

100 YEARS OF WIRELESS

Dick Smith, with Michael Owen (centre) and Carwoola resident Carl Palmer (right), at a barbecue for the Wireless Institute of Australia (WIA) at Dick and Pip Smith's Gundaroo property. Mr Owen, President of the WIA, said Dick Smith is one of an impressive group of Australian business leaders in communication and electronics who started as a young person with an interest in amateur radio.

At the end of May the WIA celebrated its centenary in Canberra and district with a gathering of some 200 visitors from Australia and overseas. Australia's is the oldest national radio society, begun in Sydney in 1910.

Private wireless experimentation began not long after the German physicist Heinrich Hertz proved the existence of radio waves in 1886. Through shortwave radio, amateur radio operators contributed significantly to the development of broadcasting in 1920 and to worldwide communication long before the internet.

During both World Wars, radio amateurs helped train service radio operators and helped with the leap in radio communications and radar technology during WWII.

Radio satellites were not far behind in the early 1960s.

Natural disaster relief efforts often turn to radio amateurs for emergency communications; most recently during the Black Saturday fires of 2009. The WIA estimates some two million people in over 100 countries are involved with amateur or ham radio.

At Gundaroo, Dick Smith regaled the assembled delegates with a spirited and funny recounting of how shortwave radio let him sing *Happy Birthday* to his daughter and soon thereafter guided him to an emergency, first-ever landing on a passing ship in rough seas somewhere between Japan and Russia. These events were among other notable radio occasions during his record solo round-the-world helicopter flight in 1983.



Gatecrashers

< Quite by coincidence, four Army helicopter pilots landed at the Smith's Gundaroo property on the same day. They were unable to land at Canberra enroute to Adelaide due to the rainy weather and happened upon this convenient rural airstrip and the WIA barbecue.