

The Southern Yarn

February/March 2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWN UNDER CLUB OF WINNIPEG INC.

downundercalendar

FEBRUARY

Winnipeg Fundraiser for the Australian Bushfires

Saturday February 22, 5:00 – 8:00 pm

Nashville's Event Centre at Canad Inns

Destination Centre Transcona (826 Regent

Ave West). \$20 (tickets purchased in advance)

for your choice of either a chicken/spud or pasta/pizza dinner with Caesar salad, garlic breadstick, and one complimentary beverage.

Tickets — to purchase tickets or to make a donation, contact Peter Debenham at 204-955-0393

MARCH

An Evening at the Manitoba Historical Society

Saturday March 28, 2020, 6:00 pm.

Hotel Fort Garry, Winnipeg



in Honour of His Imperial Highness **Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie** President of the Imperial Crown Council of Ethiopia. Address By His Imperial Highness – "The Significance of the Landmark

Global Contributions of Emperor Haile Selassie I". Tickets are \$125 (204) 947-0559. Thank you to DUCW member **Bashir Khan** for forwarding this information and an invitation to an event at the Manitoba Historical Society.

APRIL

ANZAC Day

Saturday 25th April 2020, 5 pm

Scandinavian Cultural Centre

764 Erin St, Winnipeg.

Mark this date to commemorate ANZAC Day with a memorial service, singing of our national anthems, followed by a delicious POTLUCK dinner. This is always a memorable event, so come and be a part of it, and the fun to follow. We will definitely have a game or three of Two-up! And the bar will be open.



Winnipeg Fundraiser for the Australian Bushfires

The devastating bushfires in Australia are continuing to take an almost unimaginable toll on that country. At least 27 people have died, livelihoods have been lost, countless native animals and livestock populations have been decimated, and millions of hectares of land have been burned beyond recognition.

To help those in need, the Down Under Club of Winnipeg (DUCW) is organising a large local **Bud 'n Spud Fundraiser** with monies raised sent to the Australian Red Cross through the Canadian Red Cross office in Winnipeg.

Silent Auction – if you would like to donate a prize for the auction, please contact Charlie Powell at 204-806-6965.

In addition to Silent Auction and 50/50 there will be several speeches and presentations from members of the Australian and New Zealand community, as well as local individuals and dignitaries, and we will acknowledge those members of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre who have returned from Australia after helping with the fires.

For more information – Peter Munn at 204-237-1805 or Jenny Gates at info@downunderclub.mb.ca

Waitangi Day/Australia Day event

And what a social evening it was! More than 30 members and friends came together to recognize our national days in the upstairs room at the Scandinavian Cultural Centre. The bake-off theme this year was "Pavlova" and the cooks excelled themselves, presenting six uniquely decorated desserts, one of which used the tart but deliciously appropriate passionfruit.

Following the President's welcome and singing the three national anthems, we tucked into a wide array of salads and main courses. Members were then reminded to take note of the pavlovas as they were sampled and, while dessert was being eaten, a brainteaser quiz sheet was distributed.

The winner of the bake-off, by acclaim, was Peter Gilbert's kiwi-decorated beauty. The quiz was completed and answers given; small token prizes were chosen and then it was on to several rousing games of two-up, most capably overseen by Tiernan, Aidan, and Sam. Onya, fellers.



Charlie Powell's "Ode to the Aussie Firefighters" (orchestrated to be sung to the tune "Lili Marlene") has been widely viewed via the Club's Facebook page and website and shared among many friends.

Towards the end of the evening the entire Club stood together in front of our countries flags to perform the ode for a video tribute, which will be shown at the Down Under Club's bushfire relief fundraising event on Saturday, February 22 – see you there and then!!! We hope to do the fireys proud and help provide relief to the many who have suffered through the unrelenting fire disasters unfolding over the last few months.

online



find us on facebook or the web

www.downunderclub.mb.ca

email: info@downunderclub.mb.ca

editorially yours

Charlie Powell



Well, there's movement at the station ... our DUCW is mobilized at many levels to make the **Feb 22 fundraiser** a success. (One member commented that it reminded him of when we used to plan for our Folklorama pavilion.) Generous donations and silent auction prizes are coming in, tickets are being sold and members and friends are signing up to volunteer. Winnipeggers are moved to support our efforts by the news coverage and the knowledge that Manitoban Firefighters have been helping downunder.

