

RABOBANK ADDRESS: 14 AUGUST 2003.
Pinnacle Valley Resort.

I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO TALK TO YOU TONIGHT ON THE
THEME:

“THE CHALLENGES FACING THE MEN FROM SNOWY RIVER”

I DIDN'T SET THE TOPIC BUT I THINK IT GIVES ME AN
OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT ANYTHING I LIKE.

FIRSTLY, WELCOME TO MANSFIELD/ AND FOR OUR NEW
ZEALAND VISITORS, WELCOME TO MANSFIELD, VICTORIA
AUSTRALIA

MANSFIELD IS A VERY INTERESTING DISTRICT. IT HAS AN
ACTIVE COMMUNITY AND PROGRESSIVE FARMERS.

IN THE PAST, FARMERS IN THE DISTRICT HAVE LED
AUSTRALIA IN DEVELOPING INDUSTRIES SUCH AS
PASTURE SEED AND BEEF IMPROVEMENT.

IN ITS HEYDAY, MANSFIELD SEED FARMERS PRODUCED
THE BULK OF TEMPERATE SEEDS IN AUSTRALIA AND THE
FARMERS DISCOVERED MANY NEW TECHNIQUES AND
DEVELOPED NEW VARIETIES.

IN THE EARLY 1980S, A SMALL GROUP OF BEEF FARMERS
FROM AROUND VICTORIA SPENT SOME YEARS ON A
PROJECT BASED ON A MANSFIELD PROPERTY AND HAD A
PROGRAM OF SELECTING SIRES BASED ON WEIGHT GAIN.

THE PROJECT CALLED “SIREBANK” WAS PROBABLY
BEFORE ITS TIME AND HIT LOW PRICES AND OTHER
DIFFICULTIES HOWEVER IT WAS THE FORERUNNER OF
MANY OF TODAY'S SCHEMES TO IMPROVE STOCK
GENETICS.

PRESENTLY, SEVERAL DISTRICT FARMERS HAVE PROVED
THEMSELVES AMONG THE MOST PROGRESSIVE IN
VICTORIA.

LAKE EILDON DIVIDES THE SHIRES OF MURRINDINDI AND MANSFIELD.

THERE HAVE BEEN DRAMATIC CHANGES IN THESE TWO DISTRICTS IN THE LAST 20 YEARS – SMALLER HOLDINGS – LIFESTYLE LIVING – 70 VINEYARDS – MANY OLIVE GROVES.

CITY BASED OWNERS OF SMALLER FARMS ARE LEASING TO LARGER LOCAL LAND OWNERS.

THE DISTRICT IS VERY PICTURESQUE. RELIES HEAVILY ON TOURISM AND SKIING.

IT'S BEEN THE BACKDROP TO MANY FILMS/THE BEST KNOWN BEING THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER.

WHERE THIS HOTEL SITS IS ON THE LAST FARM ON THE ROAD BEFORE THE HIGH COUNTRY. IN FACT, THE ROAD FINISHED AT THE FARM AND THE EARLY SKIERS HAD TO PACK IN ON HORSES TO MT BULLER.

THIS WAS THE KLINGSPORNS FARM – THE FIRST FAMILY TO RUN CATTLE ON MT BULLER.

THE TRACK WENT STRAIGHT UP THE SPUR TO THE MOUNTAIN ON WHAT BECAME KNOWN AS KLINGSPORNS TRACK.

I TELL YOU ALL THIS BECAUSE -

THIS FARM PLAYED A REAL PART IN CHANGING THE WAY AUSTRALIANS THOUGHT ABOUT THEMSELVES.

THE TWO FILMS "MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER 1 AND 2" HAD AN ENORMOUS IMPACT ON AUSTRALIA AND INDEED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

AND SOME OF THE HARDEST RIDING WAS DONE IN THIS VALLEY AND UP ON TOP JUST EAST OF HERE.

WHEN WE MADE SNOWY, IT WAS GREAT FUN.

\$150 A DAY AND BRING YOUR OWN HORSE – YOU HAD TO BE INVITED TO RIDE. NO SERIOUS INCIDENTS.

