew women out of the dark and offered a return to ancient equality, were turned into weapons that plunged them once more into slavery.

By the end of the 19th century the mainstream feminist movement started to redress the issue. And, while true equality in social, religious, professional and business spheres may not yet be reality, there is no doubt about the influence that women wield in many spheres, not the least of which is the nurturing of Gaia.

At the recent State Landcare conference in Longreach, 7 outstanding women were recognised for their roles in nurturing Landcare groups, getting them through the hard times, and being instrumental in the development of the groups' capacity to achieve great things.

To Adie Bode, Glennys Herrod, Rhondda Alexander, Nina House, Penny Taylor, Louise Maloney and Elizabeth Clark, well done ladies, richly deserved, and ... thank you.

Editor

Following the stock

The great pulses of economic lifeblood that once flowed along the vast network of arteries criss-crossing the nation has long since slowed to a meagre trickle. In Queensland, how to manage this 72,000 kilometres of public asset is the subject of hot debate and imminent legislation. Who has what rights and what is fair and just? ...

Stock routes are more than a relic of a time well past; they are not merely a romantic reminder of huge mobs of sheep or cattle slowly ruminating their way to market or fattening blocks; they have long been integral to many grazing enterprises and are now recognised as key refuges for our struggling biodiversity.

Across the wide open country of the Desert Channels region, stock routes are a seamless part of the grazing landscape: many follow the rivers, with their natural waterholes; and most are unfenced, marked only by a line on a map.

The days of relatively open slather use of the stock route system seems to be drawing to a close with the development of the Queensland Government's proposed new stock route management legislation. One of the key principles behind the changes is that the user should pay, ergo, if you gain some financial benefit from using a resource, especially a public one, you should pay a fair price for that use.

This philosophy gets no argument from Longreach district grazier, Duncan Emmott. "I'm happy to pay for any benefit I get from grazing a stock route or reserve," he says. "What I'm not happy about, is having to foot the entire bill for maintaining the adjoining fences."

Mr Emmott maintains that the Government is a landholder and is getting economic benefit (i.e. charging



grazing fees) from its land; therefore, it should be subject to the same rules as every other landholder: you must share the cost of your boundary fences with your neighbours.

Like many other graziers fronting major river systems, Mr Emmott is concerned that should the new legislation dictate that the stock routes through his property be fenced off, he will be entirely responsible for the construction and maintenance of a barrier to keep his stock from eating the grass that his neighbour – the Government – wants to sell.

"The Government can't sit there and say 'we want to protect our land and be able to sell the grass, but you have to pay for all of the fence,'" says Mr Emmott, "and

then talk about user pays. If they want user pays, by all means, but let's be fair and even-handed about it."

The original stock routes followed the rivers, and relied on the permanent waterholes to water the travelling stock. In many cases, those same waterholes are shared with adjoining landholders, and landholders with stock routes bisecting their land are concerned that proposed fences will cut water access to half their property. They are also concerned about the cost of maintaining additional fencing within the river systems, when there is no management benefit.

Another key principle of the proposed legislation is ensuring the network's environmental values are maintained and enhanced, where possible. Much of the state's original vegetation and habitat has been modified, particularly in farming areas, and stock routes are often the only remaining corridors connecting habitats across the landscape.

Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy Stephen Robertson said that the stock route network has strong environmental values that are an important part of the biodiversity strategy which the Government is developing.



Continued...

"The stock route network, by its very nature of providing a network of corridors that criss-cross the state, will play a vital role in the Queensland Biodiversity Strategy," Mr Robertson said.

As well as acting as biodiversity corridors, fenced stock routes are critical as refugia according to Western Queensland naturalist, Angus Emmott. A brother to Duncan, Angus is also a floodplain grazer, and is a well-known advocate for sustainable management



of the Lake Eyre Basin. He says that while the last thing he wants to see is property viability ruined, stock routes that are fenced play a vital role in the landscape. "When the grass is eaten off, seeds will lie dormant in the soil and wait for rain," he says, "but small mammals, reptiles, insects and birds that depend on groundcover for habitat and food, disappear with the grass."

"Where a stock route is fenced, the groundcover that is protected from grazing provides a critical refuge from which fauna can recolonise the surrounding country after rain.

