

• FOR RURAL WOMEN & THEIR FAMILIES •

# The Country Web

IDENTITY

NUMBER 40 AUTUMN 2006 FREE NEWSLETTER



PHOTO BY ELLA DREYFUS  
FROM LIVING OUT BACK: PEOPLE OF WESTERN NSW



Let's make it happen – together

## Rural Women's Network

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS ■ BEATING THE ODDS! ■ BOOST YOUR CHILD'S CONFIDENCE

## THE COUNTRY WEB

The Country Web is produced by the NSW Department of Primary Industries' Rural Women's Network (RWN) and distributed free, three times a year. For more about RWN see page 5.

### EDITING/DESKTOP PUBLISHING

Allison Priest

### CONTRIBUTIONS

Letters, stories, poems and photographs from rural women and their families are always welcome.

### FREE MAILING LIST

If you live in New South Wales and would like to be on our free mailing list contact the RWN.

### ADVERTISING

10,000 Country Webs are produced each edition. We welcome advertisements and offer very competitive rates. Contact RWN for more information. Sponsorship and insert options are also available.

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See pages 19 & 31 for competitions.

### COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Information on how to enter and prize details form part of the Terms & Conditions. By entering the competition, entrants accept these Terms & Conditions. 2. To enter, you must provide your full name and postal details, and in 25 words or less answer the competition question. 3. Entries must be posted to the stated address by the stated date. 4. This competition is a game of skill. The best answer as judged by the RWN will win. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be transferred or redeemed for cash. The winner will be notified by mail within 14 days from the judging date.

### DISCLAIMER

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'A rose is a rose is a rose', so the saying goes... and yet another... 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet'.

As people, we wear so many hats, so how do we keep our identity? Will I always be the same person, no matter where I am and who I am with? Or, do I change my persona to fulfil the expectations of the people or group that I am with, to suit the circumstances?

Over the past 18 years I guess I have ventured into the 'chameleon' category. My husband and I took the opposite of a 'sea change', selling all that we had on the coast and moving inland to a mixed farming enterprise. It seemed like a good idea at the time and I foolishly thought 'give it five years and we'll be back on the coast'.

Having never previously lived on a farm, it was a big venture – away from family and friends that we had made over a lifetime in the Wollongong area. It took five years for me to feel comfortable on the farm and to not want to go back 'home' to visit the friends and relatives on the coast.

Then a dear Aunt passed away. I especially remember her thanksgiving service where the officiating minister took one rose out from a bunch, drew off one

petal at a time and explained how this rose represented my Aunt's life. Life is made up of the many petals, each just a small part of life, yet together representing the person we knew her to be.

It was a very simple illustration, yet very effective. I feel that our identity is something like that. Each day, each experience, each chapter in our life helps us to become the identity that is 'us'. No matter how small, each 'petal' in our life has helped our development. First when younger, as a bud, there is so much potential curled up inside, until gradually unfolding, they work together to form the full bloom that is complete in every way.

At times in my own life, I wonder where things are going, yet I know that given the overall plan the flower that is my identity is still growing and forming, to be completed one day yet to come.

In the meantime, I hope that the pervading perfume of my developing identity will enrich the lives of those whose paths I cross, or walk beside, in the mystery that is life itself.

**Elaine Armstrong**  
**Rural Women's Network**  
**State Advisory Committee**

## IDENTITY

*She  
with limpid eyes, dark and deep,  
looks back through generations  
of her family,  
of her people,  
of the ochre earth.  
So that their eyes  
see through her eyes.  
So that their wisdom  
is woven into her  
and onto her children.  
An unbroken seam of being  
fold on fold  
so the first,  
is in the last.  
And all the while  
the earth is their mother,  
within whose womb  
they find nurture  
and nourishment  
millennia through millennia.*

© JUDITH HYNES, WILLOW TREE

## COMPETITION WINNERS

Congratulations to Lynne Cairns, Grafton who was the lucky winner of 'The 90 Day Quit Smoking Diary' advertised in the No.39 edition of *The Country Web*. See pages 19 and 31 for this edition's competitions.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY 2006

5-6, *BROKEN HILL*

**Agfair** is an agricultural trade fair and field day focusing on dry land agriculture. Attractions include agricultural, horticultural, machinery and equipment displays, merchandise and clothing, exhibition pavilion, and demonstrations and displays with particular interest for rural women, and novelty events for children and family.

