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June Norman: still fighting for the Reef

Septuagenarian June Norman visited the Nimbin Environment Centre to say hi to Coralie and others who supported her and walked 25kms into Gladstone, the 'dial steps' of ReefWalk2013.

June (pictured) said that the ReefWalk was very successful. "Communities and individuals who took part in the walk have come on board and organised Save the Reef rallies in their own areas. I have been invited back to talk at rallies at Port Douglas, Cairns and Airlie Beach."

June was on her way to attending 'Rainforest and Reef Conservation Stories' at Ninney Rise, Mission Beach. Ninney Rise is the home of the late John Buust, who in the 1960's "saved the Reef" by stopping limestone mining on Ellison Reef.

After discovering that further mining and drilling for oil was planned on other reefs, John Buust then instigated the process of the



Great Barrier Reef Marine park Authority and the listing with the World Heritage Board in 1981.

June said, "We owe so much to the vigilance and hard work of John Buust and his supporters, and I feel very proud to be following in his footsteps."

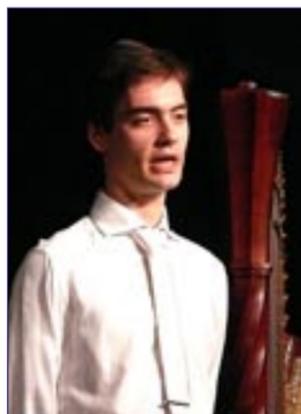
"The Great Barrier Reef is one of the Seven Wonders of the World and as Australians we are the guardians, we must act to protect this beautiful Reef."

Lock-down!



For a week in June, Nimbin town looked like a bomb had hit it. The temporary fencing, pedestrian detour and closed businesses were so that the awnings could be replaced.

Apathy kills Classic series



Nimbin Goes Classic has folded because of poor attendance of recent concerts.

With about 25 people in the audience, the most recent Nimbin Goes Classic was a total economic failure – although it was one of the best concerts.

The turn-out was far too low to cover running expenses or to pay performers. The previous concert last October attracted 80 people, and even that was a failure. Performers gave away some of their share to avoid the organiser losing personal money.

The two first concerts, in

December and May 2013, were a success, with 100 to 120 people in the audience.

The first two events were totally organised on-site by Nimbin School of Arts member Tony Coiffet (pictured). The third edition was also organised by Tony, but remotely and via internet because of visa issues.

The most recent event was mainly left to the musicians to organise, which didn't work: performers are artists, not agents.

Successful organisation requires dedication and on-site presence from someone with the required skills and network. Without a hope of getting a visa to return to Australia, Tony Coiffet has decided not to pursue his enterprise in Nimbin.

He also expressed his disappointment with local politicians whom he approached but who did not at any stage support his request for assistance.

Facing such a situation, NGC will regretfully have to cease existing.

Nimbin matters

The Nimbin Advisory Group provides Lismore Council with input on issues that impact on the village. It meets every three months with Council representatives.

Below is a summary of the matters discussed at its last meeting in May.

Hutchinson Road

The process of investigating the use of Hutchinson Road as a walking trail has been difficult, and the Mayor acknowledged the upset it had caused in the community.

Councillors met with some of the landowners and made a decision to halt the process, acknowledging that it would require a high level of input from staff considering the opposition that some landowners had to boundary adjustments and the proposal continuing.

The NAG voiced concern this could set a precedent if future road reserves come up for possible change into walking trails. Some roads have been identified in the Sustainable Nimbin Community Plan as key infrastructure access points for emergency use.

Generally, the Hutchinson Road process was complex, and it would be unfortunate if each future paper road decision was as difficult as this one.

Nimbin Recycling Centre

Council has received over 350 completed surveys from Nimbin. That's a massive response, and clearly shows that Nimbin takes the future of waste disposal and the Recycling Centre seriously.

The surveys are currently being collated and will be reported to the NAG by Council at the August meeting.

Nimbin Skate Park LCC funding

Funds were allocated from the Rural and Urban Sports Fund three years ago to remediate the old skate park site. This has been delayed due to the development of the Sustainability House project and the desire to integrate the two sites.

However a proposal is being developed to do some landscaping in three phases. A DA will be lodged for picnic tables and chairs, a basketball hoop, a handball wall and possibly a concrete table tennis table to be installed.

Peace Park traffic calming

A design for traffic calming adjacent to the new skate park was tabled by Council. It had earlier been shown to the group. The new traffic calming could happen in the new financial year.

LCC External Funding Review

Council has done a major re-think on the section 356 community donations.

The only automatic allocations are for the Mayor's Fund, Rural Halls (who get an increase from \$1000 to \$2000) and ANZAC or Australia Day expenditure. There will be no separate Youth fund.

