

Privatising the ABC

by Dr John Jiggins

The 2019 election campaign began, as Media Watch's Paul Barry observed, with "lies, hysteria and untruths about Labor's electric car policy", which was dutifully echoed by the Coalition's friends at News Corp, who were in turn characterised by Labor leader Bill Shorten as 'News Corp's climate change deniers'.

Nothing to see here you might think. Surely, this was hyperbole as normal.

But there are those who suggest a hidden motive behind the Murdoch media's pro-Coalition frenzy. According to the Friends of the ABC, the secret agenda of News Corp and the Liberals is the post-election privatisation of the ABC.

Given the Coalition's historical dislike of the national broadcaster, privatisation may well be the fate of the ABC if the Coalition were to win the coming election.

The Liberal Party's policy wing, their think tank, the Institute for Public Affairs, (the IPA), argue that privatising the ABC will set it 'free'. In June last year, they published a book titled *Against Public Broadcasting – Why we should privatise the ABC and how we should do it*.

That same month the Liberal Party's peak council voted almost 2:1 to privatise the ABC with vocal support from the Institute of Public Affairs, which said the ABC could be sold or given to Australians who already own it.

The motion said: "That federal council calls for the full privatisation of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, except for services into regional areas that are not commercially viable."

The Communication Minister, Mitch Fifield opposed the motion, while Scott Morrison said there were 'no plans' to privatise the ABC, but with a Federal election looming within a year, they had to.

All of the current leaders of the Federal parliamentary Liberal Party are members of the IPA: Prime Minister Scott Morrison is, and so is his deputy, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg. Mathias Cormann, Senate Leader and Finance Minister and his deputy, Trade Minister Simon Birmingham, are also members of the IPA.

Other ministers who are members of the IPA are Mitch Fifield, Minister for Communication with responsibility for the ABC, Michella Cash, Minister for Small and Family Business, and Kelly O'Dwyer, Minister for Industrial Relations

Other parliamentary

Our  ?

coalition members who also are members of the IPA are Tony Abbott, Eric Abetz, George Christensen, Ian McDonald, James McGrath, James Patterson, Scott Ryan, Tony Smith, Alan Tudge and Tim Wilson.

Speaking in Brisbane for the Friends of the ABC, Kerry O'Brien, former host of *Four Corners* and the *7.30 Report*, detailed the repeated cuts to ABC budget under successive Liberal governments.

He recalled sitting on the ABC panel on election night in 1996, watching Richard Alston, who was about to become their minister, promise there would be no cuts to the ABC.

He reiterated an earlier pledge, a very clear promise, no cuts to the ABC budget. Yet, says O'Brien: "It was his recommendation to Cabinet that saw the ABC budget slashed; not cut, slashed!" Later Alston privately acknowledged to his cabinet colleagues, (in a draft Cabinet submission that was leaked to O'Brien), that the cuts would be a breach of an election promise.

"He actually said that the cuts he was recommending would be in breach of an election promise," said O'Brien. When O'Brien questioned him about this on the *7.30 Report* Alston kept denying the undeniable, repeatedly saying there was no breach of faith.

In 2013 Tony Abbott similarly promised no cuts to the ABC; next budget his Communication Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, cut the ABC budget by \$254 million.

As Kerry O'Brien rhetorically asked: "So how good is their word leading up to the election?"

Given this history, if the Liberal Party plan further cuts to the ABC or to privatise the ABC they are unlikely to admit it before an election

The Institute for Public Affairs was founded in 1943 by Rupert Murdoch's father, Keith Murdoch and friends. On the IPA's 70th anniversary, his son Rupert was the guest speaker, and he praised the IPA for its strong stand against nationalisation and for privatisation.

While the opinion polls indicate a Coalition win in the next election is unlikely, the Murdoch tabloids are giving "ScoMo" a headline-a-day, and the polls are tightening.

For Murdoch and the other big players in commercial media, the ABC must seem, as it is, a great and glorious jewel.

Bike path funding could end rail hopes

by Lydia Kindred

The Nationals' Kevin Hogan recently announced \$75 million for a Casino – Bentley bike trail. Many people arrived to let him know they want to keep the tracks for a rail service but at the last minute he moved the media announcement to another location to avoid hearing from the people he represents.

There has been no community consultation on what residents in our region want and bike 'rail trail' legislation will open the door to the sale and development of our rail corridor for other purposes! We are horrified.

Federal Labor then announced \$17 million towards the Casino to Eltham walking and cycling track. This stretch of rail is in great condition and this money could repair the track and have rail services restored very quickly, even just the XPT from Casino to Lismore for starters.

Fiona Leviny, an Independent candidate for Page attended the event at the Old Casino Station to declare her support for saving the railway tracks and having trains on the tracks again. Daniel Hanna from the Democratic Labor Party has also announced that he will stand up for the railway to be funded properly as the Federal government is spending billions on regional rail in Victoria. He said the traffic congestion at Byron was as bad as anything in Sydney.

Currently, Tweed Shire Council is committed to



creating a bike path (for \$13 million, from both State and Federal funds) from Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek. Thanks to Tweed Mayor Katie Milne and other progressive councillors, tenders can opt to construct a bike trail either on or beside the railway track formation - to be completed by mid-2020. However, Crown Lands say to change the legislation for a bike 'rail trail' the council must take full responsibility for maintenance of the rail corridor. This will be a massive cost for ratepayers.

In the NSW election we were pleased to have Greens' support for rail: Bill Fenelon in Tweed; Sue Higginson in Lismore, and Ballina's Tamara Smith, winning back her seat. Tamara wants a study on our public transport needs in the Northern Rivers.

Our rail groups, TOOT and NRRAG, are concerned with regaining services for the old, young, disabled, isolated,

workers, students, those living in and visiting our region, who could all benefit from regular well timed passenger rail services with some freight, and a bike trail beside the tracks, complemented by on demand solar powered mini buses to the stations and outlying areas.

Strangely, \$112-million has been committed by the Federal government to light rail in south east Queensland and previously \$460 million was given for the Gold Coast Light Rail but we're not considered as worthy for rail, just a few kilometres away, despite our region being one of the fastest growing and including Byron Bay, the most visited town in NSW outside Sydney. We also want our region's many small and medium businesses connected by a reliable, permanent link to coastal areas currently enjoying a growing tourism boom.