For more information, Ph: 08 8088 1844, Fax: 08 8088 4599, Email: [secretary@agfairbrokenhill.com.au](mailto:secretary@agfairbrokenhill.com.au) or Visit: [www.agfairbrokenhill.com.au](http://www.agfairbrokenhill.com.au)

JUNE 2006

19-22, *BOMBALA*

**Shaping Our Futures Together** is a two-day leadership course for women. Topics include: getting more balance in your life; improving self-image; developing action plans; identifying skills; goal setting; assertiveness; communication; and networking.

To register contact Sue Haslingden on Ph: 02 6458 3330 or Jane Murdoch on Ph: 02 6458 5239.

27, *DUBBO*

**Women in Business Growth Strategy Workshop.** Participants

in this workshop will gain an insight into choosing, understanding and growing a market, and attracting customers.

To register, Ph: 1300 650 058 or Email: [pcro@bec.net.au](mailto:pcro@bec.net.au)

2006

**Year of the Outback**

To learn more about what's planned for 2006, follow the links on the Year of the Outback Website to the 'Calendar of Events' and make sure you read the latest newsletter for details and stories surrounding the year. Visit: [www.outbackinfront.com](http://www.outbackinfront.com)

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next edition of *The Country Web* will focus on **Leadership and Mentoring**.

If you have stories, poems, pictures or information of interest, we would love to hear from you.

Contributions required by 7 July for publication September 2006.

Send your stories to: The Editor, RWN, Locked Bag 21, Orange 2800, Fax: 02 6391 3650; or Email: [allison.priest@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:allison.priest@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

After reading Susan Ainge-McLeish's article in the last *Country Web* about the country/city divide I thought I would put pen to paper.

I am a city woman who would love to bridge that divide. The *Web* certainly helps me understand in part what it means for people to live in rural Australia. I wonder if there are ways I could help city women to connect with country women. Do you have any ideas?

Maybe I could help facilitate something. Perhaps an email version of pen pals. Or perhaps a point where a city family could meet a country family if they have a relative in hospital (maybe the city family could invite them for a meal). Perhaps a day where city and country women could meet and share life stories.

Anyway, I am open to ideas and opportunities. Thank you for all the work you put into *The Country Web*. From a city girl to the rural women of Australia – your lives inspire me!

**Kath Henry, Turrumurra**

*Ed: Thanks for your ideas Kath. The annual NSW rural Women's Gathering provides a fabulous opportunity for city and rural women to connect with one another. See page 37 for information on this year's Gathering to be held in Grafton from 20-22 October. To contact Kath, write to Kath Henry, c/- The Country Web, Locked Bag 21, Orange NSW 2800.*

Congrats on a wonderful magazine. I was hoping you could publish something on Menieres disease as I suffer with this condition. I would also like to hear from other people who have this condition!

**Judith Harland, Bourke**

*Ed: Thanks for your suggestion Judith. We have included some information on Menieres disease on page 29. If any of our readers suffer from this condition and would like to get in touch with Judith, write to Judith Harland, c/- The Country Web, Locked Bag 21, Orange NSW 2800.*

## A long hot summer

This summer has been a steamy one, not only high temperatures but also higher humidity across the State. Well, living out west can be exasperating when at 6pm the thermometer is reading 40°C and you have a rather limited way of cooling off.

In desperation, I decided to check out the dam, hidden away in the far paddock. I have never experienced a swim in the still water before, having spent most of my junior years near the ocean.

