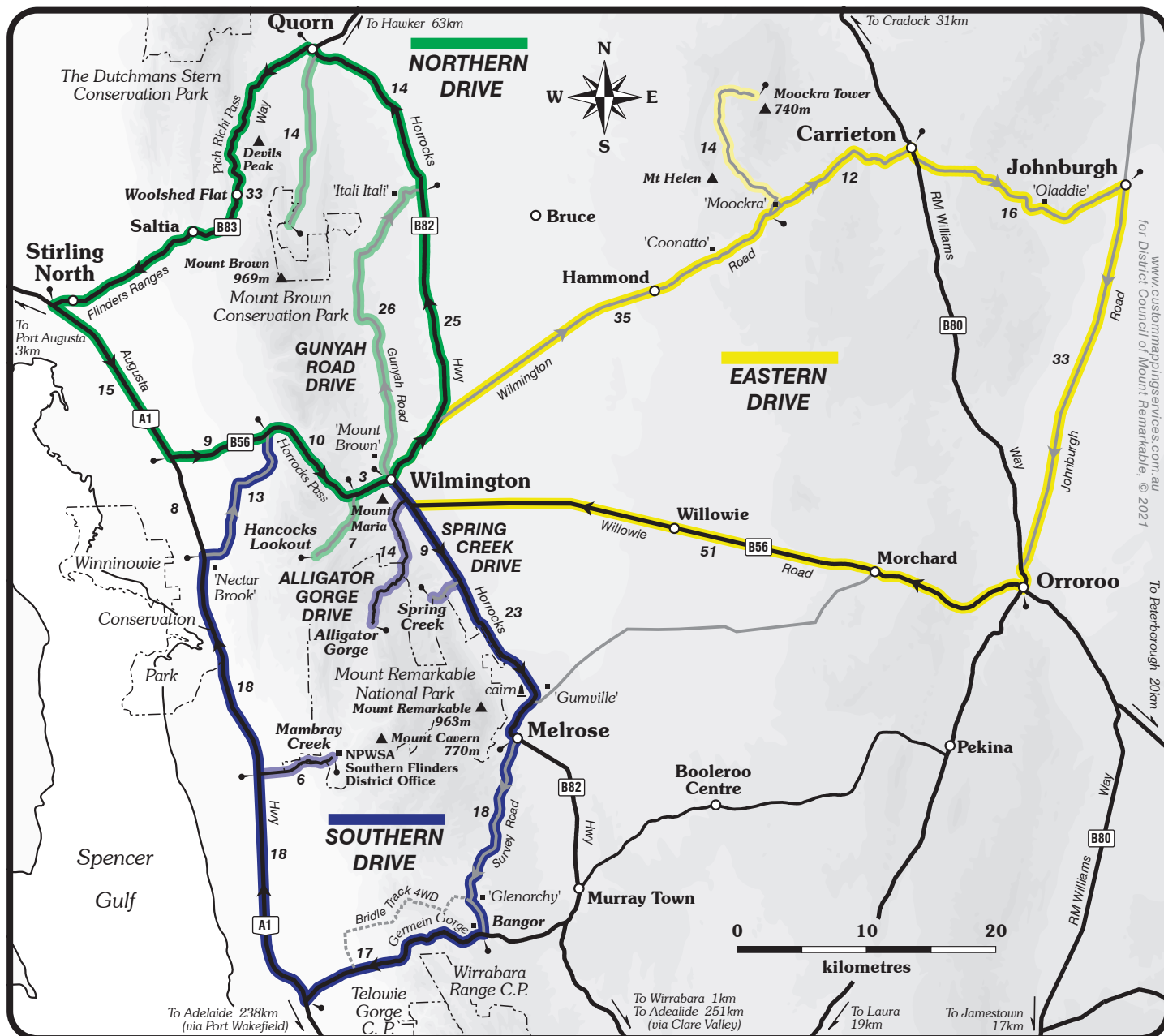


Large stone tanks, wells, wind pumps and troughing were built by the government along travelling stock routes. These facilities provided water for stock camps and drovers before the advent of rail and road transport.



