

The Southern Yarn

October/November 2019

NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWN UNDER CLUB OF WINNIPEG INC.

downundercalendar

OCTOBER

Annual Not-so-Formal Dinner

Saturday, 26th, 5:30pm

See details opposite ...

NOVEMBER

Downunder Club Annual General Meeting

Friday, 29th, 7:00 pm

Scandinavian Cultural Centre

764 Erin Street, Winnipeg

Our not-so-formal highlight of the year – when we get to review our raison d'être and decide our continuous improvement strategy. Any and all input is welcome. Come and make a difference and enjoy snacks and drinks.

DECEMBER

Family Christmas Party

Sunday, 8th at 5:00 pm.

Scandinavian Cultural Centre

764 Erin Street, Winnipeg

Santa brings the gifts and we bring the potluck. Send in the names and ages of children who will be present to Margaret Munn at 204-237-1805 or social@downunderclub.mb.ca

JANUARY 2020

Waitangi Day and Australia Day

Details to follow ...



Not-so-Formal Dinner - join us

G'day and Kia ora, everyone! You saved the date? **Saturday, October 26?** Wonderful!! Now here are the delicious details –

We are going to **Resto Gare**, a well-regarded French bistro at 630 Des Meurons, St. Boniface. There is plenty of parking and we will gather at 5:30 pm.

The venerable La Vieille Gare French restaurant received a face-lift in 2008 to reveal Resto Gare, a fresh bistro still located in the 1913 St. Boniface train station, with a train car, and serving some of the best French cuisine in Winnipeg.

Your **all-inclusive dinner** also includes fresh baked baguette, herb roasted baby red potatoes and two fresh vegetables (with the entrée), coffee and tea. Cost per person for the meal is dependent on your choice of entrée (see \$ above), plus tax and 17% gratuity.

BUT you will need to RSVP (include advising your choice of entrée) by October 18, to Judy Powell, phone 204-275-7083, or 204-218-1448, email judy_charliep@hotmail.com, or social@downunderclub.mb.ca .

Vegetarians, or gluten-free, or food allergies can be accommodated – just let Judy know with your RSVP.

There is no minimum attendance required and, for up to 30 people attending, we can be seated in the atmospheric onsite fine dining rail carriage.

We hope to see you all there! Remember, RSVP to Judy by October 18.

menu

Our 3-course inclusive menu is –

1. **Pear and spinach salad**, with radishes, red peppers, hemp seeds and spiced cherry vinaigrette
2. Your choice of (one)
 - **Chicken Parmesan**, lightly breaded breast, with rustic tomato ratatouille over pasta \$35
 - **Lamb Shank** braised Provençal, in port wine, with rosemary, garlic & tomato \$39
 - **Boeuf Bourguignon**, with mushrooms, pearl onions and bacon \$38
 - **Baked Atlantic Salmon**, with orange rosemary glaze, and pecan crumble \$36
3. **Sweet French crepes**, banana foster, and whipped Chantilly crème

Scrambling to golf in August

The annual golf tournament in August was in danger of being washed out according to the weather forecasts in the 5 days leading up to the event, but we were lucky, the outlook changed with a day to go, and we hit off as scheduled. We played a team event this year, which means less pressure on those who don't play golf too often. The teams were divided fairly evenly as to skill level, which showed up in the final results, with just one stroke separating each team. Team Debenham was running away with the competition, until the dreaded last hole, a long par 5, playing that day into a strong wind, and over water for the second shot. It created havoc for everyone, and even with the best ball format, no team managed better than a bogey 6. As usual, a good day was had by all, finished off with a cool pop after the round at the club restaurant. Thanks to all that came out, and everyone managed to win something for their game, with thanks to Judy for rounding up the prizes for the event.

And there were winners!!

Closest to the pin: Peter Debenham

Longest drive: Tim, son of Debenham

Texas Scramble: Equal first Teams: 1) Charlie P, Ricky B, Kyle N. and 2) Peter G, Terry D, Peter M. Runners up Team: Peter, Joanne and Tim D.



