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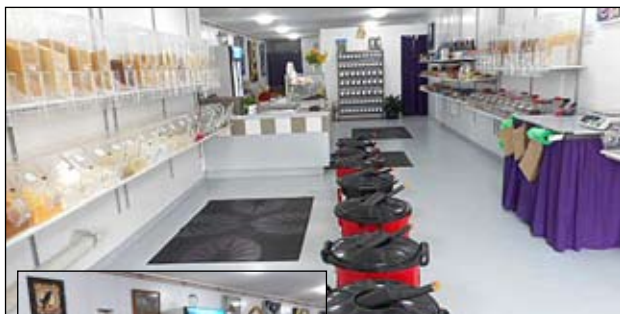
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We need trains on our tracks

by Beth Shelley

A lot of people in the Northern Rivers have given up in despair that we'll ever get trains back in this area.

We've been told by successive governments that they can't afford to pay for public transport because the cost is too high and the condition of the track is bad. The Northern Rivers Railway Action Group (NRRAG) don't believe this is true, and I'm going to tell you why.

I want to tell you about the differences in estimated costs for the Casino to Murwillumbah line, then compare rail to roads across Australia in terms of the hidden costs of carbon emissions, road accidents, heavy vehicle costs, damage to roads and social equity.

The ARUP report of 2012 estimated the cost to restore the 130km of track as \$953 million which is \$7.25 million per km. The Alice Springs to Darwin railway (The Ghan) cost \$1,200 million for 1,420 kms. There were several major river crossings, nearly 90 smaller bridges and 1,500 culverts. The Darwin railway cost \$845,000/km for a new train line in 2004.

'Elements of Byron' are currently putting a train on three kms of track at Byron - the estimated cost is \$1 million. The train, a 660 series two car rail motor (pictured), should be up and running by Easter 2016.

So, if the Casino to Murwillumbah line was costed at the same rate as the Ghan, it would cost about \$110 million and at the Byron train rate it would only cost \$43 million, to fix the whole line (and supply the trains to run on it), not \$953 million as proposed in the Government's ARUP Report.



Elements of Byron's heritage train, a 660 series 2-car rail motor, to run between Sunrise Beach and Byron township, scheduled to start operating from Easter.

Geoff Clark, the railway engineer from 'Elements of Byron', has recently given an overall estimate of \$2 million to \$2.5 million per kilometre, if all the bridges along the line need concrete piers (some already have them). If we compare all these different costings, we find it very questionable that the ARUP costing is so high.

Once the Liberal/National Coalition got into power, Barry O'Farrell set up Infrastructure NSW and Nick Greiner was appointed the chairman. In 2012, Infrastructure NSW commissioned the ARUP report and the Liberal government declared the railway service unaffordable. Apparently, Nick Greiner is now the chairman of Lend Lease Infrastructure which is doing the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale upgrade to the Pacific Highway, (\$862 million for 17km). This works out to \$50 million per km.

We question whether there was a conflict of interest involved in the obviously overinflated costing of the ARUP report.

When it comes to a comparison of costs between rail and road, again we find questionable decisions made by governments. The Deloitte Report of 2011 states that "Australia is now the most intensive user of road freight in the world and has the least energy efficient, road passenger transport among members of the International Energy Association."

An article in the *Guardian* 2013 states: "Transportation is one of the fastest growing contributors to climate change, accounting for around a quarter of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions. Worldwide, road users account for about 71% of transport carbon emissions, with railway companies making up less than 1.8%, according to the International Energy Agency".

Recent statistics show that road accidents in the Northern Rivers have cost \$450 million over the last five years. Rail is approximately 200 times safer than travelling by road. Heavy-vehicle road freight users do not face the full maintenance

costs that they cause. Under-recovery of these costs has been estimated at between \$7,000 and \$10,500 per truck each year (Productivity Commission 2006 and NTC 2006).

The COAG Road Repair Program has explicitly stated that it does not intend to include social costs such as traffic congestion, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and accidents in the pricing reform process (CRRP 2010). In other words, the government has other reasons for preferencing roads over these serious and important issues.

The ARUP report failed to identify the prime consideration of the proximity of the Far North Coast to the Gold Coast and Brisbane and our region's business, health and tourism links with South-East Queensland.

There are many reasons why the Northern Rivers community needs and deserves a commuter railway system, but we need an honest and practical government that will give it to us.

Time for action on public transport

by Cr Basil Cameron, Byron Shire Council

The opening of the upgraded Ewingsdale to Tintenbar (T2E) section of the Pacific Highway has done nothing to relieve the chronic congestion and safety issues evident on local and regional roads.

In fact, it has exacerbated problems particularly in high growth areas such as the Ewingsdale corridor where development has exploded in recent years.

Once again coastal areas can expect a significant increase in day-trippers induced to travel further from South East Queensland by the highway upgrade. In 2005, visitor numbers increased by a massive 37% following the opening of the Chinderah to Yelgun upgrade.

A key reason why an upgraded highway brings so many problems is that State and Federal Governments have tended to view the north-south Pacific Highway as the key transport infrastructure for the region and concentrated funding accordingly. While highway safety has often been the stated reason for this funding bias, the reality has been that attention on safety and funding for regional and local

roads has not kept pace with highway developments.

Truth is that governments do not fund highway upgrades primarily to assist the region. The greater imperative is to link the economic centres at either end of major roads. This is reflected in the fact that heavy freight transport on the Pacific Highway will continue to increase at a rate fifty percent higher than the rest of the country. Meanwhile, funding to upgrade the North Coast rail line within the same transport corridor has languished with the share of freight carried on rail between Sydney and Brisbane likely to continue falling to less than ten percent.

With the opening of T2E, the Pacific Highway now has been upgraded to dual carriageway from the Queensland border to south of Ballina. This is the signal for a major overhaul of funding for transport infrastructure in the Northern Rivers. It is time that east-west routes are given greater attention and there be a redirection of funding to support the development of a proper public transport system that can meet the needs of locals and visitors.

Without a serious commitment of state and federal money to such projects, rates paid to local government will continue to be skewed to reactive funding. For example, the cost of funding a Byron bypass and duplication of Ewingsdale Road will likely exceed \$20 million.

Already this is drawing funds away from urgent priorities across the region and is likely to be repeated along the myriad east-west routes in the region experiencing similar problems. It is already apparent that this is unsustainable and unlikely to lead to a significant improvement in the effectiveness of our transport networks.