Much is being spent on transport infrastructure in Sydney (\$94 billion over 10 years) with little coming to the

Northern Rivers' community, still crying out for public transport, 15 years after our rail services were stopped.

Climate change brought about by emissions, growing traffic congestion, the need to spread wealth and jobs throughout the region, and social inequities for people who don't drive a car are all concerns. Big buses don't work for the elderly and disabled.

• We are pleased to have support for rail from:

In Page: Independent Fiona Leviny; Greens' Dan Reid; DLP's Daniel Hanna.

In Richmond: Greens' Michael Lyon. And Mehreen Faruqi in the Senate is a long time great supporter of saving our railway track.

We now know through rail experts, and from the cost of establishing the Byron solar train, it will likely cost less than one tenth of what the government's spruiking as a near billion dollar price tag, to bring our rail back!



Photos: Sue Stock



Paul Le Bars

Big Turn-up for Nimbin ANZAC Day services

by Paul Le Bars

Thanks to everyone who came to the ANZAC Day services at Nimbin.

The 5.30am Dawn Service was a solemn and intimate observance with nearly 90 in attendance, and was marked with an address from Vietnam veteran, Peter Polglase. Bob Dooley read the poems and the Ode, with Rev. Grant Andrews's reading and Prayer of Remembrance.

The breaking of morning silence by bugler Petria Dean with the Last Post and Rouse saw the dawn light in and the beginning of the day.

The service was followed by a Gunfire Breakfast at the Nimbin Bowling Club. Thanks go to Don, Patty and all the crew at the club for a wonderful morning.

The ANZAC March of about 40 people arrived at the Nimbin District

Memorial led by piper James Alexander followed by the Nimbin RFS flag bearers, local veterans, veterans' families, and students from Nimbin Central School and Coffee Camp Public School.

Thanks to veteran Scott Ford for taking on commanding the parade at the last minute.

The call to commemoration was opened by MC Max Pike, this year with a focus on Military Nursing. Following the hymn, the Rev. Grant Andrew gave his reading, reflecting on recent events, and the Prayer of Remembrance. Nimbin Central School Captain Cayden Douglas read 'Sir' by Damien Morgan, a moving poem felt by all.

The Commemorative Address was given by Lismore City Council, Councillor Darlene Cook, and spoke to the experiences of Military Nursing focusing on nurses from the Far North

Coast, their trials, tribulations and victories for more than a century.

Many wreath and flowers were laid on the memorial in memory of our veterans and the fallen. The service concluded with Cayden Douglas reciting the Ode, then Petria the bugler's Last Post, one-minute's silence, the Rouse and the National Anthem.

Thanks to Scott, Marc, Farren, AJ and Eme, and anyone I may have forgotten, for your help on the day. Thanks to the Nimbin community and a big thanks to Gai and Anton (LCC) for helping get the gardens back in shape.

It is the community and its participation that gives such great value to the ANZAC and Remembrance Day commemorations, and Nimbin certainly gives that respect in spades. Thank you to all who came for the services.

"Lest We Forget."



Photos: Tony Bachelor

From Aquarius to Woodstock

by Binnah Pownall

The Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc. (NAFI) endeavours to keep the Aquarius boat afloat after launching back in 1973 via the Nimbin Aquarius festival, towards an unknown and new direction.

A brave and perhaps naive venture I am sure you would agree, though one that had to be taken by some imagineers who – even back then in 1973 – had noticed that we were already on a road to nowhere...

One new realisation dawning on us as we review the history of the world in the seminal seventies is revealing something quite unique and rather profound from a small group in Australia, way away from the rest of the Western world that we were supposed to be a part of.

We realise that the US had its Woodstock festival, which was essentially a rock concert. It also had the whole Haight-Ashbury San Francisco peace and love thing fuelled mainly by a 'new' drug called LSD (new and out of the box ideas), which marked the start of the 'counter-culture movement' there.

We in Oz obviously received great inspiration from those movements.

Then we did something unique. Nowhere else in the world was there a festival actually called to mark a taking off in another direction, away from the rank and file governmental earth-wrecking narrative we were all sick of, even by then.

Also, nowhere else in Australia, in the modern or the older days for that fact, had a group of white-ish new settlers received a 'Welcome to Country' like the group of students and dropouts got from the local Aboriginal tribe at the Aquarius Festival.

The point is: this was the biggest and most pronounced change in direction, away from perceived mainstream general destruction mentality that any group had done on the planet.

This is something to be eternally proud of. This initiative is yet to be acceptably acknowledged. Nimbin needs to crow loudly and proudly about this.

The next NAFI meeting is planned for 17th May in the Green Room at the Nimbin Community Centre at 4pm. Please come and join us.

Activists give Coalition 'F' for fail on climate

On the morning of 1st May, community members protested the failure of the Coalition government on climate, outside the office of Nationals' MP Kevin Hogan in Lismore.

"We have witnessed failure after failure from this government", said farmer Meg Nielsen, spokesperson for Gasfield Free Northern Rivers (pictured, right).

"There are so many failures it's getting hard for public to remember them, that's why we had a public reading of the failures of Coalition on Climate." The protest featured a town climate crier who rang a bell before each of the 22 Failures was read

out, to cries of 'shame' from citizens.

"When you look at these failures, it's clear that the Coalition, and National Party in particular, have no intention of heeding the advice of climate scientists that we are on course for a perilous 4 degrees C of global warming this century.

"They are more concerned about their donors Big Gas and Big Coal, than for the future of their children, grandchildren and communities who will suffer as temperatures rise inexorably".

After the public reading of the failures, a representative of Gasfield Free Northern

Rivers went inside to present a letter for Mr Hogan that contained six questions with simple YES/NO answers, so that the public can understand exactly where he stands.

Annie Kia, representative of Gasfield Free Northern Rivers, added, "The Australian Conservation Foundation released a damning report card yesterday. The Coalition scored 4 out of 100 in relation to climate policy.

"This is worse than failure: it's wilful, reckless endangerment. Mr Hogan's personal voting record on climate is awful. He can't pretend he isn't complicit."



