



## The 'bad' news from Nicaragua

Reports of an 'insurrection' in Nicaragua published in the last issue of the *GoodTimes*, contradicted my article, indicating the exact opposite. This was indeed abysmally 'bad' news, published under that headline; based on third party reports from Facebook, and 'contacts' within Nicaragua who were far less circumspect than myself in jumping to conclusions.

I was there. Two comrades were killed in confrontations with armed and violent gangs, paid by the 'opposition' (US\$15 a day up to US\$50 for the *capos*) to destabilise the Ortega/Sandinista government. I spent two weeks in Managua during July to cross-check the figures of the Human Rights organisations. Three of these were in the pay of the CIA or the NED. It was not an insurrection, it was an attempted coup.

I compared notes with Max Blumenthal (a kind of US John Pilger). We came up with the same results:

**There was no student massacre.** The whole student massacre thing was a Facebook invention, designed to bring people out on the streets to demand the resignation of the Ortega government. In spite of this, within days 200,000 people turned out in support of the government in Managua, less than a week after the outbreak of violence. I have been told that most of the posts came from Miami.

**Ortega did not escalate the police presence.** This is the biggest lie of all. Daniel Ortega took the police off the streets, which is how the gang elements of the *tranques* (roadblocks) controlled the country for three months in a rampage of violence, rape, and pillage.

International truck drivers were kidnapped and held up for two months. 60 ambulances were burned, stolen or wrecked. 30 schools, hospitals, government buildings and innumerate symbols of *Sandinismo*. Meanwhile the student and opposition 'leaders' were filmed in Washington lobbying right-wing Republicans who want to isolate Nicaragua financially.

Ortega bent over backwards to accommodate the 'opposition', and each time they walked away for several weeks and escalated the violence in the *tranques*.

**The Nicaraguan people support Ortega.** A week after the violence of April 18 (when two police were killed and 128 injured, in contradiction of the 'student massacre' figures) 200,000 people turned out for the Mayday celebrations in the capital, Managua.

On the July 19 celebrations, up to 400,000 turned out. This in spite of the cancellation of the traditional 'caravans' of buses bringing in people from the countryside. They were cancelled because of the fear of ambushes and shoot-ups of the buses, as had happened to the Mothers' Day caravans (which was blamed incorrectly by the international press as government inspired).

With the feeding of high levels of disinformation, I sometimes wonder why I bother.

Warwick Fry  
Nimbin

## Disability parking

In the past year, I have had the misfortune to require a Disability Parking Permit as a result of surgery which caused me to have limited physical mobility. There are only two designated disability parking spots in Cullen Street.

On a few occasions, when I needed to drive into the village, there was a vehicle occupying one of the spots, that did not display a permit to do so. This is very irritating due to the selfishness of the people concerned, who illegally parked there, denying others with real needs, access to the designated spots.

I wish to make people aware that the fine for stopping, even momentarily, in a designated disabled parking spot, without a permit, is \$561. This is about double that of the next most serious parking offence in NSW, in monetary terms. Also a demerit point now applies in addition to the fine.

Council has decided to do something proactive about the parking situation in Nimbin, and that will include increased monitoring and enforcement of the parking rules. About time. For too long, some people have parked in Cullen Street all day, street traders being the worst offenders.

Most people do the right thing, but those that do not should realise that their selfishness may lead to a serious fine.

Peter Hajenko  
Nimbin

## Good, bad and ugly

*The Good the Bad and the Ugly* is a movie from the 60's. Three cowboys fight over buried treasure.

The times have changed but the plot hasn't. The buried treasure now depends on how you value life, money, or power, and cowboys are still in the picture.

Just over the border, in Queensland, the cowboys struck. Linc Energy, with the on-going support of successive governments, mined for gas using fracking around the Chinchilla region. Taxpayers are left with a bill of \$80 million to clean up the pollution, and the boss escaped with millions.

Rorts and frauds are endemic in the major parties who are heavily influenced by China's government, multinationals and mining companies (the bad). Standing up to them means a political knife in the back, aka Gough Whitlam and Kevin Rudd.

The Greens party seems to be the only good one. They don't accept donations with influence (bribes) or a substitution of values for votes.

We are blessed in this region to have an outstanding candidate with Sue

Higginson. After her work with the Environmental Defenders Organisation (EDO) she accepted the role of Greens candidate for the Lismore state electorate.

