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Exercise, wet or dry, at the pool

by Sue Edmonds

Nimbin's recreational area now has a variety of activities catering for all ages.

Bright orange outdoor exercise equipment has been installed near the children's playground in Peace Park.

There are six pieces of equipment which help you stretch, strengthen arms and legs, twist that waist and cycle on the spot.

The equipment is designed to suit people of all fitness levels, from slack to tip-top, so have a go, and enjoy your moments of movement.

The Lismore City Council seems to be taking our health practices seriously, with extensive repairs to the pool and now somewhere to exercise without getting wet, and



no swimming costume required.

Next surprise could be a seat, and toilets for the park. But don't hold your breath. Keep breathing in and out steadily, and hold on for now, it's good bladder and bowel exercise, so they say.

Head down, bum up, all systems go, in a fashion.



Mike Birch

Armistice Centenary at Nimbin

by Paul LeBars

Thanks to everyone who attended the Remembrance Day-Armistice Day services at the Nimbin District Memorial.

The memorial site looked wonderful with 111 locally hand crocheted and crafted poppies placed around the gardens (six purple for animals). Each red poppy represented 1,000 of the fallen in the last 104 years in conflicts and peacekeeping.

After the call to commemoration by piper James Alexander, the service started with the Opening Address followed by a reading and Prayer of Remembrance from Rev. Grant Andrews. 'For the Fallen' was read by Bob Dooley followed by a heartfelt Commemorative Address from Cr. Elly Bird from the Lismore City Council.

The wreaths from the local schools and the Nimbin Medical Centre as well as one from Cpt. BP Turner's (the new plaque on the Seat of Remembrance) grandson were laid to the sounds of the bagpipes. A minute's silence was observed at 11am, marking the 100 years of Armistice, honouring the fallen, the veterans and the families of veterans.

A big thanks to Gai and Phil for the gardens; Simone, Sue and all the poppy-



Jiah and Lee

makers (stored for next year); Farren for the sound; and Emerald and AJ for help with the badge and poppies.

Plaque unveiled

At 9.30am on Remembrance Day, a short service was held to unveil a new plaque on the Seat of Remembrance to commemorate the life and service of Captain Bevan Patrick Turner, known to the Nimbin community as Ben or Gentle Ben, who passed away in 2002.

His good friends Marianne (Brisbane)



School students laying wreaths

and Paul (Townsville) organised the plaque and managed to find Ben's long-lost daughter Lee and grandson Gareth living in the Atherton Tableland.

Through contacting Prem at Tuntable, Lee was united with her brother Jiah (Prem's son) for the first time.

Many of Ben's personal possessions were stolen after he passed, including his Service Medals. If anyone has information on the medals, possessions or about Ben, please contact Marianne De La Motte at: zycera@yahoo.com.au

A call to arms, legs, hearts and minds

by Patrick Hall

This is a call to arms, legs, hearts and minds.

A calling on the great Aquarius spirit of this beautiful land and its amazing people who I have been lucky enough to have lived and worked with, and call my brothers and sisters and friends.

For the past three years a civil war in Yemen has wreaked havoc amongst its population. Some of the poorest people of the world have been bombed by some of the richest nations, including Saudi Arabia backed up with American and British arms and intelligence.

A Saudi air and sea blockade and aerial bombardment of the country, including attacks on



hospitals and school buses, have resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths.

At least 85,000 children have died of acute malnutrition and related diseases. Surely this is unacceptable.

The world's mainstream media are ignoring this

untouchable story, afraid of the politics of oil. Even our ABC. So it is up to you and me to rise up and speak out.

These poor children are too weak to walk, too emaciated to talk. Will you speak out for them? Will you march for them? Will you open your hearts and minds to

their crying for help?

If your answer is yes, then join us on Sunday 16th December in Nimbin at the Bush Theatre at 5pm, when a rally through the village will take place, followed by a musical event starting around 6.30pm. Please be there on the day.

I am looking for help to make this event a success and effective. If you can help by joining our working group, please contact me via Facebook and Messenger. I welcome contact from all that care.