My husband accompanied me to the dam; the water was perfect for swimming – most inviting. So how was I to lower myself into this oversized swimming pool? I found that the best way to tackle the situation was to go in backwards, slowly, leaning forward with my hands ready to steady myself in case I should slide in the mud. This was most successful and, once I was in deep enough, I could turn around. Magic! The surface was quite warm; however, below, the water was cool, so as I swam I brought the cool water to the surface and travelled in my old track.

I was rarely on my own when swimming in the dam – the chuffs\* would walk along the side for their evening drink and then become quite agitated when I approached their area. While floating on my back I was overwhelmed by the scene above me – clouds changing formation and colour and nothing to block my view. The most spectacular time was when I was swimming at 9.30pm and the sky was a mass of stars, which gave a feeling of closeness, as if the sky was coming to meet me in the water. The only sound was a distant call from a bird and frogs in the creek. It was quite dark so the waterbirds trying to land on the dam very quickly realised that they were not on their own and left.

I am now quite experienced and not the least bit bothered by the wildlife sharing my waterhole. If you have never tried swimming in your dam then do so. Where else can you have your own private

waterhole in the middle of nature and no neighbours to see if you're clothed or not!

*\*The Chuff is a member of the Currawong family. We call them our native chooks. They scratch in the garden removing the mulch and dig with their beaks looking for grubs. They are very tame and travel in families. They steal young from other families by circling the young and holding out their wings, moving the young bird away from its territory. The purpose of all this is to build up their family number. Late in the afternoon they hold a corroboree by forming a circle and holding out their wings, moving around the circle while making a great deal of noise.*

**Lynne Jones, Milvale**

*Ed: While swimming in a dam can be a lot of fun it can also be dangerous, especially for children. Always check the depth, current and flow of water and check for submerged objects, and, most importantly, never leave children unsupervised near the water.*

I would like to open up discussion on the topic of drug addiction, and the lack of support for people who are grappling with the results of and recovery from substance abuse.

The discovery that one of your children has a drug problem is one of the hardest things to experience. The feeling of helplessness is all encompassing. These feelings are amplified when you live in a rural or remote area, as there are just not enough professional services available.

The lack of places in reputable rehabilitation units is appalling, with waiting lists of up to three months, and a policy of ringing once a week on a particular day at a set time, hoping for a place, almost hoping someone else's child has dropped out and left.

The first few weeks after my child was released from hospital, after experiencing a drug induced psychosis, brought about the realisation that there is an

immediate need for more funding for places in rehabilitation centres.

Because of the stigma of drug addiction, politicians perhaps do not want to be associated with the issue; however, the incidence of amphetamine, meth-amphetamine and ecstasy use is rising, and these drugs cause severe psychiatric reactions. The statistics given to me by my doctor are chilling. Crystal meth users have a life span of around two years. 80 per cent will re-use within the first month, and the incidence of permanent psychosis rises if you re-use. It is one of the most highly addictive drugs.

After the initial symptoms of extreme paranoia have passed and the psychosis has ended, usually in a matter of a few days, the Mental Health Act is revoked and the patient is released back into the community. For country parents, this is where the real nightmare begins.

The desperate wish to get your child to a safe place as soon as possible, so they can begin to recover, is hindered by the fact that if the person is over 18 years old, you have no legal right to force them.

The long waiting lists and self-referral policy of most rehab units, mean that unless you stay in the city and watch over your child day and night, in those crucial first few weeks of detox, they are at incredible risk of becoming just another statistic, but by bringing them home to a rural situation, they do not have access to the professional care that they need.

The need for more government funded rehabilitation units, preferably single sex, that are safe and secure (and not full of hardened criminals looking for a way out of jail) is urgent.

Drug addiction has no social boundaries, it can happen to your sons and daughters, as it did to mine.

**Anonymous,  
Western Division**



RWN team l to r: Allison Priest (Assistant Coordinator), and Sonia Muir (Coordinator)

The Rural Women's Network (RWN) is a state-wide government program within the NSW Department of Primary Industries, and is based at Orange. The RWN works in innovative ways to share information and promote action on rural women's issues, often in partnership with individuals, groups and non-government and government agencies.

