

Our Future-Ready Region Plan – I’m ready, are you?

For the past six months, I’ve knocked on countless doors – from Tenterfield to Kyogle, Murwillumbah to Goonellabah – listening to the hopes and fears of our communities. I have learnt first-hand that this diverse region has a lot in common. We all love this beautiful region, and we all want a clean, healthy and fair future.

We are an optimistic region, but we have some very real fears that the two major parties aren’t addressing. A fear for our children and grandchildren coping with climate change and a fear that our region and our kids will be left behind economically.

People are worried about the effects of privatisation and cuts to services, education and health. And they are concerned about the inaction of successive governments regarding the health of our rivers and forests.

The recent Menindee fish kills and our poor empty Darling River remind us of the urgent need to help our rivers, particularly our Richmond River. People want real action, to embrace the present and be ready for the future.

Overwhelmingly, people are losing faith in politics not serving the public interest or tackling the big issues that we all face.

Here in the north, we are ready for a new type of politics. Not more of the same. We need politics free from corporate influence that is evidenced based, scientifically



by Sue Higginson,
Greens candidate for Lismore

literate, understands the environment, empowers and responds to civil society, understands the natural limits to growth and is focussed on building the health, creativity and resilience of our communities, particularly the vulnerable.

This is the politics I am part of. I want action and here, the Greens have a plan. It is called ‘Our Future-Ready Region Plan’.

It is a practical evidence-based plan that incorporates the feedback from countless door-knocks, phone calls, meetings with community groups, industry leaders, and experts in science and policy.

I want to give you something real to consider – here is a snapshot of the highlights.

Our rivers

We have already outlined our \$200 million Action Plan to Revive the Richmond River over 10 to 15 years.

- Incentives to fence off river banks and improve farming practices;

- Substantial tree-planting;
- An independent Richmond River Commissioner to co-ordinate a whole-of-government and community response to revive the river;
- A revolving fund to acquire, restore and on-sell strategically important land;
- An end to native forest logging in the catchment.

Climate change and energy

- Transition to 100% renewables by 2030;
- Establish a new \$2.8 billion Grid Transformation Fund;
- Strategic return of the energy grid back to public hands;
- Support community owned renewable energy projects and community owned retailers;
- Ensure all new developments are climate-smart and future-ready;
- Solar and batteries in every school and hospital;
- Electric vehicle-ready roads.

Flood mitigation

- Green Infrastructure projects throughout the Richmond and Tweed River catchments;
- Lismore CBD renewal and flood adaptation implementation;
- Continued support of SCU’s National Centre for Flood Research;
- Support existing community and business initiatives that build community awareness, resilience and readiness.

Housing

- Investment in community and social housing;
- Sustainable housing; tiny homes projects;
- Remove the legislative

- barriers to sustainable landshare projects;
- Introduce rent caps to help with affordability;
- End no-fault evictions.

Food and fibre hub

- Incentives to make the Northern Rivers the food producing capital of the state, including beef, dairy, fruit, nuts, fodder and fibre cropping;
- Support for the emerging rice and hemp industries;
- Comprehensive collaboration with SCU on R&D needs;
- Proper Price Produce;
- Support the Young Farmers Alliance and develop farm entry schemes;
- Develop regional food hub;
- Permanent produce markets in our town centres.

Koalas

- Create the Great Koala National Park;
- Prohibit offsetting of any core and potential koala habitat;
- A comprehensive koala habitat restoration plan with incentive funding;
- Support a wildlife hospital and bolster Friends of the Koala.

Forests

- End Native Forest Logging on our public forest estate;
- Provide for the full just transition for forest workers;
- Support Aboriginal management of public native forests on Native Title lands.

Public transport

- Build a comprehensive Public Transport System across the Northern Rivers on the

- principles of accessibility, safety, affordability, efficiency, sustainability and tourism opportunity, including trains, light rail, electric buses, car sharing, cycleways and walkways;

- Retain our very valuable rail corridor as part of the system;
- Link the system to the Gold Coast.

Reclaim our democracy

- Repeal the anti-protest laws;
- Introduce a Bill of Rights;
- End all corporate political donations.

Health

- Improved patient ratios for nurses and midwives, counting babies, in all of our hospitals across our region;
- Lactation consultants in all maternity wards;
- Security staff at all hospitals;
- Secure the future of the Murwillumbah Hospital;
- Promote healthy eating;
- Fund Hospital infrastructure needs in Urbenville, Kyogle, Nimbin, Bonalbo and Tenterfield;
- Strong support for primary health care initiatives;
- Strong support of complimentary medicinal programs;
- Strong support for medicinal cannabis;
- Legalisation of assisted dying.