The EDO was set up by a group of great environmental academics and lawyers to give a voice to the Australian people when big companies are destroying the environment for profit. It used to be funded by the government, but after winning cases against some big mining companies the government withdrew funding, so now these smart legal people with good ethical values rely on donations to keep the wheels moving. Sue was a major lawyer in it.

I first noticed her when she spoke at Andy Frame's funeral. Andy was one of the original protestors that managed, against all odds, to stop the logging around Protestors Falls (an Aboriginal woman's sacred space) and turned it into a national park. Sue spoke about how she met Andy when she was young and pregnant in Nimbin. He let her have her baby at his home. Now she's running for government, and anyone with any integrity should get behind her.

Thomas George was the Nationals rep in Lismore for a long time. He did some good things like the improvements in Lismore hospital, but he supported fracking, and even though he announced that he changed his mind about it at the last minute it was almost too late. The Nationals scraped in. If we let them in again it will show that we support them and their Liberal party cohorts in the winding down of freedoms, like the freedom to protest.

Other detriments include starving the ABC broadcaster of funds and reducing company tax while making it harder for the unemployed, young people, Aboriginal people and those who can't quite make the grade of owning their own homes and working nine to five. But as everyone knows, the monster on the horizon is climate change, and it's pretty obvious that if a government supports coal mining, like the Adani project, and land clearing then the monster's not going to go back in its shell.

Ugly gets uglier, and if you vote for the Liberal/National party you'll be in the ugly camp, and like Taco said in the movie, "I like big fat men like you. When they fall they make more noise. And sometimes they never get up."

Yagia Gentle  
Nimbin

## Climate calamity

In the last couple of weeks, we heard that drought was covering all of NSW and

bushfires burning in many places. NSW has declared its earliest total fire ban on record, with hundreds of South Coast residents forced to flee their homes amidst a massive blaze.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that fire crews battled at least 83 fires across the state, following stronger-than-expected winds, creating fire bans that beat the previous record by two weeks.

The term climate change is now a climate calamity and it's staring us in the face. How can it continue to be ignored?

Part of the problem is deforestation and decades ago local heroes fought at Terania to preserve our old growth forests. The current Liberal government is pushing through new forestry contracts that will strip away much greater amounts of forest, especially old growth. This will mean more carbon emissions and less rain.

It is beyond reason that these politicians don't care about the science or the people of this state but only fossil fuel companies. These companies are like dinosaurs hanging on to a past that cannot continue, yet they refuse to face the truth.

We cannot afford to vote for governments that care more about dinosaurs than our children.

Beth Shelley  
Booerie Creek

## Drug driving

I acknowledge that Michael Balderstone is a strong and dedicated advocate for "the weed", but his article ('Roadside testing is for drug presence, not impairment' *NGT* August 18) goes into dream world with far too much unproven and nonsensical information.

Is he really a better driver with some weed on board?

Did his friend really die prematurely ("his body had had fallen apart when he stopped using the medicine it was used to") because he couldn't smoke the weed anymore?

By all means state your case Michael, but leave out the unproven and illogical pieces. The article would be more coherent if suitably edited.

David Ashton  
Byron Bay

NGT welcomes letters and other contributions received by email or post prior to deadline. Letters longer than 300 words may be edited for length, and articles for accuracy. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Opinions expressed remain those of the author, and are not necessarily those of NGT.

## Aquarian values

Freedom, peace, love, happiness, kindness, respect, justice, harmony, music, art... these core values of the Aquarius era have drawn many good-hearted people to the Rainbow Region.

Although made up of a myriad different personalities, the community of Nimbin and surrounds shares a fundamental commonality. Our values are alternative. Alternative to mainstream money-chasing. In fact, juxtaposed to the whole modern system of economics and the city lifestyle with its concrete, traffic and toxic smog of carcinogens and EMR. Small is beautiful.

We here in the Rainbow Region are Earth family, connected through our respect and love of our planet Earth. Scratch the surface and you will find people getting on with permaculture, art, music, and building for a sustainable future. Here is the treasure trove of the Rainbow Tribe.

We know personal creativity is what makes us human. Quality of life is the true wealth. To wake up each day dancing with joy, engage in meaningful activity throughout the day, and then chill out at the end. To live in the now, breathing in each moment. Fulfilment. Contentment.

Keeping to a high path is a challenge. Like a love affair there are tiffs and makeups. At times we need to reach out to our sisters and brothers, and keep reminding and reaffirming our common values. Learn tolerance of our differences. We're in this together.

And the world surely needs us now. Imagine a world built on Aquarius values.

