

I've been everywhere.....with my eyes closed!!!!!!!!!!

How many times have you travelled through towns in regional, remote and Outback Australia without realizing that you were passing through an interesting place?

There is a proverb that states "If you know a person's story, you cannot help but like them". This expression can also be applied to places.

Previously, I regularly travelled in excess of 50,000 km per year in Australia's non-metropolitan areas. Usually aiming to conduct my journey as quickly as possible. Consequently, frustrated whenever I had to slow down to pass through a small town. Only stopping when I was hungry and/or needed a toilet stop and/or the vehicle needed fuel.

In hindsight – yes, even a fool is wise after the event - I realise the number of opportunities I missed to both explore and understand my country and its history. My sense of regret was highlighted when reading Bill Bryson's popular book entitled "Down Under" and discovered that he had also visited BUT found interesting many places through which I had driven in blissful ignorance!!! So here are some of the places he mentioned that I was ignorant of their interest:

- **Cheviot Beach** (where PM Harold Holt disappeared)
- **Menindee** (where Burke and Wills spent their last night)
- **Winchelsea** (where the first rabbits were released in 1859 in Victoria)
- **Ediacaran Hills** (where a pre-Cambrian fossil named Spriggina was discovered)
- **Darwin Botanic Gardens** (from which 3 weeds - mimosa bush, leucaena and crutch tree – escaped; they are now threatening much grazing land and Kakadu National Park – a World Heritage area)
- **Powers Lookout** (where bushrangers, such as the Kelly gang and Harry Powers, surveyed the scene to determine who their next victims might be)
- **Myall Creek**, near Bingara (where a massacre of Aborigines took place and the convicted white murderers were hanged)
- **Darwin Museum** (an extensive display of dangerous sea creatures)
- **Daly Waters** (explorer John Stuart caved an "S" into a tree here during one of his famous expeditions; it was later a stop-off point between Brisbane and Darwin on the international air route to Singapore and beyond)
- **Blue Mountains** (location of the thought-to-be-extinct Wollemi pines)
- **Waterloo Creek**, near Moree (where a massacre of an estimated 200 Aborigines occurred)

A similar exercise could be repeated with the locations feature on the TV travelogues of comedian Billy Connolly as he toured Australia. How many places have you disinterestedly passed through which he subsequently visited and revealed as fascinating?

So the next time you travel through regional, remote and Outback Australia, do some homework before leaving to check out the individualism of the places you will be passing through on that journey, or spontaneously explore apparently mundane townships and speak to the locals. You just might be intrigued, even amazed. Furthermore, why not allocate some time to visit and stay at these places!!!!

Remember, once you know the story of a place, you cannot help but like it!!!!!!

Furthermore, travel with you eyes open!!!!!!

Bill Synnot, Aurora Consulting Group