

In search of... liberty, freedom and civil rights

by Aidan Ricketts

Words like freedom, rights and liberty are values that the vast majority of people aspire to for themselves and others yet they remain poorly understood, and as a result vulnerable to being manipulated.

When we think of the word liberty or libertarian, sadly many of us quickly picture gun-toting rednecks from the US or Australian gun lobby working themselves into a froth about their 'right' to bear arms, or bigots in Australia apoplectically defending their right to free speech so they can engage in racist and homophobic hate speech. But these very same right wing 'libertarians' also support draconian anti-protests laws.

The subject of liberty and rights has become a framing contest that is being dominated by the powerful. So let's break this down a little.

There are several categories of right, let's call them civil and political liberties; personal freedoms; and entitlement rights.

Civil and political liberties are collectively held and are the very foundation of a fair and democratic society. These are the kind of things you will find in a document like the International Covenant on Civil

and Political Rights (ICCPR) and includes things like the right to peaceful assembly (protest), freedom of association, and freedom of speech.

These are the real liberties that uphold a free and fair society but unfortunately these are the ones most at risk in modern Australia as the global corporate sector leans on successive governments to curtail these rights.

They also include the rights that underpin a fair legal system: due process, the presumption of innocence, the right to silence, and an independent judiciary. You might think these are safe in Australia but you only need to look at our drug laws, our bikie laws and our anti-terror laws to see how far we have strayed from upholding these principles in recent years. In NSW even the right to silence has been abrogated for serious criminal offences.

The next important category are rights to personal freedom, autonomy and self-determination. These include our rights to use our bodies as we choose, whether as drug users, sex workers, gay, straight or other, to experiment with lifestyle. These personal freedoms also include our personal rights to choose our own faith and spirituality. Which is ironic because traditionally it has been

religious moral conservatives who have been most oppressive of other people rights to lifestyle autonomy.

The last group of rights are entitlement rights. The right to shoot MY gun, where I want, to drive MY 4WD where I want, or to do what I want on MY land. Suddenly we see where the so-called libertarians of the right are coming from. These are not civil and political rights at all, these do not help uphold the institutions of democracy, nor to deliver fairness or equality to all people, or protect the rights of people to lifestyle self-determination. They are largely the stuff of entrenched privilege, property rights enjoyed by the haves.

Right wing libertarianism has a fatal flaw in its logic. It promotes minimum government interference in the lives of the powerful, opposes progressive taxation (taxing the rich), and argues for smaller government at every turn. Hang on at every turn? No, there's one huge gaping exception. Right wing libertarians support the endless expansion of the 'nightwatchman state'.

The massive police, court and prison (and now private prison) system that keeps an unequal property system in place and that rounds up and imprisons the have nots. The USA has the highest prison populations of any regime ever in history, it has

severe prohibitions on drug use in most states, and severe laws against the sex industry. But there's guns, there's privilege and there's a huge wealth disparity.

Left wing libertarianism on the other hand sees the property system as part of the problem and the real emancipation of people to be associated with an effort to promote equality. Civil and political rights enable groups with a grievance to organise, mobilise and advocate for their advancement as Australia's trade unions and environment groups have been trying to do for many decades. The left of Australian politics (Greens and Labor) have always been more sympathetic to campaigns to decriminalise things like diverse sexualities, the sex industry and personal drug use.

Freedom of speech also underpins an open society. Free speech has never been an absolute right however. The right to free speech is most valuable to ensure open discussion and criticism of government and powerful institutions such as corporations.

We should be rightly cautious about any incursions on free speech, but we should also understand that there may need to be exceptions. Defamation laws for example are an exception, as are laws against hate speech. Hate speech does not serve the function

of speaking truth to power. The laws against hate speech are designed to protect the rights of minorities to live in safety and not be subjected to potential mob violence and discrimination.

