ISSN-0811-529X

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants

EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 72

December 2000

From what I read in the papers and see on the TV there has a been a diverse set of weather conditions across the country. For those of you who have experienced the unprecedented 'wet' I trust that the effects have not been too severe on you. On the other hand there are those areas which are still experiencing the continuing 'drought'; even into metropolitan Melbourne is this happening. We in SA seem to have been reasonably well serviced by the weather, but the scourge at the moment are the plague locusts, which at the time of preparing this Newsletter are organising themselves in the mid north of the state and on Eyre Peninsular, waiting for the right weather pattern to allow them to migrate.

In the past three years quite a number of new species have been collected and so far as I know, are now being grown in a few collections. It would be appreciated if those of you who have plants of these species could record some observations of their success or otherwise in cultivation and pass them on to me for inclusion in the next Newsletter. I am often asked if there is any material available of 'this or that' and I usually have to reply that to my knowledge that it is not yet available. Information relating to conditions in which they seem to do well, or poorly, their potential as garden plants and the ease or otherwise of their propagation from cuttings or grafts would be most welcome. **I would like to make this a feature of the next issue**

One of the important aspects of the Study Group is to establish those species which are suited to cultivation and to make them available for trials etc. by other members of the Study Group, so that the species can by tried in other locations. The importance of distributing this material around is that it does not end up in only one place and get lost due to some catastrophe or disaster. The more who have the species, the better it is for us all and often only one collection from the wild is possible. It is also important since we do not wish to continually take material from the wild if we have plants established.

TRURO WORKSHOP

Although not as many attended this workshop as attended the one in Warracknabeal, we all seemed to have an excellent weekend, thanks to our hosts Beverley and Ian Rice, on whose property the event took place.

It was most pleasing to see so many Victorians attending, my count made it nine out of the twenty one. Numbers were down, due to several last minute apologies, but we enjoyed a very pleasant weekend.

The property lies about halfway between Truro and Eudunda, and the garden area has been well planted, mainly with native plants, including a quite a comprehensive collection of eremophilas, which were given a 'hair-cut' by those wanting to add to their own collections. Beverly has planted out a new area with many of the 'newer' species and despite the occasional raid by kangaroos, they seem to be growing well. An added feature of the visit was that we were able to visit their Heritage Area, which has been allowed to grow back to its natural state over the past eight years. There are some very encouraging signs, with several new species (not eremophilas) being sighted each season.

After the customary garden walk, we enjoyed a delightful morning tea. This was followed by a demonstration by Norma Boschen. Norma showed how she grafts her eremophilas. This was followed by a further demonstration by Colin Jennings on the same topic. It was at this stage that we brought out the cutting material and those present went away with a very nice selection of species thanks to the generosity of those who were able to supply it.

After a more than adequate lunch we headed off to the Heritage Area, which drew quite a deal of favourable comment. Some very well established plants of *Hakea leucoptera* were found along with some very nice understorey shrubs, which were unfortunately just past their best. The eager eyes of a

few managed to locate *Diuris lanceolata* in several sites. *Eremophila longifolia* grows on the property, but only a couple of plants are to be found.

Afternoon Tea followed the walk, and then it was off to the garden to seek out the plants that we had located in the morning walk. Beverly has some well established eremophilas in the garden and they provided some very suitable cutting material. Thanks Beverly for being so generous.

After a 'long' day we each headed off to our accommodation, some staying at Beverley's in caravans, others in somewhat more comfortable 'digs' in the local motel, where we had dinner that night. After dinner, Colin showed a selection of slides of eremophilas which had been recently introduced into cultivation, and which had proven to be suitable as garden subjects.

On Sunday morning we assembled at Beverley's ready to set off to look at some stands of eremophilas known to us. On the road from Eudunda to Morgan there are some very large populations of *E. scoparia*, *E. maculata*, *E. alternifolia* and *E. oppositifolia*. Occasional plants of *E. glabra* and *E. longifolia* were seen: one large population of *E. divaricata* was found on the river flats near Morgan.

It proved difficult to draw people away from the many plants of *E. maculata*, such a wide range of colours, from reds to oranges, with several unspotted pure yellow forms being found by the keen-of-eye.