BEST RIDING I HAD SINCE I WAS KID CHASING WILD CATTLE WITH MY DAD.

I WAS WITH THE “GOOD BLOKES” BUNCH. CHRIS STONEY WAS WITH THE “BAD BLOKES” BUNCH.

HOWEVER THINGS HAVE CHANGED – I SEE HE IS WITH THE GOOD BLOKES TONIGHT.

SNOWY BROKE THE AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL CRINGE. UP UNTIL THE RELEASE OF THE FIRST FILM, AUSTRALIANS WERE NOT AWARE OF WHAT THEY REALLY HAD.

CITY PEOPLE REGARDED POORLY / RURAL AUSTRALIA, THE OUTBACK, DRYZABONES, MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN AND AKUBRA HATS.

ALL OF A SUDDEN, ALL OF THOSE THINGS BECAME FASHIONABLE – BRAND NEW DRYZABONES APPEARED IN TOORAK ROAD – THEY WERE SEEN ON THE GOLD COAST.

4WDS COVERED WITH MUD BECAME A STATUS SYMBOL.

RM WILLIAMS AND THOMAS COOK BOOT AND CLOTHING BECAME FASHION STORES.

PEOPLE SUDDENLY BECAME VERY PROUD OF THEIR AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE.

THE TURNING POINT CAN BE TRACED TO “THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER” AND OTHER FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES WHICH FLOWED FROM THAT TIME.

TOURISM SOARED. HORSES WERE IN. TRAIL RIDES TO THE HIGH COUNTRY WERE DEVELOPED WITH MORE THAN 24 DIFFERENT OPERATIONS FEEDING OFF EACH OTHER.

TRAIL RIDE CUSTOMERS WERE PEOPLE SEEKING A DREAM.

THEY WEREN'T JUST HORSE PEOPLE; THEY WERE PEOPLE
LOOKING FOR AN IDENTITY.

IT IS VERY SAD THAT THE 24 TRAIL RIDES ARE DOWN TO 4
BECAUSE OF THE PLI CRISES.

A FILM SET HUT CALLED "CRAIGS HUT" WAS PURPOSE
BUILT ON A HIGH POINT WITH A WONDERFUL VIEW AND
WHICH CAUGHT EVERY BREATH OF WIND IN THE HIGH
COUNTRY FROM EVERY ANGLE.

NO SELF RESPECTING CATTLEMAN WOULD BUILD A HUT IN
SUCH A PLACE.

IT IS STILL THERE – IT IS HAS THE HIGHEST VISITATION OF
ANYWHERE IN THE HIGH COUNTRY AND PEOPLE STILL GO
BECAUSE THEY SAW IT 20 YEARS AGO IN THE SNOWY
FILMS.

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN. THE
REAL MEN AND WOMEN FROM SNOWY RIVER.

THE HIGH PLAINS RUNS FROM HERE TO THE MURRAY.
40,000 CATTLE USED TO GRAZE THE AREA.

IT IS NOW LESS THAN 8-10,000 AND IT IS DROPPING. / THE
GOVERNMENT IS USING ANY EXCUSE TO GET THEM OUT/
BUT MOST ARE HANGING IN.

IN THE EARLY 80S, ABOUT THE TIME OF THE SNOWY FILMS,
THE CATTLEMEN BECAME UNDER SERIOUS THREAT.

THERE WAS INCREASING PRESSURE FROM
CONSERVATIONISTS FOR A MASSIVE ALPINE PARK.

THE CATTLEMEN HAD TO ACT.

SNOWY WAS THE CATALYST. PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR
OF SNOWY, GEOFF BURROWES, MARRIED INTO A
CATTLEMEN'S FAMILY.

HE ATTENDED A MEETING

HE BRUTALLY TOLD THEM TO CHANGE THEIR TACTICS OR THEY WERE FINISHED.

IT WAS GROUND BREAKING STUFF. WHAT WAS DEVISED IS STILL THE MODEL AGAINST WHICH SUCCESSFUL LOBBYING IS RATED.