"Having said that, indiscriminate fencing of stock routes, especially along these western rivers, would block access to water and destroy the viability of some properties."

While he recognises the principle of user



pays, Angus Emmott also maintains it should apply to everyone, including Government. "If Government wants to earn a return on their land, they should be like everyone else and pay for half the cost of the boundary fence."

Stock routes were established when there was only one way to move stock: on the hoof. Do they have a place in the modern world for travelling stock, or are they nothing more than the long paddock, low cost grass for the first ones to hit the road? Does using them when the country is getting dry, undermine the very biodiversity values they are claimed to preserve? Is it equitable for one landholder to be exempt from the upkeep of their boundary fence? There

are a lot of questions to be answered, and many answers to be questioned.

There is no doubt the landscape has drastically changed since the first cloven hoof and ploughshare penetrated our fragile Australian soil. Much of the original vegetation and habitat has been modified, particularly in farming areas where stock routes are often the only remaining corridors connecting habitats across the landscape. Seeking to preserve and sustainably manage such remnants is certainly worthy of this and subsequent generations.

Following the stock, what comes next?



Legendary Landcare Ladies

The tradition of western society is that women support their menfolk, often working quietly in the background, staying out of the way of the real workers. We all know this isn't the reality. Women are no less likely to be the energy and brains behind family or business success, it's just that society has conditioned us to expect these things to come from men.

At the recent State Landcare conference in Longreach, seven remarkable women were honoured as 'Legends of Landcare' the roles they played in driving and nurturing their respective Landcare groups, ensuring that the group played its part in leaving a viable legacy to the next generation.

Adrienne Bode:



Since its formation in September, 1995, Adie Bode has played a vital role the success of the Towerhill & Torrens Creek Catchment Landcare Group. She served in all the Executive roles, some of them concurrently. This includes five years as Treasurer, eighteen months of that as the Secretary as well, and five years as a very involved President.

During her time as President, the Group was involved in major projects which required strict accountability from both the Executive and members. This was a very busy time for Adie as she ensured all guidelines were adhered to, and projects completed on time and inspected.

Glynis Herrod:



Also from the Towerhill & Torrens Creek Catchment Landcare Group, Glynis is the quiet beaver who thinks of the little details that help to keep things running smoothly, adds

the nice touches that are inviting to new members, is generous with her time, and she sees a job through.

Glynis' ability to digest the mountain of information that comes in, sift out and pass on what is interesting or relevant, kept everyone informed and, as the main contact of the Group, was the fabric that kept it together. She went onto the Executive when it was struggling to fill positions and served with distinction for seven years.

Rhondda Alexander:



Rhondda Alexander has long been serious about plants and photography. This, along with her increasing interest in natural resource management led to her co-founding the Boulia area, Channel Landcare

Group in 1992. She has held every position within the group over the years, at times, all at once.

7 outstanding women were recognised for their roles in nurturing Landcare groups

Being the stable core of the group, many of its initiatives came from Rhondda: Property Management Planning, Revegetation Projects, Grasschecks and Drought Management.



Continued...

Legendary Landcare Ladies

LEGENDARY LANDCARE LADIES

After more than 50 years in the Boullia area, Rhondda retired to the coast with her husband where she continued her work for the Channel Landcare Group. Using her passion for photography and plants, she produced the exceptional book, 'Plants of the Channel Country'.

Nina House:



Nina House has been an active member of the Aramac Landcare Group for many years and Treasurer of the Group from 2002. She has specialised in project work monitoring and, in her own quiet way, has been able to get landholders to comply with the requirements of project contracts to ensure the Group's commitment to its funders is fulfilled.

She was employed by the Desert Uplands Committee in an administration role, but her duties far exceeded the position description as she became a key member of that small group, delivering natural resource management information, funding and support to landholders. Her love of the land and her passion for the environment are central to her efforts and commitment to Landcare.

Louise Maloney:



Louise has always been an active community member and was instrumental in the formation of the Upper Thompson Catchment Landcare Group. She remained a major force behind the success of the Group until she retired to the coast.

Louise is a relentless driver of community projects, working hard at promoting and enabling rural education,

and has organised various types of workshops and training to help increase the skills of Landcare members in areas as diverse as computer use and chainsaw operation.