Future applications will have to go through a more rigorous application process, similar to applications to other funding bodies. There will be no set maximum amount for funds but additional application requirements for amounts over \$5000 and \$10,000.

Applications must be linked to the *Imagine Lismore* community plan outcomes.

Western car park

Solar lights have recently had LED globes fitted by Rainbow Power.

Vacant land

Nimbin Garden Club had been approached regarding the gully between the Headers' ground and Rainbow Power. The site was not considered appropriate for a number of reasons – mostly to do with maintenance and crime.

The Walking Track

This proposal did not get to a Council workshop as planned, as the concept was deemed too early in its inception stage to be discussed by Councillors.

Bus route

There had been further correspondence with the Minister of Transport regarding the Countrylink bus route change to include Nimbin.

Sustain Northern Rivers have provided additional information and a letter has been sent to the Minister, an article has been published by *The Northern Star* and Thomas George has indicated he will support the request.

The group agreed it is important to keep lobbying for this.

Labor digs in on health job cuts

NSW Labor has called on the State Government to abandon its plan to slash 500 jobs at six North Coast hospitals as part of a privatisation push.

NSW Labor leader John Robertson has described the Liberal-National plan to cut 500 cleaning, ward and security staff as the "worst single attack on North Coast health services in recent memory".

Mr Robertson demanded the government halt the plans immediately.

This comes on top of the National Party caving in over the privatisation of electricity.

MBM Consulting, commissioned by the State Government's Northern NSW Health District, met with staff from Grafton, Maclean, Ballina and Lismore Base hospitals.

Mr Robertson, the Shadow Minister for the North Coast,

Walt Secord, and Labor candidates Ron Goodman (Tweed) and Isaac Smith (Lismore) have formally opposed the plan.

Mr Robertson said removing 500 staff will put pressure on medical staff, including doctors and nurses. "This plan must be dropped," he said.

Mr Goodman said there were also plans to reduce hours at the Murwillumbah Hospital children's ward and to introduce paid parking at Tweed Hospital.

Mr Secord said the National Party MPs were selling-out North Coast families.

"They've sold-out the community on coal seam gas, TAFE, and selling poles and wires which will put upward pressure on electricity prices.

"And now they are planning to slash 500 local jobs in health."

Studies cherry-pick rail vs trail facts

by Garth Kindred

A Rail Trail Bill soon to be tabled in Parliament will, proponents say, protect the Casino-Murwillumbah rail corridor – but it will destroy the rail infrastructure in the process.

A \$2m, 131-page Transport Study (TS) used by politicians to justify not repairing the line ignores the tourist potential of a commuter train service, whereas the Rail Trail Study (RTS) – at half the cost and length – focuses and relies on optimistic projections of tourist users and cost projections.

The RTS set the contingency level at 15%, while the TS has it at 50%, taking the price tag from \$476m to \$952m. The original recommendation in the RTS was 40%, but this was reduced to 15% to make the plan more attractive.

Many costs – including car-parking and level-crossing remediation – were not included and indirect costs kept down.

While the TS has over-inflated costs, the RTS has under-estimated them. Both studies are inaccurate and raise more questions than they answer.

The RTS makes the point that only 40% of the Northern Rivers population (95,200 people) live along the corridor – but promotes tourist destinations far removed from the corridor.

This means that 60% of the population won't have ready access to the trail, so it doesn't serve the majority of people – an argument MP Don Page used as grounds for rejecting the refurbishment of the railway.

The aim is satisfying the coastal tourist industry, but the trails are not connected to rail or airports, and the scenic tourist destinations mentioned in the RTS, such as Nimbin and The Channon, are not connected to the corridor.

The RTS assumes the availability of non-existent bike-carrying buses, and says that while the average tourist spends \$85 a day, a cyclist spends \$201 a day. Where does this figure come from?

The study poses a conservative scenario of 23,000+ tourists a year – but with returns of only 75c on every \$1 invested the project would not be financially viable. This was omitted from the conclusions.



Snap Action at Don Page's Ballina office on 18th June
Below: The TOOT train was very popular at this year's Lantern Parade.

Then there is cost confusion. Costs totalling \$93.4 million are mentioned considerably more than the \$75.5 million base estimate.

The study refers to the security of private properties adjoining the corridor, and suggests fencing "to delineate private property and minimise public risk", possibly at property-owners' cost. All embankments and bridges will have to be fenced for safety so that horses and bike riders do not go over the edge.

There are significant engineering issues to be considered: variable terrain, high annual rainfall, and bridges need to be modified.

The study suggests non-government funding from the "emerging gas industry". How popular would that be in the Northern Rivers?