THERE WAS A HORSE RACE.

NOT JUST AN ORDINARY HORSE RACE.

THIS WAS A MOUNTAIN HORSE RACE.

THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMAN'S CUP

THE RACE WAS STARTED WITH A SHOT GUN. RIDERS GALLOPED FLAT OUT ALONG SHEEPYARD FLAT - GET OFF/ PICK UP A BILLY/ GET ON UP A STEEP HILL/ ALONG A PRECIPICE/ DOWN THE SPUR, ACROSS THE RIVER OUT ALONG INTO THE RIVER.

BACK INTO THE RIVER. FILL THE BILLY OUT OF THE RIVER.

OVER A BIG LOG, UP THE STRAIGHT AND HOME.

YOU HAD TO BRING ENOUGH WATER HOME TO FILL 2 PANNIKINS.

IT WAS EXCITING – I WAS FIRST INTO THE RIVER, FELL, AND LAST OUT LIKE A DROWNED RAT – THE CROWD LOVED IT!

THERE WERE 2000 PEOPLE WATCHING/ **BUT THAT IS NOT THE KEY.** THE KEY WAS THAT **THE NATIONAL MEDIA CAME.**

WE HIRED A HELICOPTER AND TIED THE RACE TO THE GRAZING ISSUE.

WE FIRSTLY FIRED THE MEDIA UP WITH THE RACE/ THEN WE FLEW THEM TO THE HIGH PLAINS AND HAD RIDERS MUSTERING THE CATTLE ALONG A 1000' CLIFF.

THE CAMERAS ROLLED AND OVERNIGHT THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN BECAME A HOUSEHOLD NAME.

THE GOVERNMENT REFUSED TO ALTER THEIR PLANS TO KICK THE CATTLEMEN OUT AND CREATE A MASSIVE PARK/ SO WE RODE ON PARLIAMENT HOUSE.

304 RIDERS, 2 WAGONS, 4 DOGS./ ALL OVER THE HIGH COUNTRY – MANY FROM SHAUN BEASLEY'S AREA - BAIRNSDALE

THE MEDIA LOVED IT.

THE GREENIES HATED IT.

NEXT YEAR WE RODE FOR AN OPPOSITION CANDIDATE AT A BY-ELECTION AND THE CANDIDATE WON.

WE CLAIMED THE CREDIT.

BEING OPPORTUNISTIC THE LIBERAL & NATIONAL OPPOSITION DECIDED THE CATTLEMEN'S CAUSE MUST BE JUST.

IT TOOK ANOTHER 6 YEARS OF HIGH PROFILE, BUT WE DID A BI-PARTISAN DEAL.

WE HAD THE ON-GOING LEASES AND RIGHTS OF CATTLEMEN WRITTEN INTO LEGISLATION AS PART OF THE PARK.

IT HAD NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE OR SINCE FOR LOBBY GROUPS.

I HAVE TOLD YOU ALL THIS BECAUSE SOMETIMES ONE NEEDS TO LOOK AT HISTORY IN ORDER TO KNOW HOW TO GO FORWARD.

COUNTRY PEOPLE HAVE SOME ENORMOUS CHALLENGES AHEAD.

WATER IS THE BIG ONE.

THERE IS SALINITY -

FORESTRY – ACCESS TO RESOURCES IS BEING RESTRICTED IN THE NAME OF CONSERVATION TO THE POINT WE CANNOT SUPPLY ENOUGH OF OUR OWN GOOD QUALITY HARDWOOD IN AUSTRALIA. SO WE IMPORT OUR TIMBER FROM ASIAN RAINFORESTS – ITS IMMORAL.

ANIMAL WELFARE ISSUES.

PLANNING AND THE RIGHT TO FARM

AND THERE ARE MANY OTHERS

LETS JUST TAKE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF WATER IN THE MURRAY DARLING SYSTEM.

I THINK IRRIGATORS AND TOWNS THAT RELY ON THAT SYSTEM ARE IN TROUBLE.