The entitlement right to do what you want on your own land places land ownership above collective well-being, above ecology and above intergenerational equity. There has never been such an unfettered right. We could learn much from first nations people about our responsibilities to the environment rather than our self-centred entitlements to exploit it.

So be aware, the so called libertarians of the right are really just protecting vested wealth and privilege at your expense. There is a need to clarify our thinking around these ideas before it is too late and assert that collective civil and political rights are the real liberties worth protecting, and that personal rights to self-determination are also important for all people.

We need a Bill of Rights in Australia to arrest the steady erosion of our rights and civil liberties, but it needs to protect people and the environment not the entitlement rights of a few gun-toting land owners, or the right of a few racists to engage in public hate speech.

Punching above our weight

by Bernadine Schwartz

2018 is the fourth consecutive year that Australia has continued to break records for temperatures and rainfall and again we are watching climatic conditions deteriorate here and in countless parts of the world. Nearly all of Europe has been ravaged by an extremely hot summer with unprecedented bushfires and record flooding, while we in Australia experience the effects of the worst drought in recorded history.

The Australian Bureau of Meteorology's predictions for future rain are not encouraging and they have forecast below average rainfall for the next three months.

Droughts, floods and bushfires have always been a part of Australia's makeup but these major events used to occur every 50 to 100 years and according to the Bureau of Meteorology we are now seeing them every 5 to 10 years and they are intensifying.

Nature has always been resilient enough to survive and regenerate after a natural disaster but when they happen more frequently the environment isn't given sufficient time to recover and this poses a huge threat to our wildlife, the environment and ourselves.

When Hurricane Harvey hit Texas last year it dumped an unbelievable 33 trillion gallons of water and according to NASA, it actually caused the crust beneath Texas to warp and sink by two centimetres. We have opened a Pandora's Box and this demonstrates the power Mother Earth is now capable of because of our neglect and total disregard for her.

The average Australian must be aware of the climatic changes that are occurring and surely have some understanding of global warming and its implications. Yet whether it be buying fashion, cars, travel, phones, computers or our homes, we as consumers are exceeding the majority of nations on the planet and this explains why our contribution to global emissions is 1.8% from a population that accounts for only 0.3% globally.

The federal government knows full well how shocking these figures are and for the last three years they have purposely released this report during the Christmas period. This government has also abandoned placing an emissions

reduction target even though we have broken all records for 2017, despite massive leaps in wind and solar power generation.

Australians hit another high in 2017 for purchasing more cars than any previous year and of those sales 465,646 were SUVs. For the first time they have now outsold traditional passenger vehicles. Overall there are 18.8 million cars registered in our country and since 2002 our car population has grown faster than us with a 43% increase compared to our population at 27%. No matter how economical our vehicles may be, more cars still adds up to more emissions.

2017 has been a memorable year for Australians, we managed to break a variety of records and another was 8,747,000 international flights that were taken by Australian residents. An astonishing number and rising every year. The public don't appear to recognise that their individual actions affect the environment and others and that billions of people are doing the same.

Water scarcity is becoming a widespread problem on our planet and is occurring in locations that have historically always had an abundant water supply. We in Australia consume more water than any other nation even though we live on the driest continent in the world. A study was done by international water experts, Hoekstra & Chapagain revealing that Australians use (or waste might be a better word), 341,000 litres p.a followed by Canada with 279,000 litres and the US 217,000 litres.

Those of us who have our own water supply are far more careful but for others a tap is just a limitless supply of water. Our planet has had the same amount of water for two billion years, no more no less, it's not an infinite supply and the water we pollute is simply lost forever.

I remember a time when a barbecue was always a DIY project but now a barbecue has transformed into a kitchen on wheels and I suppose we need our bigger barbies to cook all the meat we consume. We are currently third on the planet for meat consumption after the US and Kuwait, and we eat on average 111.5 kgs of meat per year. The resources that are being sacrificed to keep our cattle alive during this drought is insane and simply unsustainable.