The approach to managing ongoing operational cost is held up as a key issue in the study. It suggests these could be managed via a Trust – those who benefit commercially from the RT pay for it via tours or hire etc. But how will they prove what extra income is derived from the provision of RTs through accommodation, meals etc? Will there be toll gates on the RTs eventually? Will we need E cards on our bikes? Will the local councils ie. ratepayers, end up paying for Rail Trail maintenance?

The RTS acknowledges Environmental Impact Assessments would need to



be undertaken and these may require amendments to the local LEPs. Has there been proper consultation with our communities? Don't surveys reveal most people in the region still want trains?

The study says: "The need to preserve the corridor for the future running of trains presents a key challenge to implementing the rail trail that must be addressed before any conversion works can commence." How, exactly?

The RTS conclusion is that "the project is likely to be viable". Rail Trails may not only fail, they will also stop trains from ever returning to the tracks.

See Northern Rivers Railway Action Group's Facebook page for updates.

Stellar solar effort

Lismore City Council has installed solar hot water systems on 10 of its facilities – another step in its challenge to self-generate all electricity from renewable resources by 2023.

The 10 new solar hot water systems were jointly funded by the council and the Local Government Energy Efficiency Program (LGEEP).

The LGEEP is a Commonwealth Government grant program that helps local governments install energy efficient solar and/or heat pump hot water technology in buildings and community facilities, particularly in low socio-economic or otherwise disadvantaged areas.

There are three new solar hot water systems on community facilities: the amenities blocks at Gilchrist Oval in Caniaba, Balzer Oval in Dunoon, and the Lismore Memorial Baths.

There are also seven new systems on the council's Corporate Centre, Mechanical Works Depot, Water and Wastewater Works Depot, East Lismore Sewage Treatment office and Laboratory, Lismore Recycling and Recovery Centre and Blakebrook Quarry.

The 10 systems cost just over \$31,000 after claiming back \$8265 from Small-scale Technology Certificates (STCs), a solar credit scheme run by the Commonwealth's Clean Energy Regulator.

"Solar is the way of the future," environmental strategies officer Anton Nguyen said. "We're ticking boxes to reach that 2023 target. It will be a challenge, but we are steadily moving toward it. If anyone can do it, I reckon Lismore can."

The council's 2023 Renewable Energy Master Plan is currently in development and is expected to be completed by August 2014.

Council road coffers stay open

In the 2013/14 year, Lismore City Council spent an extra \$700,000 on the local road network as part of the *Imagine Lismore* 10-Year Plan, and will continue to build on that increase.

It will allocate over \$200,000 to infrastructure and asset management each year.

Of the council's 780km of sealed road network, 56km has recently been resurfaced, 23km of this attributable to the additional funding.

"We need to be resurfacing 65km a year in order to be sustainable in our asset maintenance, based on an industry standard of resurfacing bitumen sealed

roads every 12 years," explained general manager Gary Murphy.

The purpose of resurfacing a bitumen sealed road was to ensure that any minor cracking was repaired before water and moisture could seep in and create potholes, he said.

"It's a change of strategy for council. We can resurface more kilometres of our road network if we focus on resurfacing and accept the fact we cannot always afford to replace kerb and guttering as well."

Fifteen roads have been repaired in the 2013/14 year with the redirected funds through *Imagine Lismore*.

Hogan welshes on water pledge

by Georgina Woods

The Federal National Party has walked away from its commitment to protect the national water trigger on Coal Seam Gas (CSG) mining, and voted last week to allow it to be handed back to the states.

The Federal National member for Page, Kevin Hogan, had promised to cross the floor on the CSG issue if necessary, but instead last

week he turned away from the commitments he made to his electorate.

Phil Laird, national co-ordinator for the Lock the Gate Alliance, said the trigger was introduced because of the severe risks to water supplies posed by CSG "and the abject failures of the states to properly assess or protect important, nationally significant water sources.

"Last week in Parliament, the National Party voted

to allow the Federal water trigger to be handed back to the states, rendering it completely meaningless," he said.

"Self-interested state governments can't be trusted to properly regulate nationally important water resources that cross state boundaries, such as the Murray Darling Basin or the Great Artesian Basin," Mr Laird said.

"Voting this trigger down is a huge betrayal of farming communities and our environment."

LNP figures who vowed that the water trigger would not be touched if they were elected should now "hang their heads in shame", he said.

Michael McNamara, spokesperson for Gasfield Free Northern Rivers said, "Before the last election, Kevin Hogan made a specific commitment not to support Federal environment powers



being handed back to the states and threatened to 'cross the floor' on CSG."

