

NARRABRI'S OWN STEVE IRWIN

Narrabri has some fascinating history and a terrific network of walking and cycling paths and the self-guided historical walk of the Narrabri Creek is a great way to exercise both body and brain at the same time. The 4km route, which I started at the Big Sky Caravan Park, meanders through Narrabri's Sporting Mile and shady parklands, taking in 15 locations of interest. They include a plaque to mark Major Thomas Mitchell's expedition to the region in 1832, the cricket sight boards which originally graced the hallowed Sydney Cricker Ground and the Sporting Wall of Fame, erected after a Channel 9 competition in 2001 to find the sportiest town in Australia. The names on the wall excelled at their sport at a state, national and world level across more than 30 sporting codes.

We bid farewell to Tanya at the Big Sky and drove about 10km out of town for our 10.30am tour at the Narrabri Fish Farm. We had been told that owner Ricko Cunningham was the local version of Steve Irwin – a larger-than-life character – and it was an apt description.

Narrabri Fish Farm is the largest hatchery-based aquaculture farm in NSW breeding golden perch, Murray cod, eel-tailed catfish, silver perch and yabbies. Ricko sells them as fingerlings to be released into river systems and farm dams. Yabbies are also sold to aquariums as feeders.

Just prior to our visit, Ricko had released 10,000 native catfish fingerlings into the Darling River system at Deniliquin, in conjunction with the Department of Primary Industries. It was the first such release of catfish into a river system anywhere in the world.

The farm is 250 acres and contains 100 dams and a four-metre sculpture of a Murray cod made out of recycled materials. As well as guided tours, fish feeding, yabbying and fishing, Ricko offers camping for self-sufficient campers. There are eight powered sites, two cabins, an amenities block and a rustic barbecue and picnic area. Ricko has planned to upgrade the camping facilities and provide regular cook-ups and activities such as yabby races and casting competitions for campers. If you're lucky, he might play the didgeridoo for you.

When you visit Narrabri pop into the Visitor Information Centre and speak to the very helpful staff about these and the many other things to do in the Narrabri region. There's a host of events on throughout the year including agricultural shows, music musters, campdrafts, races, polocrosse and festivals. 📍

The author and partner were guests of Narrabri Shire Council.

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