

PEDALS -THE BEGINNINGS



The 150th edition of PEDALS! Congratulations to all the Publicity Officers, Editors and Printers who have gathered the news and stories from all over Australia since 1981 and collated them into what has become a very informative and classy magazine.

Each edition brings back memories. I especially enjoy seeing many old family names from each state - still coming through the ranks as President, Secretary and Committee. The photos upgraded from our black and white to colour are terrific.

With your recent fantastic achievements of saving your Schools of the Air and Moora College in W.A. there is no doubt that the same strength of purpose still exists in the I.C.P.A. as it has for 47 years!

This same strength of purpose is evident in the quality of the stories coming through Pedals - of little rural schools, bus runs and special schools - that have been able to be accessed and offer help to so many isolated kids.

Young Nathan Kitto's address, 'A Journey into Isolation', delivered at the latest Federal Conference in Canberra, gives testimony to what can be achieved by such a credible organisation and close-knit communities.

From a group of angry parents in Bourke - banded together by Pat Edgley and driven by Wally Mitchell in 1971 to save the school hostel - to 1981 - we had developed into a strong and sophisticated Association - with branches in every state in Australia - including Tasmania.

But this could not have happened without the consistent help of the Rural ABC.... Wally had gone to school with Alex Nicholl ('Always on Sunday' Program) and he, along with Colin Munro, June Barton and Mike Broadhurst, became interested in our plight and spread it all over rural Australia. They attended all our Federal Conferences and we became good and trusted friends.

Through this two-way publicity we also discovered that there were many other children isolated from attending school, not by distance but by 'impassable roads' - Impassable roads caused by monsoonal rains in the Top End - by snow on the Monaro and highlands in NSW - and by frozen lakes in Victoria, where kids were rowed to school.

Then there were the children who had no roads at all. Those on pearling luggers off the coast of Broome, those on Lighthouses off the east coast of Australia and those in Cape York, who only received their correspondence lessons once a month by pack horse!

When Bunny Powne and I put together the first edition of Pedals in 1981 little did we foresee what a classy magazine it would become. We met for a day in the Cunnamulla Hall while our two 10-year olds played on the banks of the Warrego. Cunnamulla was chosen because it was half way between Enngonia (my NSW village) and Bollon (Bunny's Qld town).

We discussed those early days in the 70's when it was such a difficult job to convince most politicians and Department of Education personnel of our inequality of "access to education" Some were sceptical of us and many of them thought we were just a bunch of whingeing LARGE landholders.

I remember one evening, before a Federal Conference in Roma, a Director General (from another state) asked Bob Ridge "and who will take over your station when your children are finally educated"? Bob replied, "Probably Elders GM or the Bank of NSW!"

The same redfaced D.G. moved to another group and said to Bunny Powne, "I suppose you have a big station too - somewhere in Qld."

"Yes," Bunny replied, "a service station in Bollon!"

At our first Federal Conference in a capital city (Perth) in 1977 Sue Broad had done a wonderful job setting up the publicity for me. I had never seen so many keen journalists! I was so overwhelmed with questions I gave one journo a copy of the upcoming motions. The first one pertained to Mail Services and the second to Remedial Services. There it was the next morning as headlines in the Perth paper. "ICPA calls for Remedial Mail Services! A bit like the old bushie from Louth (Wally Mitchell's village) who was asked, "what's this I.C.P.A. stand for. He answered," International Crutchers and Piecepickers Association"

I have enjoyed reminiscing. Thank you to all those foundation members and office bearers who have left us with this great legacy. And "thank you" to those who are carrying it on

Best of Luck for 2019

Toni Ridge