The world food program have people on the ground in Yemen risking their lives to try to get the food to whoever they can. It's easy to donate on their website at: www.wfp.org/emergencies/yemen or: www.savethechildren.org/yemen

Yet another rally for rail

by Beth Shelley,
Chairperson, Northern Rivers
Railway Action Group
(NRRAG)

NRRAG is campaigning to save our railway transport corridor between Casino to Murwillumbah. The NSW state election is due next March and now is the time to take action.

A 'Rally for Rail' is being held on Saturday 8th December, 10am to 12pm at the Lismore Quad near the Art Gallery.

In all the years since our rail service was closed, there has been no community consultation to find out what people want. An article in the *Tenterfield Star* (January 5, 2018) stated that a community consultation was held in Tenterfield by NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet.

"DPC executive director Chris Hanger explained to those at the community meeting that the onus for managing and maintaining rail trails once a rail corridor is closed generally falls to the local council." Then Tenterfield Council "voted in favour of maintaining the current rail infrastructure for its future tourism potential".



Tenterfield has 4,000 people. Our Northern Rivers population is now almost 300,000 and tourist numbers are now second only to Sydney.

I believe the people of this region want trains running again, but need the opportunity to join together to be heard.

Many people believe the story that the railway tracks are in bad condition and trains are unaffordable. However, the figures tell a different story.

The Labor government closed the railway in May 2004 stating that repairs

would cost \$9 million per year for 20 years to bring it to gold-plated standard.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers, in September 2004, developed a plan for a 16 train a day lighter railcar service costing \$4 million/year for seven years. It stated that the line was in good condition.

Then the now-discredited ARUP group developed a report with grossly overestimated figures in 2013. It therefore appears that people have been misled concerning the viability of returning a regular train service to our region.

I believe that the people

of this region deserve to be consulted about what essential services they require, such as rail.

It's time for all of us who want trains to make our voices heard. Come along to the rally for rail at 10am on Saturday 8th December at the Lismore Quad.

There will be speakers and great local music (lots of songs about trains), water misters for a hot day and a photo taken at noon to show that there is great support for passenger services on our Casino to Murwillumbah line. Please come along to show your support.

Nimbin Advisory Group report

by Stan Palmer

Development Applications

Council is waiting for more information from the applicant for the Proposed Rural Land Sharing Community (RLSC) of 17 sites at 39 Crofton Road. The DA is available for viewing on the Council website: <http://tracker.lismore.nsw.gov.au/Application/ApplicationDetails/005.2018.00000285.001>

(Please note that the "Figure 1 Locality Plan" map incorrectly identifies the location of the development as Gungas Road.)

Concerns were raised on how the "Community" aspect will be reflected in RLSC developments. Council's Local Environment Plan (LEP) contains a clause relating to "people coming together as a community", whether intentionally or unintentionally.

The Council's current LEP mapping allows development of RLSC to extend as far as Blue Knob. However, Council's Growth Management Strategy mapping allows RLSC only within a 4km area around Nimbin. It also allows for approved existing MOs to apply for Community Title and this has been reflected in the LEP, however Council has not yet adopted this mapping. Due to this new MOs are currently unable to convert to Community Title.

LCC's Growth Management Strategy is up for review in 2019-2020.

Other developments discussed were:

- The 30-lot Rural Residential Subdivision development at 4 Blue Knob Road is still being assessed by Council pending more information.
- The 35 Sibley Street DA (North of Alternative Way), for a small Nursery and Hardware Supplies, has been approved.
- 36 Sibley Street (North of the Service

Station), formerly known as the Nimbin Arts and Industry Estate, had Consent Approval issued in the early '90s and has been determined to still be active. The commencement for three light industrial buildings and two other buildings that will have 38 storage units will begin.

Issues regarding the current direction of developments and how they relate to the community's concerns around affordable housing were discussed.

Parking strategy

Residents who were concerned that they would be penalised for parking on the street due to their property not having a driveway have been contacted by Council Rangers and this issue is now believed to be resolved.

Gutter ramps have been installed at the pedestrian crossing near the Chemist.

The Council's Disability Action Group are in discussions with Nimbin Post Office staff to co-ordinate easier access to the Post Office for persons with disabilities (the DA fee would be waived by LCC).

The Garbage and Recycling bin, currently located adjacent to the disabled parking space in front of the Post Office will be relocated prior to Christmas.

