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Region still ripe for rail reinstatement

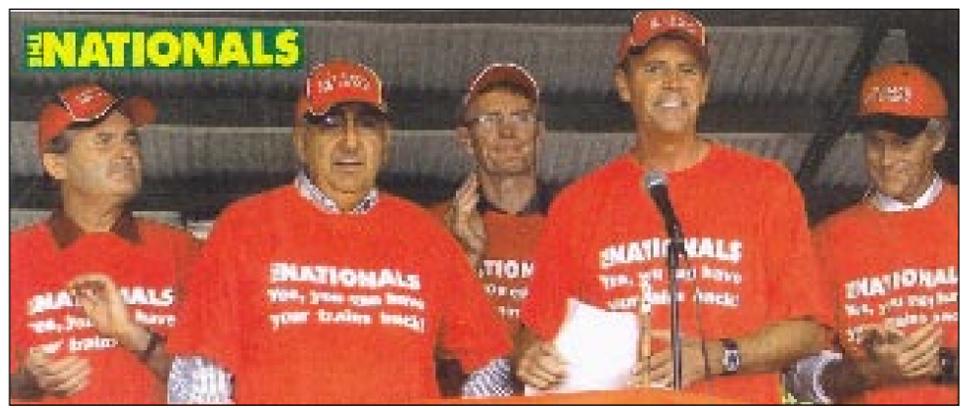
Thomas George, the State MP for Lismore, said in Parliament on 13th March 2009, "I call once again for the reinstatement of the Casino to Murwillumbah rail service."

On 1st June 2006, Barry O'Farrell, while standing on Lismore railway station with Thomas George, promised to return services within three weeks of attaining government.

TOOT (Trains On Our Tracks) calls on the NSW government to honour their pre-election commitments to run light rail services in the Northern Rivers.

An on-line poll conducted by *The Northern Star* on 27th February 2014 puts support for rail at 71%.

"We ask why is the NSW government ignoring the people? Why are they back-



Nationals MP proudly wearing their (non-core) promises on their chests prior to winning government.

flipping on their pre-election promises?" asked Karin Kolbe, president of TOOT.

"The land up here is very valuable - we strongly suspect that's the real reason: the government wants to rip up the tracks and sell the stations and corridor.

"The government's so-called

feasibility study last year ignored the option of light-rail, and unnecessarily added in the costs associated with the XPT to make the costs higher."

Ms Kolbe says the report ignored environmental issues, and didn't include tourists in the passenger numbers. "It deliberately inflated the costs

while ignoring any benefits to justify a policy backflip," Ms Kolbe said.

"Rail and bikes can work together safely in the same corridor - like in Victoria - to create a true transport system for all."

• see p10 Green Scene for more comment on rail and transport.

Recycling tips for the resourceful

by Sue Stock

Despite the 'reduce, reuse and recycle' slogan being so well known, many still do not get the message and have not changed their behaviour. Despite ample recycling and ordinary bins on the streets of Nimbin, the regular bins are constantly filled with materials that can be recycled and vice versa.

Why are Nimbin locals contaminating the recycling bins with ordinary rubbish? Sure they need better signage and look uncared for, but this is one of the Greenest voting villages in Australia. It is also a great opportunity to educate the 140,000 tourists who visit us each year.

Though recycling is only part of the solution to the world's environmental problems, and reducing consumption of throwaway objects is preferable to using items that need to be recycled, it is still very important to reduce our carbon footprint where we can.

The ten most important items to recycle are:

- 1: Aluminum.** Aluminum cans are 100% recyclable, and can be recycled over and over again. Even better, turning recycled cans into new cans takes 95% less energy than making brand-new ones.
- 2: PET Plastic Bottles.**



Doug Johnston, one of the Jungle Patrol team that empties the Nimbin street bins daily.

Making plastic out of recycled resources uses about two-thirds less energy than making new plastic.

3: Newspaper. According to the US EPA, paper makes up about one-third of the all the municipal waste stream in the US.

4: Corrugated Cardboard. Old corrugated cardboard (OCC) represents a significant percentage of the commercial solid waste stream. In 1996, the US generated 29 million tons of OCC, or 13.8% of their municipal waste stream.

5: Steel cans. Steel products can be recycled over again without compromising the quality of the steel.

6: HDPE plastic bottles. (HDPE stands for high-density polyethylene, a common and more dense plastic, which is used for detergents, bleach, shampoo, milk jugs.) HDPE plastics are identified by the logo on the bottom of the container. (Three arrows in the shape of a triangle.) Check the number inside that logo: numbers 1 and 2 are recyclable almost everywhere, but 3 through 7 are only recyclable in limited areas.

