

GETTIN' STUFF DONE!

CG's 70th Birthday– Special Edition

A weekly newsletter for staff of the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency. **For internal use only and not to be further circulated please.**



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5 Q's for...

Karla Bridges

Communications Director

Hobbies, talents or claims to fame:

I spent most of my youth with my nose stuck in a book and hated sports. I maintain that I preserved my body for an age when you got a medal for finishing without keeling over! I started running when I was 40 and have completed 4 half marathons, many 10-15km races, Tough Mudder and the Dubbo equivalent. I'm also a qualified PT.

Best thing about being locked down due to COVID-19:

I arrived in Brisbane from Canberra in early March, and managed to get settled before the lockdown really took effect. Not being able to venture too far, I was able to get a good feel for my new neighbourhood.

Worst thing about being locked down due to COVID-19:

Many people I care about– including 2 of my 3 kids are still in NSW and the ACT. Not being able to visit and hold them for most of the year has been pretty rough.

If you could choose anything to do for a day, what would it be?

Have all my kids, my parents and special others together somewhere by the water, with great food and wine, and with someone else doing the cooking and cleaning up!

Your favourite way to spend a weekend:

I like my weekends packed. Saturdays usually start with Small Group Training and a golf lesson. I also make sure I spend time exploring my new home, visiting family and friends, trying out a new restaurant, or driving to a beach somewhere. I even manage to do some housework ;)



With her first born, Kaitlin (who's now 25)

Our CG is turning 70!

Let's celebrate with a few pics, anecdotes and messages!



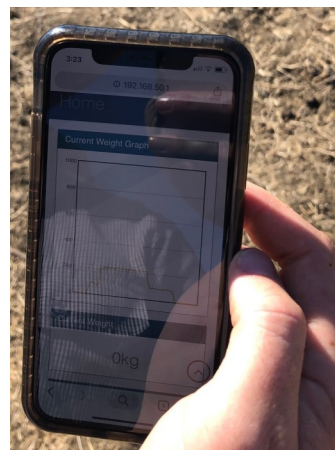
From Angela Cameron: feeding baby goat at Macquarie Station 18 December 2019



From Hannah Wandel: Happy Birthday! Wishing you a fantastic day in the top end! Have appreciated all of your wisdom, leadership and advice as well as some great trips (including the night trip to the Beechworth Cemetery). All the best.

Hannah aka Drought Diva

From Tahna Jackson: Happy Birthday Shane, hope you have a wonderful Birthday! Don't eat too much cake otherwise I'll have to take you back to the Walk Over Weigh (WOW) system at Mt Surprise station and get you and Matt McClymont to jump back on the scales.



From Andy Bruyn: In a past life, the Coordinator-General for Drought and Flood, Hon. Shane Stone AC QC (it's where he collected the Hon. bit) had the job of being the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory.

He also – at times – held the Tourism and law and order portfolios, which took him far and wide on a world scale. These days he spends a lot of time at the pointy end of a Landcruiser, travelling the highways – and more especially the by-ways – listening to the advice of people who've been affected by the natural challenges that have beset Australia during the past couple of years and, just as importantly, preparing for the inevitable next round.

As a government leader, Shane was one to do so by example, something he has also applied to the Agency. Rather than "swanning" his way around the traps to get the job done, it was the "Stone way" to fit in as much as possible in a schedule.

One memorable day started with breakfast in Frankfurt (after meetings into the afternoon and evening before), followed by hosting a lunch (after a quick cross-Channel flight) for major tourism wholesalers in London at the prestigious Café Royale in Abbey Rd, followed by a quick trip back to Heathrow to board an overnight flight to Australia via Singapore, scheduled to arrive about the same time on the clock face that ended the day in London. No grass growing there. The glamour of overseas business travel fades when there's no time to even open the suitcase, let alone adjust your watch.

Though this newsletter marks a "big" birthday, don't expect Shane to be slowing down too much any time soon. He has in the past month been in the nation's capital, the Sunshine Coast, fished for a barra, fed a crocodile, been present for Cabinet meetings to give advice online and in person, visited his Agency offices in Brisbane and Canberra, found time for his family along the way and planned the rest of the year's program of getting on the road to visit FNQ and SA.

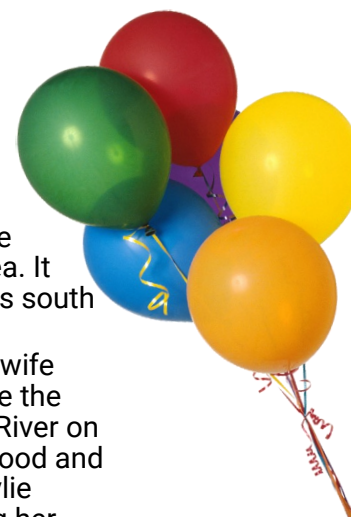
That's before cutting the cake.

Well, done C-G!



Our CG is turning 70!

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From David Moore: This photo (left) is from the September 2019 road trip through the flood area. It was taken at Ernie Camp's station, some 90kms south of Burketown.