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DR MEHREEN FARUQI
SENATOR FOR NSW



Authorised by M Faruqi, 72 Campbell St Surry Hills NSW 2010

Major parties have failed on climate: it's time to rebel

Here we are in the late Anthropocene, with an extinction crisis unfolding before our eyes and a rapidly diminishing window to respond to runaway climate change and we are facing a federal election that seems to be about anything other than the very much endangered elephant in the room.

Psychologists have warned that there's a very real risk that humans will simply fail to respond to climate change in time because as a species, neurologically we simply don't respond well to problems that have delayed impacts. Look how hard it was to convince people to stop smoking cigarettes because of the delayed impacts. What an interesting corollary to carbon pollution. The science is clear, has been for ages, but denial, selfishness and addiction hold us back from taking effective action.

Australia is a top per capita carbon polluter, and that isn't even counting the fossil fuels we mine and export. This federal election feels like a march of the zombies. Distracted by fistfuls of cash in the form of pointless tax cuts, we are distracted from the very real threats to our economy, our society and the planet we rely upon.

The two party system in Australia is corrupt. Both parties are dominated by major corporate political donors, and we all know that the captains of industry do not hand out millions of dollars without expecting a return.

Whilst the Labor Party plays the game of being "not as bad" as the Liberal-National Party (LNP) we are all caught in a collective race to the bottom. The LNP are dangerous corporate nut-jobs, Labor are neo-liberal centrists but like a kinder uncle who will do a better job of social policy but who fundamentally doesn't get the environment. Just today (before I wrote this) federal Labor announced they will direct yet another \$1.5 billion to subsidizing the expansion of fracking in Northern Australia. They can't and won't articulate a policy on Adani, or on new coal. The climate criminals that fund both major parties are still in control of parliaments before and after this federal election.

Both major parties will keep driving the Titanic towards the ice berg, but Labor will be fairer about how we rearrange the deck chairs along the way. Sadly the economic and social collapse that will result



by Aidan Ricketts

from stalled climate action will bite far more deeply into the lives of the poor, both domestically and globally.

There's a certain amount of gloom and despair that is unavoidable in this picture. So what can we do?

My first piece of advice relates to the election. Do not give a first preference vote to either major party. You have no choice at a federal election but to number every square, otherwise your vote will be informal, so the major parties know that one or the other of them is going to get your vote in the end.

Vote first for the environment and the climate. A first preference

vote for the Greens sends the message that the major parties are failing on climate change and the environment, that is the only way they will hear you. If you vote 1 Green then 2 Labor (and number every square) that is recorded officially as a Green vote that then flows to Labor as a preference. In terms of changing the government it is every bit as effective in kicking out the Liberals as it would have been if you had just voted Labor, but you have been able record it as a Green vote along the way. When your preference flows to Labor it is still worth exactly one whole vote, never more, never less, but it stops flowing once it reaches one of the two largest parties.

Don't be deceived by Labor supporters who try to tell you that a Labor first preference is the strongest way to kick out the Liberals, this is plainly untrue, your second or third preference is worth exactly as much, the only rule of thumb is to keep your preferred major party ahead of your least preferred major party.

It is depressing that we live in a corrupted two party system, but it is what we have to work with and understanding the power of our preferences is important.

Next, when you wake up after election day, it's time to get active. We are facing a climate emergency, and civil disobedience will be required to force governments to act.

Extinction Rebellion (XR) is an emerging global social movement for survival that has done its homework on the science of climate change, the emergency we face, and the power of civil disobedience to bring about rapid change. We saw this work at Bentley but now it needs to go global and national. XR are non-hierarchical, deeply committed to non-violence, and they also provide great resources for processing the grief and moving to courageous action. You can establish new chapters of any size in local communities and in case you haven't noticed they have been making a very big splash in the UK and Europe.

Our politicians will not fix this for us, we need to force the issue. There are so many worthy groups that need your support, Lock the Gate; North East Forest Alliance, and many more, but XR is well worth a look, go to: <https://ausrebellion.earth> and maybe you'll want to join the rebellion for our survival.

Climate revolution? It ain't gonna happen

by Bernardine Schwartz

There was a time when I lived in hope and thought the day would eventually come, when the public finally woke up and took to the streets demanding climate action. But if people persist in making it taboo to even discuss the topic, it ain't gonna happen.

So while people are distracted with the important things in life, such as social media, footy and crossing items off their bucket list, the planet heads towards an early grave.

According to nature.com, global warming will be still here for not only 10,000's of years but highly likely it could be 100,000's of years, and if we don't succeed in reducing emissions, concentrations of CO₂ will still be high enough to prevent an ice age even as far as 50,000 AD!

If we keep pretending everything is hunky dory, how are we ever going to get a government that's environmentally proactive?

The UN recently reported that extreme weather caused by global warming affected 62 million people last year and in the last 20 years, 4.5 billion people have been harmed in one way or another and these are statistics that society has got to STOP ignoring.

For those of you who don't consider it a global emergency, this might wake you up. The IPCC believes that climate change will begin to intensify this year, making it highly probable

that you and your family will be directly affected. We no longer live in normal times and I know there's a long list of other important issues but logic tells you that we won't survive without our planet and if we fail to elect a responsible government, we will all be sitting ducks.

Your vote determines the future of Australia and it's a privilege that many around the world don't have the benefit of. If you want to call yourself a responsible voter, it's imperative that you know exactly who and what you are voting for.

There are a lot of voters who tend to vote for the same party throughout their lives and for most of them, voting for another would be like changing their religion. Others see it as a chore and hastily vote with very little thought. Don't you think our country deserves better?

The last four years have been the hottest on record, not just for Australia but every corner of the world, as the use of fossil fuels continues to grow. Last year it increased by 1.7%, with 30% of all energy related emissions still coming from coal powered generation.

There are people who claim they want to save the planet but if the global economy keeps expanding, as it did last year by 3.7% and if we insist on worshipping money and retail therapy, our fate is set in stone. You can't have your cake and eat it too.

The Union of Concerned Scientists knows that limiting global warming in the decades to come is



Hurricane Michael's destruction

looking impossible when annual global emissions need to be 24 billion tons, instead of levels of 53.5 billion tons in 2017. How are we ever going to win this battle when we live in a world where it's every man for himself?