Education

- Full reinstatement of funding for TAFE;
- Rebuild our Lismore, Wollongbar, Murwillumbah, Kyogle and Tenterfield TAFE’s into strong properly resourced actual learning

- centres (not virtual);
- Air-conditioning and solar power in all public schools;
- Reduce the \$20m School Maintenance Backlog in the Lismore Electorate;
- Reduce class sizes.

Social justice

- Introduce a Koori Court and Drug Court for Lismore;
- Invest in more rehabilitation beds;
- Legalise cannabis.

Creative region hub

- Ensure core regional conservatorium funding, and that ANSWRC is provided with additional funds to meet the expanded music education needs of regional NSW Public Schools;
- Continue full support and growth of NORPA;
- Support our community arts sector.

No more water mining

- Prohibit water mining across our region.

If this is the type of politics you want too, come and join the team. We have only got a few weeks left until 23rd March. We have so many things to do and many great events coming up and Bob Brown is coming to town!

Check out: www.sue4lismore.org.au and click on Get involved – events. Or call us on 0428-227-363.

Don’t miss our gathering at Peace Park Lismore, on Saturday 9th February at 2pm. Hear about the campaign, join the fun and be counted. I’m ready, are you?

Nature can give and nature can take away

by Bernadine Schwartz

The human population has now reached 7.6 billion, but out of all those billions, only a fraction are indigenous (370 million) with 150 million still living a tribal existence.

Our sense of superiority has always been justification for our unstoppable quest to reshape the planet, and we wear it like a badge of honour, but we have driven nearly all of these people to extinction.

It’s been estimated that during the 20th Century at least one tribe a year was lost, either through colonisation, logging, mining, road building and industrial farming and we are still persecuting them, as we greedily consume the remains of Mother Earth’s resources.

There was a time when the indigenous people of the Earth thrived even in the harshest environments, such as the Inuit in the Arctic, to the Kalahari bushmen in Africa and to survive, it took many lifetimes of careful observation of their environment.

They have their own medicine and language, plus extraordinary hunting and navigational skills and are highly resourceful, building homes from tee pees to beautifully woven huts, to the unbelievable igloo, yet we still dismiss them as simply primitive. Obviously they had to be intelligent

and capable or they wouldn’t still be here but their knowledge is becoming worthless as climate change alters all they have ever known.

Linguists have estimated that there are roughly 7,000 languages in the world and 40% of them are endangered (a mother tongue is lost every two weeks) with 4,000 being spoken by indigenous people. Languages that convey an ancient wisdom into the planet and its lifeforms and words that express complex geological, geographical and climatic information.

Sadly, what knowledge our ancestors once had and their resilience, has faded through the generations and today many of us have grown so accustomed to our artificial environment, that we’ve become hybrids . We have a zero tolerance to the slightest sign of discomfort, and all of this has come at a great cost to the planet.

It’s very distressing as I watch my garden slowly turn from green to brown and now there are virtually no signs of life at all, except the occasional bird or insect. This is when I stop and take a deep breath and say WTF have we have done! When water is gone, the potential for life is gone too, and our high tech world becomes totally redundant, leaving us powerless. If ever there was a time to mount a case opposing water mining, it’s now!

Last month a study was done on the planet’s groundwater and published in Nature Climate Change journal.

The world’s groundwater accounts for more than half of the freshwater on the planet and over two billion people depend on it for drinking and irrigation. It’s replenished primarily by rainfall and the water exits or discharges from the groundwater sources into lakes, rivers and oceans, thereby maintaining an overall balance and scientists call this recharge.

But when there’s a lack of rainfall, the levels drop and remain that way until balance is restored. Scientists are starting to believe that it could take a century for these aquifers to be replenished and this would have a lasting impact on the world’s future water supply, as climate change, as well as our reckless overuse, decreases the groundwater levels around the planet.

We’ve even managed to now alter the Jet Stream, those powerful winds that steer the planet’s weather patterns, and the polar vortex. The vortex is a circular band of winds that rotate above the poles, preventing the cold air from escaping but it has now broken into three and this is why Europe is experiencing a freezing cold winter, again.

We have abused our privileged position on this planet, with the misuse of our intelligence and power. It’s impossible for us to replicate the work our trees and oceans perform or the gifts given from every species to make this planet function but ignorance can be bliss for only so long,

till reality eventually catches up.

Climate change is growing exponentially, so much so, that the latest update is frightening and difficult to comprehend, especially for those who have been ignoring the evidence. As early as 2030 we will be living in a world with a chronic shortage of food and water, that will threaten all of the human race and the planet’s ecosystems.

