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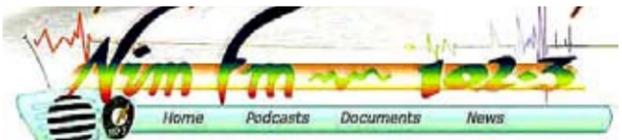
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\$120k tourism marketing boost

Lismore City Council, North Coast Destination Network and Destination NSW have joined forces to fund a \$120,000 marketing campaign for the region, focusing on Nimbin following the devastating main street fire in August last year.

The campaign is designed to drive tourism and retail spending in the Nimbin area and help boost the village's visitor numbers in the wake of the fire, which destroyed the popular and well-known Nimbin Museum, Rainbow Café and Bringabong shop.

Council's tourism and events manager Mitch Lowe said the campaign aims to highlight to visitors that Nimbin is 'open for business'.

"Unfortunately, after disasters, perceptions can be that destinations are still affected - we want to dispel that and welcome people to experience all that Nimbin has to offer. While the fire was tragic, the atmosphere and colour of the village remains largely unchanged," Mitch said.

"Nimbin is such an iconic destination with over 150,000 visitors each year. The main aim of this campaign is to encourage existing visitors to stay a little longer and spend a little more. A major focus will be on attracting visitors from south-east Queensland and regional NSW, along with existing international visitors who have travelled to the Byron region."

The campaign will be developed in partnership with the Nimbin Chamber of



Announcing the marketing campaign at the fire site are (l-r) Bringabong owner David Hyett, Grey Gum Lodge co-owners Stuart Wilson and Darren Welch, mayor Jenny Dowell and Lismore City Council's tourism and events manager Mitch Lowe and visitor services co-ordinator Andrew Walker.

Commerce, Nimbin Advisory Group and local business and tourism operators.

Bringabong owner David Hyett said the fire was devastating for Nimbin, but believed the marketing campaign was a good opportunity to spruik that Nimbin is more than its main street.

David has renovated the Nimbin Bush Factory and now operates Bringabong and the Phoenix Rising Café from the new location on the edge of the village. He hopes to make the café 100% sustainable, with vegie gardens and a bush tucker walk, so city visitors can see what can be achieved on a small plot.

"I definitely think the fire dislocated the community a little bit - the site was always a great meeting place and a hub of community interaction. I don't think it

was necessarily recognised for its social value until it was gone," he said.

"There's obviously value in getting more people to Nimbin following the fire, but my feeling is this campaign could be really useful if it shows that Nimbin is more than meets the eye. Many people come to Nimbin's main street and think that's it. It would be great to market other offerings like the candle factory, the permaculture gardens, the waterfalls and B&Bs, the skatepark, pool, showgrounds, and we'll have the Sustainable House soon - there is so much happening here."

Marketing will include a new TV commercial, print and online advertising, visits from travel journalists and many more elements. The campaign is scheduled to begin in June.

Head for the hills

A new real estate agency has started in Nimbin. It's called Nimbin Hills and the people running it will be familiar to most Nimbinites.

The licensee is John Wilcox, back in Nimbin after a stay with Wal Murray First National in Lismore. While working there he has had the opportunity to observe and learn top-line marketing strategies from the most successful real estate firm in the area and is now ready to return to his favorite town.

John said, "We feel so fortunate to be working in such a great area, with such natural beauty and Nimbin's friendly community and unique culture - it's living the dream."

John has an exceptional sales record with the most sales ever made in Nimbin and was top salesman ten years in a row, with a total 36 years on the job.

John's partner Chris Clarke will be well known to locals after establishing the very successful Nimbin Rox YHA backpackers. Chris knows how to make businesses thrive and will be the office manager and expert marketing strategist. He said, "I'm delighted to have this exciting new career change and to have a partner and mentor with the skills and experience of John Wilcox."

The staff will also include the feisty Lis Denmead, well known for her outgoing



Chris Clarke and John Wilcox

and generous nature, who has ten years' experience in sales in the area, specialising in land use for livestock and agriculture. Another name that will be familiar is Grant Rossiter who has five years sales experience and a wonderful knowledge of the local area.

This team at Nimbin Hills

is committed to give the best customer service to all clients - landlords and tenants, buyers and sellers. "We aim for a fair deal for all," said John Wilcox.

"To all our old friends and new customers, feel free to drop in and say hello at our new office at 74a Cullen Street. The doors are open!"

New energy at Nimbin Building Materials

Nimbin Building Materials at the Mill Farm is now being run in partnership.

After 20 years as the sole proprietor, Andy Kindermann has now been joined by Ralph Mack, formerly of Blue Knob Stoneworx and highly regarded as a tradesman.

Andy said, "I'm looking forward to scaling back my involvement now, with every confidence that the business will continue to flourish with the new energy that Ralph brings."

Andy will still be found on-site and Gunter and Darren are also still on hand with Ralph to provide friendly service and practical



Andy Kindermann and Ralph Mack

advice on home and property improvement and maintenance.

They are extending their

range of hardware items, and now carry a full range of Philmac rural water fittings and valves, as well as polypipe.

Supplying sand, cement, gravel, road-base, landscaping supplies, plants, fertilizer and stock feed, they are a one-stop shop for driveway, farming and gardening projects.

This is in addition to their range of quality new and new seconds building materials - timber, steel, joinery and wall-board - and they still supply and deliver gas.

Ralph said, "If we don't have it, you probably don't need it." But if you do, they will probably be able to get it in for you at a good price.

The Nimbin Mill Farm is at 50 Gungas Road, phone 6689-1206 or mobile 0429-048-808.

No more eye in the sky...

The 2014/15 Cannabis Eradication Program has concluded, with police having seized and destroyed thousands of cannabis plants during the key cannabis growing season, from late Spring to early Autumn.

The annual Cannabis Eradication Program is run by the NSW Police Force Drug Squad, working with Polair, local police and the Communications Group to conduct targeted aerial and ground surveillance to detect and destroy illegal cannabis crops.

The 2014/15 program targeted cannabis crops in the New England, Richmond, Coffs Clarence and Tweed Byron Local Area Commands, with almost 12,000 plants seized and destroyed.

Of these areas, New England was the most prolific, netting a total of 4860 plants – compared with about 2500 in Richmond and Coffs/Clarence, and 1469 in Tweed/Byron.

Michael Balderstone from Nimbin's Hemp Embassy told the *Byron Echo*, "They have driven 90% of pot supply



Polair3 conducts aerial surveillance over Lillifield community in March.

indoors to hydroponic growing, so there will be no disruption to supply."

Police said many of the crops were located in dense bushland, with crops ranging from a few plants to several hundred.

"Locals from communities here report two, three or four plants going at a time, which is hardly commercial, and in fact clearly for personal use," said Mr Balderstone.

