

Dysfunctional dog-owners

Thanks Santa Claus, another family Xmas ruined by next doors' psychotic dogs left out in the proverbial cold, locked in a cage called a backyard, alone for days, with no purpose but to bark and howl manically, non-stop, night and day.

"Talk to the neighbours," you said. Got threats instead. Barking became neglect and starvation. Dogs rescued, resident ice-dealer arrested, landlord relieved, problem solved.

Do-the-right-thing friends walk little old dog, on lead with poo-bag, past school. Box-head dog leaps over fence grabs little old dog by the throat. Box-head owner grabs vicious dog with one hand while holding baby in the other. Little old dog runs for its life, dodging traffic until caught.

Council rung, box-head dog surrendered and killed. Vet rung, little old dog survives. Problem solved, Invasion day holiday ruined.

House next door sold, new landlord, new neighbour, new baby, new cats, new dogs. New chook caged just out of reach of chained big dog. Dog goes berserk, chicken freaks out, council not interested, RSPCA not interested, property manager 'will talk to them', nothing happens. Easter holiday ruined. Neighbours move, problem solved.

New neighbour, new dog and weekend kids. Neighbour works long days. Dog bored, barks all day, shits everywhere. Flies and dog shit smell fill the kitchen, the restaurant, the motel, the op-shop. Ring council, ring landlord. Nothing happens. Ring state health department who ring council. Shit cleaned up once only. Queen's Birthday holiday ruined, I move, problem solved.

New place, new neighbours, new dogs. Same shit. Dogs dealt dud owners with dud ideas about dog-care. Left alone, in a cage called backyard, with nothing to do but bark, howl and go nuts. Talked to neighbour, got threats. Contacted the landlord, 'will talk to them'. Contacted council, many complaints are 'vexatious' (really?), two properties (not people) must complain, mediation is highly successful (really?), get your own court order and sort it out yourself (huh?). Their problem solved. My Labour Day holiday ruined.

Now what? Councils are reluctant to do their job and order owners to control their nuisance dogs, meanwhile registering more and more dogs. Complaints are considered vexatious by default, the process takes too long (sometimes years), appellants feel punished,

and nuisance dog owners get off lightly. But this is not a 'sort-it-out-yourself' problem. Councils get thousands of nuisance-barking-dog complaints every year, everywhere, all over Australia, and it is getting worse. It is a collective problem.

Councils fobbing the solution off to individuals is useless, indicates reluctance to govern and find solutions, ignores the extent of the problem, does not address the causes of nuisance barking, creates enmity among residents, normalises doing as little as possible, is disrespectful of other people's rights and of the animal, and generates cynicism and contempt towards local government. Councils' current approach tempts individuals to simply take matters in their own hands, with the dog the ultimate victim.

Elections are coming up. In NSW local government is charged with the responsibility to administer State companion animal legislation and there is considerable variation in how councils interpret the Act. For example, the Act does not say that councils need more than one complaint before they investigate a nuisance barking report. So, if you've had a gutful of councils pussy-footing around with their responsibilities, perhaps it is time to demand that a prospective state government amends the *Companion Animal Act* to give it sharper teeth so councils do their job.

C. K. Beacon,
Nimbin

Nimbin Lit Up

Nimbin Central School had another fabulous festive concert on the Bahzoooley Night on 12th December. Students were splendid in celebratory gear, joy and music filled the air: such fun. Congratulations all!

It's the leadership in folks that makes these events happen. Teachers so often are unsung heroes, but we are blessed if we had one so good that we especially remember them.

Traditional singing connects us to our cultural past, and anchors us in our shaky world. Children with a good choir teacher (the dedicated Val Mace) incorporate something very special.

Make sure you join in next year. If you need convincing of the power of music, view ABC-TV's *Don't Stop the Music*.

Thanks to all who made this night so special. Especially all the stars, hidden and obvious. Can someone do a Welcome to Country please, speaking of tradition?

Lois McWhinney,
Nimbin

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.

Umbrella Christmas tree

What a fabulous idea Lismore Council had, but my heart did sink when I read that 860 cable ties were used in the process. I guess it comes to securing the objects onto the recycled frame.

It is time something is made anew! Cable ties need a replacement, especially for items that need to be in place for only a short time.