In Federal Parliament, that commitment lay in tatters last month, and Mr Hogan voted for the Bill which has gutted the water trigger on CSG mining. "He had his one big chance to 'cross the floor', and he blew it," Mr McNamara added.

"If this new Bill passes the Senate, Federal decisions on CSG water impacts will effectively be history."



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Nationals leader attacks Northern Rivers community members over CSG protest

Lock the Tweed's Michael McNamara has called on National Party MPs Geoff Provest and Thomas George to distance themselves from reported comments by their party leader, Deputy Premier and Minister for the North Coast, Andrew Stoner about protesters at the recent Bentley Blockade.

Mr Stoner was reported to have said of those at the blockade, "It broke my heart that some of those professional bludgers thought they had a win." The comment is reported in a tweet by Jenna Cairney, deputy editor at *The Land* newspaper.

"Mr Stoner has misjudged the depth and breadth of opposition to unconventional gas operations in the Northern Rivers. He reverts to old and tired stereotypes in a pathetic attempt to denigrate and disparage those who stood against Metgasco's planned operations at Bentley," Mr McNamara said.

"The 'professional bludgers' he refers to included the mayors of Lismore, Tweed, Kyogle and Byron Shires. They also included many farmers, professionals and



tradespeople from local communities."

In another tweet by Ms Cairney, Mr Stoner is reported to have said, "Mark my word we were prepared to go head to head with that protest group."

"Thank goodness cooler heads prevailed to decide against sending the police in large numbers against a united Northern Rivers community," Mr McNamara said.

"What did Geoff Provest and Thomas George have to say? Did they defend the many ordinary community

members from their electorates who attended the Bentley Blockade against this scurrilous attack from a man who has admitted on ABC TV that he would not like a CSG well 5m from his fence?"

"Sadly, I think the answer is 'no.'" "The Nationals in the Northern Rivers need to move aside, or be moved aside, to allow room for MPs who will truly represent their communities rather than the interests of mining companies and other groups with vested interests."

Time to cancel all gas licences in the Northern Rivers

by Aidan Ricketts

The state government has via the office of Coal Seam Gas moved to re-confirm the suspension of Metgasco's exploration license in relation to the Rosella site at Bentley. In itself that is a positive outcome, and a sign that the vision of a Gasfield Free Northern Rivers in perpetuity is dawning as a serious reality.

We all know that people power has been the driving force behind the government's late realisation

that Metgasco's community consultation was deeply flawed. The government has now successfully sandbagged their original decision from Metgasco's aggressive litigation, whilst also buying themselves time to consider their position leading up to the March 2015 state election.

Our community has been spared the ongoing saga of having Metgasco's corporate ambitions imposed upon us by force, and we all get a break from the divisiveness that this industry generates. The

hideous gas-seeking zombie has just lost another limb it seems.

Councils across the region have been sending a very clear message to the State Government that the Northern Rivers is united in its desire to remain gasfield free. Ballina, Lismore, and Tweed have already passed resolutions to this general effect and Byron is expected to follow suit very soon. Last week even Richmond Valley Council agreed to reconsider their position in a meeting set for August.

The momentum for the final cancellation of all PELs across the entire region is building steadily. The community now has a window to press home the advantage and demand that the state government do the democratic thing and respect our right to clean air and water, to a safe and productive environment and to a reasonable level of regional self-determination.

The same lack of community consultation that has characterized the Rosella site applies equally to all of the Petroleum exploration licenses (PELs) in the Northern Rivers held by Metgasco and by Dart energy. They are all tarred with the same brush, all flawed and all deeply unpopular. But the reasons to push for cancellation go well beyond mere technical concerns with community consultation.

The government is faced with a political problem that will not go away until the Northern Rivers is finally legislatively recognized as a Gasfield Free region. Several months ago the

state government foolishly and no doubt at the behest of their mining industry friends removed a legislative provision giving them the power to revoke any PEL on public interest grounds with no compensation being payable. This provision needs to be re-instated as a matter of urgency so this issue can be resolved properly and permanently.

So whilst we have had an historic and powerful win at Bentley there remains much work ahead. We must rally and redouble our pressure upon state government for the final implementation of our vision of a Gasfield Free Northern Rivers.

In the months ahead it is important to seize the opportunity of the coming state elections to extract the commitments and actions needed. What we can all do is stay in contact with our local gasfield-free groups throughout the region and support the ongoing work of the regional movement through Gasfield Free Northern Rivers and the national movement through Lock the Gate. There is much to be done, pressuring local polities, contributing time and money and taking part in any events, rallies or actions that take place in coming months.

There will be plenty of activity, so stay tuned via the gasfieldfreenorthernrivers.org website or the [gasfieldfreenorthernrivers Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/gasfieldfreenorthernrivers).