Nearly all the planet’s coral reefs will be dead, the intensity of weather disasters will increase, and civilisation will begin to collapse. ALL aspects of society have to make immediate unprecedented changes and urgently, to avoid a catastrophe that is only 11 years away or maybe sooner.

Please, PAUSE for a minute and read that last paragraph again. This is the latest report from the most conservative panel of scientists in the world, the IPCC. Because of decades of procrastination the window is closing rapidly to keep below 1.5 degrees of warming, and according to most scientists the emissions pledges made in Paris don’t add up to us achieving that goal, and now even two degrees is looking unattainable.

The Iroquois of North America have an outlook on life that is a far cry from ours. They have always considered seven generations ahead in their decision making, ensuring a lasting legacy for their children with a belief that possessions only cloud the

mind and pollute the soul.

All indigenous cultures are unique, but they all share an ancient faith in the relationship between them and nature. To take more than is needed or to degrade Mother Earth is not just self-defeating, it’s regarded as neglect of the unborn child. We live in a magical place and yet we still can’t recognise that our planet is the grand matriarch.

Modernity and all its sophistication has turned us into a conceited species with too many believing that we are invincible. Who else can claim to have gone to the moon and back?

We are now witnessing Mother Earth’s life force ebb away, right here in our own backyard.

Please, please, stop everything you are doing and start talking to your neighbours, friends, family, work colleagues, anyone and let’s start taking matters into our own hands! We haven’t got time to wait for governments to pull their fingers out and we the people can do so much.

Materialism never could lead to happiness and the fundamental purpose of being here, was to learn, to love and care for our family and our fellow man. If only we’d lived in harmony with nature and not attempted to be her master. Instead, we’ve effectively pulled the plug on our own life support system and face our biggest challenge, survival itself, as we say goodbye to the planet we once knew and took for granted, for far too long.

Powerhouse of democracy and innovation

Where else but the Northern Rivers? How many times do you hear or think this?

Have you ever experienced that moment of homecoming when returning from the Gold Coast airport, on the Pacific Highway (just near the old Tropical Fruit World) where you look over the canefields towards Wollumbin and something stirs in the belly and heart as you enter the (gasfield free) Northern Rivers. A special place ecologically, culturally, and politically.

This is the community that fought off the fossil fuel industry by non-violent direct action and won; this is the place where a Green-run Council has for years kept Byron shire free of high rise apartments, and the creeping sameness of McDonalds, KFC and Hungry Jacks, and instead become a national destination for great music festivals, whale watching and grassroots democracy.

This is the place where independent media like *Nimbin GoodTimes* and *Echonetdaily* challenge corporate media to inform and empower the community.

We are the region that birthed environmental blockades and the most prominent region for the new settler movements from the 1970s onwards, but it goes back further, the NORCO cooperative began in 1895 as a very early regional act of collective organisation and a



by Aidan Ricketts

resistance to corporatisation. We are now national leaders in rooftop solar uptake and social enterprise. The list goes on.

The Northern Rivers is about breaking out of old, tired ways of doing things and making a fresh start. So inevitably I'm going to get on to politics. Why would a region like ours be content with being held captive to the alternating tedium of the two party system when we know we are more creative than that?

We first surprised the nation way back in 1990 when a surge of support for independent candidate Helen Caldicott caused the then National Party leader to lose the Federal seat of Richmond, and it has never returned. It's been a very long journey trying to break the powerful two party duopoly in the Northern Rivers, but it is well underway.

In 1995 Ian Cohen from our region became the first Green in NSW parliament. In 2004 Jan Barham became the first Green mayor to be popularly elected in NSW.

In the 2015 state election Tamara Smith was the first woman to represent Ballina electorate and the first Greens candidate to take a National Party stronghold.

Lismore very nearly fell to the Greens that year as well, but the entrenched status quo narrowly held on for another four years. This year, high profile Greens candidate Sue Higginson is on track to deliver another historic power shift away from the old duopoly parties.

The favourite argument put forward by the major parties in this region to discourage people from voting Green, is that you need to have a local member who is part of a governing party. This is an attempt to bribe and coerce the voters. This threat, and it comes from both Labor and the Nats, is an admission of political corruption that is so in-your-face, so routine, that they barely can see it for what it is.

It's worse than pork-barrelling, it's an admission of what the Greens have been saying all along, the two party system is broken and corrupt. If we keep voting for the same broken system we will keep getting more and more of this entrenched and corrupted logic.