Something that would biodegrade after a couple of months would be preferred, as otherwise we are looking at 400-600 years for these ties to break up and create even more micro-plastics in nature, and be a danger to animals for years to come.

Carolyn Cardinet,
Ballina

Injustice to small shareholders

In the *Gold Coast Sun* (12 Dec 18) Noel Whittaker asked about Labor's intention not to allow Franking Credit to small share holders.

It is another attack on small shareholders who lend businesses their money to run their business.

As a Westfarmers shareholder a further ripoff of my money was when they decided to divest into Coles (actually it was Coles when Westfarmers took them over supported by the LNP) so now each 1000 of my Westfarmers shares have been changed to 1 Coles share – a loss to me of 1000%.

And we pay these businesses and their boards of directors!!

Anne Sutherland,
Robina

Will our decision makers do what's best for regional NSW?

Regional NSW has been having a tough time. If it's not drought, it's floods, fires and storms.

These disasters are fuelled by the fossil fuel industry. Coal and gas companies hit communities while they're down. They opportunistically jump in and offer a handful of jobs and short-term prosperity.

This is not future proofing regional Australia, it's putting communities, farmland and water at risk. The Narrabri gas project is one example of this kind of backward thinking by big



mining corporations and governments that enable this to happen.

As a young person, I am extremely concerned about this short sightedness. A recent report found that jobs from renewable energy investment in the North West of NSW are entirely possible, not just a pipe dream.

Narrabri is part of the New England Renewable Energy Precinct, set up by the NSW Government in 2010 to attract new investment.

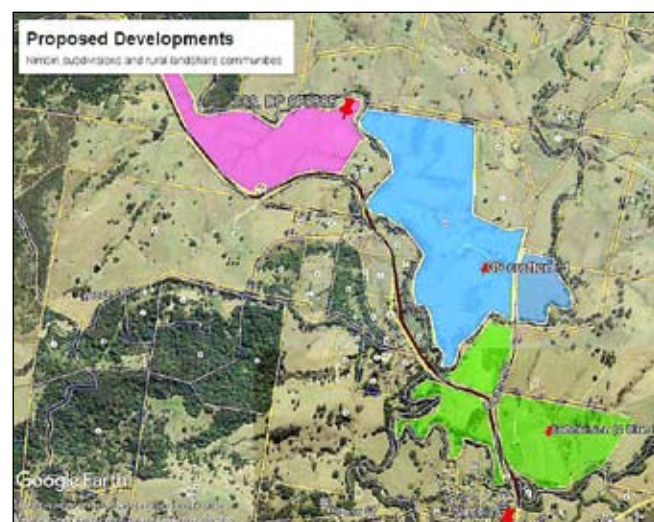
There are two current solar projects proposed. Imagine if this was taken more seriously. It would be a good step in the right direction for future generations, a reason to stay in rural and regional towns.

Harnessing solar in the North West of NSW could produce significantly more electricity than is required locally, resulting in more and longer lasting jobs for the Shire than the Narrabri gas field would generate, and affecting a much smaller area of land.

We know that fossil fuels are outdated, and causing far more harm than good. We are seeing benefits in the Northern Rivers of renewable energy, with companies like Rainbow Power, Enova and Corem re-powering our region.

I wonder then, will our decision makers do what is best for regional NSW by ruling out the Narrabri Gas Project and cast their minds to jobs powered by renewable energy innovation?

Maddy Braddon,
Lismore



Nimbin developments

Currently there are proposed developments north of Nimbin (subdivisions and Rural Landshare Communities).

On the map (above), the blue and green areas are pending a decision by council, the pink area is a landholder who wants to develop and probably will now with the new Rural Landshare Community (RLC) re-zoning.

Nimbin "village" is no longer going to be a village. The proposed development at 39 Crofton road will have not 17 houses but 34, because each lot can have two dwellings. Next to that is the subdivision at 4 Blue Knob Road.

This expansion of the village is not random, but part of Lismore Councils Growth Mangement Strategy and will change the village permanently, not to mention the massive impact on the environment.

We need to keep asking council why the radius around

Nimbin was expanded to four km whilst every other village in the Shire was only expanded to three km?

Why is the RLC extensive zoning mapping still up on their website when we know DPE knocked it back from 19,000ha to 3,961ha?

Why are RLC's allowed two dwellings, and why aren't they zoned to protect our unique flora and fauna.

