

LEX LOCI'S TRAVELS

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An ad-hoc one-pager from The Public Land Consultancy

Lex considers People-Power at Minimay, just off the Kaniva-Edenhope Road

In a tree just off Coopers Road Minimay Lex spots a couple of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos. Amongst the ground litter below the tree, he spots a couple of Diamond Firetails.



Minimay, you ask? That's in the Wimmera, on the Kaniva-Edenhope Road just south of the Little Desert. And Lex must confess he's there as a cyber-tourist. Or in this case a cyber-ornithologist.

The land on which the tree stands is not part of a national park, or a conservation reserve, or any sort of public land. It's freehold land owned by Bank Australia, covenanted by Trust for Nature, and managed by Greening Australia.

In the late 1960s, the Little Desert itself almost became freehold land. The Minister for Lands, Sir William McDonald, commenced its subdivision, sale and clearance - and thereby provoked a defining moment in Australian environmental politics.

Activists, scientists, amateur naturalists, economists and bureaucrats banded together in opposition. The Little Desert became a National Park, Sir William lost his seat, and the Land Conservation Council (LCC, now VEAC) was born.

But back to Minimay. This had been freeholded long before through a series of Crown grants - as Sir William's predecessors carved up the Parishes of Boorookpi, Mortat, Miniman and Ding-a-Ding (not joking) and sold them off to worthy settlers. To fence and to clear.

The land Lex is looking at was freeholded, but somehow spared from clearance. The tree where the birds now display their colours still stands.



At Minimay, some 950 hectares is now owned, covenanted, and managed for conservation. Here's what interests Lex: it does not need to be protected by the National Parks Act.

There's clearly been a shift in how the conservation movement works. People no longer expect governments to do it all for them. We do it ourselves. Lex included. He puts his pocket-money (such as it is) into Bank Australia.

See you there! Lex Loci

Photo credits Ian Morgan
Libby Robbin: *Defending the Little Desert*