"It won't stop these people using pot; they'll just have to go to the black market if friends don't help them. And

no doubt some people will choose to use other more dangerous drugs now if their pot is gone, as all illegal drugs are in the same black market."

Police said 13 people would face court on cultivation and possession charges and that other inquiries were continuing.

Since it was established in the 1980s, the Cannabis Eradication Program has seized and destroyed plants with an estimated potential street value of \$300 million.

The cost of the program has been estimated to exceed this figure.

Flag-making fun at Mullumbimby

A workshop in flag painting is being held at Mullumbimby Community Gardens in April.

Flags are great for festivals, rallies, protests and promotions. Flags bring colour, movement and attention, and have been used for centuries.

Modern-day flags are now generally digitally printed and together with specialist design and artwork can be expensive.

But there is an alternative and cheaper option to using digital printing.

After months of trials and experimenting, retired science teacher Trevor Reece has developed a special DIY fabric-flexible plastic-like paint formula and simple techniques for hand painting lasting large colourful outdoor flags and banners.

He will be sharing these

skills at a special flags painting workshop at the Mullumbimby Community Gardens on Friday 10th April.

He will also be showing how to construct modular 5-metre transportable flagpoles. There will be cheap flag blanks available for painting. Register early as numbers are very limited.

Information at: www.mullumbimbycommunitygardens.org/events To register, phone 02 6674-0247.



Information at: www.mullumbimbycommunitygardens.org/events To register, phone 02 6674-0247.

Nimbin Holiday Club Autumn program

The Holiday Club will be operating from the Nimbin Community School (81 Cullen St, Nimbin) and on excursion days please meet us in the Nimbin Central School car park at 9am.

Each day runs between 9am and 3pm, for children aged 5 – 12. Please read the dates, venues and costs carefully, and book to avoid disappointment, by phoning NNIC on 6689-1692 (between 10am and 4pm) or text Kylie on 0487-576-281.

Please ensure that your child wears appropriate clothing, covered shoes, brings a hat, and has adequate food and drinks for the day. Parents must sign consent forms for any excursions.

This program is funded by NSW DEC.

Date	Program	Cost
Wednesday 8 th April	Nimbin Community School, Park and Skate Park. Art/Craft, DVDs, Games, Music and more. We will be making our own playdough, then creating whatever we can imagine! Playdough and clay day	\$12
Thursday 9 th April	Nimbin Community School, Park and Skate Park Drama activities, Art/Craft, Games, DVD, Music, Dance and more. We will be making sock puppets then putting on a show. Puppets, plays and music day – a good day for dress ups! (Bring any odd socks from home)	\$12
Friday 10 th April	Nimbin Community School – visit to Djanbung Gardens. We are going to visit the Djanbung Permaculture Gardens to get our hands dirty. Please bring a hat, food and water. Please wear old clothes, we will get dirty. Garden adventure day	\$15
Tuesday 14 th April	Excursion – Ballina Waterslide and rock pools. Explore the rock pools, visit the maritime museum, have lunch at the park and if you dare, take on the Ballina waterslides. Don't forget your swimmers, hat and towel, food and water (Wet weather alternative arranged)	\$25
Wednesday 15 th April	Nimbin Community School, Park and Skate Park Art/Craft, DVDs, Games, Music and more. Inspired by a visit to the Autumn art extravaganza, Painting day. Please wear old clothes.	\$12
Thursday 16 th April	Nimbin Community School, Park and Skate Park DVDs, Art, Craft, Games, Music and more. Library craft – Scratch art	\$12

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The complexity of forest ecology

by J. Doland Nichols
Associate Professor, Forest Research Centre, Southern Cross University

I would like to add a bit of light – knowledge – to an area, where there is a great deal of heat but also much misunderstanding, forest ecology and management. The problem is that strong convictions combined with ignorance can lead to “perverse outcomes”, the exact opposite of what one hopes to achieve.

The people of the world use 3.5 billion cubic metres of wood every year. Should there be fewer people in the world, using fewer resources? Most of us think so, but it is hard to know how we achieve this outcome.

Plantations can supply perhaps 90% of the utility timber and paper consumed by humans. But some special products – hardwood flooring from eucalypts for example, are best produced by native forests. In many applications we can combine small amounts of these special timbers – ironbark, tallowwood and so on, with plantation-grown wood. Or we could substitute high-value cabinet timbers from overseas. Often in the same media where total bans on tree harvesting in Australia are being advocated, one sees advertisements for Merbau or Kwila, which is an increasingly scarce rainforest tree found in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. In spite of being transported thousands of miles - thereby burning carbon - Merbau can be sold more cheaply here than native hardwoods, because the forests these species come from are essentially unmanaged and the forest workers poorly paid and working in unsafe conditions. Is using timber from the rainforests of SE Asia really a better option?

Should we use materials other than wood like aluminium, steel, glass, etc? Of all these materials, wood comes the closest to being carbon-neutral and of course some use extraordinary amounts of energy, notably aluminium. There’s a great deal of silliness out there on the use of paper which can in fact be produced sustainably from trees. Somehow computers and electronic devices on the web seem (no mud, no blood) environmentally innocent. But they are not: plenty of environmental destruction takes place in the extraction of materials



to produce them and huge amounts of energy are used to keep the massive servers running.

Forests indeed do store carbon, but so too do some types of wood products. If the forest is well managed, then the space where the trees were removed fills in with... more trees! –and often a major part of the wood in the harvested tree continues to store carbon in built structures or furniture. The whole process of managing natural regeneration and being sure that one forest leads to the next is called “silviculture” and is a core activity of foresters. If there is no budget for nurturing the next forest, and currently there is none on either public or private land in NSW, then the forest will be degraded. In NSW on public land the process was managed fairly well for nearly one hundred years, though we should apologise for abuses in the past, so much so that many areas that had been native forest with ongoing repeated timber harvesting have now been converted into National Parks.

Koalas are plant-eating animals and – this is a bit of Ecology 101 – their populations can be anywhere along the spectrum from locally extinct to being in outbreak, meaning that they threaten to eat themselves out of house and home. That would be a “bottom-up” influence – the primary production of koala food – which increases with the presence of their favoured food trees and decreases with the lack of those tree species, say solid rainforest which would provide little for koalas to eat. Gating off a section of forest would possibly benefit koalas in some areas but not everywhere. Forests of koalas’ favourite species which are somewhat open because of ongoing

forestry operations over the past century may actually provide better habitat than dense forests of species they do not eat.

There are also “top-down” influences on koala populations – predators and parasites, natural and otherwise, cars and dogs being particularly well known. When plant-eaters are not controlled by predators, their populations often are naturally thinned out by diseases that become more severe in dense aggregations; chlamydia is an example.

