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Subject: **Pilgrimage Of Hope to Alice Springs**

It's a while now since I embarked on the POH journey with my Year 9 son, Matthew, then 14. We went in 2008, on the first trip to Alice. Up to that point, POH Alice had been a concept, an evolving plan, but not a reality. It is fair to say that as a father and as an individual I was apprehensive about what the actual experience would be like. Like anyone, I was wary of the unknown. Like most city dwellers, I had had very limited exposure to indigenous people and what little I'd had via the media was generally negative.

Skip forward four years. Since completing that trip, I attempt to apply learnings from the emotional journey that we experienced to my day to day life. I am not always successful. However, I do my best to not ignore those 'invisible' people on our city streets and help periodically with the 'soup kitchen' run by Mother Teresa's sisters as some small step in the right direction.

However, it is my son who has benefitted hugely from his ethical and moral learning in general and POH in particular. He has been back to Yipirinya as a Year 11 Peer Support in 2010 and intends to spend the majority of his gap year there as a tutor assisting Ken's teachers. I am so very proud of him and his achievements.

There are many aspects of this trip that can be captured on a digital image: Uluru, Kings Canyon, the Yipirinya kids performing for an audience (formally or otherwise). There are certain aspects that can appear too 'religious', too 'touchy feely' and definitely not 'blokey'. However, this trip is so much more than sightseeing and the importance of being gifted this much time with your maturing young man cannot be overstated. Most of the ancient cultures of our world know how important this journey is to an adolescent.

As my 17 year old finishes his school life and asserts his independence he has left behind his childhood, left behind his need for the parental home, mentally if not physically, and is embarking on his own life. How I wish I'd had the chance to repeat that 2008 journey (or to have undertaken it with his brother).

I would recommend that any Father, Uncle, Grandfather or other male role model to a current Year 8/9 should grasp this opportunity: it provides a chance to learn on so many levels.



**Martin Stewart**