Nine years ago when **Christchurch** was rocked and partly wrecked by earthquakes that also claimed lives, we similarly reacted and were well supported. It's natural - many still consider Australia or New Zealand as "home". So there is strong motivation to do what we can.

Of course, while our focus is the bush-fire appeal, we acknowledge that nature is also hitting hard in many other regions and affecting thousands of lives. To name a few: at least 77 people were killed and 94 injured in northeast **Pakistan** after a series of avalanches, triggered by heavy snowfall, destroyed and buried houses; the Taal volcano in the **Philippines** has displaced 450,000 people; floods and landslides caused by very extreme monsoon storms have killed more than 50 in the Indonesian capital, **Jakarta**, and displaced 175,000; the coronavirus has killed hundreds and infected thousands in **China**, and is spreading.

A big Thank You to our advertisers, our contributors and you, our readers!

Charlie Powell



president's ramblings

Peter Munn

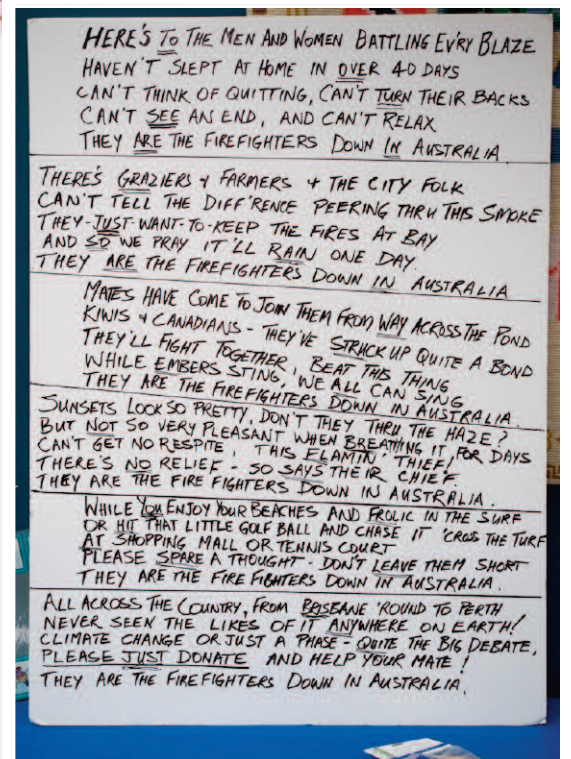


and you will be helping mates back home. We've sold hundreds, but we need to sell hundreds more.

See you there,
Peter

Had a great time at our Australia Day/Waitangi Day event, and thanks to Judy for putting it together. The arrival of some members of the Kiwi curling team, currently in training in Southern Manitoba, was a hit. We wish them all the best as they work to achieve their goal of participation in the next winter Olympics. We had over 30 people at the event, great food, great friends, and we also enjoyed welcoming members whom we had not seen for a while.

We also had some conversations on our upcoming Bushfire fundraiser, and we received some great donations of prizes for the silent auction. As well, we sold more tickets for the event. If you haven't got yours yet, hurry - by the time you receive this copy of the Yarn, there won't be much time left. So buy a ticket, take some friends, it is a great cause,



Charlie Powell penned six verses as a tribute to the bush fire fighters, and sung to the old song Lili Marlene by the group at our Australia Day / Waitangi Day event on Feb. 1st.

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MUST BOOK BY 20 Feb 2020.

*Want to modify this package? Contact us for additional travel dates, departure cities, excursions and/or any hotel upgrades.



Classic meat pies, Aidan enjoying French toast, and the group at Miss Browns. Photos: Jenny Gates.

Brunch at Miss Browns

There's no better place to be on Australia Day than having brunch at Miss Browns. And so it was that 12 members of the DUCW gathered to celebrate one of our national days and support an Australian-owned business in Winnipeg on Sunday January 26.

Not only was the usual menu on offer, but co-owner Steve had made lots of delicious minced beef and short rib meat pies, either classic or Shepherd's pie style. And while no one ordered a pie for breakfast, many of us took some home for dinner or beyond.



It was a full table with (l-r) Leon, Jess, Steve, Les, Katrina, Aidan, Tiernan, Toby, Margaret, Peter, Liz and me deep in dining and conversation for almost two hours.

Thanks to Jenny and Steve and staff for taking care of us – and we even met another two Aussies on the way out.