I worked in the 1980s in western Oregon, where Forest Service scientists developed the term “old growth”. This term has a specific ecological meaning indicating a forest dominated by large Douglas fir trees, structural complexity with the development of an understorey of western hemlock, western red cedar, Pacific yew, and the presence of coarse woody debris. But now the words “old growth” are thrown around quite carelessly throughout the world, often just to mean “big trees”. In Oregon Douglas fir become fairly large on hillsides, just as blackbutt and other eucalypt species do in our region but these are even-aged stands that are in fire-susceptible positions and sooner or later will burn to the ground. Only in special topographic positions does true “old growth” actually develop. It would be wrong to assume that old growth can and will develop in all situations in the broader landscape.

We often say that managing native forests (and banning human activities in them, declaring them “protected”, is a form of management) is not rocket science – it’s much more complicated. I have tried to illustrate that complexity just a bit.

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A poisonous legacy: Drew Hutton on Hopeland

by John Jiggins

Underground coal gasification is a non-conventional gas technology that has been described as more fracked than fracking. A chamber is dug in a coal seam, which is then set alight. Oxygen and steam are passed over the burn site, and the resultant gases, chiefly methane, but also hydrogen sulphide and carbon monoxide, are captured and liquefied in the mine.

In the great gas rush of the late noughties, the Queensland Mines Department approved Linc Energy’s application for such an unconventional gas mine at Hopeland near Chinchilla in western Queensland.

This controversial underground coal



gasification mine operated on the western Darling Downs for several years. Currently, it is being investigated by the Department of Environment, who have found high levels of carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulphide and hydrogen in the soil surrounding the experimental mine – gases that are released in the underground coal

process. The pollution had spread to areas 60 km from the mine.

How and why the pollution has spread so widely is unclear, though Drew Hutton, the president of Lock The Gate, fears the burn may be out of control and is producing these gases.

Hutton describes underground coal

gasification as “a dirty, filthy technology”. He says the Hopeland situation is very serious, potentially one of the most dangerous facing the Queensland environment. Hopeland was, he says, a dangerous experiment “which will leave a poisonous legacy.”

As well as being concerned that the underground fire at the Hopeland mine may have escaped the chamber, Hutton fears that the many coal seam gas (CSG) sites in the area could be helping spread the pollution by depressurising the local underground. Lock the Gate are calling for the cessation of CSG mining on the Darling Downs until it can be determined whether CSG mining is helping spread the pollution caused by the Hopeland mine.

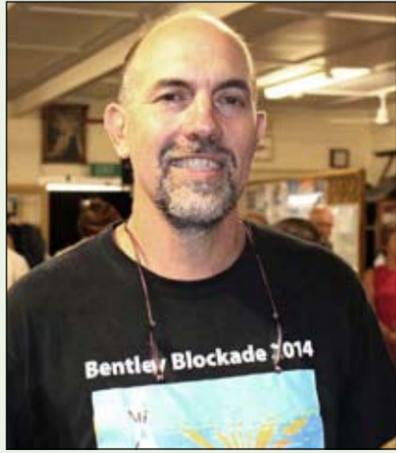
Lessons all round from NSW election

The recent state election saw a massive retreat in National Party votes across the region, with the historic spectacle of at least one seat shifting to the Greens and the formerly safe seat of Lismore pushed to the wire. Let's not forget we were talking about safe National Party seats held with massive margins before this election, and what we saw was a massive swing of 20 to 28% against Nats across the whole region and all of that in an election that the Coalition were winning in the rest of the state.

The result in Ballina and Lismore is historic and marks the birth of the regional Greens as a force in the Lower House. Lismore remains uncertain at the time of writing, but regardless of how the final votes fall, the closeness of the result in Lismore establishes the Greens as the National party's major challenger for future contests.

The biggest winner in the election was the region's massive social movement opposed to the gasfield invasion. This movement was so powerful that not a single candidate across the region dared to openly support the continuation of the gas invasion in the Northern Rivers. So in a sense the social movement had won before a single vote was cast.

The last minute backflips of the Nats, Christian Dems and Shooters party on their formerly pro-gasfield policies may have been unconvincing to most but they achieved their aim of spreading enough confusion to have sandbagged the Nats in particular against an even greater wipeout. It is now up to all of us to make sure the 'coalition of the willing to say anything to win' are forced to come good on their pre-election thought bubbles. Now what were they? Fred Nile and the Christian Dems support a statewide moratorium on the industry, the Shooters are against CSG too, Fred Nile also wants a statewide referendum. OK then, you have the balance of power in the Upper



by Aidan Ricketts

House so you'd better get straight on to it as soon as parliament resumes, you weren't lying were you Fred?

The Nats promised us they'd be buying back the Northern Rivers licences, so Gulaptis, Provest and Thomas George if you scrape through, let's see you get straight on to that, or were these all non-core promises?

But there are lessons for everyone in this result. The Lismore vote has gone to the wire with a narrow win to Thomas George still on the cards, and it didn't have to be this way. Thomas George scored a minority of the vote (42%), and the combined totals of the Greens and ALP would have easily defeated him with nearly 53% of the vote, but for the very high exhaustion rate among Labor voters. Despite all of the advice to number every square something like 40% of Labor voters only numbered 1 and failed to preference. Make no mistake about this, none of those exhausted votes ever made into the final count between the Greens and the Nats. NO, they were literally binned, that's what an exhausted vote means. Now for some it may have been intentional but I still suspect that a great number of voters still don't understand how you risk



wasting your whole vote if you don't preference. People may think, "I want Labor or nothing", but there's no such thing as nothing, if you exhaust your vote you just gave Thomas George a leg up. I'm not blaming Labor, this is just the maths and not all Green voters numbered every square either. It was a refreshingly positive and united campaign by Labor and the Greens but the big public education effort that we all need to engage in going forward is to realize that if you don't preference, your vote may not count at all and actually helps elect your opponents. If Thomas George scrapes in, it will be from a minority position and due to vote exhaustion.

Anyway, a great and historic result regardless of how the final cards fall and plenty of work going forward to see if we can keep the opportunist pollies in the Christian Dems, Shooters and Nats to honour their pre-election commitments. Despite all the smoke and mirrors we still haven't heard what's to become of Metgasco's licences. They may just go and terrorise the Clarence next.

Researchers reclassify Roundup

The world's most-popular weed killer has been identified as a likely cause of cancer.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer, a French-based research arm of the World Health Organisation, has reclassified the herbicide glyphosate as a result of what it said is convincing evidence that the chemical produces cancer in lab animals, and more limited findings that it causes non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in humans.

The assessment, published on 19th March in the medical journal, *Lancet Oncology*, found that glyphosate was "probably carcinogenic to humans."

The French agency has four levels of risks for possible cancer-causing agents: known carcinogens, probable or possible carcinogens, not classifiable and probably not carcinogenic. Glyphosate now falls in the second level of concern.

IARC report co-author and glyphosate expert Kate Guyton said the new finding was based on existing evidence from multiple studies of the



effects of glyphosate on male agricultural and forestry occupational workers.