I hear it constantly: I've always wanted to own a... or I've always wanted to travel to... or I've always wanted to do... How do people live with themselves knowing full well, that their choices are feeding global warming and will eventually result in hurting others? This is everyone's home!

Our oceans and forests are dying and the list is long for species now extinct or endangered. Yet the majority of the public don't even have the decency to show a hint of remorse.

I was deeply saddened to hear about the Notre Dame cathedral, but something is seriously amiss when the

world mourns for the loss of a building and raises \$1.6 billion to repair it, while the Amazon, that has been here for 55 million years and home to a plethora of unique species, will be completely erased in 40 years. I don't see the world grieving for its demise.

Who appointed politicians to be the guardians of the planet and who gave them the responsibility of tackling climate change? They're not scientists but mostly greedy, short sighted businessmen and our scientists should be taking centre-stage, rather than left to write reports that are constantly dismissed year after year.

This federal government never could embrace renewable energy, when their intention has always been the promotion of fossil fuels. This is why they've halved Australia's Marine Parks, to allow offshore drilling,

something most Australians aren't aware of. Approval has been given to Equinor to commence drilling in our Great Australian Bight at the end of this year.

We now live in a world where corporations' rights outweigh that of individuals, and every year generous tax concessions are given by the federal government, totalling \$135 billion in lost revenue.

Roughly half of these concessions go into the hands of the wealthiest, including mining companies who always take the lion's share. According to Anglicare, these tax concessions equal six times the country's annual expenditure for Newstart.

Didn't Hockey say the age of entitlement was over?

Records from the Australian Taxation Office show the biggest companies, 354 of them, have paid no tax at all in the last three years, despite their

combined incomes totalling \$911 billion and this includes extremely wealthy individuals like Murdoch.

The fundamental duty of all governments is to ensure the safety of its citizens and protect the nation's assets. That includes our water and food security, something this government has failed to do, but what they do excel at, is being a loyal and devoted servant for the rich and powerful. Can you honestly say to yourself that this government deserves your vote?

On 18th May, we will all be carrying a huge responsibility so, please do your homework before you cast your vote. Show you care and vote not just on what will benefit you, but what will benefit all Australians.

I want my loved ones to have a chance to grow old. I'm sure you would want the same.

Italian Film Festival comes to Lismore

A special treat is in store for lovers of contemporary Italian movies. Lismore Friendship Festival has partnered with BCC Cinemas to host the inaugural 2019 Italian Film Festival in Lismore on Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th June.

The line-up of world class films for the festival opens with the acclaimed movie *Loro* directed by Paolo Sorrentino (*The Great Beauty & The Young Pope*). Saturday night's gala opening at 5.30pm introduces the seduction, glamour, corruption, drugs and raucous poolside parties: the life and times of scandal-plagued Silvio Berlusconi. The Academy Award-winning director offers spectacle and fashion with this dazzling, topical and no-holds-barred look at life in Italy under the glistening eye of modern Europe's most infamous politician. Sorrentino gradually unveils the complex personality and motivations of the billionaire former prime minister.

On Sunday, the play bill offers three great comedies: *The Last Prosecco* is a sparkling comedic mystery set amidst the competitive Prosecco business in the Veneto region. There, an awkward detective investigates the mysterious death of a gallant Count. As liberal in his criticism of a nearby factory as he is proud of his family's heritage of making the finest Prosecco in the rolling hills



– kills himself with the theatrical flair and style that have marked his life. The motives for the suicide are puzzling, the mystery deepens, a couple of the Count's enemies are gunned down and a bumbling police inspector is assigned to the baffling case!

Put Nonna in the Freezer examines whether it is acceptable to swindle the state when the state swindles you. This is the doubt that grips Claudia, a young art restorer who manages to make ends meet thanks to her grandma's pension.

When her grandma suddenly passes away, bankruptcy seems to be looming, so Claudia, with the complicity of her staff, "freezes" her grandma so she can continue to collect her pension until the state pays her what she is due. Just when the solution to Claudia's problems seems finally close, the most incorruptible – and clumsiest – officer in the Tax Police

turns up. Amidst ingenious deceptions, disguises and misunderstandings, the young art restorer's scam will begin to melt like a frozen grandmother in the sun.

My Big Gay Italian Wedding is based on the hit off-Broadway play, it's a merry comedy of matrimony as newly engaged Antonio brings his fiancé Paolo to his hometown to meet his headstrong parents. It's a quest to make a city founded on religious tradition understand that love is love. Antonio and Paolo are finally getting married in the stunning old Italian village where Antonio grew up.

All the movies in the inaugural line up are available for the first time on the northern rivers. They are dedicated to the passions of the growing audience interest in Italian language cinema.

The Lismore Friendship Festival is committed to providing a great portfolio of diverse Italian culture to the district. The Piazza in the Park on Sunday, 23rd June, offers a fun-filled free family-friendly outdoor experience of food and wine, great music and dancing, games, language classes, displays and still more food to share with locals and visitors. For more info, visit the Friendship festival website at: www.LismoreFriendshipFestival.com.au

Perfect Strangers

by Therese Biscoe

Don't try this at home.

Perfect Strangers caused a degree of soul-searching on release in 2017 Italy, and no wonder.

It's about seven friends who come together for a regular dinner: one challenges the others to a truth game in which they must share whatever communications come through on their phones during the evening.

Apparently, some Italians were shocked at the level of lies and deception. Lucky there's none of that here.

"We don't have any secrets," says Eva (Kasia Smutniak), whose idea it is.

She and her husband Rocco (Marco Giallini), a plastic surgeon, are the hosts. Their apartment is huge, with a big balcony from which to watch the eclipse that gives the party a little lunacy.

Eva is a psychologist with a diabolical streak – no-one sensible would suggest such a game.

The rest are not as rich. Cosimo (Eduardo Leo) drives a taxi and dreams of get-rich-quick schemes. His new wife, Bianca (Alba Rohrwacher), a

vet, adores him and sees no blemishes.

They have gathered to meet the new girlfriend of the bumbling bachelor Peppe (Giuseppe Battiston), who arrives without the girl. A fever, he explains, but we can see he's lying.