Jenny Gates

Australia Day and Waitangi Day club social evening



A classic evening including potluck of plenty, pavlovas, and participation in two-up games.



Photos: Brian Hydesmith

Did you know? ...

A professor from Australia visited the traditional camp for homeless and marginalized run by the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation (AIWF) in Yellowknife, N.W.T.

And three Kiwi curlers are being billeted in Morris, Manitoba, while they hone their skills amongst some of the world's best. Two of them, **Garon Long** and **Brett Sargon** (pictured on this page playing two-up), joined us at the Waitangi Day / Australia Day celebrations Saturday evening.

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Aboriginal rescued sealers

Waubia Debar (1792-1832) was a female Aboriginal Tasmanian. Her grave is a historic site located in the east coast Tasmanian town of Bicheno, which memorialises her rescue of two sealers, one of them her husband, when their ship was wrecked about 1 km from shore during a storm. She assisted first her husband, then the other sealer safely to shore.

The grave site overlooks Waubs Bay and Warbs Harbour both of which were named after her, and is listed on the Tasmanian Heritage list.

Waubia Debar, as a teenager, was one of many Aboriginal women kidnapped and enslaved by sealers and whalers for sexual partners during the European colonisation of Tasmania. She was a strong swimmer.

She died in a boat off the coast whilst travelling towards the Furneaux Group and her body was brought ashore and buried. Local settlers raised funds in 1855 to erect the headstone on her grave, immortalising her act of heroism. [Wikipedia]

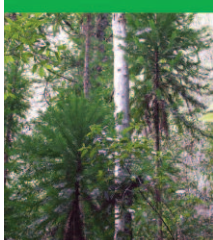
Secret mission

Desperate efforts by firefighters on the ground and in the air have saved the only known natural grove of the world-famous Wollemi pines from destruction during the record-breaking bushfires in NSW.

The rescue mission involved water-bombing aircraft and large air tankers dropping fire retardant. Helicopters also winched specialist firefighters into the remote gorge to set up an irrigation system to increase the moisture content of the ground fuels to slow the advance of any fire.

"It was like a military-style operation," NSW Environment and Energy Minister Matt

Wollemia nobilis
Wollemi Pine
Recovery Plan



Kean told the Herald. "We just had to do everything."

While most of the Wollemi National Park has been burnt by the huge Gospers Mountain fire north-west of Sydney, specialist remote-area fire crews managed to ensure the so-called "dinosaur trees" survived.

"Wollemi National Park is the only place in the world where these trees are found in the wild and, with less than 200 left, we knew we needed to do everything we could to save them," Mr Kean said.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service, backed by the Rural Fire Service, kept their efforts largely a secret to avoid revealing the location of the Wollemi pines. [SMH, Peter Hannam [Link]

Teacher's aid

Mark is the brainchild of Ingrid Albion, who trains volunteers and staff for the Department Of Primary Industries, Parks, Water And Environment (DPIPWE) to be rescue-ready for the next mass whale stranding. Mark is actually her second blow up whale – the first one was called Belt.

"He was made from conveyor belts. He used to fall apart all the time," she says.

Mark is far tougher.

"He's got compartments so we can fill him up with water and when people lift him not all the water runs to the head or the tail," she says.

It's a good thing he's sturdy, Mark has a big job to do. He is here to give trainee whale rescue volunteers an as realistic experience of saving a whale as possible.

Tasmania is a hotspot for mass whale standings; at times, up to 1,000 whales and dolphins can become stuck on a beach.

It's not clear why, but, the proximity of the island state's coast line to food rich currents probably plays a role.

Getting stranded whales back out to sea can take up to a week of constant effort. [ABC Science, Zoe Kean - Link]



Arnott's new Tim Tams inspired by down under flavours

[Australian Food News] Matt Grant of , Arnott's said, "We love our Tim Tam fans just as much as they love us, so what they want, they get. Premium ingredients – sourced

from some of the best regions across Australia and New Zealand – have been expertly crafted to create an indulgent experience for everyone who loves a Tim Tam. With decadent flavours like this, what more could you wish for?"

Murray River Salted Caramel: The pristine mineral waters of the Murray Darling River Basin produce some of the best salt flakes in the world. Arnott's have stirred these delicious salt flakes through their gooey caramel sauce and smooth caramel cream centre, before they sandwich it between two crunchy biscuits and cover with their delicious Tim Tam milk chocolate.