The golf tournament teams recover!

online



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editorially yours

Charlie Powell



Since we decided to cut back to just every two months for this newsletter, you may have noticed that it is 8 pages now instead of 6. This is good for getting more news and stories to you, the readers. It also means more opportunity for you to send in news, short stories, photos, etc. As editor, I am always grateful for any such contributions! In this edition Jenny Gates shares her experiences from her recent visit back "home" (see "Getting to know", p. 6). My sister in Brisbane also sent me a "Birds I view" piece which I'll save until next issue. I already had Grackles written up (p. 8) and you can't really talk about them in December/January - they're long-gone! Whereas birds in Australia are pretty much everywhere all the time. Other Club members or family or friends often send me links to news bites that they think will interest others - very thoughtful - thanks. I like searching for interesting historical stuff for "100 years ago...". In this edition there is one of them, and also a "200 years ago ...". I could have even included a "150 years ago ..." since this month is the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth (and almost 70 years since his assassination) - a life that speaks to some of the ignorant intolerance still being preached today.

Thanks as always to our advertisers and other regular contributors.

Enjoy,

Appreciation ...

We are so sorry to hear of Gordon's passing, but what an amazing life he led. He was just a lovely, warm, kind person and I will remember him fondly.

Thank you to you, Jenny and all of the people who work to keep the DUCW alive and well. It definitely holds a special place in my heart. I love the newsletter and for some reason now get the Squiz, a daily newsletter from down under delivery to me.

I love your Facebook postings-so creative and fun!!! A big G'Day to all.

Hugs,
Vilma Wilkie

president's ramblings

Peter Munn



By the time you read this, the federal election will be almost upon us. (If you know the results of the election, you are either clairvoyant, or this edition of the *Yarn* was a little late to the printers). Either way, it will be seen that approximately 63% of eligible voters actually bothered to vote, that being the average number over the past 6 elections. It is a problem worldwide in voting

democracies, that a large number of eligible voters do not turn up at the ballot box on voting day. Even in Australia, which has compulsory voting, just 91% placed a vote at the last federal elections for the upper and lower houses. Unfortunately, too many young Canadians don't vote, less than 40% for those aged 24 and under. And you have to believe that the level of drivel that comes from too many politicians today has a lot to do with this resistance to voting. Perhaps it will take a major issue that will truly affect them to get younger voters to the ballot box. I hope so. (Action on Global Warming, anyone?)



Peter Debenham has often spoken of the basement meetings of the original Down Under Club founders, where they met in members basements, brought along a case of beer and potato chips, along with a hat on the floor to deposit the price of your beer. We had a retro night in September, in honour and remembrance of **Gordon Keatch**. There was a great turnout for the event, and during the evening, after a toast

to Gordon, there were many fond remembrances, and recollections of Gordon and what he meant to the club. We will all miss this fine gentleman. True to tradition, there was a hat on the bar, cold beer in the fridge, and potato chips to spare. We also welcomed **Grant and Alanna**, back from Orange for a holiday. It was great we were able to get together, allowing for their hectic schedule with friends and family.

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100 years ago

At the conclusion of the Great War, an AIF Test Team XI was selected to tour South Africa in 1919 as a morale boosting initiative. From 18 October to 12 December 1919, the team played 10 matches of between 3 to 5 days, depending upon the team they were up against. The last limited overs, one day match was played by the AIF Cricket XI on 13 September 1919 at the Mitcham Green against the Mitcham Cricket Club XI selected from a pool of sixteen players. The AIF won by six wickets. The Mitcham Cricket Club XI were bowled out for 200 while the AIF reached that target with the final result of 5 wickets for 207 runs. [Read more online]

The AIF XI
South
African Tour-
ing Team,
1919



A Punch illustration showing police, convicts and colonists in 1864. A new edition of Australia's first dictionary offers a guide to criminal slang. Image: Print Collector/Getty Images

200 years ago

'Is that bum trap missing a flesh-bag?': a guide to Australia's convict slang

James Hardy Vaux's 1819 collection of 'criminal slang and other impolite terms' is recognised as Australia's first dictionary. For its 200th anniversary, Simon Barnard has updated the text. If you were one of the 164,000 convicts transported to the Australian colonies, chances are you forked clys for screeves and clouts or worked the hoist to nail lobs and serve coves.

Keeping one step ahead of the law meant being fleet of foot but also quick-witted. Communicating in slang provided criminals with the means to deceive and confuse the author-

ities. When "cat and kitten stealer" William Dixon fronted court, a police officer politely informed the magistrate that Dixon had not abducted a family of felines but had been caught pinching valuable pewter mugs, so named for the resemblance their bulbous shapes and curved handles bore to cats' bodies and tails.

