



WON OVER: Governor-General Michael Jeffery gives wife Marlena a kiss for Mother's Day outside the Birdsville Hotel yesterday. Picture: MARK BRAKE

# Jeffery calls for better rural roads, services

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GOVERNOR-GENERAL Michael Jeffery has joined the chorus for better infrastructure in country areas to help provide a better future for regional Australia.

After becoming the first Governor-General to travel along the Birdsville Track on the Back to the Bush journey in the past week, Maj-Gen. Jeffery said there was a big need to bridge the gap between city and country people and provide a better future for regional areas.

He was welcomed to Birdsville by Diamantina Shire Deputy mayor Jeff Morton, a strong supporter of the Back to the Bush trip, organised by Year of the Outback 2006.

Maj-Gen. Jeffery said he was impressed at how country people really helped themselves, but added they did need a bit of a helping hand. He believed one example was the dirt road between Lyndhurst and Marree, which should be bitumenised to help promote tourism.

Maj-Gen. Jeffery said he'd also recommended to station owners that they set up websites to promote their properties and way of life so that more young people

ventured out of the cities and into the country.

"I encourage more people to come out here and see these places because there is so much they can learn about Australia's history from the towns and the people," he said.

Maj-Gen. Jeffery said the first leg of the bush trip from Adelaide to Birdsville was magnificent.

"Three or four things have struck me along the way: one being the quality of the people we've met, who have shown the same loyalty and mateship that was displayed by Australians in World Wars I and II," he said. "They are the real life and spirit of Australia and the best way to encourage urban Australians to have that spirit is to get them out here."

Maj-Gen. Jeffery said he'd like to see TV stations spend five minutes on their news programs highlighting the great things happening in the country.

He also encouraged editors of the big city newspapers to run more stories about the country.

The SA section of the Back to the Bush trip finished yesterday, with Maj-Gen. Jeffery travelling on to Charleville and Longreach.

## Academic attacks Medicare

MEDICARE fails to provide the most cost-effective method of directing health care to those who need it, a leading Australian medical academic said.

Monash University vice-chancellor Richard Larkins said Medicare's fee-for-service basis was unduly skewed towards medical procedures while simple consultations were less well rewarded, leading to perverse incentives and distortions of practice.

Professor Larkins, a former president of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, was critical of doctors taking advantage of the system to claim for alternative treatments such as traditional Chinese medicine.



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