Traffic calming in Cecil Street

In response to community feedback, one of the median strips has been removed. Council is now proposing to build a footbridge over the creek to ensure pedestrian safety. Funding for this proposal is still to be confirmed.

Nimbin Pool

Painting of the Pool has now been completed by LCC and it is much appreciated as we head towards summer.

Fitness Park equipment

The Fitness Park equipment has been installed. A post installation repair was required but thanks to Council's prompt response to notification of this, the equipment has been repaired.

Public showers

Possible locations and ways to raise funding were discussed. NNIC has an offer of \$10,000, conditional on raising the remainder of minimum \$30,000. While quotes for the conversion of one of the public toilets to a shower have been received, there has been a great variance between those obtained by NNIC and LCC. With elections looming next year, lobbying politicians may prove beneficial.

Rainbow Walking Trail

Representatives from LCC will host a meeting to summarise and present their findings before the final Risk Management Assessment. The meeting will be held at Birth & Beyond on Friday 14th December at 8.30am.

Village CCTV

CCTV funding is confirmed and works should be complete by the end of 2019. If community groups want to assist in monitoring (as well as police), they need to apply and receive approval and agree to follow a protocol.

Rainbow Café

The rebuilding of the iconic Rainbow Café is expected to be complete by the end of 2019.

Welcome to Nimbin Kit

The Welcome to Nimbin Kit has received offers of funding from NCC, Chamber of Commerce and Nimbin Hills Real Estate.

The next NAG meeting will occur late in February 2019. Enjoy the holiday season.

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Lismore's recycled Christmas tree

Lismore City Council's 2018 recycled Christmas tree was erected in the Lismore CBD as a festive gift to the community.

The 7.3-metre CBD centrepiece is made from 49 second-hand umbrellas, 18 metres of tinsel from old CBD decorations and lights donated by Bunnings featuring 2540 LED bulbs.

The steel frame was recycled from last year and there are 778 salvaged screws, 860 cable ties, five metres of securing wire and one litre of paint.

This is the fourth tree Council staff have created as a centrepiece for the roundabout on the corner of Keen and Magellan Streets to celebrate the festive season and Lismore's commitment to



recycling and sustainability.

The tradition began in 2015 when Council staff created a Christmas tree as a gift for the community from old bicycles painted in many colours. In 2016 staff made the tree from old car tyres

and in 2017 it was fashioned from old road signs with an impressive 'Give Way' star.

"We love the recycled Christmas tree, although we're starting to feel like there's pressure to deliver," laughed Tina Irish, Lismore

City Council's Manager of Economic Development, who spearheaded this year's effort.

"We are very proud of the tree – not because it looks perfect or is the best tree in the world, but because it reflects the values of Lismore. The tree represents everything Lismore is about – it's sustainable, recycled, colourful and quirky. We think it suits the personality of our city and what our community stands for.

"Council staff love our community and do our very best to make Lismore a great place to live. Christmas gives us a chance to share our Christmas spirit and give something back from the heart," Tina added.

"It's our way of saying we love you Lismore!"

Won't someone think of the elders?

by Miss Guidance,
Nimbin Hemp Embassy

For those aware of community-based medical cannabis, the overwhelming demographic interested in medical marijuana seem to be the elders of our society.

At a recent Medican workshop in Nimbin, the majority of the 200 people in attendance were definitely 60 years plus. They are proactive about their health and healing therapies in a world determined to remove our decision-making autonomy. It's laughable that the wowers are worried about the "children" when they should be concerned that the elders of our communities can access affordable and effective herbal medicines without being considered criminals.

With that backdrop, the Nimbin Hemp Embassy attended the recent CannaTech event, 29-30 October, in the heart of big dollars Sydney, where Australia's emerging cannabis industry is rightly focused on "patient access". Their profits depend on it, obviously. Where there's profit to be made, there's corporate fascination, and the emerging legal weed industry in Australia is no exception.

A few companies were excited about gaining export licences without really thinking about the venality of that opportunity: as long as the Australian medical cannabis company is able to make money through exporting, who cares about patient access within Australia?

Since 2016, when the Federal government announced "legal" medical

cannabis access, there are currently eight companies with licenses to manufacture, and 15 licensed to import. The Office of Drug Control's website used to also list the companies who are licensed to grow and research, as well as a list of the actual products available, but all of this information, which would be helpful to doctors and patients, has disappeared from this website.