The authors cited three studies that suggest occupational glyphosate exposure causes "increased risks for non-Hodgkin lymphoma that persisted after adjustment for other pesticides."

They also pointed to both animal and human studies suggesting that the chemical, both in isolation and in the mix used in the fields by farmers, "induced DNA and chromosomal damage in mammals, and in human and animal cells in vitro"; and another one finding



Roadside sign in 2012

"increases in blood markers of chromosomal damage" in residents of several farm communities after spraying of glyphosate formulations.

The WHO ruling is likely to send shockwaves around the globe, where the glyphosate-containing herbicide Roundup is a mainstay of industrial agriculture.

Monsanto and other manufacturers of glyphosate-containing products have strongly rejected the new ruling, pointing to a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ruling from 2012 determining the herbicide to be safe.

Monsanto's 2014 annual report shows that its herbicide division reaped about a third of the company's \$15.8 billion in total sales, and *Reuters* reports the company is pushing the WHO to retract the assessment.

"All labelled uses of glyphosate are safe for human health," said Monsanto's Phil Miller, global head of regulatory and government affairs, in a statement.

The federal government's Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority has not commented on the WHO finding, or decided whether it plans to review the safety of glyphosate.

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Car Accident Information Urgently Wanted

On Wednesday, 3rd December 2014 at approximately 4.20pm, a red Hyundai Getz was travelling in a southerly direction along Blue Knob Road, Blue Knob.

At that time an unidentified white flat-tray truck was travelling towards the red Hyundai Getz on the wrong side of Blue Knob Road, causing the driver of the red Hyundai Getz to swerve off the road to avoid colliding with the white flat-tray truck. The red Hyundai Getz then collided with a tree.

Would anyone who has any information about the accident, the identity of the driver of the white flat-tray truck or its registration number, please contact Paul Henderson at Shanahan Tudhope Lawyers on (02) 9262-2888 or by email: paulhenderson@stlaw.com.au

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Letters

Pyromania

The point of my article 'Fire as Technology' (NGT, Feb '15) was that there is no proof that the extensive human use of fire has been long-term beneficial.

The NRFABCON writes "over many thousands of years, the Australian bush has evolved ways to cope successfully with fire" (NGT, March, '15). It's a bit like saying "violence traumatised families in Iraq have learnt to live successfully with their trauma." You don't continue with trauma because the environment has learnt to adapt to trauma.

In this former area of The Big Scrub, the original clearers found it difficult to burn. The strategy for fire proofing in this area, it is suggested, is to retain moisture in vegetation and soil. That is currently being carried out for free by rampant biomass.

The opposite of this strategy is to dry the area out more with frequent burning. Then we will find a tendency to eucalypt domination rather than rainforest. Then some bush regenerators, wishing only to deal with symptoms, will want to kill the eucalypts because they are seen to "not belong". The use of fire as "care of country" can be seen as part of second stage land degradation, after the first stage of excessive clearing.

What is a "hazard reduction burn"? It is partly terminology for getting rid of mulch; for getting rid of food for soil. Reducing soil life in the long term does not make us all safer.

Aboriginal burning resulted in the predominance of middle order mammals required for tucker. Settler burning created green pick for cattle. The very real possibility exists that both regimes deteriorated soil, and that part of the healing of Australia is to leave the fire stick alone.

Geoff Dawe
Byrrill Creek

Rainbow Bridge

I am disappointed in council staff's recommendation to repaint the rainbow coloured bridge on Kyogle Road bridge over Smiths Creek at Uki in honour of a child who died two years ago. In spite of a large survey response from the local community, council has disregarded the community's wishes.

Over 70% respondents said leave the rainbow coloured bridge as is and only 22% wanted it repainted, yet council regarded this smaller percentage as 'significant' (as if 70% was not significant).

Council has a 'zero tolerance for graffiti

vandalism.' In the Agenda notes to the March 2015 council meeting it also states 'there is little or no connection between a bridge railing and the death of the child.' Hello, have they not heard of the 'Rainbow Bridge' connecting this world to the next? Are they lacking imagination or just plain uninformed?

While the bridge is regarded as council infrastructure, it's paid for by the ratepayers, so therefore it should be our bridge. Why not keep it as is and add a plaque dedicating the Rainbow Bridge to all local children who have died? Why must we fit inside council's definition of acceptable memorial tributes such as roadside flowers or crosses?

Council appears to be afraid that left as is, it would set a precedent for other bridges to be painted in rainbow colours. So what? Does that necessarily make Uki another Nimbin?

As for council's concern that this bridge might cause division in the community, did they forget the extreme division the World Rally Championship of 2009 caused because council actively supported, encouraged and enabled it to happen? Concern for division was not a factor to them then, so why now?

Council has demonstrated callous disregard for the people's wishes on a highly sensitive topic – the death of a child that in fact united many of us in the community.

It's also telling that all councillors bar one voted for the bridge to be repainted in time. Kudos to Mayor Bagnall for standing up for the people's wishes. The others hang your heads in shame.

Those unhappy about this decision please write to council and complain – alternatively organise a big protest and send photos to the media.

Menkit Prince
Uki

Dawn service

Regarding the origins of the dawn service (NGT March 15), I'm not sure if it was a dawn service, but ANZAC Day services were held by soldiers who had been at Gallipoli, 12 months later on the Western front.

Apparently they recognised it as a huge and brave effort for an untested army... not to mention remembering their dead mates.

This is mentioned in some WW1 books.

Hope this helps.

Ross Bray
Myocum

About us

Editor Bob Dooley
Assistant editor Sue Stock
Layout Peter Chaplin, Andy Gough, Bob Dooley
Photographers Sue Stock, Peter Chaplin
Distribution Peter, Coralie, Philippe, Sue, Bob, Rob and Lisa, Stuart, Andrew, Faerie Laurás (Bellingen)

Bookkeeper Martha Paitson
Web www.nimbingoodtimes.com

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NGT is auspiced by Nimbin Community School Co-op Ltd., 81 Cullen Street, Nimbin

NEXT DEADLINE:
Wednesday 29th April

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

Sandpit sadness

Open Letter to Jodie, of the Pot of Gold café:

Dearest Jodie, we hear many good things are happening for the Rainbow. May we ask that you keep the little sandpit in the re-building plans; we have fond memories there.

What we imagine now, though, is the same heart-shape that Donato built, but twice the size, because what was beautiful before has not been destroyed – Nimbin's heart has not been gutted. Instead, it is opened, and frees the love that is Nimbin to a wider world, and nothing is more beautiful than kids at peaceful play.

Congratulations to all the others, too, who took this all in their stride; you're an inspiration.

Love,
Maki, Akira, Raiden, Maiya and Ron.