7: Glass containers. Recycled glass saves 50% energy versus virgin glass, and recycling just one glass

container saves enough energy to light a 100-watt bulb for four hours. Recycled glass generates 20% less air pollution and 50% less water pollution, and one ton of glass made from 50% recycled materials saves 500 kilos of mining waste.

8: Magazines and 9: Mixed paper. Recycled paper saves 60% of energy versus virgin paper, and also generates 95% less air pollution. Recycling one ton of paper saves 17 trees and 7,000 gallons of water.

10: Computers. Giving old, working computers to friends and family members or donating them to non-profit organisations not only keeps the computer entirely out of the waste stream, but it presents computer access to someone who might not otherwise be able to afford it. (Source: www.care2.com/causes/)

Non-working computers can be sent to Lismore Recycling and Recovery Centre, East Lismore where they are dismantled and valuable components are recovered.

More info can be found at Northern Rivers Waste website: www.northernriverswaste.com.au

Look for a copy of Council's Nimbin Waste Survey in your letterbox this month.

Reflecting on International Women's Day

by Moksha

Another year, another International Women's Day; another day for focusing our clear intentions for the good of all humanity, for all women and children here in our community and all over the world.

We are at the height of materialism. Matter has hardened... become dense, and the spirit world has taken flight...

or so it seems. Churches have become corporations, as have governments around the world. What this means is that money comes first, whereby we, the people, suffer.

In ancient esoteric traditions, mind is before matter, not under or over. Matter follows mind, and gives birth to the emanations flowing from the mind. This is why money in the end does not create happiness and wellbeing.

This means we have to become One Mind, especially in regards to certain issues troubling us, and intentionally focus on what we want (clean air, clean water, etc) not what we don't want (No CSG, etc).

IWD celebrations in Nimbin - Dawn to dusk for justice and healing. Saturday 8th March at Nimbin Community Centre. Bring your blankets, music, song and dance, stories and artworks for sharing.



GetUp and Hogan on same Page

A group of four GetUp members met with Mr Kevin Hogan MP on Friday 28th February to inform him how many GetUp supporters live in the Page electorate, and which issues they want put on the federal parliament's plate.

These are: action on climate change, CSG, a fairer deal for asylum seekers, an equitable taxation system and an independent media.

One of the group, Jocelyn Holloway, said after the meeting, "Mr Hogan was very generous with his time, and we ended up having an hour-long conversation. He was approachable and listened to our point of view respectfully, and while

we agreed to disagree on most points, he did commit to meeting with GetUp members again in the future."

The group delivered the *GetUp in My Electorate* report to Mr Hogan, which shows more than 6,676 GetUp members live in the area. Donations to GetUp from the Page electorate so far total \$85,000.

Ms Holloway said, "It's encouraging that Mr Hogan took time out of his schedule to meet with GetUp members, especially when he wouldn't have expected to see eye-to-eye on all the issues."

Mr Hogan has been roundly criticised for not honouring his pre-election commitment to "oppose CSG

in our region."

He wrote to voters in September: "As a Nationals member of parliament... I will be accountable only to my electorate, and I can oppose CSG from within the government if the Liberals and nationals are successful this weekend."

Ms Holloway saw the meeting with GetUp members as a positive development. "It's the first step to opening up the lines of communication and building a relationship we can revisit in the future," she said.

Pictured: GetUp members Jocelyn, Malveena, Katrina and Tony with Kevin Hogan MP.



Copper chopper returns

This photo was taken at Blue Knob over the Websters Creek community by Vanessa Pelly on the first day of the annual police Cannabis Eradication Program operations in February.

By the end of the month, police had seized more than 1200 cannabis plants from bushland near Lillian Rock, Barkers Vale, Rappville, Woodburn and surrounds, valued at \$2.5 million. The cost of the operation is unclear.



Refreshing change for restrooms

Zac Price has designed and re-painted the internal and external walls of the public toilet block in Nimbin, with the help of a local youth group. Complaints had been received regarding the state of the toilets in general, and Council has noted the need for regular maintenance.

NBN tower concerns for Nimbin

• cont from p1

Others expressed grave concerns about increased electro-magnetic radiation in the environment and its effect on both people and wildlife, particularly bees.

NBN Co provided a report showing the maximum predicted Environmental Electromagnetic Energy output would equate to 0.073% of the allowable exposure limit mandated by the Australian Radiation Protection body and the Nuclear Safety Agency, ARPANSA.

However, the validity of these exposure limits was called into question, with research papers quoted that cast doubt on the internationally-recognised baselines.

Conceding that co-location of other



NBN WIRELESS TOWERS CONTROL PLAN

infrastructure on the monopoles, a policy endorsed by the Australian Communication and Media Authority, would further increase radiation levels,

the representatives said there had been no proposals to co-locate at present.

