

Bye Bye Byron

by David McMinn

You know the situation in Byron Bay is getting really bad when The Australian Financial Review (p.22, Dec 22-26) runs an article "Is the big money ruining Byron Bay?" written by Lisa Allen.

The lead comment was "The old hippie haunt has a flavour of the Gold Coast these days and the locals are not very happy about it." It was a great place to live years ago, but now you would look at other coastal centres to

live if you wanted a sea change.

It is not even a very nice place to visit these days. Twice I have stayed in up-market accommodation and twice I have had problems with burglars. The alternative character and charm are gone and Byron is becoming just another over-developed seaside resort.

According to the article, "Byron's once funky retail strip is now home to cookie cutter franchises like Crazy John's and Subway sandwich bars. American and Australian franchises are replacing shops that once sold locally grown organic produce." The former Byron councillor Hugh



Ermacora commented, "Byron Bay has become a theme park. I avoid going there because it has changed so dramatically. It's been going down for some time."

Some of the coastal developments are horrendous. One friend aptly described Salt, further up the coast, as "East Berlin by the sea."

The locals are moving out in droves and this includes some of the area's most famous personalities, who have lived there for years. People with big bucks are moving in - many

properties are purchased as holiday homes by people living in Melbourne and Sydney and are unoccupied for much of the year. Thus the locals are increasingly being surrounded by empty houses, further hollowing out any sense of community.

"Communities are being lost and Byron, the critics cry, is losing its heart."

Could this be Nimbin's future? In the short term, the answer is definitely no. Nimbin has had no major development

problems to date, as it is located an hour's drive from the coast and the street scene is too confronting for most people. Let's face it, rich people want to live next door to rich people. Drug dealers, junkies and hippies are considered too tacky to have as neighbours. Be very thankful, as this has kept the big money out of our area.

However, the situation is slowly changing, as the coast is now so expensive and Nimbin is seen as the cheap option. The big developments are slowly creeping up the Tweed Valley, and it is only a matter of time before we are confronted with such issues in our beautiful valley.

The Nimbin community must have an input to the Lismore City Council to determine what sort of development is most suitable for our area. More people will move into the valley - they have been for 35 years - the issue is to adopt development projects that best maintain the Nimbin character and preserve the cultural and environmental reasons why we love living here.

We have to be proactive on this issue, as we could eventually end up over-developed with no character and no soul. Byron is an excellent example of what not to do, if the Nimbin community wishes to preserve its wonderful lifestyle.

Prime Minister looks to nuclear new year

by Christine Milne Greens Senator



Ziggy Switkowski

The Howard government's attempt to dress up a blatant push by the nuclear industry for expanded uranium mining, waste dumps and nuclear reactors as a response to global warming is grossly cynical politics."

This is the Greens' response to the Prime Minister's release of the final report of the Switkowski Taskforce review of uranium mining, nuclear processing and nuclear energy in Australia.

Nothing in the Switkowski review will remove one gram of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in less than 15 years. In fact, all the additional mining activity will increase greenhouse gas emissions.

Dr Ziggy Switkowski has admitted that he has no

expertise in either renewables or energy efficiency and yet makes a completely unsubstantiated and incorrect claim that nuclear power is the lowest cost low-emission technology that can meet the need.

Global warming and Australia's failure to address it will be a major election issue, and the government is now scrambling to create a perception that it is doing something, knowing full well that nuclear power is too slow, too expensive and too dangerous to provide any answer to global warming.

The Prime Minister has refused to conduct a review into the capacity of renewable energy and energy efficiency to meet Australia's future energy needs. Until he does so, his global warming response has no credibility.



Christine Milne

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"Democracy is just a hole in the ground that glows green in the night!"

The Australian Federal Liberal Party dispels democratic rights of Northern Territorians with the dumping of nuclear waste on Indigenous and public lands.

by Ian Browne, Shamrock News, Darwin

The Australian Federal Liberal Party have had it easy in recent years, pushing through political mandates unabated by all, and souring the social brew for the 'left' in a conservative, hard working country somewhat proud of its democratic wit. A nation now obsessed, like the rest of the western world, in rushing to pay exorbitant mortgage rates and praying for an early retirement, whilst systematically forgetting what is actually important for all living organisms in life; sharing and contributing to sustainability. However, to many the action of the Federal Liberal Party in relation to the dumping of nuclear waste on Indigenous and public land won't surprise. But has the Liberal Party gone too far this time?

