

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

Slow down on Cecil Street

Clearly council have no idea how to correctly fund and implement a traffic calming solution.

I would love to know how much money was spent on installing and then partially removing so-called traffic calming islands and useless ugly signage, probably enough money to make proper speed mitigation areas from the preschool to the bridge.

Money for the 'footbridge to nowhere' comes at the cost of a life, and in the end still doesn't address the need for traffic calming.

Once the footbridge is installed, drivers will be free to continue driving as fast as they like, so not a very good outcome for Cecil Street.

As a daily pedestrian I have seen near misses at the bridge, numerous wildlife deaths (snakes, birds and bandicoots) and very few vehicles travelling at the speed limit (50km). Cecil Street is a shared zone, not a speedway.

Many people like to walk, using the easy access to town, the soccer field, showground and preschool, helping reduce needless traffic and petrol use.

Many long-term walkers no longer feel safe on that stretch of road since Tonia's death and have stopped walking altogether.

Cecil Street is not just a road, it's where people live and access town without driving.

As a result of the drought we have the additional burden of water trucks. Some truck drivers treat Cecil Street like an industrial estate. They zoom noisily down the road starting at about 6am and then run up and down constantly during the day winding up business at around 10pm, without any consideration for residents or speed limits.

I have witnessed trucks travelling at high speed often with a full load of water and the driver talking on a mobile phone. There is no way, if a child ran out onto the road, that the driver would be able to stop. Neither Council nor Rous Water can confirm what reasonable operation times for water trucks should be.

I am asking everyone to take care on all the roads in our village for the safety of pedestrians, wildlife and

drivers. So next time you are travelling along Cecil Street, check your speed, and think about arriving safely, not how fast you can get there.

On a sad end note, whoever removed the beautiful cross from the camphor tree next to the bridge, have some respect and return it, this was part of a family's memorial in the place their mother was hit by a reckless driver and killed.

Amanda King
Nimbin

Thanks from Tuntable

The Tuntable Falls Community wishes to express our sincere and heartfelt thanks to all those organizations, businesses and individuals who helped us during the recent bush fire emergency.

Because of the support and help we received we were very lucky that only two structures were lost and all homes saved. We have a long way to go until we are still out of danger and our community continues its daily patrols 24 hours a day and repairs to lost infrastructure. But know you were all key in assisting in what has become a very fortunate outcome.

Special thanks to:

The local and area RFS divisions- every one of the RFS staff and volunteers are fantastic it was a pleasure to be able to work under your direction in this time of crisis.

The Nimbin CWA- who went above and beyond providing food and hydration to the RFS and volunteer defenders.

The Nimbin A&I Society, the SES, the Salvation Army and all the agencies working to support the evacuees at the Nimbin showgrounds. You did all you could to make us feel well cared-for and very well-fed. Your efforts to cater to those of us with special diets were especially appreciated, as was your tolerance.

The Rainbow Power Company who provided for the Tuntable Defenders and RFS on loan or gifted:

- independent power supply to power RFS radios and communication phones;
- colour printing of maps in A3 and A4 to assist in RFS planning and the deployment of firefighting teams;
- loans of 20+ brand new PPE shirts, only two of which have been returned and in very well used condition;
- large marquee under which was stored fuels and tools;
- stationary including dozens notebooks, boxes of pens, packs of highlighters, whiteboard and permanent markers, bulldog clips, paperclips, scissors, staplers and staples;
- their staff who were released without question to come and volunteer on the ground.

You never refused our requests and responded quickly to our need.

The Lismore Bunnings who donated 40 pairs of gloves, 3 brush hooks, 3 axes, 3 bow saws and 6 pruning saws and 100 head torches, when the call went out. Murwillumbah Mitre 10 who donated 6 pairs of leather gloves.

The Lismore Council Staff who assisted with printing of maps on Monday the 11th of November at the critical point at the beginning of the fire emergency to assist the RFS in planning the response. These maps were key to our defense on the ground in those first critical days.

Jamie MacDonald and Bill Cox for their specialised machinery that they provided.

Our State MP Janelle Saffin and the leader of the Labor Party Anthony Albanese who came and heard the concerns of the community at a time of stress and high emotion and offered what support they could.

All the amazing volunteers from the wider community who have so selflessly contributed to our community safety. We could not have been so successful without your generous and wonderful contributions; our valley still stands with the help of so many.

We still have a long road to recovery. If you would like you can continue to support us through our GoFundMe page at the link here: www.gofundme.com/f/tuntable-nightcap-fire-nov-2019.

Our hearts and minds are with all the other communities currently facing this crisis. This is time for all of us to stand together and support each other.

Thanks once again to all who helped us and apologies if we have missed anyone. You all went above and beyond in your efforts to help and we hold every one of you in our hearts.

Tuntable Co-ordination
Co-operative

Thank you Hospital

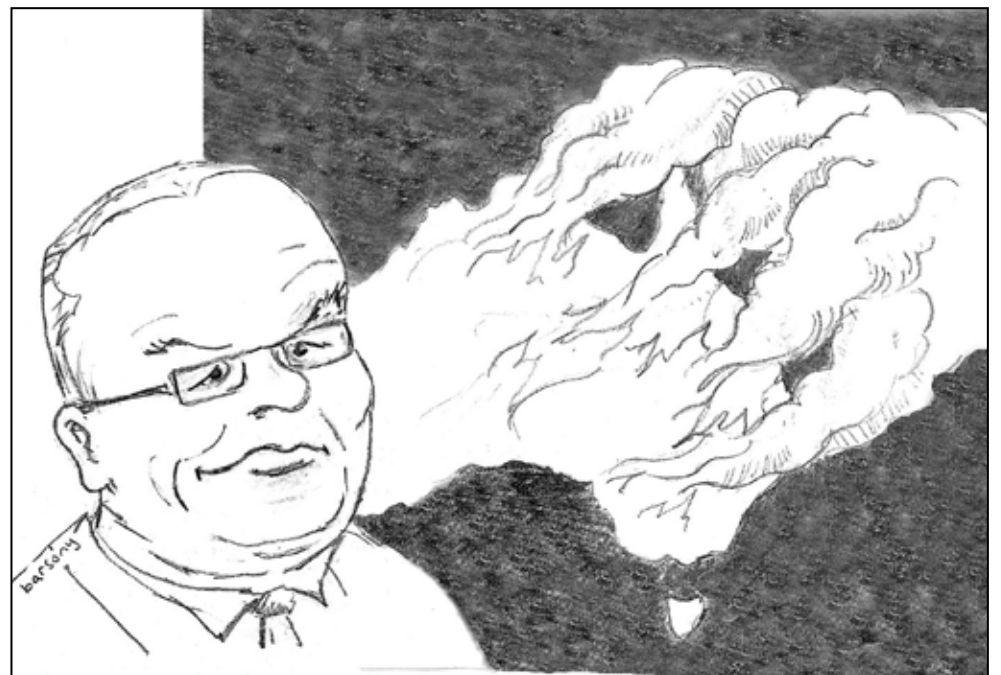
I am writing to thank the doctors and nursing staff at our 'hospital' for their wonderful supportive care, hospitality and generous hard work.