Amongst all the suits, medical cannabis patient advocate, Lucy Haslam, was the lone voice in reminding the delegates that the heart of this industry is about helping very sick people with a large range of medical conditions. However, over two years after "legal medical cannabis" was announced in Australia, getting access for patients is still complicated, time-consuming, costly and infuriating.

This dismal situation suggests that the Federal and State agencies behind it don't actually want patients to get the drug. While millions of Australian research dollars are being spent on clinical trials fewer than 2,000 people have so far been prescribed it.

This important patient access debate was continued on a panel discussion at The University of Sydney in the evening of 29 October, which featured Prof John Skerritt, Deputy Secretary for Health Products Regulation, in the Federal Department of Health. He faced criticism from patients, doctors, and patient advocates including legal people, for what they described as a cruel approach to compassionate access.

The CannaTech conference itself is a roving global event, providing a window

to the immensely professional and sophisticated cannabis industry as seen in countries like Canada and Israel. Undoubtedly this was a wonderful event for Australian based entrepreneurs interested in connecting with some of the global innovators in this domain, and the presence of this conference in Australia reflected the sure and steady growth of Australia's legal cannabis industry since 2016.

International players shared their tremendous expertise and offered insights in the fields of policy/legislative change, data analytics, growing science, and clinical research, not to mention the opportunity for networking in a nascent market.

As everywhere else around the globe where new lucrative markets appear, the actual people involved in the new Australian cannabis industry are not necessarily people with any background or interest in cannabis, but rather backgrounds in business, finance, health and so on. A number of the Australian speakers at CannaTech proclaimed that, "18 months ago I would never have believed that I would be involved with cannabis".

They have not experienced the hard slog of dozens of daily phone calls and hundreds of emails from patients seeking access. This is the world of patient advocates like Lucy Haslam, and other community based medical cannabis providers around the country. When we advocate for "legal" cannabis, it's obvious that we need to be careful of what we do indeed "wish for".

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Nimbin Community Centre renews

by Therese Biscoe,
Co-ordinator

The AGM has come and gone with the resignation of our president and long-term committee member Scott Sledge. We are welcoming most of the old committee back (though some in new roles) and new committee member, Louise Graves.

David Hallett has replaced Sledge in the role of president. Linnet Pike remains as our vice-president. Diana Roberts continues as our most competent treasurer and Michael Balderstone is now the new secretary of the committee. Our ordinary members are Darren Maxwell, Danielle Voinot and new committee member, Louise Graves.

Many thanks to Scott Sledge for the years of volunteering as part of the committee and for stepping up after we lost our beloved president Dick Hopkins. He took the job on with his customary dedication and thoughtfulness and we will miss his input and perspective at our meetings.

We had a lovely unveiling ceremony last Market Day at the basketball court in Peace



Dick Hopkins' memorial stone in position, with his widow, Gill Jones and his daughters Noni and Marama

Park where Dick Hopkins Memorial stone has been placed. Staff and community volunteers have been cleaning up and planting a garden around the stone, carved by local community artist Donato Rosella.

The plan is to just put in a few hardy plants now while the weather is so warm and then add more plantings and landscaping around the stone as the weather cools and new plants need less constant attention to survive. We are aiming to put in lots of pretty native flowering plants and make the area a lovely space to sit and contemplate in.

We have had a couple of very busy months with the unexpected resignation of our community centre co-

ordinator Inez, the AGM and lots of end-of-year events. We would like to acknowledge the great work and passion for community that Inez brought to her role as co-ordinator. We and our tenants will miss her warmth and the genuine caring she expressed. We wish her great success in her future endeavours.

Our dedicated book-keeper Helen has stepped into the co-ordinator's role on Thursdays, and Teresa has taken on the Wednesday to fill the gap left by the resignation. We are committed to keeping our office open and staff available four days per week, for our tenants and community. Office opening

hours are 10am to 2pm, Monday to Thursday, phone (02) 6689-0000.

We are slowly transitioning our tenants into the new rental levels established in our rent review this year. This has been a difficult decision and process for all of us, but with a substantial loss of funding last year and increasing operating costs, there was very little choice but make a change to our rental structure which is our primary source of income. We would like to thank our tenants for their patience and understanding in this process.

