

# LEX LOCI'S TRAVELS

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*An irregular one-pager from The Public Land Consultancy*

## Lex walks in a Straight Line From Cape Howe to the Murray River

**Lex is at Cape Howe, contemplating a walk along a straight line.**

He thinks he knows what a straight line is, and so did the House of Lords in 1850 when it defined the border of the new Colony of Victoria. Their Lordships decreed the border to include 'a straight line drawn from Cape Howe to the nearest source of the River Murray.'



*In 2004 a survey group from RMIT followed in the footsteps of Black and Allan, and repaired many of their original stone cairns ([click here](#))*

That was a definition which required a bit of interpretation. Cape Howe is a substantial geographic feature, not a precise point. And which of the many creeklets in the Great Dividing Range was the 'nearest source'? And the question which troubles Lex just now – how can you draw a straight line on a globe?

Mathematicians like Euclid and Rene Descartes studied straight lines, but they were working on plane surfaces.

**Our Lex is neither a hereditary Peer nor a theoretical mathematician, so he's glad that these questions have been addressed by the surveying profession.**

In particular by a couple of Alexanders surnamed Black and Allan. In 1870 they battled through the terrain and set up a dozen cairns marking the 'straight line.'

Later generations of surveyors have also addressed the question of 'straight' lines drawn on globes, and have come to the conclusion that some of the Black-Allan cairns are a few centimeters out of position ([click here](#)). There's no point asking whether such discrepancies are to the advantage of Victoria or of New South Wales, because the border is deemed to be where the cairns actually stand. As the surveyors' dictum goes: 'Monuments over Measurements.'

Anyway, Lex is standing at Point Hicks looking towards the North-West. It's 175 kilometers to the steel pipe in the ground which marks the 'nearest source of the River Murray.' One fellow who attempted the journey described it as "just one bloody ridge after another."

Then Lex remembers. There's a good little pub just down the road, in the hamlet of Genoa. ♦

## See you there! Lex Loci

*The Black Allan line crosses indigenous country, to which various Traditional Owner group have connections.*