The RWN:

- provides information and referrals;
- supports the development of local initiatives;
- works with rural women and families to identify and bring attention to priority issues;
- develops projects with other agencies to address needs;
- provides a medium for networking and information sharing;
- promotes the profile of rural women;
- provides a two-way link between government and rural women; and
- provides policy advice.

For more information, contact the RWN on Ph: 02 6391 3620 or Email: rural.women@dpi.nsw.gov.au

# rwn report

By Sonia Muir, RWN Coordinator

The Country Web's focus on identity made me think about my own sense of self, and what is an Australian? Is it someone who was born here or someone who travels across the globe and chooses to live here? It is a question we continue to grapple with and one I can't answer here but is worth thinking about. You see I feel very Australian and yet I also have a strong connection to Eastern Europe. Both my parents have Romanian heritage. Dad was born there and Mum was born here, but only just! (My Grandmother was pregnant on the ship coming to Australia.) My husband is from Scotland, my brother-in-law's mother is Latvian and my cousin has married a guy from Cameroon. There is a lot of cultural mixing just in my own little family.

We have Dad's name (Mihai Pansaru) enshrined on the Welcome Wall at Darling Harbour ([www.anmm.gov.au/ww](http://www.anmm.gov.au/ww)) The wall is a great tribute to people who have come to Australia and have contributed to our identity, heritage and wealth. I am proud to say I have European heritage and yet I am, and always will be, quintessentially Australian... I just have an extra layer to my sense of self.

My husband has recently had another kind of identity change. He has gone from working 28 years as a chef in the hospitality industry to a job with a Federal Government Department. I admire him for taking such a step at the age of

45. It is not easy to go outside one's comfort zone and jump into a whole new world but it can also be a positive and re-invigorating experience.

I have regained my husband after being a 'work widow' for nearly 20 years so for me it is fantastic! We so often underestimate our ability to adapt to change. The key is to make sure you have a good support network. Then you never have to go it alone if you don't want to.

The Rural Women's Network continues to work with other agencies and rural women to ensure women's identities are acknowledged and valued.

The RIRDC Award again this year shows us what talent there is in rural communities and industries. Kate Schwager, the winner, is an example of how women entrepreneurs are bringing new life to small rural towns. Mary Howard, the runner-up, is a pilot light for the fishing industry, and Cath Ford is showing how sustainability can work for macadamia and coffee production. If you would like to see these women up close and personal the RWN is happy to lend copies of the Award DVD, which includes clips of the women in their 'workplaces'; the cotton field, the river and the plantation. Start thinking now about the 2007 Award and how you could use the \$10,000 bursary to make a difference to your industry and community – you could be the next winner.

One of our most recent RWN projects involves publishing a small book of the Daring to Dream stories. These are stories of inspiring women who are following their passions. You will hear more when it is ready to be launched.

I have been running the Shaping Our Futures Together course from one end of the State to the other. I am forever grateful for the chance this gives me to meet so many diverse and incredible rural women.

Our RWN State Advisory Committee continues to play a key role by providing feedback and advice on key issues. If you want your voice to be heard please contact a member (see details on page 35). We can't guarantee to change the world but we can ensure your message gets through to those in positions of influence. The SAC meets three times a year and the next meeting will be held mid-June.

The Grafton Women's Gathering is shaping up to be a purple bonanza with the jacaranda trees being put on notice to burst with colour from 20-22 October this year. Mark your calendar and make sure you plan a short (or long) family holiday to the North Coast and experience the 'Big River Dreaming'. A full program will be published in the next Country Web.

Don't forget we are always looking for letters, stories and poems from rural women so grab that pen now!

Visit the Rural Women's Network internet site at [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn)



# The search for the real me

Peter Perisce, Psychologist, Centacare Bathurst

Personal identity – who we are – in today's world is a quite fundamental question that challenges many of us.

We don't just have a single personal identity. Who and what we are is actually a combination of several 'selves', all of which depend on who we are 'inside'. This is all driven by our values at any particular time. It is also why people may transform as they go through 'life changing experiences' – such as having a baby, attending university and negotiating personal relationships, changing jobs, or maybe moving house like so many 'sea' or 'tree changers'.