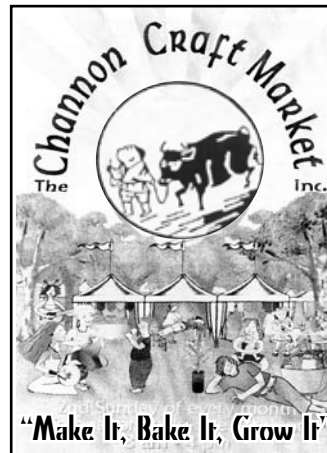
We are taking a short break over the Christmas period. The office will not be manned from Monday 24th December until Friday 4th January. Apologies for any inconvenience caused. We will of course be available for emergency contact with our tenants, but otherwise we will all be enjoying some family time.

Have a great silly season everyone, and we look forward to working together with you all for the benefit of our wonderful village and community in the coming year.

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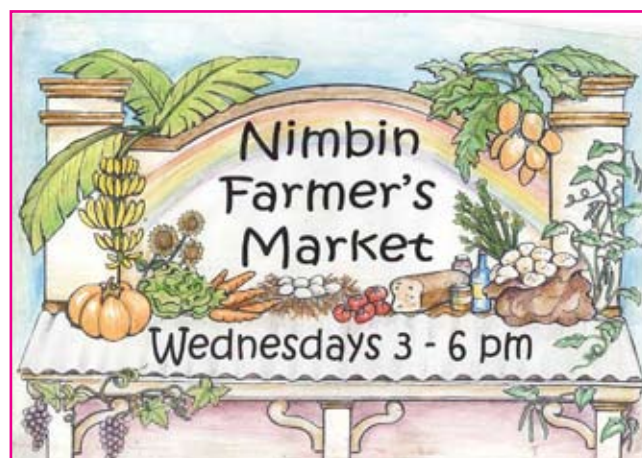
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NIMBIN ENVIRONMENT CENTRE NEWS

by Scott Sledge, President

Nimbin Environment Centre is a member of the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) organisation, and some of us (including Daniele and me) recently attended the NEFA AGM at Woody Head.

A focus was on the fact that the 20-year logging extension was going to be a disaster for the public good.

NEFA has called the process used by the Commonwealth and State Governments to adopt new Regional Forest Agreements as a superficial sham, simply intended to lock up public native forests for private saw-millers at significant environmental cost.

Dawn Walker, Greens MP said, "The Governments chose to ignore the recommendation of their own reviewer for a contemporary review that included an assessment of the effects of climate change."

"The Regional Forest Agreements were intended to end the 'forest wars' between communities, governments and loggers when they were signed approximately 20 years ago, but they have been a manifest failure and resulted in intensified logging, an alarming crash in koala populations by 50% in parts of NSW and continued breaches of forestry regulations, often with zero consequence for loggers.

"The LNP Government has rushed these new Regional Forest Agreements through without listening to the advice of experts or the voices of regional communities who want their forests protected in new National Parks, like the Great Koala National Park near Coffs Harbour that would be a boom



Photo courtesy Dawn Walker MP

for regional tourism."

NEFA spokesperson Dailan Pugh said, "The only document they have released is their resource commitments, which show they are increasing the cut of high quality logs in north-east NSW by at least 10,000 cubic metres to 230,000m3 per annum, at the same time they are fraudulently claiming a shortfall of 8,600m3 per annum to justify opening up protected old-growth and rainforest for logging.

"The increased logging intensity and significant reductions in protections for most threatened species and streams is an environmental crime.

"Out of more than 5,400 public submissions on the proposed new NSW RFAs, only 23 supported them. There is no social license to continue the degradation of our public native

forests.

"Plantations already provide 87% of our sawn timber needs. It is time to complete the transition to plantations and establish more plantations on cleared land, while we actively rehabilitate our public native forests to help them recover from past abuses and restore the full suite of benefits they can provide to the community.

"Despite the rapidly escalating environmental costs, the National Party are hell-bent on ignoring climate change, increasing land clearing and increasing the degradation of our public native forests.