Things are changing rapidly and we need to be aware, and don't forget there is nothing the developers hate more than a well-organised community group!

Vanessa Palmer,
Blue Knob

An Eco-Friendly Commercial Plan for Nimbin

By-pass roads around Nimbin would mean that unnecessary traffic would not drive through the village, which would make our community so much quieter, better and safer.

1. Lismore – Blue Knob Road should by-pass the village
2. Gungas Road to Nimbin should be another by-pass. Think how sweet Cullen Street would be without all the extra unnecessary traffic. Many more people would appreciate our village, and many will stay for more than a few hours.
3. A centre for the local environment should be built on the outskirts of the

About us

Editor Bob Dooley

Assistant Editor Sue Stock

Layout Peter Chaplin, Andy Gough, Bob Dooley

Photographers Sue Stock, Peter Chaplin, Chibo Mertineit

Distribution Peter, Coralie, Sue, Bob, Rob and Lisa, Daniel, Dominique, Aengus, Rosie, Trevor and Dave, and Soul Kindle (Bellingen)

Bookkeeper Martha Paitson
Web www.nimbingoodtimes.com
And find us on Facebook

NGT is published by the Nimbin Aquarius Foundation, 81 Cullen Street, Nimbin

NEXT DEADLINE:
Wednesday 23rd January

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

town, similar to Mossman Gorge. This could employ many local people, allow for indigenous skills and stories and dreaming places to be shown (such as Calico Creek – female sites and Nimbin Rocks – male sites), promote our artistic community, and provide car parking for many vehicles including tour buses and trucks, thus alleviating our issues with parking.

Such a centre would bring into the commercial heart of the village many new dollars, so our entrepreneurs will be happy.

In Mossman Gorge, buses driven by locals, take (eco-) tourists to the unique local sites with professional guides. Some of our sites - places like three-tree hill, the various waterfalls, trails and rainforest etc with various walkways and viewing areas, similar again to Mossman and Kuranda are great.

Buses would run people up to the edge of the village commercial district, employing more local people. 4. Our area is loaded with world class items. We do not show them off like Mossman Gorge. We have so much beauty, why not protect it? The current plan exploits it.

The current plan is attached to the mid twentieth century idea of selling off good farm land and destroying the unique landscape.

This new plan makes common sense. It is a clear track to preserving what we have and yet being commercially adept at the same time.

A petition exists to promote this new plan in our community – please sign it, or else our beautiful landscape will forever be lost.

Find the petition online at: https://www.change.org/p/stop-development-north-of-nimbin-nsw-save-calico-creek?recruiter=79259555&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=share_petition&utm_term=share_petition

Mark Pestell,
Nimbin

End party dominance

There is a global mood for change. We have an opportunity to create a world first 'almost democratic' government this time, by electing large numbers of independents capable of calling the shots.

Haven't political parties always been undemocratic? They only ever worked for some people, while bowing to the dictates of the real powerbrokers. To get people to support them they needed to be expert propagandists. It demands most of their focus.

In our semi-democratic environment, governments

must be exceedingly cunning to keep rampant exploitation and corruption of the system from public view. In more authoritarian ones it's easier to conceal crime and suppress angry citizens.

We have seen serious corruption in all our parties. As a party grows in size it becomes attractive for infiltration by special interest groups, as The Greens are demonstrating.

Parties are never the originators of ideals. They adapt what seem like solutions which have become popular at the time.

The original concept of Communism was to care for all in society. Practical ways to make it work were never invented. The Russian Communist Party was a great tool for the few to exploit the masses. Western propaganda conflated Communism with evil and Capitalism with democracy. Remove the propaganda, and Capitalism is a powerful anti-democratic tool for mass exploitation. It has its plusses, but it needs people power to bring it to heel.

Do we wish political parties to be in control of selecting all political candidates? Our servants must have the highest ethical standards, and not be compromised by greed, or indiscretions of a criminal or sexual nature. That makes them manipulable by outsiders, party factions and members. The outsiders are obviously also manipulating those parties and factions. Don't believe for a moment that with billions at stake, most corporations don't disregard legal niceties whenever they can.

These outsiders compete only for themselves on the unequal playing fields of magnificent Capitalism. It is daily extolled in the media, just to keep us believing. Whenever another party takes power, some profiteers win, some lose. Some citizens win, most lose. We get instability and unworkable system that have descended into gridlock.