Sunshine Coast Strawberries & Cream: The warm, sunny days of Queensland's Sunshine Coast produce vibrant bright, red strawberries bursting with sweetness. Arnott's have sourced real Sunshine Coast strawberries for their delicious strawberries & cream centre before they sandwich it between two crunchy biscuits and cover in smooth Tim Tam milk chocolate.

Gisborne Orange & Dark Choc: Navel oranges from the coastal town of Gisborne bask in over 1,500 hours of sunshine before being picked at their sweetest and juiciest. Arnott's have crafted these delicious oranges into their decadently smooth orange cream centre before they sandwich it between two crunchy biscuits and cover in premium Tim Tam dark chocolate.

Manuka Honey & Cream: The woody, rich flavour of Manuka honey is sought after the world over for its delicious, distinctive taste. Arnott's have paired real Manuka honey in two crunchy biscuits with a delightful cream centre, all covered in Tim Tam milk chocolate, to bring you a heavenly indulgence that will leave your tastebuds buzzing.

Haka for Australia ...

[NZH] A crew of New Zealand firefighters who spent weeks battling bushfires in Australia has left their Australian colleagues with an emotional haka to show their support.

The Kiwis performed "Ka Mate" in their uniforms as part of a farewell ceremony from Ballina, New South Wales, where they have been helping fight the devastating fires.

Richmond mayor Robert Mustoe posted the video to Facebook, thanking the New Zealand crew for the hard work.

"We were honoured to be presented with a haka," he wrote. See their haka here: [Link]



9 years ago: Christchurch

[*New Zealand History*] At 12.51 p.m. on Tuesday 22 February 2011, a magnitude 6.3 earthquake caused severe damage in Christchurch and Lyttelton, killing 185 people and injuring several thousand.

The earthquake's epicentre was near Lyttelton, just 10 km southeast of Christchurch's central business district. It occurred nearly six months after the 4 September 2010 earthquake.

The earthquake struck at lunchtime, when many people were on the city streets. More than 130 people lost their lives in the collapse of the Canterbury Television and Pyne Gould Corporation buildings. Falling bricks and masonry killed 11 people, and eight died in two city buses crushed by crumbling walls. Rock cliffs collapsed in the Sumner and Redcliffs area, and boulders tumbled down the Port Hills, with five people killed by falling rocks.

Although not as powerful as the magnitude 7.1 earthquake on 4 September 2010, this earthquake occurred on a shallow fault line that was close to the city, so the shaking was particularly destructive. [Link]



Behind the White Island tragedy

[ABC Science, Jo Khan] The geological processes that created New Zealand's stunning mountain landscape and rugged terrain are also responsible for the country's volcanic activity.

The 9 Dec deadly eruption on White Island, off the east coast of the North Island, is one event in a geological process that has been happening for over tens of millions of years.

"These geological forces have created New Zealand's natural beauty, but they can

also destroy," said volcanologist Jan Lindsay from the University of Auckland.

Clustered together in the centre and north of the North Island are New Zealand's active volcanoes.

Most of the country's active volcanoes are in an area known as the Taupo Volcanic Zone (TVZ), which extends south-west from White Island/Whakaari in the Bay of Plenty to the Ruapehu volcano.

"The Taupo Volcanic Zone is known as one of the most active volcanic regions in the world," Dr Lindsay said.

"This is why New Zealand has the landscape it has."

BushYarn

The economic depression of the 1890s and 1930s sent many Australian men and women into the bush to "carry the swag". The Government, in an attempt to control the unemployment situation, introduced a sustenance program whereby men had to travel a designated distance in order to be eligible for the dole. It created a nation of "road travellers" who were known as swagmen, tramps, bagmen, hatters, bums, hoboos and sundowners. Survival depended on how crafty and clever you were, and some of the cadging antics of the travelling people produced a vast number of yarns, poems, songs and lore.

Farmers were generally sympathetic to the swaggies, and it was customary for a standard ration handout known as the "five doubler" or the "five, two and double-half" (the "doubler"). It was five pounds of flour, two pounds of beef, half a pound of sugar and half a pound of tea. They say in the really tough times, they still got five, two and double half – five minutes to get off the property, two reasons why you could be had up for trespassing, half a yard start on the dog and only half a chance to explain yourself!