That leaves one seat free at the big square table on which they eat a series of fabulous dishes (if nothing else, the movie will make you hungry).

This is where director Paolo Genovese puts his camera, as a way of including us in the action. That's a smart response to the film's biggest challenge – how to make a one-set, dialogue-driven script cinematic, rather than just a filmed play.

Audiences won't worry much about it being static if they are laughing at good dialogue and seeing the characters squirm. It would



be easy to do this script badly – a mechanical wheeling out of one embarrassing moment after another.

Come to think of it, that's what Genovese does; and yet he works hard on the characterisations. Cosimo may be a stereotypical Italian man – a combination of serial seducer, braggart and mama's boy – but Rocco the surgeon is wise and witty, an honourable man.

There is a duality at work in the characters. They may be vulnerable, imperfect people, but they are trying. None of them is mean.

The Italian critics applauded Genovese for attempting to revive one of the most important local genres – the so-called commedia all'Italiana, or "comedy Italian style", that ran from the late 1950s until the early 1980s. That's brave but risky; times have moved on.

In a quiet way, *Perfect Strangers* does that too. It certainly attacks the way mobile phones have taken over our lives, but the malaise here is not technical. Among these seven friends, secrets are the only constant.

Genovese says he took the premise from a line by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the Colombian novelist, that we all have three lives – one public, one private, one secret.

It might have been nastier in the hands of a less experienced director but Genovese handles it with delicacy. They might all be liars, but who's going to throw the first stone?

The film is being screened on Saturday 11th May at the Birth and Beyond meeting room, 54 Cullen Street Nimbin. Doors open at 6.30pm, movie starts at 7pm. Light refreshments available.

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**BOOKS
 CRYSTALS
 GIFTS**

47 Cullen Street, Nimbin
66 891 766



Jessie Vintila (with guitar), and the Mullumbimby Raise the Roof choir in 2015

Nimbin is about to tune up, bliss out and Raise the Roof with a new weekly choir session starting up on Monday evenings from 6-8pm.

Renowned choir director Jessie Vintila has been running Raise the Roof choirs all over the region for the last eight years, with about 90 singers who come together as a mass choir to perform.

Now Nimbin lovers of singing can join in the glorious, uplifting choir sessions, held at Birth and Beyond.

According to Jessie, whose choir directing spans over 20 years, "The

scientific evidence for singing as the ultimate health tonic is growing all the time, but people who sing in choirs have known this forever – group harmony singing feels amazing!

"No matter how you feel when you arrive at choir, you'll feel great at the end of the session. You don't need to read music, or sing by yourself.

"Even people with the most basic singing ability get the chance to improve, build confidence, and become wonderful contributors to the group, in a safe and fun environment."

Jessie brings together fantastic soul, jazz, gospel, folk and bluegrass arrangements, and some beautiful songs from her Spanish Sing the Camino walking singing tours.

Come along to the opening night at 6pm on Monday 27th May and get hooked on the addictive good vibes of vocal harmony.

Five week terms are \$80, \$70 concession, or casual \$19. Joining mid-term is fine, and barter may be an option.

Contact: info@raisetheroofof singing.com or phone 0417-277-211 to register.

Elect to laugh at the Byron Comedy Festival

The Byron Comedy Festival falls on election weekend and there's no better way to spend what otherwise could be a very depressing day, so get your tickets now!

With names like Glenn Robbins, Dave O'Neil, Peter Rowsthorn, Dave Thornton, Denise Scott, Nikki Britton, Mel Buttle, and the best of the Brits (Jeff Green, Bob Franklin and Dan Willis) and of course Mandy Nolan and Ellen Briggs, this is a sensational weekend of comedy that you don't want to miss out on.

Best of British is showing over Friday 17th and Saturday 18th May, starring UK comics Jeff Green, Bob Franklin and Dan Willis. This is one of the perennial favourites at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

Saturday's headline comedy show is The Comedy Collective and stars Dave Thornton from The Project, who has been busy with his



Denise Scott



Dave Thornton



Nikki Britton



Mel Buttle

solo show at Sydney and Melbourne Comedy Festivals. He will be joined by two of Australia's rising stars of the comedy circuit, Nikki Britton and Mel Buttle.

Direct from London, Circus Director and Burlesque teacher Alex Frith has been busy running a very special Burlesque workshop – called Show Us Ya Wits!

For the last five weeks, a group of keen amateur and semi-professional performers have been meeting to present a cutting-edge gender-blending age-defying show. Show us Ya Wits is

on Saturday 18th May at 10.45pm.

Sunday 19th May sees Dancing with the Stars Host and Studio 10 panelist, Denise Scott performing for a very special Sunday morning brekky comedy show.

Comedian Mandy Nolan is also about to embark on a stand-up comedy workshop for kids the weekend before the Comedy Festival, taking two groups – 8-12 year olds and 13-17 year olds through a crash course in stand-up.

They'll be performing their first five-minute comedy

routine at the Festival on Sunday 19th May.

Joel Salom teams up with his famous Australia You've Got Talent electric dog Eric and his REAL dog in a show especially created for the Byron Comedy Fest: Talking Dogs. An incredible family show by the International Man of Circus!

The Comedy Festival closes with Women Rule The World Comedy Debate, with comedy teams headed up by Mandy Nolan and Ellen Briggs. The larger than life ladies of laughter take charge of their teams that include Jonathan Atherton, Greg Sullivan, Dusty Rich and Lindsay Webb and go head to head on a very topical subject.

The venue, Byron Surf Club, only holds 200 per session, so organisers are advising to get in quick with ticket purchases.

Go to the website to get your tix, and the full programme: byroncomedyfest.com

NIMBIN BOWLO



25 Sibley Street Nimbin. Phone 6689-1250

What's On in May?