Economic death spiral

Chinese (and other) wealth extraction from the rest of the world has achieved the inevitable: economic decline, high unemployment and deprivation where they've extracted from, notably Europe and America.

Consumption declines, as does demand for our minerals. Our mining boom supported millions of jobs. With its demise, those jobs are disappearing.

The solution, we're told, is to go into the 'investment phase' in new industry. Tollways, private schools and universities, private hospitals, childcare, rental accommodation and aged care facilities, all new ways to extract wealth.

But, instead of extracting from the rest of the world via China's exports, the profits will now come from us, the Australian people. Just as China's wealth extraction has led to declining living standards, we'll suffer the same plight as profits are extracted from us.

Wealthy investors are presently buying our houses for rentals, pushing up prices. Home affordability is far beyond most young people's reach, with rents often exceeding wages.

I expect an even more severe drop in living standards here than has happened elsewhere.

All the means to deprive us are rapidly being put into place, with the help of all Australian governments.

As profits dwindle because people have less to spend, the capitalists' only recourse is to reduce overheads. While employers race each other to cut wages and jobs to enhance profit, unemployment balloons, taxes can't pay for welfare and government austerity becomes crueler. And still the job and wage cuts continues with falling demand.

An irreversible economic death spiral, ending where?

The "pitchfork era", one economist called it, when the people have had enough and revolt. America is on the brink now, he said. Our time will come. It's time to fight against the cause of our plight: capitalism.

But from what I can gather from "Aussies" around me, the capitalists have little to fear. Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi!

Doug Burt
Kyogle

In defence of Koa

I felt it was time to respond to Peter Hardwick's attack on my old mate Koa, simply because of the contempt and vitriol that oozes from his rants, there seems to be a genuine hatred for Koa which I feel is unwarranted.

Having worked and lived with Koa over many years on producing four films with him, I have experienced what a profound change our work has done in inspiring other people to see the Bush in a totally different way. The films are not designed simply to encourage people to be living off bush foods 24/7, they were designed as survival films! In other words, to identify common plants that could be consumed in a survival situation. But equally important is the information and perspectives on how to relate / behave in the bush.

If there was a constant stream of kiddies having their stomachs pumped or buried in graveyards due to Koa's films, I think we might have heard of them by now because literally tens of thousands of people have watched them. I'm sure this paper, which seems to fully support Peter with his rants, would be the

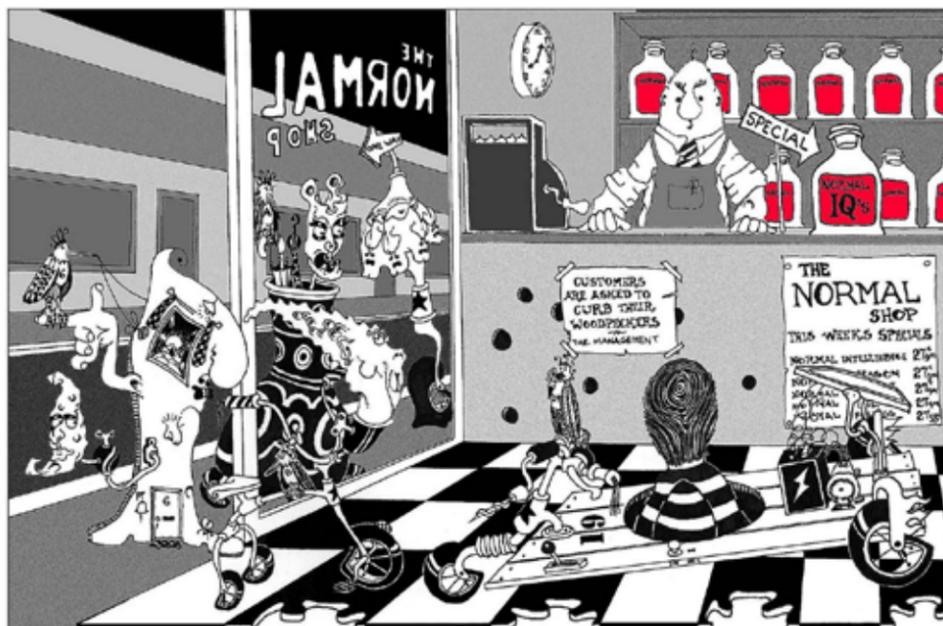
first to scream about it far and wide, this hasn't happened yet so I assume no-one has been injured or terminated by anything Koa has had to say or share.

What I have witnessed first hand is a lot of love for this man. People telling him how much our films have changed their lives. Also let me add all the DVDs were sold out years ago, so on that level the cat is well and truly out of the bag. Also I might add that Koa stresses constantly to always be cautious with plants like deadly nightshade, making the point over and over to only consume the ripe berries as the unripe ones are toxic. Is this not good knowledge to have when ignorance of this fact could kill or maim someone? I have eaten many of the plants highlighted in our DVDs.

There is an X factor to these films Peter obviously can not get, which is how unique this man is in this modern world. People literally fall in love with Koa – maybe that is the issue for Peter. I do not know. Maybe it is simply an issue of wanting people to follow the gourd not the shoe? Peter has a financial interest in bush tucker, making wonderful unique products for some of the best restaurants in Australia. Gone is the scruffy hair and hippy clothes, now replaced with slick haircuts and label clothing. It is an obvious natural progression into the world of money and business.

Koa on the other hand is still on his frugal simple path that few will ever follow but wish they could. There is a glimpse of personal freedom that others can see. Armed with this knowledge, they know that if push comes to shove one day they might need to apply this knowledge. The system we live in discourages this attitude and would prefer us all to stay put in our 1/4 acre blocks watching the TV, consuming GMO & Roundup-laden foods from Woolies rather than being self empowered, armed with knowledge that gives us other options.

It is good that Peter is pointing out some of the flaws



“250 gms of ‘Lucidity’ please...” Raoul

in the second film, which I might add is dealt with on the cover of that particular DVD, but the personal contempt is not acceptable. Koa has changed many people's lives with this two-year effort. People can see that the profit motive is not the agenda here, simply the sharing of information to empower others.

Mark Jago
Nimbin

Wild food responsibility

Judging by his letter (above), Mark Jago, the producer of the DVDs, doesn't seem to get it. He says that thousands of DVDs have been sold as if that's a good thing. But that's thousands of DVDs containing dangerous misinformation dispersed widely into the broader community. How is that good?

Koa Windsong publicly expressed an apology about the mistakes in his *Walking Softly* DVD series in a letter to the editor, *The Northern Rivers Echo*, 12/11/09. But is it true that the *Walking Softly* DVDs have since been sold?

Koa is also well aware of the toxicity problems in all three of the *Walking Softly* DVDs because he has participated in the discussion on the issues. But Koa has recently been re-promoting *Walking Softly* online, knowing that the DVD series contains toxic mistakes. That's unethical.

