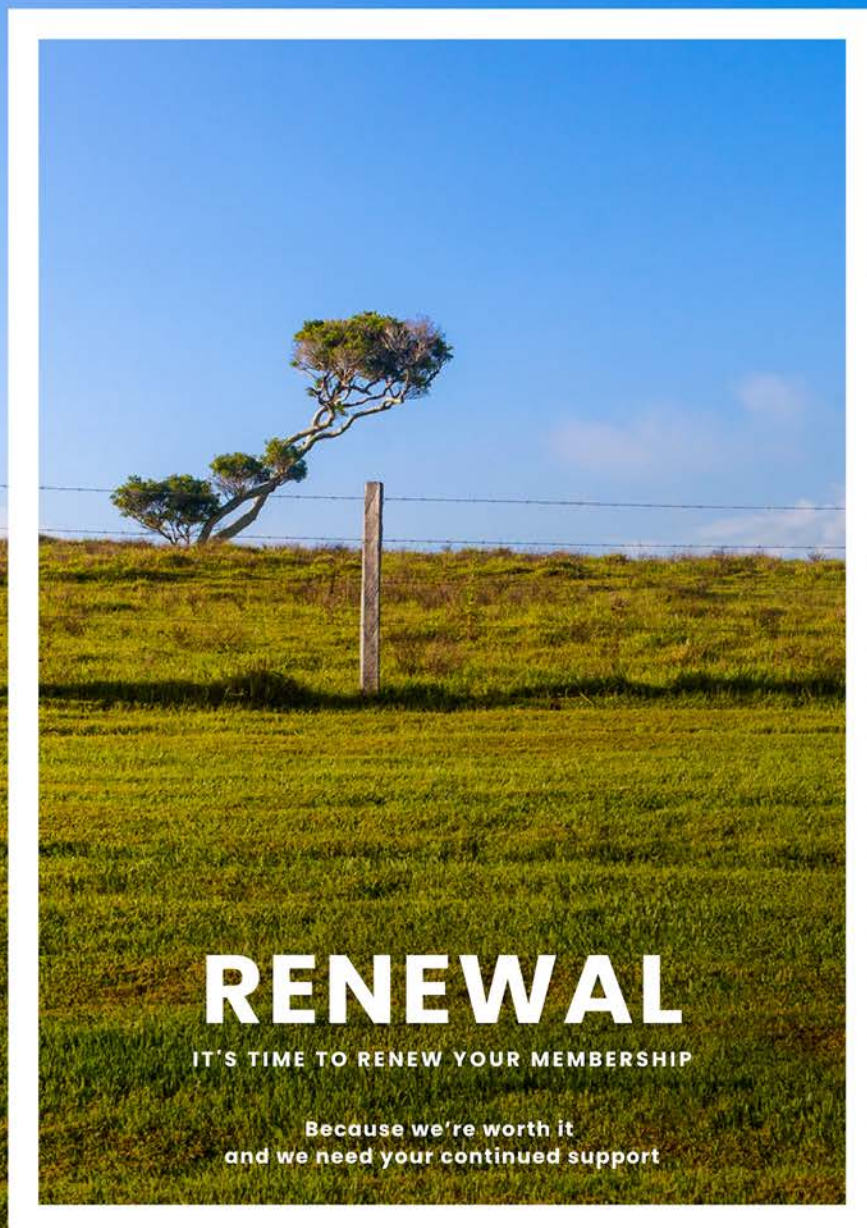


# THE COUNTRY NETWORKER

REACHING ACROSS AUSTRALIA

OCTOBER 2022

A photograph of a grassy field with a fence and a tree, framed in white. The scene is set against a clear blue sky. The field is lush green, and a single tree stands prominently in the middle ground, leaning slightly to the right. A fence with wooden posts and wire runs across the field. The entire image is enclosed in a white rectangular border.

**RENEWAL**  
IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP  
Because we're worth it  
and we need your continued support

THE GREAT COUNTRY NETWORK  
NATIONAL SURVEY IS HERE!

2022 AGM  
GATHERING

YOUR NEW LOOK  
NETWORKER!



Country Social Network Inc. (Reg Y2063541)

**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!.

# WELCOME

One thing I learned when in cadets at boarding school was never to volunteer for a task. Well, I thought I had learnt that lesson, but some 50 years later I found myself volunteering to edit The Country Networker.

When I first joined Country Network, John Roy was doing such a fabulous job as Editor and it was then that I grew to learn the importance of the bi-monthly newsletter to the vibrancy and success of our disparate membership spread across the country and in the throes of a very isolating pandemic. At such times, communication is even more vital.

When John Roy stepped down, there seemed no one to take his place and our very hard-working secretary, Neil Warner, took on the additional task of producing The Country Networker - TWICE.

I thought I should try to share some of the load and that's how I came to forget that army cadets lesson of half a century ago. I am not sure if I am the right person, but here is the first issue.



**EDITORIAL**

*Phillip Jones*

**Editor**

**DESIGN**

*Cameron Mason*

**CONTRIBUTORS**

*Jeffrey Sproal*

*Hector Vera*

*Phillip Jones*

*Thomas Tiltmann*

*Cliff Moores*

*Cameron Mason*

*Andrew Jeffery*

*Neil Warner*

*Shaun Williams*

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



This issue would not have happened without the talents of Cameron Mason, who has been instrumental in conceiving the new design, the layout, the graphics – all the artistic genius. And also the platform on which it has been produced. It's a truly magnificent effort and a very big thank you, Cameron.