Amid queries about the visual effect of the towers, many called for a fibre-to-the-home, or fibre-to-the-node installation, instead of fixed wireless, but NBN Co regards the towers as a "well-considered facility for Nimbin".

In its letter to stakeholders, the company maintained, "Both the setback from residences and the green backdrop make this a relatively discreet proposal for such infrastructure."

Now that the consultation period has ended, and with Council approving towers elsewhere, NBN Co is optimistic that Nimbin residents and visitors will be able to access the completed network in late 2015, after their satellite has been launched.

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johnkaye.org.au/event/lismore

Nimbin Flix set to light up



Nimbin now has its very own film society. Nimbin Flix is a non-profit, community-based organisation run by a group of dedicated volunteers.

Movies will range from art-house and indie to foreign films and classics, and we'll be showcasing local short films before the main feature. There will be fun, food, drink and discussion.

Membership is on a yearly basis and this will allow members to enjoy the monthly movie night at a reduced price. For membership info, please contact James Fuller on 0402-040-203 or email him at: nimfilmsocmem@dodo.com.au

For general enquiries and to join the mailing list so you never miss a film, you can email: nimbinflix@gmail.com

or call Belinda Marsh on 0466-654-772. Find us on Facebook: *Nimbin Flix*

There will be a fundraiser on Saturday 29th March at Birth and Beyond. Doors are open at 6.30pm, and the movie will start at 7.30pm. Tickets are \$10 and are available at the Apothecary. Get your tickets in advance, as places are limited. Food will be available for purchase on the night.

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Front Line takes control at Bentley

The Front Line Against Gas (FLAG) has taken decisive action to block the road to Metgasco's planned tight sand gas exploration project.

FLAG is a loose alliance of farmers, locals, landowners and business owners who have united in their opposition to gasfields in the Northern Rivers.

"We are distressed at the impending high risk activities that Metgasco has planned," said FLAG spokesperson Naomi Tarrant.

"This unsafe industry threatens our water, our air, our health and our

livelihoods with its toxic activities. Metgasco wants to drill a two-kilometre deep gas well that will most likely require hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, just 14 kilometres upstream from Lismore CBD.

"With operational activities scheduled to begin any day now, we have blocked the main drive to the planned exploration site and we will continue to use non-violent direct action to safely protest and halt any upcoming operational activities.

"We want the region to be declared gasfield free."



CSG threatens sacred cow

The Far North Coast Dairy Industry Group (DIG) has called on the NSW government for critical industry cluster status to protect its members from the incursion of CSG into the region.

The mining industry is disrupting farming operations and damaging farmers' reputation for maintaining a green industry.

"Our organisation wrote to the state government in October 2013 asking for the same protections being granted to the viticulture and thoroughbred breeder industry clusters. So far, we have not received a reply to this request," said Leigh Shearman, (pictured) chairperson of DIG. "We strongly believe that the government should protect the vital place of agriculture in the NSW economy and future growth potential.

"Our region has a clean, green image that is vital to our Asian neighbours



with increasing export opportunities. These regions offer an enormous market potential for our industry that we have only just started to explore."

Representatives from DIG have met with government and industry bodies from both sides of the CSG debate. "These meetings raised more concerns and questions for our group than were answered," she said.

"The dairy industry, like the whole community relies on clean water. Are

we willing to risk this resource? The two critical factors to our agricultural industry – land and water – are being jeopardised by CSG exploration and production.

Ms Shearman told the *GoodTimes* that "dairies are very busy places with cows traversing our farms twice a day. Any impact by trucks, workers and CSG infrastructure would be a huge imposition on dairy farmers. We use all our land as part of our business.

"Food security into the future should be a paramount concern for all governments. It is vital that this review considers our industry and the wealth that it creates for our economy now and into the future.

"We must protect and encourage a sustainable North Coast Dairy Industry. We ask the government to declare the dairy areas of the Far North Coast to be a critical industry cluster," she said.

Fenton's fracking nightmare



by Sue Stock

Western United States cattle farmer John Fenton warned a packed house at Casino RSM recently not to follow the USA into a gasfield nightmare.

John and his wife Catherine have 24 gas wells on their farm. John, who features in the *Gasland* documentary, has been touring Australia to share his experience, funded by NSW Greens MP Jeremy Buckingham and Jan Barham and the Lock the Gate Alliance members and groups.

The water on Fenton's 364-hectare Wyoming farm has been contaminated by fracking. He said that in 2008, they had noticed the water from their wells had turned bad. It changed colour and smelt of diesel. They asked the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to investigate.

The USEPA drilled monitoring bores and, in 2011, released a report that found the shallow and deep aquifers had been contaminated with chemicals linked to fracking and gas extraction.