Thanks again to the entire regional community for its unwavering determination to secure a gasfield free Northern Rivers.

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While the rest of the world is still searching for the answer to serious diseases like psoriasis and many others, goodskincare by Psoriasis & Skin Clinic has been completely changing the lives of those who have been given no hope.

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NORTHERN RIVERS & THE GOLD COAST

Anti-CSG signs say it all

Overcast skies and rain didn't dampen the resolve of residents from four areas in the Tatham, Greenridge region, as they gathered around their new anti-CSG road signs.

The signs show the community's resistance to invasion by dangerous unconventional mining.

An all-of-community survey in 2012 showed that 85% of the residents in this 120 square kilometres of prime Richmond Valley farmland want to stay gasfield free.

This region between Casino and Coraki, spanning Richmond Valley and Lismore shires, is threatened not only by Metgasco, but ERM and other mining companies.

Their risky practices show the dollar is their only concern as they continue to exploit local landholders, who are here either to farm cattle or to crop sugar cane and soybeans. Other residents have been attracted by the clean air and water and the quiet peace that this area provides.

All that will disappear if gasfields spread through the land.

"We don't want the Richmond River and its tributaries bubbling gas, or our bores drying up, as has happened to our neighbours in Queensland," said third generation farmer George Wagener.

"The unconventional gas industry got



Locals rally around the new anti-gas mining sign at Tatham. Each hat and boot represents another farming family determined to stop the mining but unable to attend.

a toehold in the Richmond Valley early, with promises of jobs and 'drought-proofing'.

"We may have been too trusting of them and governments which are supposed to look out for our best interests, but we're not stupid.

"Unconventional gas reservoirs do not stop at state boundaries, and neither do communications between farmers and graziers. We now know what a disaster

this industry really is for agriculture."

As the signs say: "Our community gasfield free, 85 percent agree! So, we stand together to protect our land, air, water and livelihood. Let all unconventional mining companies take note: You are not welcome! Let all levels of government hear our demands. Revoke all Petroleum Exploration Licences here and throughout the Northern Rivers now!"

What do we mean by 'social licence'?



Ruth Rosenhek speaking outside Thomas George's office



Anne Thompson speaks her mind.

by Richard Parsons

On Thursday 15th May, NSW Energy Minister Anthony Roberts suspended Metgasco's exploration licence at Bentley, near Lismore, citing a lack of community consultation.

The news was greeted by opponents of the project, many of whom had blockaded the site since February, as confirmation that Metgasco had no social licence. NSW Greens MP Jeremy Buckingham commented:

"The Bentley blockade is a physical manifestation of the social licence and shows that a social licence is not only real, but necessary for an industry like coal seam gas to operate."

The argument that Metgasco had no social licence was commonly made during the campaign itself. Evidence of this was typically made by noting that, in a 2012 Lismore City Council poll, 87% of voters opposed coal seam gas exploration and production in the Council area.

In short, the concept of social licence appears to give communities greater influence in development decision-making. But what does 'social licence' mean? I have researched this concept over the last five years, deriving a number of findings:

The term 'social licence' was coined in 1997 by Jim Cooney, an executive of Vancouver-based mining company Placer Dome, in response to perceived threats

to the minerals industry's legitimacy. Mining, oil, and gas industries continue to dominate its application. Hence its meaning has been shaped largely by industry.

It generally refers to the ongoing acceptance or approval of communities local to a particular business or operation, although the boundaries of these 'local communities' are unclear. Hence it might be better termed a 'community licence', as the views of wider society are usually excluded from social licence parameters.

Unlike a regulatory licence, 'social licence' is intangible and informal, with no agreed definition. This makes it easy for companies to assume that they have one, and difficult for communities and opponents to prove otherwise.

The metaphor 'licence' is therefore misleading and oversimplistic because it suggests something binary (licence or no licence). Reality is more complex: community and public sentiment vary along a continuum of opinion. A community might alternatively demonstrate acceptance, approval, or trust towards a project/company, and individuals within communities will have varying opinions.

The term 'licence' may also encourage companies to see their social responsibilities in terms of doing just enough to enable them to operate with minimal regulation.

Most commonly, companies talk about

'maintaining' it, rather than obtaining it or losing it. They rarely talk about how a social licence might be maintained, or indeed obtained or lost. It is apparently just assumed to exist.

It is very difficult, therefore, to prove conclusively that a project has no social licence. What can be stated is whether a project has the free, prior, and informed consent of local communities. Consent is a different proposition – one which companies have tended to resist, probably because it embodies a legal right to reject projects. Consent also places the burden of proof on the company to demonstrate community acceptance, whereas a loosely-defined social licence places that burden on the community to explain rejection.