Australians are responsible for disposing of approximately \$8 billion worth of edible food every year and if you include food being thrown out from supermarkets and restaurants the total is \$20 billion, according to the federal government.

There was a time when huge homes, dishwashers and a double garage were a part of the American dream. We have emulated the American lifestyle to such a degree, that we now build the biggest houses in the world. Since the 1950's our homes have more than doubled in size from 100sq to 240sq and some of those homes are only occupied by a couple or a small family while homelessness grows to epidemic proportions.

The average Australian household also has access to 6.4 screens and all with Internet connections and home entertainment systems with massive screens. You'd think that with all those connections to the Internet the public might have taken the time to research climate change and educate themselves on a topic that affects every living thing on the planet but judging by people's behavior, I doubt it.

We are also number one for smartphone ownership and it's thought that by the end of this year it's expected to surpass 90% of the market. We are that far ahead of the rest of the world that it's predicted they won't catch up till 2023.

When the Melbourne Cup is on, the entire nation stops and the passion they show for a meaningless horse race is quite bizarre. If only we could capture that level of attention and passion to save our planet.

Many Australians are so busy working hard to accumulate all those possessions that

they wouldn't be aware of changes the LNP Government has just made to our laws. They have culled half of our marine parks at a time in history when these truly need protection. One of Australia's oldest marine sanctuaries, Lord Howe Island is on the list, as well as the Coral Sea which is the cradle for the Great Barrier Reef and the only location left where giants of the oceans still thrive.

On a state level, our environment is deteriorating rapidly due to the NSW government and in the last three years it has been responsible for 800% rise in deforestation and this will only soar higher unless we can stop these new land clearing laws passed this year, but we cannot achieve anything when apathy is at epidemic proportions.

These issues are what we should be giving our attention to, not the latest smartphone or new model car. When the standard of life that we are accustomed to disintegrates, our extravagant homes, flashy cars and what we are wearing won't mean a damn thing. We cannot keep pointing the finger at governments or industries. Australians voted this government into power, and industries are busy manufacturing all the items that we are demanding.

We are an embarrassment to the rest of the world. We aren't even attempting to curb our emissions and politically we're a mess. All our major political parties have associations with mining companies and big business, with the exception of the Greens.

All I can see is that we have our foot to the floor as we hit the home straight to climate change, when what we should be doing is applying the brakes.

Fantasies Erotique cabaret 2018 is coming up on Saturday 21st September at the Nimbin Town Hall for another night brimming with elevating performing arts.

This show's production is somewhat grand – the lighting and vision mixing with live camera feeds, done by Tone Wonderland from Crystal Grid, is an exhibition in itself.

Producers Jaz and Judy Who have created the show which is a collaboration of creativity, sensuality and rawness, and the overall outcome is to expand the audience's imagination.

Raw Designs fashion and costumes are the foundations of the cabaret, where all the imagination begins.

This year the acts will be among some of the favourites. A mixture of local and national performers will deliver a raw, delicate, erotic and bold show.

"It's about giving the audience a sense of being right on the edge of laughter, sensuality and enthusiasm. We want the viewers to go home and feel open minded," said Jaz Who.

This original Erotique cabaret, which has been running for six years now, has always been restrained, keeping it right on the edge but no further. It grows every year.

"We put on this show every year for



the community, because they have so much fun. Ticket buyers come from all over the place, Byron, Gold Coast and even Sydney."

The event will be catered by the Radical Faeries, which is a show in itself.

Tickets are \$55 VIP, for a front row seat, or \$45 for general admission. (This

price is the show only.)

Tickets are available online at: eventBrite.com.au or in Nimbin at Perceptio Books, or in Lismore at Music Bizarre (+BF).

This is a licensed event. Doors open at 6pm for food and seating, and the show starts at 8pm.

What is the price of Internet fame?

Winner of the 2016 Matilda for Best Independent Production, *Viral* is a story about Art and Zane, two boys who seek to attain internet 'fame' in order to become more popular at school and to make some money.