The rail line connecting the North Coast rail line at Casino with Lismore, Bangalow, Byron Bay, Mullumbimby, Ocean Shores and Murwillumbah is ideally placed to complement and improve the efficiency of our transport network and at a much lower cost than never-ending highway and road development.

Significantly, a rail link has a far greater potential to relieve congestion and safety impacts as well as assist in a more efficient, sustainable use of funding for transport.

Oz Day gong for local



The Gardiman family: Armando, Guerrino (Gerry), Elena and Loretta

A former Nimbin local was awarded an AM this year for significant service to the law, and to the community, through the provision of legal advice to asbestos disease research institutions.

Armando Gardiman was born in Nimbin in the 50s. He is the son of an Italian migrant who first set eyes on the valley in 1944 while a prisoner of war employed as farm labour. The family, like many migrants at that time, were incredibly poor. Despite that, Armando went on to become a leading Sydney lawyer, while his sister became director of nursing at Nimbin Hospital.

Armando has probably done more for victims of asbestos than any other lawyer in the country. In 1982, while still a very junior solicitor, he took on James Hardie and won. His victory set a precedent that has allowed tens of thousands of sufferers of asbestos diseases, including mesothelioma (a terminal lung cancer), to be compensated by James Hardie due to their manufacture and sale of deadly products.

He also set the precedent that saw CSR compensate families and children from the asbestos mining town of Wittenoom.



Making a splash at Pool Olympics

by Sue Edmonds

The fifth Olympics at the pool was another huge well-attended event, and the competitors excelled, as elite athletes tend to do.

It was wet, wet, wet, appropriate for our celebration of water. Everyone was well soaked with the heavy rain, but the show went on regardless.

This year the winners were Louise on the crocodile, Sally in the backstroke, the float marathon was shared by four champion floaters: Beverly, Michael, and twins Khatia and Luca.

The marathon was well contested and won by Michael, while Sally and Louise (pictured, right) carried off the 3-legged race and also the inaugural volleyball competition. Most of the babies were saved, the ducks were rounded up by clever children using their legs and bellies, and Sue B won walking backwards for the second year.

Michael and Sue B looked stunning in the poolside fashion parade and were awarded for their efforts. The Feign Jondas managed to win the synchronised swimming competition for the second year and Deb Woodbridge (pictured, top) accepted their award. The Pink Posa looked amazing and declared they'll be back again next year, and Slippery When Wet entertained the masses with their depiction of Nimbin chooks in water, a difficult brief, but well executed.

Thanks to the Friends of the Nimbin Pool for



organising this annual celebration, to the Emporium and Nimbin Bakery for their donations, and to Jane Treasure for MC-ing at such short notice, and to all those who donated cakes and biscuits to go with the sausages/tea/coffee/cordial.

We live in hope that the LCC will do something between seasons to the surface of the pool which has been crumbling away and lifting all year. The caretaker of the pool, John, does a mighty job in vacuuming up the debris and keeping the pool clean for users, but unfortunately the patching keeps breaking down.

The Friends of the Pool are ready to contribute towards some of the costs of paint and to labour where they can, but it needs a commitment of some funds from the LCC to get the pool in better shape.

The pool is a wonderful asset to our community, appreciated and enjoyed during the six months it is open.

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New faces at the servo

Well-known Nimbin locals Josh Stanton and Tash Fuller (pictured) have taken over the lease of the Nimbin Service Station, and have now been cheerfully serving customers since the start of the year.

The shop has a new look too, with a new floating floor and a heated cabinet for Nimbin Bakery pies and sausage rolls, and there are more changes in the offing.

Josh said, "We're adding a few new things in the shop, but it's pretty much steady as she goes at the moment."

"We're adding to our grocery lines and stock feed, and welcome suggestions from people about things they need," he said.

The servo has extended its opening hours to 7pm on weekdays, to align with closing time at the Emporium. Weekends and public holiday hours remain 8am-6pm.

Say g'day next time you need fuel, oils, stock and pet feed, gas, bulk water, groceries or snack food.

Changing of the guard at Chamber of Commerce

by Teresa Biscoe

After a very busy end of year for all Nimbin business owners, it is my pleasure to introduce the newly elected Nimbin Chamber of Commerce to the community.

We would like to thank Eugenie Stephans and Peter Wise, who resigned after serving many years on the Chamber, for all the work and service that they have done on behalf of the Nimbin Business community in their roles on the Chamber Committee.

The new chamber is; President Teresa

Biscoe (Co-ordination Co-operative); Vice-president Darren Butcher (Nimbin Bakery); Secretary David Spain (Nimbin Law); Treasurer Peter Hughes (Nimbin Tax & Accounting). Ordinary committee members: John Seymour (Nimbin Cubes development); Diana Roberts (Nimbin Apothecary); Elen Jones (Happy High Herbs); Jane Mari (Armonica Cafe); David Piesse (Museum site redevelopment).

As most of the new committee members have not served on the Chamber of Commerce before, we are still finding our roles and investigating

how we can best serve our community.

We are keen to get input and feedback from the Nimbin business community and wider community and are currently discussing the best way to do this.

We intend to run some meetings soon where we can invite local businesses in for discussion and will be contacting people as soon as we can determine a productive working plan and agenda.

We are a diverse group of people and businesses that we hope will represent and pursue the best interests of our community to help create a vibrant and sustainable economic future for us all.

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Letters

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Letters to the editor

NGT welcomes letters by email or post by deadline. Letters longer than 300 words may be cut. Letters already published elsewhere will usually not be considered. Include full name, address and phone number for verification purposes. Opinions expressed remain those of the author, and are not necessarily those of NGT.

Letter of gratitude

The Ah Loy family would like to sincerely thank Dr Dan Oxley and staff at the Nimbin Medical Clinic and hospital for their amazing support and care extended to our mother and grandmother Helen in her final years with us.

It is dedicated and caring people like you who make this world a better place to live in, and you all made it better for her to be in.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Steve and staff at the Nimbin Pharmacy as well, for their exceptional assistance and care. Shine on, you crazy diamonds!

Much love and gratitude.

Lori, Anita, Sarah, Zack and Dylan

Fistful of dollars

Like so many people, I am very happy to see MetgasGONE. However, I seriously question the NSW Government's role in their going.

