

R.M.Williams OUTBACK Magazine

Issue 143 - June/July 2022

Take to the open road with **OUTBACK**, as we explore the highways and byways that we travel every day by bike, car and truck. This new issue also includes the wild places of Tasmania, a central Queensland cattle drive, a plea to improve the country's train level crossings and our biannual Education supplement.



<https://www.outbackmag.com.au/knowning-your-level/>



Knowing your level

Ag tech company Farmo has turned a common farm problem into an opportunity.

Story Anthony Ham Photos Adam Johnstone

Growing up on a sheep and cattle farm near Balmoral, in Victoria's south-west, Nick Seymour saw firsthand how hard farmers worked. It could have been his life. But as he grew older, he realised that the farm wasn't big enough for both him and his father. As a young man, he drifted away. He moved to Melbourne, where he worked as a furniture designer, then as a furniture salesman. It was a long way from the family farm.

There were hints of his former life. He kept in close contact with his family, and visited often. When he left the furniture business, he began making vegetable boxes, which, he says, "are like mini farms in a way". But he never thought that he would go back.

In 2017, Nick began to worry about his father, who was, by then, in his 80s and, like so many elderly farmers, supposedly retired; his dad remained very much involved in the day-to-day running of the farm. Nick offered to help.

The block in question was a small cattle operation with just 150 cows and some distance away from the main family farm. With neither an onsite homestead nor mains power on the block, Nick, who was still living in Melbourne, found it difficult to get help. "It's really hard to get people to come in on a casual basis to look after the cows and look after the water. There just aren't the people to do it. I tried everything I could think of – local Facebook groups and all that sort of stuff. I'm still trying."

One day during the first summer Nick turned up at the farm to find 20 weaners "just about dying of thirst". "They had pushed their way through into a laneway where there was no water, and it was just awful," he says. "When you have animals, you have a never-ending responsibility for their welfare." He knew he had to do something.

Nick pauses to contemplate the enormity of the task he was taking on. "I am a chronic sufferer of delusions that I can do something," he admits.