Lunch on the banks of the Murray at Morgan was provided by the ladies who had fed us so well on the previous day. It was at Morgan that we said our farewells to several of our Victorian friends - the hour and a half time difference due to the early introduction of daylight saving across the border causing the early departure.

This was a most enjoyable weekend and special thanks go to Beverley for organising it for us. To those who attended, thankyou for your participation. It always makes the planning of an event like this worthwhile if everyone makes the effort to 'make it work'.

Colin Jennings

SO WHO NOTICED THE ERROR?

Have been advised by Jan Sked, Co-ordinator of ASGAP Study Groups, that we have been using the wrong ISSN number since Newsletter #49. An ISSN number you say, what is that? Well it appears at the top of the front page of each issue of the Newsletter. Jan was advised by the Australian ISSN Agency that we had slipped up - good to see that someone is paying attention to detail, even though it did take seven years for it to be noticed. From now on the correct number will appear on the front page of our Newsletter. As Jan said in her email note to me " I guess that happens with computers. A mistake can be carried on indefinitely."

FROM YOUR LETTERS

Brian Walters, NSW
(Brian is responsible for the Website for ASGAP and in addition produces a very valuable newsletter, *Gumnuts*, for those who subscribe to Australian Plants online hhtp://farrer.csu.edu.au/ASGAP/ and for those who express an interest in receiving it. Brian is at <sgap@pnc.com.au>

Brian sent me an email soon after the last ESG Newsletter, providing some further information re *Bursaria spinosa* and the Christmas Beetle problem, raised by Beverly Rice in our last Newsletter - this he obtained from an article entitled "Ecological sustainability of grazed landscape on the Northern Tablelands of NSW (Australia)." This he found whilst doing some personal research into Eucalyptus dieback in the New England Region of NSW. Its at hhtp://life.csu.edu.au.esa97/papers/reid/reid.htm if anyone wishes to explore the problem further.)

"Rural tree decline was reported as early as the 1850's, so periodic defoliation of eucalypts may well characterise woodland ecosystems in the Northern Tablelands. However, the severity of dieback in the 1960's to 1970's suggested that land development altered the balance between defoliating insects and natural control agents. Blackthorn (*Bursaria spinosa*) and grazing-sensitive

native composites such as *Ammobium alatum* provide nectar for scollid wasps which parasitise the larvae of defoliating insects (Davidson 1982). Remnant vegetation with flowering shrubs support a range of insects likely to parasitise scarab larvae (Campbell & Brown 1995). Since eucalypt-feeding scarab densities peak in open pasture 50-200m from remnant vegetation, Campbell & Brown recommended that:

* remnant vegetation be fenced to allow understorey regeneration:
* planted windbreaks should include appropriate flowering shrubs (principally *Leptospermum, Baeckea, Pimelia linifolia* and *Bursaria spinosa*) as nectar sources for parisitoids; and
* areas of each remnant vegetation type should be retained undisturbed on farms."

(As Brian comments, this seems to confirm the points noted in our last issue. Thanks Brian for the information and an excellent *Gumnuts*.)

BEVERELEY O'KEEFFE - Springsure, Queensland

(Beverley has been a member for many years and has grown a wide range of eremophilas on their property - Beverley was responsible for the indexing of the Booklet of Newsletters #1-31, which is still available at $8.75, postage included.)

"I have been rereading the Newsletter #71 and saw the piece about membership of ASGAP. For years I was an active member of Queensland SGAP and we had a branch at Springsure. I organised a camp at Salvatore Rosa with the help of two other then members. However, some years ago when we were badly hit by drought I cut down on all superfluous expenses of which I considered SGAP membership to be one. Don't get me wrong - I think they do a great job, and I think I have done my bit towards the group. However, living in the 'sticks' we don't think there is 'much in it for us' and I have never bothered to rejoin. Selfish maybe? Maybe I am 'mean in behaviour and spirit'?

We do our own thing here, but DO NOT SIT DOWN AND HOLD MEETINGS. Bush walks, etc. I have been putting together a plant list of Salvatore Rosa and other interesting areas around here and I have made this available to the National Parks people in Springsure, as well as giving them lots of pressed specimens for identification. I have a number of specimens kept in the Herbarium in Brisbane. I only mention this to indicate that I don't think that I am a freeloader. I know that there are scores of people who do much more than I do 'for the cause', and I think this is great and as it should be.