"With State elections in March, and Federal elections likely in May, it is time to make a difference and vote to stop this accelerating assault on our environment and our children's future."



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In your neighbourhood...
Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre News
Celebrating 40 years of service to the community in 2018

The NNIC team wishes everyone a safe and happy festive season and we will see you all in 2019!

The big FREE community Xmas lunch

Friday 21st December at Nimbin Town Hall, from midday onwards. All welcome to come along and enjoy some festive fare. Santa will make an appearance from 1pm providing you've all been (mostly) good. Proudly brought to you by NNIC's soup kitchen team.

Call for donations

NNIC requests donations of new gifts suitable for children/jarjums of any age. Please drop any donations off Monday and Friday between 10am and 4pm by close of business on Wednesday 19th December.

NNIC Xmas closure dates

NNIC will be closed for two weeks from Saturday 22nd December and re-opening on Monday 7th January 2019 to give our staff and volunteers a well-earned break.

The Centrelink agency will be closed for one week from Saturday 23rd December and re-opening on Wednesday 2nd January 2019.

There will be no other NNIC services available between 2nd January and 4th January.

We apologise for any inconvenience during our closure period. You can do your Centrelink business on line as usual while we are closed.

7 Sibley Street

Finally open to the community. Yay!

Celebrations were held at the Grand Opening on Saturday 1st December – thanks to everyone who came along to share the joy with us.



Sustainability Hub opening



Inset: Natalie Meyer and Guy Stewart
Photo by Mandie Hale

Thanks to everyone who contributed to Stage One of the project... the full list of the many, many community contributors and volunteers will be posted on the project's website.

Extra special thanks go to the crew from Jazz Constructions – in particular Jason, Mick, Shane and Bart; our stalwart volunteers who came week in and week out and contributed many hours or work and expertise to the painting and repairs – Steph Seckold, Greg Symes and Steve Hales and to Mark Floate and Guy Stewart for all the design work.

Thanks also to NSW Family and Community Services for funds provided via the Social and Community Housing Funding stream, and to ETC for the funds for the tools library.

There are still lots of jobs going forward on site and now we can get started on some gardening as well.

See the website for more info: www.sevenonsibley.com or contact NNIC on 6689-1692 or email us: guy@nnic.org.au

Nimbin Youth Film Festival

8th December, 2pm at the Bush Factory... get along to see the incredible local young filmmaking talent.

Captain Competent will be there to present the Party Safe Award. More details: www.nimbinyouthfilmfestival.com

NNIC AGM

Wednesday 5th December, 5.30pm at our premises on 71 Cullen Street, Nimbin. All members welcome.

Festive season mental health tip – be realistic

For a number of people, the festive season can be anything but joyous and merry and can trigger depression and anxiety and general feelings of being overwhelmed.

Remember that near enough is good enough. The idea of a perfect celebration can be flooded with pressures of spending more than we have, cooking the perfect recipes, going all out with decorations, or getting caught up in extra activities.


In reality, though, we all know that everything does not always go to plan. And that's okay. Start by making a to-do list to limit stress and focus on what is most important.

If you normally commit to a lot of different things, promise yourself that you'll have a simple festive season this year.

See: <http://newhorizons.org.au/blogs/5-tips-to-stay-mentally-healthy-during-the-festive-season/>

Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre (NNIC) is run by locals for locals and our job is to support people in need and the community in general to achieve their aspirations. Everyone is welcome at NNIC. If we can't help we probably know who can. You can also find lots of useful local and other info on our website. For appointments, phone 6689-1692 or just drop in between 10am and 4pm weekdays. www.nnic.org.au www.facebook.com/pages/Nimbin-Neighbourhood-and-Information-Centre

Nimbin Hospital information



Child immunisation clinic
For 0-5 year olds, held on second Tuesday of the month. Next Clinic: 11th December. Phone 6620-7687 (Lismore Community Health Centre)

Early childhood nurse
Every Tuesday. Baby checks, weighs, post-natal support. For appointments phone 6620-7687.

Women's health nurse services
One Thursday a month. Confidential service, pap smears, breast checks, contraceptive advice, post-natal checks, general health information. Phone 6689-1400 for appointment.

Wound clinic
Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8am. For self-referral, phone 6689-1288. Referrals also from Nimbin Hospital and GP clinic.