Social licence can be a useful tool to express the degree to which communities and society approve (or disapprove) of something. For example, in our region, we might say that a renewable energy company enjoys a high level of social licence, without necessarily boasting 100% trust within the community. Social licence is limited, though, as a mechanism to resist unwanted development. And ultimately, neither social licence nor consent replaces the need for ongoing dialogue between large organisations, affected communities, and society.

Dr Richard Parsons is an independent social research consultant: rp.socialresearch@gmail.com

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Letters

Rail equity

I have just written to our somnambulant Member for Lismore, Thomas George, to draw to his attention to an inconsistency in National Party Policy.

Mr George and his master, Andrew Stoner (Deputy Premier and Minister for the North Coast) believe that the Northern Rivers Region is not deserving of a railway connection to the rest of NSW but his government is prepared to continue indefinitely the daily passenger train service to Armidale from Sydney.

Once a town on the former Main Northern Railway to Wallangarra (and Brisbane) Armidale now effectively sits at the end of a 124 kilometre extension of a branch line through Tamworth from Werris Creek. This isolated barren stretch of railway only serves two small isolated settlements (Uralla and Walcha) on the 124 km journey north from Tamworth.

Armidale only has a population of 23,578 whereas Lismore has an urban population of 27,474 and lies only 30km from its nearest railway connection, Casino.

So, Mr George, why does the smaller city of Armidale deserve a daily train service whilst the 60,390 people living in the towns along the 131 km Casino - Murwillumbah Railway have been denied any train services for 10 long years?

I have also received correspondence from Tim Fischer, the former Deputy PM, who is regarded as Australia's best-known railway enthusiast and advocate. Contrary to the anti-regional-rail policies of Mr George and his Government, Tim Fischer is fully supporting the return of trains to the Northern Rivers and he gave me permission to quote him as follows:

"Rail trails are great in many ways and certainly boost cross pollination of ideas and linkages but better still in NE NSW, shuttle modern light rail between Casino and Byron Bay and Murwillumbah makes great sense and I believe essential to the core transport fabric of an increasingly congested part of NSW, adjoining as it does the Gold Coast."

Thomas George and his

National Party associates are now hell-bent on returning to the transport of the Dark Ages by advocating a Northern Rivers Rail-Trail for horses and bikes, instead of the 21st Century rail service, which Tim Fischer believes we deserve and should have.

Glen Aspinall,
Goonellabah

Twin obsessions

The Nimbin Environment Centre is being asked to support two different obsessions that have the common feature of being harmless.

One is Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR) from mobile phone or broadband towers and the other is vapour trails (actually ice crystals) that form from aeroplane exhaust in sufficiently cold and humid conditions. Frightening people about nothing is not something I'm happy for NEC to be involved in.

First, how can I be so confident that the phone towers aren't responsible for the list of medical monstrosities ascribed to them? Two reasons – their frequency is too low and their power is too low. To be carcinogenic or mutagenic, the phone tower EMR would have to be energetic enough to cause chemical change, but it has nowhere near enough energy.

The photon energy of mobile phone frequency EMR is from 4 millionths to 2 one hundred thousandths of an electron volt (eV) in energy (photon energy = plank's constant x frequency (Hz)). Chemical reactions like photosynthesis are only starting at about 1.8eV which is orangey-red light wave EMR. Even then the photosynthesis cycle has to store up the energy from 8 photons before it can strip a hydrogen atom from water.

Phone tower EMR is not remotely close to an energy level capable of causing chemical change and so DNA is safe. Mobile phone photon energies are equivalent to a thermal temperature of 0.03K to 0.16K. Hence if mobile phone frequencies were capable of DNA damage, so too would any temperature above 0.03K. DNA is stable at 300K, well above mobile phone effects.

The other EMR effect is thermal, as polar molecules

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Email: nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com or put stuff in our pigeonhole at the Nimbin Community Centre.

(like water) align or attempt to align with the alternating electric and magnetic fields in the wave. This heating effect depends on the intensity of the EMR measured in W/m2 (watt per square metre). Even close to the tower, typical measured intensities are quite low, around 7mW/m2 to 12mW/m2 (mW is milliwatt or one thousandth of a Watt).

Compare this to EMR from sunlight which is up to 1100W/m2 in summer or warming yourself by a fire – about 6kW/m2 of EMR to get nice and warm. Diathermy, both high frequency RF and microwave uses power levels of 100W and up to 200W over a smaller area, equivalent to about 1600W/m2 – though in controlled conditions, none of the horrors attributed to phone towers appear to have been noted. Nor do these horrors appear to be attributed to the much more powerful TV or radio antennas.

