

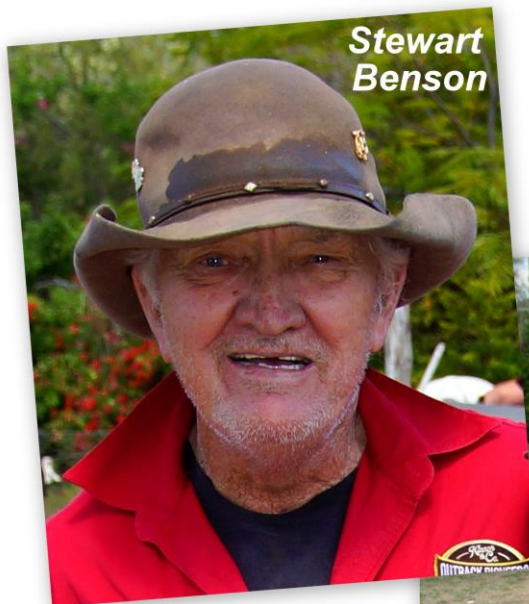
# COVID Crusaders (aka Kimberley/Cape... Crusaders) – Part 4 (final report)

Oct 7 - 2020 – 7,166km (4,478miles) driven in total on our 'winter hibernation' expedition.

The main reason why we head to **Blackall** is an online-video appointment on Sept 9 with the relevant authorities to seal my Australian citizenship and pledge loyalty to our 'Great Southland' 😊



Another **Blackall highlight** is the tour with Stewart Benson at the 'Ram Park Museum'. He has a wonderful passion for collecting old memorabilia and restored many items back to working-order with great skill. Doing this, he brings back to light and life old trades and customs; so knowledge of them may be preserved and not forever lost on the younger generations.



*'Ram Park Museum': This chap is one living legend! - Listen to his version of history through a drover's eyes, shared with true-blue wry sense of humor and wit. The world would be a better place if more folk had his outlook on life!*



**Not to be missed:  
"Stewie's" tour  
at Blackall**

*("He had us in stitches!")*

**Summertime... the fish are jumping...**

**Springtime... the dotterel are .....!**



Camp off Mitchell Hwy north of Charleville at '10 Mile Warrego River':



Latest model of a  
Four-Slice Toaster

We cross paths with Byron and Annie Cullen once more at **Charleville** where we meet up at the 'Evening Star' van park, a favourite stop for us. It is our third time at this station stay. Manager *Craig* is a delight... The large camp fire is lit nightly and ample supply of fresh baked damper is served to lounging visitors as everyone enjoys the 'happy hour' musical entertainment.



## Charleville

### Camp at Evening Star van park



We part company with the Cullens over a hearty meal at one of the local restaurants:



And we wonder why, out here in 'cattle country', steaks are often tough...



Heading south to **Quilpie** from Charleville. Rain is forecast in two or three days' time; thus we are hanging low at 'The Lake' station and wait for the threat to unfold. One must not be caught on a dirt road or camped on black soil when the heavens open; lest run risk of a serious mud bog that could see you stranded or slid off the road. In any case you might be waiting to be rescued for a very long while!



*Camp at Lake Houdraman/Quilpie*



*A late arvo relaxer*



*Fiery sunset at Lake Houdraman*



*Early morning at Lake Houdraman - the calm before the storm!*

Sure enough, the long awaited change finally hits about one hour after the above shot was taken. Note the dark black sky out west! We hastily collect a bunch of yabbies from the traps set overnight and hightail out the moment the first raindrops hit...