Shifting seats from the grasp of the duopoly parties makes way for new beginnings and also brings renewed political focus to local seats. Since Tamara was elected in Ballina, there has been a whopping 32% increase in spending

in that seat. If the Greens gained balance of power in the tightly contested NSW election next month the clout of the Northern Rivers would be enormous in the new parliament.

The Greens held the balance of power in both houses of federal parliament under the Gillard government, and they achieved so much including pushing Labor to put a price on carbon, government assistance for child dental health, and democratic reform of the Senate voting system.

The Northern Rivers is growing greener year by year as people come to value our region's identity as a national driver of progressive change. Our rivers need help, our forests need help, our state political system needs a major clean up, our regional farming sector needs revitalising. The Northern Rivers Greens are home-grown and community-based. It just makes sense that a region like ours would do politics differently.

Fighting the power of the two-party voting system is not an easy task, so it remains always essential to use your preferences wisely. Whilst the duopoly is uninspiring, there is still a very big difference between Labor and the Nationals when it comes to social justice and even the environment.

Labor is very much the next best option after the Greens on these issues, so make sure you number one and two, it's the best you can do.

Together Party hosts inaugural conference

The Together Party is having its first ever conference, with talks and workshops on everything from climate change to industry policy, from the arts to Australia's place in the world.

Candidate Mark Swivel (*pictured*) said, "Together is a new political force, part of the new independent wave that will change #auspol and our 'national conversation' at the 2019 federal election. Disruption is everywhere except politics – let's change that."

The party has applied for registration with the Australian Electoral Commission and will campaign at least for the Senate in NSW.

The two-day conference in February is an opportunity to think through how to rebuild our Commonwealth, debate policy, and develop an action plan for the election campaign, with entertainments thrown in, to engage, inspire and activate.

Headline speakers are: **Belinda Kinkead**, engineer and director of



LO3 Energy Australia, on Energy Policy and Climate Change; **Prof Patrick Keyzer**, head of LaTrobe Law School, on Human Rights and the world we want to live in; **Kate McDowell**, performer and creator of Wonderbabes, on a Life in the Arts and Funding a Future; **Prof Julian Knowles**, Macquarie academic

and muso, on Making Sense of Higher Education; **Mick O'Regan**, broadcaster, on Journalism and Democracy.

It'll also be fun – especially on Friday night with entertainment provided by **Bec Melrose**, winner of RAW Comedy 2018, and **Pinky Beecroft**, ex-Machine Gun Fellatio frontman.


The conference will be held on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th February, 10am to 5pm at Mullumbimby Ex-Services Club Auditorium, Dalley Street.

The Together Party has over 700 members, a policy platform, a motivated committee and militia of volunteers, and would love to talk to you about its plans, platform and the coming campaign.

Contact Mark Swivel on 0407-875-398 or at: hello@thetogetherparty.org.au Website: www.thetogetherparty.org.au

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Bush Theatre gigs



Sali Bracewell – Cabaret by Candlelight
Friday 8th February, 7pm, by donation
Sali Bracewell is a Welsh/Australian singer-songwriter-pianist who performs regularly throughout Australia and in the UK.

She has shared the lineup at festivals and conferences with the likes of the Dalai Lama, Tash Sultana, Eileen Jewell, Julien Baker, Olympia and Lior. Teetering on the edges of vulnerability and strength, Sali’s vibrato vocals soar atop her warm and dynamic piano playing.

Traditional folk is the basis of her music with added elements of classical music and alt-pop. Her music meanders, unhurried and haunting, through these spheres, conjuring an ambience that is evocative of old traditional stories, but reinvented with a modern twist.

Catch her in the auditorium, set up with cabaret style seating for dinner and the show. The Cafe will be open serving delectable dinners, treats and snacks to enhance your sensory experience. BYO OK.

Waitangi Day – Paua to the People!
Saturday 9th February: 1pm – Blakboi, free entry
3-8pm – Hāngi – \$20 veg, \$25 non-veg
7.30pm – Paua in the auditorium \$25.
Tix online at: <https://nimbinbushtheatre.com/event/waitangi-day-celebrations>
The Treaty of Waitangi is New Zealand’s founding document. It takes its name from



the place in the Bay of Islands where it was first signed on the 6th of February 1840.
The Treaty is an agreement, in Māori and English, that was made between the British Crown and about 540 Māori Rangatira (chiefs). It gave the Māori people the same rights as the British and recognised Māori ownership of their lands.

To celebrate the occasion you can enjoy an authentic Hāngi – a traditional Māori method of cooking food using heated rocks buried in a earth pit oven.

