

# REFLECTION:

## HSC Geography via regional NSW and Central Australia

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During the Easter holidays my Year 12 Geography class and I had the opportunity to join Menai High School on their Geography focused camping expedition around regional NSW and Central Australia – a trip that was superbly conceived, organised and lead by GTANSW Councillor David Proctor. This is a reflective piece about the way I saw an experience such as this providing us with unique examples to consider across each topic of the HSC Geography course. The focus for this piece is People and Economic Activity. Future articles in upcoming editions of the *Geography Bulletin* will address Urban Places and then Ecosystems At Risk.

### People and Economic Activity

**The Junee Licorice and Chocolate factory** is an enterprise study worth considering if doing Tourism as an economic activity. The *nature* of this enterprise is explored through characteristics such as size and ownership (family owned, employs up to 50 local staff); and product and market (approximately 1½ tonnes of organic licorice is produced for export and distribution across Australia each week; chocolate was added to expand the product range and increase product value).

The *locational* factors of this enterprise are also interesting. For example, it is located in a repurposed flour mill at Junee, where climate and topography are ideal for growing wheat and other agricultural products. Whilst contemplating 'why in a flour mill?' we discovered that wheat (in the form of flour) is a crucial ingredient to licorice. The Junee Licorice and Chocolate factory is a popular tourist destination as part of the 'foodie trail' (300 visitors per week) and significantly contributes economically to both Junee (thus preventing urban decay and demise of a country town) and the Riverina region. Being in a converted flour mill and using Riverina suppliers the factory also acknowledges the heritage and agricultural wealth of Junee and the Riverina.

Junee is a small country town of approximately 4,000 people. It is 41 km NE of the regional centre Wagga

(approximately 22,000 people) and 444 km SW of Sydney (4.8 million people; a secondary world city). Junee has a typical 'country town' appearance with wide streets, locally owned shops and heritage buildings with awnings and verandahs. It is the birthplace of NRL legends Ray Warren and Laurie Daley which also contributes to the appeal of tourism to the town.

*Ecological dimensions* can be identified through factors such as low food miles, local suppliers and produce and a sustainable approach towards production. The licorice is certified organic and sold



*The Junee Licorice and Chocolate factory*

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A useful way to obtain information!

under the 'Green Grove' label in a small number of selected stores around Australia. It is the organic nature, 'niche-ness' of the licorice, and the connection of the family, factory and product to the local area that is appealing to the typical tourist group: the grey-nomad or foodie trail tourist. The *internal and external linkages* are plentiful including on-site training of staff, factory tours, chocolate coating of the licorice to add value and inclusion of services such as a café and online purchasing of the products (internal); and local food related competitors in the Riverina region as well as the connection with local and organic suppliers (external). The *effects of global change* on this enterprise are related to factors such the growth of the organic food industry and new international markets interested in accessing organic produce; and the growth of domestic and regional tourism.



Chocolate at the licorice factory!

The **Yulara resort at Uluru** (Northern Territory) is a larger economic enterprise to consider if investigating tourism as an economic activity. Apart from the diversity of visitors staying at Yulara (campers and caravanners through to 5 star resort-ers), there is a variety of businesses situated within the resort such as restaurants, souvenir shops, a museum and other retail stores. The extent of *internal and external linkages* evident across the resort makes for an interesting study. Something I did notice was the authentic inclusion and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the businesses and activities around Yulara and the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. An example of this is the Kulata Academy Café – a traineeship program aimed at developing careers in hospitality.



Signage in the Kulata Academy Café, Yulara resort.



Signage in Kulata Academy Café, Yulara resort.

Another interesting and unexpected enterprise related to Tourism were the cattle stations, particularly Kings Creek Cattle Station, although Curtin Springs would also be suitable.

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The entrance to Kings Creek Cattle Station



The entrance to Curtin Springs Cattle Station

To provide an example about how this remote cattle station can connect with the syllabus as an economic enterprise, the *nature* of Kings Creek Cattle Station can be investigated through factors such as size and ownership (family owned; 15 contractual and/or volunteer staff; 1800 sq km); and product and market (cattle and camel breeding and export mostly to the Middle East, south east Asia and domestic markets; short stay destination for international and domestic tourists; popular destination for documentary production about life in the outback). It is estimated about 300,000 visitors camp at Kings Creek Station each year either using their own camping equipment such as tents or caravans, or using one of the 25 cabins provided by the station. Tourism accounts for 60-70% of annual income for Kings Creek Station. Easter until September is the most popular time for tourists to visit.