No stone was left unturned giving me support during my time at the hospital. Both on arrival before being transferred to 'Lismore Base' and later for a two week stay.

The support and empathy given is priceless and shows the best of true humanity.

I firstly arrived after a bad fall with my ankle swollen like a melon, twisted so badly it was loose from the leg.

As a community we are fortunate in having this splendid medical facility so close on hand. Every support and care was given to my



"Just don't mention climate change in the same sentence as the fires, and she'll be right mate."

needs.

My injury was such it was impossible to tell how severe it was. If an x-ray had been taken, much time would have been saved.

We all know time in such situations can be precious. Though the staff can be easily taught to use one, (after all, vets use portable x-ray equipment) no x-ray machine is in the hospital. It has been taken away, disadvantaging those with injuries.

Surely our NSW government could dip, just a little bit into the annual medical budget of \$8 billion. to provide an x-ray machine and a permanent ambulance on standby for our 'Nimbin Hospital' outpatients medical centre. (An acquaintance kindly drove me to Lismore for specialist treatment as an ambulance was not available.)

Many local people agree, our Hospital have excellent nurses and doctors but it needs more substantial resourcing.

Mark Pestell
Nimbin

Israeli torture

World Vision's Gaza Director, Mohammed El Halabi, accused by Israel of diverting aid funds to Hamas, has now been incarcerated for three and a half years and, after dozens of court appearances, has still not been charged.

His lawyer only saw him after 23 days and reported that he had been so badly beaten while in the custody of Shin Bet (Israel's secret service), that he now has 40% hearing loss.

Israel routinely extracts confessions from its Palestinian victims through torture and Mohammed is no exception.

Israel claims Mohammed diverted \$43 million but expert defence witnesses have testified that it would be impossible for him to have

committed fraud on such a scale in Gaza because the World Vision budget was only \$22.5 million over the entire decade.

In any case, World Vision and the Australian government exercised tight actuarial control over funding so Israel's claim is preposterous, nevertheless most media swung in behind it and Australia promptly suspended its humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The Australian Zionist Federation recently awarded Prime Minister Morrison the Jerusalem Prize.

During his acceptance speech he said, "We know the character of our friend Israel and we stand with our friends and under this government we've set up a trade and defence office in west Jerusalem to deepen our ties on trade and defence industries".

Does Morrison seriously support Israeli torture or is he just wilfully ignorant?

Gareth W R Smith
Palestine Liberation Centre
Byron Bay

"No longer produced..."

One of our neighbours has a sign in their front garden reading, "bore water in use".

They seem to believe that this justifies them washing their cars every couple of days, drenching their front lawn, hosing down their driveway and the footpath outside their house and generally using water like it was going out of fashion. When asked if they are concerned at getting "pinged" for breaking the water restrictions they point to their sign.

I have tried to turn the conversation by asking where they think the "underground water" comes from but they seem unable (or unwilling, to accept the fact that God is no longer making any water).

What water we have on this Earth now, is what

we got at the time of the Creation. NO MORE IS BEING PRODUCED. All we are doing is re-circulating it...and we do not do that very wisely or well.

Perhaps this is yet another manifestation of the great Australian mantra... "Bugger you, Jack, I'm alright"? Except that, in this case, none of us is alright.

Peter Leith
Bogangar

Open letter to Environment Minister Sussan Ley

After reading the SBS news article this morning regarding the Expert Koala Meeting in Brisbane today, I wondered how this \$3 million will be spent.

I have dear friends who work as volunteers with Friends of Koalas in Lismore, and there was no invitation given to any one from that organisation to attend this Expert Meeting, why is that?

How do you think this money will help in the immediate now? It may help down the track, but we need action NOW to save the koalas that are left in the wild, and sadly the numbers aren't many.

And with the devastating bush fires in NSW and Queensland, the threat of extinction is even greater than what we know.

The government needs to step up and declare the most practical and realistic measure immediately to save this iconic and much loved species of our native wildlife, by declaring immediately the halt to any logging in this country where there are known koala habitats, and this action is free.

This is the only way to save these beautiful marsupials from extinction.

I know koalas are selective with their food trees. I know how many trees one koala needs in its own territory.

About us

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The Nimbin GoodTimes acknowledges the Bundjalung people, the traditional owners of the land and waters on which we work and live, and pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

I know that koalas have been dying from dehydration because the eucalyptus leaves don't have the moisture in them like they used to due to the drought, and that's been happening for a while. I can go on and on.
So, Sussan this is what you can do as the Environment Minister. Stop habitation loss in known koala habitats. Put in place legislation that doesn't allow developers to destroy any further koala habitats. Actions speak louder than words, so please act now.
Humans are the greatest threat to the koala in so many ways which I have mentioned a few areas of.
It's dire straits for koalas Sussan, and you have the power to save the remaining populations.
Let's see you do this please. NOW.
Marie Cameron
Nimbin

Bushfires and funding
Congratulations to all the volunteers and supporters fighting fires for our communities,
But I wonder, why do all governments rely on volunteers, giving up time at work, in these catastrophic times.
The Federal Government is spending billions on submarines and fighter planes, which will probably be outdated by future technologies very soon, instead of developing skills and equipment that can be utilised in these times.
Surely one less submarine or even one less fighter plane would be better spent refurbishing a fleet of aircraft for firefighting.
The new F-35 Joint Strike fighter costs \$124 million each, according to Christopher Pyne while the projected cost of the new submarines will be between \$1.4 to \$3.04 billion each!
Former NSW Fire and Rescue commissioner Greg Mullins and former Tasmanian Fire Service chief Mike Brown – who together have 90 years' firefighting experience – say increasingly overlapping fire seasons in the southern and northern hemispheres, driven by climate change, mean

