

OUR PEOPLE

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Tourism connects city with outback

BY ALI KUCHEL

FOR Tony Smith, living on a 12,000-hectare station bordering Wilpena Pound is possibly one of the safest places on earth.

It is what he tells city, interstate and overseas travellers who flock to Rawnsley Park Station, Hawker, each year, as they question why he would want to live so far away from city life.

"They think there is danger out here, whereas to me, it's the safest place in the world," he said.

"There isn't that much that's going to harm you."

Sharing these life experiences about growing up on a remote station, the highs and lows of running a 1300 Dohne-Merino ewe flock, and being a neighbour to Ika-Flinders Ranges National Park has put Rawnsley Park Station on the map.

Rawnsley Park Station was first bought by Tony's parents Clem and Alison Smith, and was used to farm sheep.

The change to tourism was not so much a choice, but what Tony describes as a necessity.

In 1968, Clem and Alison bought a transportable building and turned it into a shearers quarters and tourism accommodation, offer-

ing sheep shearing demonstrations to generate extra income when the station was struggling.

It has since grown to 25 holiday units, eight eco villas, a homestead and caravan park, providing their city cousins, interstate and overseas travellers a chance to experience the outback.

While most visitors are interested in visiting the national park and wildlife, Tony, Julie and the team give visitors an insight to country life through tours of the farm.

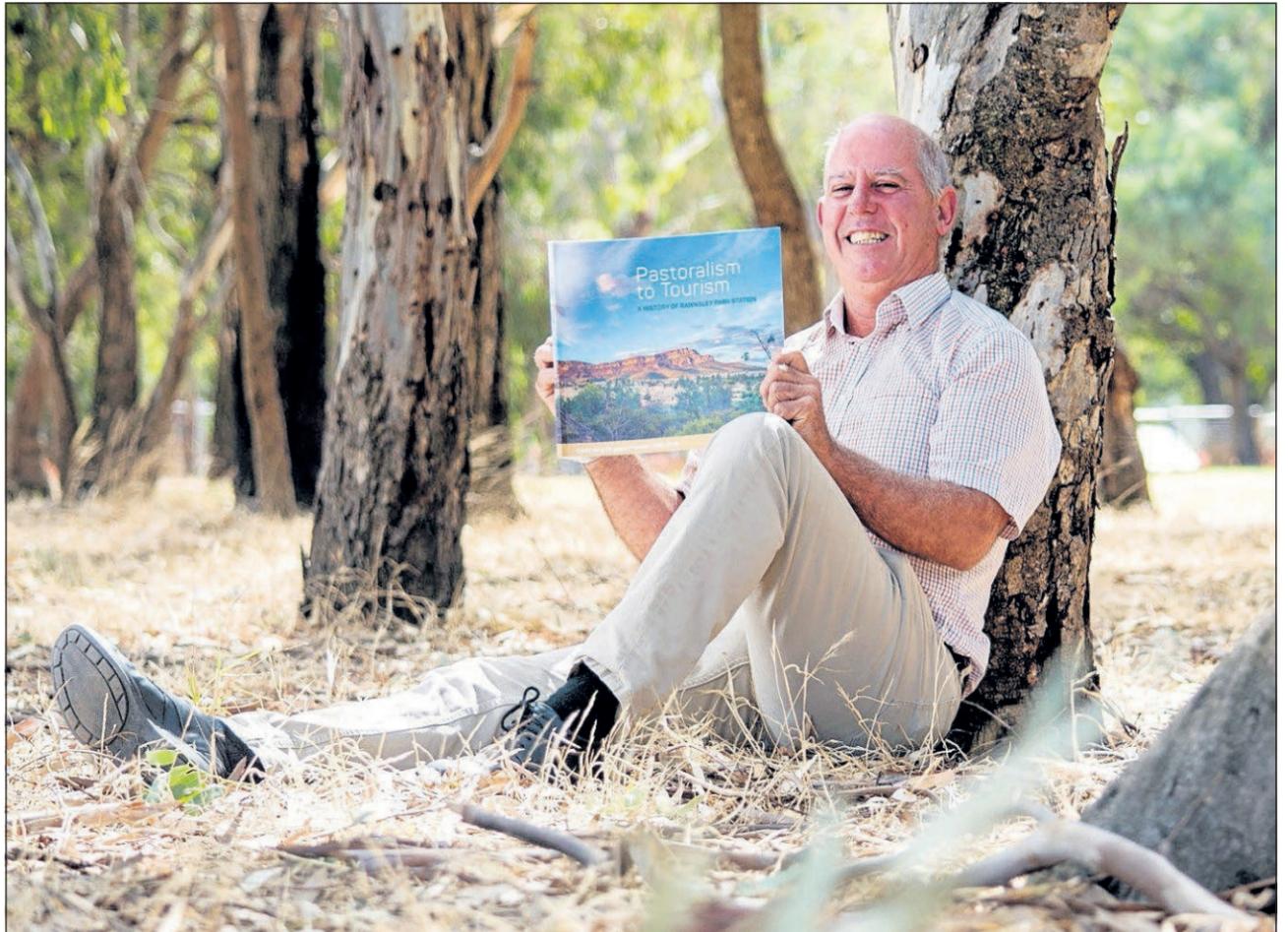
"I find it quite rewarding to have the contact with the internationals," Tony said.

