

Life in the outback is amazingly varied. On Tuesday I drove over 1200km, saw wild pigs, kangaroos, emus, ran over a brown snake, and narrowly missed collisions with numerous birds I lack the knowledge to identify. I travelled from Spinifex and sand to the sea, through forests of tall green gums. I spent the day with Aborigines from Lake Nash, explored a 'permit only' Aboriginal station, and then returned to Mount Isa for a (late) supper with my wife.

The very next day I awoke with the dawn to head out fishing with some work colleagues. Being engineers, we had to get everything just right – and hadn't thought too much about it beforehand. Adjustments to towing points, repairing electrical systems, and a quick stop at the supermarket to obtain our daily sustenance. At last we were ready to commence our hunter-gatherer life again. The simple pleasure of messing about in boats is hard to top. I caught a fish – our only fish, but we had to throw it back – after taking photos for our respective missus' – to demonstrate that 'gone fishing' is in fact a valid explanation for an absence lasting eight hours.



Going fishing for cattle.



Church BBQ's – semi-regular, always valuable.

Life has changed dramatically this year, and I suppose we have changed as well. We've been attending the local Baptist church, and been rejoicing in new experiences of Christian fellowship – with families! We've enjoyed joining an amazing church family – generous, kind and welcoming – a great blessing to a young couple a long way from friends and family. This is one advantage we have over FIFO rosters – a church fellowship who understand the challenges of living in a remote community.



Outback travel – getting off-road, and getting off the road... To let the roadtrain pass!

My work underground has seen the formation of a range of friendships, many of which have lead to discussions about my church attendance – which has sometimes been a starting point for really fruitful discussion about Christianity. I do regret that my role involves rotations through many different departments – you just start to get some great friendships going, and then have to say a sort of goodbye as you head off to work with a new crew. However, it has been great to have lots of time to hang out with my workmates – and to discover that most of the blokes are quite interested in our church, and many have had some experiences with Christians that they would like to chat about – nothing to be afraid of – need to keep reminding myself.

If you ever pass through Mount Isa, drop in to the Baptist Church and say hello!

In Christ,
Andrew and Kate Ireland