# Drives Around Wilmington

## Southern Flinders Ranges South Australia



Moockra Tower and old harvester

<b>Northern Drive</b>	<b>109km</b>
<b>Eastern Drive</b>	<b>151km</b>
<b>Southern Drive</b>	<b>124km</b>
<b>Gunyah Road Loop Drive</b>	<b>51km</b>
<b>Hancocks Lookout Drive</b>	<b>20km return</b>
<b>Alligator Gorge Drive</b>	<b>28km return</b>
<b>Spring Creek Drive</b>	<b>24km return</b>



District Council of  
**Mount Remarkable**

### NORTHERN DRIVE (109km)

#### Wilmington to Quorn (39km)

The sealed Horrocks Highway runs between the forested main ridge of the southern Flinders Ranges and the broad expanse of the **Willochra Plain**. This is a great north south trending basin partially filled with material eroded off the ranges. There are park-like stands of river red gum near all the creeks. **Mount Brown** is a dominant hill on the western skyline.

Much of the land was cropped for wheat from the late 1870's until the 1930's but today, except in favoured localities, cropping land diminishes north, towards Quorn. Road verges give an idea of the former cover of salt bush, blue bush and scattered scrub.

About 25km north of Wilmington is the **Itali Itali** historic township site. A plaque recalls the pioneers of Richman Creek Methodist Church, 1870–1954. Land here, including Richman Valley over the range to the west, was first held by pastoralist Henry John Richman who took it up in 1849. He had pastoral interests on northern Eyre Peninsula and used to take his Mt. Brown sheep to his Carriewerloo woolshed for shearing. When Itali Itali was resumed for farming in the 1870's, he transferred all his interests to Eyre Peninsula.

**Quorn** was established in 1878 mainly to service pastoral and farming properties in the Flinders Ranges. It soon became an important railway junction, a function which ceased in 1937 with the opening of a new railway direct to Port Augusta.

**Walks** – There are several bushwalks accessible from Quorn – Mount Brown Summit (15km return), The Dutchmans Stern (10.5km return), Warrens Gorge (5km return) and Devil's Peak (2.5km). **(All walks rated moderate)**

Alternative route to Quorn via Gunyah Road (40km) (unsealed road subject to flooding)

This road runs close to Mount Brown (969m). Just north of Wilmington on the left (west) side of the road are the stone buildings of old Mt Brown station first established for pastoralism in the 1840's by Abraham Scott. Some distance further north where the road crosses Richman Creek, also on the west side of the road, is the site of Richman Itali Itali station, now a farm. He used to take his sheep through the low range to the west into the valley of Capowie Creek (Richman Valley) and thence down Waukarie Creek to Pichi Richi Pass and Port Augusta.

#### Pichi Richi Pass (33km)

Pichi Richi Pass was an important access route to the north from the 1850's. It still carries the old narrow gauge railway between Port Augusta and Quorn which was built in 1879.

It now operates for tourists between Quorn and Port Augusta. The magnificent dry stone wall embankments and bridge abutments are a credit to the original builders and the Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society which now maintains them.

**The Dutchmans Stern Range** lies to the west, fringed on the skyline with big sugar gums; to the east is Richman Valley, with Mount Brown.

**Pichi Richi** settlement ruins lie about 10km south of Quorn. A bold outcrop of quartzite forms the distinctive **Devils Peak**.

About 14km from Quorn are dry stone walls of the railway, and in the wall of the cutting are some fossilised drying cracks. When the sediments of this rock were laid down on a muddy shore, they dried out and cracked into polygonal shapes. Later storms and floods filled the cracks with different material, which became fossilised and tipped into this vertical position when the ranges were folded.

**Woolshed Flat** is a station on the Pichi Richi railway, which currently runs between Quorn and Port Augusta.

**Saltia** ('Saltire'); a spot where the teamsters wives lived while their husbands travelled between Port Augusta and Blinman. A hotel was built in 1859 and a private township surveyed in 1862. The rolling country along the road is clad with low, rounded shrubs of pearl bluebush (pale blue) and black bluebush (dark green).

