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Higher Ground Australia



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## HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – January 2005

### Welcome

Hello everyone and welcome to our first newsletter for 2005. I hope that you all had a very happy Christmas and New Year.

### Tsunami

The tragic news of the earthquake and Tsunami in the Indian Ocean on Boxing Day rocked the world, but it is very heartening to see the world pull together to help those people devastated by this natural disaster. It is difficult to fully understand the impact this has had on the lives of those living in this region. Although Banda Aceh, Sri Lanka and Phuket are in the forefront of the news, please spare a thought for the people of India, the Maldives, The Seychelles and all the small nations who are hurting badly from this tragedy.

With so many people now homeless, it is a good time to reflect on how lucky we all are and to try to help any way you can. Even if you are unable to donate cash, there are other ways in which you can help, so please check your local papers to see what your community is doing for the victims of this disaster. Some groups may need people to help pack boxes of clothes and medicines and would appreciate all the help they can get.

Also, if you are giving either money or goods, please make sure that the fund into which you are giving money are actually donating it to the Tsunami victims. Oxfam in Australia have announced that 90% of all donated funds will be used for disaster relief, so that is who is getting my donation.

Please also say a prayer for those people who have lost loved ones.

### United States Natural Disasters

During the past couple of weeks, we have seen parts of the United States under many feet of snow, mud and water. We hope that you and your families are safe, dry and warm and we hope that the extreme weather conditions that you have been experiencing will settle down.

### Members

New members have signed up over the past month as we welcome each and every one of you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions at all or if you would like to introduce yourself to the group by writing a short profile about yourself.

### A Special Birthday

Happy belated birthday to Max Moore, who turned 82 on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. Many happy returns and we all hope that your day was a special one indeed

### Website

Our web address is: [www.highergroundaustralia.com](http://www.highergroundaustralia.com) The website is being updated regularly and if you want to leave any feedback, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you to Lynn for keeping it up to date.

### 2005 Gathering Bateman's Bay, NSW

Our 2005 JD weekend will be held on the 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> October in Bateman's Bay NSW. These dates will coincide with the Aspen weekend. More information about the gathering will be posted through this newsletter early next year.

Carmel, Alistair and Max have had a look at some possible sites around Bateman's Bay and all look very positive.

### Australia Day – 26<sup>th</sup> January

On Australia Day, 1988, John Denver sang a song dedicated to all Australians that he had written for our Bicentenary celebrations. That song was 'Sing Australia'. Very few songs have successfully been able to sum up the absolute essence of Australia in a few words in the way that Sing Australia does.

Thank you John, for this wonderful song.

## **Cook Book**

Hurry – Last few copies of the cookbook are available. Thanks to everyone who has purchased a copy as 100% of your money will be donated to raptor rehabilitation in Australia. For any further sales, please contact Genie either through the website or on [gbp@almostheavendesigns.com](mailto:gbp@almostheavendesigns.com)

We continue to receive positive feedback about the book and we thank the people who have taken the time to let us know of your thoughts.

## **Book Giveaway**

We will be giving away some of the Christopher Canyon picture books again this year at our weekend in October. These are donated to schools that have been nominated by our members. As well as the Christopher Canyon books, we will also be donating a copy of David Mallet's picture book Inch by Inch – The Garden Song. I will be asking for school nominations later in the year.

## **Latest John Denver News**

Anyone who travelled by United airlines in a 777 aircraft in December, would have been in for a treat. The Yesterday & Today channel on the audio program featured John Denver's Definitive All Time Greatest Hits.

In the United Airlines Hemisphere magazine there was an advertising feature called *Winter in the West*, which included some very interesting information about the ski resorts in the western regions of USA, including Aspen.

One of our members has passed on the following information in regard to some John Denver CDs that are currently on sale at Heartland Music

In the catalogue from [www.heartlandmusic.com](http://www.heartlandmusic.com) I just received, they list two of JD's most wonderful collections on their "sale" page: "John Denver: The Country Roads Collection" is the 4 CD one, in a container like a book, with 79 songs, and a wonderful booklet in the centre with great pictures. They have it for only \$57.88 which is about \$20 less than I paid for it, and it's put together by Mr. Paul Williams. It's the absolutely BEST collection I think there is.

Also, they have "John Denver, Portrait" 2 CD, collection with the song "Don't Be Kind" in it, and 34 songs in all. This is a great collection because they put in some of his less played songs (which are still beautiful), for only \$24.88.

So I just thought folks there might be interested to know this. Their phone # is 1-888-339-0001

Thanks Jean. We appreciate this type of feedback.

## **Environmental News**

Clean Up Australia day will be held on Sunday March 5<sup>th</sup> 2005. Schools Clean Up Day will be held on Friday March 4<sup>th</sup> and Business Clean Up Day will be held on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March.