To aid magistrates struggling to understand slang-whanging criminals, a thrice-transported convict and self-confessed swindler named James Hardy Vaux compiled a dictionary of underworld slang. Published in London in 1819, the work is recognised as Australia's first dictionary.

Some of the slang in Vaux's 200-year-old tome lives on in terms and phrases that make Australian English recognisably ours. Others are curious oddities. Here are seven words that would have come in handy if you were living a shady life in the British penal colonies of 19th century Australia – Vaux's original text, in bold, followed by some explanation and illustration of the terms from the convict record.

Bum traps: A sheriff's officer or his follower

A sheriff's officer, more commonly termed a bailiff, was notorious for following closely at a sheriff's bum. For this reason, bailiffs were called bum-bailiffs and members of the "catch club" (because they were said to "catch" farts.) But they were also known as

bull-dogs, hawks, lurchers and, from the manner in which they escorted debtors, shoulder clappers. Bailiffs were unpopular; colonists attacked them with knives, swords and pistols. In 1853 a South Australian, John Bevis, was fined £1 for kicking a "bum bailiff" and pelting him with stones.

Chiv: A knife; to chiv a person is to stab or cut him with a knife

Chiv, a term applied to any improvised bladed weapon, may derive from *chivomengro*, a Romany word for knife. William Courtney accused George Bradley of stabbing him in his chest at the Impression Bay probation station in Van Diemen's Land. According to Courtney's testimony, Bradley's accomplice, Charles Fisher, instructed him to "ding the chiv". Bradley and Fisher were convicted of attempted murder, with the jury recommending that they be executed. But the two convicts appealed the sentence and successfully argued that Courtney had stabbed himself. They were pardoned and Courtney was sentenced to nine months' hard labour in chains. Courtney had a history of self-harm – during his imprisonment he was punished for rubbing caustic lime into his eyes, injuring his foot and cutting his own throat.

Finger-smith: A midwife

Midwives were nicknamed finger-smiths because they worked with their fingers, and

... continued on page 5

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Growing seafood in WA

The growing aquaculture industry in Western Australia is attracting tourism to small towns on the south coast of the state, by providing seasonal jobs.

The seaside communities of Bremer Bay and Augusta have been popular for providing aquaculture-related work for almost a decade. The state government is promising 30,000 new regional positions by 2023-2024.

Ocean Grown Abalone (OGA) has expanded, in just five years, from a handful of employees to the biggest employer in Augusta. [Australian Food News, Sept. 2019, more online]

Take the 'roo quiz

The [blank] kangaroo features on Australia's Commonwealth Coat of Arms to help symbolise a nation moving forward – supposedly because it can't easily move backwards (although it's not clear how thoroughly this has been tested!).

Answer this and other kangaroo questions online [Source: ABC News, Anna Salleh, Sept 2019]



Another Aussie invention

Two local, South Australian businesses may have just invented the game-changing solution to plastic food packaging, catching the eye of overseas exporters with the potential to change the way the world buys produce; reducing plastic and food waste.

George Antonas, Director of IG Fresh Produce and Scott Morton of Peak Fresh, two local South Australian produce and packaging businesses, have spent the last 12 months developing a 100% biodegradable, compostable cucumber wrap after a conversation Antonas and John-Paul Drake had last year. [Source: Australian Food News, Sept. 2019- online link]



Robots have started serving ice cream in Melbourne

Niska, an Australian based start-up company has opened a world-first retail robotics ice-cream store in Melbourne.

Niska is located at the popular Federation Square in Melbourne CBD where multiple robots have already started serving 16 flavours of ice-cream, locally-produced in Melbourne with the best artisan tradition of gelato and ice cream making. [Australian Food News, Sep 2019, more online].

newszealand

various sources, see web links in online edition

Manuka honey: NZ vs Aus

The honey industry stands to forgo up to a billion dollars in export revenue following an audacious bid by the New Zealand government to prevent Australian beekeepers from marketing their products as "manuka".

The New Zealand government has taken an unusual step into the private sphere to support a group of domestic honey producers seeking to register the term "manuka honey" as a certification trademark in China, which would effectively lock their competitors out of the world's biggest trade market. High grade manuka sells there for up to \$400 per kilogram.