**Stirling North**; the Augusta Highway junction beyond.

#### Augusta Highway (15km)

This 15km stretch of the highway provides views across Spencer Gulf (named by explorer Matthew Flinders after a First Lord of the Admiralty). Near here on 10 March 1802, the expedition naturalist, **Robert Brown**, with a few men landed from *Investigator* (anchored in the gulf) to walk to the top of Mount Brown. In the clear light they mistook the distance thinking it was only 5 miles. Instead it was 15 miles and a thirsty night was spent on the hillside. Flinders named the hill Mount Brown after the naturalist.

**Sundrop Tomato Farm**, near the Gulf is a 20 hectare tomato greenhouse. Using solar thermal electricity generation, desalinated sea water and climate control, tomatoes are grown hydroponically all year round. Sundrop supplies these tomatoes to supermarket giant Coles.

### Port Augusta Renewable Energy Park (PAREP)

south-east of Port Augusta and adjacent to the Sundrop Tomato Farm PAREP is a unique combined wind and solar photovoltaic hybrid project. On completion it is planned to comprise of 50 wind turbines and 250,000 solar panels and will be one of the largest hybrid renewable power stations in the southern hemisphere producing significant amounts of clean renewable energy.

#### Horrocks Pass (22km)

Horrocks Pass was discovered by John Ainsworth Horrocks on 10 August 1846. It is a less tortuous route than Germein Gorge because it follows a NW–SE fault-line which has allowed the rocks on either side to erode and form a more or less straight depression. As this route became the Main North Road it carried most of the traffic to Port Augusta from the south through Wilmington for many years.

Once off the highway, stop to take in the view of distant peaks; starting from the south, **Mt Brown**, **Devils Peak** and **The Dutchmans Stern**.

**A memorial above the road** (about 14km from Augusta Highway) tells of the fate of the explorer John Horrocks. It lies on a watershed – tributaries of Horrocks Creek drain to the west and Beautiful Valley Creek drains to the east.

**Hancocks Lookout** turn-off provides an optional unsealed detour (14km return)

Large sugar gums and drooping she-oaks give an indication of the former woodland here. There is an open parking and picnic area with sweeping western views of Spencer Gulf:

- hydrocarbon storage tanks (white) at Port Bonython (210°)
- Whyalla Steelworks at Whyalla (220°) with Mt Laura nearby
- the Middleback Ranges (source of the iron ore for Whyalla Steelworks) beyond
- the Dutchmans Stern Range to the north.

**Moockra Tower** in the Horseshoe Range is visible to the north-east from the road above Wilmington.

**Mount Maria** is on the right as you re-enter Wilmington. There is an easy walk (5km return) to the top.

Copyright material from the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia's book *Explore the Flinders Ranges* was used in the preparation of this leaflet. It is gratefully acknowledged.

Produced by Custom Mapping Services

www.custommappingservices.com.au

2021



**EASTERN DRIVE (151km excluding detour, predominantly unsealed)**

**Wilmington to Johnburgh (67km excluding detour)**

Leaving Wilmington heading towards Quorn, Wilmington Road is 4.5km out of town which will take you straight into Carrieton, 47km after the turn off. Johnburgh is another 16km away on Oladdie Road, east of Carrieton.

Pastoralists settled the northern areas with great hopes in the 1840s, only to have their runs resumed and subdivided to make way for wheat farms in the 1870s. In spite of Surveyor General Goyder’s warning about the folly of planting crops too far north, a few good seasons left his words unheeded and the land still bears the marks of those years of wheat fever – ruined cottages and abandoned towns.

Much of the land carries low scrub not highly regarded as pasture including the weed South African boxthorn, native nitrebush and small-leaved bluebush.

**Hammond;** a number of old buildings still stand including a school, an old post office, a Bank of Adelaide (all now private residences), an old shop and corner store, a pub, catholic church (1907) and three railway cottages. The out-of-town cemetery, like others contributes to the local jigsaw of history.

The arid nature of this country is indicated by pearl bluebush in the road reserve and on Coonatto Hill to the north; bluebush was one of the plants Goyder used to judge the country to be too dry for farming in most seasons.

**Coonatto Station,** 6km from Hammond was one of the most substantial sheep stations in the region; it is private property. Taken up in 1851 and owned by Alexander Grant, as many as 133,000 sheep were shorn here in its heyday. The small ‘settle-ment’ had a chapel and a ‘street’ of workers cottages. Coonatto was subdivided for wheat farms in the late 1870s.

An old railway embankment south of the road was the main line from Adelaide through Burra to Port Augusta and the Far North, until 1937 when the standard gauge line between Port Pirie and Port Augusta was completed.

Turn off at **Moockra** – an optional 28km detour to climb **Moockra Tower** for a panoramic view. The rocky peak Moockra Tower (740m) is part of the Horseshoe Range, which is a small pound structure similar to that at Wilpena; Mt. Helen (637m) (named after Alexander Grant’s mother) overlooks the entrance to the ‘horseshoe’.

About 12km from the turn-off a finger post directs you east through a closed gate **which you must close.**

Drive a further 3.7km and park outside the gate marked 338 Moockra Tower Rd, walk thirty metres through the gate, following the left fork in the track. A moderate hike (2.8km, 80mins return) along this rough track (**steep sections**) will bring you to the base of the spectacular rocky outcrop. The final climb to the summit rewards you with views of the nearby Stokes Hill radio tower and further afield:

-	Mt Plantagenet	15°	62km
-	Wilpena Pound	4°	87km
-	Elder Range	354°	82km
-	Mt Brown	244°	40km
-	Mt Remarkable Range	200°	51km
-	Dutchmans Stern Range	276°	42km

**Carrieton** was proclaimed in 1879 and named after the daughter of Governor Jervois. There were three churches in the town; pass the Catholic Church to find the road to Johnburgh, which winds through the attractive mallee and pine-clad Oladdie Hills. Oladdie settlement ruins are close to the road; nearby was the Oladdie copper mine which operated in the early years of the twentieth century.

**Johnburgh;** named in 1879 after the son of Governor Jervois. A number of old buildings remain, including a former school. Drought and remoteness from the railway curbed the growth of wheat farming in this dry country.

**Johnburgh – Orroroo (33km)**

The Oladdie Plain, and further south, the Pekina Plain were taken up early for pastoral runs such as Pekina and Coonatto but largely ploughed for wheat growing from about 1878. These plains still carry patches of their original vegetation – speargrass, the rather twiggy leafless bluebush, Australian boxthorn and nitre bush – now the basis of the present grazing.

Large square stone water tanks in this country remind us that this wide road was a Travelling Stock Route. Stock water tanks were established along the route. TSRs often suffered the fate of being eaten out by the thousands of animals that moved through them each year – in this case, from far northern sheep runs to the railway at Orroroo.

Outside Orroroo and a few kilometres east on the Minburra Road are relics of a once extensive irrigation scheme supplied by a dam in Pekina Creek. The most active period was from 1910 to the 1940s when Lucerne was grown and dairy cattle raised to supply the Orroroo dairy.

**Orroroo;** much of interest remains from the 1880s, the town’s founding decade, when it expanded rapidly to service the hundreds of surrounding new wheat farms.

**Orroroo to Wilmington (51km)**

**Morchard;** a small town on the eastern margin of the Willowie Plain. Alongside the Soldiers’ Memorial is a steel boiler and portion of a steel chimney which were part of a boiling-down plant at Pekina Station. The fat (tallow) was sent to Port Augusta in 80 gallon casks. The sign tells the story.

**Willowie;** a substantial German population in the district around Wilmington prompted the building of a Lutheran church in 1891 in a location central to its congregation; a Methodist church was built in 1879.

**SOUTHERN DRIVE (124km)**

**Wilmington to Melrose (23km)**

**Terka** township site is marked with a historical marker, which records details of the Spring Creek district. Terka township, with its former school, store and post office, was named after an Aboriginal word for Kangaroo. The turn off for Terka is 7km from Wilmington on Horrocks Highway.

Pass the **Spring Creek** turn-off (see Spring Creek Drive).

A cairn **A** about 20km south of Wilmington marks Goyder’s Line. During a disastrous drought in the mid 1860s Surveyor General G.W. Goyder was sent north to find the line of demarcation between country that had received rain and country which was droughted. He used the southern limit of saltbush and bluebush as a guide in drawing what became known as Goyder’s Line, which he regarded as the safe northern limit for agriculture.

A little further on, to the east, is the former Mt. Remarkable Station which is now named ‘Gumville’ (private residence). Buildings include the homestead and the large stone woolshed, built in 1874 and capable of holding 40 shearers and shearing 50,000 sheep annually. The Mount Remarkable property was owned by John Howard Angas (who also owned ‘Collingrove’ near Angaston in the Barossa Valley and Hill River Station near Clare). Sold in 1882 to the Willowie Land and Pastoral Associa-tion, it was acquired by the State in 1916 under the Closer Settlement Act with part of it being used as a training farm for returned servicemen until 1921.

**Melrose** is the oldest town in the Flinders Ranges. A police outpost was established here in 1848 to protect early pastoralists in the northern areas. The township was surveyed in 1853.

**Germein Gorge via Survey Road (35km partially unsealed)**

Survey Road is accessible from the Melrose township via Searle Street (turn south at the Melrose CFS). Following the discovery of copper at the foot of Mount Remarkable a Special Survey was commissioned so that mineral rights could be obtained. The copper ores did not live up to their promise however, otherwise the tortuous route through Germein Gorge may have been opened earlier to take dray loads of ore to the coast, where the Mt. Remarkable Mining Company already had land at Weeroona Island (formerly known as Port Flinders).

**Survey Road** runs through the rectangular block which was the Special Survey, crossing the area from north to south.

**A roadside quarry** on the western side of the road on the outskirts of Melrose has a spectacular exposure of ripples in the local rock types; their origin and history are explained on a sign.

Another sign explains about the **Special Survey**. When the mining venture folded, sections were bought by many landholders including John Howard Angas who used the Special Survey land to augment his Mt Remarkable Station (see above). Another early landholder was Alexander Campbell who developed a property (Glenorchy) near the township of **Bangor**, (surveyed in 1853) at the southern end of the Special Survey. Like many other surveyed towns it never developed.

*A detour can be made over the **Bridle Track**, which comes off of Survey Road, 10km from Melrose and comes out on the western side of the Ranges. A **4WD only track** that provides views of the Willochra Plains on the east side and view of the Spencer Gulf on the west side. The track was originally developed to walk stock from either side of the Ranges. **The Bridle Track goes through private property, and gates must be closed after going through them.***

The T-junction with **Germein Gorge** Road is the approximate location of the original site of Bangor; the Glenorchy property and the Campbell family graveyard lies just to the north-east but is on private property.

Although Germein Gorge could be negotiated on horseback, it was not until 1879 that a road for drays was built to transport wheat to shipping facilities at Port Germein. In 1888 the Gorge Hotel was built on the northern side of the road where there is now a plaque. A blacksmith, post office, store and school soon followed. This development became known as **Bangor**, some 4km from the surveyed site (see above). From Bangor, the road crosses and recrosses Back Creek until the true Gorge at the western end is reached.

As you travel west you can see across the gulf:

- Port Bonython storage tanks (for liquid hydrocarbons from the Moomba gas fields)
- Mount Laura, near Whyalla
- Port Germein jetty where sailing ships called to pick up wheat for British markets.

**Augusta Highway and to Wilmington (62km)**

Ahead are features of Mt Remarkable National Park – the sharp cone of Mount Cavern was named by a British officer from a vessel surveying in the gulf; north of it extends the long ridge of The Battery.

A long bridge over the railway provides an elevated view of the vegetation which would have covered much larger areas before settlement – mallee, false sandalwood, dryland tea-tree, broom emu-bush and saltbush.

Nearby tamarisk trees surround the paddocks of old market gardens dating from the days before greenhouses; the trees sheltered early crops of spring vegetables from cold winds.

**Mambray Creek** turn-off provides an optional detour (12km return, sealed road) Mambray Creek campground and day visitor area is part of the Mt Remarkable National Park, vehicle entry fee is required and payable before arrival. [www.parks.sa.gov.au/parks/mount-remarkable-national-park#fees](http://www.parks.sa.gov.au/parks/mount-remarkable-national-park#fees)

To the left is Winninowie Conservation Park.

Turn right at Nectar Brook Road (**dry weather road only**), crossing the railway line and passing Nectar Brook Station where there are palms and an old horse trough and tank.

Turn right at the **Horrocks Pass** Road and use notes from NORTHERN DRIVE.

**ALLIGATOR GORGE DRIVE (28km return, sealed)**

Pass Centenary Park on the way out of town to reach the road into Alligator Gorge, which was set aside as part of Mount Remarkable National Park in 1965.

Local tradition suggests the name is adapted from that of an Aboriginal shepherd, Alli. The quartzite gorge with its wealth of surrounding vegetation, provides spectacular cliff-top walks and, when the creek is not flowing strongly, along its floor where ripple marks from ancient tidal beds can be seen.

The road crosses productive cropland, passing the Wilmington cemetery before climbing the hill. Old orchard trees suggest the location of a settler’s homestead by Stony Creek.

Peppermint gums clothe the lower slopes and as the park entrance is reached lofty sugar gums make their appearance. Facilities are available for day visitors and a number of walks begin at Blue Gum Flat, apart from the steep climb down into the gorge which begins from the carpark. Entry fees apply; payment can be made online via [www.parks.sa.gov.au](http://www.parks.sa.gov.au).

**SPRING CREEK DRIVE (24km return, steep unsealed, dry weather only)**

There was always hope that there would be major finds of minerals in the Flinders Ranges. Although many small mines were opened, companies were floated by hopeful investors and many fine buildings were erected. Blinman (210km north of Wilmington) was the only mine to even come close to living up to its promise. Included in this district were the Oladdie Mine, the Mount Remarkable Mine, the Prince Alfred Mine, the Charlton mine (north of Wirrabara) and the Spring Creek Mine. Most operated for only a few months or years, very often intermittently and Spring Creek was no exception.

From the turn off 9km south of Wilmington, the track runs between wheat paddocks close to the range where the rainfall is slightly higher than on the eastern plains.

As the track climbs into the valley of Spring Creek, it passes the northern limit of Mount Remarkable National Park. The hills are often a blaze of colour in spring when the golden wattle is in flower. A sharp turn brings you to a small car park. An information board explains the ruins.

**Copper** was discovered here in 1860 and worked periodically until 1874. In 1866 more than 20 men were employed by Captain Bryant and two smelting furnaces were erected near Wilmington. The mine was reworked in 1907 and 1916. In 1917, pumping from the main shaft began in order to supplement the water supply for the surrounding district including the township of Wilmington, a practice which continues to the present day.

**Please Note:** These drives include sealed and unsealed roads and optional 4WD tracks.

**The Australian Bush & Country Code**

- Drive carefully** – keep to roads and tracks
- Consider local people** – respect their property and stock
- Leave no litter** – take your rubbish home
- Respect the past** – leave old things as you find them
- Care for our native plants and animals** – respect their habitat
- Safeguard water** – don't waste it keep it clean
- Take care with fire** – wildfires destroy
- Think safety** – take care of yourself and others
- Fire Danger Season** – Flinders 1 Nov. to 15 Apr.

*... and please remember in a park or sanctuary pets and firearms are not permitted - please leave them at home and keep to walking tracks to avoid damaging vegetation.*