As Chair of the National Prickly Bush Management Board for the coordination of management and control work on prickly acacia, parkinsonia and mesquite, Louise has been able to push the case for getting on-the-ground funding for weed control in the region.

Penny Taylor:



Penny was an original member of the Ilfracombe Landcare Group, and combined her energy as an active member, with her role as an Ilfracombe Shire councillor, to be instrumental making the then Ilfracombe Shire one of the most weed-free shires in the Central West.

Penny worked extremely hard to involve community members in weed buster days, one of the key ingredients

to get landholders on the track to weed eradication. It is not only in the area of Landcare that Penny is active in the community, she is also a key player in the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, promoting education opportunities and support for rural and remote families.

Elizabeth Clark:



Elizabeth is a long-time member of the Longreach Landcare Group. Her common sense, level head, experience and expertise were put to good use for the term she served as the Desert Channels regional representative on the Board of Queensland Water and LandCarers.

Elizabeth is imbued with the Landcare ethic, and recently instigated a nature walk at the 'Leander' truck stop to help visitors and travellers identify the local, native flora. In fact, she is well known for her self-taught expertise in growing native plants from seed, and is much sought after for advice and for garden talks.





Geoff Campbell, through the numerous entertaining and informative sessions to the field days and social events.

CLIMATE CHANGE FORUM

Our Landholder Support Service Project has just held an extremely successful climate change adaptation forum in Longreach (see separate story) in partnership with the Cooper Creek and Georgina Diamantina catchment

There are times through the year when things seem to get a bit busy, and then there are the times when you are left in no doubt ...

LAUNCH OF GARDEN BOOK

Our much anticipated, Growing Outback Gardens, was officially launched by member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson on the 13th November at a high tea in Longreach's Edkin's Park. Guests were entertained with opera by local singer, Alyssa Poole while they sipped tea and enjoyed cucumber sandwiches – who wants to hear about pretty petit fours and exquisite, delicate madeleines, macarons, mini éclairs and delectable miniature pastries. This book, co-authored by DCQ's very own gardening gurus, Mike Chuk and Jeff Poole, was in response to the need identified over three years of delivering water wise garden workshops to the green thumbs of the region.

STATE LANDCARE CONFERENCE

Whew! It's finally behind us! The 2009 State Landcare Conference (see separate story) was a resounding success and a great credit to the Local Organising Committee under the guidance of Chair, John Fisher, our Events Coordinator, Roelie Hartwig, and the team from International Conferences and Events. There were so many highlights from Governor Penelope Wensley's opening and the keynote, 'Kiss my grass', address of

committee. The high calibre of the speakers and the regional relevance of the topics were reflected in high attendance and the range of very thoughtful questions from the floor. Feedback highlighted the appreciation for the 'big picture' approach to climate change and the broad range of speakers. Our Landholder Support Service Project is funded by the Queensland Government's Blueprint for the Bush program.

SOIL INFORMATION DAYS

Also delivered through our Landholder Support Service Project were three soil information field days at Prairie, Winton and Boulia. Soil scientists and pasture agronomists imparted their many years of practical experience on the link between soil health and pasture production. The key areas covered were: regenerative land management techniques that enhance biodiversity, increase biological activity, sequester carbon, activate soil nutrient cycles, restore water balance and improve productivity; demonstrating and comparing filtration, ponding and run-off characteristics of different soil types and ground covers through an in-field rainfall simulation; and analysis of locally sampled soil types and how their properties affect pasture production.

LUNCH BAGS

Getting the kids involved in sustainability is a critical investment in the future. Our partnership with the Longreach State School in the provision of re-useable lunch bags is just one of the ways we are doing this. The re-useable lunch bags replace brown paper bags that were identified as the single biggest contributor to the schools waste stream. Students now enjoy their lunch out of reusable, non-woven polypropylene lunch bags that reduce resource use and improve the environment at the school. The bags can be wiped clean with a damp cloth, have a Velcro tab to prevent spillage, and clear plastic, name-tag sleeve.

TOWN COMMON PLANNING

Several years ago, DCQ developed a process for consultative, whole-of-community process for the integrated management of town commons; this has now been implemented for three town commons across the region. One of the activities under our Regional Investment Proposal is the rollout of town common planning to two more towns. Our planning guru, Mike Chuk, has held preliminary discussions with the Blackall Tambo Shire Council and will be commencing the consultation phase early in the New Year.