Why did it have to cost the people of NSW 24 million bucks to be rid of them? For heaven's sake, Metgasco share prices were down to about 2 cents a share and declining. Another month would have seen them in the hands of the receivers and GONE for good. For free.

So what was the point of giving them a bail-out? Was it to give what shareholders were left a final dividend? Lucky them if it was. Or to pay off creditors?

Whatever, that is not the role of government. Businesses go under all the time and don't get bailed out (unless you are a vehicle manufacturer).

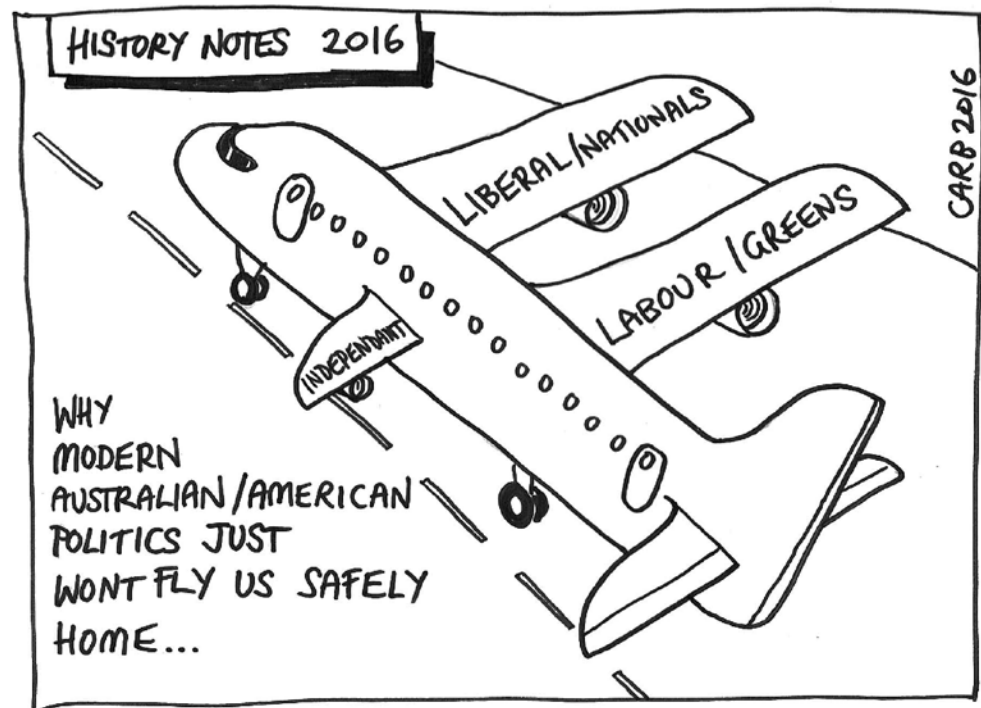
It makes me feel quite angry. 24 million dollars could have been put to much better use. And Metgasco didn't deserve one cent of it.

Peter Leishman
Upper Main Arm

A real Republic

As both leaders of our political parties are on the same page in regard to a republic, perhaps it is time to start the ball rolling in that direction. But let's not stop there. Being a small country population-wise, let's go the whole hog and sack the state governments. The savings would be immense.

Also at the same time take a



hard look at our relationship with America. As long as I can remember, I have been told the USA need a war going somewhere for their economy to flourish. The burning question is: do we have to be there with them?

I wonder how many of their allies really want to be there, bombing the crap out of Syria. The problem, as France has found out, is that you leave yourself open back home to local terrorists.

Also, bombs can't differentiate between the enemy and women and children used as shields.

The cost of this offensive is enormous, as is the money allocated for defence. As most countries are broke, where is the threat coming from? I think we could cut Defence in half, and have billions to spend on health and education, including free universities.

Brian O'Toole
Bilambil Heights

Honing the BS detector

The internet provides a voice to anyone and everyone, so consequently we are exposed to information from genuine experts to complete nutters!

Making sense of all this or choosing what to believe can be difficult, so perhaps it's useful to consider some basic guidelines in helping us to decide. A basic framework, or method upon which we can rely for guidance.

Our first port of call might be to examine our sources.

Who is writing the articles we read? Are they someone whose background matches the subject they claim to know? Are their views based on years of training and practice, or are they simply expressing their private fears from the comfort of a swivel chair?

Are the sources upon which we rely for our understanding of the world based on real-life, first hand experience, or are they the product of popular opinion?

Before we accept what someone has to say as 'fact',

it's important to give ourselves a chance to make such a decision. Listening with an open mind is important, yet accepting something as real and truthful requires discernment and careful consideration. It requires the time and opportunity to speak with informed friends, or compare our information with other sources.

Our point of view can be an on-going process in which we test or weigh the evidence. Rather than 'believing' wholeheartedly in dogma, we can respond to new information. Instead of setting our views in concrete, we can be flexible and responsive to new discoveries and technology. The sources we choose to accept should likewise be critical of themselves and willing to test, question or even alter their own conclusions.

Perhaps the way we think is equally as important as what we think.

R J Poole
Lismore

Gallery faces closure

The Serpentine Community Gallery urgently seeks input and assistance from the Lismore and wider community to continue its function as a local artists and artisans run co-operative.

We are an established gallery that has functioned in a voluntary capacity for over nine years and are an affordable and accessible space to display, market and promote artworks.

The beginning of the year brings an uncertain time

to Serpentine Gallery. We have opened sporadically throughout the holiday period and are looking to cement our future as Lismore's only completely self-sufficient community gallery.

The success of our previous nine years of operation is testament to the galleries vital function, offering a nurturing space for our local and regional artists and the support of the public... but we need to capitalise on this positivity and maintain our people power to re-energise the gallery.

Our AGM to decide our future will be held on Tuesday 9th February from 1-2 pm at the Serpentine Gallery, 17 Bridge Street, North Lismore. Our phone number is (02) 6621-6845, our website: www.serpentinearts.org

Susannah French
Lismore

Out of site out of mind

I'm going to dig a hole for a monument if something doesn't happen in the middle of town soon. Just build a bloody big banana shed and put a kitchen in it. People will come. And what about a permanent market place opposite on the museum site? What Christmas are you waiting for?

People, we have enough brilliant architects and talented people in Nimbin to make any building look like a piece of artwork. Or are too many architects designing over-structured palaces with no thought of Nimbin's diverse community?