- Sunday 26th – Northern Rivers Fishing Club visit
- Open Mic Nights – Wednesdays 15th & 29th
- Saturday 11th – Nimbin Jazz Club
- Social Bowls – Sundays 9am
- Courtesy Bus – Enquire at Bar
- Social Membership – \$5

KENO First-timers and novice bowlers welcome

BISTRO – AND – LOUNGE

25 Sibley Street Nimbin. Phone 6689-1473

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT THIS MONTH

- Friday 10th, 6pm Brommers
- Friday 17th, 6pm Sayad
- Friday 24th, 6pm Sarah Stando
- Friday 31st, 6pm Mish
- Friday 7th June, 6pm Kobya

Lunch & Dinner Wed – Sat
 Sunday lunch specials
 Catering for functions of all budgets and tastes

Tantalise your inner Italian

The 2019 Lismore Friendship Festival's – Piazza in the Park will certainly tantalise your inner Italian. The community celebration that acknowledges the contribution Italian settlers have made to the region's cultural heritage will titillate the taste buds with authentic Italian favourite flavours, have bodies dancing to the beats of traditional music and promises to provide a fabulous free family friendly outdoor event in Lismore's CBD at Spinks Park on Sunday, 23rd June from 10am to 3pm.



Photo: Peter Derrett

In recent years the Festival has attracted thousands of attendees to Spinks Park in Lismore's CBD to enjoy a day with a twist of humour, fellowship and active involvement in arts and leisure activities along with conspicuous consumption of authentic Italian delicacies.

It is the main feature of the Festival's annual program encouraging attendees to become Italian for the day!

There are number of exciting elements taking place in June this year. The outdoor riverside location is filled with Italian music, Italian food and Italian wine and a number of diverse activities with a distinctive Italian twist.

The Festival runs between 10-3pm and is on the day

after Lismore's iconic Lantern Parade (which will be celebrating 25 years in 2019).

Locals and visitors will be tempted to play a round of bocce with friends, cheer on a team in the tug-o-war challenge, sing and dance along with the kids at the popular Curly Cousins performances, gyrate with the tarantella accompanied by Domenico and his Latin Mafia Band all day, dress up and perform with Antonio Mazzella a commedia dell'arte performer, chat to owners of fancy Italian motor bikes, all the while tasting amazing pasta, pizza, polenta, gelato, classic desserts, sip Prosecco in excellent company with great coffee!

"The park will be pumping," says festival manager Alison

Kelly. "People of all ages and stages will be able to sit and listen to the accordions or feast on fine fare at our food market stalls, buy specialist Festival-inspired merchandise, share stories with visitors in a human history project in the CWA Rooms or take a few lessons in the Italian language," Alison said.

• For the first time, an Italian Film Festival will run on the weekend 15-16 June (see story p15);

• Commedia dell'arte workshops with Antonio Mazzella, a professional drama teacher specialising in this Italian improvised comedy will again be a feature for a series of school workshops;

• Italian Masterclasses on Monday, June 24 are

being prepared to offer participants an opportunity to work with experts in Italian cooking including pasta making and Italian opera singing;

• Cafes and Restaurants across the city will join in celebrating Italian food, wine and coffee by offering up a specific Italian dish on their menus for the month of June. Patrons will have an opportunity to participate in collecting stamps on a card, promote the cafes on social media and go into a draw to win a prize on the day;

• An off-line and on-line history game is being developed that aims to entertain and inform the general public about the historical influence Italians brought to the region as well as finding ways to link Lismore with its sister cities in Italy. The game invites people to get out and explore the area whilst searching for answers on our rich Italian history.

Put these special dates on your 2019 cultural calendar. Invite your family and friends from far and wide to join you for a great day out.

Come for the whole weekend and experience the iconic 25th Lismore Lantern Parade the day before the 2019 Lismore Friendship Festival's Piazza in the Park.



Elena B Williams

Elena B Williams is an Australian-Samoan singer-songwriter currently living in Byron Bay. She started her music career at a young age, at one of her dad's poetry readings in the Oxford Street Café, Perth. Poets have long inspired singers and songwriters, and Elena is no exception, with poetry finding its way into her improvised lyrics.

Inspired by artists like Nina Simone, Patti Smith, Bob Dylan and Tracey Chapman, Elena began singing and playing guitar at the age of 15, with no intention of making it a career, it was just a fun thing to do. After three months of playing music, Elena was hooked.

She says, "When you find a place of freedom, how can you ever leave it? That's music to me, complete freedom."

Elena's music is a unique blend of soul, folk, jazz, blues and alternative, but really a sound all of her own.

With a powerful voice that hits you in the heart and honest lyrics that tell stories of life as it is, of human emotion, her Samoan heritage and a desire to celebrate the beauty of nature, Elena's songs will take you on a journey and connect you to yourself and the world around you.

Elena will perform during May: on Friday 10th at Fresh Cafe, Byron, 7pm-9pm; Saturday 11th at Sabi Sushi, Ocean Shores, 6pm-7.30pm; Sunday 12th at Sphinx Rock Cafe, Mount Burrell, 12pm-3pm; and Saturday 18th at Lulu's Cafe, Mullumbimby, 11am-1pm.

B	I	N	G	O
74	22	7	25	77

BINGO EVERY MONDAY 6PM

Live Music Thursday to Saturday from 7pm

May 2019

TUESDAY 7PM TRIVIA NIGHT

Thursday 9th Q 7pm

Friday 10th Mrs Hippy & the Love Handles 7pm

Saturday 11th Luke Houselander 7pm

Thursday 16th Surf Report 7pm

Friday 17th Dreams of Indigo 7pm

Saturday 18th Slim Pickens 7pm

Thursday 23rd Comedy Night Open Mic 6.30pm

Friday 24th Kiara Jack 7pm

Saturday 25th Doug & Biko 7pm

Thursday 30th Surf Report 7pm

Friday 31st Burger Joint 7pm

Saturday 1st June Wil Massey 7pm

Poker Night Every Wednesday 6pm

Joker Poker Every Thursday

53 Cullen Street Nimbin NSW (02) 66891246



Photo: Sue Stock

The world according to Magenta Appel-Pye

Recently I attended the Stop Adani rally at Mullumbimby Showground (pictured). Over 3,000 people encouraged a convoy led by electric cars on their way from Hobart going to the Galilee Basin and on to Canberra for their final protest there on 5th May. Intelligent, impassioned speeches given by Bob Brown, Mia Thom and Muz made me cry and I was not the only one. It is disgusting madness that Adani has been given the right to mine this precious land that would mean the death of the Great Barrier Reef and do endless damage to the water table there. We all know there will be fuck-all jobs as it will be largely automated and most of the profits will end up overseas. These dinosaur politicians who happily sell off our assets to the highest bidder with no concern for our already fragile environment should be held accountable and

made to pay for their profiteering, nepotism and self-serving greed. Mia Thom, who spoke so well at the rally, organised, along with Ella Whan, the Byron student's protest about climate change, while 15-year-old Beth Cooper-Wares from Nimbin Central led the Lismore protest. I fully applaud the students' actions, especially to protest in school hours – they get more attention that way. This is the most important issue in all of our lives. Greed has got to stop. Money will be useless when our planet becomes devastated by heat and natural disasters. The currency then will be clean water, shelter and food – back to the basics. Communities will survive through mutual support, co-operation and sharing. The people of Ukraine have voted a comedian as their President but for us in Australia, Scott Morrison and this present government are no laughing matter and they have to go. Please think of the young people and the planet, and vote sensibly.