I am sad that one of the articles in this month's publication is reaching out to ask someone to step up to the very important position of secretary. Neil has played such a major role, has been dedicated and tireless in his efforts, and understandably is looking to take a rest. But I know he will be around in one capacity or another – he is just too good a contributor to lose. Neil is an amazing networker. I remember on joining less than two years ago how welcoming he was and how he introduced me to people whose company he thought I would enjoy. And these people have indeed become great friends. Neil's Saturday Zoom meetings were so important in the midst of Covid – and still are because they enable a group of us to see each other's handsome faces once a month (it's still unclear what some members wear below the waist). So please contact Neil if you would like to join us on Zoom at 5:00pm of a Saturday – it's great fun and we can enjoy a drink and nibbles.

Some other ideas for future editions include interviews with members. We have some other great ideas including "My Town" where members can get to boast and sell the virtues of their own town. A Big Gay Quiz would be great – so any budding quizmasters, please step up. If there is enough interest, I have been thinking of starting a monthly Book Club on Zoom, which could include music and streaming during which we can share what has recently tickled our fancies. So those with an interest, please let me know on 0438 460 342 or [PhillGJones@gmail.com](mailto:PhillGJones@gmail.com)

Country Network offers us all a safe place which I really treasure. In these uncertain times, we can't take for granted our hard-won battles for sexual freedom and respect. Russia, Hungary, Brazil (though hopefully not for long), Turkey and now even Italy are all trying to erode our rights. But for every dark cloud, there are some bright ones – who would have thought that Cuba would be welcoming same-sex marriage and that even Singapore would go halfway and said it's okay to be gay – just don't get married. Be vigilant when it comes to our rights.

In about a week's time – a number of us will be able to get together in Wodonga and enjoy that face-to-face fellowship and all those hugs that we have been missing. Oh and by the way, may I remind you who has been organising our time in Wodonga? Yes, thank you Neil.

I have a fridge magnet which says "You are irreplaceable because you are you".

Watch out for one another and take care, especially of yourselves.

*Phillip Jones*

**Editor from Wagga Wagga – Wiradjuri Country**

# THE PRESIDENTS REPORT



*Jeffrey P. Sproul*

*"We are coming out of our hiatus and beginning to restart our many social activities"*

Hello Members,

Welcome to the September edition of the Country Networker.

### **Welcome to our New Editor**

With this edition we welcome our new Editor of our magazine, Phillip Jones, of Wagga Wagga fame. Phillip is also our Area Coordinator for Inland NSW and recently became a member of the Committee.

Welcome Phillip and many thanks for taking on the role of Editor. Gentlemen, it is now up to you to furnish Phillip with interesting articles for our magazine. How about someone writing a book review, a report on a group activity. It doesn't have to be a literary masterpiece, but of interest to our members. You can contact Phillip at [PhillGJones@gmail.com](mailto:PhillGJones@gmail.com)

There are many things starting to happen within Country Network at last. We are coming out of our hiatus and beginning to restart our many social activities. It is good to see members starting new activities in their areas. These events range from lunches, coffee mornings, bush walks to name a few.

### **Events**

Hector, our events coordinator needs to be kept busy adding new events to our monthly list. If you have an event happening in your area or want an event advertised, drop an email to Hector at [events@countrynetwork.com](mailto:events@countrynetwork.com) by the 19th of each month





### Website Update

One of the things I wanted to undertake as President was a review of our website. I know many members had difficulty using the site and I am sure many potential new members gave up after a while. The site is clunky and definitely not user friendly. There have been some exciting discussions with a couple of very new members to the organisation and I am hopeful we will see something positive happening by the end of this year – a new and fabulous website to take us into the future. If you would like to make a comment about the website and what you would like to see in a new website please drop a line to [president@countrynetwork.com](mailto:president@countrynetwork.com) and we will pass those comments on to the group looking at this exciting development.

"a new and fabulous website to take us into the future"

### AGM Update

Coming up in October is our Annual General Meeting (AGM). This is our social highlight of the year as we gather to renew old friendships and make new ones, take part in fun activities, and eat drink and be merry. This year, we have returned to Wodonga and the Blazing Stump Motel & Suites for our AGM at the same motel, and same main venue where we held the last AGM in 2019 before the onset of the pandemic. Let us all set about really firing ourselves up at the Blazing Stump.

We have four days of fun activities planned including our AGM. I have always found these weekends great fun and full of lasting memories. At the last Wodonga AGM, my partner Pete Ryan and I met Rob Clisdell and since then have formed a close friendship with Rob. This is one of the great things about Country Network. My thanks to Secretary Neil Warner for taking on the organisation of this year's AGM. I am looking forward to the "Car Drive" around the area taking in the various tourist sites of Albury-Wodonga.

By the time you get to read this report, Pete and I will be in warmer climes visiting Spain and Portugal. We are going mainly to attend Bears Week at Sitges after which we will be touring Spain and Portugal with our friends Tony and Ray in a hire car. We have had our monkey pox injection and are fully Covid vaxed, so we should hopefully return home in one piece after fighting the bulls, drinking the sangria and feasting on tapas.