It examines the role of social media and technology and how it impacts the way we record, communicate and think about events of racism, abuse and violence in our community.

It investigates the line between disassociation and raises awareness about such events.

Inspired by true events, *Viral* uses physical theatre, multiple role-sharing, verbatim political theatre, AV and an evocative musical score to create a visceral and dynamic theatrical experience.

"*Viral* was inspired by a number of true events and broader societal



changes facing all of us. The show explores desensitisation, responsibility and the role of social media in our modern world," said directors and performers Hayden Jones and Sam Foster.

"During the development of *Viral*, we engaged with various demographics and cultural groups on the Gold Coast, to hear a

diverse cross-section of perspectives concerning the themes and issues in the play. This process, along with our own research, raised many interesting ethical and moral questions about the role of technology, the internet and the media."

"We wanted to create a show that raised these themes and issues in an interesting and thought provoking way by combining episodic action that is held together by a strong narrative."

Viral is an example of Shock Therapy Production's signature style of doing as much as possible with as little as possible.

Viral will be performed on Wednesday 12th September at 7.30pm at Lismore City Hall. Recommended for ages 13+. The NORPA bar and dinner will open from 6pm. Tickets are \$25-\$36 through: www.norpa.org.au or phone 1300-066-722.



The rain fell, then the sun gayzed through on a lovely Sungay afternoon in August.

Some sang and danced along to the wonderfully talented duo Mona Lizard who performed two magical musical sets. Others munched on Mick's marvelous menu. Prizes were won.

Lots of fun is set again for next month's event on 23rd September from 1pm 'til 6pm. And remember, if you're queer with talent or just talentedly queer, give Brendan a call on 0487-834-980 for your chance to shine and earn a dime at the same time.

Thanks to the fabulous Teresa (Biskit) and Doug, Nollie and Mz Mel for their wonderful support – see you next month.

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Bush Theatre gigs



Local Fringe

Friday 14th to Sunday 16th September, 10am-7pm, entry free.

Head to the Nimbin Bush Theatre for a celebration of the region's amazing local musical talent all weekend, presented as the "Local Fringe".

From 10am to 7pm on Friday 14th through to Sunday 16th there will be an open Chalk Board Stage and everyone is welcome. Free entry, all weekend.

With a diverse mix of local and national players, there will be a bevy of talent on display, and it is free and inclusive!

Musicians' sessions will be happening in the garden, with informal jams and gigs on the outdoor stage. Catch locals like Sarah Stando, Sonic Fur, Donato, Orphan Tunes spinning Cypher-roots, and many more who will be joined by an array of visiting players.

Visit the most beautiful gardens in Nimbin with a great cafe on site, BYO.



Ryan Martin John

Friday 21st September, 7pm
Entry by donation.

As part of the Dinner Under the Stars series, the Nimbin Bush Theatre is delighted to welcome Ryan Martin John from South Australia.

Playing a brand of alt-pop infused acoustic roots, Ryan Martin John has a sublime voice reminiscent of Thom Yorke from Radiohead – emotive and distinctive.

His songs are brilliantly crafted sonic journeys with a very Australian sound in the realms of bands such as The Church. Catch him on the outdoor stage for a night of beautiful music.

The Cafe will be open serving food from our Bushfoods-Asian fusion menu. BYO.



Josh Lovegrove

Battle of the Bands the finals

Saturday 22nd September, entry free.

The Finals are here for the Battle of the Bands – Passport to Airlie.

The winner of this final will play 3-4 gigs at the Airlie Beach Festival of Music in November, be paid \$1000, and receive VIP accommodation and access. This is a great prize for musicians, and leads to great networks and potential gigs down the track.

From 7pm on Saturday 22nd September, there will be five bands in the Nimbin Bush Theatre auditorium with free entry. Playing will be local soul songstress Sarah Stando, three-piece indie rockers Mecha Mecha, folk-roots band Monkey and the Fish and the incandescent talent of singer-songwriter Josh Lovegrove, plus the winners of the semi finals, who are TBA at time of press.