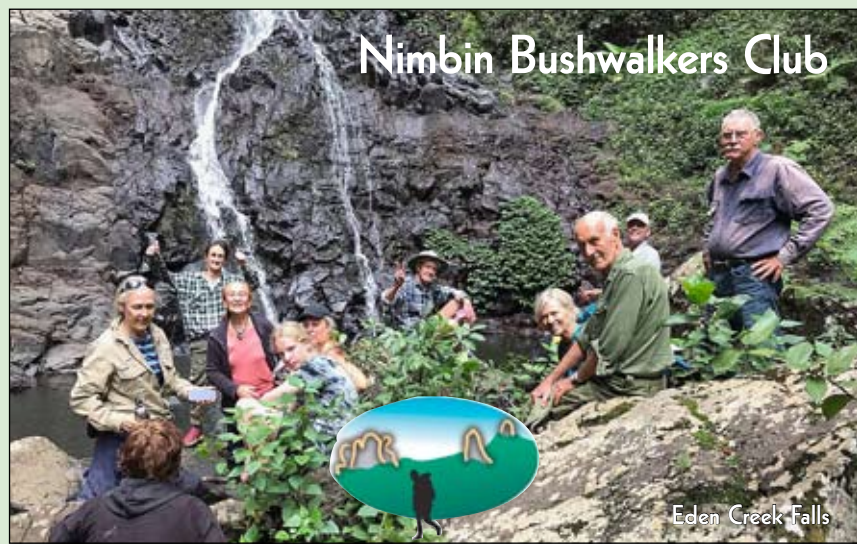
She says

Dear Kay, if you can be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains, if you can understand when your loved ones are too busy to give you any time, if you can take criticism and blame without resentment, if you can face the world without lies and deceit, if you can conquer tension without medical help, relax without liquor, and sleep without the aid of drugs; if you can honestly say that you have no prejudice against creed, color, religion, gender preference, or politics; then you have almost reached the same level of spiritual development as your dog! Dog spelled backwards is god. The Buddhist monks believed that when the master of the Lhasa Apso dog died, the master's soul reincarnated into the body of the dog if he was not quite ready for Nirvana. So how can we mere humans compete with these cute, fluffy, semi-enlightened beings? You try locking your man and your dog in the shed all day and see who gives you the better reception when you get home: however, in my case, Uncle Norm enjoys being in his shed so much, especially with the dog for company, that he probably wouldn't even notice I'd gone. Human relations are much trickier. All the dog has got to do is lie around waiting for attention, walkies and food. What's not to be happy about? Even though dogs whine, bark, be uncooperative, downright disobedient and sometimes even give you the evil eye, somehow no-one holds that against them. Why is it that people can be so generous with their love, affection, words and time with their dogs, but not give anywhere near as much to their human loved ones? Ask your husband to try and give you at least as much loving attention that he gives the dog. Is that really too much to ask? If he does this, he's going to have a much happier wife and remember, happy wife, happy life. However, if it is a guide dog, then you haven't got a hope. **If I throw a stick, will you leave?**

He says

Dear Kay, you're probably right. The problem is that you're up against a far superior being. All that unconditional love and unstinting loyalty, combined with a bubbly, playful personality, topped off with a cute, furry face that's just irresistible, means you are well and truly behind the eight ball. The dog doesn't care that its master is porking on the weight, or that he smokes and drinks too much. It doesn't give a shit if he's left a mess or forgotten to do a household chore. Fido is non-judgmental if you haven't washed or shaved for a few days and look and smell like a billy goat. In fact, dogs like that sort of thing. Fact is, your husband probably has more in common with the dog than with you in that they share similar values and lifestyles. It all goes back to ancient times when men would take their dogs with them to hunt for food or to round up livestock. Dogs and man spent so much time together they've taken on each other's characteristics. My little she-wolf has often said she lives with a pig and a dog. If you try to compete with the dog for your husband's affections, you're wasting your time. You'll look pretty silly rolling around on the floor with your arms and legs akimbo: although I do like those soft, fluffy jumpers my wifey wears in winter. No, you've got to remember you're a human, and a woman at that. You've got to remind him that he's human too in ways that only a woman knows how. Above all, you shouldn't worry too much about it. These shenanigans are just silly blokey/doggy stuff and I'm sure deep down they both know who the true alpha dog is in your house. **Woof! I had to get rid of my wife. The dog was allergic.**

Send your relationship problems to: normanappel@westnet.com.au



The Rainforest still lives, and is a wonder to behold.

*We dallied in the rainforest green,
With epiphytes and fungi of eden's dream,
Warm & safe & moisture rich,
They grew on giant Ents, who welcomed
them as friends, (and us),
One with planet Avatar. Interconnected.
The forest green, with Toona Ciliata*

*Australis, giant figs, & native wisteria,
Just like some proliiferia.
Groves of Bangalow palms, and buttresses
of our "teak", Flindersia Australis.
The bellbirds pinged their notes, and the
small whip-birds talked together.
I am glad I've had the chance,
To appreciate what the phylum of plants
have taught me.*

Gary



During April, we were fortunate to complete our two walks, the rains came and went and on the days we had gorgeous weather and were not disappointed in our adventures. Trini's backyard, not far from Nimbin, gave us a great experience in both terrain and environment as we made our way through the gullies and scrub where Trini has rejuvenated and reforested her land. With years of hard work, the results were stunning, lantana cleared, weeds and introduced vegetation taken out and the replanting of original natives has given the long meandering walking trails she has created a relaxing and enjoyable experience

back to nature. Thanks Trini for sharing your home with us. Our weekend away with two day-walks took us to one of our favourite camp areas, Iron Pot Creek. 14 walkers took on Eden Creek Falls on the Saturday and it is not a long walk, a bit slippery on loose ground and muddy underfoot, but we took our time and spent plenty of time by the creek and falls, very enjoyable. The Sunday saw us on the Murray Scrub loop with its lush forest and giant red cedar, again loved by all and with some new members and some young enthusiastic children in tow. All is travelling nicely for the Nimbin Bushwalkers.

