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On this week's Behind the News

- Travel back in time to discover the origins of Australia Day.
- Meet a guy willing to take a one-way trip to the planet Mars.
- And find out what happens when koalas get a little hot under the collar during a heatwave.

Hello I'm Nathan and welcome back for a brand new year of BtN! We'll have all those stories and more coming right up. But first, Emma's here's with some of the stories you might've missed over summer.

The Wire

Here in Australia, summers are hot. But this summer has officially had more extremes than an extreme sports comp. Quite a few towns in South Australia had their hottest days ever, while Victoria recorded its hottest four-day period. In fact, overall, 2013 was the hottest year on record! But don't worry; this month's set to be a little more comfortable.

A big campaign about the danger of one punch hits had everyone talking this summer. One mum whose son was killed by a single punch wants the attacks to be called "coward punches" and a lot of people have got behind the idea. Meanwhile, in New South Wales, tougher laws have been brought in to deal with those that throw them.

And the federal government has announced a new plan to encourage around 1500 public schools to go independent. The aim is to give principals more say in how their school is run. But the education union is against the plan, saying independent schools won't necessarily change for the better.

Governor-General

INTRO: Okay, Who is the most powerful person in Australia? The Prime Minister? Well, probably. But did you know there is someone with enough power to fire the PM? The position's called the 'Governor-General' and last week it was announced that we're getting a new one. Matt has more on this interesting role.

How would you like a job where you have your own VIP jet to fly around? A mansion to live in when you get home? And an impressive holiday house for that weekend getaway? You get a nice salary, of course. And your own fleet of cars to take you where ever you need to go. And, if you really want to, you can even fire the Prime Minister!

It might surprise you to learn that this is a job that actually exists. It's called the Governor-General of Australia and at the moment it belongs to this woman, Quentin Bryce. She became our first ever female Governor-General (or GG) back in 2008.

But now it's time for someone else to take over. That someone else is this guy, General Peter Cosgrove. If the 'general' bit didn't tip you off, the uniform will. He served in the Australian Defence Force for a long time and even became its chief.

He's known for leading international forces in East Timor, helping the country become Independent in 1999. After he retired he kept busy; leading the clean up after Cyclone Larry hit in 2006, amongst other things.

Now, Prime Minister Tony Abbott has asked him to be the new GG. But what does it actually mean to be the Governor-General?

Well, you might know that Australia's a monarchy, which means we have the Queen as our head of state. But because she's all the way over in England she has a representative here - that's the Governor-General.

While the Governor-General doesn't really have much say in how the country's run, they do have some important official business to take care of. It's the Governor-General's job to make sure everything is done by the book.

They have to approve new laws and officially appoint new judges and government officials. The GG also has some serious power. They have the ability to give the PM the flick if there's a really good reason. Of course, it's incredibly rare for them to actually use that power because it would cause chaos. But it has happened.

Way back in 1975 the Governor-General, John Kerr, got rid of the then-PM, Gough Whitlam. It caused a lot of controversy. So Governor-General's not a job to be taken lightly.

And aside from all that super official government stuff there are still heaps of other responsibilities too. You have to travel around Australia and represent the country at big events overseas. You have to take part in heaps of community events and meet a lot of people (like, "a lot" a lot!) and when you're sick of that you have to give a speech or two and meet a few more people! Still think it sounds easy? Well if you average it out the current GG, Quentin Bryce, has been to more than one event every day since she started the job!

So while it might sound like fun, it's also a lot of work and responsibility. That's what the new Governor-General, Peter Cosgrove, can look forward to when he takes over and helps to represent Australia in the best way he can.

Presenter: Good luck to him. Okay, let's do a quiz.

Quiz 1

The Question is: What is the title given to the Governor-General's partner?

Is it:

Honourable Spouse

Australian Baroness

Or the vice-regal consort

Answer: vice-regal consort

Shark Cull

Reporter: James Bartold

INTRO: The death of a shark in Western Australia has stirred up a lot of debate recently. That's because it's the first shark to be killed under Western Australia's new culling program. James took a look at the plan and why it's happening.

REPORTER, JAMES BARTOLD: When it comes to things that we're scared of, sharks are usually pretty high up on the list.