The sundowners were the least welcome, as they were the ones that arrived at the homestead door at sundown in the hope of avoiding the usual wood-chopping or other farm work usually done in exchange for rations.

I recorded Bart Saggars in 1974, and he told me how he had been a "professional swagman" right through the Depression and he was universally known as "The Great Australian Bite". He told me there was even a Swagman's Union with its own set of rules.

1. No member to be over 100 years of age.
2. Each member to pay one pannikin of flour entrance fee. Members who do not care about paying it will be admitted free.



Swagman photo: Wikipedia

3. No member to carry swags weighting over ten pounds.
4. Each member to possess three complete sets of tucker-bags, each set to consist of nine bags.
5. No member to pass any station, farm, homestead or boundary rider's hut without tapping and obtaining rations and handouts.
6. No member to allow himself to be bitten by a sheep. If a sheep bites a member, he must immediately turn it into mutton.
7. Members who defame a good cook, or pay a fine when run in, shall be expelled by the union.
8. No member is allowed to solicit baking powder, tea, flour, sugar or tobacco from a fellow unionist.
9. Any member found without at least two sets of bags filled with tucker will be fined.
10. No member to look for or accept work of any description. Members found working will be expelled.
11. No member to walk more than five miles per day if rations can be found.
12. No member to tramp on a Sunday at any price.

You'll have to use the Axe

The sundowner arrived at the homestead just as the sun was setting. He knew that it would be unlikely that he would be asked to work in the dark.

He knocked on the door and politely asked the station owner if he could spare a loaf of bread.

"You'll have to use the axe", came the reply.

The sundowner, an experienced Roads Scholar, looked the station owner in the eye.

"Oh, that won't be necessary", he replied. "I'll just soak it in me tea."

[Source: "Classic Bush Yarns, by Warren Fahey, 2001]

Capt. James Cook

250 years ago ...

The Australian Government has announced a package of measures to mark the 250th Anniversary of James Cook's first voyage to Australia and the Pacific in 1770.

Captain James Cook was a British explorer, surveyor, navigator and cartographer who mapped large parts of the world including Australia's east coast and New Zealand's North and South Islands.

On 26 August 1768 Cook embarked on his first Pacific voyage, aboard the *HMB Endeavour*, with instructions to chart the transit of Venus across the sun at the equator. Cook went on to chart New Zealand, before continuing on to first sight the east coast of Australia at Point Hicks on 20 April 1770. As the *Endeavour* sailed north he charted the coast making first landfall at Botany Bay on 29 April 1770.

Cook also stopped at what has since become known as the Town of Seventeen Seventy before the *Endeavour* ran aground near Cooktown on 11 June. The ship was damaged and the voyage delayed while repairs were carried out. The ship then rounded Cape York, stopping at Possession Island in the Torres Strait on 22 August.

Cook's exploration of the Pacific Ocean has left a profound legacy of scientific investigation, including the first large-scale hydrographic surveys and a significant contribution to the measurement of longitude. He is also revered for his superior seamanship and disciplined leadership.

To mark the 250th anniversary of the voyage, funding is being provided for a range of activities including a range of reflective exhibitions, activities and events delivered by the National Library of Australia (NLA), Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM) and National Museum of Australia (NMA).

A project by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies



Portrait of Captain James Cook (Wikipedia). HMB Endeavour replica in Darling Harbour, Sydney. Photo: Pinterest.

(AIATSIS) will return culturally significant Indigenous items from overseas institutions

There will be four capital projects associated with the Cooktown Shire Council's Cooktown Expo 2020. The development of an Interpretive Centre will proceed in the Town of Seventeen Seventy; and the delivery of the Kamay Botany Bay National Park Master Plan is expected, including a commemorative installation, with the New South Wales Government.

Outline of activities

A range of events and activities will mark the anniversary across the country. We are providing support for voyaging activities by the ANMM's HMB Endeavour replica and communications associated with the government funded initiatives.

Australian National Maritime Museum

The ANMM's Encounters 2020 program of events will explore stories of contact, encounter and transformation involving Indigenous, migrant and other communities from Australia and beyond, and will create new opportunities for innovative exploration of Cook's legacy.

The ANMM will host exhibitions in its Darling Harbour premises and is developing 2 interactive games for the anniversary website currently in development.