Benzene was present at 50 times the level that is considered safe for consumption. Phenols – another dangerous carcinogen – acetone toluene, naphthalene, methane and 13 different compounds associated with hydro-fracking were found in the water.

"Our community was warned not to drink water from our wells and to shower with the windows open, to prevent a build up of explosive gas. My neighbour's water well exploded because of high-pressure gas," he said.

Although the gas company refuses to admit fault, it trucks in drinking water to farmers and has installed

reverse osmosis units.

Fenton said that fracking for CSG is not just an environmental concern, but a human rights issue as well.

"People are going to find out that it's not only the environment, it's human rights. This impacts every portion of your life when you take a rural area or a remote area and you industrialise it for the sole purpose of making profit."

He said that the risks of fracked gas are just not worth taking. "The gas industry will tell you it's a pot of gold, but it has become our pot of poison."

Another packed house, another standing ovation, another stark lesson not to follow the USA into a gasfield nightmare. Sadly, no Richmond Valley councillors or local state MPs (Thomas George or Don Page) attended.

Nannas know how to needle 'em



A screening of *Knitting Nannas*, the award winning short documentary, will be held in Lismore on International Women's Day, 8th March.

Knitting Nannas, made by Rani Brown, was among the six finalists in Greenflicks, Flickerfest's International environmental section. It was Highly Commended (ie second place, behind a British film shot in India).

At the Byron Bay All Shorts film festival, the movie won People's Choice. It was filmed on location in the Northern Rivers, and includes scenes from the blockades at Glenugie and



The Nannas – Felicity Cahill (Drake), Anne Thompson (Eltham), Judi Summers (Eltham), Jenny Leunig (Goonellabah), Clare Twomey (North Lismore), Louise Somerville (East Lismore), and front Rani Brown (filmmaker, Blackheath)

Doubtful Creek.

At the screening there will be a serenade by Davey Bob Ramsay, with other local performers to be announced. A sneak preview of a local documentary will also grace the screens. There will be a lucky door prize and lots of silly old ladies hooting and cackling. And knitting.

There are a lot of cold people in poor countries (and poor people in cold countries) that need fetching yellow and black blankets to keep them snug.

For your diaries:

2pm – 4.30pm, Saturday 8th March, at Lismore Worker's Club (Keen Street Lismore), Rooms 1-3

(take the lift to the top). The Knitting Nannas Against Gas (Northern Rivers/Lismore Loop) can be seen every Thursday, 9.30 – 11am, in Walker Street, Casino (between Crazy Clark's and the Summerland Credit Union) and from 2 – 3.30pm outside Thomas George's office in Conway Street, Lismore (opposite the post office).

The Knitting Nannas Against Gas (Grafton Loop) meets outside Chris Gulaptis' office in Grafton (11 Prince Street) on Tuesdays at 1pm, and the Ballinannas at Don Page's office, Moon St, Ballina Tuesdays at 9.30. Drop in any time!

For further information visit www.knitting-nannas.com or contact Clare Twomey at knnmag@gmail.com phone 0421 443 751.

Logging: EPA called to account

The North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) is calling for an independent investigation into logging of a private property at Whian Whian adjoining the Nightcap National Park, north of Lismore.

A NEFA audit revealed that the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) had approved the Forestry Corporation's construction of illegal roads through exclusion zones for koalas, threatened plants, and the federally Critically Endangered Lowland Rainforest of Subtropical Australia. NEFA spokesperson Dailan Pugh said the EPA oversaw and approved these breaches. "The EPA can not be trusted to investigate illegal roading that they condoned."

NEFA's audit of the Whian Whian property identified eight koala high-use trees and 76 threatened plants that

have had forestry operations within the exclusion zones around them.

"The Forestry Corporation knowingly undertook roading within what should have been 20m exclusion zones for three koala high use trees, seven endangered Slender Marsdenia, 12 vulnerable Arrow-head Vines, and eight vulnerable Red Bopple Nuts, most of which had been identified and tagged with pink tape prior to track construction," said Mr Pugh.

Two Slender Marsdenia were killed, one injured and three are missing. So far, one Arrow-head Vine has died. This occurred three days after NEFA had asked the EPA for a stop-work order to allow a proper survey to be undertaken, and after the EPA had approved the route.

At the behest of the Forestry Corporation, the EPA also had the

Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) remap rainforest on the property. Mr Pugh says 2.5 hectares of the Federally Critically Endangered Lowland Rainforest of Subtropical Australia was reallocated to either the logging area or cleared land in the process.

The Forestry Corporation then constructed a road through these areas. "The EPA are directly responsible for removing protection for Critically Endangered Lowland Rainforest and the construction of a track through core koala habitat and a plethora of threatened plants, killing endangered species in the process," Mr Pugh said. "Only an independent investigation can make both the Forestry Corporation and the EPA accountable for their wilful harm to threatened species and endangered rainforest."