And if that was not enough, Harrods in the UK will next week start selling a jar of Kiwi honey for £1388. To save you doing the



math, that's equivalent to \$2724 per 230-gram tub of golden nectar from The True Honey Company. [Sources: The Age and NZHerald, online link and more online]



Takahe comeback

The population of endangered flightless takahē has passed the 400 mark for the first time in at least a century. The species had been considered extinct until it was rediscovered in 1948, in Fiordland's Murchison Mountains. The population has soared to 418 in the Department of Conservation's latest count and it follows a record breeding season that produced 65 juveniles. About two-thirds of the takahē population is spread across 18 secure island and mainland sanctuaries. [Source: NZHerald, Oct. 2019, more online]

Wool, duh!

It's exciting too to see a win for Wools of New Zealand, as they earned the status of preferred supplier for leading UK retail group John Lewis, a significant retail partner for leading carpet manufacturer Ulster Carpets.

Ulster Carpets has worked in partnership with Wools of New Zealand for several years, notably to develop the popular Open Spaces Auckland, Queenstown and Wellington Stripe ranges.

In short, it's a champagne moment for wool, and exciting news that our premium product is getting attention from a leading UK retail group like John Lewis. Wool is natural, renewable and biodegradable and these qualities are creating waves of interest as innovators frantically look for sustainable alternatives. For example, NASA is testing New Zealand wool filters on Orion's emergency life-support system for on-board fires. There are even wool surfboards and shoes. [Source: NZHerald, Sept. 2019, more online].



What's the meaning of the phrase 'Fair dinkum'?

Honest; genuine; fair play.

There could hardly be a more Southern Hemisphere expression than 'fair dinkum'. The phrase, which is hardly used outside Australia, conjures up images of horny-handed farm hands with corks on their hats. A 'fair-dinkum Aussie' is indeed what the locals call someone who embodies the nation's values. So, where did the phrase originate? Alice Springs? Adelaide? No, Lincolnshire in England. That claim will take a little justifying, especially to readers down under, so here goes.

Firstly, let's get out of the way the folk-etymological tale that the phrase derives from the expression 'din gum', used by Chinese miners with the meaning 'real gold'. My Chinese is less than perfect but I am told by Chinese speaking correspondents that 'din gum' (or 'zhen jin' in Mandarin) is a correct translation of 'real gold'. However, there's no evidence to link the phrase to China. There is, however, a mining connection in the phrase's background.

'Dinkum' is a slang term that appears to have grown up with two meanings, 'work' and 'fair play'. These may in fact be drawn from one original meaning, that is, 'honest toil'. The 'work' meaning of dinkum is found in print in documents from both Australia and the UK in the late 19th century, the earliest being in the classic Australian novel *Robbery under Arms*, published by Thomas Alexander Browne, using the pseudonym Rolf Boldrewood, in 1888. It also appears in



Sidney Addy's *Glossary of Words Used in the Neighbourhood of Sheffield, 1891*:

'I can stand plenty o' dincum.' This word is used by colliers at Eckington. [Eckington is in East Derbyshire]

The 'honesty' or 'fair play' meaning is what people now mean

by the phrase. The 'fair' was added to dinkum for emphasis, much in the same way that it was added to 'square' to make 'fair and square'. The 'fair play' meaning was known in England from at least 1882, as in this example from a report of a political meeting in Lincoln, reported in the *Nottingham Evening Post*, February 1882. The paper reports the opinions of Richard Hall, a local magistrate who was complaining about the unfair policies of the Gladstone government, which he believed favoured the wealthy.

In all of these things he thought there should be fair 'dinkum' to all classes of people.

'Fair dinkum' also appeared in Australia, in the Sydney newspaper *The Bulletin*, in 1894.

'Fair dinkum' was used by the colliers of the UK's East Midlands from the 1880s and by Australians from a few years later. In the late 19th century, in addition to the numerous criminals who were transported, many mineworkers migrated from England to Australia, taking their working language with them. Significantly as far as the derivation of this phrase is concerned, the direction of migration was very much one way and few migrants ever came back. [online link]

200 years ago, from page 3

because smith means "maker" and "worker". Convicts were the first finger-smiths to arrive in Australia from Britain. Babies were delivered on board transport ships and in prisons. When Jane Skinner went into labour at Richmond gaol in Van Diemen's Land, Mary Ann Watson was released from solitary confinement to act as her finger-smith. But Skinner's baby died soon after it was born. Because of unwholesome living conditions and insufficient or inadequate medical training and equipment, the infant mortality rate among convicts was notoriously high. Watson, whose trade was listed as "washer-woman", may not have been experienced in midwifery. She did, however, have finger-smith expertise – finger-smith is also slang for "pickpocket".