Miranda Mills  
Sphinx Rock

## About us

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**NEXT DEADLINE:**  
**Wednesday 26th September**

Email [nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com](mailto:nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com) or put stuff in our pigeonhole at the Nimbin Community Centre.



## RIP Vera Bourne

12/6/1935 – 7/8/2018

Remembered by Pampussycat Bourne

Vera Bourne has been part of the Nimbin Community in so many ways, although she never lived in Nimbin.

For 18 years she provided toys for Santa to distribute at the Community Christmas lunch, although she stopped two years ago as her health went downhill. She exhibited at the Nimbin A&I Show for many years as an award winning pickles, relish and jam maker (the men all loved her mustard pickles).

Vera helped with the Neighbourhood Centre's homeless personal care packs, providing items and packs for over 15 years. She was gay, and became an activist in the GBLTQI rights movement. She started the first gay social group in the Northern Rivers (Northern Rivers Gay Group) at a time when homosexuality was illegal and a jailable offence.

She presented *Gaywaves* radio programme with Mike Bray and Darlene Cook at 2NCR-FM, and was involved with ACON from its opening; also women's music festivals, gay and lesbian counselling services Lismore, ongoing provision of an open



house 1972-1997. The last people she physically cared for on the farm were in 2002.

Her extended family is enormous and spreads worldwide. Vera was a Lifeline councillor, a phone-a-friend councillor, a blood donor, and a nurseryman. She was part of the Friends Of CASPA, fundraising for the North Coast Children's Home. She made the best Christmas fruit cakes for many people.

Through crowdfunding, Vera was able to support film-makers, writers and people with innovative ideas. Vera led the Lismore Lung Support Walking Group, and attended Lismore U3A Computer Users Group for many years.

Vera was a storyteller and a writer. Her work was both fiction and nonfiction. Her anecdotes and stories have been published in books, magazines and online worldwide. She has won awards for her writing. Most recently she was writing a trilogy which she hoped to have published down the line.

Vera had a deep conviction that God loved ALL people. She became a Sunday school and a primary school scripture teacher. At 42 she started studying with Metropolitan Community Church. She was licensed in 1993, and ordained in 1996. She became involved in ministering to prisoners and housebound people. The Auris Ministry outreach started in 1990. She was appointed as Gay and Lesbian liaison with Police Lay Visitors Scheme Lismore in 1992.

Vera loved to learn, and said that when a person thinks they know everything, they may as well turn up their toes and die. In many ways, mum was a "giving tree". Mum had a big heart and loved many people and animals, without question or judgement.

For the many lives that mum has touched, she has given the seeds of compassion to continue growing. I am sure that there will be a Vera-shaped hole left in all of our hearts.



## RIP Violet Soward

27/11/1918 – 20/7/2018

Violet Soward has passed away aged 99 years and 7 months.

She will be remembered for constantly winning highest point score in cooking at the Nimbin A&I Show. She taught many Nimbinites how to cook a sponge cake to Show standard.

She is survived by children and great grandchildren.

## RIP Lea Bryce

24/06/1957 – 26/08/2018

Lea lived a full life and will be remembered by the many lives and hearts that she touched. Born in Jandowae, Queensland, but she will be fondly remembered for the many roles she played during her years in Nimbin.

Lea loved growing things, and exhibited cut flowers at Nimbin A&I Show. Lea volunteered at St Vincent De Paul store in Nimbin for many years. She worked at Nimbin Central Canteen, as well as Tumble Falls and Jiggi Pre-Schools.

Lea enjoyed sport and played with Nimbin Headers. She was an aunty figure to many Nimbin youths, offering support and encouragement.

Lea led an active life which changed when at 42 she had a stroke, which impacted on



her mobility and speech. She had to leave her Mt Nardi home, and move to Lismore. This did not stop Lea from campaigning against proposed closure to the Nimbin Hospital.

Lea leaves behind her three children: Shannon, Emily and Amelia, plus her grandchildren.

issue has become too divisive and political poison within the LNP.

So the greatest threat to mankind is shoved under the table. And instead reduced power prices are being dished out as election sweeteners.

The NEG is a pathetic attempt at a climate policy. The Australian people deserve better than this. It is their livelihood and their children's future that is at stake. Climate change needs to be front and centre of energy policy, not an afterthought, with leaders who are prepared to step up to the challenge rather than just meet the bottom line.

Lyn Dickinson  
Pottsville

## Smoke and mirrors

What political party faction in their right mind would challenge the Prime Minister with a candidate who has a pecuniary interest (in question) hanging over his head? Dutton's challenge was obviously doomed to failure before it was announced.