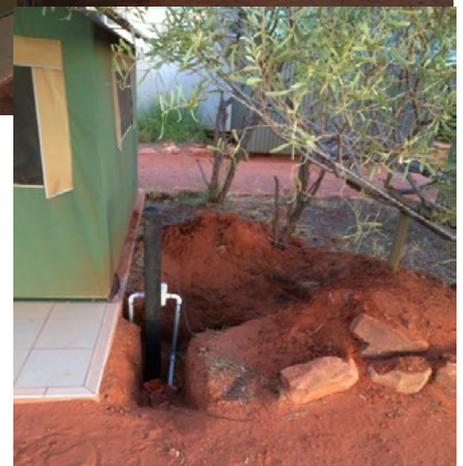
*Locational* factors seem to always make reference to the remoteness and isolation of the station for example being 300km SW of Alice Springs and 300km E of Uluru and being equidistance between the east and west coasts, as well as equidistance between the northern and southern coastlines. This meant that the station had to be as self-sufficient as possible due to the 'tyranny of distance', for example, mail is delivered once a week via the 'mail plane'; they generate their own electricity via two diesel generators; and water is obtained from two bores: one is 150m below ground level and the other is 50m below ground level. These factors are all related to *ecological dimensions* of the station.

An example of *global change* affecting Kings Creek Cattle Station (although in this example not specifically related to Tourism) is the increasing popularity of camel meat and camel milk. Australian camels are currently free of a respiratory disease prevalent in Middle Eastern bred camels, and are therefore attractive produce for international markets. Camel milk does not require refrigeration and is a popular source of fluid for many

living in desert communities outside Australia. In Australia, camel milk is sold as 'bath milk' because laws state that all milk should be pasteurised before human consumption. Medical research emerging from the Middle East suggests that conditions such as ADHD can be controlled by regular ingestion of camel milk. Closer to home, Flinders University (South Australia) is researching the possibility of camel blood being a cure for diabetes. Live export regulations can be problematic due to cost, rest times and transport restrictions when moving camels vast distances by road and sea. Currently, Kings Creek Station are finding it challenging to meet the quantity of live camels ordered for export due to the increasing popularity of Australian camels for their purity and quality of camel milk.



The cabins at Kings Creek Cattle Station



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I will leave it to you to determine where this story from Kings Creek Cattle Station fits into the syllabus...

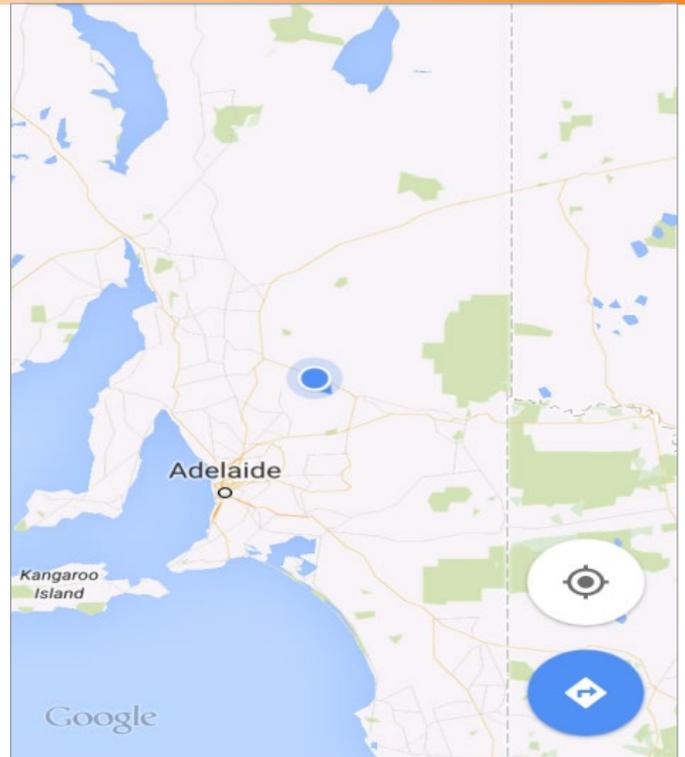
Ian Conway is the owner of Kings Creek Cattle Station. As the station became successful he wanted to contribute to the local Aboriginal communities. He did this via the establishment of Conways Kids – a fund to provide the chance for Aboriginal young people from the Kings Canyon area to access educational opportunities at boarding school in Adelaide. It is important to remember many of these young people speak English as a second language and live hundreds of kilometres from the schools in Alice Springs. In contemporary policy speak; Ian Conway has been working hard for many years to help 'close the gap'.