POF CONTRACTS

Protecting our Future, our devolved grant funding vehicle, has once again rolled out smoothly. An open call for projects was put out in July with \$770,000 worth of applications – many from first time clients – going to our independent Technical Assessment Network in early September. All targets for this round of funding have now been met or exceeded with the 51 projects approved.



AGM

DCQ's AGM saw the endorsement of changes to the constitution to meet requirements for deductible gift recipient status for our foundation trust, The Desert Channels Foundation. This should be completed early in the New Year and work is currently underway to finalise the donor prospectus for the Foundation.

The meeting enthusiastically received a presentation by Desert Channels Digital's Executive Producer, Bruce Honeywill, on the development of online workshop technologies that are being used for both external and internal products.

As part of our efficiency drive in both resource use and budget, hard-copy Board papers and meeting folders have been replaced with USB memory sticks. As well as the annual dollar saving of around \$5000 in material and labour, there are the environmental benefits in saving 2 trees and over 5,000 litres of water, as well as preventing more than 150 kilograms of carbon dioxide going into the atmosphere.

AAP TO AAG

Our Aboriginal Advisory Panel has been a very successful model for representation of the 14 language groups of the region in providing advice to the DCQ Board. At their most recent meeting, they decided on a name change to Aboriginal Advisory Group as they had become more of an action group than an advisory panel.

Two of their current projects, both funded by the federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and Arts through the Rockhampton Indigenous Cultural Centre, are the Carbine Rock fencing and the language dictionary. The language dictionary is an exciting project with a large scope that covers all 14 language groups, while the Carbine Rock fencing project has seen fencing erected to protect a highly significant rock art site near Dajarra.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING

The Board Executive and Senior Management Team at Desert Channels Queensland spent a recent weekend developing a strategic action plan to keep them at the leading edge. They were expertly and generously guided through this process, free of charge, by Michael Goldsworthy of Australian Strategic Services and his associate, Mary Tokarczyk. Their kind donation of time speaks volumes for their generosity, and that of Australian Strategic Services. It is also a great example of the power of networks and the unique relationships that DCQ forges with clients, partners and providers.

DC SOLUTIONS UPDATE

Out there online

Desert Channels Digital is the digital production arm of DC Solutions and it has been generating a lot of interest. The interactive online workshop delivery that DCD has been developing has been taken up by several clients

in the tourism industry. These include how to make up a motel room and a familiarisation with the regional tourism industry for those looking for employment in the field. DCD has also developed an interactive workshop on the media and how to get the most out of it. This will be trialled in the New Year and available for use in early February.

Other substantial areas of activity are: training in all aspects of video storytelling, including a secondary school mentoring program; production of the Indigenous component of Certificate 1 training in tourism; web-based video delivery; and audio-visual presentations.

Synthetic turf

DC Solutions is now agent for Synthetic Turf Products across the west and has been fielding keen interest from residents, businesses and local government. The products range from sporting surfaces for cricket, tennis, bowling and putting, through to a variety of turfs for both domestic and commercial use. The introduction of these products to the west is an exciting adjunct to the water wise programs run by DCQ over the past three years. Now, western residents can have that little patch of green to give the place a lift without using water and without the ongoing expense of maintenance.

ROAD TRIP

A recent road trip by two of our people has identified considerable interest in our expertise. The three main areas are in: planning, particularly the environmental area; mapping – providing services and training staff in data capture, management and display; interpretation – researching, designing and producing interpretive signage. Other areas where our services are being sought are in communication services, event management, and publication layout design.

THE END OF LIFE AS WE KNOW IT?

On this, the world's driest continent, climate change is threatening to end life as we know it in the bush. This is throwing up huge challenges, but also providing opportunities for those armed with the knowledge to recognise them.

organiser, Colleen James, Industry Liaison Officer with Desert Channels Queensland.

"It's not often you get as many expert speakers with the practical knowledge and ability to get information across in everyday language," says Ms James.



"..a rare chance to talk to experts.."

Just what those challenges are and how we deal with them, while making the most of the opportunities, was the subject of a recent climate change forum in Longreach.