Dollars and drills

by Greg Reid

Money is the life-blood of CSG exploitation.

It will take a lot of money to drill the hundreds of wells and lay the network of pipes to exploit coal seam gas (CSG) in the Northern Rivers. The companies awaiting approval, or holding licences in the region, do not have that sort of money.

The major banks have already lent over \$7113 million to coal and gas projects in Queensland, showing they are more than willing to lend for this purpose, but not if it costs them customers, or damages their image.

A grassroots movement is growing to send a message to the banks. Divestment involves moving some of your accounts to other banks and credit unions that do not support CSG and fossil



Barbara Thomas

fuels.

Tweed resident Barbara Thomas said, "Are some banks the lesser of the evils? For instance, I believe Westpac has a quarter the exposure to coal investment than ANZ, which is financing the Whitehaven coalmine in the Laird State Forest."

"I have been a lifelong customer of the ANZ bank, but we need to ask ourselves, 'What is the price of the environment, and the future of our grandchildren?' I want to answer that I am prepared to wear some cost," she said.

An information evening on divestment has been organised by Tweed Climate Action Now, to be held in the meeting room of the Imperial Hotel in Murwillumbah from 7pm to 8.30pm on Monday 10th March.

Money talks, and all are welcome who want to learn how to make it say: "No CSG here".

Barbara Thomas said, "We retirees have specific needs: can they be met by another institution? I am looking forward to the information night, as there just may be an alternative that provides for the specific needs of my generation."

Filling Len's shoes...

Nimbin needs a new CSG-free roads community co-ordinator. Len Martin has retired from the post at the age of 80.

New blood is needed to drum up support for the next round of protection actions (Metgasco is back). What is required is complete community engagement to stand up to mining companies – and that takes some co-ordinating.

A talent for diplomacy, telephone, social media, organisation and inspirational skills is needed for this post, which may suit a frail or disabled person.

There are also possibilities for a job share. Anyone who can offer support or needs to know more, email: nimbinenvironmentcentre@gmail.com or phone 6689-0395.

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Letters

Gun laws

Watching the news on all the shootings in the cities is pretty scary. But here in the bush we have some very laid-back laws regarding guns.

Apparently you can place a gun in your vehicle, drive to your neighbour's gate, show your neighbour said gun, and as long as they can't prove the gun is loaded and are not directly threatened by it, that's acceptable. It seems you can also be intoxicated, and ignore many requests to leave.

If you live in an isolated area, it can take the police 13 hours to arrive after phoning 000 to report an incident involving a gun. Apparently this is acceptable too.

Lesley Jordan,
Drake

Professional activists

Recently, Mr. Peter Henderson, CEO Metgasco publicly claimed that local activists are "professional activists".

If "professional" means: well-informed, competent, strategic, cohesive, creative, accountable and effective, then we are "professional". All we are lacking is payment for the hundred of hours of work upholding community values in the face of an onslaught against the north coast community from Metgasco.

There will be more and more citizens taking up activism as our democracy is increasingly under threat.

Most of our leaders no longer represent community values because most of them are handmaidens of vested corporate interest.

Democracy requires a lot more of citizens than being intelligent voters. In the face of corporate and government deception, lax regulators and vast discrepancies between public interest and corporate interest, the government is actually turning its citizens into activists.

Democracy is actually dynamic and it evolves in response to well-informed and creative action from its citizens.

Carol Perry,
The Channon

Direct democracy

In reply to the excellent letter from R. J. Poole (NGT January 14), there are two types of democracy: Direct democracy (D.D.) and Representative Democracy (R.D.).

During the compiling of our Australian constitution in the late 19th century, CIR (Citizens Initiated Referenda) based on the Swiss model of D.D. was seriously considered. Easily done in a small compact

country such as Switzerland. Political information could be sent out and citizens' responses (yea or nay) on any particular issue in a matter of days even to areas where the fastest means of communication was by horseback.

In those days in the vastness of Australia such communications could take months and in some remote areas up to a year before all citizens were informed and responses were collated. So CIR would have been unworkable for our government of the day.

Time and technology has moved on. It is only in about the past decade that communications can be transmitted from and to governments in the blink of an eye to the remotest corners of the nation. There is no excuse now that CIR could not be implemented, but will never be because it gives too much power to the people (where it should be in a democracy anyway).

However, although CIR will never be introduced at top government level, passed by parties and senate, it can be done at individual electorate levels. Each electorate votes/chooses a person (a paid agent) to represent their constituency in the House of Parliament. Unfortunately the chosen one usually must obey the dictates of their party rather than the opinions and wishes of their constituents.