The videos about phone towers and "chemtrails" that are being circulated, get away with telling bald-faced lies as statements from authority ("nothing grows in soil with pH 6.5") but people ignore the lies and keep watching because they discern the presenter as credible. The video presenters callously exploit gaps in general knowledge and science and use trickery shamelessly.

At Bentley I saw people cowering under a blanket all day to protect themselves from the imagined effects of aircraft vapour trails. It's possible that the level of fear-induced stressing about nothing could weaken the immune system and make more likely some of the feared effects. For this reason, those promoting this fear have a responsibility to check their facts.

NEC should not be involved in frightening people about nothing.

Alan Roberts
Bentley

Smoulder hugs

The last couple of weeks I've been assisting with Smoulder's (John Darryl Brunson) funeral, memorial service and his belongings. I

wish to thank many people who allowed me to do this for Smoulder.

When I asked for some help of some people and told them it was for Smoulder, it was inspiring for me to see that our wonderful community jumped at the chance to help out. So it is with the greatest respect and heartfelt thanks to all those people and thank you to those who made my job (sometimes in hidden tears) easier.

In particular I wish to mention and give big hugs to the following community members: Jodee and the Rainbow Cafe, both Martins of Stringworks and Jeremy, Michael and the Hemp Embassy crew, the mob at NNIC, Venessa, Cat, Nat, Guy, Gail, Reg, Heidi and Peter Lawrence from All Tribes. For those that have assisted and I've not mentioned your name, please let me say thank you to you too!

So just to keep you all informed, Smoulder's belongings have been shared around and some sold. The monies will be put to the refurbishing of the Mulgum House unit for the next community member to enjoy. I also would like to say thank you to his sister Leanne Hall and her husband Bill, who allowed Smoulder to stay in our community, the community he so dearly loved.

Teena Kavasilas,
Nimbin

Medical cannabis plea

A few months ago John Kaye from the NSW Greens proposed to introduce to parliament a bill recommending Medical Marijuana for people with terminal illness. He was probably not expecting a lot of support as both Labor and Liberal parties have shown little interest in the past.

Then an amazing thing happened. A young man called Dan Haslam, who has terminal cancer, went to his local MP, a member of the National Party, and told him how the only thing that helped him eat after chemo and find some relief was cannabis. His dad, an ex-undercover cop, had to help

Letters to the editor

NGT welcomes letters by email or post by deadline. Letters longer than 300 words may be cut. Letters already published elsewhere will usually not be considered. Include full name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Opinions expressed remain those of the author, and are not necessarily those of NGT.



him find a supply from people he used to lock up in jail. This young man expressed how it felt to be desperately wanting something that relieved his suffering while being considered a criminal for using it.

When you've experienced the medicinal effects of cannabis, it's hard to understand why its use is treated as a crime. I have previously written about how using it saved me from the nightmare of post-natal depression and while writing about it I could hear in my head voices saying, 'oh she's making that up', just trying to excuse her own drug problem'.

It's incredible the amount of discrimination and negativity that has been directed towards this drug. If its use is legalised for people with terminal illness other people may feel safer to speak openly about the medicinal benefits without the fear of being accused of a crime.

I would love it if no-one ever again had to suffer that fear because they're trying to find relief from suffering. I'm grateful to Dan Haslam for sharing with the world the difficulties he faces and to politicians who are actually listening.

Beth Shelley
Boorie Creek

R.I.P. Wayne John Fuller

3/3/64 – 29/5/14
Forever cherished and loved.

On behalf of myself and my entire family I would like to express my sincere gratitude and love to all the people who showed us compassion, care and support after the sudden death of Wayne.

Thank you for the donations of food and money, thank you for caring, thank you all for just being there.

Wayne is missed and loved by many. In our hearts he shall forever stay.

Tash, Kimberley and Zac



Has Oz abandoned Assange?

by John Jiggins

Julian Assange has celebrated the second anniversary in his virtual prison at the Ecuadorian embassy in London.

Mr Assange's father, John Shipton, spoke to me about his son.

"His health is OK, they work at health," he said. "There is that worry if you have an accident or become sick you have to leave your asylum. I imagine that is what the British government is hoping for.

Greg Barns, who was campaign manager for the WikiLeaks Party, and who visited the embassy last year, described the atmosphere of the place.

"There is no natural light," he said. "You are breathing in recirculated air. There is no capacity to go outside and interact with other people.

"If we can all imagine ourselves living in six or seven rooms, it is pretty isolated. Sheer human decency would tell you that the Swedes ought to go to London to interview him or alternatively give guarantees that if he is interviewed in Sweden, he won't be handed over to the Americans.

He said Mr Assange was "doing a lot better than other people would".