The Climate Change Adaptation Forum, held on Thursday the 12th of November at the Agricultural College Auditorium in Longreach, featured highly qualified and experienced speakers, according to

"This forum was a rare chance for graziers across the region to talk to the experts and get specific information on what climate change means for their industry, and how they can adapt and take advantage of opportunities."

Speakers included Emeritus Professor Bob Miles of Central Queensland University on the implications and risks to the pastoral sector and explores some of the ways forward; Queensland Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries Senior Scientist Dr Steven Bray on developing your greenhouse gas budget; the CSIRO's Dr Ed Charmley on reducing methane emissions while improving your bottom line; Tony Lovell of Soil Carbon Research, Bond University on using soil

carbon to address biodiversity loss, build ecosystem resilience, and help reverse desertification; and Alan Lauder, author of 'Carbon Grazing - The Missing Link' on reducing the impact of an increasingly variable climate.

The Climate Change Adaptation Forum was an initiative of Desert Channels Queensland working with the Cooper's Creek and Georgina Diamantina catchment committees and was funded by the Queensland Government's Blueprint for the Bush Program. For more information,

[CLICK HERE](#)



Tony Lovell, Bob Miles, Steven Bray, Alan Lauder, Ed Charmley

EXPLORING OUR BASIN

by Helen Avery

Part 2 of a series looking at the history of the Basin

...1840 began the decade that saw the first European explorations of the Lake Eyre Basin. The settlements of Melbourne and Adelaide were only ten years old. These initial journeys emanated from the desperate desire to turn the dream of an inland sea into a reality. All were frustrating and disappointing.

Eyre came to the conclusion that Lake Torrens formed a huge horseshoe shaped barricade to the north of Adelaide. He even suggested that the colony may have once been an island with the apparently vast Lake Torrens the remnant channel between it and the mainland.

Another enthusiastic young explorer, Horrocks, planned to trace the western side of Lake Torrens and from there, make his way overland to the Swan River settlement (now Perth). His dreams were shattered

Major Thomas Mitchell



before he left his camp at the head of Spencers Gulf when his rifle exploded in his face. He died three days later. He is remembered also as the first explorer in Australia to make use of the camel as a pack animal.

Sturt's journey into the Basin from the

Darling River was far more extensive than anyone else's, but he returned to Adelaide bitterly disappointed. He never resolved the rumour of an inland sea, but his journeys provided the key to unlocking European understanding of the two magnificent inland drainage systems that shape the geography of most of the eastern half of this continent. It was Sturt who found the Darling and traced the Murray to its mouth, and it was Sturt who found Cooper's Creek which, although he didn't realise it, was one of the main rivers draining into the Lake Eyre Basin.

The country these men covered was desolate. They pushed themselves to the extremities of human endurance attempting to penetrate incredibly inhospitable country, convinced that 'on the other side' there had to be something other than desert. Their reports held nothing to entice settlers or overlanders.

By the second half of the 1840s, attention had turned north. Fertile, well-watered pasture country had been found by Alan Cunningham in the area referred to as the Darling Downs as early as 1827. Governors and surveyors had been discussing a northern journey since 1841. Both Edward Eyre and Thomas Mitchell (Surveyor General) had forwarded expressions of interest; however, the governor was awaiting the return of two



Ludwig Leichardt



other professionals still in the field. Charles Sturt was somewhere west of the Darling; Ludwig Leichardt was somewhere between Moreton Bay and Port Essendon. Exploration was a competitive business.

When it seemed that communication with both Sturt and Leichardt had been lost, Mitchell was instructed to mount an expedition to open a pathway to the Gulf of Carpentaria and across to Port Essington, instructions very similar to those of Leichardt. Leichardt had travelled closer to the coastline than Mitchell intended to. It was 1846.

Mitchell was undoubtedly a talented individual, trained as a military surveyor but also a poet, an artist, a geologist and a botanist. He can share with Sturt the credit for exploration of the major waterways of the Murray Darling system. It seemed though, that where Sturt was dogged by disappointment and harsh conditions, Mitchell was blessed with magnificent

Continued...

pasture lands and good seasons. He was opinionated, and a much more abrasive personality than Sturt, and showed no tolerance or sympathy for the people whose country he was travelling through.

This, his final journey of exploration, took him north from Fort Bourke as far as the junction of the Suttor and the Belyando Rivers. At his depot, he received notice that Leichardt had been successful in reaching Port Essington, so turned his attention west. There was no point trailing Leichardt's footprints.