There are also influences coming from 'outside' ourselves. In today's world a person's appearance features to an absurd extent. Body image can dominate emotional landscapes so much that it becomes an obsession for many individuals – hence the current proliferation of slimming clinics, diet and health studios, plastic surgical procedures, botox injections, eating disorders and body piercing.

In today's world, it would appear from the covers of the bulk of women's magazines that the highest form of perfection for being 'woman' is thin, busty, with beautifully groomed hair, professionally applied make-up and expensive clothes and accessories. The primary focus becomes the outward 'good looks' with less focus on inner qualities such as 'good brain', 'good heart' or 'good worker'.

Was it always like this? If we reflect on changes in roles and values occurring over the last few years we can see so many changes in the way we view ourselves – our identities.

For instance, when I was growing up, women's identities primarily focused on caring for others – children, the house and all those homemaking activities that many

women resented. Back then, men did not contribute very much at all to these tasks even if the woman worked outside the home (and many still don't today).

People's identity strongly related to family. My memory of the time was that most people lived near or with relatives. Australia was also predominantly Anglo-Celtic without the rich ethnic mix of today. We did not even recognise the 'original Australians' as 'citizens' until 1967 when Indigenous people were granted the right to vote.

Back in those days, sex roles seemed a lot clearer than today. A man was often quite content with himself as long as he was a 'good provider'. The rest might have been an absolute mess, but if he saw his primary role as the one who went to work and brought home money or the one who worked his butt off farming, then he was an OK bloke in his own mind.

Go back 50 years and it was also reasonably clear for women. To be seen as personally adequate, women had to be OK morally, be meticulously tidy, have neat well-behaved children and be skilled in cooking and various handcrafts and to look after everyone.

Consequently, it is no surprise that advice in 1950's school Home Economics textbooks recommended that girls be good cooks and dress up for their husbands when they came home from work. These girls were advised to ask about how their future husband's day had gone and not to complain about their own, as well as making sure the children were bathed and fed and that nothing interfered with the husband's relaxation time.

Today's society is one where the roles and identities are much more complex and people aren't locked into such rigid roles as these. There is now a lot more

opportunity for a diversity of personal identities despite us living in the age of mass media which constantly emphasizes appearances and manipulates us with images that create expectations of what is or isn't desirable. We also live in a fast world where people want instant meals, instant wealth and instant relationships. The concept of taking things slowly is seen by many as less desirable. These are all things which influence who we think we are or 'should' be.

In searching for the 'Real Me' in today's world, we will partly be what we were and partly be what we are in the process of becoming. Parts of our personal identity will also get tied in with which particular groups we identify, or which are seen as being important.

Personal identity therefore is not as stable nor is it as unitary as we may have first thought. It can vary over time, be manipulated by others and society, and may change enormously across situations. However we do have the power to deliberately and systematically work on ourselves in terms of what we would prefer the Real Me to be. And let's face it: some stuff about ourselves should be kept, but other bits tossed out.

Maybe, then, all of us should wear this symbolic T-shirt that proclaims loudly to the world “ ***I may not be perfect, but parts of me are excellent.*** ” ■

*Centacare is a charitable non-profitable organisation offering child, adolescent, adult and family counselling services to all people regardless of creed, race, social or economic status. It provides a range of assistance – such as family and child mediation, men's programs, family relationship and marriage counselling, individual therapy, bereavement counselling, as well as a wide range of educative programs – such as pre-marriage education, parenting programs, and other preventative work. To contact Centacare Ph: 1800 231 118 freecall (Bathurst area) or Ph: 1800 443 855 freecall (Dubbo area).*

***Plenty of people miss their share of happiness, not because they never found it, but because they didn't stop to enjoy it. WILLIAM FEATHER***

# My home, my heart

By Jackie Huggins AM. From 'Voices of Australia: A collection of real-life stories about Australians living together. Published by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. October 2005



*Jackie Huggins is an Indigenous Australian of the Bidjara (Central Queensland) and Birri-Gubba Juru (North Queensland) peoples. Among many of her leadership positions, Jackie is currently Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia and Director of the Australian Centre for Indigenous History at the Australian National University. In 2001 she was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (AM) for her work with Indigenous people, particularly through reconciliation, literacy, women's issues and social justice.*

My sense of what it means to be Aboriginal was very strong all through my childhood. It was instilled in me by my family and particularly by my mother that being Aboriginal was something to be very proud of. That pride has always stayed with me.