If mining is the chosen tourist activity then it is hard to go past an enterprise study of an **Opal Mine at Coober Pedy** (South Australia). Alternatively there is the now vacant but heritage listed open-cut copper mine at Burra (South Australia). However, many would say Burra is now an interesting tourist destination being recognised as a heritage village and located on the main route through to Adelaide or the Red Centre from the east coast. Burra was settled by English, Cornish and Welsh miners and this open cut copper mine was the largest in the southern hemisphere. Interestingly, the homestead shown on the cover of Midnight Oil's Diesel and Dust album is on the outskirts of Burra – another reason to visit!



*Open-cut copper mine, Burra*

In closing, the incredible remoteness of places, the extent of observational change in the surrounding soils and landscapes, and the lack of mobile phone reception for many hours at a time was well-noted throughout the trip to 'Centralia'. An inquiry in to places visited (as a tourist and a geographer) was often conducted via observation and the extensive taking of photographs in the hopes that via reflection and discussion with others, answers to 'why?' and 'how?' would emerge. However, doing these inquiries in conjunction with talking to the local population and



*Close to Burra (blue dot NE of Adelaide)*

reading the local newspapers such as NTTimes helped to make sense of an unfamiliar place, environment or community. The newspapers revealed much about the positive and negative effects of economic activities such as tourism and mining across the Northern Territory and also South Australia, for example: <http://www.ntnews.com.au/lifestyle/new-uluru-flights-boost-to-red-centre-tourism/story-fnkd45ts-1226851861599> and <http://www.ntnews.com.au/news/national/darwin-not-the-next-big-mining-hub-expert/story-fnjbnyj-1227134322637>. We also came across several adverts that brought attention to the relevance of locating places by latitude and longitude:



*Opal mine, Coober Pedy*

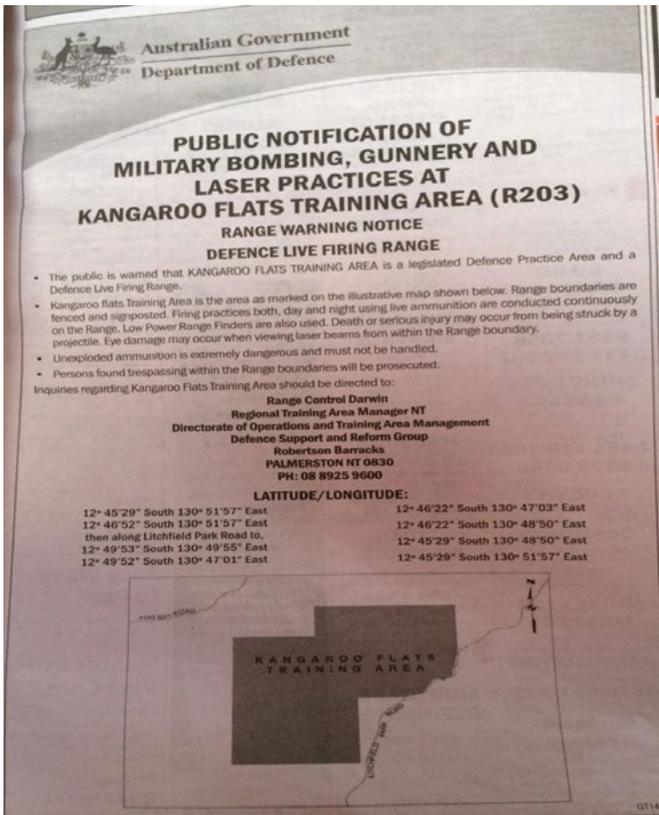
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Coober Pedy at sunrise



Inside a vacant opal mine



Taken from NT Times, 11 April 2015

Mining, agriculture and Tourism are significant economic activities across regional NSW and Central Australia and the trip provided many opportunities to explore related enterprises – some enterprises such as the cattle stations provided a link between economic activities, for example tourism and agriculture. Other enterprises such as mines and/or factories provide a link in to Urban Places as it is the existence of these enterprises that contribute to increased prosperity, population and interest in a country town, thus preventing its demise. In the next edition of the Geography Bulletin, this trip across regional NSW and Central Australia will be explored in the context of Urban Places.



Mount Conner from the Lasseter Highway



A salt lake, seen from Lasseter Highway



Lasseter Highway