If an MP was truly a representative of their constituency, they would have a plebiscite and forum attached to their website (restricted to their constituency only) so that the people they represent could keep him/her informed as to how the majority of the constituency wishes bills to be voted upon on their behalf in parliament.

If a representative is not willing to do this (and few would be), then if the apathy of the electorate could be overcome, a board of a few people who are au-fait with political business and some time to devote could set up an electorate website in order to keep both the electorate and the MP informed. If the M.P. should refuse to vote in parliament according to the will of the majority of his/her constituency, then they will be assured that they need not stand at the next election.

Your representative is paid by you, the taxpayer, to be your voice in parliament. A rep is your employee, a public servant. By law and the constitution you have the power. It is only for you to put it to use. It may begin with just one electorate to

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Wednesday 26th March

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

gain the ability to control their elected representative and have the possibility of spreading to others.

Old saying: "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time."

Peggy Balfour,
Mullumbimby

More democracy

In the columns of NGT there has been some discussion about the validity of voting and democracy. Bob Menzies said, "The difference between the Liberals and Labor is that while Labor are theoretical socialists, Liberals are practical socialists. So people will accept things from Liberals that they will never accept from Labor."

Let us look at some examples. Some years ago the NSW Labor team was thrown out when they tried to abolish gun ownership – so the federal Libs did it for them. Federal Labor was thrown out by the angst of the carbon tax, among other things – now the Libs will increase the GST and cut everything except polities' perks. So you see there is no difference between them: all that happens is to change the puppets on stage, not the puppet master.

If we had a democracy, or any say in our affairs, we would have a referendum on fluoridation, or invading other countries, or increasing taxes. These polities do not represent the people's wishes, but they are given their orders from their minders – party financiers – and promised their jobs on condition of obedience.

As our representatives, politicians should not be allowed to have an opinion; they are there to carry out our orders. Put this question to them: "Are you my servant or my master?" and see them choke and stammer.

Long live the dissidents!

Charles Gaitskell,
Stanthorpe

Fact-checking the Fact-checkers

The ABC has published an article on its website, which it claims to be a fact-check of a claim made by Barack Obama that marijuana is less dangerous than alcohol.

I haven't done a complete fact-check on this article, but I don't think I need to. This article is clearly a biased failure. My recommendation is that the ABC withdraw the article, and rewrite their effort. If they agree, I will submit papers I think make good exemplars (*Nutt et al.*) and ensure that they understand how such an investigation is conducted, because, judging by this alleged fact-check, they have little idea.

A glaring omission from the article is that there is no comparison between the number of drug-related deaths caused by alcohol or cannabis. Although there are 900 words on the health effects of cannabis and alcohol, nowhere is there an analysis of the relative cost in a variety of fatal ways of either alcohol or cannabis.

Any honest investigation of the comparative harmfulness of the two drugs would see this as the first task. You don't have to be an expert in the field to grasp that human fatalities are probably the major determinant in assessing the relative harmfulness of drugs. Not surprisingly, researchers consider it an important matter in assessing relative harms.

I don't know what the best current figures are, but I expect that alcohol-related deaths will be in the high thousands, and the cannabis-related deaths will be in the low zeros. When people like Obama say cannabis is less dangerous than alcohol, this statistic is one of the major reasons for their conclusions, and so it should be. It is the reason why I, and many others, agree with Obama.

The assessment of the number of fatalities associated with the use of a particular drug fact plays a major part in assigning relative harmfulness. Since the ABC hasn't done this, they should be requested to take down the article and do their fact-check with more diligence.

In its current form, this article is spectacularly misleading.

Dr John Jiggins,
Brisbane

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Pursuant to Section 127 of the NSW Co-Operatives Act 1992, the following:-
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The Disputed Plains

When one looks across the beautiful undulating hills of Disputed Plains at Bungabee, it's hard to believe that anything but serenity would reign supreme on this vista of the very best of Richmond Valley country.

However if we look back in history, this is reputed to be the traditional fighting grounds of the local first Australians. Hence the name, "Disputed Plains".

Then came the turbulent years of dispossession with the arrival of Europeans. Next came the dispute of ownership of the plain between Ward Stephens and Adolphus Leycester. The cost of litigation on this issue ruined both men. Then came the dispute between Stephens versus Shaw and Leycester. But finally, the Armstrong family gained possession of the plains... Now we have the dispute of all disputes.

This one will pale all others into obscurity because it affects us all. Already Casino council has taken sides against the ratepayer majority that maintains their existence. Executive Manager, Gary Murphy has ordered the safety steps, which were installed by the residents, be removed, thus forcing them to walk on the very busy roadway.