"You meet people from all over the world, and they're interested in the country and the lifestyle, and why we want to live in the outback."

Tony said just last month, a former New Zealand dairy-farmer visited the station and was taken back to his farming days.

"(It was great) for him to come back and chat during the four-wheel drive tour, which took him back to his childhood," he said.

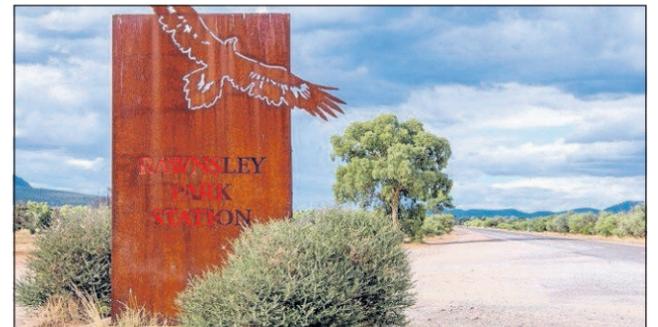
This year marks 50 years since tourism began at Rawnsley Park Station, and to mark the achievement, a book has been created documenting the history and transformation.



GOOD READ: Rawnsley Park Station owner Tony Smith, Hawker, relaxes with a copy of *Pastoralism to Tourism* - a book documenting the station's transition from grazing to tourism. The book will be launched at the station tomorrow.



STUNNING VIEWS: A helicopter takes tourists across the station and the neighbouring national park.



WELCOME SIGN: Rawnsley Park Station welcomed about 500 guests during the Easter period.

Book documents station's unique history

DOCUMENTING the history of Rawnsley Park Station, Hawker, not only serves as a marketing tool, but a way to record the station's transition from a pastoral property to tourism icon.

It took 18 months of collecting and scanning photos, and calling on past guests

and family members to share their stories about Rawnsley Park Station to create *Pastoralism to Tourism*.

"Julie and I are delighted with how the book has turned out and believe it really captures the evolution of Rawnsley Park Station and our family's deep affinity with

the Flinders Ranges," station owner Tony Smith said.

It showcases the early years from when the station was purchased, to days on the farm with Tony, his wife Julie and children Neville, Glenn and Greg, and includes a story by former Miss South Australia Marilyn Gil-

bertson, who recalls a near-death experience falling from Rawnsley Bluff.

The book was written by former *The Advertiser* journalist and author of *History of Country Press* Kym Tillbrook, with photographs and design work done by elevenacross's Karen English.



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VIC Murray - Zone 7	130	135	STEADY	50ML - VIC Goulburn Zone 1A - High Reliability	SOLD \$3125/ML
VIC Murray - Zone 6	130	135	STEADY	19.8ML VIC Murray Zone 7 - High Reliability	SOLD \$3735/ML
VIC Goulburn	114	118	STEADY	65.5ML VIC Murray Zone 7 - High Reliability	SOLD \$3835/ML
NSW Murray - Zone 11	130	132	STEADY	10ML VIC Murray Zone 7 - High Reliability	SOLD \$3745/ML
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