There is no one leading on our behalf. All the corruption scandals, profiteering and low calibre politicians reflect this mess. So let's break up this system with independents of calibre.

Only complete transparency of past and current relationships of all politicians will do. This is now enabled with technology. For example, to be sure of their loyalties, requires frequent publication of all non-private communications.

To focus on the study of Western Civilisation, is only to encourage repetition of our history of exploitation. We should study all civilisations for the secrets of how inclusive societies functioned,

especially tribal ones.

A new breed of independents pre-committed to new standards as above, will receive massive support.

To fight the entrenched crooked system and secret alliances would kill them. It doesn't want to be reformed. It's too complex. The new ethics rises above the fray. It is inclusive, and kind to opponents.

Only local communities know what they need and want, and only they can make it happen. It's a gigantic challenge. It will need locals to invent new ways of caring and cooperating, with the help of all who are inclined to contribute, especially those with serious problems. Generous sharing of experiences is for the greater good.

Compassionate independents can facilitate this. Solve the homelessness, starvation and unprotected children problems locally. The R-Evolution is here.

Hayo van der Woude,
Mullumbimby

Why to vote and Vote 1 The Greens

Both NSW and Federal elections will be taking place this year.

At the moment we have the best chance ever in the Lismore electorate to vote into the NSW parliament a Greens candidate who walks her talk.

Sue Higginson is a leader in frontline actions to save the rainforest and old growth forests, who pioneered setting up the NSW Environmental Defenders Office to defend environmental activists in court. Her whole life has been dedicated to Environmental Earth caring movements.

She was the only NSW political candidate to turn up and speak at the International Climate Action rally last September in Lismore; turned up to listen at the school strike Climate Action rally; and recently walked with us in Nimbin for a fundraiser to help feed the dying and starving children of war torn Yemen.

Sue is homegrown. She has been working tirelessly for the whole community. She stands for a fair and healthy future in sustainable tourism, jobs

and agriculture, to restore and bring back our rivers to health, and take action on climate change.

Her focus is also on cleaning up politics and helping communities and local businesses with investing in our region's natural assets.

We need her in the NSW parliament to stop the cuts to health care, domestic violence, community legal services, public transport and TAFE services.

I recently spoke with the legendary Ian Cohen, our first elected Greens representative in the NSW parliament, who has updated his book, *Green Fire: A call to action for those aspire to save the planet earth.*

Besides encouraging Sue Higginson to stand for the NSW Greens in the State elections, he pointed out to me not to underestimate that we folks on the North Coast have continued to inspire the whole nation on creative non-violent actions for progressive major social and environmental reforms.

I asked him about the fallout of Jeremy Buckingham and others with the Greens. Instead of reacting to these human internal differences which happen in all political organisations, Sue Higginson and Tamara Smith, who represents the Ballina electorate, are far removed from that struggle and are focused on delivering for our community, core Greens policy.

If voted in, they may hold the balance of power in parliament, giving them bargaining power with Green independents, to effect government legislations.

To achieve this, it is important for those of us "Hippies" here to get over not voting and not voting properly, because the system is corrupt. Your vote counts in our preferential voting system that will enable decent representatives to turn it around for our children and the unborn.

You can help by volunteering. Check out the web page: sue4lismore.org.au and visit the Lismore Greens office at shop 12 Warina Walk Arcade, 154 Molesworth Street, Lismore.

Benny Zable,
Nimbin

Building for Rent

The Fig Tree building at the Nimbin Community Centre is available to rent. Internal area is 104.62m² composed of large central room with kitchen, two offices and bathroom.



Would suit many different purposes.

Rent from \$983/month for non-profit (net GST)
Commercial rate offered on application

Phone: 6689-0000

Email: ncci@nimbincommunity.org.au

Nimbin

Computer

Support

www.nimbin-computer-support.com.au

Computer Repairs
Hardware / Software
Desktop Publishing
Printing
IT Help

81 Cullen St

(In the Nimbin Community Centre)

0487263816

CROFTON'S
Retreat
MOTEL

02 6689 0030
0427 610 549

360 Crofton Road NIMBIN

NIMBIN
HAPPY HIGH HERBS
IS NOW HOME TO...