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

Australia must procure its own fleet of large air tankers and other craft – some possibly operated by the military.
Mr Mullins said large air tankers were “becoming quite crucial in the new fire environment, and we just haven't got enough. The time is coming when Australia, federally, needs a fleet of heavy water bombing aircraft. We are about the only country with a bad bushfire problem that doesn't have its own fleet.
Times have changed and so have our lifestyles. All political parties need to work together on today's major issues. We are not about to be invaded but we will have continuing catastrophic, widespread disasters such as fires, droughts, cyclones and floods. These are beyond the capacity of just volunteers.
We need a defence force that has, and utilises, a capacity to help the nation at home. Logistics and engineering skills, a highly trained, full time workforce and specific machinery must be deployed expediently as these disasters occur.
Certainly, maintain the current community volunteer base, use their expertise developed over years, but it won't be long before they are totally exhausted if we continue to have such intense fires and other natural disasters, so widespread and more frequently.
We need a comprehensive bipartisan review of our current use of resources and develop new strategies for our future. Listen to the experts in the field and ACT!
Richard White
East Ballina

Fireys vilified as abusers
I was gobsmacked to watch women's rights activist Sherele Moody taking an opportunistic swipe at our firies during a press conference, saying “after a cataclysmic event like this domestic violence peaks and women become extremely unsafe when, generally, men return from the fires and subject them to domestic violence”. Disgraceful!
Moody runs the 'Red Heart Campaign' tasked with

Notices

RFS poster comp cancelled
There has been an advertised competition to design a recruitment poster for our volunteer fire brigade service.
The idea behind the competition was to draw attention to the need to recruit new people into the volunteer fire brigade, to start this dialogue.
The recent and ongoing fires have seen plenty of conversation and action among locals and with people displaced and stretched, the competition has been cancelled.
The prizes offered will be used in on-going fundraising for the brigade. Apologies to those who have submitted entries or were working on them.

Free notices
Keep it short, under 50 words, and to the point, and if your notice is not-for-profit and of interest to our readers, get it to us by deadline and we'll run it for you for free.


counting Australians killed violently, with a focus on female victims of DV.
The comments were made alongside Greens Senator Larissa Waters while presenting a petition to remove Pauline Hanson from the Parliamentary Inquiry into Family Law and Child Support.
Within 24 hours a petition calling for Moody to be sacked had generated over 35,000 signatures when it was mysteriously removed by *change.org* who were also behind Moody's petition against Hanson.
For her sake I hope her house doesn't catch fire.
Andy Gough
Larnook

Future for Flix fans?
Due to the disruption created by the fire emergency and in consultation with the Flix projectionist, we have decided not to have a Nimbin Flix screening for December.
The NCC staff have not had the time to research and source the latest film suggestions and the proposed film for December is not suitable due to the screening cost.
Flix Film Society has offered interesting non main-stream films to the Nimbin Community since forming in 2014. It enjoyed the support of the community who missed the regular screenings that the Bush Theatre had offered when it was working as cinema.
Many great films, which were suggested by the members of the Flix group, were shared and enjoyed over this period.
Flix is currently under review as we have a very small group who have committed to setting up, running the screenings and to attending, we need more people to join, volunteer and participate if we are to remain a viable group.
We need people who can research and suggest suitable films, help set up the curtains screen and equipment on the day, run the door and help with catering.
The membership is \$50

annually, this pays for screening fees, film costs and printing costs for posters.
If you are interested in being a supporter of this great cinema appreciation event please email Flix at: nimbinflix@gmail.com with your interest and any volunteering you can do.
Thank you Flix members for your understanding and hopefully we can reignite interest and participation for Flix in the coming year.
Teresa Biscoe
Coordinator
Nimbin Community Centre

Conspiracy theories
Dane Wigington of geoengineeringwatch.org would call this “weather warfare”. Australia's current crisis gets a special mention at the end of his video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXwmA7RF7pM
Without considering what he calls the elephant in the lounge room, climate engineering, we would be unwise to beg the controllers to impose a 50% carbon tax, or cull the human population like never before, or send us all back to the stone age.
The controllers actually believe that they will get total power with God (their God being Lucifer/Satan/whatever) on their side when the whole world goes to crap.
It is worth noting that sea levels have been rising 15cm/100 years since the Aborigines crossed the Timor Strait.
It is also worth noting that 20 years of chemtrails included a lot of aluminum which in the leaves will make them burn with a fury. It all goes up in the air to be recycled, along with Fukushima outfall (particularly in the Northern Hemisphere, ala California fires).
Fires deliberately lit by idiots might be idiots in the pay, or mind control, of the controllers, and I would not put it past them to use their technology to use artificial lightning or otherwise to start the fires like at Mt Nardi.
Peter Godden
Nimbin

Rental Vacancy at Nimbin Community Centre



Room C3, Figtree building
A large (85.34m²) central room with kitchenette, and bathroom attached. Would suit many different purposes. Rent from \$871.88/month (net GST) for non-profit. Commercial rates available on application.
If you are interested in renting this room, please direct a written Expression of Interest to the Nimbin Community Centre Management Committee at 81 Cullen Street Nimbin, or email: ncci@nimbincommunity.org.au You will need to provide two rental references.
For further information on what to include in your Expression of Interest, please contact our co-ordinators during office hours Monday to Thursday between 10am and 2pm on 6689-0000 or via email.

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Strategic planning required for bushfire threat

by Janelle Saffin
Member for Lismore

Federal Labor Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese's recent visit to Nimbin resulted in a welcome windfall for Country Womens Association Nimbin branch as they supported the firefighting effort during the Mount Nardi bushfire.

Anthony asked the CWA women what practical measures could he provide to support their good work in feeding the firefighters, among other things. Ms Theresa Howes, known as Queen of the Kitchen, said "fridges".

We both pledged some assistance to CWA Nimbin President Linnet Pike and her fellow members, and Albo was as good as his word, arranging for Woolworths' Qld-NSW state manager facilities Colin Kane to personally donate two upright freezers, two upright fridges, 20 x 24-bottle packs of water and two \$500 Woolworths vouchers.

I was on hand to thank Colin and his refrigeration technician Michael Heck as they delivered the white goods to Nimbin Town Hall, where CWA Nimbin put them to good use during the fire emergency and will use them for future community events.

I sincerely thank Woolworths for its generosity.

I also thank all 25 members of CWA Nimbin, which was reformed in February this year and supplied meals, water, fruit and snacks to the large contingent of Rural Fire Service volunteers – from local and out-of-town brigades – fighting to protect lives, property, our precious rainforest and animals.

Thanks too to Darren Butcher, owner of the Nimbin Bakery, who supplied breakfasts, and CWA Lismore and Fundamental Food stores, for getting right behind the Nimbin community as well.

I know residents who relocated from their homes to the evacuation centre at Nimbin Showgrounds due to the fire threat, townsfolk who were very worried for firefighters, and locals who stayed behind to defend their homes.