The Judges between them have a wealth of musical experience, and are: Chana Waters (Tweed Creative Studios), Tim Tonkin, (Multi-award winning composer, producer, songwriter, videographer), Mel J Will (founder of Nimbin Music FB, critic and photographer), and local musician Reilly FitzAllen, (founder of the Northern Rivers Massive).

This is great way to see and support our local musicians, so come on down and cheer them on!

Artwomb

Saturday 29th September, 12.30pm
Entry by donation.

Artwomb is back at the Nimbin Bush Theatre, after having already held three well-received workshops so far this year.



These meetings are collaborations across all art mediums available to all artists. The idea is folk coming together to create art within a mutually supportive and inspiring art tribe!

It's a fabulous experience for performers, artists and punters. Everyone is welcome. The Cafe will be open.



Chad Wilkins' conscious groove

Friday 5th October, 7pm
Entry by donation.

The music of American mystic minstrel Chad Wilkins is more of an invitation than a performance – an experience to be entered into.

Chad's style is folksy, progressive, contemplative and mystical – but the real point is the message. This charismatic hippy-billy troubadour is on a mission to brighten the

night.

He will be performing for Dinner under the Stars at the Nimbin Bush Theatre, with the Cafe serving delicious meals, sweet treats and award winning coffee.

Get your conscious groove on with Chad Wilkins, Under the Stars!



The best of Hip Hop

Saturday 6th October, 7pm
\$15 entry. All ages.

Hip Hop at the Bush, hosted by MJ Main, is coming to the Nimbin Bush Theatre.

MJ Main started Rapping at 14 years old and has never slowed down. He has created a thriving hip hop community around his shows that bring together a range of performers of the Hip Hop/RnB and Rap genres.

MJ Main has shared stages with Tech N9ne, Krizz Kaliko, Obie Trice, Swifty Mcvay, Stevie Stone, Fortay at Large and many more. This event will be a spectacular showcase of big names and newbie MCs who come together for the love of Hip Hop, Rap and wicked beats.

Catch local rappers and influencers from the Brisbane scene in a celebration of Hip Hop that is open to all ages.

Get on down to the Mighty Bush and be a part of it!

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Jeff Lang to light up Nimbin



Roots music legend Jeff Lang will set the Australia's counter culture capital alight when this year's Nimbin Roots Festival bursts into life on 14-16th September.

The annual celebration of peace, love and roots music is delighted to welcome Lang onto the stage for the first time, along with dozens of other incredible musicians from across the country.

"Jeff is such an extraordinary singer-songwriter and a seminal figure in the world of roots and blues music, we are thrilled to have him on board," Festival Director Lou Bradley said.

"A unique town deserves a unique talent, and that's what they're going to get."

In just three short years, Nimbin Roots has emerged as one of the few affordable, sustainable festivals that is truly "for the people and by the people".

Making use of Nimbin's beautiful halls and outdoor stages, it welcomes musicians from all corners and gives them all equal billing.

A colourful array of talent will join Jeff Lang in the line-up, including explosive Northern Rivers quartet Wild Marmalade, award-winning country/roots artist Paul Greene, consummate songstress Hussy Hicks, and American banjo virtuoso Cameron DeWhitt.

The Festival will incorporate solar powered venues and stages this year, and for the first time bus services running to and from Lismore, Byron Bay and Mullumbimby.

There will also be a colourful array of stalls and great camping options for those keen to have the full "Nimbin experience".

For ticket info, head to: www.nrfest.com

Mullum music fest approaches

Diversity, community, equality. That's the vibe that underpins Mullum Music Fest, to be held November 15-18, the popular small town festival that's on every music lover's bucket list.

With headline acts like Nigerian Bombino, Guyana's Mad Professor, Jah9 from Jamaica, and Osaka Monaurail from Japan bringing the music of the globe to the stage, the festival also brings local music to the globe with its third announcement celebrating the immense talent of the region.