**Neighborhood:**

**ABOUT QUILPIE**  
"THE END OF THE LINE"  
Population **575**

**ABOUT TOOMPINE**  
"THE PUB WITH NO TOWN"  
Population **2**  
Distance from Quilpie **80km South**

**ABOUT ADAVALE**  
Population **15**  
Distance from Quilpie **96km North**

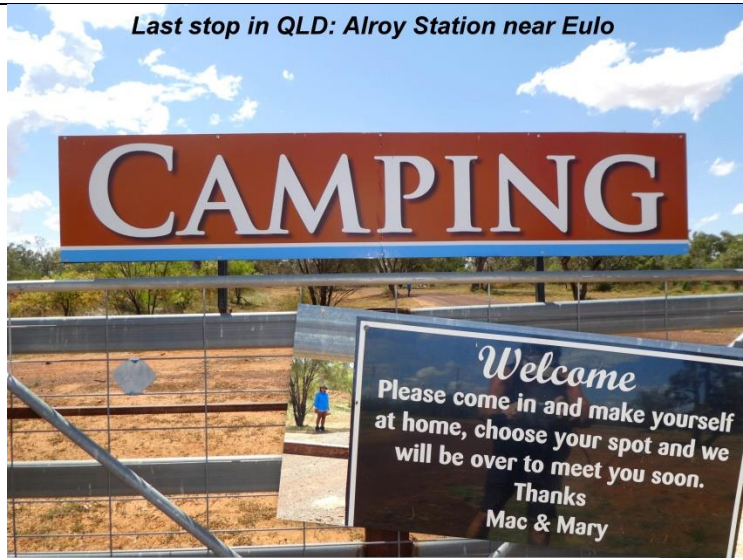
**ABOUT EROMANGA**  
Population **45**  
Distance from Quilpie **123km West**



*That's one heck of a dental surgery to tackle Outback tooth aches!*

After hunkering down in the safety of **Quilpie** Van Park for a couple of nights we venture on. We find a number of our planned routes are flooded; gravel roads to the south are impassable and therefore closed to all traffic! We had enjoyed weeks of sunshine and now seemingly Queensland is 'flushing us out'. It feels a bit odd crossing back into NSW knowing we would not be allowed back right now as the border has firmly been shut again because of COVID since our opportunistic lucky crossing into Queensland in early July.

*Last stop in QLD: Alroy Station near Eulo*



**While we camp at Alroy, another weather low ploughs through...**

**This one pushes a mighty sandstorm ahead of its wet deluge. A spectacle both eerie and awesome to watch as the fierce squall passes only a short distance to the south!**

**Property owner Mac takes us a scenic tour of the station in his beat up Cruiser the following day.**

**Many creeks are now in full flood: A god-sent change for the drought stricken country folk.**



*A sandstorm sweeps past our camp just to the south*



*The next day: Outback creeks in flood*



*Creek crossing: The track continues on the far side ahead*







*'Alroy Station' owner Mac shows us his ultra lights used for mustering sheep and cattle*