Keep safe, and I look forward to seeing and meeting you at Wodonga.

Jeffrey



Jeffrey

## Secretary wanted

Ever considered joining the Country Network Committee?

We have a vacancy for the position of secretary so here's your chance to help shape the future of our organisation. The secretary doesn't need to sit on the president's lap or make tea (though you can if you want). The main role involves meetings; providing notices, minutes and correspondence.

With new enthusiastic faces ready to join the new committee, the future of our organisation is looking very bright. The doldrums of Covid restrictions and our failing website will soon be a mere glitch in our rear-view mirror. The position of secretary provides a front-row seat in shaping how that future looks. Country Network has led to significant improvement in many men's lives by providing a sense of community and friendship. But we can still do even better.

Please consider how you may assist; either in the role of secretary or in one of the many other support roles required to run the organisation. You'll get that lovely gooey feeling you receive when putting smiles on the faces of others.

Have a chat with our President Jeffrey Sproal on 0412 651 429 or send him an email to [jeffreyps2@gmail.com](mailto:jeffreyps2@gmail.com)

"your chance to help shape the future of our organisation"

We know that some members have their own businesses or have a side hustle that they would like to promote. So don't be shy, let us know what you are up to!

All you have to do is email us your:

- Business name
- Some detail about what you do
- The address, email, phone number of your business
- Website details
- Your business logo or any graphic/photo
- Anything else that you would like us to know.

Please send in all the details to [editor@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:editor@countrynetwork.com.au)





# TIME TO RENEW!

## **Why Renew your Membership?**

**Because we're worth it and we need your continued support.**

We're aware we were unable to provide social opportunities to all members during COVID, and if you're one of those who are questioning the worth of your membership, we please ask that you consider your continued support because we do make a significant difference to enough members to make our organisation worth supporting, even if you're not getting much from your membership personally.

As we start up our events calendar again, we have a few new enthusiastic volunteers already organising events helping to rejuvenate our fine organisation. Coupled with record high membership numbers and a new website (finally) on the horizon, we have good reason to be excited about the future of Country Network and we want you to be a part of that future and help us expand further across the width and breadth of this vast country until no man, regardless of where he resides, feels socially isolated.



# Memberships

## HOW TO RENEW!

Firstly, check when your subscription is due by logging on to the website and selecting "Profile" from the menu.

If it is due soon, click the renew button, complete any necessary details, then hit "send". If paying by direct credit, just hit "send" and complete your bank transaction separately.

If you want to just pay (\$20 single, \$25 couple) directly into the bank without logging on, please make sure you provide an identifiable reference.

**ANZ Bank: BSB: 015 881 A/C 4779 37562**

Paying by cheque: Mail to Registrar, 24 Pinnocks Rd, Emerald 3782

If you're unable to log in to the website or need any other further assistance, please contact the Registrar: Neil on 0419 551 245.  
[registrar@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:registrar@countrynetwork.com.au)



## Welcome new members

Frank B.	Buderim, Sunshine Coast, Qld
George S.	Midland, Perth Metro, WA
Alexander Z.	Cronulla, Sydney Metro, NSW
Christian C.	Daylesford, Western Vic
Emilio N.	Daylesford, Western Vic
Gregg W.	West Wodonga, North Eastern Vic
Rodger T.	Dicky Beach, Sunshine Coast, Qld
Stephen B.	South Melbourne, Vic
Paul C.	Chittering, Perth Metro, WA
Cameron M.	Point Cook, Melbourne Metro, Vic
Craig B.	Sunnybank, Brisbane Metro, Qld
Michael G.	Armidale, Northern Tablelands, NSW
Jamie M.	Braybrook, Melbourne Metro, Vic
Neil J.	Point Cook, Melbourne Metro, Vic
Graham W.	Brookvale, Sydney Metro, NSW
Paul J.	Eynesbury, Melbourne Metro, Vic
John C.	Warradale, Adelaide Metro, SA
Norman J.	Seven Hills, Sydney Metro, NSW
Neil B.	Ravenshoe, Qld
Geoffrey D.	Ravenshoe, Qld
William (Bill) B.	Mount Compass, SA



# AGM Gathering

## Wodonga 2022

The 2022 AGM will be held in Wodonga, Victoria over the weekend of October 21- 24.

Those who attended the 2019 AGM at The Blazing Stump, know what a great success it was with both the Motel and Hotel perfect venues where our group was greeted with a warm, friendly welcome.

Neil Warner has organised a fantastic weekend of activities and events that will keep us all busy, well fed and entertained.

We look forward to the reports from the AGM Gathering in the next newsletter!