I admire their bravery and public service, and trust that they all stay safe on the firefronts.

I welcome the NSW and Australian government's \$48-million recovery package under which eligible primary producers, small businesses and non-profit organisations in bushfire-affected communities on the North Coast and Northern Tablelands can access recovery grants of up to \$15,000.

I have been pushing for this now for



Back row: refrigeration technician Michael Heck, Nimbin CWA president Linnet Pike, Woolworths Qld-NSW state manager Colin Kane, State Member for Lismore Janelle Saffin, cookery officer Theresa Howes, Lilith Tauraki, secretary Kitty Van Vuuren, agriculture and environment officer Ashoka Joblin
Front row: Saskia Kouwenberg and publicity officer Tashanna Fuller

several months, but I believe the NSW Government needs to go further by establishing a Strategic Planning Team (SPT) to handle the impacts which predicted ongoing bushfires will have on our stretched resources, assets and our already parched land, given equally dire weather forecasts going into summer.

We are faced with the current situation:

- Volunteers of the Rural Fire Service, other emergency services and communities are stretched after two to three months of fighting fires, and are facing a worsening situation.
- In many areas, scant mobile phone reception (Jiggi and Torrington);
- The residual burning, with logs etc., can continue for some time;
- The landscape may have little vegetation left by January 2020 along the coast and inland for 200 kilometres, and even further in some cases;
- Few crops, few animals, less meat, less vegetables and jobs gone, businesses in regional centres and towns suffering;
- Huge amounts of fencing gone;
- Farmers forced to truck in fodder and water at unsustainable rates;
- Over 1.5 million hectares burnt already, far more than that of the past three big fire seasons;
- The earliest predicted decent rainfall is for January 2020.

The questions to be considered are:

- How can this commitment continue for another three months?
- Employers and business owners, especially small business owners who are volunteering, cannot sustain employees being away and they, the owners, cannot continue to be away for this length of time.

The responses to be considered include National Parks and Forestry working collaboratively with the RFS and Fire and Rescue to expand the design and reach of containment lines.

For the building of containment lines:

- Employ contractors with heavy earthmoving gear;
- The Cultural Burning Team to be deployed, and;
- To create a comprehensive Cultural Burning plan, that sees Indigenous Ranger Teams on the ground;
- Ask the Federal Government for Australian Defence Force (ADF) support for this work.

Government agencies can support the people making decisions on containment lines in key areas such as towns, schools infrastructure, power lines, water supply and special habitats. These need to be protected now.

The waste levy waiver, which Kyogle Shire Mayor Cr Danielle Mulholland and I successfully pushed for, could apply to clean-up for preparedness as well as post-fire clean-up.

There is, and will be, more of a huge loss of farming land, fences and soil from all the fire areas when we eventually get rain. We are already seeing the loss of native flora and fauna. This will result in major erosion problems, pollution of the waterways, fish loss, macro invertebrates gone, estuarine pollution, to name a few.

The response needs to be for the immediate threat, of course, and for ongoing and future predicted threats. A Strategic Planning Team would have bipartisan support and give reassurance and confidence to our communities, that they are so in need of.

Parliament recognises Arakwal Native Title

A motion put forward by the Member for Ballina, Tamara Smith MP (pictured), recognising the Arakwal Bundjalung people as the Native Title holders of areas of Byron Bay and surrounds was carried unanimously in the NSW Legislative Assembly.

"This motion celebrates the historic recognition of the Arakwal people of the Bundjalung nation as the native title holders of Cape Byron and the Traditional Owners," Ms Smith said.

"This is only the second time in NSW history that native title sea rights have been recognised and I congratulate the elders and all involved in this decades long process."

"In late 1994, three Aboriginal elders and sisters, Auntie Lorna Kelly, Auntie Linda Vidler, and Auntie Yvonne Graham began a process that sadly



they would never see realised in their lifetime.

It is their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will never forget their struggle towards and

ultimate achievement of native title rights."

"It was wonderful to see Members from all political parties, including the NSW Attorney General Mark Speakman, speak today in support of this landmark decision."

"The determination sent an important message that the land was, is and always will be Aboriginal land," Ms Smith said.

"The words of the Arakwal sisters who started this lengthy process echoed through our House this afternoon:

'Our People, the Byron Bay Arakwal want our children, grandchildren and their grandchildren to know how we once lived and also to be able to use the food from these lands. We want them to know our special places.' – Linda Vidler, Lorna Kelly, Dulcie Nichols, Byron Bay Arakwal Elders," Ms Smith said.

Fires cause trauma

Last month I wrote about the possibility of a fire situation occurring in our area and I worried about how prepared we all might be. Fire is not a situation many of us, myself included, have had to face. Sadly, it seems I was a bit prophetic.

The fires in northern NSW in the past few weeks have been very traumatic for so many people. We grieve for those at Tabulam, Torrington, Ewingar, Rappville, Bungawalbin, Woombah, Ashby, New Italy, and for those outside of our areas, in Wyaliba, Nymboida, Mt George, and so many other places. Our neighbours and friends, they have lost homes, properties, livestock, native animals and for too many, their livelihoods.

We are fortunate here that the Mt Nardi fire, extending as it has through Tuntab Creek, Terania Creek, up Wallace Road, to Gibbergunya and Whian Whian, east to Upper Coopers and north west to Doon Doon, has not taken any lives and I believe no homes have been lost.

The tireless work of the emergency services, the RFS volunteers and NPWS cannot be praised enough. But it was the work of the defenders – those of you who listened to the emergency services warnings; who prepared, got the necessary equipment together and stood as a united defence against the flames with the RFS; you saved our homes and we cannot thank you sufficiently as you deserve.

I also want to publicly



by Darlene Cook, Deputy Mayor, Lismore City Council

thank and acknowledge those Nimbin businesses and community groups and charities and ordinary people who came to the evacuation centres; supplied breakfasts and dinners, water, hats, tents and face masks; those who helped arrange alternate accommodation and made sure that people who evacuated were safe. This community pulled together, supported each other and showed the world what community is all about.

Lismore Council has been with you all the way. Councillors and Council staff came to the emergency control rooms, worked with the police and RFS to get the important information out and kept up to date. Many of us worked at evacuation centres and community information meetings, helped where we could, listened to your concerns, tried to answer your questions. Some of us were out there on the fire lines or organising supplies and food, while we ourselves were evacuated and our homes left to others to defend. Thank you to all of

you for your commitment to this community.

The job is not over. RFS, NPWS and defender patrols are still in the forest and national park watching flare-ups, smouldering logs and falling trees. Until we get some really good rains we will all be on edge.