NIMBIN HERBS

www.nimbinherbs.com.au

WHITNEY BROTHERS EXCAVATIONS

"We do the dirty work"

0403-721-876

whitneybrothers@outlook.com



- Rural roads & driveways
- Stump grinding
- Wastewater systems
- Excavators 1.7t – 30t
- House & shed cuts
- Posi tracks (bobcats)
- Underground services
- small grader
- Horse arenas
- Rollers
- Turf prep
- Water truck
- Trenching and drainage
- Tippers
- All-terrain slashing
- Float

Nimbin Servo

02 6675-7906



- Fuel, oils, automotive needs, ice, gas refills & Swap'n'Go
- Nimbin Bakery pies & sausage rolls, drinks, icecreams
- Bread & milk, newspapers, cigarettes, Nabropure water
- Stock food, horse & cattle food, lucerne, pet food & bones

NIMBIN SERVO SHOP

Open 7 days: Mon-Fri 7am-6.30pm, W/E 8am-5pm, Pub Hols 8am-4pm

Happy High Herbs

NIMBIN

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS IN NIMBIN

www.happyhighherbsnimbin.com



Four cozy 1 bedroom timber cabins nestled on 33 acres of natural bushland with abundant wildlife, within easy walking distance of local restaurants and shops. Pet friendly, free wifi and air-conditioned. Overnight or weekly. Wheelchair Access.

TERETRE Cabins - NIMBIN

5 High St, Nimbin, 2480 Australia

Ph: (02) 6689 1908 Mob: 0427 891 626

Email: info@teretre.com.au Website: www.teretre.com.au

- FLOOR SANDING -

New & old floors, verandahs, decks



- Free quotes & advice
- Prompt service
- Quality work assured



• All areas serviced

Rob Clark ph 6632-3342 or 0410-016-694

ABN 93 105 831 192

Les gilets jaunes lead France into 2019

by Aurelie Billot

As you may (or may not) have heard, the French have declared yellow to be the colour to wear in 2019.

Les gilets jaunes (yellow vests) have become the sign that identifies citizens opposing the current government. A bit like the beret was used to symbolise the resistance spirit in the Second World War.

And how the 'bonnet phrygien' or the 'cocarde tricolore' was the emblem of those joining the French revolution, back in 1789...

What 'les gilets jaunes' are demanding is for president Emmanuel Macron to resign and for another constitution to be put in place. French citizens want the people they elect to represent them and listen to them, as a Sovereign people.

They don't support the politics of Emmanuel Macron, who shows unfairness to the middle and lower classes, adds constant taxes and doesn't invest the government money in the key sectors of education, health, environment and public service.

The president's obstinate mistreatment of the most vulnerable has led to the point of insurrection and national mobilisation.

Worldwide, the French are renowned for speaking their mind and demonstrate readily when disagreement with politicians occurs. This time, it looks more like a revolution going on, or a re-evolution happening as some like to call it.

The movement is even spreading to Europe. I have read that it is being compared to May 68 by some independent journalists: once again for



the police force and the army which have been brought in to oppose protestors.

I am proud my country stands up for its rights and says 'enough' to political abuses of all kinds. I am happy it brings a certain solidarity and fraternity within the population.

Living in Australia, I can only support the rebellion from a distance, but have sent yellow vest-shaped greeting cards to my family this year and encouraged them to keep going and to make the French government understand they have been elected to serve our interests and not theirs.

On this positive note, je vous souhaite une très bonne année 2019, pleine de rêves, de joies, d'Amour et de jaune!

Slogans on vests translated:

"I did May 68,

I do November 2018"

"When you seed misery

You harvest anger

Angry French"

and of course, the motto of the French

republic, "Liberty Equality, Fraternity".

Douce France, French Language Centre offers private/small group tuition, conversation classes and immersion programs to adults, HSC students and homeschoolers.

Visit: www.douce-france.com.au or email:

douce-france@yahoo.com.au

Find and like us on FB for more resources on French language and culture.

Turning the Page on Jobs and the Economy

by Patrick Deegan
ALP candidate for Page

Remember the 'Ideas Boom'?

The Ideas Boom was the Federal Government's most over-used catchphrase of 2015.

It was meant to describe a future where Australia would become the new Silicon Valley, and we'd all be working for software start-ups.

But of course, the Ideas Boom never had any substance. It was just a shallow slogan with a website and a glossy brochure - not a policy.

For people in regional and rural Australia who couldn't even get decent broadband connection, the Ideas Boom was another symbol of an out-of-touch Government.