When I asked him how he'd feel if someone is killed because of his stupid decision, he replied "quite alright". He ordered that signs erected to warn motorists of "pedestrians ahead", be removed, and refused requests to have any safety signs, speed restrictions or safety barriers placed to keep people off the roadway. Then eight workers in four vehicles turned up to paint over some very artistic artwork on the road. Evidently that was more of a safety issue than people being forced on to the roadway, or the elderly having to negotiate the slippery hillside because the steps have been removed. I guess it's an example of Murphy's Law.

Murphy's Law has been the butt of many of our traditional jokes and always infers low intelligence. Nothing new here. These decisions would however seem to indicate that all potholes in the RVC have been filled, all the verges are mowed etc. and the council staff have nothing to keep them gainfully employed. A very enviable position to be in. Now we wait to see if Metgascon gets special treatment and safety signs. If they do, the Council will look stupid and biased, and if they don't, the Council will look stupid and negligent. But the dispute continues.

The Council has allied itself against the wishes of the vast majority of the ratepayers. The government has ignored the verdict of the people. There is no social license for a gasfield in our beautiful valley. This puts the police in an unenviable position whereby they will lose the respect of virtually the whole of society. If they criminalise farmers, townspeople, the original owners, and the new settlers, who will undoubtedly fight for what they have spent their lives to attain, as did their forefathers and theirs before them, they will be held in the greatest contempt, as are the councillors and politicians currently, for having got us to this stage.

Australia was built on the Anzac heritage and I believe that tradition is alive and well today. We hold those who would defile our birthright, our soil, water and air in contempt and disgust. Let's make Disputed Plains our Victory Plains. If we work together, we can do it, but we need your help.

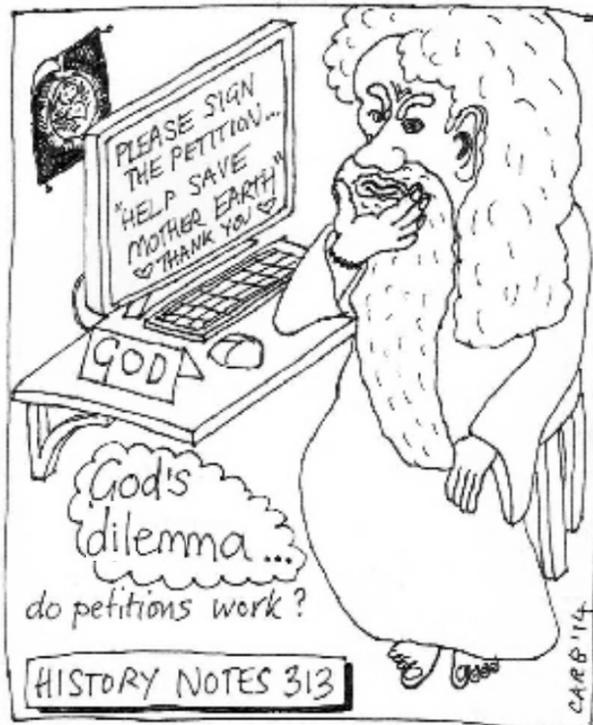
**Don Durrant,
Afterlee**

Financing MardiGrass

It's always been tricky paying for MardiGrass, because really it's a protest and in the early days the priority was getting community support.

The first years created a lot of angst in the community, just like the Aquarius Festival must have done, I imagine. There were big angry Town Hall meetings but the hippies always had the willpower, if not the paperwork and influence. We were never going to not have a MardiGrass and the authorities knew that and left us alone, for a while anyway. A major influence turned out to be the money made over the big weekend. Profits speak loudly, and we were always happy to see the village businesses do well and in particular community fundraising barbecues etc have a field day with the huge hungry crowds.

A short history of MardiGrass's financial journey is true hippy reading. In the beginning it was Ganja Faeries with donation buckets and fundraisers in the Town Hall, which paid the few bills. When the Embassy rented its current home next to the pub, we could raise money in the shop and there were a few sponsors, but always only a few. I never had much luck getting money out of local businesses because they were starting to rely on the first weekend in May for the thickest cream, along with Christmas and Easter. And



fair enough: nearly thirty years in the Museum has taught me all about paying the rent week after week, no matter how you trade!

The more MardiGrass grew the more Council circled us, waving ever-increasing paperwork. Stuff like special traffic plans with very expensive signatures and insurance forms thirty pages long that gave me instant panic attacks, maps of portable toilets and rubbish bins, security contracts etc, etc, until finally the dreaded letters DA arrived. Then we had to make a gate to pay for the protest.

By then, the event had spread all over town and we couldn't really gate the village, so we fenced in Peace Park. It was no good in the rain, but one year we actually made a profit!

Meanwhile, more open-minded people arrived at the Showgrounds and realised they could host all these MardiGrass visitors sleeping all over the village annoying everyone, and make a few bucks at the same time.