Drug and alcohol counselling services available
For an appointment please contact 6620-7600. A trained professional will ask you a few confidential questions and will provide you with an appointment time.


Nurse practitioner clinics
• Diabetes clinics: third Thursday of the month, next is 20th December.
• Respiratory clinic: second Tuesday of the month, next is 11th December. Phone 6630-0488 for appointments.

Community Registered Nurses
Monday to Friday, 8am-4.30pm. Assessments, wound care, referrals, advocacy, provision of palliative care in the home, medication support. Phone 6689-1288 – leave message, will return call swiftly.

Nimbin NSP
Needle and Syringe program open Monday to Thursday. Arrangements can be made to see a Community Registered Nurse.

Health advice line
Phone 1800-022-222 if you have a health issue. 24-hour, seven days a week free service. A Registered Nurse will assess whether you need to go to an Emergency Department.

Nimbin Hospital Auxiliary
Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at the hospital, at 10am. Next meeting: 2nd January. New members always welcome.



Ngara Institute goes paradigm busting

by Richard Hil

In August 2014 my partner Jenn and I had only just arrived in Mullumbimby from the Gold Coast. We were basking in the wonders of the town, so different to the drab suburb we'd just fled.

As we walked up and down the main street we marvelled at the jamboree of people, colour, street music, 'alternative' shops, the old daggy pub, and the folk collecting money for activist causes. The community noticeboards bristled with notices of forthcoming events, from rebirthing and primal screaming classes, to Buddhist retreats, vegan workshops, and yoga and meditation classes. Despite the awful pot-holed roads, we were exactly where we wanted to be.

One evening, as we sat in a pub sipping wine, I turned to Jenn and suggested, "Let's start up an ideas group, nothing too grand. We could invite speakers from just about anywhere. They'd all want to come here, it's the Byron nirvana after all." Jenn rolled her eyes, knowing that there'd be stacks of work to do.

"We could film the talks and beam them out through YouTube," I babbled on excitedly. Jenn sighed, "Can't we just enjoy the place for a while?"

The idea of a café conversation evaporated. But it wasn't long before we started talking with a few others about starting Politics in the Pub. The original idea came from Hans Lovejoy, the double-bass playing editor of the local independent newspaper. We were keen to make it happen. There wasn't anything like it in Mullum. But a politics gig? I wasn't sure.

Around the same time, a few of us – mainly crotchety lefties – also began talking about setting up an activist think tank. At first, it sounded like a silly idea given that most think tanks operate out of major metropolitan centres and are well funded – and none of them claim to be activist! All the more reason, I mused, to start one. I mean, what was there to lose?

Australia already has a swag of think tanks, 22 of them in fact, with most on the conservative side of politics – the IPA, Centre for Independent Studies, Menzies Institute, Sydney Institute etc. I had no idea how we could fit into that constellation, or how we'd get the necessary funds. But the idea persisted.

Why did I think a progressive think tank was even needed? We already had the leftish Australian, McKell and Whitlam institutes, but they seemed pretty low key and

a bit too preoccupied with invading current mainstream policy domains.

What about something more out there, a think tank focussed on doing away with the current system and replacing it with something much more peaceful and regenerative? What about a progressive futures institute that was in the business of rethinking, co-creating and reimagining? It sounded appealing.

But there was more. I'd also spent some time surveying the ideological scenscape and was learning a lot about the global neoliberal takeover in which think tanks played a key role. Like countless others, I wanted to see the end of neoliberalism. I detested the idea that the market should govern everything, that profit should be our guiding ethic, that we should all be competing against one another, that everything should be privatised and most regulations abandoned.

This was a recipe for disaster. It had led to growing inequality, the concentration of capital, environmental destruction, disconnection, and the undermining of democracy. To my mind, one of the most important things progressives could do was to blitz neoliberal



Politics in the pub at Mullumbimby

assumptions and offer a different story about the future – one based on a radically alternative set of values that placed peace, justice, regeneration and Indigenous wisdoms at the centre of all things; one that viewed humans as part of an interconnected, complex, global, ecological system in which cooperation, mutuality, sharing, caring, compassion and kindness were its defining features.