We must recognise that people that have been exposed to these traumatic events will be affected for months or years to come. Recovery is a marathon not a sprint.

Let's continue to look after each other, and our neighbours. Remember that it is completely normal to experience a range of emotions after stressful events, including anxiety, forgetfulness, sleep disturbance and more.

We need to be gentle with each other when people are upset or angry and take time to listen; check with your family and friends if they are OK; and be prepared to ask for help for yourself and your loved ones. We also need to recognise that our kids have been affected by these experiences and may not have the ability to communicate that trauma.

The following are free services available 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

- Mental Health Line – 1800 011 511
- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- Mensline – 1300 789 978
- Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800
- Beyondblue – 1300 224 636
- 1800Respect Domestic Violence Line – 1800 737 732

I can be contacted at: darlene.cook@lismore.nsw.gov.au or on 0427-895-316.

I was at the Nimbin Evacuation Centre at the Showground recently. It was great to be able to thank all of the people and community groups who were doing so much to help others.

I would like to especially thank our RFS volunteers, Emergency services and first responders for their tireless efforts; they are doing an incredible job keeping our communities safe.

Farmers and small businesses on the North Coast that have been hit by the bushfires can now access recovery grants of up to \$15,000.

To apply for a recovery grant, primary producers and small businesses should contact the NSW Rural Assistance Authority on 1800-678-593 or visit: raa.nsw.gov.au

The Disaster Recovery Payment will immediately put cash into the pockets of those in need, providing \$1000 for eligible adults and \$400 for eligible children on 1800-22-66 or visit: www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/help-emergency

Emergency fodder is available from the Wollongbar DPI Institute for landholders impacted by bushfires. 1800-814-647

For help with fencing and livestock management: <https://blazeaid.com.au>

General enquiries relating to insurance - 1800-734-621 or: <http://www.disasters.org.au>

Further information on disaster assistance is available on the Australian Government's Disaster Assist website at: www.disasterassist.gov.au and the NSW emergency information and response



by Kevin Hogan MP
Member for Page

website at: www.emergency.nsw.gov.au
Disaster assistance has been made available and above is some information that you may find useful. If you prefer you can always phone my office and we can direct you to the right area (6621-4044).
The Australian Defence Force has been working with Emergency Management Australia to help with firefighting efforts since 8th November. They have transported over 1000 passengers so far.
You can find out more about what the Defence Force is doing at: <https://news.defence.gov.au/national/defence-continues-bushfire-support>

Community-led resilience

My Facebook feed is full of burnt-out landscapes, emergency warnings, recovering communities and grim weather forecasts. My heart feels heavy and I am bone weary. I'm too tired to feel anxious, and the knot of worry that sits in my belly hasn't gone away for weeks now. And everyone I know is feeling the same way.

I have been writing about disasters, fires and floods in the *GoodTimes* for nearly three years now, knowing that before too long we would find ourselves in a time and place that looks a lot like now. I take no comfort from knowing what was on the horizon, if anything it makes it a little harder to bear, and it's hard to stay hopeful. So I guess I want to reflect on that.

There is a word that gets used so often these days it can be difficult to pinpoint what it actually means. The word is resilience. What exactly is resilience then? Anne Leadbeater, an Australian Disaster Recovery expert who lived through the Black Saturday Fires ten years ago, defines resilience as "connection, capacity, adaptation, perseverance. The ability to confront adversity and still find hope."

And, if you have read my columns before, you know that I believe that resilience is intrinsically tied to community, and I am not alone. In Disaster Recovery circles the phrase that is used is 'community-led' meaning that it is the community who should determine what they need to recover and that the community should

Word of the Bird by Cr Elly Bird

be empowered to actively participate and determine their own pathway to recovery.

Our emergency services are absolute heroes – they work inhuman hours to protect lives and property and they do an incredible job. We all know they are under-resourced, and that in conditions like these, they may not always be able to properly respond. So where does the community fit?

What models can be put in place to enable the community to work with and support emergency services? If a disaster does unfold, how can we empower community to actively participate in recovery? How can command and control systems and government agencies fit with and support fluid, organic, and sometimes slightly messy community response?

I don't pretend to have the answers but if we want to increase our resilience and community preparedness we need to be actively looking for ways to make it work, and documenting it when it does. In Nimbin and in the Terania Valley what I have witnessed over the last month, and what many of you have actively participated in, is resilience in action. The efforts of the Nimbin CWA and others co-ordinating and distributing food for firefighters and volunteers is phenomenal as is the community volunteer defenders response in working alongside the RFS.

I am hopeful that there is a paradigm shift underway

that will see us move further along the path towards truly resilient, prepared and empowered communities. We need to build strong, resilient, self-determining communities who can efficiently support disaster response and recovery – which is what communities are doing right now across the country, and the RFS are doing an incredible job working so well alongside them.

Of course, a quicker, more practical option is for as many people as possible to sign up to volunteer for the RFS, the SES and the Red Cross, and for recovery organisations like Blaze Aid. As we have all seen in these last few weeks, they need our help. With bushfires across so many communities, at this scale, there are simply not enough volunteers to cover the roles that are required.

So, amidst the chaos and concern, once again I come back to community and find hope there. My hat is well and truly off to you, good people of the Northern Rivers, take care of yourselves and each other as you flex and strengthen your resilience muscles. Keep up the excellent work but please remember to pace yourself – this is a marathon not a sprint.

If you want to flex your resilience muscles even more I recommend having a look at the Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience Handbook collection which is full of great information. You can find it here: <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/collections/handbook-collection/>



Revenge of the Loon

by Laurence Axtens

At least we shouldn't feel alone in our battles against the wildfires. Every state in the country and indeed every significant land mass in the Southern Hemisphere and much of the Northern Hemisphere are fighting the same fight; often in forests like our rainforests that have never burnt before.

All the modelling predicted that this

fire season would be catastrophic. As with most perfect storms all the elements need to come together at the same time – and all the major factors were scheduled to come together.

Ocean currents and climate change had created a hotter drier and long fire season and the NSW government had sacked more than 30 of the 40 National Parks and Wildlife Service fire officers and there had been a decade long build-up in fuel in the National Parks.

You'd think that such an 'oversight' would've had the premiers offering a mea culpa and a resignation. Hardly. Gladys @ engineofextinction made it clear this was no time to look for causes or reasons, unless they were her political opponents or actual arsonists.

Of course she offered her thoughts and prayers to the victims, presumably thoughts and prayers that none of the communities affected would organise a class action against her government for their criminal mismanagement of the National Parks.

To what degree the redistribution of \$120M of the recurrent Rural Fire Service funding toward fire bombers could also be considered mismanagement is a moot point.

