

# ROUND THE TRAPS

The idea for a podcast that showcased people from rural and regional WA had been percolating in my mind for a while. I feel that regional Australia is underrepresented in Australian media. But if the battles to save School of the Air, Moora Residential College and the crayfishing industry in WA taught me anything, it is that the city cares about the bush more than city-centric media and politicians realise.

With the advent of COVID in Australia, my mainstream media paid work dried up. For a time, as advertisers closed their wallets, uncertainty pervaded the industry. We now know that the Australian public returned to trusted news sources in large numbers, keen to understand how the virus would impact their lives and the nation.

But if you cast your mind back to March and April of 2020, you will recall the uncertainty. In the regions, van loads of people were spotted raiding country shops and

supermarkets for toilet paper, disinfectant, long life foods and other necessities.

As a pared back media focused on the virus and how its city-based consumers were affected, I yearned to tell country stories.

I built a small studio in the old garage under our house and bought a little podcasting desk and began by doing news and politics-based podcasts. Then, a discussion with my good friend Julian McGill in Bolgart about the dearth of regional stories turned to the prospect of a podcast featuring farmers. Julian introduced me to Brad Jones, a very clever pilot, contractor and farmer in Tammin, and the witty Sam Burgess, a farmer and contractor in Arthur River. During the battle to save Moora College, I had met Tony White and was impressed by his knowledge, humour and enthusiasm. Jules roped Tony in and I called Leigh Strange



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in Bruce Rock. I had known Leigh since he was a boy. Many years ago, when working on a Channel Seven show called Wild West, I'd driven to Bruce Rock and met the fabulous waterskiing Stranges who then starred, skiing Ardath Lake in the TV feature on their town.

As regional borders were erected and WA prepared to go into lockdown at the end of March, Leigh called me to say that Bruce Rock's one and only shop had burned down. He asked me for help. I did what I could. It was hard getting anyone to listen as the focus everywhere was wholly and solely COVID, but the fact was an entire town had lost its shopping centre that serviced 800 people. WA Today ran a story within its Covid coverage and my good friend Peta Credlin allowed me some time on Sky News to get the story out. Now there is a woman who has passion for the regions and is steadfast supporter of country people.

Eventually supplies made it to the town with Shire President Stephen Strange and numerous others coordinating the mammoth task, working around the clock to get a makeshift shop up and running in a COVID-safe way. Stephen rightly, at the time, did not want hordes of well-meaning people heading to the town, endangering the health of its elderly residents.

Therefore, when I decided to do the podcast that Julian named "Around the Traps", Leigh was on my list of good blokes. Moreover, good blokes who can tell a yarn and have a laugh.

I already knew that I wanted Raelene Hall involved in the podcast, or "poddie" as we have dubbed it after Gary Shannon christened his podcast with me "big poddie". The boys call Raelene "Mrs H", and hold her in the highest regard. (Note to Raelene, you are NOT allowed to edit this bit out.) I first met Raelene over the phone mid December

2017. Kirsty Forshaw from Nita Downs station had called me to say that the WA Education Minister, Sue Ellery had announced the closure of the WA Schools of the Air. We had joined forces years before to battle the shutdown of Live Exports after Four Corners aired a programme, that in my view, was an animal activist video dressed up as journalism. At the time we urged everyone who would be negatively impacted by the ban to get onto Twitter and be heard. I also advised cattlemen and women to write letters to newspapers and call talkback radio.

The same action was needed to fight the SOTA closures. Raelene and I chatted on the phone. Although I grew up in country WA, I did not understand how the schools operated, only that they were an invaluable resource. Along with Liz Sudlow and Tash Johns, Raelene and Kirsty spent hours on the phone and email educating me about the SOTAS. We put Christmas on hold as we geared up to hold the government to account. I was hosting mornings on 6PR as we went to war.

As an aside, governments often do sneaky things at Christmas when they think no one is watching.

Regional Australia does not have a better friend or advocate than Mrs H. A passionate educator and communicator she is also the most loyal and thoughtful of friends. When I lost my work, I quietly told a handful of people including Raelene. A day or two later, there was a knock at the door. A beautiful hamper accompanied by a note that read *Illegitimi non carborundum!!!* arrived from Neds Creek station.

To be honest, Raelene's sentiments are the embodiment of our farming podcast. We don't let anyone get us down. We support each other. Around the Traps is its own community with a sizable and burgeoning following. The voices are authentic, intelligent and fascinating.

I'm proud to call the people in this group my friends. When my husband and I recently bought a small block of land near Karridale, where we hope to farm a few steers, everyone in the group offered us help, support and advice. These friendships are invaluable. The "poddie" is the embodiment of all of this and so much more.

**Jane Marwick**  
**Broadcaster**

*The Jane Marwick Show Podcast is available where all good podcasts can be found*