There is no doubt in my mind that he was put there to knife Turnbull so Morrison could take the throne without blood on his hands. Dutton's unpopularity with the public would further ensure Morrison's acceptance.

Blaming the spill on vengeance is a convenient way to cover up the fact that the party collapsed because it can't agree on policy, especially around the greatest threat to mankind... climate change.

Now the Liberal National Party is being run by a new generation of last century thinkers, many of whom are well-known for their climate change denial. With Barnaby Joyce in charge of drought recovery and assistance, heaven help our farmers as the LNP continues to ignore the cause of the problem

while throwing bucket loads of taxpayer's money around in a vain attempt to try and relieve the symptoms.

Greens leader Richard Di Natale is right. In order to tackle the problems that beset us, such as low wages growth, the high cost of housing and climate change, we need a new generation of 21st century governance and neither of the major parties are capable of providing it.

David Norris  
Pottsville

## Power price spin

According to the Smart Energy Council and the Australian Greens, the Turnbull Government's proposed National Energy Guarantee is a dud.

Why? It doesn't encourage investment in renewables or any form of new power generation. It doesn't cut coal pollution. It doesn't reduce power bills. It can't be easily changed by a future government. It means the rest of the economy such as transport and agriculture will have to do much more to cut emissions.

Unless we immediately and significantly reduce our

greenhouse gas emissions, any savings on our power bills are minuscule compared with the costs which will be incurred by rising sea levels, global warming and extreme weather events.

Yes, investors do need certainty, not in an outdated fossil-fuel intensive dirty coal industry but in clean energy with ambitious emission reduction targets and 100% renewables. That is the way of the future, where money can be made and the planet can be protected.

It is time for our leaders to stand up for what's right, rather than promoting political spin to get votes. Malcolm Turnbull knows he can't win an election based on climate change as the

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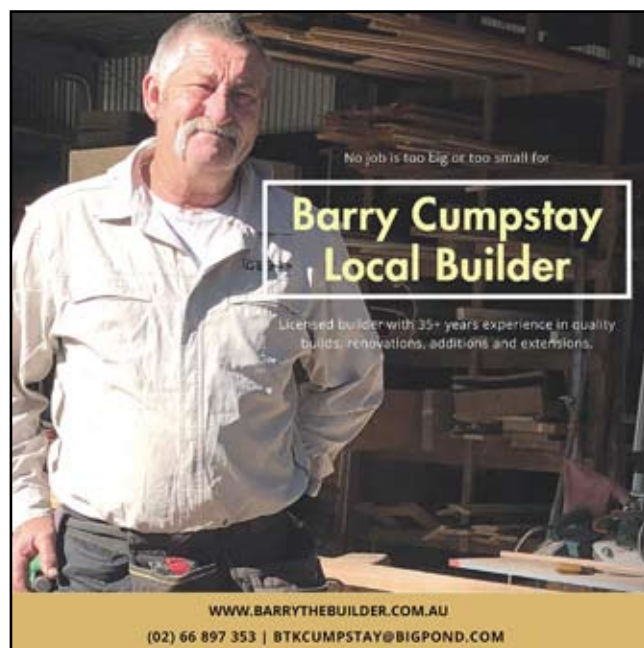
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# From the mayor's desk



by Cr Isaac Smith

The change of season is always a little special as it means a little closer with the warmer weather. One of those things is the Nimbin Show which is always a highlight. Not many events bring the broader community together like the show as it continues to evolve and change with the community. I hope to see you there, so come up and say hello.

Another change with the weather is the Nimbin pool getting ready to provide a little summer relief for hot and weary locals. It is getting some major maintenance before opening this year, as it is due for a complete resurface to keep that precious water in place and ready for swimmers. Council still has some major infrastructure works planned for Nimbin pool in a few years' time and it remains a high priority for us, as it does for the Nimbin Community.

Last week I experienced the highs and lows of politics as I spent a few days in our nation's capital. Canberra can be cold, but it's not the



weather I am talking about.

I had travelled to Canberra as Lismore City was nominated for a national award, but more about that later. First the bad news. What was supposed to be a casual visit to Parliament House to see our local MP and view the House of Representatives in action, turned into a dramatic event where all the toys were thrown out of the cot!

It was both a highlight, to be there in such an emotional and physically charged moment as MP's walked about, not sure of what was happening or what to do, and a low moment watching another Prime Minister being dumped while fingers were pointed and every member of the house I could see was

yelling and protesting and generally carrying on like a pork chop.

