

Oh possum, you are a hero in the heat

The recent heatwave from hell may have lifted, but the work never stops for wildlife carers who are at the frontline when it comes to caring for distressed native animals, like this week's Quiet Hero.

A Chinese coat of many memories

This week in our new section, Treasures, we asked well-known Port Fairy resident Di Clanchy to choose something precious from her visits to China and what a glorious choice she has made...

Time for a fresh start with Australia Day



Analysis – Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"]S[/dropcap]omething ugly happened in a Warrnambool supermarket last week.

A young woman wearing what she no doubt thought was a “patriotic” t-shirt for Australia Day, hurled abuse at another couple of women for speaking in Italian.

“Why don’t you speak f*&%ing English!” she yelled, among other things.

Shortly after hearing about this incident, I was driving into town and noticed the tradesman’s van in front of me proudly displaying a bumper sticker: “Like it, or leave!!”

These might not be earth-shattering incidents on their own, but more and more people are finding it deeply troubling that some Australians now feel it is acceptable – even patriotic – to behave in this way.

Since One Nation leader Pauline Hanson wrapped herself in an Australian flag 16 years ago and signalled a shift in the political landscape, Australia Day has taken on a different tone.

Flag waving and overt displays of nationalism were once something we poked fun at in others, especially when it came to highly patriotic Americans, and Australia Day was once little more than a lazy long weekend that may – or may not – [have actually fallen on January 26.](#) (It was only agreed in 1994 to hold Australia Day on January 26 regardless of what day of the week it fell).

For a younger generation, in particular, Australia Day all seemed pretty boring and and rather than wave the flag, they preferred to wave the green-and-gold colours of our sporting teams and sing “Come on Aussie, Come on, Come on.”

Then came a series of pivotal events in the late 90s and early 2000s which turned things on their head and Australia’s nationalism began to turn nasty.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] A
[/dropcap]s a result of this changing political landscape – the launch of One Nation, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, a hard line on refugees – Australians learned to become fearful and defensive.

Some of us began to mis-trust people who didn't look like "us", or talk like "us" or behave like "us", because they were out to "get us". Remember the post 9/11 fridge magnets that encouraged us to be alert not alarmed and to report any suspicious activity on a special hotline?

In the years shortly after, bumper stickers and t-shirts began to appear with a picture of the Australian flag and slogans like "F**k off, we're full", "Like it or Leave" or "100% Aussie".

And instead of waving the flag, we began to wrap ourselves in it, like a shield. For me, this was one of the most memorable images of the [Cronulla riots in 2005](#): angry young men and women draped in Australian flags, hurling abuse.

An influx of cheap, imported patriotic merchandise means that everyone can now cover themselves – and their cars – in the Australian flag on Australia Day, except it no longer feels like Australia Day.

To me, it has increasingly felt like Us and Them Day.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] 0
[/dropcap]f course Australia Day has always been “Us and Them Day” for Australia’s indigenous population. I find it bizarre that we still expect Indigenous Australians to join the party and not be so hung up about January 26 as marking the beginning of the end for their ancient culture. (Australian of the Year Adam Goodes [emphasised this point](#) at the weekend.)

Yet at the same time, Aldi recalled a range of Australia Day t-shirts because the slogan “Australia: Est 1788” was considered offensive – and it is – but isn’t the choice of January 26 underpinned by this very same sentiment?

Perhaps the best way to celebrate our nation as a welcoming, multicultural and tolerant country with a rich indigenous heritage is to recall the whole day and start afresh.

After all, it has [only been since 1994](#) that all the states and territories have, as one, marked January 26 as a public holiday. Various alternative dates have since been proposed – the anniversary of the Eureka Stockade, the anniversary of the Mabo Native Title decision – but each comes loaded with its own politics.

So I would suggest picking a date that is already a glorious,

relaxed and apolitical public holiday: **Boxing Day**.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] A
[/dropcap]side from South Australia, where Boxing Day is Proclamation Day, Boxing Day now has little symbolic meaning in Australia. Ask anyone under 45 what Boxing Day is about and they will probably suggest it is the day the kids starting fighting over their Christmas toys or the first day of a big cricket match.