.... I am not interested in rejoining the SGAP. So if this means I can be no longer a member of the Eremophila Study Group, then so be it. Please accept my money anyway, and I will muddle along on my own. Which is what we do out here anyway.

As mentioned in my other letter, (Printed elsewhere in this Newsletter - Ed.) I think the group does a great job and I will continue to propagate and grow eremophilas as long as I can. I am very happy to see members (or non-members) any time they are passing through Springsure. Our garden is always open - mess and all."

(I have advised Beverley that as far as I am concerned she is welcome to receive the Newsletter and that her contribution is a valued one, despite her 'status' - Colin)

ALICE AISHTORPE - Roma, Queensland

"My eremophilas have been flowering gorgeously - putting on their best faces, as I say. At the moment (Sept 20th) *E. christophorii, E. nivea, E, microtheca* and *E. eriocalyx* (blue form) are 'blue-ing' the area. That's just the few I can see from where I am sitting. I have an *E. chrisptophorii* and an *E. laanii* growing near each other and the contrast of lilac and pink makes a stunning effect.

Eremophila laanii is one of my favourites! It nearly always has some flowers, then goes berserk in spring, just dripping with flowers.

I planted 200 eremophilas back in February 2000 and although they haven't had much rain (two falls of 25mm) since, most of them are nice plants now. On a trip out to the fields of eremophilas at Charleville

we collected a white flowered form of *E. bowmanii* which gave us a thrill. Diane Akers is propagating it. We missed seeing most of the eremophilas in flower, but saw lots of other plants.

We had a frost down to minus five or six degrees, but not one of the eremophilas has been affected. They would all have a really good drink as the season has been very dry, however, I will not be watering them, so they will start to shut down in October for the summer heat.

We have a lot of pruning done by rosellas here, the birds snip off about 10cm of the tops (a good cutting size!) till the ground is littered with flowering tips. The *E. youngii* and all the reds and pinks being the worst affected. I guess there is no remedy as I actually encourage the birds and we have a lovely resident population of about 20 rosellas. Anyway the worst birds were visiting flocks of crimson winged parrots. I thought I wouldn't have any flowers by the time they moved on!!

I have to do talk on eremophilas on Saturday for the Red Cross ladies. My displays of eremophila blooms at the Chelsea Red Cross Show in Roma caused a lot of comment, so now the talk.

Well I must away and do some watering of some eremophilas which I am holding till the season improves. I don't plant out over summer if I can help it, so these will stay in pots until February."

IAN MITCHELL - Ringwood, Victoria

"I think I complained before about a fungal dieback on an *E. maculata* x *E. duttonii* cross which progressed further last winter and I suspect that plant will get the chop. I have also had total blackening during winter of *E. abietina*. I have grafted a tiny green piece and am trying it in a sunnier and more windy site - time will tell. Others like *E. forrestii* and *E. mackinlayi* with hairy leaves do not have this problem. Perhaps it is not retention of water which is the problem, but the sticky exudate which is a good fungal substrate.

Someone was saying that they have had good success striking cuttings in January, for me both *E. forrestii* and *E. mackinlayi* strike very quickly and reliably in mid-summer. *Eremophila mackinlayi* grows well on its own roots but I find *E. forrestii* difficult to graft."

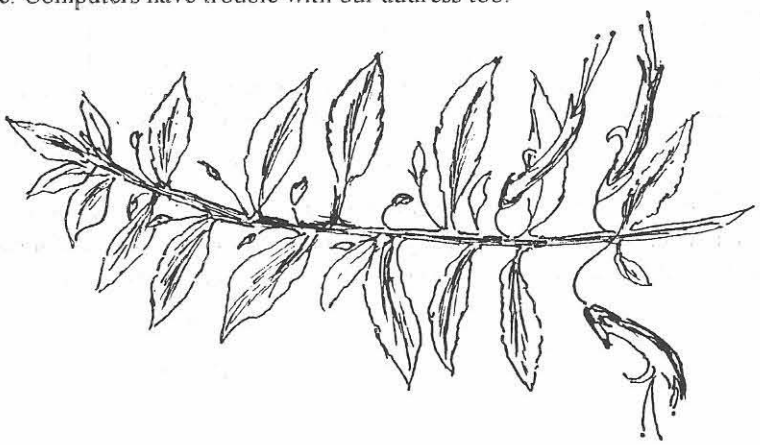
(I saw a very well established plant of *E. abietina* growing in Darley Park, Bacchus March, Victoria in early October. This plant was extremely black around the base and along the stems to a height of nearly a metre, but the plant itself was very healthy and displaying a magnificent top growth with a multitude of flowers. Colin)

JOCELYN LINDNER - Tutye, Victoria

(Thought that Jocelyn's explanation of where she lives might interest anyone trying to locate her.)