*Bale of freshly shorn wool*

**Later on our way south testing the waters:  
Could have driven through that one...**



**...but this crossing looks decidedly risky; we turn back!**



**Forced into a 200km detour**

*On the move - destination 'Broken Hill/NSW: A 700km jump*

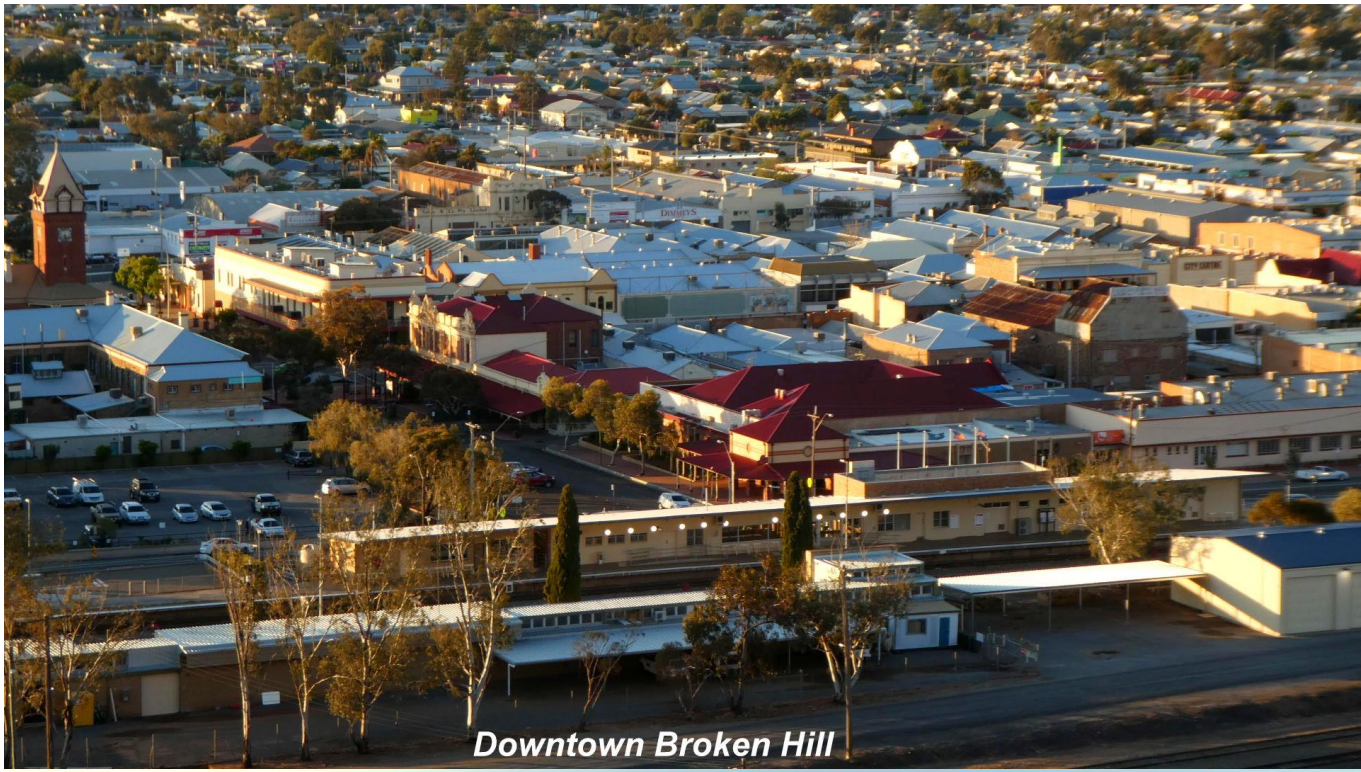


*Heading south*



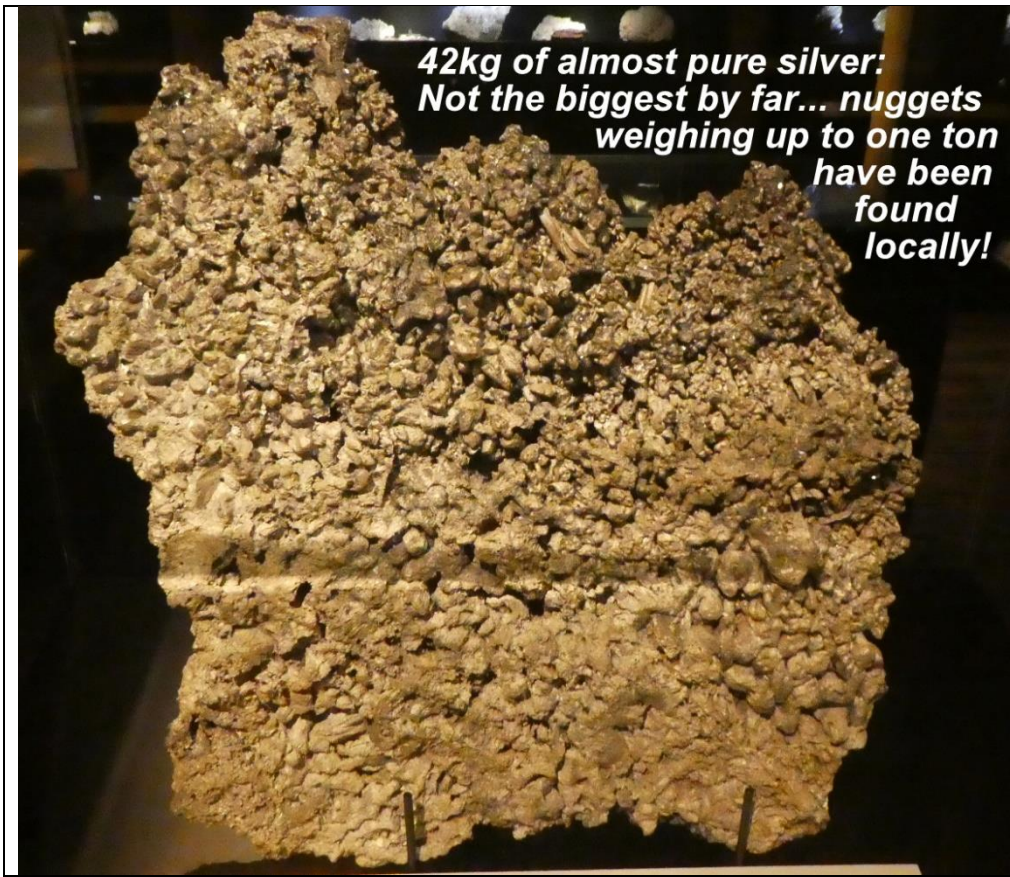
*Wildflowers are out in force after the rains*