*Plenty to keep you entertained!*



<b>Friday</b>	5:00pm	Meet and Greet
<b>Saturday</b>	10:00am	AGM
	12:30pm	Lunch
	2:30pm	Afternoon Tea
	6:00pm	Dinner at Historic Country Pub
<b>Sunday</b>	9:30am	Magical Mystery Tour
	6:30pm	Dinner Country Calvery
<b>Monday</b>	10:30am	Country Picnic
	6:30pm	Farewell Dinner



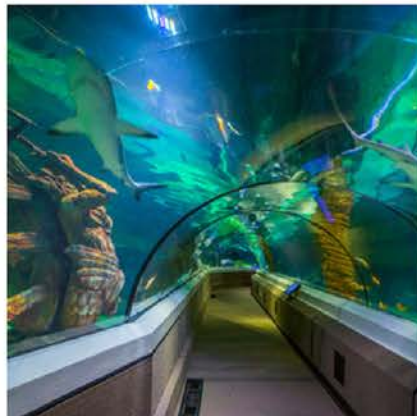
# 21-24 OCTOBER 2022

# Sunshine Coast



## SUNSHINE COAST LUNCH

*In September, Glen B, a Country Network member from Victoria, visited the Sunshine Coast for four weeks. We made Glen welcome by showing him around for a day and organising a special one-off lunch.*





Thomas

# Sunshine Coast

## SUNSHINE COAST LUNCH

In September, Glen B, a Country Network member from Victoria, visited the Sunshine Coast for four weeks. Glen and I have been communicating for the past two years on Skype and it was good to meet him for the first time in person.

On 8 September, Rodger T and I took Glen to Sea Life Sunshine Coast, an amazing Underwater World at Mooloolaba, followed by a small lunch afterwards. Thanks to Rodger T for organising the tickets from his Information Centre where he has been a volunteer for the past 28 years. The next day, we held a special lunch for Glen with eight Country Network members from the Sunshine Coast turning up at the Maroochydore Hotel. It was a great opportunity for new and older members to meet each other and forge some new friendships.

*Thomas Tiltmann*

**Country Network Area Co-Ordinator for Brisbane & Gold Coast**  
**0449 186 305 Email: [freedom47@outlook.com.au](mailto:freedom47@outlook.com.au)**

*PS: If anyone is travelling to, or passing through the Sunshine Coast or Gold Coast, please get in contact with me and I can organise to show you around and arrange a lunch for you to meet other members of Country Network in the area.*

## Would you like to wake up someplace amazing?



Would you like to enjoy some fabulous experiences, enjoy LGBT+ social events and connect with like-minded people?

For all your (gay) travel needs contact fellow CN member

**Adam Bold**

[www.pointsofdifference.com](http://www.pointsofdifference.com)

**POINTS OF DIFFERENCE**   
*Travel & Events*

# Brisbane

## AN INVITATION

**To Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and any other interested Country Network members.**

Date: Saturday, 15 October, from 11:45am to 2:30pm for lunch, but you're welcome to stay on for coffee, cake and socialising.

Venue: Club Beenleigh (lounge room), 20-28 Alamein Street, Beenleigh, Qld 4207.  
[www.clubbeenleigh.com.au](http://www.clubbeenleigh.com.au)

RSVP by: Thursday, 13 October, to Thomas Tiltmann (0449 186 305) or email to [freedom47@outlook.com.au](mailto:freedom47@outlook.com.au)

I will be at the venue from about 11:30am. You can use my membership card for the discount drinks and meals or you can sign up for a membership card (at Reception) and get the discounts yourselves. Membership is free (I think) so please sign up as there will be more lunches at this venue.

This will be the last Country Network lunch that I can organise for the Gold Coast/Brisbane/Sunshine Coast for this year. The next lunch after this I plan to organise for January 2023.

*Thomas Tiltmann*





Thomas

Brisbane

## BRISBANE LUNCH

**We held the September lunch at the Grand Central Hotel in Brisbane, with 19 in attendance. It was almost like a re-union for some as they had not seen some of the others for up to 30 years.**

We also used the lunch as an opportunity to meet men from different organisations and it showed how much we all benefit from mutual support in these times. Just one phone call to a member or new friend can make a big difference.

There will be one more lunch on Saturday, 15 October, at Club Beenleigh. This will be the last lunch I can organise for the year as I am going on a holiday during all of November and in December it is difficult to avoid clashes with Christmas functions. So we plan to start up the lunches again in January 2023.

I would like to thank all of you for your attendance and support at the lunches during 2022. I urge you to stay in contact with each other over the Christmas period as it can be a lonely time for some.

Please do not hesitate to give me a call (044 9186 305), if you need to talk to someone. Those of you from other parts of the country, please drop in when you are travelling to Brisbane and the Gold Coast (Beenleigh, QLD) and when you are in the Sunshine Coast, you can also call on Rodger T. We would love to have coffee, lunch or dinner and meet you.

I wish you all a very safe and blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

*Thomas Tittmann*

**CN Co-Ordinator for Brisbane & Gold Coast**

**0449 186 305 Email: [freedom47@outlook.com.au](mailto:freedom47@outlook.com.au)**



### What's happening in your neighbourhood?

We would love to hear what our members are up to in their part of the world.

Whether it's a monthly lunch, a bush walk, a get-together, or a local scandal, bash out a paragraph or two and email it to: [editor@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:editor@countrynetwork.com.au)

# Western Australia



## WE LOVE VISITORS!

Because Perth is one of the most isolated cities in the world, we in WA love visitors. There is lots of stuff to do and see in the west, so come on over. We're a very friendly mob!



