



Coober Pedy Street and Road Names

Where did the name of your street come from?



Bill Stretton's (centre) Birthday Party, Jungle 1960

STRETTON ROAD is named for Arthur Edward Stretton, a bushman who patrolled the Dog Fence for 25 years. He was known in Coober Pedy as Old Bill, Uncle Bill or Father Christmas. The nick name of Bill dated back to the days when he rode horses in a circus. He was billed as 'Bronco Bill.' His Father Christmas name derived from his snow white beard and hair.

Bill Stretton was born in 1902 on a remote station on the Nullarbor Plain. After a mixed career which included marriage and different jobs, Bill started work on the Dog Fence in 1941. He had three camels – Jessie and Molly to carry his packs and Ned for riding. The animals were more experienced than Bill, having worked the fence for 5 years with their previous owner. The camels were good company as well as steady workers and Bill was sorry to trade them in on a Land Rover in 1953.

Bill carried tools to repair breaks in the fence. He had bits and brace, wire, spades,

post strainers, crowbar, axe, pliers, wire cutter, etc. Sometimes he had to cut new posts from trees in the creek beds. He carried water and food supplies, dingo traps, a radio transmitter, a medical bag – half a ton of equipment carried between 2 camels. In the early days Bill was paid for his work by station owners in money and/or salted meat. He got 50 shillings a week and was mainly expected to live off the land. He supplemented his income with dingo hunting. He'd set traps or poison baits. The government paid a bounty for dingo scalps.

Bill Stretton got his Father Christmas name because of his full white beard and hair. Chris Butler told the story of why he grew the beard in an article written for the Advertiser in 1977:

'I had 200 dingo traps when I gave it away,' he said, 'When I'd catch a roo though, I would cut off what I wanted and poison the rest with crystallised cyanide.'

Part 21 in a series - by Sue Britt

The cyanide is why he first decided to grow a beard. Before placing it in a carcase he would have to crush the crystals.

'The powder would sometimes get on my face,' he said, 'so I grew the beard so that when it did I would just brush it off without getting any on my skin.' In 1956, suffering from thrombosis and rheumatism, Bill moved to 'civilization' - a small caravan in Coober Pedy. Then in 1961, he returned to the bush, riding the Dog Fence again until 1973.

Kerry Medway told a story about Bill Stretton's rude awakening on one of his supply trips to Coober Pedy:

"Bill, whilst camping out the back of the local store, heard a noise in the backyard, sprang from bed, buckled on his holster and pistol and rushed outside. The chill air quickly brought him back to reality as he realised he had forgotten to put on his trousers." Bill died in 1985 and was buried in the Boot Hill cemetery in Coober Pedy.

Information from: Doyen of the Dog Fence Men by Chris Butler Advertiser 4/5/77

Opal Wonderland of Australia by Kerry Medway

Holding the Line: A History of the South Australian Dog Fence Board 1947 to 2000 by Leith Yelland

CHILD CARE REBATE RELEASED AS FROM THIS WEEK

About 340,000 eligible parents can expect to receive their quarterly Child Care Rebate payment from this week.

Acting Minister for Human Services Anthony Albanese said the Child Care Rebate supported working parents by providing them with financial assistance to meet the costs of child care.

"Of the 700,000 Australian families who receive the Child Care Rebate, about 340,000 choose to receive it quarterly," Mr Albanese said.

"We've increased the Child Care Rebate from 30 per cent to 50 per cent of all approved out-of-pocket child care expenses up to a maximum of \$7,500 per child per year to help families out with the cost of child care," Minister for Early Childhood and Child Care Kate Ellis said.

"We also gave parents the option of having their Child Care Rebate paid fortnightly or

weekly, so parents don't have to wait to receive this crucial assistance.

"Our reforms to make child care more affordable are working - in the last year alone there has been a 9 per cent increase in the number of families accessing child care across Australia.

Mr Albanese said that, even if parents are not entitled to Child Care Benefit, they may still be eligible for the Child Care Rebate.

"Families who receive their Child Care Rebate payments quarterly will begin receiving their second payment and statement for the October to December quarter this week," he said.

"If families have not received the payment in their bank account by Friday, 1 February, they can check online to see whether their quarterly Child Care Rebate payment has been issued."

BI-PARTISAN SUPPORT NEEDED FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION

Local Government Minister Simon Crean today welcomed the release of an interim report on a referendum on financial recognition of local government.

Mr Crean said the Federal Government was clear on its commitment to achieve constitutional recognition of local government, and that it will require support from both political parties and all states, if it is to be successful.

"The Federal Government does not accept the evidence presented to the Committee in relation to the federal financial framework, and the Commonwealth continues to have constitutional support to make grants or payments directly to local government bodies," Mr Crean said.

"The Federal Government has been engaging with the states, local governments and bodies on its commitment to achieving constitutional recognition for local government.

"We acknowledge further work needs to be done with the states to secure the necessary support for a successful referendum.

"The states were waiting for the words. This report now provides those words.

The interim report is available at:
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=jsclg/localgovt/preliminaryreport.htm

"It is not sufficient to simply say that the role of achieving constitutional recognition falls on the Federal Government, we need bi-partisan support for this to go forward. The Coalition must now lobby the states to get behind constitutional recognition.

"Nor can local government leave this task of convincing the states to both major parties. Bodies such as the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) need to be active in lobbying state governments.

"It is in interests of the nation for the Commonwealth to directly fund local government. Local government is the conduit of communities, and today more so than ever local government is called upon to deliver and facilitate services to meet the needs of their communities.

"The interim report demonstrates a successful outcome is possible if governments work together. The Federal Government will await the release of the final report before responding.

"I thank Michelle Rowland MP, Committee Chair, and her fellow committee members for their hard work."