Ernie (the Mayor who doesn't wear shoes) and wife Kylie (heavy metal aficionado) own and manage the 90,000 acre 'Floraville' station. The Leichhardt River on one boundary rose over 20 metres during the flood and flooded underneath the house. One morning Kylie looked out the window and sharks were circling her chicken house.

Shane took quite a shine to Barney the goat and he and Don gave him a few feeds of leucaena – a forage crop that has huge potential for mass planting in the far north if they can access irrigation. Kylie told us that any poddie animals she has to look after get named pretty quickly because once they're named they're safe from being eaten, including goats.



From Kate Woodbridge:

Happy Birthday Shane, this year working and getting to know you has been the most fun I have had in years, so thank you very much for including me in your team. After spending some time with you on the road I have now learnt about the Stone power couple Pam and Les, seen the Pam Stone Park, visited the home town of your lovely wife Josie, seen an amazing light show on the Mighty Murray and found the Giant Murray Cod. The one piece of evidence I have asked to be struck out of the comms team photo library is this photo of you down on the Victorian border – the amount of effort to get that photo over a week, and now it will have to stay forever hidden in the bottom draw. I hope you, Josie and the kids have a fantastic weekend celebrating.



From Karan Gaylard: My working relationship with Shane got off to a rocky start. The Agency (or Taskforce, as it was then) was only a few weeks old when, on about my third day, I was sent to Townsville to coordinate media for the Ad Board announcement. One of the tasks on my 'to-do-list' was to provide Shane with Talking Points. Suffice to say, it went down like a lead balloon – Shane has since told me he was thinking 'who is this @\$% woman?'. Fortunately, I managed to recover from that rough start and have been invited to write many more TPs for Shane since. My times on the road with Shane (through North QLD, NSW and VIC) have been real highlights – I highly recommend everyone take up the opportunity. Happy Birthday Shane – and thanks for giving me a second go at making a first impression!



**Happy Birthday
Shane!!!**

People Matters

Performance Management 20/21

Consultation on the Agency's proposed new Performance Management Framework commenced on Wednesday 16 September 2020 and closes on Wednesday 30 September 2020. All staff are strongly encouraged to provide their views and feedback on the proposed Framework. The proposed Framework consists of a new:

- Performance and Development Template
- Performance Management Policy
- Managing Underperformance Policy
- Probation Policy

To support the Framework, a number of supporting documents have also been prepared. Feedback on these documents is also welcome.

To access the documents, please visit the [Performance Management Intranet Page](#), or contact hr@droughtandflood.gov.au. If you are unable to access the intranet, these documents can be sent to you.

The APS census is coming!

The Australian Public Service (APS) census is an annual employee perception survey. The survey captures attitude and opinion data on important issues such as wellbeing, innovation, leadership, learning and development, and engagement of the APS workforce. It provides an opportunity for all APS employees to have their say about their workplace and help make the public sector a better place to work.

The census will run from Monday 12 October to Friday 13 November 2020. You can expect to receive an email from the APSC on or before 12 October inviting you to participate.

The People Team will also provide more information as we get closer to the commencement of the census.

COVID-19 Update

Thank you to everyone who participated in the recent COVID-19 pulse survey. The response rate was high and your feedback is greatly appreciated.

As we all know, things continue to change rapidly and you are encouraged to stay up to date with the latest information on the [Department of Health](#) website and your [specific State/Territory requirements](#). Also don't forget, if you have any symptoms at all ensure you are following your local requirements for testing... and don't attend the workplace if you are unwell!

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The person who can have the biggest impact on your health and wellbeing is...well, you! But with so much information available it's hard to know what is reliable or where to begin.

'Best You' is professional, confidential coaching and support provided by the Agency's EAP provider Benestar, which is free for you and your immediate family members!

Good health is not just about getting help when you have a problem – it's about proactively looking after all aspects of your life, for life.

You can make an appointment (face-to-face or via phone) by calling **Benestar on 1300 360 364**.

Further information on the EAP offering, including accessing the BeneHub health and wellbeing portal, which has a vast library of tools, blog posts, podcasts, animations, videos and learning modules that you can access anywhere, anytime from your computer or mobile device is available on the Agency's [Health, Safety and Wellbeing Intranet Page](#).

Learning & Development

In the last edition, we promoted the [Running Virtual Meetings](#) (HBR 20 minute Manager Series) – eBook. Keeping to this theme, why not check out the [How to Have Better Meetings - The 25 Minute Meeting with Donna McGeorge](#) podcast available through Learnhub.

In this podcast episode learn:

- How to organise better meetings to get better results and save time
- Alternatives to the standard sit-down meeting
- Why meetings have become a 'default' behaviour and how to break the pattern
- Preparedness and Presence and the keys to better meetings
- The Scan, Focus, Act process
- How you can politely leave a meeting early

Welcome to the Agency

Tamara Lai – Drought (Canberra)



Farewell

Simon Potter



Meet the new members of the Drought team!

Julie Steele: I have been the Director of one of the Drought teams since I joined the Agency in August. I am from Canberra but have travelled and lived in many places including Brisbane for a few years, Whistler in Canada for 2 years and York in England for a year where I worked in an 80s themed pub.