I wish I could say local government was immune from this behaviour, but what we see at the federal and state level has slowly been creeping into the local level. More than ever I see councillors who are uninformed on the issues, so they lean back on emotional responses or personal opinions. Worse still they resort to personal attacks or in taking pot shots at a process they couldn't be bothered involving themselves in to make it better. This is never a good look and it continues to undermine people's faith in our political processes.

So what's the good news?

I'm glad you asked.

Lismore City Council was at the Local Government Professionals National Awards after winning in NSW a few months ago. And we came away with the win again. Our city had the best collaboration or partnership in Australia for our Community Solar Initiative. This was a massive effort and represents five years of hard work from staff. So the recognition is well deserved.

Five years ago we asked the question, can a council borrow money from the community rather than borrow it from a bank? No one had ever done it before, so we were starting from scratch. It took years to lay the ground work, clear the legals and find partners who could coordinate the community side.

In the end a wonderful organisation called Farming the Sun joined with council to find 40 local investors who helped us build two solar farms, pushing Council towards our goal of producing all our own energy by 2023. These investors also see a better than bank return on their investment, so it is a real win/win.

Later this year we will be announcing the second round of investment opportunities, so people across the Northern Rivers should keep an eye out. The first was oversubscribed, so it will be first in best dressed, as they say.



by Cr Danielle Mulholland

I attended my first meeting of the NSW Country Mayors' Association in Sydney at the beginning of August. Kyogle Council just recently joined this organisation to enhance our lobbying capacity and further our networks. Being part of such an advocacy group gives us a stronger voice in government decision making.

Congratulations to Council staff member, Matt Sorenson, who was the people's choice panel member on a recent Q&A episode broadcast from Lismore. He did an outstanding job of representing himself and his community.

The Bonalbo street library was finally launched after a series of mishaps. Unfortunately, the first street library, which was made by one of our volunteers from the Visitor Information Centre, literally fell off the back of a truck while being transported.

Fortunately, Bonalbo's Dave Tucker worked his magic, and the street library was launched at a ceremony attended by Cr Earle Grundy.

## Kyogle Council notebook

Council intends to roll out the street libraries across the Council area to promote literacy and provide a point of interest for tourists and community members alike. The Woodenbong street library is currently being made – it will have a Yowie theme.

We have had a couple of exciting announcements in Bonalbo with the RSL getting funding for a fence around Patrick McNamee Memorial Park and the Bonalbo Showgrounds getting a pavilion and new amenities from Federal grant programs.

We completed another bridge on Ettrick Road which brings our total down to 150 bridges left to replace. In 2017/18, Council replaced 17 bridges.

We have been very fortunate in attracting funding from both State and Federal governments and hope to continue this trend until we can focus on upgrading or enhancing infrastructure, rather than replacing it.

We all know we have the State and Federal elections coming up. Most of the candidates have been announced and they are roaming around the electorate discussing their platforms. They are all very approachable so if you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

The Tabulam medieval festival was held on 25th August, and Mallanganee Hall is holding a number of events over the next couple of months, kicking off with a Spring Dance on 15th September, so put your dancing shoes on and come along.

While we're talking about Mallanganee Hall... it has been selected by the Small

Hall Tour group (Woodford Folk Festival group) for a free concert for 100 people on 25th October.

The concert will be used as a drought fundraiser, raising money to buy hay bales in partnership for the Rotary Burrumbuttock Hay Runners. Please support the concert as it is a community driven initiative that will generously donate proceeds to drought relief efforts.

A multi-million dollar advertisement was recently filmed in and around Kyogle, providing us with an opportunity to showcase our beautiful region nationally. A launch of the ad is expected around October, so more details will be forthcoming then.

Many thanks to the staff who worked over the weekend to make this happen – it was a great success and I look forward to sharing more with you in the coming weeks.

The Northern Rivers Joint Organisation (JO) is now up and running, being formally established on 22nd June. I was honoured to accept the Chair's position and have been attending various meetings to establish the relationships the new JO will enjoy.

There is an opportunity for better advocacy around regional issues through such networks and I look forward to working with my fellow Mayors, Simon Richardson (Byron), Katie Milne (Tweed), David Wright (Ballina) Isaac Smith (Lismore) and Robert Mustow (Richmond Valley) to develop our statement of regional priorities so we can start to get some runs on the board.





Revenge of the Loon

by Laurie Axtens

It was not just about jealousy or revenge, it was not about personalities, obviously as Dutton doesn't have one; last month's putsch was about handcuffing the Liberal Party to the bedstead while the right wing 'romper' stompers could take turns.

