

We The People

Program 29
The Black Stump



I was out with friends a few nights ago and during a pleasant conversation one referred to a location as 'Beyond the Black Stump'. It's a term I grew up with and that most Australians would know well as it's a spot on the map which is a land mark of significant if not remote proportions. So if it's beyond the Black Stump its a distant or unlikely place not seen recently. This got me thinking and so I did a little research and as it turns out the phrase appears to have been introduced by early surveyors who would use a hard blackened stump to place their theodolite on being more stable than early tripods.

Now what's even more intriguing is that the term appears to have originated in Queensland in the 1860's although it's true that a number of towns have claimed it as their own. There are many wonderful Australian sayings including 'It's a Furphy' which comes from the Furphy family in Victoria who made water tanks. During WW1 a private would lead a donkey drawn water cart through the battle field to provide water to the troops. It represented an opportunity to quench their thirst and catch up on the news from home. However the repeated stops of the water cart meant the stories got more and more colourful so the yarns became known as a 'Furphy'. So it could be said the Black Stump is a Furphy too but this little black duck thinks its real. So add to these colloquial sayings 'come in spinner', 'youve got tickets on yourself mate', 'stop draggin the chain' and 'the drovers dog could do a better job. I reckon there should be a school for these iconic sayings so new Australians pick up our rich culture and priceless lingo.

Anyway after that 'furphy' back to the black stump. It seemed to me that this old icon may well be located on the Gold Coast and if so the local Gold Coast City Council would know for sure. So I called them and the first bloke I spoke to was stumped and I pointed that out. I was sent off to every pillar and post to the point where I thought I might have to shoot through like a Bondi Tram, then came the big break. The council people in town planning located the original Black Stump just west of Nerang on an old dirt road partly covered in blackberry bush. Anyhow as it turns out the Council is owed back rates of \$7 million dollars accumulated over 150 years. So I thought this is lower than a snakes belly and I would have to get some inspirational guidance from our Councillors on the matter as it's a national icon mate. I called Eddy Sarroff and he was outraged and spat the dummy. Jan Grew took off like a brides nighty and claimed imunity. Ted Sheheard commented it needed to be grubbed out and units built on the site while Dawn Critclow said I was barkin up the wrong tree and the black stump should be relocated to Southport. Finally however Margaret Grummitt made sense and just wanted to call the coppers.

I wanted to 'up the anti' so I called Anna Bligh but she'd shot through while Bob Katter just wanted to use it for riffle practice and Can do Newman said he needed it like a back pocket in a tee shirt. Well I thought no luck there so stone the crows and back to the Council. There is good news and bad news they said, the councils formed a sub committee to look into the matter and report back once the new computer system is up and running which will be about as useful as lips on a chicken. Anyhow the Black Stump's in safe hands now as Council is flat out like a lizard drinking working toward an outcome through due process fully audited by themselves for a quality outcome for we the people. In the mean time the caravan moves on and the dogs keep barking.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley