



# Miranda

issues from the country  
with Genevieve Barlow

## Want a farm makeover?

**R**emember *Backyard Blitz*, that show on the telly in which teams of beautiful young things would make over domestic backyards?

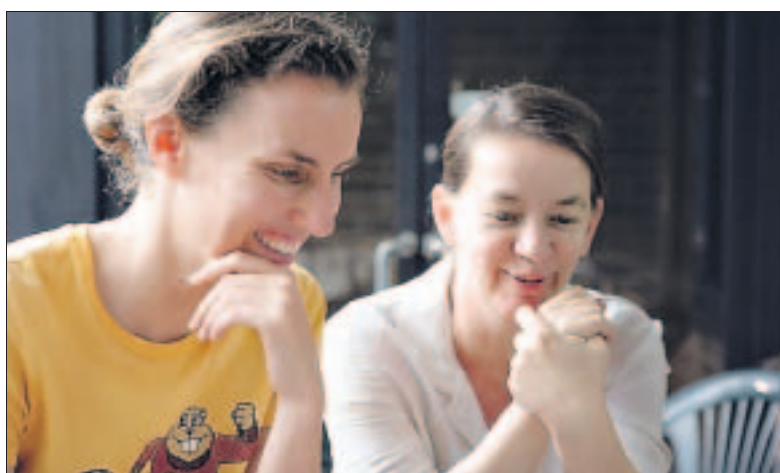
Unwitting residents, usually going through hard times, would arrive home from a short break to find their backyards — trees, shrubs, pavements and garden beds — looking a picture and fit to function as an entertaining zone-cum-family haven where they could show off a little gardening or design prowess, even if it was somebody else's prowess.

Imagine taking that idea and trying it with farms instead of gardens.

They haven't given it a name yet, but the makers of a planned documentary are about to give down-at-heel farms a similar on-screen makeover.

The mind boggles with promo lines: Salt pans expanding? Give the farm fixers a whirl. Crops not growing? Disease in your dairy herd? Try the TV team.

The idea is the brainchild of Sydney-based doco team Kylee Ingram and Laurie Critchley, whose company,



Untold story: documentary makers Kylee Ingram (left) and Laurie Critchley.

Australian Documentaries, has made docos, promos and educational videos, plus ads, on subjects as diverse as ecotourism, stroke recovery and post-tsunami fundraising appeals.

Kylee, a former sports broadcaster, and Laurie, a surfer with a string of TV show credits, such as the ABC *Dynasties* series, to her name, reckon

there's an untold story out there about Australian farmers' ability to look after the land.

"Australia is very good at exporting its landscape," says Kylee, in reference to those gorgeous images that grace tourism brochures.

But what's really undersold, she says, is the way farmers turn around

"broken" land, making it productive, sustainable and profitable.

Naturally, there are distinct and necessary differences from *Backyard Blitz* in the planned doco's format.

First, farm makeovers take longer than a weekend; Kylee and Laurie think two years is more likely.

Second, they're calling for other farmers to help recommend the makeovers.

Thirdly, looks are one thing, but this will be all about reviving landscapes and farms that are, in the most apt rural parlance, bugged.

What this means, of course, is that they need farms and farmers to be part of it.

That's the sticky bit.

Will farmers swallow their pride and put their farms up for a makeover?

"We're looking for farmers who are in a pretty bad situation plus those who've made great steps, for example, reduced their nutrient run-off into iconic places like the Great Barrier Reef," Kylee says.

"Farmers are really on the frontline of the environmental debate, but they don't really get recognition for how

hard it can be or the steps they are taking to improve the environment.

"We won't start filming until next year, but we want to get a sense now of what's out there and the sorts of stories we can tell."

Those nominating for the doco have to be open to the idea of someone else coming in and telling them what to do.

Now there's a challenge.

It's hardly *Farmer Wants A Wife*, thank heavens.

You could also get a pretty good profile for your enterprise out of this.

And if you're not the self-marketing type, think of it this way: you'll get a makeover that'll help change the way the world views farmers.

I must tell my farming brothers up north. Maybe Kylee and co could fix up a little rain for them.

For more information, email theedge@australiandocumentaries.org or visit [www.australiandocumentaries.org](http://www.australiandocumentaries.org)

Genevieve

## Caring staff, down to a soothing cup of tea

Dear Miranda,

Until this year, my family had not really appreciated our country hospitals, and their very caring staff members, and the friends we have made in our local community.

In May this year my husband, unfortunately, became incapacitated with a mystery illness.

After a couple of months in hospital in a nearby regional centre, we were advised to transfer to a large Melbourne hospital for further tests.

A subsequent diagnosis was made and a transfer to a nearby rehabilitation centre was the next step.

So far from home — (thank God for family and friends) — we were required to keep not only the farm ticking over but our spirits up.

Three months was a long time.

We were so glad when the day came that we were told he could transfer to our local district hospital so much closer to home.

We are so grateful to all the staff at this hospital, the Timboon and District Health Care Centre.

Hubby only had to stay there while some alterations were made at home to make life easier, and they were not just concerned about him but me as well.

Nothing was too much trouble and when he had a heavy fall in the driveway, which necessitated a trip to the hospital for a bit of a clean up, we

were greeted by a soothing cup of tea as well as caring staff to put things to right.

Our local Lions Club members and a local builder installed a ramp and concrete to park on to make getting in and out of the house and car much easier, as well as installing some rails inside the house.

Thankfully he is making slow, but steady, progress and when we go for physio, we are still greeted as friends, not a number.

We should all remember not to take our local facilities for granted and give them all the support we can.

Without the caring staff in hospitals such as ours, the district would be in a sad and sorry state.

And a very big thank you to all the members of our community for their support and help over this difficult time.

Deirdre Harper, Simpson

### My organic passion

Dear Miranda,

I am passionate about growing my own fruit and vegetables organically.

It terrifies me when I learn more about the sprays that are being used on vegetables and fruits, for pests and storage.

The latest shock was the humble onion, which I thought didn't have any pests.

Unfortunately they have to control the weeds and then spray to make the

onions store well.

I am now determined not to buy onions if I can help it, my garden will do most of the supplying.

I was very disappointed with my crop over winter now going to seed and not setting swollen bulbs.

After reading your Peter Cundall article on onions ("Do you know your onions?" WT, June 24), I have learnt where I went wrong.

I find his articles extremely informative and just appreciate the wisdom that he has to pass down to the following generations.

We have recently joined a group to set up a community organic garden at the high school down the road.

We are just delighted and have spent many hours rotary hoeing, digging and removing tons of couch grass that has been cut up into tiny little segments, already popping up everywhere.

It is backbreaking work, digging and removing handfuls from every fork load.

But we are determined to do it without any pesticides or sprays (which are not allowed in the garden anyway).

We have met the nicest people from all age groups and many are old hands, but many are very new at it.

We try to help one another and I look forward to the harvests and seed-sharing we will be able to do.

Our garden is 54sq m and my husband couldn't believe we would be able to fill it.

He had forgotten about the rockmelons and watermelons that we are anxiously waiting to be able to plant in the cold climate of Canberra.

Things are shooting up and hopefully my new onions won't have been planted too late this time, but I realise I have cut it very fine.

Robyn Power, Kaleen, ACT



Chop chop: send in a recipe and you could be barbecuing up a storm.

## Snag a great prize

**T**he temperature is rising and sausages and chops will soon be on the menu.

One lucky *Country Living* reader will win the ultimate summer prize: an Ascona barbecue from Bunnings, valued at \$500, as well as a grill set (\$60), cookbook (\$15) and barbecue cover (\$46).

The Ascona barbecue is equipped with two gas ring burners; low heat for slow cooking and smoking; lid hinge, spring and lock for ease of use; epoxy coated and patented trolley as well as a bottom shelf and side table in eucalyptus.

For your chance to win this prize,

valued at more than \$600, just write in with your favourite summer recipes to: Ascona BBQ Competition, PO Box 14681, Melbourne 8001 or email [countryliving@theweeklytimes.com.au](mailto:countryliving@theweeklytimes.com.au) with the subject line "BBQ".

Entries close November 20. The winner will be selected at HWT, 40 City Rd, Southbank and the name will be published on November 25.

Details: [www.bunnings.com.au](http://www.bunnings.com.au)

● Congratulations to Ros Hayman, from Bannockburn, who is the lucky winner of the Maui motorhome holiday. Ros will enjoy a six-berth campervan for five days' hire.

### WRITE TO ME

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