Festival Director Glenn Wright is committed to continuing this festival's exciting trajectory with a line up that is all about inclusivity.

"I think when we say diversity and equality, it is of nations, gender and music styles. There is also a common thread of good quality music, and we are very aware of the local arts scene, our community, and try to include as many of these artists each year," Glenn said.

There's one sure way of telling Mullum Music Festival is about diversity and that's by having a look at the audiences. There are children, older people, teenagers, mothers, fathers, young adults, babies – all dancing, listening, walking the streets and generally vibing along at the shows. Inclusivity was the festival vision 11 years ago, as it continues to be in 2018.

This year, joining the stellar line up is Mullumbimby resident, Irish singer songwriter Aine Tyrell. Story is at the forefront with her latest offering *Return to the Sea*, written and recorded in her homeland but mastered on her return



The Button Collective

here. Due for release in 2019, Tyrell will be showcasing her incredible new songs at Mullum Music Festival this year.

Also from the Northern Rivers comes Bethanie Jolly, with her rich folk style coloured with splashes of old time blues and deeply moving soul. Other local treasures include jazz legend Sharny Russell, chanteuse Shelly Brown, the wild banjo of The Button Collective, the magic of Ash Bell and Sara Tindley, and so much more.

Bringing Melbourne to Mullum is singer songwriter and musical story teller Lucy Wise – on the back of her 2018 release *Winter Sun*, a tapestry of rich soundscapes varying from the lush to the raw and pared back.

Festival favourites Husky are back. Ever since their return from Berlin last year there's been a whole new buzz about Husky. Also along for the ride is Canada's Old Man Luedecke, the singer songwriter and banjo player from Nova Scotia with a penchant for narrative driven folk songs that are rare playful, coy

and soul warming.

This year's Mullum Music festival also introduces two daily comedy shows, with Rusty Berther, Ellen Briggs, Mandy Nolan, Lindsay Webb, Jonathan Atherton and Matt Ford being just a few of the funny people taking the stage in a place where humour is well overdue... the local Council chambers.

It's not just about music, there's an art exhibition you can catch as you stroll between venues at the BSA, flash mobs by the 80's divas The Cassettes, full freaky fun on the Magic Bus, local choirs, ukulele battles, and of course, the highlight of every event, the Sunday street parade where New Orleans meets the Horns of Mullum and where the audience, those babies, teenagers, children, mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers are all dancing shoulder to shoulder, or even hoisted onto shoulders in a giant celebratory cacophony of brass.

The Mullum Music Festival ensures in a world where words fail, music speaks.

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FRI 21 SEPT 7pm DONATION	Dinner Under the Stars RYAN MARTIN JOHN Warm & luscious folk/blues/pop	
SAT 22 SEPT 6pm FREE	Battle of the Muso's FINAL! Who will represent Nimbin at Airlie Beach Music Festival?	
FRI 28 SEPT 7.30pm \$10 PG	Film / Fundraiser Eve GURRUMUL Cultural Centre benefit Raffles & more from 6pm	
SAT 29 SEPT 12.30pm DONATION	Viz Art & Music ARTWOMB Come & contribute or just enjoy the spectacle	
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Yothu Yindi and the Treaty Project

Yothu Yindi & The Treaty Project are excited to be bringing the new, electronica-driven show to Lismore City Hall on Saturday, 15th September.

Yothu Yindi & The Treaty Project was initially launched in 2017, to celebrate the release of the 25th anniversary remix pack of Yothu Yindi's *Treaty* and raise awareness for the need for treaty with Australia's First Nations people, resulting in ongoing demand from festivals and concert promoters around the country.