Stuck between losing their homophobic, climate denying, victim blaming 'base' to a plethora of neo-nationalist, neo-nazi parties and losing the middle to Mr Short-on-credibility, they chose the

former, they chose the minority over the majority. They chose to govern for their knuckle draggers and not for the country as a whole.

But why? Why would so many of the Liberals embrace inevitable and obvious political oblivion in the form of Peter Dutton?

The answer is the algorithm. What we see and hear on social media, on all media we choose to look at, is an echo of ourselves; the algorithmic reflection of our desires.

The climate deniers, racists and homophobes hear their own voices echoed back at them and they think it's the voice of the people. And a quarter of our parliament are people of this ilk.

Democracy is failing, it's collapsing because too many of the people involved are without principle and decency.

We can change that – but we need to give a shit. Don't turn away, don't just watch this disgusting display, stand up and do something about it.



On the same PAGE

by Kevin Hogan MP, Member for Page

It was great to be at the Nimbin Headers Soccer Club recently to announce a grant for the installation of a solar connected battery storage system.

The fields are a wonderful community asset, and are a credit to the community and the club's volunteers.

The hepatitis C drug Maviret is now listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Without the listing, patients could pay more than \$50,000 per course of treatment for this medicine.

Maviret works by stopping hepatitis C virus from multiplying and infecting new cells. It belongs to a class of new treatments which provide a cure for well over 90 percent of people treated.

I am also pleased that we will provide \$1 million to Hepatitis Australia to continue education and awareness activities to improve hepatitis C testing and treatment uptake.

The constant rotation of prime ministers by both the Labor Party and Liberal Party, I cannot condone.

I have removed myself from the Government benches to sit on the Cross benches.

I have made this decision because our community is fed up. What we have been seeing in Canberra with leadership changes over the last 10 years is letting our great country down.

I remain 100% committed to delivering for our community.

I will still attend National Party meetings. I will not attend Coalition Party meetings.

I will support the Government in No Confidence Motions and Supply. Any other legislation I will take on a case-by-case basis.

I will continue to focus on what our community has elected me to do.

Labor to mandate nurse-to-patient ratios

Patient safety will improve with more nurses in North Coast hospitals, under a Foley Labor Government pledge to lift nurse to patient ratios in the region's hospitals.

Labor will increase ratios in regional hospitals to ensure better patient care and reduce the understaffing problems that have plagued the public health system under the North Coast Nationals.

NSW Labor's policy will introduce mandated staffing levels in regional hospitals like Tweed, Lismore Base, Byron Central Hospital, Murwillumbah District and Ballina District Hospitals which will bring them into line with Sydney hospitals.

Mr Foley made the announcement on a visit to Tweed, Lismore and Ballina as part of his statewide tour to promote Labor's policy of putting hospitals and schools before Sydney stadiums.

He made the announcement outside Lismore Base Hospital, alongside nurses who have been calling on the Berejiklian-Barilaro government to mandate that regional hospitals get the same nurse-to-patient ratios as city hospitals.

Joining Mr Foley was Country Labor candidate for Lismore, Janelle Saffin. She said, "I welcome this critical policy announcement that brings our local nurses and midwives on par with their city counterparts, a shameful situation that persists to this day."

Labor's policy will employ hundreds more nurses in "B" and "C" group hospitals



across NSW, improving patient care in about 60 separate hospitals – most of them outside Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle.

Mr Foley said nurses and midwives do extraordinary work but were under severe pressure. They are overworked and under resourced due to a lack of support from the Berejiklian Government.

Numerous studies show that nurse-to-patient ratios save lives as there is a clear link between higher staff levels and improved outcomes for patients.

Nurse to patient ratios reduce errors, improve the amount of time each nurse can spend on patient care, create better workplaces, reduce stress and lead to higher retention of nurses and midwives.



Entrants in the public speaking competition held at Tregagle Public School.

Word of the Bird

by Cr Elly Bird

This week I went to one of the most enjoyable events I have been invited to as a Councillor, at Tregagle Public School. I was invited to judge a combined schools public speaking competition. Students in Years 3 and 4 from Tregagle, Wyrallah, Empire Vale, Cabbage Tree Island and Wardell competed for the coveted Junior Public Speaker Award.

It was an honour to hear from the students their ideas and perspectives on a range of topics. There were convincing arguments that students need longer holidays, and that people should eat less junk food. I also learnt about what the coolest superhero power is, what the least dangerous animal is, and what they would do if they ruled the world.