Anthony Grassby
Nimbin

About us

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NEXT DEADLINE:
Wednesday 24th February

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

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Improving Soil Health

“Understanding our Soils” is being delivered by Judi Earl and Lewis Kahn of AIMS with funding provided by the National Landcare Programme. The project is hosting free workshops in Alstonville on 10th February and Murwillumbah on 11th February. Interested land managers and farmers can contact Judi Earl by email: judi@aimsag.com.au or phone 0409-151-969 for more information.

WIRES Course

Wildlife Rescue and Immediate Care course to be held Sunday 21st February. The course has an on-line component which can be completed at your own pace and a face-to-face workshop. Course is pre-requisite for becoming a WIRES volunteer. Cost is \$175, and includes first year’s membership of WIRES. Fees may be subsidised in certain conditions. For more information, call the 24/7 hotline on 6628-1898.

Nimbin Flix

AGM at Birth and Beyond, Nimbin at 7pm on Wednesday 10th February.
Screening *The Dressmaker* on Saturday 27th February at Birth and Beyond. Doors open 7pm for a 7.30pm start. Food and tea / coffee / chai available. Entry \$10 or membership \$25 until May.

Mothers Matter

New pregnancy & postnatal support group starting Wednesday 10th February at the Lismore Women’s Health & Resource Centre, 60 Uralba St (behind the bus stop, next to the Lismore Base Hospital). The group is on-going and will be run during each school term on Wednesdays, 10am-12pm. The first group program is from 10th February to 6th April. There is a weekly \$3 charge for morning tea. For information and to register please call 6621-9800. Places are limited, so booking is essential.

Bellydance

For fun and fitness with Biskit at Nimbin Community Centre on Fridays from 4-5pm starting 5th February. \$10 per class.

Chanting Circle

‘Songs of the Heart’, meeting 3rd Friday of the month, 6-8pm at Birth & Beyond, Nimbin. Everyone welcome.

Yoga classes at the Dharma Centre

The Dharma Centre is a purpose-built space on Lillifield Community at Wadeville. We invite all levels of experience to our classes and look forward to sharing Yoga with you. Mondays & Thursdays, 4pm; Wednesdays & Fridays, 9.30am. Phone 6689-7120 or follow us on Facebook: Dharma Centre Lillifield.

Reiki Circle

First Thursday of each month in Lismore. 5.30-8.30pm. Open to anyone who has completed any Reiki level. \$10 + bring a healthy plate. Info: www.helenecollard.com or 0405-656-797.

Soul Circle

Thursday 25th February, Lismore. 5.30-7.30pm, \$20. Listening. Sharing. Creative expression. Meditation. Men and Women welcome. Info: www.helenecollard.com or 0405-656-797.

Understanding Secondary Trauma

Wednesday 9th March in Lismore, 4.30-8.30pm, \$80. Workshop for everyday people & individuals in helping/ caring jobs. Info: www.helenecollard.com or 0405-656-797.

AGM

The Nimbin A&I Society will hold its Annual General Meeting at the Nimbin Showgrounds canteen on Tuesday 8th March at 6pm. All welcome. This month’s ordinary meeting will be held at the same venue and time on Tuesday 9th February.

Free Notices

Just keep it brief and interesting, and get it to us by deadline.

Prohibition – it begins and ends with violating our rights

During the 19th century English philosopher John Stuart Mill elucidated very coherent arguments about the proper role of the state in relation to personal liberties and personal choice. In essence, the law should only intervene to prevent us harming others. He argued that the state and society generally should avoid interfering in the personal life choices of individuals, partly because people deserved the right to their own experiments and partly because through experimentation, society advances.

In relation to drug prohibition, history has shown just how right Mill was about paternalistic laws. The primary impact of prohibition on our rights, begins by transgressing an individual’s right to choose what they do with their own mind and body, but worse still, its secondary impact is that it necessarily sets in motion a never ending erosion of everyone’s rights whether they use prohibited drugs or not and its tertiary impacts of corruption and organised crime are even worse.

Once we accept the state prohibiting private behaviours which concern no-one, other than the participants (and this would also include laws against diverse sexuality, sex work or drug use) then repressive enforcement mechanisms follow as sure as night follows day.

Victimless and complainant-less crimes are by their nature difficult to enforce. If someone robs or assaults you, your complaint to the police should set the enforcement process in train. There is a witness because there is a victim.



by Aidan Ricketts

With crimes of personal choice however, there is no complainant and so police enforcement is virtually impossible without then establishing the machinery of personal surveillance. What we have seen with decades of drug prohibition is the inexorable extension of police powers. Absurdly murderers are afforded greater legal protections from police enforcement activities than humble drug users. For drug users there’s sniffer dogs, phone tapping, forced car and body searches based on mere suspicion, helicopter raids, undercover police ‘sting’ operations, and the latest weapon, roadside drug tests.

Prohibition has set in train changes to criminal law that have reversed the onus of proof (deemed supply charges), enabled police to commit drug crimes in order to entrap suspects, and led to the position where NSW now has one of the highest rates of legalised electronic police surveillance in the world. Prohibition has wrought massive damage to the rule of law, to the concept of due process and to the traditional value of the presumption of innocence.

This corrosion of our legal

system is the ever expanding secondary harm of prohibition. It is a harm that affects everybody, whether they are drug users or not, because essentially under NSW law we are all treated as drug suspects every day of our lives.

But there is a tertiary harm to prohibition that extends even further, and that is the massive corruption, violence and organised crime that engulfs any society foolish enough to go down the path of criminalising private behaviours.

There are two types of harm associated with drug use, one is drug related harm, the other is prohibition related harm. Drug related harm describes the harms directly caused by the effects of the drug on a person’s mind or body. It may be personal physical or mental health impacts, or it may at times extend into behaviours that harm others such as violence, domestic violence and impaired driving. The health impacts are and should be a health issue, the harms on other people are quite rightly distinct crimes in themselves and this includes impaired driving.

But the overwhelming bulk of the social harms that we associate with drugs these days are actually prohibition related harms. The erosion of civil liberties, the official corruption, the massive waste of police and court resources, the poor quality drugs at festivals, massive organised crime activity, the petty crimes such as theft committed to fuel expensive drug habits, the piles of bloodied corpses at the Mexican border, the overcrowded prison systems

of the Australia and the US. There is a never ending social, economic and human catastrophe that has been created by the policy of prohibition.

