



# **The Power of Bones: From a troubled childhood to running a cattle station one woman's heartbreaking but uplifting story of triumph**

*Keelen Mailman*

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It looked bleak and predictable for little Keelen Mailman: an alcoholic mother, absent father, the horrors of regular sexual and physical assault and the casual racism of a small outback town in the sixties. But somehow, despite the pain and deprivation, the lost education, she managed to absorb her mother's lessons: her Bidjara language and culture, her obligations to Country, and her loyalty to her family.

So it was no surprise to some that a girl who could hide for a year in her own home to keep her family together, run as fast as Raylene Boyle and catch porcupine and goanna, would one day make history. At just 30, and a single mother, Keelen became the first Aboriginal woman to run a commercial cattle station when she took over Mt Tabor, two hours from Augathella on the black soil plains of western Queensland. This is the heartland of Bidjara country, after all, the place her mother and grandparents and great-grandparents had camped on and cared for, and where their ancestors left their marks on caves and rock walls more than 10,000 years ago.

In this unflinching memoir, the warmth of Keelen's personality, her determination and her irresistible humour shine through as she recalls her extraordinary life.

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