# Western Australia

## WE LOVE VISITORS!

Now that the pandemic has abated to some degree, it was great to welcome Lachlan from Victoria who recently visited us in his caravan. This is what Country Network is all about.

Please let us know when you are planning to visit. We maybe able to help you with some of your itinerary, depending on what you have in mind!

We have a busy social life in Perth and this is often achieved by combining with a very vibrant group - the Prime Timers - established in Perth for gay and bi-sexual men.

Monthly functions include cards/games afternoon at someone's house; Wednesday night dinners at different restaurants; a monthly Sunday morning coffee group; a Tuesday luncheon at a local hotel and also social get togethers organised by Prime Timers who invite Country Network members. The social get togethers usually occur on the last Sunday of the month. The Sunday event may take the form of a picnic lunch, a bus trip, a group visit to a theatre or recently we attended the Perth Gay Outdance celebrations of 21 years of same-sex dancing.

One of the enjoyable events we have arranged over here, is a regular get away for a week at the Myalup Pines resort. In summer this gives us a chance to relax together and visit the beach or tour the country areas south of Perth—all at a low cost. Ric Shell, one of our CN members in Esperance (which is another very beautiful part of the State), has been superbly arranging these escapades for a number of years.

There are lots of stuff to do and see in the West, so come on over, we're a very friendly mob!

*Cliff Moores*

**CN Co-Ordinator for Western Australia  
0422 799 729 Email: cliff12@iinet.net.au**



Bus Trip to Swan Valley—Sept. 2022



Informal camp site of Myalup Pines in summer



Hector

Find out about all upcoming events in the following locations:

- Country Network Private Facebook Group
- Country Network Events Monthly Newsletter

Once the new website is up and running all events will also be listed on the website.

Don't forget if you would like to organise an event: contact our events coordinator, Hector or your regional coordinator.

# Happenings

*from the regions*



member event

Victoria

## West Gippsland Dinner Group

First Wednesday of the month

Railway Hotel, Warrugal  
6:30pm

contact David in advance,  
to help the hotel with catering

David Adams  
0473 951 736



member event

Victoria

## North Eastern Victoria Lunch

Fourth Sunday of the month

GV Hotel, Shepperton  
11:30am - 2:00pm

Paul West  
0409 497 273



member event

Victoria

## Geelong Lunch Group

Third Sunday of the month

Various Locations  
12:00pm - 2:00pm

Peter  
fair01@bigpond.com



member event

Victoria

## Breakfast in Blackburn

Second Sunday of the Month

Various Locations  
10am start

Glenn  
0428 235 323



member event

Queensland

## Club Beenleigh Lunch

October 15th, 2022

Club Beenleigh  
11:45am start

RSVP: 13th October 2022  
Thomas Titmann

0449 186 305  
freedom47@outlook.com.au





member event

New South Wales / ACT

## Sydney Naked Walking Group

First Thursday of the month  
Various Locations

John Wenborn  
0414 727 060



member event

New South Wales / ACT

## Coff's Coasters Walking Group

Second Friday of the month  
Various Locations

Details in monthly events email & CN private FB group. Lunch before walk  
BYO Drinking Water  
Jack Ellis  
0425 391 235



member event

New South Wales / ACT

## Port Macquarie Lunch Meetups

Third Tuesday of the month  
Settlers Inn, Port Macquarie  
12:00pm start

Jeffery Sproal  
0412 651 429



member event

Western Australia

## Dome Hotel Morning Cofee

6th Nov 2022  
Dome Hotel, Vic Park  
10am start

Tables booked under Chris or Prime Timers  
Cliff Moores  
0422 799 729



member event

Western Australia

## Cards & Board Games Afternoon

October 12th, 2022  
Venue to be advised  
1:30pm start

Cliff Moores  
0422 799 729  
cliff12@iinet.net.au



member event

Online

## Neil's Zoom Nights!

Every Saturday  
Online  
5pm

Contact Neil for the access link prior to the event.  
Neil Warner  
0419 551 245

# IT'S TIME FOR YOUR SAY!

We want to hear from you, in our first Great Country Network National Survey! Tell us what you think about all things to do with the Country Network, including your chance to help guide the website team with the new updated website!

We know members have a lot to say about Country Network, now's your chance. The survey is completely anonymous and confidential, so feel free to tell us some of the things you don't necessarily like and we can work to improve them, please try to be constructive as you offer your suggestions

Please allow 10-15 minutes to complete survey.

**Find the survey here: [www.offthefmainroad.com.au/survey](http://www.offthefmainroad.com.au/survey)**

If you're reading this newsletter as a PDF simply click on the link to open up the survey online.



**the great  
country network  
national survey!**

# Network Organisations

## GAY FATHERS WORLDWIDE

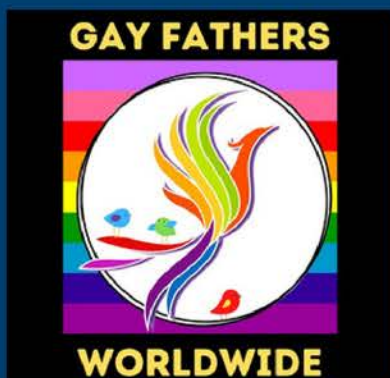
*Even though Country Network is an amazing group, it can't possibly fulfill all of the many needs of our diverse group of members. There are many organisations which fill the niche needs of men.*

*Over coming issues of The Country Networker, we will be providing details and articles of various organisations which may be of interest to our members and we urge you to contact the Editor either*

*by phone: 0438 460 342  
or via email: [PhillGJones@gmail.com](mailto:PhillGJones@gmail.com)  
to discuss possibilities*

*Given that many of our members have children, particularly from earlier male-female marriages and relationships, we wanted to bring some information of an important group of men:*

*Gay Fathers Worldwide.*



Gay Fathers Worldwide (GFW) is a peer support group specifically for gay men who have children from previous heterosexual relationships.