Flesh-bag: A shirt

In 1844 the governor of Oakham gaol overheard an inmate and burglar, William Bats, divulge that, despite wearing his "flesh-bag" over his clothes to alter his appearance, his victim had recognised him at his preliminary hearing before the "beaks" (magistrates). Bates was charged with burglary and transported to Van Diemen's Land for life.

Hopper-dockers: Shoes

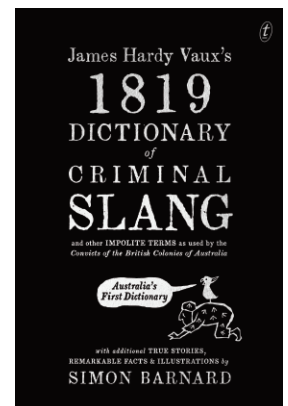
Shoes may have been nicknamed hopper-dockers because barefoot people hop to "dock" their feet. But shoes also were nicknamed hock-dockers, after hock, "the joint in a quadruped's hind leg", and clod-hoppers, because people hop over earthen clods. In 1827, at Parramatta, convicts "shook" the "clod-hoppers" and "kickers" belonging to convict Nicholas Doyle, a so-called "flat". The thieves also stole Doyle's certificate of freedom. A convict, Robert Goodwin, offered to "spring the plant" if Doyle paid him "blunt", but because Doyle was penniless he prosecuted Goodwin to recover his possessions. Doyle failed to prove that Goodwin was the thief, so the judge dismissed the case for lack of evidence.

Quod: A gaol. To quod a person is to send him to gaol. In quod, is in gaol.

Quod comes from quadrangle, a square or rectangular space or courtyard enclosed by buildings. When Frances Stewart was charged with drunkenness in 1840, the *Sydney Monitor* and Commercial Advertiser described her as "an old and multitudinous offender, with face as red as scarlet, and nose blue as bilberry". Stewart explained to the

judge that she drank to cope with the loss of her lover, and, in summing up her sorry plight, stated: "I expects you won't send me to quod." But Stewart was "ordered to study Zimmerman for 120 hours, in Mr Keck's library" – five days' solitary confinement in Sydney gaol, supervised by the gaoler Henry Keck. Zimmerman refers to *Solitude*, a book written by John George Zimmerman.

Simon Barnard's verbosely titled new book – *James Hardy Vaux's 1819 Dictionary of Criminal Slang and Other Impolite Terms as Used by the Convicts of the British Colonies of Australia with Additional True Stories, Remarkable Facts and Illustrations* – is out now through Text Publishing. [Source: *The Guardian*, Books, Simon Barnard, 20 Aug 2019]



An Unexpected Adventure in Australia

Last summer I headed to Australia for an extended trip with family and friends. At one point, I had seven days to fill between planned stops, and found myself looking for somewhere to stay.

What to do? Where to go? And who would want me dropping by on such short notice?

Several dear friends, it turned out, all located within a few hours of each other in central west NSW, and all willing to put up with me for two nights.

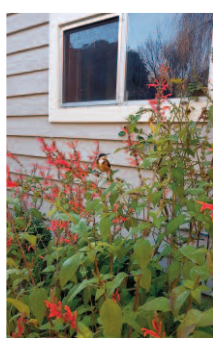
First stop was Cath in Canowindra – pronounced Ca-noun-dra, as I found out. An historic village about 2½ hours drive north-ish from Canberra, Canowindra is best known as the hot air balloon capital of Australia. Set on the banks of the beautiful Belubula River, the crooked main street follows the route of an old bullock track and the surrounding rich farmlands produce wool, wheat and fat lambs.

Cath moved there from Sydney about 4 years ago. She bought a house, is currently renovating it, and is making a life for herself in this intriguing country town. Since I hadn't seen Cath for at least 20 years, there was a lot of catching up to do, and I also took the opportunity to visit the Age of Fishes Museum, and the Parkes Observatory – twice.

You might remember Parkes' most famous resident, affectionately known as "The Dish", as featured in the movie of the same name. That radio telescope observatory was one of several radio antennae used to receive live television images of the Apollo 11 Moon landing.

Although the drive from Canowindra to Orange – my next destination – is only about 50 minutes, it took me about 4 hours because there was so much to see along the way.