"I must explain about our misleading address. When our small PO closed at Tutye some fifteen years ago the postal department did away with post codes of some small towns along the Mallee Highway and gave us all the same post code as Ouyen, where our mail is sorted, then brought out and left in a shed at Tutye.

We are 80km on the SA side of Ouyen. We actually live 9km south of Tutye. Our address causes much frustration and amusement. I have been asked if Tutye is a suburb of Ouyen and it is more frustrating when someone expects to find us in Ouyen and finds out that we are 80km back along the highway at Tutye. Computers have trouble with our address too."



Erem. serpens

RUSSELL WAIT - Natya, Victoria

"I have had a reply from CALM about the *E. resinosa* that I found last year. It is an endangered species and the location that I found it at is probably new and there are sixteen plants at it."

BONNIE ADDISON-SMITH - Junabee, Queensland

(Bonnie wrote, seeking membership of the Study Group in August. A list of plants growing and passed on was also included, but not printed here. The information included in her letter is relevant to comments passed over the past few issues re labelling and naming.)

".....I am not sure that I can make a significant contribution but I am keen to learn more about these plants (eremophilas) and their propagation.

What I find most disconcerting is that plants purchased are incorrectly labelled. I have a copy of *Eremophilas for the Garden* and wish it covered more plants. I have been able to correct some errors from information contained therein. Gardening at Warwick is difficult for we have low temperatures (minus 4 degrees), frosts and cold winds in winter; high temperatures, hot winds and some periods of high humidity in summer. This year our rain stopped at the end of January. We are now 125mm below average. I have found that my eremophilas cope with these difficulties but are inclined to die suddenly after rain. I suspect unusual humidity."

(The issue of labels and correct naming is ongoing. I have made a number of comments about it in past issues and it seems to arise whenever a discussion on plant names takes place. **Any suggestions?**)

ASGAP CONFERENCE, CANBERRA 2001

You should by now have received some information about the Conference & Seminar to be held in Canberra from September 29th - October 5th 2001: it is being hosted by the Canberra Region. Hope to see you there!

I have been asked to present, on behalf of the Study Group, a talk about the activities of the Study Group as it relates to the theme of the Conference - Australian Plants in a Changing World. I replied to the invitation back in August, but to date have not had any further confirmation. This is to be on the Wednesday in the daytime. In the evening, Study Group displays are to be presented - I might be calling for some assistance with the evening display in the next Newsletter, or as soon as I know a bit more about what I might be able to do and how much time I have to get it set up.

It might also be possible to organise a get together for all members of the Eremophila Study Group who are attending, but I realise that there are not many hours free at such events. I had intended to try to organise such a get together in Brisbane, but unfortunately I was not able to attend.

On Saturday 29th Sept, a meeting of Study Group Leaders is scheduled. If there are any matters which you as members of the Study Group consider important to be raised then please let me know of them and I will see that they are placed on the agenda.

The list of speakers is very interesting and the tours which have been arranged, pre and post conference as well as the day tours during the conference look very inviting.

Colin Jennings

EREMOPHILAS AT SPRINGSURE

I'm afraid I'm not very active at the moment, though we do have some lovely eremophilas flowering in our garden. I find they have stood up to the very dry years we have had lately. (Always seems to be dry lately.)

My favourites are *E. bignoniiflora, E. polyclada* and their offspring *E. bignoniiflora* x *E. polyclada.* The cross, particularly, flowers here just about all year, beginning from May and it is a beautiful sight. We have three of them. After a recent good rain I found about fifteen seedlings under the *E.*

bignoniiflora (eleven years old) and have potted them up. This is not the first time I have found these seedlings, but this is the only species which has produced seedlings for us. One plant from a previous potting is 45cm high and doing well. *Eremophila polyclada* is a bit of a nuisance because it keeps layering and would take off if I did not fight it. I have been trying to keep it off the ground on a single trunk - like a small tree, but it gets away from me.