While the idea of the think tank remained on the back burner, we were off and running with the Politics in the Pub. Astonishingly, the first such gig attracted 180 people. Since then, there have been around thirty pub events, featuring some of Australia's most progressive thinkers, and covering topics as diverse as anti-protest laws, trade treaties, narcissism, the commons, anarchism, Trump, and the politics of cruelty.

Additionally, in 2017 the Institute launched its inaugural annual lecture followed by the first Australian Activist of the Year Award. Over time, we have also supported many different organisations, causes and events, and have affiliated with activist groups both here and overseas. There are now Ngara-supported Politics in the Pub in Lismore and Kyogle, with plans for the same in Coffs Harbour, and Melbourne – and hopefully Nimbin. Over the next year Ngara plans to get the funds we need to turn the Institute into a fully-fledged think tank.

If you want to know more about Ngara, please visit our website. Keep an eye on our terrific line-up for next year's Politics in the Pub, which includes John Pilger, Margaret Reynolds, Hugh Mackay, Jenny Hocking, Dahr Jamail and many others: www.ngarainstitute.org.au



Nimbin MPS Staff with \$500 cheque from NNSW LHD for their 100% participation in the 'People Matter' employee survey. Rear: Krista Matthews, Wendy Longmuir, Ross McNall, Shannon Holgate, Vicki Martin, John Howley. Front: Jhonany Ramsay, Tracey Sheehan

by Noelle Lynden-Way

Surveys and feedback are a part of modern life these days. With a survey, the goal is always to get as many people as possible to complete it so that there is a fair representation on which to base results and plan changes for the future.

At Nimbin MPS, 100% of staff completed the recent Northern NSW Local Health District (NNSW LHD) 'People Matter' employee survey.

Staff in facilities throughout the Northern Rivers were asked questions about current systems and management structures and, from their perspective, what did they think of the health service, whether they felt supported and if there was a clear pathway for career advancement and opportunities for education. The survey could be completed on-line or filled in and posted to the LHD office.

Nimbin staff were encouraged to put forward their opinions by Susan Lacy, Assistant in Nursing (AIN), who represented Nimbin MPS on the District's Culture and Staff Engagement Committee.

This committee was established to support the staff culture and well-being strategy and took the lead in encouraging staff participation in the 'People Matter' Survey. Susan and others were successful in ensuring

100% of Nimbin staff completed the survey and, as a result, Nimbin MPS was awarded \$500 by Wayne Jones, Chief Executive NNSWLHD. Bonalbo and Urbenville MPS were also awarded \$500.

Meetings have now begun with Nancy Martin, EO/DON, MPS Network, to discuss the feedback given and to develop an ongoing action plan with staff.

After receiving the \$500 cheque, staff members met to discuss how to use the money. Like most staff rooms, Nimbin MPS had a variety of cups and plastic water bottles. They decided to purchase reusable coffee/tea cups and water bottles and, in keeping with encouraging business in Nimbin, they agreed to buy these products locally.

Jason Gough, Senior RN, approached the Green Bank on the main street and staff members chose their own cup or water bottle.

Recycling is alive and well too in other areas of the MPS. Staff participate in the return-and-earn scheme, and volunteer their time to take the bottles to the Lismore Recycling Depot.

Money from this recycling is donated to the Hospital Auxiliary and often used to provide cooking supplies and plants for the on-site Residential Aged Care.

Good on you, Nimbin MPS.



Nimbin Garden Club



by Andrew Barton

It was a lovely cool afternoon at the end of November, when the Nimbin Garden Club gathered to celebrate another great year of garden visits... oh, and of course, Christmas.

Thirty members and guests came laden with a delicious lunch to share, along with lashings of champagne and good cheer.

We reminisced about the

year that was, talked of the great fundraising work that had been done, and the wonderful community organisations that had benefited.

Before a decadent dessert was served, we drew our annual Christmas raffle. Some lucky winners there! Thank you to all in the community who bought tickets, and to those generous businesses that donated such wonderful prizes.

The Garden Club is a great little social group with people of all ages, and all walks of life. If you feel like you might enjoy joining us, come and give us a test run... we love welcoming visitors and new members.

Keep an eye out in the February edition of the *Nimbin GoodTimes* for our next garden visit.

To all our members, guests and friends, may you all enjoy a safe and happy festive season.