It's got a lot to do with why I have been involved in reconciliation for such a long time. I want to share that pride with all Australians – a sense of what it means to live in a country with such a long and rich history.

There was a particular moment I remember as a child when my identity as an Aboriginal Australian was reinforced.

I've heard there is this kind of moment for a lot of people. For me, it was in Grade 3 and the teacher said to the class 'stand up all those students who are Australian'. We all stood, of course, and then he pointed to me and said 'Jackie is the only real Australian here' and he explained why he felt that way.

It was an incredible thing for me to have this young, blonde, non-Indigenous man expressing something so strong and public about who I was and about my place in this country.

The experience gave me some strong clues for later life about recognition and respect being the main ingredients of reconciliation, and how these qualities improve relationships. Australians are essentially very good at relationships and that's what reconciliation is all about.

It hardly needs to be said that there is one overriding reason why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians get and stay involved in reconciliation.

It's the heartache for our communities, and the great fear and hope for our kids, and the opportunities they will have to fulfil their potential and make a contribution to Australia.

The plight of our people does not weigh us down in this task. It drives us to find a way forward, no matter how long it takes.

Some of us have been involved in reconciliation for a long time.

It can be dispiriting but it can also be uplifting, and once you have felt reconciliation, you know it to be something achievable, and so right and good that you can't help but keep coming back for more.

Because things are changing – too slowly for many of my brothers and sisters – but they are changing and there are now numbers of Australians who can tell us about that change so that we might grow it into something.

It is wonderful to be identified as an Australian who cares for their community.

I had the great advantage of coming from a well-known and respected family which was always part of the community. Once your community sees you doing things for it, people feel and show pride and support which is the greatest of gifts and reinforcements. It far outweighs the difficulties of leadership.

And when you are noticed for the good job you are doing in the community, there's a chain reaction where you are identified to take on bigger and broader responsibilities. This is why there is such a hunger for emerging young Indigenous leaders at the national level and why it is vital for older leaders to mentor, communicate and allow younger people to take the lead also.

It's a very Aboriginal thing to do, to give younger people greater responsibilities within the community as they become able to take those responsibilities on. It is a culturally appropriate transfer of roles that involves respect in both directions – from the younger to the older and the older to the younger.

Every day I speak to my Mother who passed on nine years ago. Every day I ask her to guide me in my journeys. When I have to speak at a big event, when I am restless and nervous, I meditate for a few moments and I feel her tap on my shoulder to tell me she is there with me.

She then calls in the ancestors and I am surrounded by them. They tell me to 'go for it'. Which is what I have done – and tell my young sisters to do so also.

Australia is home to me and home to people from all over the world. But it is more than the land in which I live. It is my 'mother', 'my identity', my 'heart'. It dictates how I relate to other people.

Aboriginal people are happy to share our land and our history with people from many cultures. Together we can create an even stronger, more harmonious and richer Australia which values all of our different legends and stories. It is this sharing of cultures that makes reconciliation real. ■

# Breaking down barriers

By Jason Yat-sen Li. From 'Voices of Australia: A collection of real-life stories about Australians living together. Published by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. October 2005

**Jason Yat-sen Li was born in Australia after his parents migrated to Australia from Hong Kong in 1959. Jason is an international lawyer, specialising in corporate social responsibility. He is currently Deputy Chairman of the Australian Republican Movement, a board member of the Sydney Institute and Governor of The Smith Family. Jason continues to be involved in a number of social and political campaigns advancing multiculturalism, anti-racism and cultural diversity.**

Many years ago, when I was living in Holland, a Dutch guy in a pub asked me where I was from. I told him I was Australian. He looked at me again and, after some thought, said: 'You know, you don't look very Australian. Are you sure you're not Japanese?'

