



**SERIES 3 STARTS ON MONDAY 27 NOVEMBER AT 8PM ON ABC**



## Back Roads is back!

Now in its third series, **Back Roads** returns to ABC TV introducing viewers to more of Australia's most interesting and resilient communities. These are towns full of colourful characters whose grit and good humour will uplift and inspire. In this nine-part series, award-winning journalist Heather Ewart uncovers more wonderful communities defined by their strength and humility. These Australians are as awe-inspiring as the landscape that surrounds them.

"They're proud communities like my hometown, full of surprises, fight and spirit", says Heather.

This series you'll meet 34-year-old Hunter McLeod, a former Melbourne commercial radio DJ turned pilot, who lives and flies in one of this country's most remote areas, South Australia's Oodnadatta track.

You'll meet best friends Doug Sheather and 'Snags' McKimmie, old 'bushies' from the foothills of the high country around Corryong in Victoria. Doug's bachelor shack is basic to say the least - with a view to die for. These cattlemen are as authentic as the whips they hand-braid.

And there's also Wayne Quach. He loves mangoes so much he left his life as a successful software developer in Arizona, in the USA, and moved to Pine Creek in the Northern Territory to become a mango farmer. The former Vietnamese refugee now runs 12 mango farms, and has recruited his son Robert from the US to help out.

*Back Roads* highlights the significance of place and how it inspires lives and passions writ large.

First stop is the Victorian high-country town of Corryong, before this nine-part series heads to the small Tasmanian town of Dunalley, which has re-invented itself after a bushfire almost wiped out the town. Then *Back Roads* traverses the Oodnadatta track in South Australia, on to Canowindra in NSW, Pine Creek in Northern Territory, a journey through West Australia's Pilbara with female truck-drivers, Robe in South Australia, and to a place close to Heather's heart, Violet Town, in Victoria.

Production credits: *Back Roads* is the flagship series of the ABC Regional Division. Executive Producer, Brigid Donovan. Series Producer Louise Turley. Supervising Producer, Kerri Ritchie. Field Producers, Lisa Whitehead and Karen Michelmore.

For further information and interviews Amy Reiha on (02) 8333 3852 or [Reiha.amy@abc.net.au](mailto:Reiha.amy@abc.net.au) or Xenica Ayling on (02) 8333 2733 or [ayling.xenica@abc.net.au](mailto:ayling.xenica@abc.net.au). For images visit [abc.net.au/tvpublicity](http://abc.net.au/tvpublicity)

## Episode One: Corryong, Victoria – Monday 27 November at 8.00pm on ABC

Presenter Heather Ewart arrives in Corryong with Fanny Lumsden, a talented local singer song-writer who won best new talent at this year's *Tamworth Country Music Festival*. Fanny and her musician husband, Dan Stanley Freeman, may be on the road for many months of the year but they feel blessed to call Corryong home. Like many young people growing up in the country who headed off to the bright city lights, Fanny has been lured back to Corryong, a place that for many years has seemed frozen in time.

Heather has arrived as preparations are in full swing for the town's biggest celebration of the year, *The Man from Snowy River Festival*. Each year the festival attracts thousands of visitors to town, who yearn to learn more about the old bush ways.

Heather meets Joan Sinclair, one of the region's best horse and cattlemen. Joan is 83 years old and still riding, because in her opinion it beats walking. Joan was just six weeks old when she arrived at her property outside Corryong, and she's lived there ever since. She's had two husbands, both now deceased, and believes horses are a lot less trouble than men.

Heather also meets two true-blue bush characters, 'Snags' McKimmie and Doug Sheather. These old friends have spent their lives in the high country, mustering cattle and catching brumbies. 86-year-old Doug makes traditional leather whips at his bush shack, which is basic to say the least, with a view to die for.

Corryong has its share of struggles and full-time jobs are scarce. But the town has realised that its future lies not only in preserving the past. They are coming up with creative new ways of creating opportunities for their young people who chose to stay.



## Episode Two: Dunalley, Tasmania – Monday 4 December at 8.00pm on ABC

Presenter Heather Ewart heads to Dunalley, a small Tasmanian fishing village, which is one of Australia's oldest towns. Four years ago, Dunalley was almost wiped out by devastating bushfires, which destroyed the Primary School, bakery, sawmill, police station and community hall.

Somehow this resilient little community found the strength to keep going, and has reinvented itself in the process.

Heather meets sheep farmer turned oyster grower Tom Gray and his photographer wife Alice Bennett. Since the fires, oyster farming has become the biggest employer in Dunalley. Tom says the bushfire gave many in the town a blank canvas to start again.

On the day of the fires, Alice Bennett took shelter in the deep waters near the oyster shed. She captured the terrifying experience on her camera, as she protected her baby from the thick smoke. (See fire photo below.)

After the fire, Tom and Alice joined forces with local farmers who lost their woolshed in the fire. A restaurant was built in its place, and they went into partnership. The oyster shed now employs young locals including 19-year-old Jaidyn Panton. When he's not working as a kitchen hand, he's down at the boxing gym. The gym was one of the positives to come out of the fire. Former Tasmanian boxing champ Scott Griffiths built the gym with insurance money he received from his own house burning down.

