

THE GREAT WALKABOUT

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It all began when three aboriginal people called Ness, Coolumbar and Bister went on a walkabout. They were brothers. The eldest brother, Ness, was tall and had dreadlocks, and he was the leader of the group. His two younger brothers were good mates, but sometimes fought a lot. Coolumbar was shorter than Bister and knew a lot of things about animals. Bister, though knew a lot about the Dreamtime and he was very serious. All three brothers loved going on walkabouts and they used to go every year and catch up with what they had been doing since they last saw each other. They always looked forward to seeing each other and getting together around their campfires.

On their walkabouts Bister told stories that he knew from the Dreamtime. Coolumbar and Ness liked to listen around their campfires. On their walkabouts they liked to find new areas to hunt for food. But their favourite place to hunt was in the Coona bush. The whole entire bush there was filled with greyish gum trees with brown sap holes. They loved to see the animals in the bush and they challenged each other when hunting them. In that bush there were dirt tracks that looked like serpents winding through the bush. Sometimes the brothers followed the tracks and

other times they went off the tracks. The brothers especially liked the sound of the kookaburras. They would sit up in their trees and watch everything that was going on below them. They had a good view of all the land. On this trip the kookaburras were warning them to stay away, but the brothers ignored them because they wanted to get a catch.

One beautiful spring morning the three brothers , Ness, Coolumbar and Bister were all ready to go on their next walkabout. They set out, but decided to head for Dubbo, to find some different areas to hunt. They knew it would take them quite a few hours to get there. Along the way they were hunting for sweet sugar ants, kangaroos and pythons. Before leaving they had made sure that their spears were sharp and their boomerangs were polished ready to catch their prey. When they were a quarter of the way they stopped and had a drink at a cool, refreshing lake. The water was sparkling and looked shiny like glass. They saw a herd of black and white cattle nearby and they wondered who they may belong to. Ness was cooking up a red kangaroo tail on the fire they had made when they arrived at the lake. Coolumbar was getting pythons and throwing them on the fire and Bister was getting the bag of sugar ants. They made sure they were well hidden in case anyone was around, but they saw no-one.

After a while they set off again. Ness saw something in the bush. It was colourful, long and shining lightly. They went around it and it blocked the

footpath. Bister said it was the mythical rainbow serpent. It looked like it was thirty metres long and it was terrifying. It was coloured red, yellow, blue and orange and it had purple patterns. Its head was large and it had giant fangs. They were worried as they had never seen a serpent this big before. The serpent to their surprise didn't seem to care that they were there. They knew they had done something wrong though. They had not listened to the kookaburras and they had drunk out of the mythical lake called the 'Fountain of Youth'. They hoped this would not mean they may be cursed.

The serpent started to head up the footpath. The brothers thought of an idea. The serpent was about nineteen metres ahead of them when they caught up with it. They asked it a few questions and it answered back.

Ness asked,

"How far is it to Dubbo?"

The serpent said,

"About one more hour."

They didn't realise at first that the serpent was not happy with them for drinking from the lake. They headed off again. About half an hour later they met up with an old friend called Destermini. Ness and he were great friends and Destermini led them through a quicker way. They discovered it wasn't the same. All the trees were burnt down and everything was black.

"That's strange", they thought. They hadn't seen any smoke.

"Is this the curse happening?" they wondered.

They were in Wail-Warn country. Even though things did not look right they set off again to get to Dubbo as quickly as possible.

They arrived in Dubbo and they saw a great camping ground and so they stayed there for a night. The next morning it was the biggest dust storm they had ever seen. Another strange thing was happening. The dust storm caused a big problem. Coolumbar's asthma was bad and he was coughing a lot. Bister made a hut and Ness did the cooking. Destermini looked after Coolumbar. He sat in the hut and made some medication for Coolumbar. He had collected the things he needed as they travelled along. Coolumbar took the medication and soon he was better.

On the way back they spotted a horse. It was black and white and he had a long, fluffy tail like a bilby. The horse was tied up to a twisty paperbark tree. There seemed to be no-one around so they gave him some water and some hay because he looked starving and you could see his chest bones sticking out.

After a while Bister had an idea to ride the horse back to his house.

There was no way Coolumbar could walk with his asthma. Bister decided to go and get a couple of more horses with Ness and take them back to Coolumbar and Destermini.

That afternoon they headed off with enough supplies to get back. The trip was nice and peaceful. They saw koalas in the trees, pythons sliding along in the grass and bilbies jumping over long grass. The sun's rays

were shining through the branches of the trees as they passed them.

Soon they were back and getting their two mates to head off to Coona to tell their tribe.

Immediately they knew, the tribesmen headed down to help Coolumbar.

When they arrived they saw a lot of animals to hunt and a good camping ground. They thought it was a good place that Coolumbar and the others had found to hunt in. After they had helped Coolumbar with his asthma they made a couple of huts and decided to stay longer. They had been looking for a place like this for a long time. When it was time to leave they headed home.

Every spring season from then on they went there to this great place to hunt. It became a well-known camping ground for their tribe.