I admire my parents and other immigrants a great deal. It takes some serious guts to pack up everything you have and move to a new foreign land, where you have no friends, no language, no contacts, no foundations. Most of us can't even leave jobs that we don't like, let alone uproot to another part of the world.

When my parents first migrated to Australia from Hong Kong, they faced different types of barriers. Australia was a less sophisticated society, far less connected globally, far less diverse and multicultural. My father came on a boat – four weeks in 4th class, crammed into a small cabin with 50 others from Hong Kong and a few coffins for good measure for those who did not make it. It was 1959. He was 18. Robert Menzies was Prime Minister and Australia was very British. People ate roast beef, gravy and Yorkshire pudding for dinner; fish always on Fridays. The White Australia Policy was in full swing. It wasn't that there

were restaurants that had signs that said 'No dogs and Asians allowed'. This was Sydney after all – not the American Deep South. But still, he would wait at restaurants whilst groups arriving after him were shown tables ahead of him. But still, he would not get jobs for which he was more qualified than the successful candidate. But still, he was pushed over on George Street and told to speak English.

Dad became an Australian citizen in 1972 and was given a Citizenship Card. Even though the card was controversial and abandoned soon after it was launched, he told me, 'I carried it around in my wallet for years in case I was challenged so I would have something to show.'

There were nights where Dad was woken by shouting and banging on the door of the room which he rented from a landlady who lived alone in Punchbowl. Her boyfriends would have been on the grog that night and were convinced that Dad was a Japanese spy and wanted to bash him. Unlike Bruce Lee, my Dad was no kung fu expert.

Some 16 years after Dad arrived in Australia, the Racial Discrimination Act (the RDA) was passed and racial discrimination became

unlawful. That was a very powerful public symbolic gesture. It reflected a society's changing aspirations and values. It was a great achievement in its day.

Today, Australia is a very different place from 30 years ago. We have become one of the world's success stories in terms of creating a harmonious, diverse population. But deep prejudices and tall barriers remain.

For the Australians who experience racism or prejudice, the RDA could do little, as most cases of prejudice are very personal, difficult to put your finger on, difficult to substantiate, deeply hurtful and most often suffered in silence. At the end of High School, I came first in NSW for 2 and 3 unit English. But that did not stop the man dining at the restaurant where I waited tables from stopping me as I asked if I 'could take his plate', putting a hand on my arm and explaining condescendingly: 'It's may I take your plate.' Or the company executive who, at the law firm where I was working as a paralegal during university, from pulling my supervising partner aside and asking 'Are you sure his English is ok?' Or the car full of young guys who yelled at

me at a service station on the North Coast: 'Go home. Get on your boat!' Or the talkback callers who, after a televised Republic Referendum debate in which I was arguing for a move to a Republic, said on air, 'You shouldn't listen to that Jason Yat-sen Li – he's not a real Australian'.

A law cannot change people's hearts, just as a law cannot itself create a society of harmony, shared identity and shared purpose.

The barriers therefore are not so much about discrimination. The barriers are about belonging. About how difficult it is for people who are different to feel like they can belong. These are the barriers of not having the connections of shared history. The barriers of not having shared identity, shared schooling, shared relationships, shared culture. The barriers in our own minds. The lack of confidence. The absence of trust.

These are deeply personal barriers, but at the same time are barriers for our entire community. It is so important for a community to create a sense of belonging and identity for all of its citizens because if you don't feel like you belong to something, you are not likely to want to participate in it or be a part of its life and growth.

Breaking down barriers means continuing to build a truly inclusive definition of what it means to be Australian. One in which anyone can feel like they have a place. The RDA is a starting point, a necessary precondition. But we have so much more work to do.

Like building on our great Anzac stories and including other stories that speak of the