The saddest irony in all of this is that prohibition of drugs has failed just as surely as prohibition of the sex industry has always failed. Humans will take drugs, humans will buy and sell sex, and attempts at prohibition only create much bigger problems than they seek to prevent.

All over the world governments are waking up not only to the failure of prohibition but to the massive cost of the secondary and tertiary harms that it generates. In the United States, the nation that has been the single greatest proponent of prohibition for nearly a century, the tide is turning fast, similarly in Europe, and South America, prohibition is in retreat.

Australia is becoming a stagnant backwater on this issue. Whilst we can see how pointless and painful prohibition has become we seem unable to move beyond it to a genuine harm reduction approach.

We are living in the historic aftermath of a failed policy, and most people can’t see the wood for the trees. When people talk about the problem of drugs, they are mostly ignorant of the fact that 80% of the problem with drugs is prohibition related harm itself. We should follow Portugal’s lead and end prohibition and redirect the massive resources into dealing with real drug related harms in the lives of individual citizens.

Families in crisis face epic delays

The Senate has called on the government to undertake a root-and-branch review of the Family Court under a motion initiated by Senator John Madigan and co-sponsored by six other members of the crossbench.

The motion provides that the review should lead to a new mechanism that is non-adversarial in nature and deals with family separation in a way that has a tangible and primary focus on the welfare of the child.

The motion also called on the government to recognise thousands of Australian children continued to be harmed by a family law system that is not fit for purpose.

“This is an historic moment for all of us fighting for change in the Family Court,” Senator Madigan said.

“The government is now on notice that the Senate recognises there are deep and significant problems in the Family Court that must be addressed as a matter of urgency.”

Senator Madigan called the motion, “a first step in the right direction”.

“But this must be followed up by action and I will be writing to the Attorney-General George Brandis to obtain details of the government’s root-and-branch review of the family law system, when it will start and its terms of reference,” Senator Madigan said.

“Many thousands of Australian families believe the *Family Law Act* should be revised, simplified, shortened and based

on the long-term welfare of children. Now this is the will of the Senate.

“The Attorney General and the Prime Minister must act. Australian children must come first.”

Top judge uses gong to hit out

The Senate motion comes on the back of Australia’s top family law judge Chief Judge John Pascoe using his Australia Day honours acceptance to highlight how he says the court system is leaving children at risk.

He agreed that family law matters involving children should take no more than a year to resolve. In Wollongong, the wait for a final hearing for a family law matter in the Federal Circuit Court is now more than three years. Three years is an awfully long time in the life of a child.

“The best outcome for children is for cases to be dealt with, within hopefully six months of filing so they can be in and out within a 12-month period,” Judge Pascoe said.

“I think prolonged conflict is not in the best interests of children.”

He said backlogs and delays could be blamed on the Federal Government’s failure to quickly replace retiring judges. Family Court judge Graham Bell retired last February and is yet to be replaced.

The Federal Circuit Court, which handles almost 90% of family law disputes, is still waiting for two

vacancies to be filled. Six more judges are due to retire in 2016.

Chief Judge Pascoe identified Wollongong, Lismore and Albury in New South Wales, as well as Rockhampton in Queensland as the areas most in need of resources to protect children.

Reform desperately needed

Australia’s Family Law Reform Coalition agrees that the family courts are causing enormous, avoidable harm to thousands of children, but says that appointing more judges is not the solution.

“More judges won’t make Family Courts less adversarial. More money won’t stop them being unaffordable to the vast majority of Australian parents.

And reducing court cases from three to two years, or even 12 months, won’t stop tens of thousands of children from being harmed for life. The harm is done in the first few months, or even weeks, when children are wrongly left with abusive parents, or wrongfully removed from good ones – by a court not competent to tell the difference,” Coalition spokesman Dr David Curl said.

“Australian families desperately need the government to implement its own 2003 recommendations to create a new, non-adversarial system – for the sake of our children.”



by Cr Jenny Dowell
Lismore City Council

Australia Day

After a break of seven years, it was good to be back in City Hall for this year's Australia Day ceremony. I am well aware that for many Aboriginal people and non-indigenous Australians, January 26 is a day that brings levels of discomfort, sadness and anger. While there may well be a better day to celebrate what it means to be an Australian, no other date is emerging as one of consensus at this stage.

Here in Lismore LGA, we work hard at being respectful of the Bundjalung people and the peoples of tribes who have lived here for tens of thousands of years. Under the bricks, concrete and bitumen, this land is, was and always will be Bundjalung land. I am very thankful that Elders and others have played a part in our Australia Day ceremonies and have been nominees and winners of various award categories. I sincerely thank them for their generosity of spirit.

Awards

Congratulations to the people who were awarded Lismore Australia Day recognition. Citizen of the Year – Jodie McRae; Aboriginal

From the mayor's desk

Citizen of the Year – Aunty Thelma James; Young Citizen of the Year – Holley Somerville-Knott; Services in Community – Ross McDougall; Services in Community (Group) – LightnUp; Art and Culture – Amber Gooley; Sustainable Environment – Judi Emmett; Junior Sports person – Keea Parrish.

Citizenship

Conferring citizenship is wonderful at anytime during the year at the five or six ceremonies I perform but Australia Day conferrals are extra special. Those January 26 ceremonies are attended not only by friends and family but also by hundreds of community members who are there to support award nominees and as a bonus are able to welcome new citizens. The new citizens see the people who are contributing to our community through their volunteer efforts and the community is more aware of the people from a variety of nations of birth who choose to live here and become citizens.

This year we welcomed 23 people from 11 nations of birth – France, Switzerland, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Vietnam, Malaysia, United Kingdom, Brazil, India, Thailand and Canada.

Ambassador

Our Australia Day Ambassador was Liz Deep-Jones. Ms Deep-Jones has a long list of credits to her name including television journalist and presenter, author, producer, broadcaster and public speaker. She first came into the public eye as the popular presenter on SBS TV's Toyota World Sports and has since turned her talents to producing television and online programs for SBS. She has interviewed

prominent personalities including Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, Geoffrey Robertson QC, Prince Albert of Monaco, Serena Williams and many others. She has also enjoyed success as author of the Lucy Zeezou teen novels.

Liz spoke about her Lebanese background and her recent experiences in Paris during a terrorist attack. She engaged with the audience through her speech and over morning tea and afterwards we had a tour of the city and the nearby countryside before a barbeque lunch.