And why Orange? Because that is the home of Grant, Alanna, Kaitlyn and Luke Hinrichsen – and their newest family member Byf (after one of their favourite Winnipeg Jets). The family swapped Winnipeg for the city of Orange about 2 years ago and, by all accounts, are thriving there.



Other than relaxing in front of the tv and catching up on their lives, we took in the foggy view from the top of Mt Canobolas, explored Cook Park and the Botanic Gardens, and took a walk around part of Lake Canobolas. Orange is definitely a must-stop-and-see if you are ever in that part of the world.

An even shorter distance from Orange is the town of Vittoria – my third and final stop before reuniting with my planned schedule. I had never heard of Vittoria until friends Nick and Margaret bought a small property there earlier this year. Surrounded by sheep farms, their home – their haven – is beautiful. Most of the property has been landscaped, thanks to previous owners, and Nick and Margaret are hard at work making it their own.

While there, Margaret and I toured some of the nearby towns – Millthorpe, Carcoar – and I took a lot of photos, both out and about and in their own backyard. I also learned how to play Catan – and actually won, thanks to my hosts doing their best to make sure neither of them won.

Those 6 days were bookended by time spent in Canberra with long-time friends Ed and Gill, who made room in their very busy schedules to welcome me and make me feel like family. In fact, the entire time I was in Oz, everyone I stayed with were as much family as friends, and I couldn't have done that very long trip without any of them.

My advice for planning your next trip? Leave a bit of leeway for unexpected stops and adventures because you never know where that will take you.

Jenny Gates

From top:

- On the road between Orange and Vittoria
- School sign in Canowindra
- The Dish in Parkes
- Orange Botanic Gardens
- Eastern Spinebill in Nick and Margaret's garden]
- The view from Ed and Gill's place



Australia's welfare card fails human rights test

Since its 2016 trial beginnings in rural Australian towns, the Coalition's enforcement of the Cashless Welfare Card has been a contested issue. Now, with the Morrison government's new plans to expand the scope of its power, further restrictions will limit the spending habits of welfare recipients from selected towns.

While it is unsure how much of the payment will be quarantined – with estimations ranging from 50-100% of benefits being limited – lawyers claim that over 80% of people affected by the new changes will be Indigenous Australians. The scheme has ignited new criticisms from welfare and human rights advocates.

Describing it as a “micro-managing” policy that denies people the “freedom to make the decisions about where to buy things like food”, Adrienne Walters – a senior lawyer for The Human Rights Law Centre – argued that the “core” of the policy was innately “discriminative and coercive”. At a recent Senate inquiry into the bill, Walters explained that “imposing a blanket law [which] forcibly restricts how and where a person can spend their money, fails the human rights test”.

It is a view that is shared by Marcia Langton, who emphasized that “bureaucrat after bureaucrat has wielded a big stick to punish the poor”. The Indigenous academic initially supported the trials but has since changed her position: a critical feature of the policy design, was never implemented. Indigenous leaders within remote towns had recommended that locals committees should oversee the election of participants who would not be included in the trials and should receive the full amount of entitlements. Professor Langton asserted that the scheme “viciously” and “savagely punished” recipients, instead of gradually weaning them off social security.

In an interview with the Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison was questioned about how the policy reflected a “nanny state” and further impinged upon the personal liberties, which the Liberal government strongly endorses. The PM defended the decision to extend and expand the trials for the cashless debit card. He went on to maintain that the cards provide an additional incentive for recipients to gain employment and lowered substance abuse.

Morrison argued that “one of the key reasons that it has been working is because it has been embraced by the communities where it's been put in place.” – Zahrah Sahib.

NZ scraps ‘racist’ refugee policy

Immigration Minister Iain Lees-Galloway has announced as part of the government's three-year refugee policy that it will get rid of the requirement for Middle Eastern and African refugees to have relatives already residing here. The announcement has come just months before the refugee quota will jump from 1,000 to 1,500 for 2020.

Africa and Middle East regions will have their allocation increased from 14% to 15%. The focus will remain on refugees from the Asia-Pacific who will make up 50% of the allocation. The number of places within the refugee quota for large-scale refugee crisis situations will also rise from 100 to 200 places from July next year, meaning New Zealand will be able to maintain its ability to respond to a global refugee crisis. A sub-category for women who are at risk will also receive more places going from 75 to 100.

