

# **B**ingara (NSW) to Home (SA) Stage 5 - September 2023

In this stage of the trip we head for home, now travelling slowly Southward. There is a mixture of old and new spots to visit and a range of new experiences. From here on, the towns where we stayed are generally larger and more urban but there are one or two small towns thrown in for good measure.

I am a creature of habit and love re-visiting places I have enjoyed before. But on this trip (during the earlier stages) we have stayed at quite a few places not seen before, like Muttaborra and Aramac, and in this stage Gunnedah, Condobolin and Cargelligo. It was great to see new places and stay in completely different locales.



*Eucalyptus pyriformis*, at Pensioner Hill Gunnedah NSW

## Gunnedah

Gunnedah is a fair sized regional city with all the services you would expect, including Mitre 10, hotels, Macdonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken. They also had an Aldi, not that we got there to see it. Gunnedah Shire is located in the North West Slopes Region of north-west New South Wales, about 450 kilometres north of the Sydney CBD, and about 650 kilometres south of the Brisbane CBD. I am guessing it gets hot there but the weather was delightful for us, days reaching about 25 and freezing nights.

Our chosen camp spot was the CMCA Club RV park. Part of a network of campgrounds around most of Australia, campers are provided with a safe area to camp, a communal happy hour shed, a dump point for grey and black water cassettes and water taps. Our three days here were very pleasant and we met some nice folk around the campfire.

We also were wowed by the two lookouts, Pensioners Hill and the Porcupine Lookout. Pensioners Hill was named after the group of older citizens who lived up there during the Great Depression. It is a fair hike up there so I am unsure how their old legs managed it but there you are. I thought this was an affluent town (although they do apparently have their lower socio economic stratas too). I could live there!



Statue on Pensioners Hill

## Eumungerie

This was a much smaller town. It has an active and popular hotel, a post office cum general store and a town oval which is also a campground. The beauty of the campground is that with a caretaker they offer powered sites for \$10 a night, in a nice bush type setting. We have been here a couple of times before and really liked it.

Eumungerie is about 30 or so kms South of Gilgandra and 40 or so kms North of Dubbo, so you can do day trips to those towns and do shopping, visiting cafes or just sightseeing.

We did go to Dubbo for the day as we needed a couple of camping things at the BCF shop, and we did some grocery shopping.

While here we did a lot of washing as we had a connection to a water tap and power. To make up for the extra water and power we used we paid for a night longer than we

needed and made that our extra contribution. After two days we were on our way again.

## Bogan Weir

Yes, this place has the weirdest name...but it is merely a lovely stretch of billabong/creek alongside a grassed area which is mowed by the town. There are rubbish bins but that is about the only facilities here.

It was very cold the three days we were here and we had light frosts each night. The days were sunny and cool but warm enough to not need a jumper during the day. The diesel heater was a valued trip companion again.

Bogan Weir is 5kms West of the small town of Peak Hill, which has a supermarket, café, a range of services and, valuably, an RSL. Why do I like an RSL so much? Because they usually have a great restaurant. Peak Hill has one of the best!



Bogan Weir

It is run by an Asian (Chinese?) family and has great meals. So come Sunday night, that's where we were.

The phone reception is great here and that was useful as I was on call this week.

## Gum Bend Lake, Condobolin

Someone back at Bogan Weir told us about the camping at Gum Bend Lake near Condobolin. Condobolin was one of those places you often hear about but in our case, had never been to or stayed.

The town is relatively small (population 3185).

From Wikipedia:

The name Condobolin is suggested by some<sup>[[by whom?](#)]</sup> to have evolved from the Aboriginal word Cundabullen – shallow crossing. The crossing was located a short distance below the junction of the Lachlan River and the [Goobang Creek](#).<sup>[3]</sup> Others suggest that the town's name from the Wiradjuri word for 'hop bush', or 'hop brush'.<sup>[4][5]</sup>

The area was explored by [John Oxley](#) in 1817 and [Thomas Mitchell](#) in 1836. The 'Condoumlin' run was established by 1844.<sup>[3]</sup> There had been [squatters](#) in the district since Mitchell's 1836 exploration. Closer settlement of the area began in 1880 when the large runs were broken up into smaller holdings.

The town of Condobolin was proclaimed in 1859. The railway arrived in 1898, and the town's population boomed, assisted by finds in 1885 of copper north of the town and in 1896 of gold in the district, north-west of the town. A major copper and gold mine was in operation at Condobolin from 1898 until around 1910. Agriculture is still a major influence on the town, production having expanded with the damming of the Lachlan River in 1935 by the [Wyangala Dam](#).<sup>[4]</sup> Wheat, barley, canola, wool, sheep and cattle are produced in the district. In more recent years irrigation has brought horticulture and cotton to the Lachlan River area.<sup>[6]</sup> The Lachlan River saw paddle steamer traffic from the 1860s up until the 1920s.

Anyway, the town provides a camping ground out at nearby Gum Bend Lake, a nice place to camp for up to a week. There were people staying longer (as they do) but you are generally supposed to only be there for a shorter time. It was busy while we were there and people tried to park appropriately so as not to crowd others. We had beautiful weather here and used our diesel heater at night as there were frosty mornings.



We found a great RSL (yes, again) and had a fantastic meal. I ordered the small serve of chicken schnitzel and couldn't eat it all.