Heather also meets Kevin Daly, one of the volunteer firefighters who battled to try to save the 128-year-old Primary school. When it burnt down, Kevin says he found it hard to look people in the eye. But then fellow local Elizabeth Knox stepped in.

Elizabeth was the head of the school association at the time of the fire. She set up an office at the pub, the only place that still had power, and headed up the campaign to save the school. The government wanted Dunalley children to go to schools in nearby towns, but Elizabeth lobbied the Tasmanian Education Minister and the Dunalley Primary school was rebuilt.

This is a place that never gives up. It's a town that has been transformed, with sheer determination. The story of Dunalley will inspire and uplift.



### Episode Three: Oodnadatta Track, South Australia, Pt 1 – Monday 11 December at 8.00pm on ABC

**Back Roads** heads along the legendary Oodnadatta Track in outback South Australia. Heather Ewart begins her journey in the small town of Marree, where the Oodnadatta and Birdsville Tracks meet.

Heather is flown into town by pilot Hunter McLeod. Hunter was once a commercial radio announcer in Melbourne and a DJ at music events around the world. Hunter wasn't sure how long she'd stay when she took up a pilot's job in William Creek but she quickly fell in love with the place.

Marree is 700 kilometres north of Adelaide and is home to descendants of camel drivers who came from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other middle eastern countries in the late 1800's and helped open up inland Australia. The cameleers, always known as Afghans, built Australia's first mosque here.

Marree was once a bustling railway town but now only 100 people call it home. The population swells when the annual Camel Cup is on, an event which celebrates the town's unique Afghan heritage.

Heather's tour guide for the next part of the journey is Aboriginal man Bobby Hunter, who takes her to Lake Eyre, the amazing salt-lake that is one of Australia's natural wonders. The temperature out here can reach more than 50 degrees and it seems incredibly dry, but Heather learns they're driving over one of the world's biggest underground water basins. She visits the string of natural springs, following the route Aboriginal people traded along for thousands of years.

Their destination is the tiny town of William Creek. Trevor Wright arrived in William Creek 30 years ago, and today owns pretty much everything in town. His aviation business has a fleet of 20 planes and he employs Hunter McLeod and a number of other young pilots. Trevor was drawn to William Creek by the isolation and the wide-open spaces. He says it's important that small towns like this one are preserved.



## Episode Four: Oodnadatta Track, South Australia, Pt 2 – Monday 18 December at 8.00pm on ABC

**Back Roads** continues to journey along the Oodnadatta Track in South Australia, meeting the people who call this remote area home.

Heather Ewart hitches a lift along the Oodnadatta Track with truck driver Kris 'Wally' Wallis. They drive from William Creek to Oodnadatta, where Wally drops off groceries and hauls unexpected cargo – once he got a call to pick up a dead body. They pull in to Oodnadatta, population 200, which is preparing to host the annual campdraft and bronco branding competition. The busiest place in town is The Pink Roadhouse, which is owned and run by Adriana Jacob and her husband.

Heather heads out to an isolated cattle station called Todmorden where almost all of the staff hail from overseas. The station overseer, Harvey Vermeulen, is from Namibia and the cook, Altea Salami, is from Italy.

Back in Oodnadatta, Bridie Ferguson is competing in the bronco branding event. Bridie, her husband and small children, have driven 650 kilometres to be here. Bridie says it's a rare chance to socialise and catch up with old friends.

Adriana at the Pink Roadhouse receives a visit from the former owner of the business, her old friend Linnie Plate. Linnie and her husband Adam lived in Oodnadatta for 40 years and turned the roadhouse into a landmark and painted it pink. Sadly, Adam was killed in a car rally accident five years ago. Adriana is continuing Adam's commitment to looking after people who adventure along the Oodnadatta track. The people out here are drawn together by a reliance on each other. Anyone who has lived here finds it very hard to leave.





**Heather Ewart**  
**Back Roads Presenter**

Born and bred in country Victoria, Heather Ewart is one of the ABC's most experienced and skilled reporters and presenters. In a diverse career that has encompassed print, radio and television journalism, Heather has reported in bureaus in Canberra, London, Washington, and Brussels.

Her first job in journalism was in Melbourne at Leader suburban newspapers, where she worked while still completing her undergraduate studies in journalism.

After cutting her teeth at local newspapers, Heather worked at the ABC Radio Current Affairs unit before moving overseas to become the ABC's London correspondent in 1983. This led to a long posting in Washington, during which she reported on the Gulf War, the election of Bill Clinton and the first term of Clinton's presidency. She was then posted to Brussels before returning to Melbourne with husband and fellow ABC personality Barrie Cassidy in 2001.

Heather has been the National Affairs Correspondent for 7.30 and Chief Political Editor. She has reported on numerous Federal election campaigns, starting with the Malcolm Fraser era in 1980.

In 2007, Heather won a prestigious Monash University Gold Quill award for her story on skin cancer victim Clare Oliver.

In 2015, Heather was the presenter/executive producer of the highly-acclaimed three-part ABC documentary series, *A Country Road –The Nationals*, and she presented the first and second series of *Back Roads*.