I was gratefully invited by the leader of the Northern Territory's 'No Waste Alliance' in Darwin to attend a meeting at the Northern Territory Museum and Art Gallery, by the turquoise waters of Darwin Harbour, in relation to the Liberal Party's lack of consultation with 'all' in relation to nuclear waste burial sites in the Northern Territory. It was a warm, humid pre-monsoon night in late November 2006 and Aboriginal folk from Central Australia were present after a long day of protest in the heat of the tropical north. There had been maneuvers to bury nuclear waste at 'Mucketty'-Tennant Creek, in the semi-arid region of the Northern Territory nearer to Alice Springs than to coastal monsoon lands known as the Top End. There were

also site assessment activities for nuclear waste burial at Leach Lagoon near Katherine, which were to be discussed by David Sweeny from Australian Nature Conservation Foundation and concerned landowners from both these regions.

So I ask anyone, "why should the Federal Liberal Party be able to avoid consultation with traditional land managers and conservation groups, side stepping obstacles to protect land and family, to bury poison upon their Dreamtime past and futures, and thus perhaps transforming land into 'sickness country'? Yes, dangerous radioactive material buried in a special clay casing, and it is hoped safely south of the tropical north's monsoon soaked watertable zone and out of reach of the Australasian/Asian continental conversion fault line susceptible to earth tremors.

I interviewed local Katherine resident 'Vina Hornsby' who gave a very natural and honest account of how the dumping of nuclear waste near Katherine could have disastrous consequences for the environment as heavy monsoon rains would influence ground water seepage, which I too was concerned with in past journals I had written. I just assumed that the Government and their team of scientists from the 'dark side' would have worked this little difficulty out for themselves. Vina was also justifiably right in suggesting grose disrespect for all land users in this part of the Top End where communication with Katherine residents about the Federal Government's proposed waste burial site was almost non existence she felt.

I also interviewed David Sweeny at length before the meeting took place and he was very concerned about the disintegration of democracy

taking place at present where many have been left out of the picture, as the Liberal Party bulldozes through obstacles once again to have their way with people's future. David and the N.T. No Waste Alliance produced a documentary with the Arrente people in the desert country in Central Australia, which was shown during the Museum meeting. These proud Indigenous Australians, surviving on bore water, showed us all attending the meeting how they still used the land for bush foods and the passing down of cultural knowledge to young Aboriginal locals. Two wise elders explained how the government should keep the waste in their own backyards if it is so safe, why should they suffer any of these environmental uncertainties?

Standing tired and emotional, yet defiant and boldly intelligent, a well spoken lady Margie Lynch, spoke strongly of how this recent action is a further slap in the face to those Indigenous folk trying to connect back with the land after being stolen away from home and family, being stripped from their spiritual wisdoms and disposed from cultural and 'land' knowledge. "They have the right now to sing the spirit of the land!" Margie said this behavior is an insult to the many generations of elders who have protected this land with toil and love, whilst governments are ignorant to the traditional rights of land careers. She said she felt sorry for John Howard, he needs to heal for he surely cannot understand the people he governs if he treats them in the way he continuously has over the past 10 years or so. Miss Lynch was dismayed by the lack of consent obtained from traditional elders in relation to Government land use proposals.

She had decided to act for her people after attending a ceremony for the victims of Hiroshima this year.

Dianna Stokes, a lady from Mucketty, was also angry at the Government's actions and described how her land is still used traditionally by her people and that the benefits attributed to ecotourism in her arid region would also be affected by the use of land for waste burials. Valerie; from the Katherine region gave her account as a pastoralist; also concerned by the use of limestone cave country in which to bury nuclear waste. She said monsoon summer rains where huge amounts of soil surface runoff occur, cut off her property in the wet season. Hardly the place to bury nuclear waste, perhaps an environmental disaster awaiting to happen in a region rife with lagoons and sinkholes occurring in the limestone landscape due to surface water runoff and groundwater incursions. Besides, the Federal Liberal Government also plans to develop an evaporation pond in the region, though they have so far kept this information to themselves, clearly a lack of transparency occurring here.

To be fair these planned nuclear waste sites were designed to be stored 400m below the ground and that only low level to medium level waste would be stored in these clay casings. However, what of the proposed future nuclear plants soon to be developed in Australia and their combined generated wastes? And the pressure and dollars instigated by other nations in which to use our ancient landscape to bury nuclear waste, the very same nations we sell our uranium to, enriched or otherwise?

To read the entire article email Ian at etsbamrock2@hotmail.com

Nimbin Truck & crane Hire
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Transport & General
 Long & Short Haul
 Ph: 66890050 Ah:66890063 ask for Vic Florey
 35a Sibley st Nimbin 2480