I was pleased to hear from some students that if they were in the top job of world ruler they would fix the plastic problem, they would make sure that refugees and homeless people were well treated and that farmers would be looked after, and that they would make Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un sort out their differences once and for all as an

important step towards world peace.

I learnt about why the common garden earthworm, the quokka and the budgie are in the running for the least dangerous animal in the world, and I learnt that teleporting is right up there as a very cool superpower. It was a great day. I really enjoyed hearing from these young people and I was impressed by their ideas and enthusiasm.

Public speaking can be challenging but it is such a useful skill to develop, and I commend these students for their effort. Thanks to Lisa Fahy, the principal at Wyrallah Public School for inviting me to judge the competition.

This week is also the week that spring is here, and today it has brought dust with it. I'm writing this as I look out off my verandah, and it's hazy with dust blowing across the coast from our drought stricken interior. It's a stark reminder of how tough it is for so many people at the moment as the big dry continues and I know that it is biting closer to home as well. The latest climate outlook doesn't hold much hope for us with a dry spring forecast and possibly into summer.

Like many of you I am so furious that our leaders in Canberra are too busy with political manoeuvrings, and too

beholden to their coal masters to take action on climate change. When Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud was in Lismore for Q&A, he refused to talk about the impact of climate change on drought and our new prime minister Scott Morrison has refused to as well.

Meanwhile, everyone else knows that climate change will make droughts longer and more frequent including Fiona Simson, the president of the National Farmers Federation, who told the National Press Club that climate change and drought are linked and that it is well beyond time to talk about it.

We have had a very early start to bushfire season, and I hope that everyone has prepared their properties in case of fire. Clean your gutters and trim your trees, and make sure you have a garden hose that can reach the whole perimeter of your house. You should also make sure you have an emergency kit prepared and you should install the 'fires near me' app on your phone. Go to the RFS website for a good guide on preparation for your home and for your family: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare

As always I can be contacted for Council or community matters on 0418-639-927 or at: elly.bird@lismore.nsw.gov.au



**YOU CAN'T TRUST  
THE NATIONALS**

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Authorised by J Elliot, ALP, 107 Minjungbal Drive, Tweed Heads South

# Time to turn the Page on the Nationals

The death of Aretha Franklin was a sad day for the music industry, and the world. Aretha was not just an extraordinary artist, she was a civil rights campaigner, and a courageous voice for equality and social justice.

If there was one Aretha Franklin song that changed the world forever it was Respect.

Aretha flipped the original masculine (and more than slightly misogynist) version, performed by Otis Redding, and turned it into a feminist anthem. It became a rallying cry for gender equality.

Aretha's songs also encapsulated the confidence of progressive political movement in the 1960s – a time when hierarchies were being challenged, and people who had previously been silenced or forgotten were standing up and demanding to be heard.

So it was somewhat ironic that as Aretha Franklin exited the worldly stage, Australian politics descended into the abyss.

Parliament erupted in chaos, torn apart by blind ambition and naked self-interest, as the Liberal Party imploded on itself.

The business of the House was abandoned to let the Liberals duke it out behind closed doors, and in the end Scott Morrison emerged as the last man standing, and our new PM.

Of course, the chaos is not just about the Liberals.

It's only a few months since it was the National Party at the centre of the drama -with Barnaby Joyce's face splashed all over the newspapers, TV screens and



by Patrick Deegan,  
Labor candidate for Page

tabloid magazines on a daily basis.

Since Mr Joyce was reluctantly relieved of his leadership duties he's been free to tell us what he really thinks – including his views about the people of the Northern Rivers.

We found this out when Mr Joyce sarcastically tweeted during the recent episode of Q&A broadcast from Lismore. "Next week a sequel of #QandA from another rural centre: Nimbin," he said.

I don't know what the Nationals have against Nimbin, because just a few weeks later they were at it again.

This time it was a National Party MP quoted in the *Australian Financial Review* – explaining why the Member for Page, Kevin Hogan MP, was threatening to resign and move the cross-bench.

According to the un-named MP, Mr

Hogan "has Nimbin and all those hairy arm-pitted lefties chasing him down." Classy stuff.

Cheap shots aside, it does raise an interesting question – just why has Kevin Hogan supposedly "defected"?

On one level, it's interesting that the internal shenanigans of the Liberal Party is the issue to finally inspire Mr Hogan to take a stand.