My partner, Dean Woodgate, and I (Shaun Williams) are both fathers who came out later in life.

Separately, we experienced isolation and lack of understanding as gay fathers and wanted to ensure other men had the support they needed. As a result, we created GFW as a private Facebook group in October 2020. The group is a safe place, free of judgement, where likeminded gay men can connect in a non-sexualised way without shame.

The almost 700 dads who are GFW members are at various stages of their life's journey. Some members have been out for 30 years, others for only a few months. Some are considering coming out while others may never do so.

There are those who may still be married and not sure what to do, or are newly separated or divorced and looking to find their way as gay men.

The dads are aged from 30 up to 80 and even older. The average age is late 50s with members from Europe, Asia, the Americas, Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

Gay fathers are impacted by the same struggles as many in the broader gay community including mental health and addictions.



# Network Organisations

## GAY FATHERS WORLDWIDE



Others are lonely, possibly isolated from estranged children and friends and family who abandoned them once they came out. Some are learning to redefine relationships with children, grandchildren and new partners and attempting to create connection and community. Many GFW members have found peace in their new lives as gay dads and inspire others in our community through peer support.

GFW is proud of the work it does to create a safe and loving community. The group encourages and supports gay fathers to catch up and talk to other men in similar circumstances including through regular zoom meetings and face-to-face events scheduled around the globe. This has often resulted in life-long friendships.

This year, GFW has organised events in Melbourne and regional Victoria and NSW including Ballarat, Rutherglen and Albury. A number of dads have established a regional NSW group. Next year, in conjunction with World Pride and Mardi Gras, GFW is organising a trip to Sydney and Melbourne with 30 dads and their partners signed up (including some from the UK, the US and Canada).

GFW's goal is to help gay dads feel at peace in the world with other like-minded men. Many have remarked how being a member of the group has made them feel accepted for the first time in their lives. Country Network men who are gay fathers are invited to reach out and join our safe space.

*Shaun Williams*

**Gay Fathers Worldwide**

**Email: [gayfathersworldwide@gmail.com](mailto:gayfathersworldwide@gmail.com)**



*You can join the private Facebook group at Gay Fathers Worldwide or email us at*

*[gayfathersworldwide@gmail.com](mailto:gayfathersworldwide@gmail.com)*

*Shortly there will also be a website available with resources and contacts for those who do not use Facebook.*

*We look forward to welcoming new members from the Country Network.*



Cameron

# Pot Luck

## Meals with Mates

There's nothing as good as a cuppa with a mate to solve the problems of the world. Why not whip up a batch of these super simple scones and visit a mate today. They may just need it!

The only question remains: Jam on top of cream, or cream on top of jam?

**3 cups self-raising flour**  
**80g butter, cubed**  
**1 1/4 cups milk**  
**1/2 cup sultanas**  
**Plain flour, for dusting**



Sultana Scones

Preheat oven to 200°C. Lightly dust a flat baking tray with plain flour.

Sift self-raising flour into a large bowl. Using your fingertips, gently rub butter into flour until mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Add sultanas

Make a well in the centre. Add 1 cup of milk. Mix with a flat-bladed knife until mixture forms a soft dough, add more milk if required.

Turn onto a lightly floured surface. Knead dough gently until smooth. Be careful not to knead dough too much or scones will be tough.

Pat dough into a 2cm-thick round. Using a 5cm (diameter) round cutter, cut out 12 rounds.

Press remaining dough together and cut out more 4 rounds. Place scones onto prepared baking tray, 1cm apart.

Sprinkle tops of scones with a little plain flour. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until golden and well risen. Transfer to a wire rack. Serve warm with jam and cream.



# WE WANT YOU TO BE FAMOUS!

Are you secretly harbouring the desire for fame and fortune?

Do you want to see your name up there in lights? Don't we all!!

Well, Country Network can help you... kinda ...sorta ....maybe!

Okay, what we can do is include your stories printed in our very own full-colour, magazine-style newsletter when you write and send in an article. Who knew fame was so easy??

All you have to do is bash out a couple of paragraphs on something that interests you (and keep it clean, boys). Tell us about:

- Your favourite place to eat (so we know where to eat next time we're in your neighbourhood)
- A great place to holiday/go camping (here or overseas)
- Any great garden tips? (I think we'll be writing about what to do with excess fruit by the end of Summer the way my fruit trees are going)
- Any great recipes. Maybe ones that get rave reviews at your dinner parties, or childhood favs.
- Any interesting local gay history. (remember the 'keep it clean' rule)
- Your hobbies/past times (the nerdier the better as far as we're concerned)

Anyway, you get the idea. We would love to hear about what you get up to!