Mr Barns said Mr Assange could not have remained in the UK. "If he went



Photo courtesy: vosiznias.com

back to Sweden there is no doubt that the Swedes would have handed him over to the US. He was hunted into the position he found himself in and it was to the credit of the Ecuadorians that they gave him asylum."

John Shipton agreed. "Since Edward Snowden's release of the NSA documents, confirming that there is a secret grand jury accumulating evidence, it is now clear that the reasons for Julian taking asylum were firm."

Mr Shipton was organising a care package, including a small companion

animal, for his son. He spoke with some bitterness about the treatment of the man who was the readers' choice for Time's Man of the Year and who won the Sydney Peace Prize in 2010.

"The Obama administration rhetoric on whistle-blowers and publishers is the opposite of their practice," he said.

"They have hounded and imprisoned more whistle-blowers than any previous administration. They are determined to put the lives of anybody who reveals their misdeeds in limbo. They are cruel people who attempt to remove all hope."

Mr Barns questioned former Foreign Minister Bob Carr's claim that the Australian High Commission had made over 70 contacts with Mr Assange.

"Essentially what the Australian High Commission does is ring the Ecuadorian Embassy and say, 'Does Julian need anything?', and if they say no they tick that off as servicing the case for that week."

He said Australians should be horrified that one of their own should find himself in this situation.

"I think it is time for Australian politicians on both sides of politics got serious and did something for Julian Assange, in the same way they were forced to take action for David Hicks at Guantanamo Bay," he said.

Notices

For sale: bromeliads

If you are a bromeliad collector or just need some low maintenance plants to brighten up your house or garden, Mandy Hale is now selling from home. Extensive range of very affordable plants and pups (young plants) are cheaper still. Cheap succulents too. Phone 6689-1145 and leave your contact number, or email: halegarden@yahoo.com.au Mandy is 10 minutes from Nimbin by car.



For sale: pottery

Art deco Diana pottery collection for sale. 56 pieces + original guidebook. \$770 ono. Contact Dianne on 0432-051-189.

To let

Room for rent at the Nimbin Community Centre. Currently housing Nimbin Optical. Available August. For further information or to apply, please contact Nina on 6689-0000 or email: ncci@nimbincommunity.org.au

Sewing repairs and alterations

No job too small. Ultra cheap rates for students and pensioners. Phone Josephine in Lismore with any enquiries: 0437-377-425.

Nimbin Flix

Screenings held on the third Saturday night of each month at 6.30pm at Birth and Beyond. You can email Belinda and Daniel at: nimbinflix@gmail.com or find them on facebook, or phone 0466-654-772 if you need more information.

Introduction to essential oils

Free medicine cabinet makeover class, hosted by Laura Trantino, presented by Tanya Maidment and Vanessa Jean, on Wednesday 9th July, 6pm-7.30pm at 'Nurture', upstairs at 115 Keen Street Lismore, opposite Fundies. RSVP to Laura on 0405-730-933 or email: laurauratrantino@yahoo.com.au

Train your brain

Brain Gym® in Action – an introduction. Lifetime skills to 'switch on' your brain. Sunday 13th July, 9am-5pm in Byron Bay. Cost \$200 includes one book, morning tea. Register with Heather on 0407 978 335.

Hospital engagement

Northern NSW Local Health District Multi-Purpose Service (MPS) Network invites community members to attend a morning tea with Murray Spriggs, community engagement manager, to provide an overview of the MPS in your community and discuss the formation of an advisory committee, to meet three times a year.

Please RSVP to attend the morning teas, which will be held 10-11.30am at Nimbin MPS on Thursday 17th July (6689-1400), Urbenville MPS on Wednesday 23rd July (6634-1600), and Kyogle MPS on Thursday 24th July (6632-1522).

Living and dying workshop

'Living and Dying Consciously' workshop with clinical psychologist, Indivar. 9.30 to 5pm, 26th & 27th July Lismore. Please phone/text Elizabeth on 0429-199-021 or email: dr_mccardell@yahoo.com

Greens fundraiser

Northern Rivers Greens trivia fundraiser. Great prizes. 3pm, Sunday 3rd August at Lismore City Bowling Club, \$10 per ticket. Make up a table of 10. Contact Aniko on 0400-305-715 for more details.

Embroiderers' group

Meetings are 9.30am-2.30pm every 1st and 3rd Wednesday and every 3rd Saturday of each month in the function room at the rear of the Red Dove Centre, Keen Street, Lismore. Tutoring is available for new embroiderers, and workshops with local and visiting tutors are held throughout the year. Contact 0423-337-872.

Free listings

Keep it brief and to the point and if we think it's of interest to our readers, we'll run your community notice for free! Email us before deadline (see box on opposite page).