

# Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation Community Builder of the Week



## Celebrating our abilities

ENCOURAGING, supporting and amplifying positive community action.

Ananias is a proud employee at McDonald's Alice Springs, celebrating his two-year anniversary with the highly regarded and awarded local Macca's last month.

Working at Macca's has supported Ananias with a greater sense of independence, Ananias highlighting that his team at Macca's feel like his extended family.

Outside of work, Ananias spends his time volunteering at Bark 'N' Bath Doggy Day Care and loves to stay active, from parasailing, jet skiing and abseiling.

Ananias is one of many living with an intellectual disability that is employed by Macca's through a disability employment service.

Macca's are long-standing supporters of creating opportunities for people with disability in their restaurants and continue to find ways to represent the incredible diversity of

communities. Last week, they announced an exciting new three-year partnership with Paralympics Australia and the Australian Paralympics team. The landmark deal highlights Macca's support for the nation's elite Para-athletes striving to compete for Australia at the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris.

Alice Springs residents living with a disability, their families and support workers, who all make a valued contribution to our wonderful community celebrated their collective achievements last week with awards on the Alice Springs Town Council laws for International Day of People with Disability, officially on Sunday, December 3.

If you'd like to nominate someone to be the Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation Community Builder of the Week, email [editorial@centraliantoday.com.au](mailto:editorial@centraliantoday.com.au) and let us know who, why you think it would be great for the community to know about what they are doing and how to contact them.



DEDICATED: Ananias with his Macca's "family" Chloe and Mat Peters. 377314

Picture: SUPPLIED



Noteworthy: The Bindi Mail Run Team received the Mayor's Noteworthy Award. 377308

Picture: PHIL WILLIAMS



Project: Strong Feelings were awarded the NT Arts Access Project award for 2023. 377308

Picture: PHIL WILLIAMS



Champions: Graham Wilfred and Royston Thomas with gold medal Paralympian swimmer, Blake Cochran and Mayor Matt Patterson after being honoured with the Champions Award. 377308

Picture: PHIL WILLIAMS

# Faces of Australia

Ted Egan



## In 15 years and 20 minutes... The Drover's Boy

I often tell people that I composed my song *The Drover's Boy* "in fifteen years and twenty minutes". It's perhaps my best-known song. Here's the background.

In the early 1950s I was a Cadet Patrol Officer with the old Native Affairs Branch of NT Administration. I travelled on a few occasions with my dear friend and mentor Patrol Officer Ted Evans to some of the big stations in our north-west regions – places like VRD, Wave Hill, Inverway.

I have always been a good listener and observer, so I learned just so much from those fascinating journeys. The language, the terminology, the customs prevailing in the unique lifestyle were just so different from my Melbourne upbringing. The wisdom of Ted Evans was a crucial factor in my education.

The various roles of Aboriginal men, women and children on those stations were all meaningful. In those times. No wonder so many traditional First Australian people today look back nostalgically on 'station life' where life had more meaning.

I noticed with great interest that there was invariably a group of elderly Aboriginal women present wherever there was activity around the horses and cattle. They sat in little groups

around fires, perhaps heating branding irons and billies of tea, usually making damper for dinner camp. They freely gave advice to the men, black and white; it was joyful that they were respected for their considerable knowledge.

Over many more years I became more experienced, visited many more stations and began my long career of composing and singing songs. On a visit to Wave Hill an old woman accosted me for this exchange:

Q. 'You the fella write the song, ain't it?' TE: You-ai Q. 'What about a song for we fellas, we womans?' TE. Tell me your stories and I'll try.

That started a long series of discussions about their experiences "in the cattle". They insisted that they were "better than the men". "We were kind to horses, gentle with the cattle, when the white men got on the grog we still watched the mob".

I could sense that a song was in the offing. But gradually their stories took them to various well-known cattle market places, like Gepps Cross (SA) Midland Junction (WA) Tamworth (NSW).

"Hang on" I interposed, "How did you get to places like that?"

"When we drovers" was the response.

I knew the rules, the laws, the conventions. "But hang on, Aboriginal women aren't allowed to go outside the Territory as drovers". I was aware that such laws were introduced after deplorable treatment of women in earlier times.

They explained, with no acrimony, no vitriol: "We go those places alright, with the cattle.

When that new law come in, the white men who owned us (sic) gave us new names".

They explained the procedure. "We wearing trouser, shirt, hat, just like man. They cut our hair short. Right, you name Geoffrey, you Roger, you Tommy". Much laughter accompanied these reminiscences.

So a good theme for a song was developing, but not emerging. Then, one day in 1981, I was having a long lunch with my mate, historian Peter Forrest at The Overlanders in Alice Springs. Peter was giving a very popular set of talks in Alice.

"What are you working on at the moment?" he asked.

Well, I'm sure you'll know where I'm coming from. I've got a song in my head but it hasn't happened yet. It's about the notion that Aboriginal women were masqueraded as males in the old droving days".

He sipped on his wine, reflectively. "Ah, yes" he mused "the drover's boys".

I jumped to my feet. "The Drover's Boy" I didn't quite roar, but I headed for the door. I left Peter to finish the lovely bottle of Peter Lehmann Shiraz. I called: "See you later this arvo".

I walked quickly to the Stuart Arms, where I lived, sat down at my little cassette recorder and sang my song. Later that afternoon I handed Peter a copy of the cassette.

"The Drover's Boy. Thank you mate".

### The Drover's Boy

*They couldn't understand why the drover cried  
As they buried The Drover's Boy*

*For the drover had always seemed so hard*

*To the men in his employ*

*A bolting horse, a stirrup lost*

*The Drover's Boy was dead*

*The shovelled dirt, a mumbled word*

*Then it's back on the road ahead*

*And forget about, The Drover's Boy.....*

As I mentioned, it's probably my best-known song. It's available on iTunes Ted Egan See you next week. Aritjinanga.