Although they're terrifying, shark attacks are actually pretty rare. But they do happen and when they do they're big news.

Over in Western Australia seven people have died from shark attacks in the past three years.

The rest of Australia doesn't even come close to that number combined. So the WA government decided they needed to do something about it quickly.

Their plan was to catch and kill the sea giants if they come too close to the beach. To do this they set up shark 'no go zones'. These areas are surrounded by special hooked called baited drum lines.

Sharks that go into these areas are seen as a threat and can be caught and killed. The problem is many sharks are endangered species so not all of them can be killed.

They have to be either Great White, Bull or Tiger Sharks, and they must be bigger than three metres long.

Government spokesperson: "Seven people dying in three years is a lot and we believe the government had to do something about it".

Colin Barnett, WA Premier: "We're talking about only large sharks."

On Australia Day the first shark was caught entering a no-go zone. The 3metre shark was caught south of Perth and later killed. That made a lot of people very angry because not everyone agrees that killing sharks is a good idea.

Shark Cull Protester: "This is shark culling and we say no!"

Shark Cull Protester: "Great Whites have rights!"

They argue that sharks are an important part of the ecosystem and, rather than killing them, we should learn to live with them.

Sharon is one person you'd probably expect to support the new plan. Her son Kyle was killed by a shark in 2011.

His death was one of the cases that brought about the new policy. But she doesn't support it at all.

Sharon Burden, Shark Attack Victim's Mum: "You can't just say, 'we're going to kill things because it interferes with my lifestyle,' and, essentially, that's what's occurring here.

Not all shark attack victims agree though. Brian's another Aussie who's come face to face with a shark.

Brian Sierakowski, Shark Attack Survivor: "His jaw came down 1.5 inches in front of my feet, so I was very lucky."

He disagrees with Sharon and says it's time to take action.

"There's no such culling. This is all about safety of people in the water".

So that's the argument for and against the culling of sharks. But what do you guys think is right?

Kid 1: We know that sharks would be in the water and that's the risk that we're taking

Kid 2: And it's their home as well

Kid 3: It's like someone coming into our home and saying you have to leave it's not fair

Kid 4: I reckon maybe they just kill some of the sharks, some of the main ones, but keep some as well.

Kid 5: People are not going to want to swim if they know there's gonna be sharks that will come and eat them"

Kid 6: Put sign posts up or something saying there could be sharks there

Kid 7: Enter at your own risk

Presenter: I think we need to know how you feel about that one.

Online Poll

The question is: Should sharks be culled? To vote just head to our website.

First Fleet

Reporter: Sarah Larsen

INTRO: Recently we celebrated Australia day on the 26th of January. But why do we mark it on that day in particular? To answer that question, Sarah will take you back in time to 1788, to meet some kids who came to Australia on the First Fleet.

Kid 1: "My name is John Hudson and I'm nine years old. I've been an orphan ever since I can remember and I made a living sweeping chimneys. It was horrible work, dangerous too. In the summertime there's no need for sweeping so I took to thieving to survive."

Kid 2: "For the theft of one linen shirt, value 10 shillings, five silk stockings, value 5 shillings, one pistol, value 5 shillings, and two aprons, value 2 shillings. You are found guilty!"

Kid 3: "My name is Elizabeth Haywood and I'm 13 years old. I was apprenticed to a clog maker in London, but I earned so little, so I stole some clothes and tried to sell them."

Kid 2: "For the theft of one linen gown, value 4 shillings, a silk bonnet value 2 shillings, and a bath cloth cloak, value 1 shilling. You are found guilty!"

In London in the 1700s, gaols were full of people like Elizabeth and John; poor, hungry, unwanted. People who stole to survive.

The city's population had exploded and mass poverty had led to a rise in crime.

Reporter: England's laws were really, really harsh. Stealing something could land you with a death sentence. But they couldn't hang everyone. And with the gaols full there was the problem of what to do with all the criminals.

One solution was transportation.

Britain had colonies in Africa and America where it send criminals.

But then Americans rose up against the English so it was no longer an option.

The government looked to the land of New Holland and a place called New South Wales; claimed for England by Captain Cook in 1770.

KID 2: "John Hudson, you are sentenced to transportation across the seas for a period of seven years."