Mitchell also carried a dream – that of a great 'North-West River' rumoured by some to flow across the entire north of Australia to the Kimberley coastline. When he found and followed a major river channel running roughly between Tambo and Isisford, he called it the Victoria, convinced he had been successful in finding the river of his dreams and that it flowed north to the Gulf. He had already been in the field for a year. It was time to go home.

A year later, he sent his second in command, Edmund Kennedy, to follow the Victoria to the Gulf. Kennedy traced the river south,

renamed it with its indigenous name, the Barcoo, and realised that it was ultimately a part of the Cooper system explored by Sturt.

The 1840s drew to a close. Eyre had become Lieutenant Governor of New Zealand. Sturt had returned to England to try to recover his health. Kennedy was killed in North Queensland in 1848, aged thirty. Leichardt had disappeared in the same year. Mitchell died of pneumonia in 1855. Many of the expeditions in the Basin in the 1850s were to be directly connected with the search for Leichardt, and land hungry settlers and investors followed hard on the explorer's heels ...

Ludwig Leichardt's
watch



Get Christmas wrapped up...

Growing Outback Gardens is a 116 page, full-colour, practical book that gives you the how-to of making an attractive garden to cope with the harsh extremes of the Outback. ✨

Having conducted numerous gardening workshops over the last 3 years, authors Mike Chuk and Jeff Poole take you through how to plan a garden, select plants, irrigation systems, mulches, worms, vegetables fruits and flowers. What more could you ask for if you're into sowing things and growing things?



Order now, [click here](#)



The Saga Of Cecil

**“Cecil Sux! Yeah, Cecil Sux!” Would ring the taunting cry
Of the cheeky local children as the tanker trundled by.
Whilst the driver, quite dismissive of the urchins’ cruel
pursuit
Would elevate a finger in a nonchalant salute.**

His name was Cecil Simpson and he’d laboured since a lad
With Cecil Simpson senior; who was Cecil’s dear old dad,
In the little family business, where Cec had staked a claim
As a legend, carting nightsoil, and disposal of the same.

On winter nights, when others slept in comfort, snug and
sound,
Swift and silent, Cecil Simpson worked his dunny round.
Dodging dogs and ducking laundry lines with never stay nor
stop,
With a pan on either shoulder he would never spill a drop,

While his nightcart standing solid in the middle of the road,
Would idle in contentment there as Cecil filled its load.

POEM BY MILTON TAYLOR

And printed on the lorry door in letters bright and bold.
“We pick up and carry off what others cannot hold.”

Cecil Senior passed away. young Cec, as well expected
Copped the lot. The town progressed and sewerage was
connected.
Thus, Cecil’s enterprise collapsed; there came the sorry day
He parked the nightcart up for good and stacked the cans
away.

So, Cecil sourced a new career; life took a different slant.
As senior supervisor of the sewage treatment plant,
Cec was in his element; his joy quite undisputed;
His subject matter much the same - just many times diluted.

He also scored the contract cleaning out each septic pit
Of the houses in the district where the sewerage did not fit.
A lovely little earner; Cecil turned a tidy buck
By rigging up his nightcart as a sullage hauling truck.

On Fridays in the local pub he’d launch a dissertation
Re the value of bacteria in modern sanitation.
And anaerobic action and disintegration time
Of solids in suspension and sixteen sorts of slime.

The siren song of sewage held poor Cecil in its thrall.
He would speak of slushy sediments or would not speak at all.

He made the grand pronouncement in his wisdom, late one
night,
To no one in particular - just everyone in sight.

“I’ve made a new invention that will put me on me feet.
I’ll be a multi millionaire and I’ll live on Easy Street.
I’ll suck out any sewer line and siphon any sump
With Cecil Simpson’s Centrifugal Sullage Suckin’ Pump!”

Well, laugh! We had hysterics! What a crazy, twisted bloke!
A fortune from effluvium? Oh Cecil, what a joke!
He must have breathed too deeply of his product’s awful smell.
(Or else he’d gone half loopy and was drinkin’ it as well.)

To talk such utter rubbish signified he weren’t too bright,
So the title, “Sullage Suckin’ Cec,” came into vogue that night.
No wonder children mocked him and all scorned his job and
name.
They’d heard us parents talking and were doing just the same.