I have been in the public service since 2009 and my experience includes working on the Renewable Energy Target at the Clean Energy Regulator, Regulatory Governance at the Office of Transport Security and a range of roles in Regional Policy at the Department of Infrastructure. Prior to joining the public service I worked in the travel and tourism industry for 10 years.

My loves include travel, hiking, camping, music (from metal to rock, blues and folk) and spending time with my husband, family, friends and cat. I am passionate about helping make a difference in people's lives. I am excited to be working at the Agency and looking forward to helping make a difference to those affected by drought.



Adam Powell: I have recently commenced with the Agency in the Drought Team. I am originally from eastern Melbourne near the Dandenong Ranges. I ventured to Perth to study horticulture at university—with a little bit of oenology thrown in for good measure—and lived there for about 8 years all up, where I first joined the Department of Agriculture.

I met my wife via email (yes, it doesn't just happen in movies) and moved to Canberra in 2002. My interests outside of work include Australian native plants, bushwalking, music—particularly the Beatles (my first son is named George John, but I could not convince my wife to name our second son Ringo Paul), mountain bike riding with my sons and spending time outside with my family.

I am very pleased to be at the Agency and working to make things better for those in our extended rural community who are affected by drought in this wide brown land we are lucky to call home.



Chelsea Bassett: I joined the Drought Team at the start of September. I'm originally from Numurkah in country Victoria, near Shepparton - known for dairy, fruit, and MOOO-ving art (no 4am milkings required!). I studied in Melbourne for 5 years and then moved to Canberra as a Department of Agriculture graduate in 2017, where I enjoyed the diverse work of the portfolio, from Meat Exports to Plant Biosecurity, and found my niche in Water Infrastructure. I was MoGged to the Department of Infrastructure in 2018, and helped establish the National Water Grid Authority last year. Before joining the public service I was an analytical and environmental chemistry researcher designing microfluidic paper-based analytical devices to detect heavy metals in waterways – which largely translated to scientific arts and crafts.

Outside of work I try to run my kelpie Radar ragged, love board games with friends and play netball a couple of times a week. I'm delighted to be working in the Agency and 'here if you need'!

Sue Aiesi: I joined the Drought Team in August. I was born in Home Hill in far north Queensland but grew up in Toowoomba. I came to Canberra to join DFAT and after four postings decided that I, and the family, had enough of travelling and moving regularly.

Since leaving DFAT I have had a number of positions. One of my most rewarding was at Carers Australia. In developing the National Carer Strategy, I travelled extensively around rural and regional Australia to gain first-hand knowledge of the struggles farmers and those living in smaller communities had looking after a person with a disability or chronic illness. I was particularly drawn to young carers who were often caring for a parent or a sibling while trying to combine this with school work. Caring was frequently made all the more difficult when farmers were struggling with drought and the other adverse impacts of living in the bush. I guess I saw another side of the challenges of living in rural and regional Australia and one that can sometimes be forgotten.

My favourite things to do are spending time with the family and with my grandchildren. I also enjoy having conversations with my dog Rocky, who understands every word I say I am sure.



Drought team work update

Working on Drought Eligibility Indicators

The Agency is leading from the front: In July the Agency finalised its 'Review of Australian Government Drought Response'. When developing this report, the drought team found there was an inconsistency of indicators used to identify drought-affectedness across Australia, limiting the ability of policy makers to identify the needs of stakeholders, and appropriately address the growing demand for specific types of drought support.

To address this issue, the Agency is driving the development of whole-of-government drought eligibility indicators in collaboration with our departmental colleagues. This work won't lead to automatic access to support, but rather will lead to more consistent and equitable drought policy, and therefore support measures, fulfilling the Government's pledged action under the Australian Government Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness Plan.

4WD Course– Community Engagement Team

Kat, Kaz, Pauline and MJ from the Community Engagement Team headed off for the day to Kowen Forest, just over the ACT border, for a day's training with the goal to improve their 4WD skills, which were best described as non-existent at the start of the day.

Our instructor was a 4WDing veteran, recounting many stories from his adventures all over the country. At the start of the day, Greg showed us a harrowing downhill section, which we were sure he would say was an example of a hill not to descend. Before we knew it, he swiftly had us heading down the steep incline (picture the ravine the Man from Snowy River rode down on his horse, it was far worse than that J), towing and recovering vehicles, and mastering all ranges of gears.

You can throw words such as locking differentials, dampeners, snatch recovery and crawler gears at us and we will now nod wisely at you, being the seasoned, hardy 4WDers that we have now become.

Speed demon of the day goes to Pauline Siteaud, who didn't feel much need for using the brakes and was overheard on the UHF to say 'sorry – we were distracted by stuff flying everywhere'.

Kat M took to lead of the recovery of vehicles like a pro, keeping everyone in line and making sure we were all 'with the program'.

Thank you to the Agency for supporting the training, and if you are looking for drivers to transport you safely around Australia, just come and see the girls in the Community Engagement Team!



If you want to be featured...

We love to receive a mix of content! Whether it's informative or fun, from recipes to sharing a funny work or non-work related story, please email us at:

GSD@pmc.gov.au