WALKS PROGRAMME

Sunday 12th May – Goanna Headland at Evans Head

Leader: Megan 0415-063-302
Grade: 2-3 Meet at 10am at Chinaman's Beach car park. Two beautiful coastal walks: each year we come here and we never tire of this wonderful spot and a nice coffee afterwards. Goanna Headland is followed – after lunch at the beach – by a walk through Dirrawong reserve. Each walk is about 1.5 hours
Bring: water, lunch and a hat.

Saturday 18th – Saturday 25th May – K'gari (Fraser Island)

14 Members are off for 8 days and 7 nights staying in rental houses at Happy Valley on the eastern/ocean side of the island, doing parts of the Great Walk and visiting some of the famous lakes and other special places on the island. This trip is booked out, so maybe again next year.

Sunday 9th June – Terania Creek Basin to Gracie's Spire, Nightcap National Park

Leader: Judy Hales, who knows this area well. Register with Peter 0412-656-498
Grade: 4. Mostly off-track there will be some slippery rocks and rough walking particularly after rain. We will walk through wild, rugged rainforest, the site of the historic battle to save this precious patch of pristine forest. Plenty of lush rainforest and hopefully plenty of water over the falls. This is one of the gems of this World Heritage-listed area. Meet at 9.30am at the picnic area at the end of Terania Creek Road, 15km from The Channon.
Bring: the usual, hat, drinking water, lunch and good bushwalking boots/shoes.



Police overkill fails to dampen festival

by Michael Balderstone

The police raid on the HEMP Embassy the day before MardiGrass was of course not ideal timing, but it didn't affect the weekend much.

Maybe it stopped some people coming, but really, Nimbin is not big enough or set up to have huge crowds.

And the police reports of what they took from the Embassy sounded much worse than it was. You know how it goes, each seedling is worth two grand and each gram twenty bucks, so a bag of leaf sounds like it's worth a fortune, but of course it isn't. And we don't sell weed anyway, so the value, reported by police as \$93,000, is irrelevant.

And yes, the police presence was unnecessarily huge over the weekend, but it made me realise yet again how resilient our community is, and how used to getting a hard time has made us shrug it off easily. MardiGrass has become more and more for the serious protestor. You're going to have to want to come.

And fortunately plenty did. It was a terrific Sunday Rally. Lots of passion and determination and creativity.

The Nim-FM live radio float was a highlight for me, Johnny Bayles amongst us on Koori radio as we marched down the street.

The village had the least amount of traffic on its roads that I have ever seen. On the busiest weekend of the year! The two black public order and riot squad shadows moved endlessly back and forth up and down the street, almost alone, making me think we were under threat from somewhere, but we weren't. Except for the saliva testing.

And for country people whose licence is critical, it is a big threat.

Every now and then a normal car drove through, but not many. They may have been the UBER, UBUD or DOOBER cars, or friends looking after each other, which is what this community is going to have to do, because I can't see RDT changing in a hurry.

It's hard to argue, also. Drug driving sounds so dangerous. Like drunk driving. And yet it's totally different. They just haven't been able to sort drug testing like they have alcohol testing. It's a whole different ball game, and the people making the rules I suspect don't have



The Ganja Faeries get their dancing shoes on
Photo: Linda Fox

a lot of drug experience, and they're trying to do it like grog. Not the same at all.

Road safety has to be about impairment, we all agree, and it's not at the moment. Maybe one day, but meanwhile we might be spending more time in our gardens. Can't be a bad thing can it?

There were many highlights for me. Jingles built an amazing stage down by the creek in the week before, with some help from a few excellent volunteers. It's so

beautiful we can't pull it down.

S Sorrensen and Alan Glover's HEMP Olympix has become legendary and now they have a book out to prove it (available in the Embassy). The memorial Bong Throw and Yell with world record holder Gary the Plumber's ashes in the bongs was sensational, only to see his decade-old record broken soon after, twice. Comedy is happening more and more in MardiGrass, and don't we need it.

The daily Jungle Patrol street cleaners need acknowledgement. It's so easy to take for granted that every

morning over MardiGrass we come out to freshly-swept footpaths, looking scrubbed clean.

Sue from the Mullum Spaghetti Circus, together with a great team, recycled so efficiently that we really only needed one skip instead of four.

So many locals come out of the woodwork for MardiGrass each year and all contribute in unique ways. Heidi's Jungle Patrol is invaluable, and a big thank you to the locals who joined in. Stephanie our market fairy is the real deal.

Miss Guidance who behind the scenes is the glue and

Hemposium organiser; Luka who didn't stop running for the last fortnight; Des who did all the electrics while smiling constantly (how does he do that?), and the drug free drivers who were critical.

Graeme's lanterns, Rodney's loads of wood, Martin's Hemp Expo, Gail and her crew managing the Hall, Louise who cleaned the toilets, Caroline who managed the vollen kitchen, Gilly the Town Hall kitchen, and Rayman and Keys who came for the two weeks before.

Juliska for the fashion show and the bubbles, David Hallett for the wondrous Great Green Cabaret on Friday night and more, Elspeth's artwork everywhere, Max Stone for "supervising" the police raid, Jay for the TV advert, and all the others, as in hundreds, who contributed. It's dangerous naming anyone, as it really is a genuine community effort.

The HEMP Embassy would like to thank everyone, sincerely, who made the effort to come and protest with us. Hopefully you enjoyed yourself.

Thanks are also due to the locals who once again put up with the many inconveniences of parking queueing and getting around the village with the large number of visitors, both in and out of uniform.

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