Mark says that the DVDs were only for survival purposes – as if toxicity issues don't matter in a survival situation. But it's actually worse, because in a survival situation toxic plants are more dangerous because the body is more vulnerable to toxins when malnourished.

Koa also gave the impression to many people that he lived off these toxic weeds. People believed him. As a result, thinking it was safe, some people put toxic flossflower and billygoat weed into their regular salads and used salad dressings to mask

the bitter flavour of the toxic compounds.

Mark assumes that people have not been adversely affected. But compounds, like lycopsamine, in these toxic plants cause damage to internal organs that can go undetected until it develops into serious illness years later.

There was a mass poisoning case of villagers in Ethiopia from billygoat weed, *Ageratum conyzoides* – a species deemed safe by Koa via his 'edibility test'. The Ethiopian billygoat weed tragedy caused 118 cases of toxic hepatitis (veno-occlusive liver disease) which killed over 38% of the people affected (Wiedenfeld, 2010).

With eating flossflower, *Ageratum houstonianum*, there is a case study where 40 cattle died with symptoms of haemorrhaging in internal organs (Noa *et al*, 2004). The fruits of tobacco bush, *Solanum mauritianum*, contain toxic glycoalkaloids (Everist, 1974). And there are several other unsafe plants that Koa encourages people to eat.

I don't understand how Mark can think that the issue is resolved because Koa makes some vague and inadequate statements on DVD labels and makes a comment in the content of the third DVD. This DVD is almost more dangerous, because he makes out that the toxicity issues have been dealt with – but still says to use the flawed edibility test.

Mark is the producer and he should be taking more responsibility. If anyone gets sick or dies as a result of the contents of the thousands of faulty DVDs distributed, it will be on his head as well.

Yes, I supply wild foods to restaurants and I have been working with biochemists on wild food safety for over 28 years. Through that process I know the level of skill that is required to deal with wild food plant safety.

Peter Hardwick
Nimbin

Not such a bumper

As far as I can see, Mookx Hanley wasn't making any linguistic assertions (NGT January 15); he was merely pointing out the impact of US cultural imperialism on Australian English. So, who gives a toss about overly academic obfuscation? I totally agree with Mr Hanley.

Language is a virus (to quote WS Burroughs) and necessarily mutates, therefore undergoing regionalisation. Quite frankly, who cares about what "pussie" meant in the 1580s: it's all about what it means now, today... 2015. We all know that "puss, wee pussie..." was a term of endearment (hopefully) way back when, but it ain't now. But it's actually not the worst of terms, at least it refers to something warm, soft and furry.

And as for the pronunciation of "arse"? Don't even start me. We say, as an essentially British culture, "arse", and it's spelt that way... the Americans say, "ass"; they spell it that way.

Do we really want, as Australians, to let the US dictate our language? I'm so sick of hearing... "Like, like, you know, it's like... like you are so sweet... you know."

So, what is the crap about "precursor forms" etc... wank, wank, wank. And as for "anglophone North America"! Could you get any more pretentious?

What Mookx (I assume) is talking about is the co-opting of our language and therefore the degradation and loss of deep, symbolic meaning and cultural reference.

Fiona McConnachie
The Channon

Palestine

Why does the media focus so much attention on two people who have knowingly broken the law. Sure capital punishment is abhorant and inhumane but so is the

Notices

Remembering Len Harper

Friends and close associates of Len Harper are cordially invited to a celebration and remembrance of Len's life and work at Djanbung Gardens at 74 Cecil Street Nimbin, on 11th April for lunch, bring a plate. There will be a remembrance Selamatan in his honour, followed by fellowship through the afternoon and into the evening. All enquires contact Admin (02) 6689-1755 at Djanbung Gardens. All welcome.

Nimbin Flix

Saturday 18th April at Birth & Beyond, doors open 6pm for a 6.30pm start. The movie is *Living Is Easy* (With Eyes Closed), Spanish with English sub-titles.

Open Learning classes

Term 2 begins on 6th May and we'll be offering classes in Exploring Art, Creative Writing, Spanish, Ukulele, Personal Book Keeping and Computer Skills. Enrolments are between 10am and 3pm on 29th and 30th April, at the Nimbin Community School classroom. For enquiries, phone 6689-1477.

Annual General Meetings

• Nimbin Environment Centre AGM, Tuesday 5th May, 5.30pm at Birth & Beyond building. Nominations for positions on the committee will be accepted from the floor, as is usual practice..

• Nimbin Community School Co-op AGM, Wednesday 13th May, 6pm, Green Room, Nimbin Community Centre.

Sound bath sessions

Thursdays 5.30-6.30pm upstairs at Nurture, 115 Keen Street, Lismore. Come and unwind with a relaxing Sound Bath, all you have to do is relax and let the sounds of chimes, bells, singing bowls and rainstick wash over you, taking you on your own journey, leaving you regenerated and balanced. Group sessions \$10.

Al-Anon

Al-Anon Family Groups meet in Lismore at 6.30pm on Tuesdays, at the Quakers Hut, Cnr Wyrallah Road and Dibbs Street and in Ballina at 6pm at West End Lions Club Hall, river end of Brunswick Street. If you are concerned about somebody else's drinking, Al-Anon can help. Go to: www.al-anon.alateen.org/australia or phone 1300-252-666.

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. 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.

indiscriminate killing of civilians, including children, in Palestine.

It was good to see an article in the *Northern Star*, albeit on page 11, about Israelis for peace.

The Palestinians have been forced to live as refugees in their own land since 1948 and conditions have deteriorated continually.

I find it incongruous that a nation that suffered so horribly, can't see the irony of their behaviour, over the past 67 years, almost a lifetime, waging war on civilians.

No nation has shown the moral courage to confront the Israel nation and neither has any media raised the issue with the public.

It is one thing to label a people, fighting for their rightful, equal footing in this world, terrorists and another to stand meekly by and allow it to continue.

The leaders should be called warmongers. We run campaigns against bullying and this is the extreme form of bullying.

We are all responsible and must demand a resolution to this terrible debacle.

Show support to those Israelis that want peace by writing to your paper, local member or discussing it with friends and this may be the start to bringing some peace to the world.

Richard White
East Lismore

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.



From the mayor's desk



by Cr Jenny Dowell

Election

As a write my column, we are days away from the NSW State election. The campaign has been unusual in that all three major parties have rolled out a string of members of parliament for a range of announcements and promises. Whatever the result, our region has influenced policy and made our voices heard on the issues that affect us. Unconventional gas exploration including the coal seam variety has long been the unwanted industry in the Northern Rivers, so whoever takes the reins in Maquarie Street, the message has never been clearer. We want a gasfield-free region and we will continue to demand that the government and our elected representatives respect our position.

GSAC LMB

The March Council meeting contained the usual variety of core local government issues as well as some principled decisions such as Cr Simon Clough's motion to divest ourselves of fossil fuel investments.

