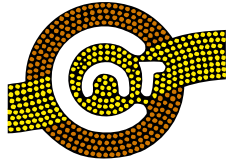


# MULGA BORE

# **our**place *radio*

Volume 6  
Segment 5



**Centre for  
Appropriate  
Technology**

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The Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) is the national Indigenous science and technology organisation. CAT's vision is Happy and Safe communities of Indigenous peoples and its purpose is to secure sustainable livelihoods through appropriate technology. CAT is currently funded from a variety of sources including the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments and private sources.

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## **SEGMENT 5     Mulga Bore Story**

### **Adrian**

We are taking a look at water issues in the remote community of Mulga Bore situated about 260km north east of Alice Springs.

Aboriginal people resettled back at Mulga Bore back in the 1970's, this is where elder Lindsay Bird moved his people back to Anmatjere land known to them as "El Goanna" country.

When Lindsay Bird moved his family back to Mulga Bore over thirty years ago he knew there was a problem with the quality of their water. He signed a form agreeing that although he knew that there was a problem with the water he still chose to live there with family. (We'll come back to this later in the program).

Earlier this year the community of Mulga Bore had run out of water, their main supply of water from bore number 1 had broken down, bore number 2 wasn't working at all and bore number 3 was still capped as the water was too salty to drink. With their main bore number 1 broken down and not being able to contact their contractor to fix the bore Lindsay asked CAT, the Centre for Appropriate Technology for help to fix the bore. When CAT staff had purchased the right parts to fix the main bore at Mulga Bore they also contacted Donald Holt from Delmore Downs station for help.

**Donald Holt:** "Their regular contractor was out of touch and they couldn't get on to him. I knew that they had a fair few people there and a bit short of water. I know Lindsay quite well, he's a top old bloke, a friend of mine so I thought we'd just pop over and fix it up for them". "I called in to see Lindsay and the old men there who are at the community and told them what we're there for and asked if they wanted some help and they said yes so I suggested appoint a couple of men to come and watch and learn with us so we just simply pulled the two bores and one needed a new part so it wasn't fixable on the day but the other one we were able to fix it quite easily and we showed a couple of local fellas a bit about how to do it. We used our equipment and stuff and quite a lot of people turned up from town, Nerida and Marc and another chap, I bought a couple of people we just pulled up together and yeah, we just sort of used our know how and we pulled the bore and we got it going".

### **Adrian**

Recently I went out to Mulga Bore and caught up with Lindsay about their bore being fixed by CAT and Delmore Downs station. Sitting down with Lindsay at the bore he spoke about how they had problems with their water but was now happy that they were getting good clean water. While he was talking about getting good water from their bore he took me over to the bore tap to show me how clean the water was.

**Lindsay :** "Yeah they just been fix that for the last week, last couple of weeks. I know right through what happened with this bore, we had water problem here and they got new pump there now and they working good now, it's pumping water now old pump is alright now, solars alright all that power coming up well solars working alright, everything's working you can hear this noise coming up now we drinking this kwatye, we getting plenty kwatye plenty water everybody's getting now it's nice clean water, good kwatye coming through this old bore here I'm pretty glad with that. I'd like you to go and see that tap here just open that tap and let you know it's right along bore there. You see this clean water, its nice and clean it can see with my finger there, I get more? Look at this".

**Adrian :** "Kwatye, water was dirty before hey?"

**Lindsay :** "Yeah, just after two days he was dirty"

**Adrian :** "What colour?"

**Lindsay :** "Red, dirt one we can see what dirt comin out and we get good water now it's clean now".

**Adrian**

When Mulga Bore ran out of water earlier this year CAT also organised with another service provider to have emergency supply of water delivered by truck from Alice Springs, The trucks delivered 40 000 litres but they ran out of water after two days, that means they were using a lot of water very quickly so to help save some of the water being trucked in CAT talked with Lindsay and they agreed to cut off the two water tanks from the main supply, people at least had drinking water until the bore could be fixed.