**Downtown Broken Hill**

**Broken Hill - view from the 'Line of Lode Miners Memorial' - Mining lies at the very heart of this town: BHB (Broken Hill Proprietary) was incorporated here in 1885. Since then, over 50million tons of lead and zinc and 20.000tons of silver have been extracted from 200million tons of ore.**



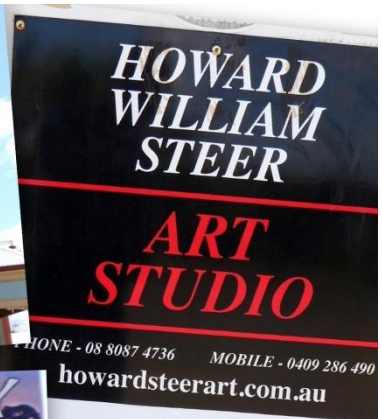
**42kg of almost pure silver:  
Not the biggest by far... nuggets  
weighing up to one ton  
have been  
found  
locally!**

The 'Line of Lode Memorial' is an icon for Broken Hill and the mining industry.

A stark reminder of the town's human tragedy: The tragic loss of over 800 lives since mining began in 1883.

Local artist *Kevin Charles "Pro" Hart* is considered the 'father of Outback painting'. He spent many of his early years as an underground locomotive driver in the mines – and survived to a much better life becoming an internationally respected painter and sculptor.

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*Broken Hill boasts an inspiring array of historic buildings, progressive art, unique galleries, open air sculptures and quirky museums!*