Condobolin also has an attraction which must be viewed. It's a collection of utes turned into art works. Displayed in order of vehicle production, there are about a dozen utes and they are placed in a semi circle around a road which will abut the new Visitor Information Centre. Here is a small sample of the utes.



So after three days of relaxing beside the Gum Bend Lake (which is really a Dam not a lake) we were off again.

Heading further South we aimed for another new place, Lake Cargelligo.

## Lake Cargelligo

A smallish town but with a fabulous setting. The lake was natural this time and provided a lovely backdrop for this town.

When we arrived in town it soon became clear that a significant funeral was being held. Earlier in the month there had been a tragic car accident in which four older local residents had all been killed, and the day we arrived was the day of their funeral. It seemed that the deceased locals were much loved and their absence would place a significant hole in the community.

We arrived early at the campground on the lake and pulled in to what was the best site to be found. We had a view out over the lake and were camped on nice green grass right at the edge of the water. Perfect! And we had really nice neighbours with whom we shared a drink both afternoons.



Lake Cargelligo

We were tempted to stay longer but after two days we packed up and headed on toward one of our favourite spots, Griffith.

## Lake Wyangan, near Griffith

This has been a firm favourite camp spot for many trips now. But we had not been here this late in the year before so were not really prepared for the hot days we experienced.

Two of the three days were hot, very hot. It was 37° on our third day and it had to be managed. We did cope well by sitting outside on the nice green grass in the earlier part of the day, and when the temperature climbed in the afternoon we visited the local library and sat in their cool airconditioning and read for a while. Then we went to an early dinner at a nice Italian restaurant handily located just across the road.

The campground is on sloping lawns overlooking a large lake (natural I assume, due to its size) and there is a nice modern toilet block. Usually when we camp here it is late Autumn or Winter and the weather is nice and cool. That was definitely not the case this time. But it was a lovely place to spend three days nonetheless.

Griffith's appeal lies in the restaurants and wineries. There is a strong Italian influence from earlier settlers and these people established vines and cellar doors, as well as fruit and vegetable orchards. You can see and hear the Italian influence in every café and winery cellar door.

## Hay

Hay is one of those towns which on the surface appear to be dull and boring but have a fascinating heritage. There are some impressive heritage buildings (most still being used) and the town is quite pretty, being built on the edge of the Murrumbidgee River.

There is a great camping area near the river (we usually stay there as its set in pretty bushland) but on this trip it was baking hot and we sought a powered site at the Showgrounds. The site was quirky to put it mildly. The caretaker put us on a bit of a semi circle with three other vans all in close proximity. If you drove past each other's vans you had to be careful not to run over their chairs and toes. (Yes I exaggerate - slightly).

We did the geocaches there which were new since our last trip and went out to dinner at the RSL. No Ode at the RSL this time - a pity.

## Mildura

### **The Palms Caravan Park**

So it was another three or so hours of travel across the Hay Plains and we arrived at Mildura. Our plan had been to camp out of town on the banks of the river but as we wanted to catch up with very dear and old friends from Darwin, were not sure about the security of leaving the van out there while out and about. A music festival was on in Mildura and so accommodation was scarce, but we did a quick search using the phone's internet and found a park.

We booked into The Palms. This was an interesting experience. Not completely in a bad way but not one I would be keen to revisit.

The park put us on a site among all the permanent fruit pickers (mainly Samoan I think) who were just the nicest people. But when you have your van parked among a group of permanents there is a sense that you are interrupting their daily lives. I think where we were put was usually their spare parking spot for a second car.

The permanents had established a neat vegetable garden with herbs, peas, cucumbers, pumpkins, silverbeet, tomatoes etc. What enterprising people they are!

And we managed to catch up with our friends while there so all was good.

By this time we were getting closer to the SA border - and home. From Mildura we could be home in several hours. But we had one more last small camp site yet to enjoy.

## Lyrup

This is a small, very small, town near Renmark. For us the appeal lay in its situation right on the mighty River Murray and its closeness to Renmark. The town is on the edge of the Murray River National Park and there is a ferry crossing adjacent to the campground.

I could easily live in Renmark which is a beautiful and neat city with what appears to be fertile soil. The town has a magic Annual Rose Festival. Lyrup though is just a clutch of houses and has a campground on the edge of the river, with several powered sites at \$15 a night and a couple of unpowered sites for \$10. We knew it would be hot over the next few days and so the powered site was useful, so we booked and paid for it online. We had two nice days here, and went over to good friends Sally and Les's place in Renmark to join them for lunch at the Renmark Hotel.

And thus came to an end the four months trip, as we headed for home the following day.

## Trip Summary

**The camp sites** which were standouts from this trip were:

- Macsland near Longreach
- Camooweal Billabong
- Bingara on the Gwydir River
- Trepina Gorge, East MacDonnell Ranges NP
- Rainbow Valley Conservation Park near Alice Springs

(The one which we both enjoyed immensely was Trepina Gorge, site 11. It had space around it and internet, as well as a tap nearby and good sun for solar power).

**New Towns** visited that we enjoyed:

- Muttaborra
- Aramac
- Gunnedah
- Tenterfield
- Wallangarara

The area which was a surprise package was Tenterfield. The countryside around there is just lovely.