Inevitably, Malcolm Turnbull's Ideas Boom went bust, and in its place came ... well, nothing.

These days the Liberals and Nationals can't even come up with a slogan, let alone a plan for how to grow the national economy and provide people with meaningful jobs.

Over the past few years, however, Bill Shorten and the Labor team have been putting together a long list of policies to do just that.

Labor's economic strategy was front-and-centre at the ALP National conference in Adelaide during December.

A Shorten Labor



Patrick Deegan and Senator Doug Cameron

Government will focus on growth, while making sure that the benefits of are right across the country - not just concentrated in the wealthy inner-city enclaves of Sydney and Melbourne.

There are five key aspects of Labor's economic plan that are particularly important for our region.

Firstly, Labor will immediately seek to fix the problems with the National Party's second-rate NBN (that's already \$21.4 billion over budget, and four years behind schedule), because our local businesses need access to affordable, high-quality broadband.

Secondly, Labor's Australian Investment Guarantee will allow all businesses to immediately write off 20 per cent of all their new investments in the first year.

For businesses in the Northern Rivers' growing

food manufacturing sector, for example, this tax benefit will improve the business case for marginal projects that otherwise may not get off the ground - driving new investment in plant, machinery and equipment, and helping those enterprises to increase production.

Thirdly, Labor's investment in education, including an extra \$23.9 million for schools in Page over three years, will help put our children on a pathway to success.

Labor will also scrap upfront fees for 100,000 TAFE students, and invest \$100 million in a Building TAFE for the Future Fund, to revitalise TAFE campuses and facilities in regional and outer metropolitan areas.

Fourthly, our ten-year \$6.6 billion affordable housing program will stimulate investment in new affordable rental properties. This will

not only increase the housing supply, it will also ensure the residential construction sector stays healthy for years to come.

In other words, this policy will provide a steady pipeline of jobs in the building industry, with positive flow-on effects for our local communities.

Similarly, Labor's plan to build a more decentralised power network through increased use of solar systems and battery storage, supported by a domestic battery industry, will generate thousands of new jobs in the renewable energy sector.

Northern NSW is already one of Australia's renewable energy hotspots, so this policy will be a great boost for our region.

And finally, Labor's plan for tax cuts for low and middle-income earners, combined with our plan to restore penalty rates, will put more money into the pockets of working Australians.

This will give people more cash to spend with their local businesses - whether it's the corner store, the weekend markets, or any of our local service providers.

Labor's economic policies are not cheap slogans or trendy catchphrases, they constitute a real plan for jobs and growth, and one that will make a real difference for people in Northern NSW.

On the same PAGE

From the mayor's desk

by Cr Isaac Smith



Kevin Hogan MP announces a grant for Nimbin Headers Soccer Club

by Kevin Hogan MP,
Member for Page

I hope everyone had a good Christmas and New Year.

Looking back over last year, we achieved a lot as a community.

Early in the year we set up a one-stop shop for accessing medicinal cannabis.

This meant the decision to prescribe medicinal cannabis is now in the hands of medical professionals.

I secured a grant for Northern Rivers Food

to promote Food Tourism. This benefits our local food producers like Nimbin Valley Dairy Cheese.

In July, we cracked down on multi-nationals avoiding paying tax in Australia. We have clawed back more than \$2.7 billion in just under a year.

It was also great to open Rainbow Ridge Steiner School's new administration block and learning area.

I was able to secure a grant for \$150,000. The school matched the funding.

It is a wonderful school

and I would like to thank all the teaching staff led by Educational Administrator Marga Helms for the work they do.

It was also wonderful to announce a grant for the Nimbin Headers Soccer Club.

It was for the installation of a solar connected battery storage system.

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

I am looking forward to working with the community again this year to get even more done.



Darmin and the Mayor

It has been great travelling out to Nimbin so much in 2018. It feels good to connect with what is happening there on so many levels.

It is one of the great things about my job in that I get to see it all. Each of the community groups doing amazing things and I get to be a part of it. I do wonder if it is a little like what the Sydney-ite feels when they head home to Lismore for Christmas. Depends what we are looking for I guess, but a feeling of belonging has got to be a part of any worthwhile visit.

I'm not a big Ed Sheehan fan, but I found myself listening to 'Castle on the Hill' recently. It is a song about coming home, which I think we can all relate to these holidays.