All that aside, I want to send out a massive thank you to the RFS, the local 'defenders' and the CWA for their co-ordinated response to the emergency. The value of the housing and lives they have saved so far is incalculable.

ScoMo fiddles while Australia burns

by Bernadine Schwartz

It's nearly 40 years ago, when my partner and I left Sydney and moved north, to a place where the locals called it God's country, with beautiful weather throughout the year and a backdrop of lush green hills where the rainforest sat.

Mullumbimby holds many precious memories for me, I had my children there and I will always remember our first night, watching a spectacular storm approach as it rolled over Huonbrook.

Today here I sit, feeling sad and depressed as I look out my kitchen window to what was once a green garden but now it's unrecognisable with smoke so thick it blocks out the sun, and there's no respite from that constant wind.

The birds have all disappeared, except for a few scarlet honeyeaters. I'm feeding hungry wallabies and the larger trees are starting to struggle and the ground is cracking up. It's a surreal picture and thoughts of fires just won't leave my mind.

So I did some research into our national fire services, to hopefully gain some reassurance but it's left me furious and deeply worried, after learning how dangerously ill equipped and under resourced our Australian fire services are and through no fault of their own.

After I began this article, our community and many others

throughout NSW and Queensland, experienced unprecedented fires firsthand and with emotions running high I wasn't sure if I should continue but I decided it was far too important.

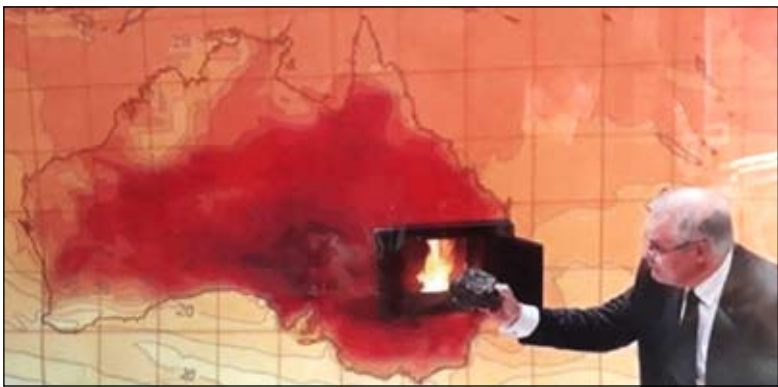
This federal government is guilty of extreme negligence and their arrogance and beliefs have interfered with the responsible running of the country and they have to be held accountable.

For the first time in our history, the fire season began in September, when 55 homes were lost and 130 fires swept through South East Queensland and Northern NSW in a single day, including rainforests, which is unheard of.

Then in November, fires took another 476 homes in NSW, resulting in the loss of four lives and while these fires raged on, Australia recorded another unprecedented event, a day when not a single drop of rain fell from the sky over the entire nation.

After the historical announcement from 11,000 scientists, no one can deny that we are in the grip of global warming, unless you're the Australian government, where it's become the elephant in the rooms of parliament, that grows larger every day.

These fires were inevitable with such dry conditions but the severity of many could have probably been avoided if our government hadn't dismissed the advice of twenty-three experts in the field, and Greg Mullins,



who has been in the game for 50 years and is a member of the Australian Climate Council and a former NSW Fire and Rescue commissioner.

Mr Mullins and his colleagues don't need to be convinced that these fires are the result of global warming and they have asked on numerous occasions for extra funding but their knowledge and experience seems to mean very little, when they are continually ignored by our PM. Our Deputy PM is no better and openly makes comments that insult our intelligence.

"Australia has experienced fires since time began and what people need now is a little bit of sympathy, understanding and real assistance."

Funding for our National Aerial Firefighting Centre has more than halved since 2003 and they have repeatedly petitioned the government for over two years, for an additional \$11 million, to contribute to the vital

leasing of specialised water bombing aircraft from the US. They are still waiting for a response.

The threat is far from over and authorities have said to be prepared for catastrophic conditions through summer, which means our firefighters have the monumental task of protecting Australia and I'm not sure that's physically possible if all hell breaks loose.

Our PM thinks it's acceptable to generously give away \$100 million of tax payers money to NASA to fund that important trip to Mars, but can't guarantee funding for NAFC or the only national body, researching fires of the future.

Over the last five years, at least 7,000 volunteer firefighters have left the RFS, at a time when they are needed most and in the past the states have always been able to readily lend resources and give assistance but fire seasons are now

overlapping and this is putting more pressure on our firefighters.

Bushfires in NSW have consumed five million hectares from May last year to now, more than twice the previous two fire seasons, and it might sound harsh but our homes can be rebuilt whereas the loss of forests and all the animals who call them home is not something you can easily replace.

Previous to the fires, wildlife carers have been stretched to the limit because of a drought that just won't break and even now, with all that's happened, I still don't know if I can trust Australians' judgement.

What were they thinking on that fateful day in May and how could so many get it so wrong? We've had our share of unusual weather events and they are becoming more frequent, yet Australians forget them so easily.

The rest of the world is at least making some kind of progress and after all we are in this together but as for Australia, we have our own agenda and it's taking us backwards in time and we're letting the rest of the world down and our own children.

Our forests are on fire, our animals are struggling to survive and many are dead but the festival of Christmas must go on, that celebrates shopping in all its glory, over indulgence, and at the same time puts a few more nails in Mother Earth's coffin. Then it's all over for another year, but I don't think there will be a next time.

Solar powered water pumps

by N Correy, Rainbow Power Co

Whether you believe in climate change or not, the one thing that is certain is that we are living in a time of soaring temperatures with many parts of Australia in drought.

Conditions aren't set to improve quickly; with little to no rain on the horizon, water is becoming a precious resource. Managing your water use and your ability to store it are some of the first steps you can take to ensure the survival of family, livestock, crops and homes.

If you have a dam down the hill, a bore in the field, or a tank at the end of your property, solar energy as a power source for water pumping is an ideal solution where water is required when the sun is shining, or where it can be stored in a high location (eg in a header tank).

Solar pump systems can also be configured as 'hybrid' systems and incorporate an additional power source, eg a generator, allowing for pump use at night.

When searching for a company to design and supply a solar pumping system for submersible bore pumps, surface pumps (or floating pumps) or inline transfer pumps, make sure that the company is known for selling quality items, with high quality materials and long warranties (with most good brands also being mostly maintenance free).



Features and benefits of good solar pumping include not only low maintenance costs and a long life-span, but they are also environmentally friendly with no pollution or noise and are independent from the grid.