The entertainment begins at 1pm with Blakboi, an Indigenous singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist who uses loops decks, drums, keys, guitars, voice and dj-ing. He is also a visual artist and activist, surfer and poet. Blakboi is from the Gamilaroi peoples of central NSW now living on the Bundjalung nation around Byron Bay. His music is uplifting, political and thought provoking.

At 7.30pm in the auditorium, reggae legends Paua will take you to a place of positive vibrations via reggae fusion, soulful RnB hooks, incognito jazz spills, righteous vocals and 808 ends.

Famous for creating chemistry between the band and their audiences, Paua are bringing their high-energy, polished live show to Nimbin. Known for packing venues and selling out shows, lead singer Jay says, “We are extending our positive message to the world.”



Sean McMahon – Cabaret by Candlelight
Friday 15th February, 7pm, by donation.
Sean McMahon’s dedicated songwriting is a craft that walks that fine line between edginess and vulnerability.

His poetic and melodic style of writing is loaded with confessional narratives and vivid story telling that explore and exploit themes we may all know well, however, its his ability to craft a song, and his warm and honest vocal that make the magic happen.

Across five albums to date, he has honed a style all his own and traversed a musical landscape from densely textured alt-country through to a blend of folk, blues, ‘cosmic’ country and rock and roll.

Be prepared to be lulled and mesmerised by this consummate musician and performer.

A cross between The Eels and Steve Earle, he creates folky-bluesy music, with a hint of alternative pop.

His songs are accessible and steeped in a fine songsmith’s beauty and sensitivity.

Catch him in the auditorium in a cabaret setting for an evening of musical finesse. The Cafe will be open serving delicious meals, award-winning coffee and amazing sweet treats. BYO.



Craig Atkins – Cabaret by Candlelight
Friday, 1st March at 7pm

An evening of roots-blues with one of our favourite regular performers, award-winning Craig Atkins – a man whose music is rapidly gaining momentum within the local scene and also making waves nationally.

Those who saw him perform at our recent Survival Day event can attest to his special quality and inspirational music.

Craig Atkins is a multi-instrumentalist songwriter and performer based in the Byron Hinterland (Bundjalung Country), with his set-up consisting of various acoustic guitars, lap slide, didgeridoos, harmonica, foot percussion and loop and effect pedals.

With a passionate but humble heart Craig Atkins can make your feet tap, but also make you heart break and then soar. His passionate performances are moving and grooving as his music weaves through roots, blues, folk, world and country, from chilled finger-picking folk stories, to delta slide blues, all played with a gentle conviction and pure intention.

Catch this great musician on stage in our auditorium, which will be transformed into a cabaret style dinner setting, for an evening of sensory delight where great music meets great food! BYO.

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Singing up Bundjalung collaboration

by Shae Salmon

“Misty Valleys, ancient lands,” the beginning lyrics of *Bundjalung*, the beautiful and evocative song by the highly regarded Monkey and the Fish, regaled the Nimbin Bush Factory on Friday the 4th of January.

Originally released on their debut album *In Cahoots*, the recent Nimbin performance celebrated the 20 year anniversary since its recording. The Bundjalung people are the original custodians of the ancient land of the northern coastal area of NSW.

The song won the Dolphin Award for Song of the Year in 1999 and was written by popular local singer and songwriter Chris Fisher (lead vocals), and the late Col Roberts, who was a talented and much respected Bundjalung man.

The song reflects the immense love of country and family, with great respect paid to the Bundjalung people past and present.

Performers Bibi, Tule, Lewis Walker (didgeridoo) Gil (Bundjalung Custodians), John Crozier (guitar) and the late Steve Thompson (drums) featured on the album version of the song. Special guest performers on the night of the anniversary celebration were brothers Anthony Gordon (percussion and chants) and Roy Gordon (speaking the Bundjalung language) who teamed up with the other regular members of Monkey and the Fish, George Urbaszek on bass, and Johnny Shaw on drums.

In Cahoots notably was mixed and recorded at Bush Traks studio in



Nimbin by the legendary Dave Highet. Monkey and the Fish have notched up an impressive eight Dolphin awards all together.

Also off *In Cahoots* are ‘Wai:Bal’ which won the 2001 Dolphin award for Environmental Song, and ‘Mirror’ which won the 2001 Indigenous/World award.

Sharing the lead vocals with Chris is the other half of Monkey and the Fish, Marcelle Townsend-Cross, the lady with the lovely voice and alluring stage presence, who herself is a talented song writer, having composed songs such as ‘Mirror’ and ‘Following Blind’, also featured on the album.

These inspiring songs were dedicated to Marcelle’s Mum and Nan respectively, portraying emotional stories while embracing aspects of her Koori family and culture.