Eleven ships were prepared for the voyage to New South Wales. Six would transport convicts: The Alexander, the Friendship, the Charlotte, the Lady Penryn, the Prince of Wales and Scarborough.

Then there were two navy ships and three ships full of the supplies they'd need to build a new colony.

Captain Arthur Phillip was chosen to lead that colony. He knew it was an important job and, one day, New South Wales could be great.

Kid 4: "The sanguine might form expectations of extraordinary consequences, and be justified, in some degree, by the reflection, that from smaller, and not more respectable beginnings, powerful empires have frequently arisen."

The convicts probably weren't so hopeful. More than 700 were packed onto the crowded ships, including around 17 children.

Many were sick and malnourished when they boarded. Around 20 wouldn't survive the journey.

The ships sailed from Portsmouth, England, on 13 May 1787. As they sailed through the tropics the weather was hot and humid. There were rats, cockroaches and other pests and water had to be rationed.

On the 5th of August they arrived in Rio De Janiero and took on food and water. Then they sailed to the Cape of Good Hope in Africa

On the 19th of January the first ships arrived in Botany Bay. Seven days later the ships found a place to anchor and Arthur Philip planted a British flag in a place he called Sydney Cove.

The land had been home to Aboriginal people for tens of thousands of years but to the convicts it was new, strange and harsh.

Kid 1: "I never would have thought in my life I'd end up in a place like this; so far away from home. But I've survived this far and I'll keep on surviving."

Kid 3: "We'll make the best of what we have and maybe one day build a better future here in New South Wales."

Mars Madness

Reporter: Matt Holbrook

INTRO: NASA scientists say they've found more evidence that water used to flow across the surface of Mars. But, these days, it's pretty much just dust and rocks. Certainly not somewhere you'd want to live. We'll that's what we thought until Matt caught up with one young guy who's already put up his hand.

It's the start of a new day. Time to drag myself out of bed, make a cup of tea, and get ready for work. But when I open the front door, not everything's as it should be.

OK, so that never really happened. But for one young Aussie, there's a chance it could. Tristan's one of two hundred thousand people who applied to be part of the Mars One project. Tristan's made it to the final thousand, so he's definitely in the running.

And for those selected, the prize is a one way trip to the planet Mars. Yep that's right, he would be sent to live on the red planet and he could never come home! It's a huge deal. So why would anyone want to do it? I've met Tristan to find out.

MATT: Hi Tristan.

TRISTAN: “Hi Matt, how's it going?”

MATT: What are you looking at?

TRISTAN: “We're trying to look for Mars.”

MATT: For Mars. Daytime? OK.

TRISTAN: “Nah, not really, can't see that during the day.”

MATT: Well, where can we see it?

TRISTAN: “We might have to go to the planetarium for that.”

The whole idea of the Mars One project is that four people will be sent to live on Mars by 2024. And every so often, more people will join them. It might sound crazy, but apparently, it's entirely possible. He says applying was a tough decision, though.

TRISTAN: “It would be very difficult to leave behind my family; brothers, sisters, and my dog. Which is very sad but you get to explore a whole new planet which no-one has ever been to before, and I just think that would be the most incredible adventure anyone could really do.”

And he hasn't wasted any time preparing himself for life on the far-away planet.

TRISTAN: “Sometimes it's very windy on mars so we might see little tornadoes flying around the place. Other than that, very orange, very red, very rocky, pretty much like a desert.”

MATT: “When you're on Mars, what do you eat, what do you do?”

TRISTAN:” So we have to bring all our own food, we have to grow it all. We'll have our own hydroponic set up. We can grow all our own fruit and veggies, and some insects.”

MATT: “Insects, not there just for fun, you're supposed to eat them.”

TRISTAN: “Insects are very easy to keep, easy to maintain. They're a good source of protein.”

MATT: “So you got to eat insects. You can't make friends with Benny the cricket, you have to eat him.”

TRISTAN: “Yeah, very one way relationship there.”

MATT: “What if you get bored, what are you going to do? What if you can't watch the next episode of Dance Academy, what then?”

TRISTAN: “There'll be so much stuff to do, so much exploring. A lot of unis send experiments and scientific research we can do.”