I also have another plant which is a cross between *E. polyclada* and *E. weldii* (actually it is *E. divaricata* Ed.) and is called *E.* 'Summertime Blue'. It is doing well and may turn out to be pretty. Others which have done well for me are *E.* 'Aurea' (ground cover variety) which is twenty years old and just keeps spreading and layering. I have to keep cutting it back so it does not take over. It only gets afternoon sun. Another plant, in full sun, has not done so well, but is still going. I have the upright form also, which is healthy and about 1.2 - 1.5m high. (*E.* 'Aurea' is not a valid name - probably a form of *E. glabra.* Ed.)

I will be systematic and give you a list:
E. alternifolia - twenty years old. It's there but not doing much.
E. 'Aurea' - mentioned above - doing well after twenty years, layers vigorously.
E. barbata - one plant in shade was lovely for about eight years, but has since died. Several others wouldn't seem to get going.
E. bignoniiflora - we have three of these as small trees, plus the seedling.
E. bowmanii - several forms struggled on for a while, but are now dead.
E. calorhabdos - several plants have done well, lasted three to five years, but have died.
E. christophorii - lived on southern side of house for about six years and then had some sort of fungus (black leaves) and died. Grew to about 1.8m by about 3m across. Blue flowers - birds were not interested.
E. clarkei - two plants about ten years old. Not spectacular, but going well and flower each year.
E. decipiens - (fine leaf WA form) One plant in full sun lived five years. Another cutting grown from the first struck 1987 and does not get much sun is still going. Getting a bit woody.
E. dempsteri - Lovely, lived seven to eight years and then died after the drought. I haven't been able to get another established. I did strike some cuttings in November one year, but they did not grow on.
E. divaricata - Original plant nearly twenty years old and growing like a wildfire. Layers and needs cutting back from time to time. Takes hard cutting.
E. freelingii - About ten years old and healthy and flowers well each year.
E. georgei - One of my favourites, but I can't strike it. Have two plants one of which has done well and the other straggly,
E. glabra 'Rottnest Island form' - Three plants, one eight years old and has spread to about 3m. Two others about seven years old and also doing well.
E. glabra subsp. *carnosa* - Is lovely, but tends to not live as long as others. Fairly easy to strike, when I get the energy.
E. laanii - Given to me by Harvey Shaw (God rest his soul) and still healthy. Several other plants still OK.
E. oppositifolia - A small tree, eighteen years old and has done well. Getting a bit straggly.
E. macdonnellii - Lovely plant. Grew well for ten years and spread about 3m. Others since have struggled and not done so well. Maybe this one got some water from the lawn.
E. mackinlayi - Also did well for probably ten years before dying. Another struck from this one is OK.
E. maculata - Various forms (I have about eight I think). All do well, though the grass hoppers love them.
E. microtheca - Has done well. Lived about ten years. I do have another now.
E. miniata - I have three, all over ten years old and healthy, though VERY slow growing.
E. oppositifolia subsp. *rubra* - Over ten years old and flowers beautifully.
E. ovata - Grew in sandy soil for about ten years and suckered madly (which was good). Just about all gone now.
E. polyclada - I mentioned this one above. The first one I eventually removed after ten years as it was too much of a problem where it was growing. Several other layered plants from this one alive and well.
E. racemosa - Lived about five years and healthy while it was there.
E. spinescens - About ten years old, healthy, but has not done much.
E. sturtii - Lovely. I have four plants which I struck in 1987 and they are all beautiful and flowering at the moment. Grow about 3m high and will take careful cutting.
E. weldii - First placed in 1983 and still going well. I think these ones which layer are pretty safe.

E. youngii - Fist planted over ten years ago and doing well. I have three plants.
E. mitchellii - The birds planted this about eight years ago and it had grown well. Then last week we found it dead. I can't imagine why, as it grows naturally in our paddocks.