The most challenging debate of the evening involved the future

staffing of the Goonellabah Sports and Aquatic Centre (GSAC) and the Lismore Memorial Baths (LMB). The current staffing of these facilities is largely via casual employment through a labour hire provider. Some of these staff have worked at GSAC or LMB for the full six years since GSAC opened and, naturally, they would like security of tenure. The dilemma for Council is that employment under the NSW Local Government Act would cost considerably more than the budget currently allows. As a result, Council decided to explore another option to set up an entity that would allow the facilities to operate under a different award. To do so would also involve seeking permission from the Minister for Local Government.

Council resolved to go down that path with some councillors expressing reservations but all agreeing on some key principles including that staff deserved to be employed with permanency and that the community should continue to be offered the same high level of service that has been provided at the facilities.

The day after the meeting, a rescission motion was lodged at an extraordinary meeting called on the following Tuesday to rescind the original decision and consider an alternative.

In the interim, the Australian Services Union met with Councillors and several staff met or communicated with me.

The rescission motion was successful and instead of going down the path to an entity at this stage, Councillors have asked management to meet with the ASU

to explore other options under the Local Government award and other relevant awards.

There will be further formal decisions by Council on this matter but meanwhile we hope that staff have some confidence that Council wants the best outcome for them and the community.

ANZAC

This month sees a plethora of special events to commemorate the centenary of the landing at Gallipoli. ANZAC ceremonies extend from early April with a display at Lismore Shopping Centre through the traditional services in Lismore and Nimbin, special events in Dunoon and Goolmangar and services in various aged care facilities and churches.

This year, to also mark the 90th anniversary of the Nimbin war memorial, I hope to get to the service there if I can get away from the main Lismore service in time.

Traffic

Roadworks and pothole filling has been taking place in and around Nimbin over the past few weeks and various traffic matters pertaining to roads around the area have also come before the Traffic Advisory Committee. Line marking, speeds, stop signs and vegetation on Gungah Road, Cecil Street and other roads were all discussed at recent meetings and hopefully decisions have been made in conjunction with Police and Roads and Maritime Services that improve safety and road conditions.

Sale of land to Nimbin A&I

Also at the March meeting, council agreed to sell a portion of land once

used by the Nimbin Aussie Rules team to the Nimbin Agricultural and Industrial (A&I) Society. The General Manager has been authorised to enter into negotiations with the Society based on market value of the land and for the Society to pay the legal costs involved in the sale. The purchase of this land allows the Society to plan for the expansion of facilities at the Showground.

7 Sibley Street

Congratulations to everyone who has helped purchase 7 Sibley Street for the community! The celebrations to be held at the weekend are an ideal time to bask in the generosity and determination of Nimbin people who have a vision of sustainability that is becoming a reality. Well done all!

Nimbin Tourism campaign

As I write this column, I'm also excited to hear that Lismore City Council, North Coast Destination Network and Destination NSW will work in partnership to fund a substantial marketing campaign for Nimbin, following the devastating main street fire in August last year. In addition, significant in-kind support will be provided through Destination NSW's media and marketing networks to support tourism and retail spending in Nimbin and help boost the village's visitor numbers.

The campaign will be developed in partnership with the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce, Nimbin Advisory Group and local business and tourism operators. Marketing and promotional elements are scheduled to start in May and will

include a wide variety of TV, print and online advertising, visits from travel journalists and many more elements.

This is very exciting and is the culmination of a great deal of work led by Council's Mitch Lowe and Andrew Walker.

Kyogle

Our Council has held two workshops to discuss the pros and cons of a merger with Kyogle Shire Council. It is true that neither Council would be a willing participant in any merger whether voluntary or forced but it is important that the issues be explored. If the coalition is returned it is considered likely that the number of councils in NSW will be reduced through forced amalgamations. While the talk is that the focus will be on the 41 Sydney councils, it would be foolish for Lismore City Council to bury its head in the sand and pretend that mergers are not being considered. Better to be prepared by airing the issues. I thank Mayor Danielle Mulholland for demonstrating strong leadership in her Council in facing this issue too.

Easter

Easter and school holidays also mean the Autumn Arts Extravaganza. Like many, I look forward to seeing the wide array of wonderful works on display in the School of Arts.

Email: jenny.dowell@lismore.nsw.gov.au or phone: 6625-0403

A matter of public importance

by Justine Elliot
MP for Richmond

I recently spoke in Parliament on a Matter of Public Importance (MPI) about how the Abbott Government's Budget cuts are hurting every Australian. Here's some of that speech:

"The fact is that this government's unfair budget and cruel cuts have been devastating not just for the nation but also for regional areas like mine, the electorate of Richmond. The deep concern now is that this year's budget will be just as deep and just as cruel and just as unfair because of this government's massive mismanagement. Everyone knows they are in utter chaos; they cannot manage anything at all. There are real concerns that there are going to be just as severe cuts in this year's budget.

"All we are seeing from this government today—whether it be here in MPIs or in question time, or throughout the day—is chaos, mismanagement, conflicting narratives and backflips on a whole range of issues. Today the Prime Minister said that the government will get back to broad balance by 2019-20. This, quite frankly, means the commitment to the same cuts

that were in last year's budget. All we get is a series of bad decisions from a bad government. It just keeps on going. Locals in my area have every right to feel betrayed by this government, and in regional areas of course that betrayal is by the National Party. A Liberal-National government continue to relentlessly attack the standard of living of Australians by cutting pensions and cutting family payments, slashing services and increasing taxes—hurting, of course, the most vulnerable in our community.

"Indeed, before the election, we had all these promises made that there would be no changes to pensions, health care, GP tax and no cuts to education. After the election all those promises were broken. It was an unprecedented attack on the living standards of millions of Australians. The fact is, since the Liberal-National Party's unfair budget last year, locals in my area have had to deal with so many cruel measures like those cuts to pensions and health and aged care cuts as well, yet all we keep seeing now is more of the chaos.

"I will move to health cuts because this is something that has really impacted people in my area. Firstly, we recently had the Prime Minister

claiming that the GP tax is now dead, buried and cremated. Locals in my area know that you cannot trust Liberals and especially the National Party when it comes to health care and hospitals.

"But back to the GP tax. Regardless of what the Prime Minister or health minister have announced, we know that the GP tax will be back—make no mistake about it. It is not gone. It is not buried. The Prime Minister said he is committed to it. This is all about the Liberal-National Party destroying Medicare and destroying bulkbilling because this is their agenda. Part of this attack also includes the \$50 billion to be slashed from the hospital funding agreements.