Looking back now, the Showgrounds' MardiGrass camping has been one of the great benefits of Nimbin's annual big weekend. The Showgrounds, like MardiGrass and the HEMP Embassy, is a non-profit group. Smarter perhaps than the other two, the Showies are mostly shrewd old farmers who make every cent count, and thanks to their careful planning, the village now has an amazing venue in Cecil Street decked out with excellent facilities, mostly purchased with the profits from MardiGrasses, but installed with a lot of hard work and careful thought to make a top class community asset.

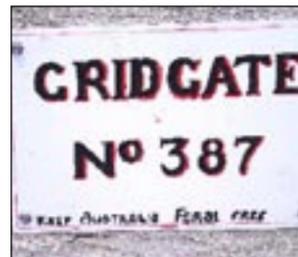
The other influence on the Nimbin community coming to accept MardiGrass is that this village is possibly the

best educated on drug use in Australia, and not many locals oppose cannabis law reform these days.

Now that Peace Park has got the Gillard skatepark and we cannot use it for MardiGrass, we are trying for the second year to hold events behind the Town Hall on private land. It's a beautiful site for the HEMP Olympix and adjoins the Town Hall, which means we have a venue no matter what the weather. However, there will be stages again at the Market and in Mingle Park behind the Museum as well as on the street, so there is plenty of free entertainment without ever buying an armband.

We had great weather last year and a good crowd, but we ended up in the red again. Last year many locals didn't, couldn't or wouldn't pay the entry fee, so this year we are offering a local pass, which will cost \$20 for the whole weekend entry. We hope it will help more people access everything and support the weekend.

**Michael Balderstone,
President, Nimbin HEMP
Embassy**



Hatred?

I find it disturbing to think of how many soldiers have died over the last 100 years for this public display of hatred on a sign on a local grid-gate (see attached photo).

Is this what the men in my family fought for in the trenches, at Normandy and on the seas? In 2014 how can this be OK?

Paula Morris

Notices

Notice of Meeting to Incorporate KAMS

The Kyogle Acoustic Music Society meets to incorporate on Wednesday 26th March at 6pm in the Banquet Room of the Kyogle Memorial Institute Hall, Cnr Roxy Lane and Stratheden Street. New members welcome, and nominations invited for the seven committee positions. For more info, contact Kym Watling at: kams.kyogle@gmail.com or phone 0409-534-233.

Tuntable Falls Early Childhood Centre AGM

The Tuntable Falls Early Childhood Centre Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 27th March at 9.15am at the school. All interested are welcome. For more info, email the preschool at: tuntablepreschool@gmail.com

The future of Nimbin Organics

After a significantly long stint in the Organic shop and, subsequently The Grapevine Cafe, Anna and David are looking to reclaim their lives.

Please come to a Public Meeting to learn about, or help guide, the future of Nimbin's Organic shop, on Monday 17th March, 7pm at Birth & Beyond. Refreshments available.

2015 Year 7 information afternoon

Parents and caregivers of 2015 Year 7 students are cordially invited to Nimbin Central School for a Year 7 information afternoon on Wednesday 12th March, 4pm – 5:30pm in the school's Multi-Purpose Unit (also known as the hall), where afternoon tea will be served and information provided before a quick tour of the school, finishing with a panel of current teachers, students and executive.

Please RSVP to Louise or Deb in the office by Tuesday March 11th on 6689-1355.

Playgroups

Nimbin Family Centre conducts supported playgroups for children aged 0-5 years every Tuesday and Friday from 10am to 1.30pm during school term, in the grounds of the Nimbin Community Centre – the Family Centre is the purple building opposite the skate park.

The playgroups are free to attend, are a great way to meet other families, and a healthy morning tea is provided. Please phone Mel on 6621-2489 for more information.

Equinox pizza party

Nimbin community radio Nim-FM will celebrate the equinox with a pizza party on Friday 21st March, 3pm onwards at Nimbin Community Centre pizza oven.

Bring some of your favourite pizza toppings and share good times with your community radio. All welcome – see you there. 102.3 Nim-FM

Belly dancing classes

For fun and fitness, with Biskit, every Thursday 5.30-6.30pm at the Nimbin Community Centre Dance Studio. \$10 per class, beginners welcome.

Rock & Roll Bowls at South Lismore

Northern Rivers Greens Fundraiser at South Lismore Bowlo on Sunday 23rd March. 'Rock & Roll Bowls', 2.30pm - 6pm, with 'DeCafe', a two-piece band. Bistro opens at 5pm. Family \$15, employed \$10 pp, concession \$5.

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. Whether you are a traditional embroiderer or enjoy creating artworks with embroidery, you are welcome. Contact 0423-337-872.

Free listings

Send brief information about your upcoming events to us before deadline, and we'll run it in Notices for free!

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.