Pool Olympics

The Nimbin Pool Olympics was a great event again this year. Congratulations Sue Edmonds and team for the fun and frivolity and for raising funds to repaint the pool. I had hoped to get out to Nimbin with our Australia Day Ambassador but time got away from us so we couldn't fit it in.

February meeting

The first Council meeting for 2016 will be held on 9 February, 6pm at Chambers. Items on the Agenda include the draft policy for rural connections to the Nimbin water supply and a report on the proposed upgrade of the water supply to the village. Details will be available on the Council website under the Business Paper link by the time the *GoodTimes* hits the streets.

Highway signage

I'm interested in hearing from Nimbin people whether you or your visitors have found the very limited signage on the Pacific Highway has led to delays because you have missed the Ewingsdale turn off. Prior to Christmas when the St

Helena tunnels opened, I heard of many people who missed the temporary yellow sign to Lismore and were forced to travel to Ross Lane to take the Tevan turnoff or drove to Lismore via Ballina. This confusion applied to locals as well as visitors, and added considerable time to their travels particularly if they were intending to drive to Clunes, Nimbin, The Channon and other destinations north of Lismore.

The signage has been a challenge for Council as the Bangalow Chamber of Commerce has argued strongly with the support of Byron Shire Council not to have any signage to Lismore because they want to limit traffic through the town. Council finally obtained agreement from Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) for a temporary yellow advisory sign to be installed for approximately 12 months only. Many people have missed the sign as it is smaller and less prominent than the large green directional signs.

Lismore Council has three concerns with the lack of appropriate signs. Firstly, unfamiliar drivers to Nimbin, The Channon and its popular market and other villages will have a much longer travel time if they miss the turn off. Secondly, Bruxner Highway from Ballina will be more congested in peak travel times. Thirdly, a significant drop in traffic on Bangalow Road may result in this Main Road being downgraded to a Local Road with subsequent drop of state funding for repairs.

I have had feedback from The Channon Markets that quite a few people missed the turn off. Some people ended up in Grafton, others were confused at Ballina and found

themselves heading back up the highway.

Please contact me if you or your visitors have been affected, at: Jenny.Dowell@lismore.nsw.gov.au

Council elections

Mayors throughout NSW have been asked to let our peak representative body, Local Government NSW (LGNSW) know our preference for the timing of the next Council elections.

The options are:

1. Councils not subject to merger proposals going to the polls as planned in September 2016 for a full four-year term, with any merging councils going to the polls in March 2017 for a three-and-a-half-year term.
2. All councils going to the polls in September 2016 for a full four-year term (on the basis that final decisions on merger proposals are made and have legal effect before then).
3. All councils going to the polls in March 2017 for a three-and-a-half-year term (regardless of whether they are subject to merger proposals or not).
4. All councils going to the polls in March 2017 for a four-and-a-half-year term (regardless of whether they are subject to merger proposals or not).

Following discussions with my fellow Councillors, I have voted for Option 4. The confusion and additional costs of two election dates would be considerable and clearly the Councils proposed to merge will not be ready for a September 2016 election. The 4.5 year term is the usual when elections are delayed, and allows a new Council to implement its delivery plan objectives.

In my next column, I hope to let you know the recommendation by LGNSW and the Government's decision.

Simon says...



by Cr Simon Clough,
Deputy Mayor LCC

So January 2016 is all but over already. I trust everyone has had a restful break.

Lismore City Council has some major projects for this year:

- The review of all Council's levels of service with a view to saving \$2M will continue.
- The renovation of C block for the new art gallery and piazza will commence.
- Application will be made to IPART for a special rate variation for the Biodiversity Management Strategy and the Landholder Initiative will continue.
- Council's largest expenditure in a very long time should get underway with the commencement of the replacement of the South Lismore Sewerage Treatment Plant.

- The unique Farming the Sun initiative which will see the first community council partnership in renewable energy in Australia will begin soon. This partnership will create almost 200kwh of renewable electricity.
 - The Community Planning Workshops which have been taking place across the region will continue. I'm excited about these workshops as they are a great opportunity for all the areas of our local government area to empower themselves and make significant improvements to their communities.
 - The new Wilson Street bridge and road extension should start, hopefully taking much of the pressure off the Hollingworth Bridge (Lismore's traffic jam hub).
 - Hopefully North Lismore Plateau and the many other new land release areas that Council has been working on will become available with many blocks available for affordable housing.
 - Council's partnership with Area Health should continue with the opening of the new multi storey carp park at the hospital and the completion of the \$300M hospital extension. Council is particularly keen to increase housing options and density in the hospital precinct.
- These are just some of the projects that Council is engaged in, and apologies for any I may have omitted.

Recently the Lismore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) launched an attack on Lismore City Council saying that Lismore needed a new Council. The LCCI President is Andrew Gordon, local real estate agent and National Party warhorse. It's a shame to see the LCCI used for such personal political games.

I don't believe the community's memory is that short that it doesn't remember the crippling debt with the Goonellabah Sports and Aquatic Centre and the new memorial baths that Mr Gordon's conservative mates imposed on Council. Nor will people forget the crippling red tape that all but prevented footpath dining and cafés, the high s64 charges and the prohibitive parking provisions for new enterprises. Oh, and let's not forget over \$5M the conservatives lost in the global financial crash.

In contrast, this Council has encouraged Lismore to be a vibrant, diverse city with lots of activity on the streets, the amazing Back Alley Gallery, businesses able to open with minimum cost and



Coverage in 'The Northern Rivers Echo' 14/1/16

the largest CBD office block in decades about to go ahead. Then there is of course the refurbished City Hall an amazing venue for local and imported cultural events almost completely paid for by a Commonwealth grant. There is the legacy of high rates, but there are no more high-debt trophy projects that we saw in the 'bad old days'.

There are at least four major housing developments on the way, many of them with provision for affordable housing. This is something years of conservative Councils were unable to achieve.

The current Council has also improved the Recycling and

Recovery Centre, and has pledged to be on 100% renewable energy by 2023.

Andrew Gordon makes much of Council's concern for the environment. In our major community consultation Imagine Lismore our community told us that it wanted the Council to be a leader in the environment and sustainability. Currently Council spends 0.5% of its expenditure on environmental projects. Council is simply trying to meet the demands of its community by attempting to increase its environmental programs.