*Artist prestige - whatever graces your 'Roller'!*



*Ned Kelly*



*"Your money or your life!"*

*Not that Ned guy again...!*

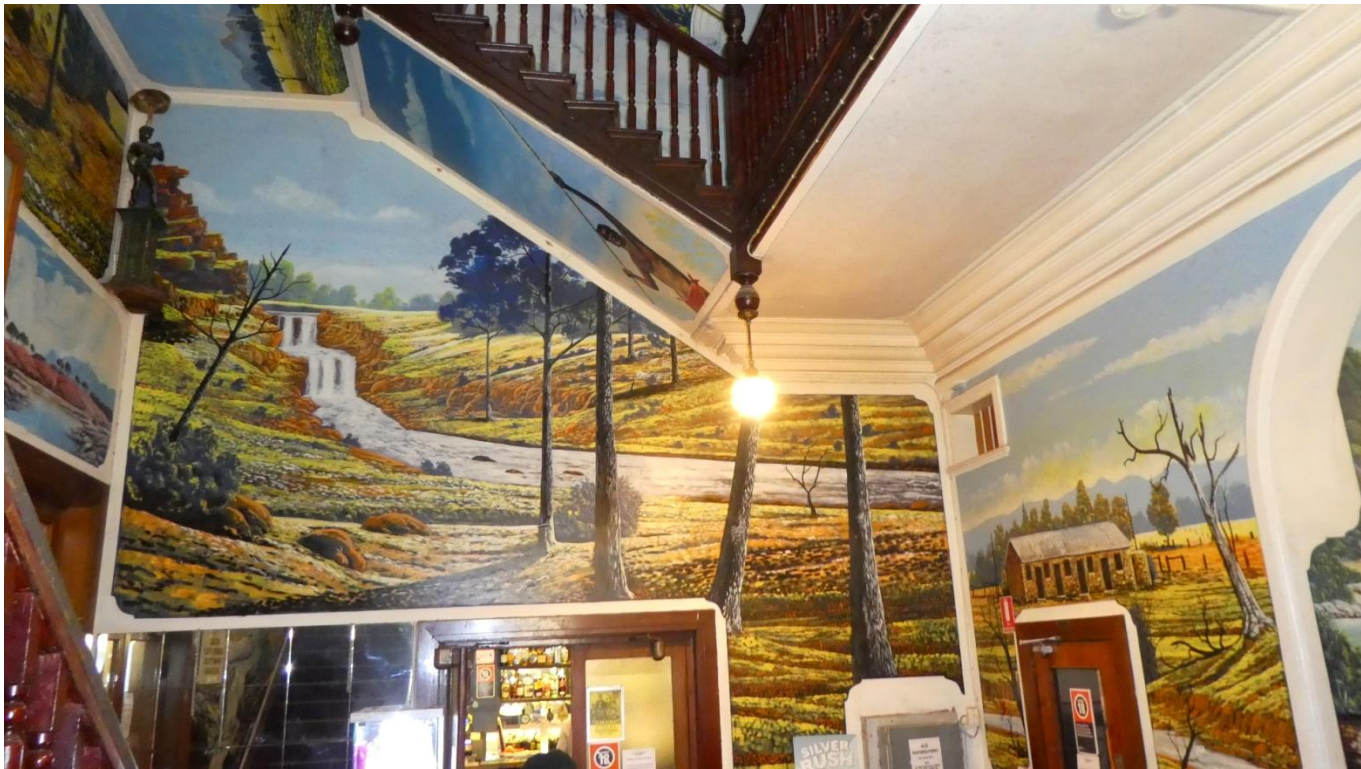
**Mad Max Museum at Silverton/Broken Hill**