Chris has been in two prior bands, The Essentials with whom he recorded the album *Progress*, and The Dreamcatchers, producing the album

Green Hearts.

Chris has been well known for his interest in, and promotion of, social and environmental issues. The lovely song ‘A Place of Hope’ was based on a poem written by Chris’s mother Iris; it is the title track off the latest album, which also received Dolphin awards for Album Of The Year and Production in 2017, and is always a favourite with the crowd, lovingly dedicated to her memory.

The tasty food available at the Bush Factory, and the general Nimbin good vibes made for a wonderful night. For those not fortunate enough to attend, the concert was recorded and a video clip is in production to be published online later this year.

In Cahoots, along with the other great music from Chris and Monkey and the Fish, including the awesome new album *A Place of Hope*, can be procured for your enjoyment by contacting: www.fruitbatmusic.com or downloading on iTunes or Spotify.

Go ahead, treat yourself!



Byron Bay-based singer-songwriter Steve Tyson has travelled the world and played at some of the great international folk and roots festivals. Steve writes contemporary folk songs infused with blues, intimate story-telling one minute, and swaggering alt-country the next, but decidedly Australian in content. Steve’s band includes bass player John Barr, drummer Andy Kirkcaldie, and guitarist Ian Shawsmith.

The band has just released a new single, ‘The Reverend’ and embarks on an east coast tour during February, including gigs at the Nimbin Hotel on Thursday 14th February, and the Bangalow Hotel on Friday 15th February.



Yes, it’s on again, back by popular demand: 2B Queer presents Queeraoke at the Nimbin Town Hall on Saturday 9th March, doors open 7pm. Prizes for best dressed and best singer. Tickets on sale now at Perceptio’s for \$10. Limited tickets so get in quick. See ya there!

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Cabaret by Candlelight
CRAIG ATKINS
Award-winning
Roots maestro

FRI 8 MAR
7pm
DONATION

Cabaret by Candlelight
MRS HIPPY & THE
LOVE HANDLES
Sassy Soul-Rock

FRI 15 MAR
7pm
DONATION

Cabaret by Candlelight
TAILOR BIRDS
Electric violin-led
experimental World-Folk

COMING UP!

MARCH - Artwomb / Pagan Love Cult
HipHop: Shorty Main + Walshy

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- Friday 1st, 6pm Kobya
- Friday 8th, 6pm Rob Cass
- Friday 15th, 6pm Freowyn
- Friday 22nd, 6pm Cass Eleven

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Strange Colours

Set in the opal mining town of Lightning Ridge, *Strange Colours* tells the story of three lonely people floating in this unique microcosm with its own ideals and rules, surrounded by vast stretches of bush. A closed off, strong-willed daughter longs to know her absent father before he dies and travels here for the first time. The father is cracked open by the past he's abandoned. An enigmatic miner is thrown into a fleeting romance despite his reclusive lifestyle. The characters seek connection with one another, but are torn apart by themselves and the world around them. They struggle to find what to say. As overwhelmed humans in a world ruled by

the relentless speed of progress. We are really excited to show this wonderful Australian film debut from a dynamic new talent in Australian cinema. *Strange Colours* is the first feature film from Alena Lodkina a Russian-born filmmaker based in Melbourne. She has made fiction and documentary short films that have played at festivals around the world. She has worked as a film editor (*The Silent Eye*, 2016), and her writing on film has appeared in *Senses of Cinema*, *4:3 Journal* and *Fireflies*. Her work includes two short films; *No such thing as a Jellyfish* (2014) and *Plain Pleasures* (2015) and a documentary *Lightning*



Ridge – The Land of the Black Opals (2016), which won awards at the Antenna Film Festival, Message to Man Film Festival and the Melbourne International Film Festival. The experience of this documentary inspired the story of *Strange Colours*. She participated in Biennale College Cinema in 2016 with this first feature film, which went on to win funding, go into production and premiere at Venice Film Festival 2017. Winner of the Best Australian Independent Film Award at the Gold Coast Film Festival, it is currently touring the national and international festival circuit. See *Strange Colours* on Saturday 9th February at Birth & Beyond, 54 Cullen Street, Nimbin. Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30 showing. Light refreshments available. Members are free and guests are \$10. New members are always welcome. For more information, contact: nimbinflix@gmail.com