He has displayed no such passion for tackling income equality, stagnant wage growth, homelessness, domestic violence, climate change, housing affordability, hospital funding, banking rorts, the collapse of the TAFE system or the crisis in aged care funding.

But the reality is that Mr Hogan has not actually taken a stand at all. He has not resigned from the National Party, and he says he will continue to support the Liberal-National Coalition Government in Parliament.

Mr Hogan wants to have it both ways. He wants voters to think he's an Independent, while retaining the protection, privileges and financial backing of the National Party.

In other words, the cross-bencher talk is nothing more than a cheap hoax on the people of Page. At the end of the day, a vote for Kevin Hogan will be a vote for more of the same.

And frankly, I don't think the Coalition of Chaos deserves another chance. It's time for a change.

Because as the Queen of Soul would say, the people of the Northern Rivers deserve a little R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

## A future for all of us – our region's role

by Sue Higginson,  
Greens Candidate for Lismore

Richard Di Natale, the leader of the Australian Greens, came to Lismore at the end of August and spoke to a packed room of Northern Rivers folk.

He was here to share the Greens vision and plan – A future for all of us. It's a vision and plan, that here in the State Seat of Lismore, and the Northern Rivers we have a major role to play.

Richard was the only MP who showed our collective outrage at the disgraceful rubbish that just played out in the Canberra meltdown. The meltdown that has left us with Scott Morrison as our Prime Minister – the guy who takes lumps of coal into Parliament House and makes jokes about the fact that the planet is burning.

Richard's speech went viral. Here is some of what he said: "It's a disgrace. It's utterly shameful.

"Just think, while the Liberal Party has been tearing themselves apart. We've got 100% of NSW that's in drought right now, we've got the Great Barrier Reef on the brink of collapse, we've got floods in India. We've got a 12-year-old girl who is setting herself alight in Nauru. We've got kids who are in a catatonic state because they've given up hope, locked away in those offshore hell-holes.

"What's the Liberal party doing? Focusing on vengeance. On payback. Focusing on themselves.

"We've got people who can't afford to pay their medical bills right now. We've got young



people being priced out of an education. There are 100,000 people in this country who are homeless. There are women who fear going home tonight because one woman a week is killed at the hands of a violent partner.

"And what have we got? We've got this spectacle. This disgrace. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

"We have got people around the country who are suffering, and look at what you are doing. You are so focused on yourselves that you have forgotten what the country elected you to do. And that is to govern for them. Not for you.

"You don't deserve to govern. You deserve to be turfed out. That's what you deserve."

The Greens plan is clear. Corporations pay more tax. Corporate donations and influence are banned so politicians are accountable to the community, not big donors. Reclaim our democracy so that civil society is empowered to participate in decision-making and holding governments to account.

Get on and address climate change – the evidence is

very clear that the cheapest, quickest most equitable way to reduce our emissions is to end our reliance on fossil fuels and power Australia with cheap, reliable, renewable energy, resulting in a massive increase in sustainable employment.

Protect the environment through enacting laws that stop big corporates from exploiting and damaging our environment, tackling the recycling and waste crisis and protecting our forests, rivers and oceans. Cap power prices, return key parts of the grid to public hands and create a publicly owned energy retailer to ensure cheap, clean, reliable energy.

Work with First Nations People to establish a path for sovereignty and treaties and close the gap.

Prioritise public health and bring dental into Medicare, properly fund our public hospitals and increase funding to mental health.

Prioritise public education so that we focus on lifelong learning. Invest in public transport and kick start the electric vehicle revolution here in Australia.

Fight for workers and increase the minimum wage, protect rights at work, empower unions, reverse cuts to penalty rates and plan for the sustainable future of work in Australia.

The current NSW National and Liberal Coalition Government has a big coal agenda. NSW was Australia's largest coal exporter last year and has so many new coal projects in the pipeline it makes the Adani Galilee Basin project look small!

The National Party here in the Northern Rivers firmly believes coal is part of the clean energy future. It also is currently introducing laws that reduce the protection of our Richmond River headwaters, so that the timber industry can get a few more logs out of our precious public native forests that they have flogged for years.

It has also just stripped Landcare, one of the most successful environmental organisations in our region, of essential funding. These environmentally harmful policies are being applied at the same time the Coalition has removed our rights to peacefully assemble, gather and protest on public land.

There has never been a more important time to vote Green. There is a very real chance that the Greens can win the State Seat of Lismore and retain the State Seat of Ballina at the State election in March 2019.

This would make most of the Northern Rivers Region Green, provide a loud voice in NSW Parliament and make a future for all of us possible.

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