**Adrian** : “A little while ago you’s ran out of water hey?”

**Lindsay** : “oh we had run out water, and we still bin gettim from Alice Springs water”.

**Adrian**: “You asked for help hey you say to people that um that we need more water?”

**Lindsay**: “Yowea, I seen only big truck was here this one day I bin talk this way then “we want that bore to fix up”.

**Adrian**

Trying to save some of their water from the water tanks while waiting for their bore to be fixed was only part of the problem. After the delivery of water from the first truck had filled their tanks, some people in the community became sick it was discovered that the clean water that came from Alice Springs was being polluted by mud at the bottom of these tanks.

Teacher assistant, Marie Rider from Mulga Bore school contacted CAT about people becoming sick from this water. These two water tanks were then flushed out by CAT staff before anymore water was delivered by truck.

**Marie**: “One of my sister in laws got diarrhoea and my little boy got same thing again and I was thinking after drinkin’ that water ‘cause it looked cloudy and it wasn’t like that before, some of the older adults complained of having diarrhoea too ‘cause they was always telling me I don’t know why but thought I might be the one to tell ‘bout the problem. We drink water all the time but that water what we had few weeks ago it wasn’t tasting good, it wasn’t nice you know when we was drinking it ‘cause we usually put water in the fridge for when it was hot we used to drink cold water and that water then was tasting different”.

**Adrian**: “And what did it taste like before when it was horrible?”

**Marie**: “There was a funny taste on our tongues, I know I had that funny taste on my tongue after drinking that water it tasted like it was sour or something, must have been the bottom of the tank they might’n of washed the tank or cleaned it out before putting that water in and I was thinking the bottom of the tank might have been dirty and that must be why it was cloudy and tasting different, um it was like milky, tea with milk in it, black tea with just tiny little bit of milk that colour”.

**Adrian**: “And with um water being dirty, you know it’s not healthy for people you can probably also think there’s probably little all sorts of little bugs in there hey?”

**Marie**: “Yeah, that’s what I was thinkin’ bout that diarrhoea and thinkin’ that from that dirty bottom from up that tank, dirty, must have been bugs in there”.

**Adrian**

Earlier, we touched on how 30 years ago Lindsay signed a form agreeing that he knew there was a problem with the quality of water at Mulga Bore. When he moved his family back to Mulga Bore in the 1970’s he signed what’s known as an indemnity for a government department to say that he knew the water wasn’t good quality but they chose to live at Mulga Bore. Therefore, people who live at Mulga Bore can’t hold government accountable for the lack of good quality water. As a Water Research Engineer at CAT, Nerida Beard explained to me how the rocks in the ground at Mulga Bore have a natural mineral in them called nitrate. When you drink water which contains nitrate the acid in your mouth and stomach changes the nitrate into what’s known as nitrite. Having nitrite in your body can affect the way your blood carries oxygen, so for over 30 years people

who live at Mulga Bore have also been drinking their bore water with nitrate in it, with people sometimes becoming sick.

**Adrian:** “It awkward for you ‘cause you can’t complain too much hey?”

**Lindsay:** “Soon as we got here, bad water, and we get sick that’s what I bin thinkin’ you know, I bin long time here and I like gonna stay here.”

**Adrian:** “And you must feel for that maybe your hands tied that you can’t speak up to get good water because you signed that form.”

**Lindsay:** “I was little bit tired, bloke can’t talk not much you know but still alright still happy now.”

### **Adrian**

The community of Mulga Bore may need to find an alternative supply of water. Donald Holt of Delmore Downs station thinks that a better water supply might be found west of the community.

**Donald:** “I believe from what I saw over there that if the government does a couple more exploratory bores out to the west they’ll find a bigger supply of good water because the west of the bore at Mulga Bore had a big supply of salty water so I think if they go a bit further west they’ll find a big supply of good water but it just needs a few exploration bores”.

### **Adrian**

Elder Lindsay Bird wants all of his family to stay at Mulga Bore, with the bore now fixed and everyone getting water he’s just happy that people are getting good clean running water again.

Lindsay: “like family to stay here because this place, they call this place ‘El Goanna’, this my country, this my ‘El Goanna’ country, ‘El Goanna’ that his name it’s still in the record that one we know I grew up with this one, an this is home, I gotta be here to look after them I can’t shift no way. Yeah we happy, we got clean water now, everybody drinkin’ that one, good kwatye now and this bore bin runnin’ good an he’s still runnin’ this time now he’s right now, drinking this kwatye”.