And don't worry if you don't think you are a good writer. We have an army of people (well, one or two really, maybe three on a good day) who can edit your writing and make you sound like the most interesting writer in the world.

Who knows, you may be a step away from a Pulitzer!! (OK, that might be a stretch). *We will also accept anonymous articles if you are not so keen on being famous!*

Email your masterpiece to [editor@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:editor@countrynetwork.com.au)



Phillip



# Off the shelf Reading

What is exciting is the number of quality gay themed books that are being published. A decade or so ago, those of us who were avid readers would be hanging out for every new gay book, and would be tempted to read anything regardless of the quality. Now it is impossible to keep up with so many excellent books being freshly published. Even one of our most prolific Country Network readers, who reads up to a dozen or more books a month, is not able to keep up it all.

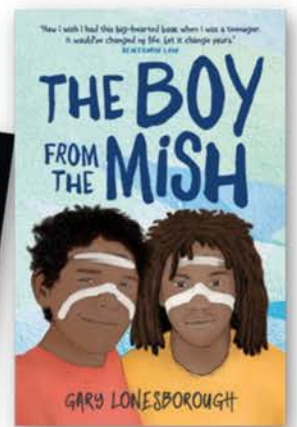
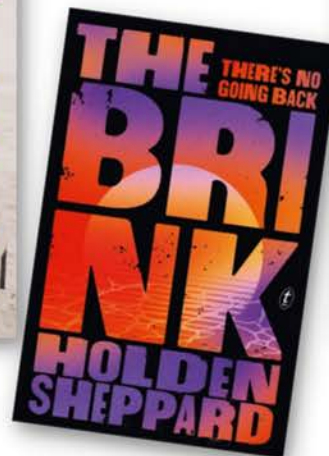
What is also exciting is that many new young Australian authors are coming on to the scene. Three who stand out for me – Holden Sheppard, Gary Lonesborough and Jay Carmichael – all openly gay in their early 20s and strongly influenced by their country/regional roots. I like the way they strongly support each other and its impressive how much maturity they bring to their writing. It seems gay men can live a number of lifetimes in the challenging years coming to terms with their sexuality.

In keeping with previous issues of *The Country Network*, we want to continue to bring you news, reviews and articles on recent books, music and also streaming, especially with gay themes.

We particularly encourage members to send in reviews of recently published books you have read, music you have enjoyed listening to, as well as films and documentaries available on the ever increasing streaming services.

### Check out your local library.

You may be very surprised how many books they have with gay themes, and recently published ones too. Last month, I used my local Wagga library app to reserve some books and within days a dozen or so books, all published in 2021 or 2022, were waiting for me to pick up. And if your library doesn't have the book you are looking for, just ask them if they can get it in for you.



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## **Jay Carmichael – Ironbark and Marlo**

*Ironbark* depicts the conflict and confusion of life as a gay man in rural Australia, and explores how place can shape personal identity by both offering and restricting potential. A moving portrait of grief and loss, *Ironbark* is also a devastating account of the toll exacted by our society's expectations of what it means to be a man.

Published in 2022, *Marlo*, set in 1950s conservative Australia. Christopher, a young gay man, moves to 'the city' to escape the repressive atmosphere of his tiny hometown. Once there, however, he finds that it is just as censorial and punitive, in its own way. Then Christopher meets Morgan, and the two fall in love – a love that breathes truth back into Christopher's stifled life. But the society around them remains rigid and unchanging, and what begins as a refuge for both men inevitably buckles, under the intensity of navigating a world that wants them to refuse what they are.

## **Holden Sheppard – Invisible Boys and The Brink.**

Born in the regional WA town Geraldton, Sheppard's first novel, *Invisible Boys*, is a raw and confronting novel, tackling homosexuality, masculinity, anger and suicide. Set in regional WA, the novel follows three 16-year-old boys coming to terms with their homosexuality in a town where it is invisible – and so are they. In a small town, everyone thinks they know everyone, but all three do their best to hide who they really are.

Holden's second novel, *The Brink*, published in August 2022, is a raw, powerful novel that pulls no punches in its authentic exploration of masculinity, sexuality, mental health, drug and alcohol use, relationships and sex. A group of school leavers, free at last, ready to party, expectations high, are on a remote island off the West Australian coast.

## **Gary Lonesborough - The Boy from the Mish**

Published in 2021, Holden Sheppard writes of the novel: "[it] is a deftly woven tale that is both a raw, unflinching look at the experience of growing up gay and Aboriginal, and a sweet, truly endearing love story you just can't turn away from. This is Own Voices storytelling at its best."

Gary grew up in regional NSW on the far south coast. As a First Nations man, to have come out and written this beautiful love story of two Indigenous teenage boys is quite remarkable and a real inspiration to gay guys, young and old.





Phillip

# On the Player

*Listening*



"a song born from loneliness, acceptance and the heartbreaking but liberating tale of my coming out experience"

Born in England in 1988, Calum Scott first came to prominence in 2015 when auditioning for Britain's Got Talent.

Just before performing, his younger sister, Jade, was eliminated, and Scott, clearly nervous after what had just befallen his sister, the one who had encouraged him to sing, stood up to sing Robyn's Dancing on My Own.