The ANMM's *HMB Endeavour* replica's circumnavigation of Australia will provide

an opportunity for Australians to experience the historic voyage and its legacy for exploration, science and reconciliation. The ANMM will also host a series of events and activities through its shore-based exhibition that will follow the vessel during its circumnavigation. There will also be an opportunity for people to crew the *HMB Endeavour* replica on different legs of the journey.

Find out more about the voyage on the ANMM's website, including the itinerary, map indicating where the vessel will stop.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

AIATSIS is leading a **Return of Cultural Heritage Project** to intensify the effort to bring Australian First Nations' cultural heritage material held overseas back to its original custodians and owners.

The arrival of Cook in 1770 marks the start of a process of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage being removed overseas. With support from the Australian Government, the RCHP seeks to secure the return of culturally significant heritage materials, including but not limited to artefacts, documentary records and artwork from overseas collecting institutions back to Australian Indigenous communities.

The project will also develop and document an appropriately accessible database of overseas collections, return processes and practice. The project is a scoping exercise

and currently runs until 30 June 2020. Find out more about the project on the AIATSIS website.

Anniversary website

The Australian government is developing a website to mark the anniversary and provide information from a range of perspectives. The website will be the national portal for all Australians to access information about the anniversary, including an events calendar, the *Endeavour* itinerary, other government-funded initiatives and community events, and educational resources for teachers and students. It will also bring together collection material relevant to the anniversary held by the NLA, ANMM and NMA.

Community organisations will be able to submit details of their anniversary related events for publication on the website. The website is expected to launch this month.

Cooktown 2020 Expo

The government will provide \$5.45 million to support projects for the Cooktown 2020 Expo, including the development of the Reconciliation Rocks Precinct, the Botanic Gardens Development and upgrades to the Gamaay Dreaming Track to commemorate the anniversary and local Indigenous culture. It will also support the Waymburr Milbi project (The Waymburr Story) Development of the Waymburr Cultural Centre to house artefacts used for the annual re-enactment of the story of Australia's first act of reconciliation told by the Gugu Yimithirr people on the banks of the Endeavour River.

Funding for this measure is administered by the Department of Infrastructure Transport, Cities and Regional Development.

Kamay Botany Bay National Park Master Plan

The Australian and NSW governments have together committed \$50 million (\$25 million each) to upgrade visitor, transport, educational and commemorative infrastructure at Kurnell, including a new commemorative installation that takes in the original mooring site for the *HMB Endeavour* and foreshore. This is the area where Captain Cook first came ashore on 29 April 1770.

The project includes: a new visitor building, an upgrade of the main visitor and heritage precinct; construction of new ferry wharves at La Perouse and Kurnell; precinct conservation and restoration works; the establishment of a collection garden to commemorate the work of the botanists, Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander.

[Link]



Last asylum seekers held in Papua detention centre released

Eighteen men who were held in isolation and poor conditions in Papua New Guinea's Bomana immigration detention centre have been released.

In August, PNG authorities arrested 52 men who had previously been detained on Manus Island on behalf of the Australian government after seeking asylum by boat.



Manus Island detention centre

As of January this year, just 18 of the 52 men remained in the detention centre, after the others had been removed having agreed to return to their country of origin.

Many of those who were detained had spent up to seven years in Australia's off-shore detention system, but say the conditions inside Bomana broke them into signing the agreements.

The 18 men were released last month and moved to hotels in Port Moresby, *Guardian Australia* understands.

Shaminda Kanapathi, a refugee in Port Moresby, tweeted that the men had lost a lot of weight during their detention, and their physical and mental health had deteriorated.

"The fact that they're out is fantastic. I'm really happy about that. I was crying all day yesterday," refugee advocate Anne Moon said.

The Australian government has said it has no involvement or visibility inside Bomana. Moon said, however, Australia bears responsibility for the treatment of the men in Bomana.

"They're broken. We've broken them. And some of these men will never recover. That's on us, that's on Australia."

Both the Australian department of home affairs and the PNG immigration department were contacted for comment. – By Josh Taylor SOURCE: *The Guardian, Australia*

NZ prostitution law review

Following the murder of Bella Te Pania in Christchurch, Speak Up For Women, a NZ-wide feminist organization, is calling on the government to conduct an overdue review of the impact on women and girls of the decriminalization of prostitution.