"You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker that I asked the Prime Minister today in question time specifically about those \$50 billion worth of cuts and how they will impact on my electorate. Do you know what he did? He refused to answer. Do you know why he refused to answer? It is because he is weak and running scared. The Prime Minister is weak and running scared and would not answer my question about how his \$50 billion cut will impact on hospitals on the



north coast of New South Wales. One of the cruellest cuts is the one to the age pension. Again, we had the Prime Minister and his candidates running around all over the country - in my area it was National Party candidates - saying, 'There'll be no cuts to pensions. There'll be no changes there.' Of course, when they got into office, we saw huge changes with their cuts to pensions.

"But it got worse over the weekend. We saw some changes. What they say now is that they only want to index the pension by the consumer price index. The fact is that, under Labor, the pension was indexed by whichever was the higher of wages, the consumer price index or the pensioner index that Labor introduced. This was to make sure that pensions kept up with the general standard of living of all Australians. This is just the

government's latest mean trick. There was such an array of cruel cuts and unfair methods brought in with the last budget. Many people have real concerns that this year's budget will be just as bad.

"People have no faith in this government. They think the government is cruel and unfair and that all they seem to introduce are a series of mean and unfair tricks. As I have said, all we see from this government is chaos, conflicting narratives and backflips on a range of issues. I am constantly told by people in my area that they do not trust the National Party. Whether it is at the federal level or the state level, they do not trust them one bit because we constantly get bad decisions from bad governments. The fact is that this is a government with a commitment to deep cuts which are hurting every Australian."

Simon says...

It's early in the morning the day before the state election and there's a definite sense of excitement in the electorate of Lismore. Whether this will result in a Greens or Labor candidate in Lismore who knows, but it is impossible to believe that sitting National Thomas George won't experience a significant reduction in his vote. It's a testament to the power of the social movement that our community has created to see the candidates trying to outdo each other in their opposition to gasfields. This is democracy at work.

Some of the claims about candidates opposing CSG are laughable with Thomas George supporters for instance claiming he'd been opposing CSG for the last four years!

The coalition has committed itself to the removal of the Native Vegetation Act and the Threatened Species Act. I don't think that it's too much to say that this will be an environmental disaster, setting back threatened species and climate change by 25 years.

Should the coalition be able to carry out its promise, it makes Lismore City Council's Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) all the more critical. Council held a workshop on the strategy last Tuesday. The BMS to me is the Council delivering what the community has requested through the Imagine Lismore consultation. While Council spends over 30% of its expenditure on roads it spends less

than 0.5% directly on the environment. It is Council's chance to catch up.

The BMS is significantly different and I think better than many environmental strategies.

Firstly, although the strategy will be largely paid for by the urban community 70% of the projects and spending are in the rural areas. For instance there is the opportunity for rate rebates on high conservation value land. So often it has been the case where farmers and rural folk have ended up paying for the environmental demands of the urban community. It is not the case here.

Secondly, the strategy does not increase regulation on rural landowners. The strategy is based on farmers' voluntary commitment and a system of incentives and education.

Council staff believe that the phone survey carried out by the respected Hunter Research Institute is the most reliable guide to the community's opinion on the BMS and its special rate variation, compared with the submissions and the Community Forum. This is because:

- Ratepayers were randomly selected from the White Pages and matched against property addresses and the rating database;
- Multiple contact attempts yielded a high response rate (88%), with very few people refusing to take part;
- Small ratepayer categories (i.e.



by Cr Simon Clough,
Lismore City Council

Farmland and Residential – Rural) were oversampled;

- Sample was designed to give each affected ratepayer category a 'voice'; and
- Council can have high confidence that the results of the telephone survey are representative of the cross-section of views held by the community.

On balance, the Hunter survey showed that there was a majority of the ratepayers who were in favour of the BMS and supporting it with a special rate variation.

Here's looking forward to some new representatives in state parliament for the Northern Rivers, and a wonderful autumn.

Contact Simon: phone 0428-886-217,
email: simonclough@internode.on.net

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Email: jayne@nimbintax.com.au



Roads, tourism... and amalgamations

Roads, community facilities and how to fund them are common themes for all councils. They have reached a critical stage in Byron Shire due to the impact of 100 tourist visitors for every one ratepayer. Paying for and maintaining such heavily used infrastructure is a major challenge for Council. Our Tourism Advisory Committee has worked with the tourism industry and residents to identify a variety of alternative revenues that would allow tourist visitors to make a contribution to help repair our roads and community facilities. However the NSW government has persistently refused to allow Council to implement measures such as a bed tax.

With one hand tied, the government is doing its best to tie up the other by failing to realign the distribution of federal government money to the regions. Even within the Northern Rivers, Byron Shire receives up to \$50 million a year less in Federal Assistance Grants than other Councils. At the same time, the government has imposed a new reporting regime on all councils to test whether they are 'fit for the future' (FFF). This test poses significant challenges for all councils in our region with none currently making the pass mark. Without further financial reform and a recognition that many traditionally 'rural' local government areas have transformed into 'coastal' and 'tree change' communities, the FFF will lead to more amalgamations over time.

Rail, trails and upended priorities

All the talk in Byron Bay at the moment revolves around a new MasterPlan. Wide ranging consultations about 'big ideas' and reclaiming the 'soul' and 'vibe' of the town are taking place. Transport has emerged as a major theme with strong

It's great to have an opportunity to write a monthly column for the NGT. The ability for local representatives to speak directly to our communities distinguishes this paper as a leading voice across the Northern Rivers. I hope my contribution can highlight issues as we see them in Byron Shire as well as a coastal perspective on shared regional concerns and aspirations.

– Basil Cameron

support from residents and businesses for a town with fewer cars. At the same time the existing traffic congestion and the West Byron development is focusing interest and scare funds on expanding the capacity of Ewingsdale Road so that more cars can come into town.

The solution to these conflicting aims is to expand our thinking on alternative transport, particularly the use of the rail corridor. North Byron resort will shortly begin operation of a rail car shuttle in and out of town, opening up the potential for Council to move its road based park and ride trial onto rails. While this provides some relief, the real potential to reduce traffic significantly comes from an expanded rail network linking the Bluesfest, Splendour sites and alternative transport for 'day tripper' visitors from across the region.

Sadly the coalition government's policy will dramatically undermine these community driven solutions. Instead of transport infrastructure, \$50 million is put up so that an important regional rail network can be ripped up and replaced with a walking track. The viability of this project is based on attracting an additional 100,000 plus adventure tourists thus adding to the overload on local communities. It also limited the



Byron Views
by Cr Basil Cameron

possibility of expanding public transport. A further sting will be that councils across the region ultimately pick up the cost of providing and maintaining facilities such as toilets and car parks. Funds will come out of council coffers, which would otherwise have been spent on local roads, parks and other community facilities.

A fresh start?

I write this a couple of days before the state election, but with a hope that the new Member for Ballina moves quickly to better represent the needs and aspirations of our Shire and the Rainbow Region.

I can be contacted at: basil.cameron@cr.byron.nsw.gov.au or Facebook



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