Watch the video of his performance on YouTube [here](#) It is very emotional with his mother and sister looking on as this gay boy from Yorkshire makes good. This clip now has more than 367 million views.

## Only Human

His first album, *Only Human* (2018), peaked at No 5 in Australia. In the same year, he released a new single *No Matter What* – "without doubt the most personal song I have ever written and the one I am most proud of. It's a song born from loneliness, acceptance and the heartbreaking but liberating tale of my coming out experience".





## Bridges

# On the Player

## Listening

Out for only a few months, it's already No 12 in Australia. Many songs are autobiographical and he courageously delves into his own mental health issues, lockdowns, sexuality, romance breakups and then there are songs like *Biblical* in which he sings "I want to have it all with you" and which has become popular at gay weddings whereas *Dancing on my Own* is probably off the play list.

In the title song *Bridges*, he sings "Oh, I used to walk on bridges with one thing on my mind. Do I wanna live or do I wanna die". By the end of the song, the feelings have changed: "But now I walk on bridges to reach the other side".

In *Boys in the Street*, the father says to his son "You're the last thing I wanted ... How am I gonna answer when my friends tell me, my son was kissing boys in the street?" He tries to change his son, but as he is dying, the father softens "All I was taught is men only love women, but now I'm not sure. My son, keep kissing boys in the street. And when I'm gone, keep kissing boys in the street".

All the songs have powerful lyrics. In *Heaven*, he asks: "So tell me why? What good is life? If we're all just waiting to dance in the sky. I'm already there, here in your eyes ... They say it's better, but how can that be? If everyone had a love like us, they wouldn't call that place above, Heaven."

## Mental health is a priority

Calum says that the cause closest to his heart is mental health, without a doubt, because of his own struggles. "I've gone through a massive journey with mental health, and still do". A strong proponent of mental health awareness and suicide prevention, he performed live in support of Mind for Mental Health Awareness in 2020, donating all proceeds to Mind.

## World Bridges Tour

Calum is currently on his worldwide Bridges tour. On 1 September, he streamed live his performance from House of Blues, Chicago, and it was great to watch and listen to him on my big screen at home in Wagga with a Country Network friend. I then immediately booked to go to see him at the Enmore Theatre on 11 November (tickets still available).

Unfortunately, he seems to have sold out in Melbourne on 8 and 9 November but there are still tickets at The Tivoli in Brisbane on 12 November.

And did I say, he is very handsome!



Neil

# Networking *Online*

## Zoom with Neil!

Would you like to join fellow members on Zoom each Saturday at 5pm (AEST) for an hour of Relaxed Conversation? Make new friends around the country, and catch up with other members.

Contact Neil:  
[secretary@countrynetwork.com.au](mailto:secretary@countrynetwork.com.au)  
for details of the access link.



## Tell us what you think

### Don't forget about our Great Country Network National Survey!

Tell us what you think about all things to do with the Country Network, including your chance to help guide the website team with the new updated website!

Find the survey here:  
[www.offthefmainroad.com.au/survey](http://www.offthefmainroad.com.au/survey)  
Please allow 10-15 minutes to complete survey.



## Our new website

if you would like to make a comment about the website and what you would like to see in a new website please drop a line to [president@countrynetwork.com](mailto:president@countrynetwork.com) and we will pass those comments on to the group looking at this exciting development.

# Stay in Touch

## Useful contacts

### Executive Committee

President:	Jeffrey Sproal	NSW
Vice President:		
Secretary:	Neil Warner	VIC
Treasurer:	John Conway	NSW

### Committee

Member:	David Peplow	NSW
Member:	Robert Clisdell	NSW
Member:	Phillip Jones	NSW
Counsellor:	Charlie Helyar	

### Support and Acknowledgement

Founder:	David Sergeant	NSW
Facebook:	Bernie Gregory	NSW
Public Officer:	John Conway	NSW
Newsletter Editor:	Phillip Jones	NSW
Conference Co-ord.:	Jeffrey Sproal	NSW
Web Administrator:		
Returning Officer:	Lindsay Sheppard	
Mail Distribution:	Ray Potter	VIC
Publicity and Promotion:	admin	TN
Events Coordinator:	Hector Vera	
Archives:	admin	TN
Registrar:	Neil Warner	VIC

### Support services

#### Adult

Lifeline: 13 11 14  
[lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)  
 Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467  
[suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://suicidecallbackservice.org.au)  
 Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636  
[beyondblue.org.au/forums](http://beyondblue.org.au/forums)  
 MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978  
[mensline.org.au](http://mensline.org.au)

#### Youth

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800  
[kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)  
 headspace: 1800 650 890  
[headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)  
 ReachOut: [ReachOut.com](http://ReachOut.com)

#### Other resources

Head to Health: mental health portal  
[headtohealth.gov.au](http://headtohealth.gov.au)  
 Life in Mind: suicide prevention portal  
[lifeinmind.org.au](http://lifeinmind.org.au)  
 SANE: online forums [saneforums.org](http://saneforums.org)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: [healthinonet.ecu.edu.au](http://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au)  
 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex: 1800 184 527 [qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au)  
 Culturally and linguistically diverse: [embracementalhealth.org.au](http://embracementalhealth.org.au)



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