The song talks about the past and time, friends and family and how that makes us feel. Memories are a mixed bag. Some good, some bad... most a little hazy or echoes of actual events. But the feelings that accompany those memories are very real. While the details change over time, coming home... being back, is always a profound experience.

I have many a friend who has left our region in search of a life elsewhere. I guess most do in the scheme of things. Families and opportunities abound everywhere, but most people come home at some point to reconnect.

It is my job to make sure we have lots of local opportunities so that people have more options to stay here. We would love to see more jobs in our community for people to stay. We need young people to live in regional NSW and become the innovators and business people of the future. But they will always leave. It is a right of passage for some.

For those of us not living in the big smoke, it is usually a time when they are coming back to us. People flee the cities in summer, often going back to where they came from. Where

Mum and Dad used to live. Where an Aunt or Uncle still calls home. Where your best friend from school lives with their family. They come back for the feelings we either ignore or forget most days.

We need to bottle that feeling. When the urban refugee flees the city in search of meaning, they find it here back at home. It warms them and feeds their soul, yet those of us who are still here forget just how much it means to us. Locals do not appreciate the best of what we have, so it is vital that we listen to those who return and see things through their eyes. How do we harvest that feeling and make it ours again?

As you gathered with family and friends over Christmas, or right now as you read this sitting on the back deck battling the humidity, I hope that you are able to reconnect with what makes you special. What makes our home special. It could happen when you see someone you've probably not seen for a year or two. Those feelings that this is a special place, and that makes you a special person.

I love where we live, so next time you see me, make sure you tell me how much you love it here as well. Then we can both enjoy a little moment of joy together these holidays!

We're all connected

Word of the Bird

by Cr Elly Bird

It's New Year's Eve tomorrow, and I'm sitting in my camp at Woodford Folk Festival. It's my 20th year at the festival this year and I've been feeling quite nostalgic.

I direct the Welcome Ceremony at the festival and I feel very privileged to be able to do so.

When I first came to Woodford, I worked on the Fire Event, which is the closing ceremony of the festival, under the direction of Neil Cameron, who instilled in me a deep appreciation for fire, ceremony and ritual.

I was incredibly inspired by the work and I remember thinking to myself that I wanted to direct the Fire Event one day.

I didn't quite get to the Fire Event, and instead I am lucky enough to be able to open the festival and to help set the intention for the week.

Woodford has a strong culture of ceremony, and I am grateful that I can help to keep that tradition going.

This year the theme of the festival is 'We're all connected', and I have been reflecting on the qualities and culture of Woodford and how they have shaped my life and my way of being.

Readers of this column will know that community is incredibly important to me, because strong, connected communities are resilient communities.

Woodford is my community just as much as Lismore is, and there is plenty of cross-over between the two! I know many of you come to Woodford often and love it just as much as I do.

It was Woodford connections and



Woodford skills that I drew on in my work with Lismore Helping Hands after the floods, and the qualities of care and compassion that are so intrinsic to this festival that have helped me to stay connected and find meaning in my work.

It has been a huge year for me, and I'm sure the coming year will bring its own challenges and opportunities. As it will for you. But, that is probably enough navel-gazing for now – thanks for making it this far.

I'm off to explore a festival program that is full of hope, courage, compassion, thousands of good people and hours

upon hours of excellent music.

Best wishes to you as we head into 2019. Let's stay connected to each other because it's that connection that will help us to weather the storms ahead.



Revenge of the Loon



by Laurie Axtens

This coming year is one where the political cycle comes to a head. There will be both Federal and State elections.

Traditionally these critical years correlate with events that sound the shrill whistle of xenophobia and racism.

Boatloads of refugees don't throw their children over board contrary to the propaganda of the government of the day.

Sanguine skinned terrorists are arrested with plans to blow up the nation's infrastructure and armed madmen with Arabic heritage take cafes full of hostages, and they and a few hostages

are killed by the Special Services to end the stand-off.

All of the standard incitements have been put in place. The Coalition have committed to moving their Israeli embassy to Jerusalem. Medical care is being denied illegally imprisoned refugees and the Government and its media are having a field day crowing about these decisions.

All the fear mongering and misinformation machines of repressive government will be in full swing but are these governments too far gone?

Perhaps they need an actual invasion and even they will be forced to share power.