The Green Party said the government was putting fairness and inclusion back in the heart of New Zealand's refugee policy. Green MP Golriz Ghahraman said the government was demonstrating its commitment to the idea that human rights are universal. She said as a former refugee from the affected region, it was meaningful for her to work with the minister to bring about this change.

Ms Ghahraman said it sent an important signal to NZ's refugee communities that whatever their faith or ethnicity, they were welcome. Manawatu Refugee Voice president Tammam Tamim lived in Palestine and Syria before coming to NZ. He said by having more people from the Middle East in New Zealand, it would help other refugees settle. “When we came here our English is not perfect - we're just learning, [so] do you think our life will be easier? Absolutely, it will be easier,” he said. He said it would also make it easier to find schooling and jobs.

Iain Lees-Galloway announced the policy in Palmerston North, saying the government knew changes needed to be made and today's announcements reflected the priority given to people who need refugee assistance. But the National Party's Immigration spokesperson Stuart Smith said it was not a move he would have made. And he defended the introduction of the policy in the first place. “We were focusing on our region with refugees and I think that was the right thing to do,” he said. A review of the policy was expected in July, however, Mr Lees-Galloway

said it was still being considered and a decision would be announced “soon”.

In August, World Vision presented a petition to the Education and Workforce Select Committee calling for the refugee policy to be fairer.

Refugee advocate Dr Murdoch Stephens had said then that this was a racist policy “intentionally designed to reduce the number of Middle Eastern and African refugees in the country”.

Meanwhile, the two-year pilot ‘Welcoming Communities Programme’ is going to be extended out to other parts of the country. Ten councils across five regions and the Office of Ethnic Communities have been part of the pilot. The government will allocate over \$6.6 million for the program over the next four years.

Pacific leaders: industrial nations must cut carbon emissions

Pacific Island Forum leaders have urged the UN Secretary General to persuade the world's industrial powers to take urgent action to reduce their carbon emissions.

Forum leaders met with António Guterres late last month ahead of the UN summit's special Climate Action Summit and UN General Assembly. They highlighted critical priorities to securing the future of the Pacific region. NZ's Minister for Pacific People's represented the country ahead of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's arrival.

Beyond the plea for action, Pacific leaders urge industrial nations to then stay on course to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 in order to limit temperature rise.

The September meeting in New York gave Forum leaders the opportunity to formally table issues discussed at the 50th Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Leaders Meeting in Tuvalu last month, before the UN General Assembly. Leaders also raised issues previously discussed with Antonio Guterres during his visit to Fiji, New Zealand, Tuvalu and Vanuatu in May.

Read more from Commonwealth Corner on page nine of the electronic versions of most issues of *The Southern Yarn*.

Murray Burt is a retired editor and journalist who is concerned that lesser elements of the Commonwealth get poor media coverage.

Burt is president of the Manitoba branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society; past president of the Commonwealth Journalists Association; Hon LCol of the 78th Fraser Highlanders; a senator of the 166th Battery RCA (Kenora) and a director of The Intrepid Society. He is retired from more than 50 years of journalism.



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Grackles

It was mid-September here in Winnipeg when the first flock arrived – raucous, flighty and obviously enjoying a picnic. One minute covering the lawn, snacking on seeds and grubs, and the next minute in the treetops, calling loudly and restlessly on the move. The movie “Birds” came to mind.

Grackles don’t tough it out through our northern winters, so this flock was just enjoying a stopover on its way south. Their range is southern Canada to the southern US.

Quiscalus quiscula belongs to the same family as orioles and blackbirds and has two larger namesakes – the boat-tailed and the great-tailed grackles, neither of which come up to Canada. Prominent features include yellow eyes, the male’s iridescent blue neck, black body and long keel-shaped tail. Apart from grubs and grains they also dine on small reptiles, frogs, crayfish, mice, nestling birds and eggs. Females are smaller, brown, and lack the iridescence of the male.

They can mimic some other birds and have been known to have a go at human speech.

Downunder, many birds flock – particularly the parrot family – but the nearest I can think of to the above scene would be a huge “murder of crows”.

The grackle’s voice is less than mellow,

His heart is black, his eye is yellow,

He bullies more attractive birds

With hoodlum deeds and vulgar words,

And should a human interfere,

Attacks that human in the rear.

I cannot help but deem the grackle

An ornithological debacle.

Ogden Nash



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