I WAS SUPPOSED TO TALK TONIGHT ABOUT THE CHALLENGES FACING THE MEN FROM SNOWY RIVER.

LET ME TELL YOU, THE CHALLENGES FACING THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE MURRAY, MURRUMBIDGEE, DARLING AND GOULBURN RIVERS ARE AWESOME.

FOR OUR VISITORS, THOSE RIVERS ARE IN THREE STATES AND FORM THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN, THE FOOD BOWL OF THE AUSTRALIA.

THE BIG ISSUE IN THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN IS WATER MANAGEMENT.

THERE IS NO DOUBT, THE ISSUE OF WATER IS BEING POLITICISED.

WATER IS BEING USED TO GAIN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE AND VOTES, AND SCIENCE IS BEING IGNORED.

PROMISING TO "SAVE THE SNOWY" PUT THE BRACKS GOVERNMENT IN POWER – THE POLICY HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH SCIENCE.

ALL TO DO WITH EMOTION AND THE VOTE OF THE INDEPENDENT CRAIG INGRAM.

YOU WOULD HAVE NOTICED THAT SIMON CREAN, THE LEADER OF THE FEDERAL OPPOSITION, IS NOW GOING TO "SAVE THE MURRAY".

HE HAS PLEDGED TO PUT 1500 GIGALITRES DOWN THE MURRAY.

HE HAS MADE THE STATEMENT BEFORE THE SCIENTIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE BEEN RELEASED ON HOW MUCH WATER THE ENVIRONMENT NEEDS.

HIS PLEDGE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH SCIENCE, IT HAS ALL TO DO WITH HOLDING THE GREEN VOTE.

IT IS ALL TO DO WITH THE MAKING THE PEOPLE OF MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY FEEL GOOD ABOUT SOMETHING THAT THEY KNOW NOTHING ABOUT.

BUT THEY HAVE BEEN DUDDERED BY POLITICS/ THE POLITICS HAS PREEMPTED THE SCIENCE.

IN MY OPINION, THE RESIDENTS OF THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN HAVE TO DO WHAT THE CATTLEMEN DID. THEY HAVE TO RAISE THEIR PROFILE AND GET THE CITIES ON SIDE.

IF THEY DON'T, POLITICIANS WILL USE THEIR WATER TO ATTRACT VOTES UNTIL THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN WILL BECOME ONLY A SHADOW OF ITS FORMER GLORY.

THERE IS A DANGER, MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF WATER NOW AVAILABLE FOR AGRICULTURE WILL BE TAKEN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

BEFORE THE LAST STATE ELECTION, PRECIOUS WATER WAS TURNED DOWN THE SNOWY IN A DROUGHT, TO KEEP THE GREEN VOTE/WHICH SAW THE BRACKS GOVERNMENT WIN THE LARGEST MAJORITY IN HISTORY.

TO DEMONSTRATE MY POINT, WITH ALL THE WATER THAT IS GOING TO GO DOWN THE SNOWY, I AM TOLD THE WATER INDICATOR LEVEL AT ORBOST WILL NOT MOVE.

I RESTATE THE GRAB FOR VOTES MAY OVERSHADOW
GOOD PUBLIC POLICY.

IN CONCLUSION

IT IS AN INDICTMENT ON OUR POLITICAL PROCESS THAT
THE MEDIA ARE AS INFLUENTIAL AS THEY ARE.

BUT UNLESS THE OTHER SIDE IS TOLD AND THE MEDIA
BECOME INTERESTED, THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN AND
OTHER RURAL ISSUES SUCH AS TIMBER WILL BE THE
SACRIFICIAL LAMBS.

GIVEN THAT / PEOPLE WITH A MESSAGE CAN USE THE
MEDIA TO THEIR ADVANTAGE IF THEY THINK LATERALLY
AND SHOW SOME IMAGINATION.

JUST LIKE THE MEN FROM SNOWY RIVER.

THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE SNOWY RIVER ROSE TO THE
CHALLENGE – AND TO QUOTE BANJO

“ARE STILL A HOUSEHOLD WORD TODAY”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Stoney", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and stylized.