There are quite a few others which I have tried over the years with various degrees of success. When I look back over the list I see there are lots of deaths, however, I did not mean to convey this. I find them an extremely interesting and rewarding group of plants to grow. We have very dry times in Springsure and our soil has a high degree of phosphorus, which makes it pretty impossible to grow Proteaceae, so I love the eremophilas. I don't know how many plants we would have in the garden, but I think it could be a hundred. Unfortunately, since the demise of Brookvale Park, I don't seem to have the same access to new plants. I really need to get in and try to propagate some cuttings as I will have a number of single plants which I don't want to lose. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

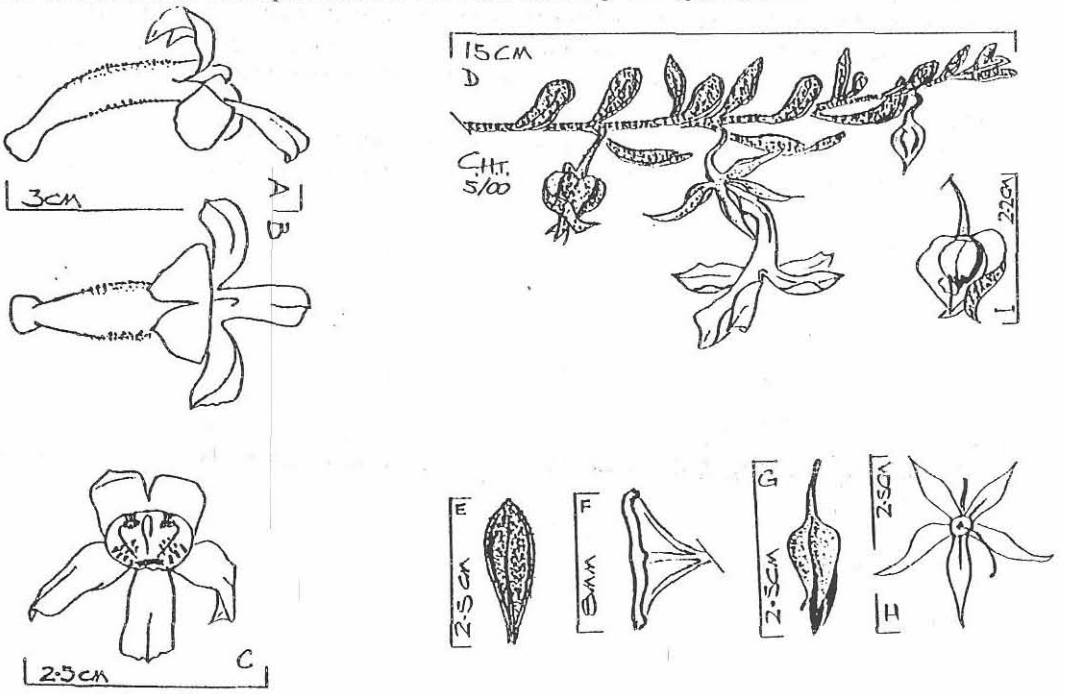
Beverley O'Keeffe

ARTWORK

Once again I am pleased to be able to include some artwork done by Jocelyn Lindner. These sketches are of plants which are growing in her garden, and add to the ones printed in the last issue. Some more of Colin Theakstone's work is also presented. Colin, you may remember, offered to do some drawings of eremophilas which are not commonly found in collections - as a help to those trying to identify some of their garden plants. Russell Wait and Len Richardson assisted with the live material.

Thankyou to you both for taking the time to do this for us.

Eremophila cordatisepala. A dwarf, spreading, many branched shrub, densely hairy, becoming greyish or yellow with age. To 60cm x 1m. Flowers tubular, solitary in axils, sky blue, to 2cm long. Grows on a range of soils, clay-loams to stony soils in hilly areas, tolerates alkaline soils, frosts and dry conditions; often found near limestone outcrops. Native to Northern Territory and Queensland.



Eremophila cordatisepala
A,B&C, corolla - side, top & front view. **D**, habit - note progression from enclosed calyx to slender reflexed sepals at open flower stage to broad, fleshy sepals, clasped around developing fruit. **E**, leaf. **F**, leaf - cross section showing 'rolled' margins. **G**, calyx, with flower emerging. Sepals still mostly joined. **H**, calyx and ovary. (soon after flower drop.) **I**, fruit - cross section of developing fruit, with fleshy calyx.

ASGAP Study Group Leader: Colin Jennings, 4 Kinnaird Crescent, Highbury, SA, 5089
email address: colmyr@senet.com.au