The core line-up of this fluid collective features founding members of Yothu Yindi – Witiyana Marika, Stuart Kellaway and Kevin Malngay Yunupingu who are joined onstage by former band member Ben Hakalitz along with popular Indigenous singer/ songwriters Yirmal (son of Witiyana), Dhapanbal Yunupingu (daughter of the late Dr M. Yunupingu), renowned cabaret artist Kamahi Djordon King and emerging Yolngu singers, Yirringa Yunupingu and Yimala Gurruwiwi.

Rounding out the group is multi-instrumentalist Ania Reynolds (the current musical director of Circus Oz), Kellaway's son Roy on guitar, along with DJ/producer Gavin Campbell on additional percussion and the Toraiiz SP-16 sampler.



As seen by Yothu Yindi's success in the 1990's, Indigenous music, song and dance are powerful tools of protest.

The current national conversation surrounding Indigenous affairs and recent wave of new generation artists keeping the message and culture alive have made it clear that now is the time for this iconic outfit to renew their involvement in that protest.

Yothu Yindi & The Treaty Project was inspired by the new remix package celebrating the 25th anniversary of *Treaty* (Filthy Lucre remix), which resulted in ARIA Hall of Fame inductees Yothu Yindi reuniting with Gavin Campbell of production

outfit Filthy Lucre, in a reinvigorated formation.

The outfit features original Yothu Yindi members, along with emerging First Nations artists and special guests performing new remixes of classic Yothu Yindi hits (courtesy of producers Nubreed, Lostep and Filthy Lucre), plus brand new material, all with an electronic twist in a cross-generational celebration of cultural diversity.

Yothu Yindi & The Treaty Project will perform at Lismore City Hall, 1 Bounty St, Lismore on Saturday 15th September, at 7.30pm. Tickets are \$65. For bookings visit: www.lismorecityhall.com.au or phone 1300-066-772.

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Festival pits art against science

by Omega Breakspear

"It's all about National Science Week in Lismore, and bringing together the whole community. We are celebrating creativity and our enquiring minds. We're looking to engage people who may not ordinarily engage with science," said Ajita Cannings, the co-ordinator of the Arts vs Science Festival at Lismore's Quad space last month.

From Andrew Colefax's shark drones to the mesmerising time-lapse fungi photography of Steve Axford, there was something for everyone.

Opened by the Nini Nahri Gali Bundjalung Dancers, I found myself immersed in a day of science, art and music.

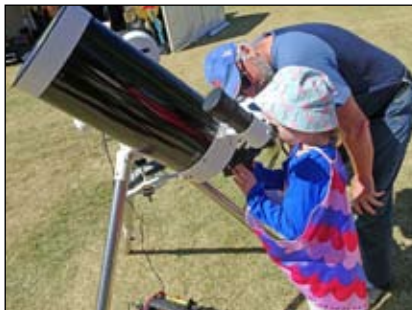
I got to see the moonrise at 11am up close, watched the sun with its halo of solar flares, and later gazed at the mystery of Venus, all through the wondrous telescopes of the North Coast Astronomy Club, thanks to their (un) amateur astronomers (pictured).

Then it was off to discover how to identify frogs from their calls and wonder about eating insects. I'll be leaving that culinary experience to the frogs. I preferred the Love Food Hate Waste cooking demos.

The different water quality impacts in our catchment were graphically demonstrated using Rous Water's terraformed realistic model, loosely based on the Richmond and Brunswick Rivers water catchment areas (pictured). These impacts come from agriculture, urban areas and industry.

We were told about simple everyday things we can do to help improve water quality. There was a school in the model, so we saw how litter left in the playground ended up in the river through the effects of wind and rain. Ditto for litter anywhere.

In urban areas, sediment ends up in the river through storm water drains when hosing paths or washing cars. Different farming practices were also demonstrated in terms of sediment control and riparian vegetation. The



model starts up at Rocky Creek Dam and, showing all the different catchments, ends down at the ocean.

My next science adventure was in Training the Brain. From playing a giant chess set to clever picture memory games, it seems there are many ways to improve our brains.