So the choice for voters in the next local government election will be stark: back to the past with Mr Gordon and his National Party mates with their adversarial attitude, divisive tactics and history of high-cost trophy projects and financial losses. Or a more balanced, collaborative and energetic approach to Council which has put Lismore on the map as the "go-ahead heart of the Northern Rivers".

Of course, to protect these gains made by the Council you must be able to vote, so please register to vote at the post office.

Please contact me anytime regarding Council matters: 0428-886-217, or: simonclough@internode.on.net

Indigenous issues

Green Scene

by Jan Barham MLC

At this time of year there is much talk about being proud Australians and celebrating our values. But for many there is also deep shame about the historical wrongs experienced by the First Peoples and a belief that we must address those wrongs and their lasting effects on our society.

When I made my first speech in the current Parliament last year I began by saying:

"The next four years will be a crucial time that shapes the lives of generations to come. We face four enormous challenges that require ongoing action. The first challenge is the relationship and treatment of the First Peoples of this country... I acknowledge the traditional custodians of all lands across this State who through past and current generations have faced the impact of dispossession and injustice."

In many ways, the first step in meeting this challenge is one of acknowledgement and growing awareness. There is a widespread collective amnesia about events and issues that have contributed to the disadvantages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face today.

One of the most prominent current public debates is about constitutional recognition. But despite having heard about the idea of a referendum, many people aren't aware that Australia is, as Professor George Williams said, "the only democratic

nation in the world that has a constitution with clauses that still authorise discrimination on the basis of race."

That is why we need a substantial conversation about reforming our constitution, not just to recognise Aboriginal people but to also remove the possibility for discriminatory laws. This should be one step on the path to addressing the history of how this land was colonized and the nation was formed. The Greens support changes to the constitution as well as sovereignty and a treaty. People across all of our communities need to be engaged in understanding why these changes are needed and what they will do to address the past and provide for a better future.

Another crucial issue that requires broader awareness is the impact of forced removals of children from their families and communities. Currently I am chairing an inquiry into Reparations for the Stolen Generations. I had pledged to establish as the Greens Aboriginal Affairs spokesperson before the 2015 election.

It is almost 20 years since the *Bringing Them Home* report was released documenting the history and impact of the Stolen Generations and recommending a process of reparations that included an apology – which was eventually delivered by Kevin Rudd in 2008– as well as efforts to address the impacts and ensure such harms would never be repeated.

Our inquiry is continuing its



Jan Barham at Clarence Valley Healing Centre – Gurehlgam with manager Janelle Brown

work but what is clear is that the experience of the removals has had an intergenerational impact. The trauma that was experienced by those children has left them and their families and communities scarred for life. We need to address these issues for the sake of all generations affected.

An issue that deserves greater awareness is the history of Baryulgil near Grafton, an Aboriginal settlement that became the site of an asbestos mine and provided jobs to locals. But that exposed the workers and the community to asbestos and the impacts have been fatal for some and continue to affect lives today.

A Commonwealth inquiry in 1983 identified outcomes including the provision of new housing at Malabugilmah and a medical centre in Grafton, but not the right to compensation. I have

visited both communities and met with the medical centre to assess the long term impacts and will continue to investigate why this community was denied the right to compensation from James Hardie.

Addressing the inequality and disadvantage affecting Indigenous Australians is going to take more effort from us all and greater commitment and investment from governments. But as a starting point, as Australians we all need to focus on raising awareness about the impacts of the historical treatment of First Peoples and how those consequences continue to have significant effects today.

Submissions are still open for the Stolen Generations Inquiry: www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/0DDB3FD9F05A47BDCA257E6F0017B118?open&refnavid=x

Liberal/Nationals cut essential health services

Women across the Northern Rivers have been communicating to me their outrage at the latest round of Liberal Nationals government cuts to essential health services.

Preventative health care services such as pap smears, blood tests, urine tests and imaging services are all set to cost patients more when Malcolm Turnbull imposes \$650 million in cuts to Medicare from July. These cuts are an unfair attack on ordinary Australians, especially women, who rely on pap smears and diagnostic imaging in the detection of life threatening conditions like cervical and breast cancer.

Every year over 800 Australian women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and around a third of those women are likely to die from the disease. Pap smears have been a major success story of cancer prevention. In just seven years the rates of cervical cancer, and the women who die from it, have dropped by about a third. These cuts by Turnbull government will directly hurt health outcomes, and will be a financial barrier to women continuing to have their regular pap smears.

Nationals Kevin Hogan continues to refuse to explain why he is supporting his government's policy that will adversely impact such very important preventative health measures. His government's cuts to Medicare will also have a devastating impact on women with breast cancer. Costs for diagnostic



by Janelle Saffin

imaging is set to increase and patients with suspected breast cancer will be forced to pay additional upfront fees when this essential service is also removed from the current bulk billing incentive scheme.

The Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association is warning of upfront costs of between \$300 and \$500, and further out of pocket expenses of up to \$300. Kevin Hogan's support to rip \$650 million out of Medicare by slashing bulk billing for diagnostic imaging and pathology will hurt patients, by forcing cancer patients and others with critical health conditions, to either pay more or to miss out on vital scans and tests.

Labor built Medicare and only Labor supports Medicare. I understand that free and accessible health services are essential to diagnosing and treating cancer, as well as sexual transmitted

infection and even pregnancy. Universal access is fundamental to our world class healthcare system. The National Party's unfair cuts will make it more difficult for many patients to receive the high level of care that they need and deserve. Medicare needs to be there to help people and Malcolm Turnbull and the Nationals' cuts are a direct attack on the institution providing that help.

The Nationals' current assault on Medicare isn't just about cutting payments which will directly make it more expensive for people who are suffering cancer to get treatment. It's much more than that, it's an attack on Medicare and it's an attack on all Australians and our way of life. Having universal health care is one of the things which helps Australian families keep their head above water, to help make ends meet.

Nationals MP Kevin Hogan refuses to explain to local women and their families why he continues to support these vicious unfair cuts which will directly hurt women's health services across our region. It shows that nobody can trust their future to Kevin Hogan and his National Party colleagues. Only Labor will properly fund Australia's world class health system and universal access to essential health services.

Janelle Saffin, Federal Labor candidate for Page: jasaffin@nor.com.au or phone 0418-664-001.

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Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre News

www.nnic.org.au



7 Sibley Street STAGE ONE

We have commenced the Stage One (moving and renovating the old house) fundraising campaign. Donate now! All donations will be used specifically for Stage One (and not for ongoing costs such as rates, insurances etc).