Then, came the great disaster in the year of eighty eight
When bushfires swept the country at a most horrendous rate.
When raging, wild infernos scorched through every line and
strata
Of mountain gum and stringy bark and pinus radiata.

Would our village, now surrounded by a raging wall of flames
Become a singed statistic in this twist of nature’s games?
Or would there come a hero in this hour of desolation
Who’d save us from extinction and offer up salvation.

The population gathered on the safest place around.
On the hallowed, grassy surface of the Rugby Union ground,
Where teachers talked to truckies and sad shearers spoke to
nuns
And the bankers stuck up daughters huddled up with butchers’
sons.

Students stood with senior citz’s and stared in disbelief



Continued...

As the judge's wife took comfort from a thrice convicted thief.
Whilst the ladies of society, of status now devoid,
Rubbed shoulders with the local drunks and long term
unemployed.

As Baptists joined with Catholics, calling loud on Mother Mary,
A spaced out Hare Krishna chanted "Hary! Hary! Hary!"
A Witness for Jehovah paved our way to Kingdom Come
And the Army of Salvation thumped the tambourine and drum.

As loud we prayed for mercy and prepared to meet our doom
A subtle sound and sickly smell emerged from haze and gloom.
And Mrs Fiffle-Farthington shrieked, "Goodness gracious! Yuck!
It's Sullage Sucking Cecil in his sucking sullage truck!"

We looked to where she pointed at some movement through the
smoke
Where a madman on a mission had devised a master stroke.
For charging like a demon, with a fire retardant shower,
Came Cecil, squirting sullage, at a hundred miles an hour.

Well the conflagration halted and the blaze began to budge,
Assaulted by the potency of Simpson's Super Sludge.
That chemical concoction had put other brands to shame
With showering spurts of soaking steam extinguishing the flames.

In minutes it was over and the victory was complete.
The fires, reduced to ashes, simply smouldered in defeat,
Whilst the stench of septic gases; like a lavatory in bloom
Was sweeter to our nostrils than the finest French perfume.

Young Cecil waved in triumph as he rumbled down the road
To his depot at the treatment plant to get another load.
As the people started cheering and the crowd began to clap,
He revved the motor, gunned the pump, and did a victory lap.

Well, the television cameras and the media descended.
In a frenzy of publicity our Cecil was commended
For his courage and commitment and he garnered instant fame,
And all across Australia, everybody knew his name.

There's a statue in our village, by a eucalyptus stump.
It's a full sized bust of Cecil with his Suckin' Sullage Pump.
And it tells the stirring story of a hero of our town
Who refused to let the ridicule of others grind him down.

Cecil's now a millionaire; he's living like a king.
But fame has mattered little; it's hardly changed a thing.
His Sullage Suckin' franchise makes him money on the side
And Cecil's Sullage Suckers are familiar nationwide.

In nearly every town and city, here and interstate,
His business is expanding and its reputation's great.
And printed on the side of all those sullage suckin' trucks
Is a sign that says, "For Sullage, contact Cec -'cause, Cecil Sux!"





The Nose Bag Fame in a lunchbox

Jeff Poole writes about his 'famous in his own lunchbox' sausage rolls ...

Cooking has never been an exact science for me. After 3 years in Chemistry labs doing careful titrations, measuring, distilling, and general, mad scientist things with white lab coats and safety glasses, I was cured. I can no longer abide unnecessary exactitude; therefore, the following is just a guideline, but I'm pretty sure it will work - fingers crossed!

If they are the best sausage rolls you have tasted, tell everyone; if not, you might require a lab coat, pipettes, burettes and beakers.

THE BEST SAUSAGE ROLL

YOU WILL NEED:

- 2-3 sheets of puff pastry
- 500g sausage meat
- 1 small onion
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 1 grated carrot
- 1 grated zucchini
- 2-3 tablespoons of chutney
- ½ tsp of vegie salt
- Pepper
- 1 beaten egg

Finely dice the onion and garlic and sauté in plenty of olive oil. Add the grated carrot and zucchini along with the salt. Sauté until they start to soften. Cool and add to the sausage meat along with the chutney and a few turns of a pepper mill. Hands are the best utensil to mix this.