Te Pania is the fifth prostituted woman murdered in Christchurch since decriminalisation and the women's group says decriminalisation is failing New Zealand's most vulnerable women and girls. Ally-Marie Diamond, a sex trade survivor who spoke against decriminalization to the South Australian and Northern Territory parliaments in 2019, says: "Decriminalisation has been a nightmare for the girls. The pimps and johns are emboldened operating within the law and the women have been commoditized".

The report of the Prostitution Law Review Committee (2008) expressed concern "that there are still some managed sex workers who are being required by brothel operators to provide commercial sexual services against their will on occasion."

Ani O'Brien, spokeswoman for Speak Up For Women, says: "The reality of life for prostituted women in NZ was last reviewed 12 years ago; A thorough review is urgently needed".

NZ has one of the highest domestic violence rates in the world, and was also the first to decriminalize prostitution with the introduction of the Prostitution Reform Act 2003. Links between violence against women and pornography and sexual exploitation have been established all over the world. – *Fuseworks Media, NZ*

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.

Murray Burt writes this column to raise sensitivities mainly about the southern Commonwealth nations and to lift the curtain on our understanding of a third of the population of the world. The Commonwealth name and significance is too rarely mentioned in daily news, he says. It should be. Enjoy.

Instead of sharing a regular bird article this month, I thought it more appropriate to help emphasize the plight of birds and their habitat as the fires continue. I am not particularly promoting any one organization over another. The following is just reprinted to help illustrate the reality. [\[Link\]](#)

Terrifying fires are sweeping across Australia, devastating our wildlife and their homes.

Just a week after winter, serious bushfires broke out in Queensland. Hundreds of fires are now raging across the country - even in habitats that don't usually see fire.

This bushfire season has already been catastrophic, and it's far from over. Experts predicted a tough bushfire season and that's become a terrible reality. Our thoughts are with everyone impacted by the fires.

Over a billion animals have been killed. Millions more have lost their habitats, and face starvation right now.

Australian bushfires aren't what they used to be. The Aussie bush is as dry as we've ever seen it, with many areas in severe drought. These conditions have contributed to a perfect storm for extreme bushfires. Already, huge tracts of habitat across the country have been destroyed.

Millions of birds have already been impacted by the bushfire crisis. It's likely fire will affect over 50 bird species and sub-species.

This is an unprecedented wildlife crisis. We need your help. What will your gift do?

With your help, we can act now to save and protect the future of Australian birds in fire hotspots around the country. To do this, we'll focus our efforts on the most vulnerable birds and areas, with three key actions to help save them:

1. FIRE EMERGENCY TEAMS: As soon as it's safe after fires, we need to get Fire Emergency Teams in to check for birds. These teams are made up of BirdLife staff and volunteers and our partners who work together to survey birds after fires, evaluate the situation, and investigate how we can best support the surviving birds.

Tragically, millions of birds have likely already perished, falling victim to the intense fires. The breeding habitats and food sources of millions more have been incinerated.



[Photo: Landscape after fire © Dean Ingwersen]

Once the flames subside, we need to be ready to survey impacted areas and implement the best strategies to protect survivors.

Donate now to help put Fire Emergency Teams of experts on the ground after fires, to monitor the health of threatened birds and their homes. Once we know the extent of the damage, we can take the best actions, working with our partners, to rehabilitate habitats and save precious species.

2. HABITAT REFUGES: It's also critical that in the longer term, we ensure surviving birds have safe homes. It sounds simple, but maintaining suitable vegetation keeps moisture in the soil. This makes habitats more fire-resistant and keeps fire intensity lower. Importantly, it also helps with regeneration after fire.

Donate now to help plant trees and shrubs that are resilient to climate change, and provide refuges designed to help birds survive bushfires.

3. PEOPLE- AND BIRD-SAFE BURNS: Inappropriate fire management can put many native threatened bird species at even more risk.

With your support, we can continue to work with landowners and councils to safely reduce fuel loads, while keeping birds and their food sources and homes safe at the same time. For example, low-scorch burning practices that avoid key feeding trees are vital for birds like the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

Donate now to help support bird-safe planned burns, so that food sources are kept safe for birds like these beautiful, endangered cockies!

These three simple yet powerful actions are our best defence to protect bird populations in some of the most fire-affected and fire-prone habitats around Australia.

With your urgent Fire Emergency donation today, you will help protect birds from the intensity of fire, and care for them in the aftermath. Please give generously to help threatened birds survive!



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