

By COURTNEY TODD

JAMIE Kemshead, like so many other Australians, is having his life ripped apart by drought, piece by unbearable piece. He works long, lonely days while reminding himself of the reasons to keep fighting: his family, his land, his community. He also works at night, not as a stockman but as a wordsmith, focusing on something positive to get him through the harsh times.

Jamie (pictured) is one of the boys and like many of his mates he works the land, loves the footy and plays with big machinery. He is also an emerging Australian author writing under the name Jame Mclean.

Last year Jamie self-published his first novel, titled *The Greatest Life*, giving him and his family more challenges but also some shiny new hope and some much needed achievement.

To date more than 1000 copies of the book have been sold, mostly in small outback communities.

"I was over the moon to sell so many copies. We needed to print 1000 copies to start with and when you see 1000 books on the pallet that can be a bit daunting," he said.

The second book, *Dog Trap*, has just been printed.

Jamie's roots run deep into the land

that feeds his imagination as he is the third generation to live and work on Lantana, his family's 40,500ha sheep and cattle station located more than 100km from Quilpie.

He said writing and publishing his books is a way of hitting back at the destruction caused by the drought.

"We've been fighting back in the outback. When everyone is down it's infectious. The feeling that I'm doing more than just what I can to fight has been a great help and motivator for me."

Jamie believes the publishing of the books, rather than the stories themselves,

what will start a flame of hope in people as they are inspired by good news.

"If you provide a little bit of light it's a good payoff," Jamie said.

His first experience with writing was in high school when, after an injury took him off the football field, he tried his hand at writing plays.

After high school Jamie wrote continually except for a three-year period when the drought knocked him and his family around the hardest. It was at his grandfather's funeral that people first got a taste of his writing in the form of a poem expressing the raw emotions of grief for the man who had such a great influence on Jamie.

His grandfather, "the original storyteller", is credited for influencing and helping to shape Jamie's storytelling ability. He believes being raised in the outback also helped mould him into a writer.

"When you have to entertain yourself and it's very hard to get to town an imagination comes in handy," he said.

Most of what Jamie writes is influenced by the land and life around him. He will hear a line of dialogue and it will stick in his head like a song while he is fencing or mustering. By the end of the day he has created a character from it.

"I write at night and I have the days to work on the place," Jamie said.

Jamie and his wife came to a point where they had to decide whether Jamie would pursue getting his work