From Cape York Peninsula to Southport in Tasmania hundreds of thousands of interested and community-minded people collected unsightly and polluting rubbish from our fragile environment.

Clean Up Australia Day is firmly entrenched in the Australian environmental calendar. It is an apolitical, non-profit community campaign in which everyone can participate.

This great idea celebrates its 16th birthday in 2005 and has successfully grown each year to make this community event the largest annual environmental campaign in Australia.

### ***Why we need to Clean Up Australia***

- An estimated 7 billion cigarette butts end up in Australian waterways, streets and parklands each year.
- 80 million plastic bags end up as litter in Australia each year – causing a serious threat to our precious marine life
- 37% of all items collected on Clean Up Australia Day in 2004 were plastic. Recycling one tonne of plastic saves enough energy to run a refrigerator for a month
- Over the past 15 years, volunteers on Clean Up Australia Day have collected over 200,000 tonnes of rubbish. That is 4.7 million household wheelie bins.

For further information on Clean Up Australia Day <http://www.cleanup.com.au/>

## **Australian of the Year Nominations**

Just a few minutes ago, Ben Kearney of Coles Bay, Tasmania has been nominated as a finalist for an Australia Day award for his work as coordinator of Plastic Bag Free Coles Bay. Good Luck Ben – you have worked hard to make your town plastic bag free.

Read about Ben's initiative and the results of his vision for a plastic-bag free town.

## **COLES BAY**

**If Coles Bay in Tasmania can do it, why can't your town?**

That's the basis of the 'Coles Bay Challenge'. We would like to see towns and villages with locally owned retail outlets following the Coles Bay lead

and banning plastic check-out bags in all their stores.

Since April 2003, all retail outlets in Coles Bay, including both supermarkets, have banned plastic check-out shopping bags. In the first twelve months, they stopped the use of 350,000 plastic check-out bags.

In Coles Bay as alternatives, they are offering a strong reusable paper bag with a handle, for 25c. The other alternative on offer is a Planet Ark reusable calico bag selling for \$2. The message on these bags reads 'Coles Bay – Australia's First Plastic Bag Free Town!' This message also appears on the road sign that welcomes visitors to the town

Planet Ark worked for some months in partnership with Coles Bay retailers who have been led in this endeavour by Ben Kearney, the owner of the local bakery.

Coles Bay plays host to whales on their annual migration along the eastern seaboard. One of the reasons Coles Bay has gone Plastic-Check-out Bag Free is to protect these whales and to stop the plastic bag littering of the adjoining Freycinet National Park.

The Coles Bay ban on plastic checkout bags unleashed a firestorm of positive publicity both here and overseas.

Coles Bay was awarded the Environmental Excellence Award by the Tasmanian Government for their efforts. Ben Kearney, the local coordinator of Coles Bay going Plastic Bag Free, has now also been recognised as the Tasmanian Local Hero - Regional at the recent Tasmanian Australian of the Year Awards for his commitment to his local environment.

### What the town of Coles Bay says

**"Going plastic bag free has been great for our business and great for our town. It has really bound the community together and united us with this common goal.**

We are all now seeing how small changes to our habits can have a big



**Ben Kearney - Coordinator of Plastic Bag Free Coles Bay and local bakery owner**

impact on our local environment, and a huge impact on all the people who see what we have done down here.

Our customers and our staff love us not using plastic bags anymore. We have sent out bags to people in New Zealand the United Kingdom and the United States who have written to us wanting to know more about what we are doing to protect this amazing part of the world."

## Sing Australia

I come to Australia as many people do,  
to see the old koala, hitch a ride on a kangaroo.  
To hear somebody call me "Mate" and call somebody "Blue,"  
To hear an Aborigine play a didgeridoo.

Some of you came as prisoners two centuries ago,  
Some of you come as kings and queens, your blessing to bestow.  
Some of you stand all swelled with pride, Some with shattered wings,  
but all of us come with open hearts To hear Australia sing.

In the desert, in the city,  
In the mountains and in the sea.  
In the stories and in the people  
I can hear Australia sing.

Waltzing Matilda, the men of Gallipoli,  
Clancy of the Overflow and Crocodile Dundee.  
The myth of all creation, the teaching of Baiame,  
the legends of the Dreamtime for all eternity.

And in this celebration, a brief two hundred years,  
the cost to build a nation in blood and sweat and tears.  
And if we stand divided, divided we shall fall.  
But if we stand together, we shall conquer all.

In the desert, in the city,  
In the mountains and in the sea.  
In the stories and in the people  
I can hear Australia sing..

Sing Australia, sing Australia,  
Sing Australia, sing Australia.  
In the sails on Sydney Harbour  
I can hear Australia sing.

Words and music by John Denver