**Mad Max weaponry**

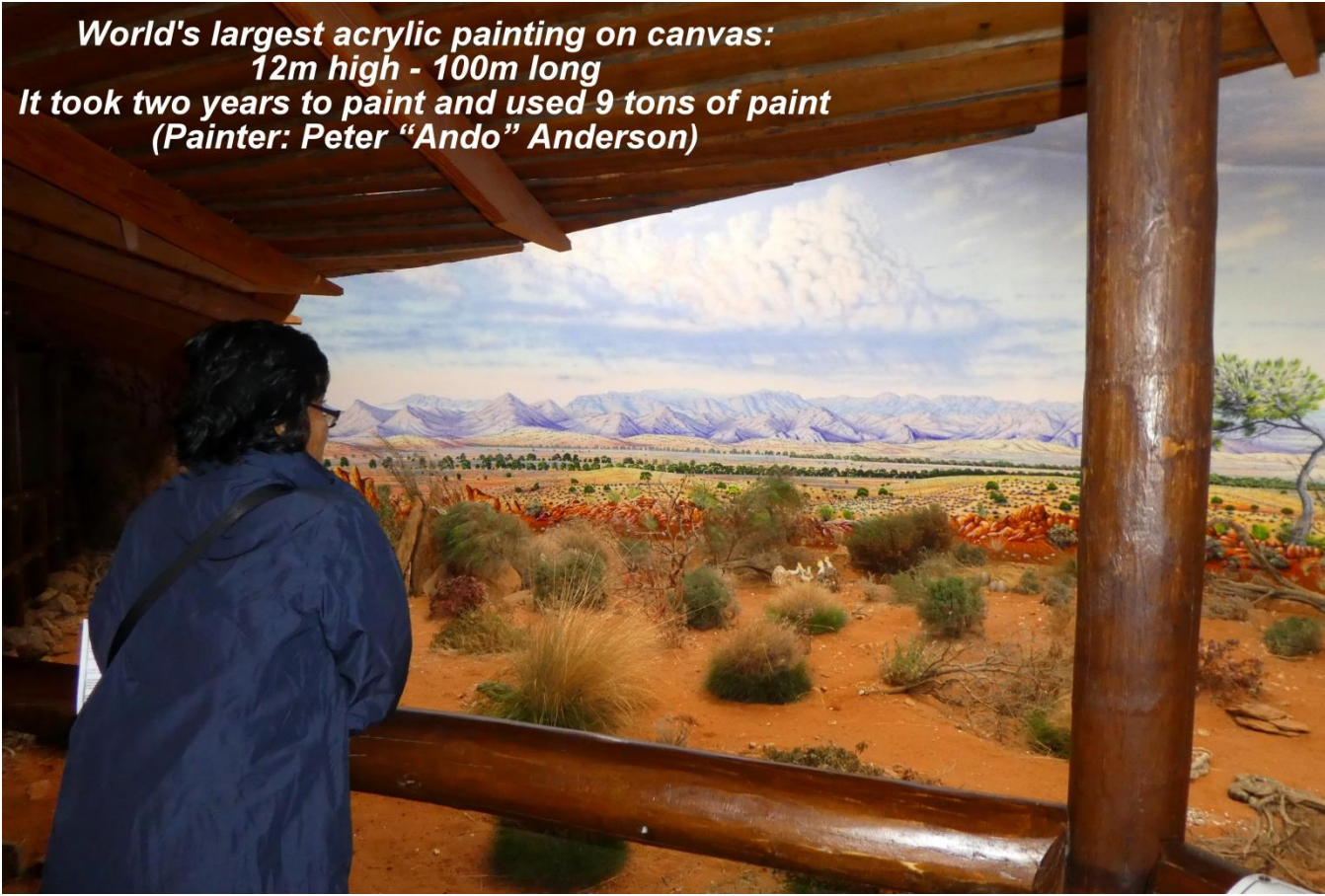


**Palace Hotel/Broken Hill built in 1889 - its famous staircase with 500sqm of mural paintings**



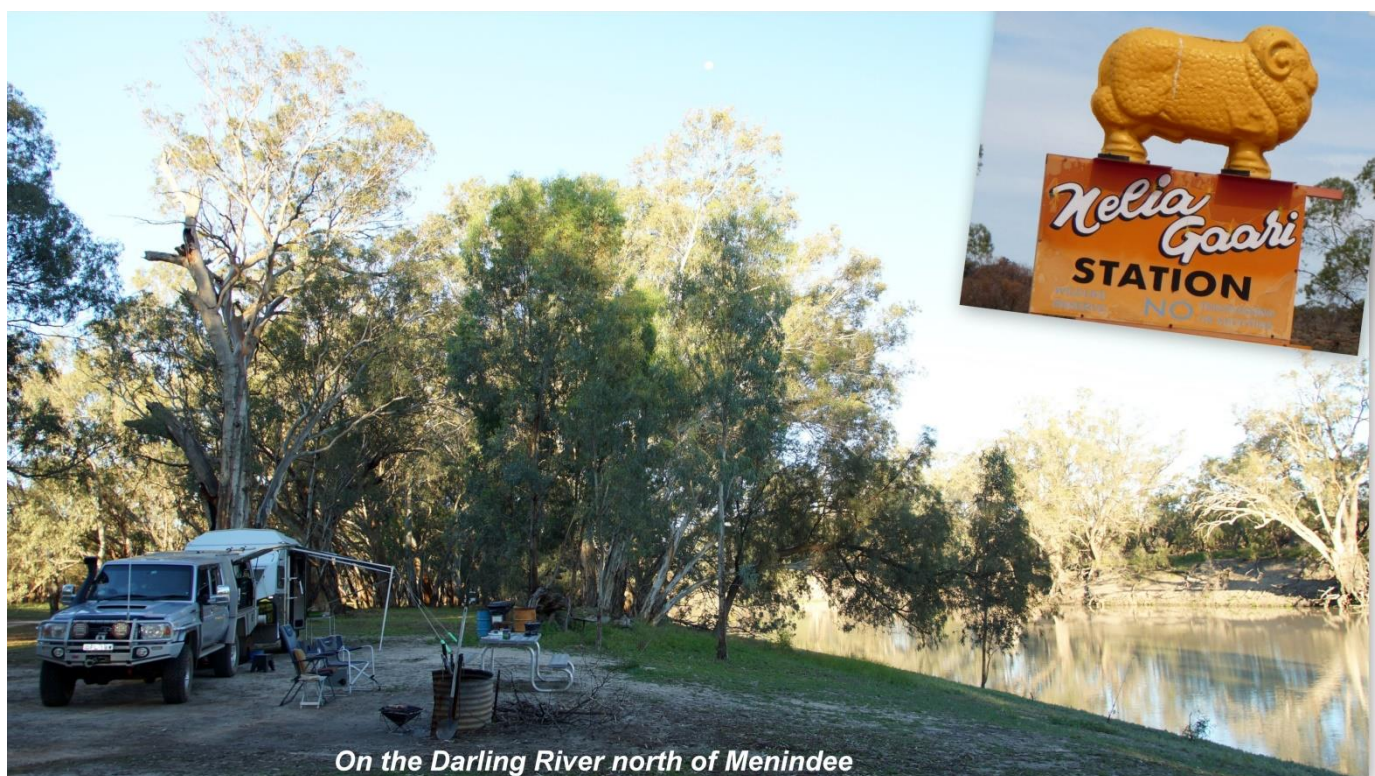


**World's largest acrylic painting on canvas:  
12m high - 100m long  
It took two years to paint and used 9 tons of paint  
(Painter: Peter "Ando" Anderson)**



From Broken Hill we tackle the 'Darling River Run' starting at Menindee (Lake Menindee is no longer a lake as it has no water in it!).

First camp is **Nelia Gaari**, a working sheep station on the west side river road about 60km north of L.Men. The natural camp sites have absolute river frontage, are set well apart and secluded amongst the majestic Darling River Red Gums.



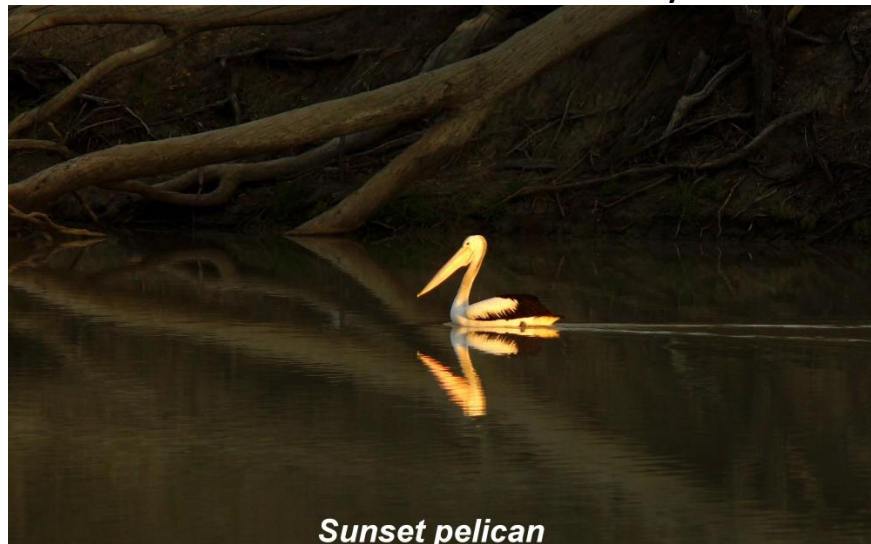
On the Darling River north of Menindee



It takes us several days to complete the stretch of our chosen journey following the Darling River from Bourke to Menindee, some 475km for the which by no means covers the total length of the Darling!  
The complete length of Australia's third longest river spans a full 950km.  
The Darling is the lifeblood of Outback NSW although the majority of its water supply comes from rain falling west of the Great Divide in Queensland.  
The majority of the 'Darling River Run' comprises of unsealed (gravel) roads that meander along on either side of the river. There are bridges at Menindee, Wilcannia, Tilpa, Louth and Bourke...



← Fishing does not prove very productive as the river is riddled (polluted) with European carp. Although Katherine manages to land a monster. It is illegal to return such entirely useless catch back to the river (pest control!). It's a 'one over the head' and an unceremonial burial above the high water mark. It has been reported carp's eggs can survive a seven-year drought and still hatch when coming into contact with water even after very prolonged periods underground. Be sure to make certain they will never be allowed a flush back into a waterway!