Cut your sheet of pastry into thirds (lengthways) if you want to go fine and dainty or, if you're after super chunky-give-me-a-knife-and-fork kind of thickness, cut your pastry in half. Take a handful of the mixture, roll it out to the desired thickness, and place along the length of your pastry. Roll it up but, before you complete the roll, brush the sealing edge with a little beaten egg to help it stick. Cut into desired lengths. Brush the tops with the egg to give them a lovely golden colour. Bake in a hot oven (200 C) for as long it takes. I would guess around 15 to 20 minutes, but it depends on your oven. Once the pastry is puffed and golden, they are done (black and charred means you have left them too long, and they might be better as a toy for the dog to fetch). Serve with the obligatory tomato sauce.

Landcare Lingers!

More than a month after the State Landcare Conference, Longreach is still in the grip of a contented afterglow. From the Sunset Muster on the evening before proceedings began, to the Wrap-up Party afterwards, Legends, Larrikins and Landcare was three days of full-on sessions, socialising, field trips and cultural events that left delegates satisfied yet saddened.

The conference, hosted by Desert Channels Queensland in partnership with the Landcare groups of the region, was the culmination of eighteen months of hard work for the organising committee. Delegates were welcomed to Country by Iningai custodian, David Thompson prior to the official opening of the conference by the Governor of Queensland, Ms Penelope Wensley AO who is also the patron of Queensland Water and Landcarers.

Delegates got a real taste for the different shades of the outback with the Drivers Extravaganza dinner on the banks of the Thompson River, the Dino Dinner with the featured address by the always passionate David Elliott of The Australian Age of Dinosaurs, and the acclaimed bush band, Ned and The Kellys, and the very informal Wrap-up Party barbeque with local band, The Desert Rats.

Field trip choices had people in a quandary as they had to make the hard choice between the Longreach Town Common, Iningai Nature Park, Rosebank Research Station and Longway Station. All four gave a tremendous insight into the landscape, culture, industries and issues of the region.

The highlight for many was the emotional, but very uplifting, Iningai repatriation ceremony on the Saturday morning. The solemn handover by Museum Victoria of the remains of two Iningai Elders, amid didgeridoo playing and the sprinkling of dirt, was followed by a white fella funeral procession and a black fella smoking ceremony as the two were finally laid to rest on their own country in the Iningai Keeping Place. The Keeping Place, at the Longreach Cemetery, was a Desert Channels Queensland funded project, that had previously seen five sets of remains interred in a similar ceremony two years ago.

Themes for the conference were, Landcare Leadership, Murri Magic, Positive Partnerships, Cunning Communications, and Awesome Outback. Internationally renowned bush poet and son of Longreach, Milton Taylor kept the crowd entertained and informed and showed his true professionalism when he improvised for 15 minutes while a technical difficulty was overcome.

All in all, it was a great experience for everyone involved, but one that no one on the organising committee is keen to revisit in the immediate future.

Desert Channels Queensland is funded by



COFFEE...ANYONE?



Google is often hailed as the most successful information provider in this technological age. Not only has it cornered the market, it has lent its name to our lexicon: what's a lexicon? hang on, I'll Goggle it! Googling seems to have become a way of life for many of us in the western world . . . information at the stroke of a key.

However, recent research suggests that there is a hidden cost to this little piece of convenience. Google's commitment to the fastest possible search means that they run a lot

Hold that thought!

of extra capacity – more banks of servers in more data farms. When you submit a search it gets directed to multiple servers that could be anywhere in the world; Google sends you data from whichever one produces it fastest.

So, each search, depending on how long it takes can vary from 0.2 grams of CO₂ for a 'I'm Feeling Lucky' search, to 10 grams for a more complex, multi-layered search – enough to boil the kettle for a cup of coffee.

Apparently, the emissions of the global IT industry are on a par with that of the airline industry, about 2% of world CO₂ output. And if that hasn't given you pause for thought, viewing a simple web page pumps 0.02 grams per second, but if you add in complex images, animations or videos, that jumps tenfold.

The alternative might be to drive to the local library to research, or buy a complete set of Encyclopaedia Britannica – I wonder how many cups of coffee that would be?

As one wag said, even breathing produces CO₂ so the best way to offset the emissions of a Google search is to simply hold your breath while doing it.