Movie at the Bush Theatre

OCCUPATION (M)
 Friday, 22nd February at 7.30 pm, \$10

Directed by local wunderkind Luke Sparke, *Occupation* was shot in and around Murwillumbah in early 2018, with a budget of \$6 million. It's been deemed a success and sold onto North America, Europe, South East Asia and the Middle East. Its sequel, *Occupation Rainfall* is currently being shot on the Gold Coast. A host of locals were given positions as extras in *Occupation*, and this is a chance to see yourself, your kids and your friends up on the big screen. Also starring a bevy of local talent, including Temuera Morrison (*Once Were Warriors*) and Jacqueline McKenzie (*Romper Stomper*). We will have a post movie Q&A with actors from the film, including well-loved Nimbin local, James Stratton. After their small Australian country town is annihilated by an overwhelming alien airborne attack, a group of civilians evade capture and discover they are now among the last remaining survivors of an extraterrestrial invasion engulfing the entire planet. As humanity falls under world-wide occupation, they form a home-grown army to fight back against vastly superior enemy forces. On the frontlines of the battle for Earth, this ragtag crew of country people are our last hope. Catch this movie so you are up to date for the sequel. Cafe open, BYO.



Nimbin FASHION SHOW

2pm & 7pm
 Sat 2nd March
 2019
 Nimbin Town Hall

Tickets available @
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El Salvador's Gangland - Made in the USA

by Warwick Fry

The second day of Christmas 2017, and outside an 'Evangelista' is on a rant for Jesus with a loudspeaker that can be heard for several blocks.

You don't often get that in the middle of the week, but then you don't often hear gang members – pandilleros – encouraged to seek forgiveness in Jesus.

The evangelist was blatantly capitalising on the death of a local pandillero at the hands of the police, on Christmas Eve.

It's a signifier of how gang culture has changed over the last few generations. Some former gang leaders are now Evangelical Pastors. No longer the tattoos (a teardrop denoting a murder – a requisite for promotion in the gang hierarchy). No more soccer games with the macheted head of a rival gang as a football (as occurred once in a prison riot). No more (or not so much) forced recruitment of school kids, with the assassination of teachers who objected. The former 'reformed' gang leader now has another captive audience willing to listen to two (or if you're lucky three) chords monotonously pumped out on an irreverently amplified electric organ on loop for several hours straight. Sometimes until midnight. ('At least', the patient Catholics say, 'we pray quietly'). You're a Pastor now, mon; Hallelujia!! Hear the People Testify!

The gangs still have a sinister presence. The corner stores in our suburb pay a 'tax' of \$US5 to \$25 a week depending on the size of the business. Three years ago my taxi driver had to be persuaded to enter the suburb. He's cool now, (he has to douse his lights if he



comes in after dark to indicate that he is a 'local'). But if we have a different taxi a boy runs up with his mobile to take a dollar 'tax'. Some walk around with phones glued. Others watch who enters the barrio (neighbourhood). They don't have tattoos, now, and they don't have to kill anyone. At least not in our neighbourhood. They just don't want to go to school. And they get a free iPhone.

Police have made sweeps since I first lived there. Our neighbours changed as gang related families were evicted. We no longer heard the odd shot in the night. But the reputation sticks. It is hard to get deliveries made or the internet fixed.

Other areas are more unlucky. In the first half of 2018, 160 police were killed in confrontations with the gangs. A disturbing development - police overreaction, and the formation of vigilantes who go out and assassinate suspected gang members.

This is the environment that has generated the marches of refugees to the US border. While the media presents this as an invasion by the envious, the Central American people see it

more as a protest march against the conditions created by US support of dictatorships (as is the case in Honduras) and profoundly corrupt government (as is the case in Guatemala – and Honduras). The exodus has been going on for years, but now the refugees are marching as a combined, organised group to bring international attention to the damage US policies have brought to the region. The obscenity of Trump's wall is intended to exclude the vision of collateral damage coming home to roost.

The notorious gangs of El Salvador and the evangelicals are both made in the USA. In 1996, 60,000 Salvadoran 'undesirables' were deported en masse from the US, most of them from Los Angeles. Twenty years later care packages from the US Bible Belt ensure that the Evangelical churches are well attended and the compliant gang leaders rewarded with the position of 'Pastors'.

In Honduras the gangs are in open collusion with the US funded police, and with drug traffickers. The brother of the current (elected under a US condoned fraud) President and the son of a former



President (illegally appointed after a US endorsed coup) have both been arrested for massive cocaine smuggling.

It makes the petty extortion rackets of the Salvadoran gangs (born in the USA) look like small beer.

Mari's Story

Mari's youngest brother was killed by gangsters five years ago near the family farm up in the hills near the Guatemalan border. He was killed for his ID papers and mobile phone. The gangsters use fake ID for their criminal activities.

Another brother owns the house she lives in. He was a security guard on an armoured van that was attacked in an attempted bank robbery. One of the bandits killed was a gang member. The gang found out where he lived. He resigned from his job and moved out of town.