Applications in which solar pumps are used include watering livestock, irrigation of crops or greenhouses, and water supply for homes.

Since water can only be pumped during sunshine hours, you need a header tank that is at least a few metres higher than your house. The pressure in your pipes is then supplied by gravity – simple, reliable and renewable!

Trusted solar pump brands Grundfos and Lorentz have quality models in their range including helical rotor as well as vertical centrifugal pumps – the former achieves a high

vertical lift (head), the latter high yields (volume).

To find the best solar pump solution suited to your requirements the only information that you need to be armed with is: the location (suburb) of the intended pump; the total dynamic head (how high the water needs to be lifted from its source to its destination); the length and width of the delivery pipes; an idea of where the water is being pumped from (dam, bore, tank, creek); plus an indication of how much water is needing to be transferred per day.

Why wait until it's too late and your tanks are dry? Rainbow Power Company can ship complete solar pump kits ready to be installed anywhere in Australia, so give their friendly, knowledgeable staff a call.

Council raises rates 'to fix roads'

Lismore City Councillors have voted for a second time to apply for a special rate variation over four years to fund a massive investment in our local roads and help re-invigorate the CBD.

Mayor Isaac Smith said he and other councillors were aware there is opposition to the rate rise but added it was the job of elected councillors to put the interests of the entire community first. He also noted that there were supporters of the rate rise, as noted in the feedback that was made available to all parties.

"I acknowledge that this is a controversial decision and that, for some, this may create a small financial burden" he said.

"We are very aware of that, and we make provisions for this. Ratepayers can contact council to make an arrangement to pay their rates off over time. People can also apply for assistance under our Hardship Policy and all Centrelink pensioners and certain Veteran Affairs pensioners are entitled to a discount, many people have taken this up already and I encourage others to apply for these too.

"No councillor wants to raise rates but there is no alternative. Over the term of this council we have cut spending by millions of



Photo courtesy The Northern Star

dollars, appointed a new General Manager to put new cost-saving measures in place and much more.

"We all want the Lismore community to grow and to become a vibrant economy that will support us into the future."

"As I have said previously, there is nothing left to trim, which means if we didn't vote for the rise, we would have to cut essential services and not invest anything in our growth."

"We have the largest road network of any council in the Northern Rivers, and a maintenance backlog of more than \$54 million which has been built up over consecutive councils.

"Unfortunately, previous councils have kicked the issue down the road. This must stop now. If we continue to duck this, it will make it worse for the next council and the cost that will be required to

rectify the infrastructure backlog will greatly penalise the community in the future.

"We are not alone in this. Other councils in our area, like Byron Bay, Richmond Valley and Ballina councils have all increased their rates by as much as 33.5% and we can all see the economic growth that has occurred in these areas.

"If our application is approved, this will be the largest investment in our roads in living memory."

The council will now write to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, which will make the final decision on whether to approve the increase.

The council voted to ask IPART for a rate increase over 4 years, starting with 7.5% in the first year, 9.4% in the second year, 3.9% in the third and 3.2% in the fourth year.

State of emergency

by Tamara Smith,
MP for Ballina

While homes and lives have been threatened by the bushfires ravaging the state lately, it has been hard to avoid the many vocal opinions about the cause, who is to blame, whether this could have been prevented and whether it is, in fact, too soon to discuss these topics entirely.

I know I joined many members of the community in feeling a deep sense of unease as the blanket of smoke descended upon our townships, wondering how bad it would get.

My team and I headed out to knock on the doors of some of the residents who were at risk from the predicted catastrophic weather conditions. I watched in awe as evacuation centres were set up seamlessly and was humbled to hear the stories of centre support staff who had been present at other locations a couple of weeks prior with families who had lost everything.

Watching the co-ordinated efforts of the Police, Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service Volunteers was nothing short of astonishing. Saying that they have and continue to do an amazing job is quite an understatement, and no thanks will ever be enough to acknowledge the work that they have done.

Much of the media attention surrounding these devastating events has focused on who is to blame and whether this tragedy could have been prevented. We Greens have come under attack for supposedly preventing back-burning and talking about climate change.

Playing the blame game in the midst of such tragedy has been disappointing to say the least. Particularly the attempts to distract from the government's failures to address the reality of the climate crisis that we face.

The loss of life, property and habitat throughout these fires has indeed been heartbreaking. What has been even more so

has been the preceding stubborn drought and that this may be the new normal. What we are seeing today and what we may see into the future is the consequence of record high levels of carbon pollution in this country.

Some have argued that it is too soon to speak about these things – that fires are still burning, communities and lives are still at risk. But my question to those people is how much worse are we prepared to let things get? Of course none of us want this to continue to be our new normal, yet we continue to burn and export coal and gas, making our climate crisis worse with more loss of life, more loss of property, more dry conditions and more heat.

It's not because we don't know how: we have the collective knowledge about how to address one of the primary drivers of this climate crisis producing bushfires. Yet we are not seeing the sort of action that is being taken right across the world on our own soil. We have known for decades what we need to do to stop our planet from burning.

In a briefing I received from one of the fire chiefs, I was advised that the rainforest at Mt Nardi is burning for the first time since 1964. No amount of back-burning could have prevented the type of canopy fire we have witnessed in our rainforest that has been so deprived of rain that 3000 hectares of it burned in the space of a couple of days and continues to do so. In the midst of dealing with this disaster, even fire chiefs and community members acknowledge that we need to deal with the climate crisis that we face.

We are in a moment of national mourning and now is the time to act. If not now, when?

We know what we need to do – we've known for years. We can build a renewable energy economy that will produce tens of thousands of jobs and make crises like the ones we have witnessed unfold this week the exception rather than the rule.

Cops target people fleeing fires

by David Shoebridge
NSW Greens MP

Picture this: you're fleeing bushfires which have been racing towards your home and the police pull you over – not to offer assistance, not to point you in the right direction – but for a roadside drug test.

You're already terrified, worried for your home and your neighbours and you're faced with a police officer asking to collect your saliva for testing. Not because you're driving dangerously, not because they have any intelligence suggesting you are impaired, but because they want to make up the numbers for their monthly quotas.

Or this: you've loaded all of your precious possessions into your car with your family pets and you're driving down a road with dark skies overhead and the smell of smoke – the police pull you over and fine you for not securing your load, or for having your pet goat on the front seat. You're only going to the next town where you're staying at a friend's place while you anxiously wait for news, you're driving carefully, but you're still in their sights.

These were the reports we received from around NSW as bushfires burned out of control.

We received reports of Roadside Drug Testing people in fire-afflicted areas



Random drug testing in Goolmangar earlier this year
Photo: Gemma Sapwell, ABC North Coast,

including South West Rocks, Heddon Greta, Ocean Shores, Huonbrook, Wilsons Creek Valley and Mullumbimby.