If it all goes ahead, it'll pave the way for a whole lot more people to live on Mars. But for now, I think I'm pretty comfortable right here on Earth!

Presenter: Me too. Let's go to a quiz.

Quiz 2

The question is: How many spacecraft are working on or near Mars right now?

Is it 1

3

Or 5

Answer: The answer is Five.

Two are working on the surface, while another three are in orbit. There are also a few others that have landed on Mars in the past but don't work anymore.

Right, let's get some sport now. Emma has the score.

The Score

The Aussie cricket team has finished off their series against England with yet another victory. Sunday's 20-20 went to the home side by 84 runs giving Australia a total of twelve out of the thirteen international matches they played against each other. Impressive.

Meanwhile, while we're sweating ourselves silly in the summer heat, Australia's Winter Olympians have arrived in the much cooler Russian city of Sochi. Security is tight so they've been told to be on their best behaviour. The games kick off on Friday.

Two Aussies are trying to cross Bass Strait in the least practical way they can; on paddleboards. They'll make the attempt next month. And if they finish the three hundred kay journey between Victoria and Tasmania they'll be the very first to do it.

And finals don't get much bigger than America's Super Bowl. This time around, the Seattle Seahawks took home the championship winning 43 to 8. Even if you don't care that much about American Football, it's always worth checking out the entertainment and some of the event's creative ads.

Hot Koalas

Reporter: James Bartold

INTRO: When was the last time you saw an air-conditioned eucalyptus tree? Yeah, unfortunately koalas don't have all the creature comforts we do which is why many koalas struggle when the temperature rises. James went to meet some and the lady in charge of looking after them.

REPORTER, JAMES BARTOLD: Hey guys, we're just getting in the car on the way to a Koala and Wildlife Hospital. We're going to meet a whole bunch of koalas who like us have found this stinking hot summer unbearable!

This is Rae and it's her job to nurse Koalas back to health during this heatwave.

Rae Campbell, Koala and Wildlife Hospital: "In here we have some of our patients. Lilian is up here climbing up to talk to us".

Reporter: So what was wrong with Lilian when she came in?

Rae Campbell: "Lilian was totally heat stressed. In fact she was really flat so we brought her in and examined her and put her on a drip. Without the luxury of her own air conditioned home, she was dehydrated and suffering badly from heat stress. But now she's on the mend."

Reporter: So Rae what do you do for the koalas when they come to the hospital, all hot and thirsty?

Rae Campbell: "Well, when they come in they're first of all examined, so that we know that's there's a problem, because they come in with lots of problems, and if they are hot and thirsty, we make sure they have a drink but we will also put them onto an intravenous drip."

More than 70 of Vivian's furry pals have joined her at the hospital since the start of January. But, being native animals, you'd think koalas would be used to the Australian heat!

Rae Campbell: "The summer is always the time we have the most patients."

Reporter: You look at a koala, and they're all so furry, and they've got their big coat. Is that what makes them so hot in the summer?

Rae Campbell: "No their coat is almost like a protective insulation for them."

Reporter: So it actually helps them?

Rae Campbell: “It does. It does, and you'll notice on the front they have a white area. That white area is so that when they lay back in the tree as koalas lie on their backs as they will on very hot days, the sun reflects that.”

Reporter: So what's the main reason that so many koalas have been struggling with the heat?

Rae Campbell: “There are several reasons. All the trees at the present time are being affected by our climate. They're not getting enough moisture from the leaves.”

It leaves the koalas with no other choice than to get out of their beloved trees and go searching for water and food.

Rae Campbell: “If they're struggling with the heat, they'll come down the tree. They're looking for water.”

Many of these little guys have been found by people and given help, which can make all the difference.

Reporter: We're just giving this little guy a little bit of breakfast.

There are other ways you can help too, like leaving an ice cream container filled with water at the base of a tree, so it's safer for the koalas to get a drink if they need one.

For the meantime Vivian and the gang will take some time out from the heat under the air conditioner.

But it won't be too long till they're back out, healthy and climbing in the wild!

Closer

Right that's it from us. If you want to know more about any of our stories today as always just hit our website. You know where to find it. Have a good one and we'll see you next week!