Last year another brother died. He had been deported for the fourth time, but kept trying to get back. Why? He had lived in Los Angeles for seventeen years, had a partner, a 13-year old daughter, work and business assets.

After five months in a Texan prison he came back to live with us.

A jack of all trades, helping us out on the house, on the family farm near the border, he simply gave up when he got news that his partner had married an evangelical pastor.

When I first met Mari she had been threatened by the pandilleros with a gun at her head and a knife at her throat, to extort a 'tax'. (I only learnt this later). She invited me to meet her family, visit the family farm up in the hills. The rest is history.

Mari does not feel that her circumstances are unusual for Salvadorans. She does not feel that she is a victim.

She loves her childhood on the family farm based on sustainable agriculture. As the first child in her family to finish school at the age of 14 she had to accompany her father to read the documents he signed with his thumbprint. Her mother is also illiterate.

After working in the city as a street vendor, as a US\$8 dollar a day cellophane sweet wrapper in a sweatshop factory for two years, as a live-in maid for similar wages with a half a day off each weekend, as a barmaid and a waitress, she still yearns for the country life.

Her dream is to grow things.

Sur quoi portent 'Les Gilets Jaunes'?

by Aurelie Billot

I was recently asked by an acquaintance if what we read about the happenings in France is true or not... this was a reference to the Gilets Jaunes (Yellow Vests).

It is true, a large number of French citizens are wearing the yellow vest and joining or supporting the movement of discontent.

The movement is sometimes depicted as one of a growing extreme right in France. But it is definitely not! The yellow vests movement gathers people from all social classes and political parties.

It also seems that there is a focus on problems created by a revised Carbon Tax and subsequent increase in cost of fuel... However, from my own research, I understand that it is not the Carbon Tax in itself that makes the French angry. This is just 'la goutte d'eau qui fait déborder le vase' – literally 'the last drop of water that makes the vase overflow' = 'the straw that breaks the camel's back'.

The real reason is what lies underneath, the skeleton in the closet...

Since 2018, France is the world's most taxed country with about 250 taxes of all kinds. The increase of the Carbon Tax is to finance some taxes that have been lowered or cancelled. For instance, the ISF (Impôt Sur la Fortune = Tax on Wealth) was cancelled to profit the wealthiest, meaning 1% of the French population only.

Then, the CICE (Credit d'Impôt pour la Compétitivité et l'Emploi = Competitiveness and Employment Tax Credit) lowered taxes paid by companies in general. To finance the

reform of the CICE, which represents 20 billion euros a year, the government decided to increase the Carbon Tax... (Liberation, Luc Peillon- 28/11/2018) and that's what French people couldn't tolerate.

CICE could be a good idea if only small businesses and big companies were not considered the same. Small businesses generally provide more employment and are facing greater risk, which suggests they should be granted more financial support from the government (e.g less taxes).

It makes sense that big companies don't need such measures to boost their economy, whereas they benefit from 50% of this measure. For instance, the big supermarket chain "Carrefour" (the equivalent of Coles) didn't create any employment in 2018 at all and the money they saved from the CICE was just to make its shareholders wealthier.

So, here we are... French people do not feel supported by the government and have had enough of the current political system. It would seem that the movement really has nothing to do with being for or against environmental reforms or taxes, it has to do with fairness and equality.

What Yellow Vests claim is for the people to be represented as a Sovereign People and for elected officials to really represent them. They are asking for President Emmanuel Macron to resign and for a 6th Republic to be put in place.

In 'Les Cahiers de Doléances' of 1789, the People demanded the monarchy make changes in order to create a whole new system of civil rights. The outcome was 'La déclaration



des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen' (the Declaration of Human Rights) on which the French Constitution was founded in 1791. This became the basis for a nation of free individuals protected equally by the law.

It is included at the beginning of the constitutions of both the Fourth French Republic (1946) and Fifth Republic (1958) and is still current. Inspired by the Enlightenment philosophers, the Declaration was a core statement of the values of the French Revolution and had a major impact on the development of freedom and democracy in Europe and worldwide.

Today, we seem to have returned to an era

of privileges and inequality, so once more people are demanding change. They want to be able to directly intervene in the democracy by putting in place a Citizens' Initiative referendum. Hence, French people are very conscious that current political system doesn't work for 99% of the nation and want everyone's opinions to be fairly represented. Considering that a similar movement of discontent is spreading throughout Europe, this seems to be a widely shared issue.

How convenient is it that in 2008 France made it obligatory to carry yellow vests in every car in case of accident. Now everyone has one at hand!