The [origins of Boxing Day](#), however, are steeped in the tradition of giving, of kindness, of showing respect for those less fortunate.

How perfect, then, that December 26 become **Unity Day**.

A day when we unite as a nation: be it at the MCG watching the Ashes and reviving "Come on Aussie, Come On" (which is so much gentler than "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie Oi, Oi Oi") , or watching the yachts set sail for Hobart, or simply enjoying the calm

that comes after Christmas.

And instead of wrapping ourselves in the Australian flag, maybe on December 26 we peg out a flag on a Hill's Hoist, together with every other flag that we feel represents who we are, so that we are a nation covered in flags – all with the sunshine and breeze blowing through.

“Happy Unity Day”...I like it.



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Moove over cows, the goats are coming!



A house full of happy kids: Melissa Lewis with Mason, 2, Paddy, 4, and one of the 50 goats she is raising for milk production in her venture, Buddy Goat.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] G
[/dropcap]iven Allansford is deep in cow country, **Melissa Lewis** is somewhat of a black sheep by using her 20-acre Allansford property to breed and milk goats.

Melissa, who grew up on a dairy farm near Mortlake and is a

qualified animal nutritionist, has spent the past 18 months building up a herd of about 50 goats with a mix of Toggenburg (brown and white in colour), Saanens (all white) and British Alpine (black and white) that are all known for their high levels of milk production.

And it is the raw goat's milk – and byproducts including cheese, yoghurt and icecream – that Melissa is most interested in developing through her **Buddy Goat** brand, rather than the more conventional path of using the milk to create soaps and cosmetics.

Despite there reportedly being 19 goats on board the First Fleet in 1788, Australia has never really embraced the idea of enjoying a chilled glass of fresh goat's milk in the morning.

"It's funny, but the thought of drinking goat's milk puts a lot of people off and they are far more comfortable with goat's cheese, yet there are so many health benefits to goat's milk," Melissa explains.



Melissa Lewis with the former cow dairy that last September was converted to suit the much smaller goats.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] M
[/dropcap]elissa experienced these benefits first hand when her first son, Paddy, 4, developed asthma several years ago and she changed his diet from cow's to goat's milk. The asthma attacks stopped.

"We forget that goat's milk is actually consumed more than any other milk around the world. It is easier to digest and a lot of people who can't handle cow's milk can drink goat's milk," Melissa says.

She tells the story of one man who was intolerant to cows milk but tried her goats milk and, for the first time in many years, was able to eat a bowl of breakfast cereal with milk. Another woman uses Melissa's raw goat's milk to bathe her young daughter who suffers severe eczema.

Most of Melissa's raw goat's milk is sold by a distributor into Melbourne and Geelong where there is a big demand among particularly the Greek and Italian communities for goat's milk with which to make cheese.



Paddy takes an udderly different view of where

milk comes from, having been raised on goat's milk.

Due to stringent food regulations, Melissa is currently only permitted to sell her products marked for "cosmetic use only" and "not for human consumption", but how customers choose to use the milk is ultimately their decision.

Having spent the past couple of years proving there is a growing market for goat's milk, Melissa is planning to move into the next stage of commercial production.

Last September she and her husband Darcy, a fencing contractor, converted a cow dairy into a goat milking dairy where her girls line up each day – or twice a day when the milk production is high. They also plan to transform part of a large shed on their property into a commercial kitchen.

It is a significant investment, with a pasteuriser costing around \$25,000 alone.

For Melissa, however, it is all about diversification. Apart from her own property, Melissa and her sister **Nicole Ritchie** run a 200-acre farm at Mortlake, across the road from their parent's 1000-acre property where the sisters also agist cattle.

Two young sons and another baby on the way have also made life a little busier for Melissa, but she still has plenty of energy and enthusiasm for her new venture.

"It's about trying new things, seeing where they go and diversifying, because you can't survive off farming alone any more."

For more information on Buddy Goat, you can contact Melissa at goatsmilk@live.com.au or find her on Facebook [here](#).



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Books pave new road for

Melbourne

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