I particularly liked the workshop by Nimbin local Michelle Walker titled 'Beyond Words – how pictures make our brains smarter'. She explored how art helps us to communicate. Our brain doesn't take on words easily, it thinks in pictures. Michelle discovered that using drawing to communicate ideas works more effectively than just talking about them. Memory is also aided by having visuals. For more on Michelle's useful techniques you can go to her website: www.curiousmindsco.com.au

Talking of curious, nothing could be more quirky than 'curiouser and curiouser' Katie Cooper-Wares, who performed strange experiments on unsuspecting visitors. She explained nothing but rather attached cryptic messages to our foreheads written on yellow stickies as she worked laboriously on the crowd. Hmm.

Science vs Sound was another theme. In this case sound won outright with the musical entertainment highlights including Love Your Mother. These Northern Rivers Conservatorium students played an impressive set of jazz fusion with considerable talent. Follow these young stars on the rise, I will be.

Richmond Tweed Regional Library hosted hands-on science with coding in the computer lab. Disturbingly, most of the participants were very young and

extremely skilled and fast in this digital domain. I was out of my league.

The ubiquitous Knitting Nanas were also there, raising awareness and collecting donations for our drought-affected farmers. They travelled out to Gunnedah and through other regions in NSW the next week offering emotional as well as financial support.

Now more than ever, it is essential for adults as well as children to understand the importance of science backed up by practical, creative research and impartial scientific facts. Nothing highlights this more than the climate change deniers amongst industry leaders worldwide and our politicians. New PM Scott Morrison took a lump of coal to the House of Representatives last year and held it up while claiming those politicians concerned about the environmental impact of the coal industry have "an ideological, pathological fear of coal."

Science has proved beyond reproach that there is an irrefutable link between the coal industry and climate change. In this instance, science reigns over artful theatre.

So if you can't wait for your creative environmental science hit until next year's free annual festival then you can come to the Big Scrub Rainforest Day at the Rocky Creek Dam on Sunday the 21st October. Richmond Land Care will be there celebrating 20 years as a landcare group. So come enjoy a picnic while you learn about our unique rainforest and biodiversity.

As Leonardo Da Vinci once said, "Study the science of art. Study the art of science. Realise that everything connects to everything else."

ENERGY HEALING

- balancing
- clearing

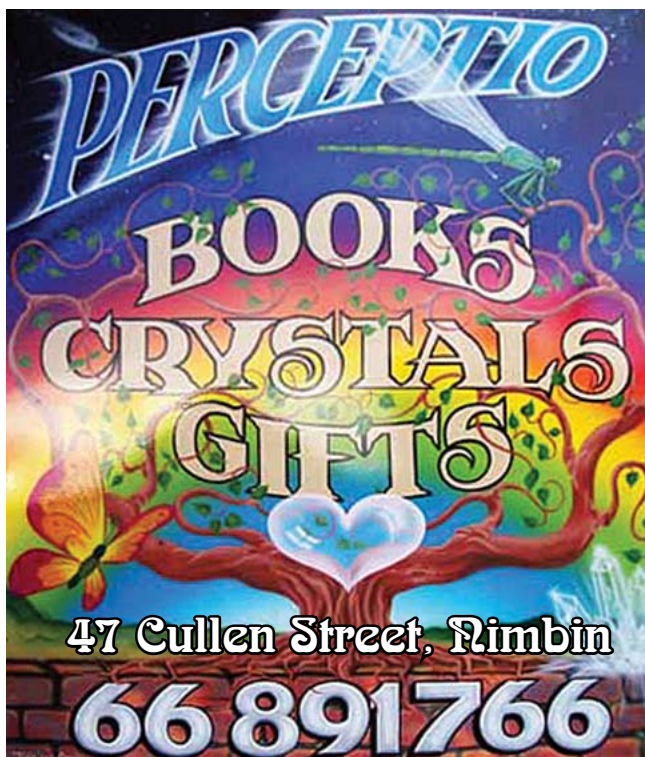
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