All of these are either directly affected by bushfires, or safe zones for surrounding areas. Subjecting those fleeing for their lives to random drug tests causes significant unnecessary harm and stress and has no impact on road safety.

People were scared, stressed and in many cases fleeing for safety. Responding to this with a punitive focus from the NSW Police Force is completely out of line.

We also received reports of police targeting motorists for unsecured loads, speeding and unregistered vehicles in areas including Uki, Huonbrook, Long Flat, Oxley Highway, Wingham, throughout the Blue Mountains, Woy Woy and Penrith.

Of course there almost certainly are real instances of

safety concerns, but it is clear that many people were just taking whatever action they could to protect themselves and their family. Checking to make them safe, urging them to secure their load is one thing, fining them is another. Having the police targeting them for traffic infringements like these is not just insensitive, it will further compound the difficulties people are facing.

There is a clear public expectation that police operations in times like this are focused on supporting affected communities. These operations are not consistent with that mandate. We have raised this with the Police Minister and the Commissioner as a matter of urgency.

When fires are tearing apart communities, police have an important role to play, but it's not doing random roadside drug tests to meet a state-wide quota.

Fires, liars and climate deniers

by Aidan Ricketts

Even for those of us who have had the intelligence and humility to heed the scientists and have been expecting catastrophic climate events, these fires have shocked us. A "rapid onset apocalypse" is how a friend described it.

After thirty or more years of warnings catastrophe is upon us in what is only an opening salvo in the climate emergency that we face. These forest fires are so widespread across the state that they will no doubt trigger a very large extinction event. There is very little forest refugia for surviving creatures or for recolonisation once burnt areas begin to regenerate. There is no greater tragedy than extinction. As humans we need to recognise that we stand in line with our fellow species on the march to extinction. Each loss brings us closer to that precipice.

We have seen lives lost and homes destroyed. Sadly, it is the people who have fought to spare the forests from industrial logging, and the people who have built their homes near them who have suffered the most. Not the coal tycoons in their harbourside mansions, not their irresponsible share market investors, and not the lying politicians. The tragedy of climate change is that its first victims are always going to be nature, and then the humans who live closest to nature and those with the least wealth.

From forest-based communities like Nymboida, Ewingar, Woodenbong, Wyaliba, or those around the Nightcap or further afield, this is where the brunt of the loss is being felt. Just like how the Pacific Islanders, and the world's poor whose carbon footprint is so small, stand to lose so much so soon. Climate change will catch up with the rich and the global north but for now they shelter inside the collective psychosis of their imagined economy and society as our forests burn.

My anger at climate deniers is as hot as the fires themselves. "Liar liar, climate denier, telling lies while the world's on fire!" Science was all fine when it was making household appliances, aeroplanes and gadgets for you. But as soon as scientists warned you that you may need to constrain your consumption something just went awry in your brains. The arrogance of people thinking they get to have an unqualified opinion on everything when there's clear science that tells us what's happening.

There's several species of climate denier. First, there's the plain stupid: The Dunning-Kruger effect is a psychological study that found that the less intelligent and informed people are, the more likely they are to value their own opinion over that of experts. Then there is the purely arrogant: Educated and informed enough to respect science but too stubborn, selfish and arrogant to accept a message they don't want to hear without opting for some crappy

bit of denialist pseudo-science from the internet.

But worst of all are the genuinely disingenuous liars. The fossil fuel companies that for decades have funded so-called climate scepticism, the coal industry lobbyists and the complicit politicians who continue to resist, delay, deny or arrest their way out of responding to the climate crisis.

As fires rage throughout the country and faced with clear and present warning of danger from a collection of former fire and emergency chiefs, instead we have seen toxic propaganda intent on deflecting attention from government complicity in the climate fires and peddling nonsensical lies.

In peddling misinformation about hazard reduction burning, these polities are actually blaming the very communities who have suffered the most. I'm not even going to enter this debate as clear expert opinion is available. The fire chiefs have told us, these fires are this bad because of climate change, the window for HR burning is reduced by climate change and HR burns don't stop fires, at best they can reduce intensity.

How foolish is climate denial for Australians? We live in the land of climate extremes already yet collectively we have thumbed our noses at the risk of more extreme weather and vilified the very people who have been trying to turn this around, the scientists, the activists

and the greenies.

Climate deniers deserve no respect from anyone. Whether they are our prime minister, our work colleagues or some pissant troll on social media, we need to treat them with the derision and condescension they deserve. They lose all credibility the moment they start trying to offer their own delusional opinions over the top of 97% scientific opinion. It's all flat earth stuff and they get their 'information' from think tanks run by the fossil fuel industry.

Australia is the third largest exporter of fossil fuels by CO₂ potential globally. Our climate activists are struggling against a very powerful industry group domestically, in a battle that has very real and quantifiable impacts globally. In the face of climate action we get lies, vilification of activists and anti-protest laws.

The mining industry has spent over \$541 million over a decade on lobbying and public misinformation. Direct political donations of over \$16.6 million have been made to Australia's two main political groupings (ALP and Coalition) in the past decade. Both major political parties are implicated, but the LNP are the greatest climate criminals by a long way. Our parliaments have been corrupted. The Greens take no corporate donations and yet they take the blame.

We need to collectively ostracise and neutralise climate deniers. When we encounter them on social media it is pointless to argue with them, if reality, science and expert knowledge doesn't move them, there's nothing you can say that will. My advice is to quickly and

routinely and as condescendingly as possible dismiss their contribution. "Run along now climate denier, get on your bicycle and ride across your flat earth, I'm sorry, I only deal with rational people I don't want to talk to you."

The academic news site The Conversation has a good approach. It has decided to adopt a policy of zero tolerance for climate misinformation. Being a site funded by universities, they understand the value of rigorous and well supported argument. The new policy encourages readers to report climate misinformation, and it will be removed by moderators and the climate misinformers will have their account suspended. Bravo.

We are in a climate emergency. We should be on a united war footing to transform our entire way of life but instead decades have been wasted by the stupid and the corrupt.

The real battle is to win hearts and minds of ordinary people who are innocently confused by all the misinformation directed at them. Concentrate on compassionately changing these people. Dismiss climate deniers on social media quickly but firmly and spend time with the genuinely baffled innocents.

We need to wholeheartedly support the climate movement, join the strikes and marches, go to the front line actions and get behind the political parties that take climate change seriously.

May you, your family, your home and all of the forests and creatures you treasure survive this summer of reckoning in the climate fires.