Sunset pelican



*Forest Kingfisher*

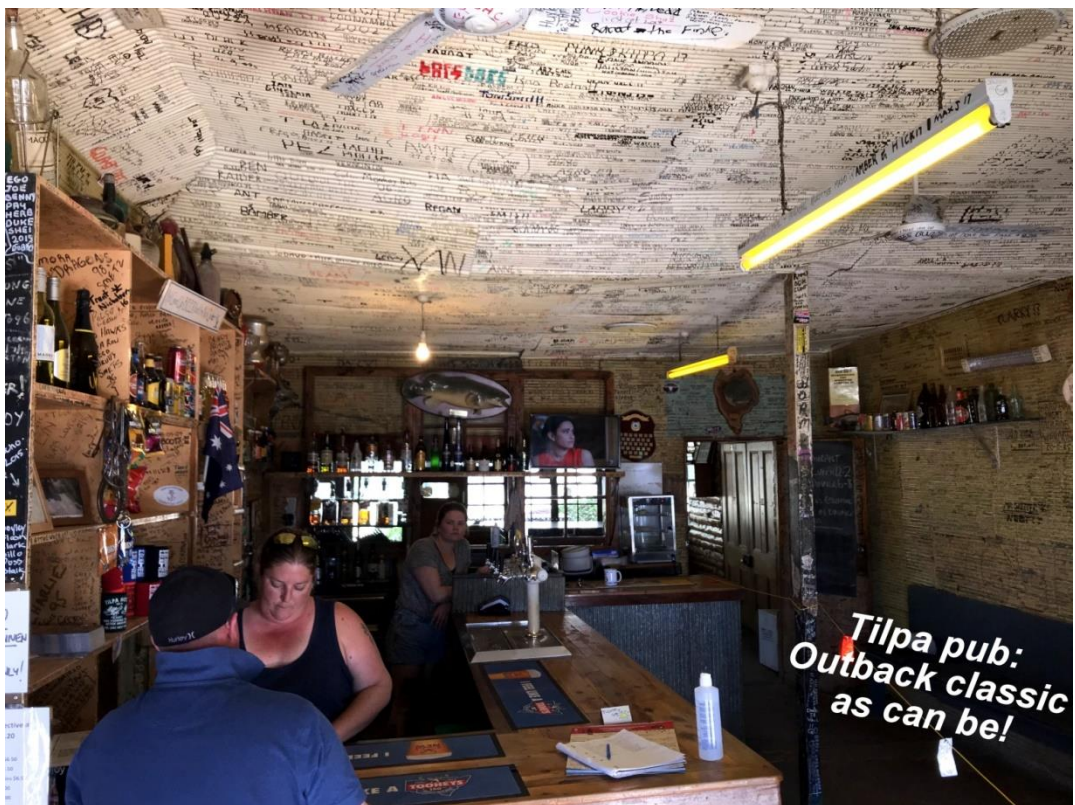


*Watering hole along the Darling:  
Half way between Wilcannia and Bourke*

*Serving thirsty adventurers miles from nowhere!*



*One pleased gypsy!*



*Tilpa pub:  
Outback classic  
as can be!*

We leave out one planned stop at 'Kallara Station': The mosquitoes here are *blood-hound ferocious* even in broad daylight at 1pm in the afternoon. They are so huge, you could have saddle one and joy-ride it through the air waves!

Which could have been quite fun but not while having your limbs chewed off at the same time...





Dear Friends,

We hope you enjoyed our excursions into the Covid-free territories where life goes on mostly as normal.

Our sincere thanks go to the many folks we met along the way who made this journey extra enjoyable for us.

Let us encourage you to explore the distant corners far away from well-trodden paths and connect with Outback 'salt of the earth' locals who make this land so special!

## Covid Outback rules!



Safe stay the Outback way!

### In summing up:

We can warmly recommend hibernation in sunny, temperate and hospitable south west Queensland to anyone who might toy with the idea of escaping a damp, fickle and freezing coastal climate over the winter months! 😊😊😊

*Greetings from Chris and Katherine*



**PS:** We have booked our ferry crossing for **Tasmania** in the third week of Jan 2021. Fingers crossed, the borders will open and all will go to plan for our next 'Crusader' adventure!

**Stay tuned...**