We need \$70,000. That's a mere 70 people at \$1000 or 140 people at \$500 or 700 people at \$100 or 7000 people at \$10. Or 14,000 x \$5 raffle tickets. Not so many if you say it really quickly.

If you or anyone you know can donate, donations can be made at NNIC 10am-4pm weekdays or via our bank account as follows:

Bank: Summerland Credit Union
BSB: 728-728; Account Name: NNIC - Sibley St Fundraising account, Account Number: 2230 4372. Key three letters for the target account: NIM. Be sure to give your name in the reference so we can acknowledge your donation - unless you prefer anonymity of course.

The challenge is on folks...send your fundraising ideas into us or even better, go forth and fundraise for us!

Sustainable Nimbin Community Plan

Thanks to those of you who have provided comments and feedback - we will now finalise the SNCP and get it published very soon. Keep watching this space.

Nimbin Women's Dinner

This annual dinner be held at the Town Hall on International Women's Day, Tuesday 8th March 2016. Get your tix at NNIC. Tix are \$25 for both dinner and the show, \$15 for the show only. Lots of great acts. Not to be missed.

Struggling to make ends meet?

Household bills getting on top of you? We may be able to help with material aid ranging from nappies, sanitary products, food supplies, assistance with phone and electricity bills and unpaid fines. To find out if you are eligible for assistance make an appointment with one of our Community Workers for advice.

February mental health tip

Five things you can say to support someone dealing with depression:

1. I'm here for you.
2. You matter to me.
3. What can I do to help?
4. Depression is real. You are not alone.
5. There is hope - there is help out there. Can I help you find out about it?

The NIS program at NNIC can provide support for community members and their carers/support people, experiencing mental health and/or alcohol/drug problems, aged 15 years and above. Contact NNIC for appointment details.

Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre (NNIC) is run by locals for locals and our job is to support people in need and the community in general to achieve their aspirations. Everyone is welcome at NNIC. If we can't help we probably know who can.

You can also find lots of useful local and other info on our website. For appointments call 6689-1692 or just drop in during 10am and 4pm weekdays.

New technology in our hospitals

by Noelle Lynden-Way

The Emergency Departments at the hospitals of our three MPS - Urbenville, Nimbin and Kyogle - now have access to useful new technology.

If you call Triple O, there are ambulances based in Kyogle and Urbenville to take you to the hospital. In Nimbin, the response will be an ambulance sent from Lismore, or surrounding areas. Paramedics decide on the spot whether the person will be admitted to ED at Nimbin or go straight to Lismore Base Hospital.

There is a patient transfer vehicle for less urgent cases that have to be moved to Lismore Base Hospital. This is organised directly by the local MPS.

But what happens if an adult, young person or baby is critically injured, has a bad fall, neural damage, suffers from trauma or develops a serious illness and is admitted to a local ED?

This is where Connecting Critical Care (CCC) technology is used in our rural hospitals.

In each of the Emergency Departments there is a CCC video screen which can connect the local GP or nurse practitioner (NP) with the senior medical officer at Lismore Base Emergency Department. The doctor in Lismore can see the patient and talk to them and to the local GP or NP using a camera and headphones.

Sometimes the patient can be stabilised enough to send

them to Lismore and not need further expert knowledge and advice. In this case they will be sent by ambulance or helicopter depending on the condition. There are helicopter landing pads near each MPS.

However, if the patient's condition is more serious, the Adult Medical Retrieval Service (AMRS) based in Sydney, will be contacted to organise transport. The doctor at Lismore Base will consult with AMRS to get the patient to definitive care at Lismore Base, Gold Coast, John Flynn (Private), Brisbane or John Hunter (Newcastle) Hospitals.

Two AMRS team paramedics and a doctor can come by road to accompany the patient or organise helicopter transport.

The transport organisation used for children and babies is called Newborn and Paediatrics Emergency Transport Services (NETS). It is based in both Brisbane and Sydney. NETS is accessed via the CCC, and the local doctor or clinical nurse can consult by video screen with a paediatrician who can see the child via the camera in ED.

If it is decided that the young patient needs to be transported, the paediatrician will notify the emergency team at the hospital where he/she will be going.

The advances that have been made in technology in our society are being well used in our hospitals to ensure that expert knowledge and advice can be accessed right away to treat patients.

Nimbin Hospital Information

Immunisation clinic

For 0-5 year olds. Held in Nimbin Hospital, second Tuesday of every month. Next clinic, 9th February. For appointments phone 6620-7687 Lismore Community Health.

Early childhood nurse

Every Tuesday. For appointments, phone 6620-7687 (Lismore Community Health Centre).

Women's health nurse services

Third Thursday of the month for breast checks, pap smears, contraceptive advice and general health information. Next clinic held 18th February. For appointments ring 6689-1400.

Nimbin community nurses

Monday to Friday 0800hrs to 1630hrs. For assessments, wound care, referrals, advocacy. Provision of palliative care in the home. Provide and coordinate aged care packages.

Free health checks

In front of the Neighbourhood Centre, Every second Friday, 11.30- 13.30.

Cardiac, diabetic and stroke risk assessments. Run by a nurse practitioner and a registered nurse. Weigh, blood pressure, oxygen sats, BSL, cholesterol levels. Referrals to appropriate health professional, if required.

Free respiratory clinic

At Nimbin hospital. With specialist respiratory nurse and a nurse practitioner. Second Thursday of the month. Next clinic, 11th February. For appointment phone 6688 1401.

Free diabetic clinic

At Nimbin hospital. Every 3rd Thursday of the month. For appointment phone Leanne Boothe 6630-0488

Cannabis clinic

Confidential counselling, every Monday. Phone 1300-664-098.

Drug and alcohol counsellor/psychologist

Every Thursday, phone 6620-7634 or mobile 0428-109-474.



Nimbin NSP

Open Mondays to Thursdays, 9-30am - 12pm. Arrangements can be made to see a community health nurse through NSP.

Health advice line

Phone 1800-022-222 if you have a health issue. It's a 24-hour, 7 days a week free service. A registered nurse will speak to you and assess whether or not you need to go to the emergency department at your local MPS.

Read more information about this service at: www.healthdirect.org.au

Nimbin Hospital Auxiliary

Meetings are held on the second Friday of each month in the hospital conference room at 10am. Next meeting: 12th February.



