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## Council unaccountable

Although I don't miss the monthly patronising monologues 'From the Mayor's desk', I find it curious that Lismore Council's appalling financial mess has not yet been mentioned in our otherwise great local paper.

You will have noticed the plethora of inappropriate suburban subdivisions springing up all around our village, with more in the pipeline. This is all being done without the necessary upgrades to our infrastructure.

As we watch our loved ones being killed in road accidents, Council has found a \$6.1M black hole in this year's budget, and we're told there's no money for footpaths and road shoulders.

Council geniuses have also amassed an \$80 M debt, and estimates an infrastructure backlog of over \$70 M. Add these together and you get about \$160 M plus interest that needs paying off by the ratepayers.

Council is now planning to give us a 31% rate rise. After all, someone needs to be held accountable. You have been given until 18th June to respond.

May I suggest a regular Council Capers column in future?

G. Rosen  
Nimbin

## Polling booth madness

It seems that handing out and receiving 'how-to-vote cards' was not a pleasant experience for many during the federal election.

The scene as voters entered

# Notices

## Markets

Rock Valley Hall Markets (at Rock Valley Hall grounds) will be held on Sunday 30th June, 8am to 12pm. BBQ and drinks available. \$10 per stall. Enquiries Betty 6629-3329 or visit Rock Valley Hall on Facebook.

the booths was akin to a flock of starving seagulls being fed potato chips.

A voting school teacher voiced her bitter disappointment in the amount of wasted paper when each and every day schools are teaching students and making every effort to use less paper, and that we should get rid of plastic election placards.

Why can't we just have the HTV cards fixed to the inside of each cardboard voting booth? We could have a draw to determine the location of each party's card within the booth in a similar manner to the candidate draw that determines where the candidates are placed on the ballot paper.

As a booth volunteer, one of the most alarming things for me was the amount of lies I witnessed being told to voters as they entered the booth.

I was also amazed at some voters' beliefs and attitudes. For example, one voter told me that he believed the reason we are suffering extreme climate events is because God is punishing humanity for allowing abortion.

This fellow and his wife were travelling around Australia in his caravan funded by his church, promoting creation science.

I think it's unfair that churches get tax breaks and handouts while there hasn't been an increase to unemployment benefits for over 20 years and people are sleeping on the streets.

David Norris,  
Pottsville

## Get on your knees

Vyvyan Stott (Letters, May 2019) is correct to point out the tragic addiction that

drugs can cause.

However, the most potent and damaging addiction is superstition. Wars, terrorism, brainwashing, overpopulation – due to withholding of adequate provision of contraception and abortion opportunities – can all be traced back to the tyranny of superstition cults.

Yes, by all means read the Bible. It contains much truth and wisdom. As does, it must be said, contemporary fiction like Lord of the Rings, The Simpsons or Xena: Warrior Princess.

The Creator is TimeSpace. The best reason to get on your knees is to weed invasive plants.

If these are the "last days", it is due generally to humanity's hubris and greed, and more specifically to the egomania of men with destructive forces at their disposal.

Peter Mudd,  
East Lismore

## God bless USA?

Trump and the Iranian foreign minister have exchanged pleasantries and pointed fingers at each other.

The aggressive US policy to try to dictate the terms to other countries doesn't surprise me; the grey men in grey suits have been doing that since the Mayflower birthed on that land. Sound familiar?

The heavy hand Trump wants to slap Iran with will create, but hopefully not, another war in the middle east.

Obviously USA hasn't learned any lessons of the past, and sending young men and women off to be killed disgusts me.

Paul Brecht  
Evans Head

# Tribute to the late Bob Hawke AC GCL Australia's 23rd prime minister

by Janelle Saffin MP

I mourn the passing of my friend, the irascible, intelligent, brilliant Bob Hawke. How lucky were we Australians to have had him lead our nation.

Bob Hawke modernised Australia's economy and set us on the path to prosperity but this great achievement was underpinned by a strong social, cultural and environmental justice platform.

When Bob became Prime Minister, three in 10 kids finished high school. Under him, eight in 10 did.

He saved Tasmania's wild rivers, Kakadu and Antarctica.

He enlarged our place in the world, and equally in Asia, by seeing the future and preparing us for that engagement.

Bob did not tolerate racism or sexism and called it out.

He opposed apartheid and defended Nelson Mandela, and endured conservative politicians branding him a terrorist.

He campaigned in Lismore and the Tweed and I was fortunate to spend time with him and MC his functions, being privy to some very funny personal conversations.

Whether it was the Winsome Hotel in North Lismore, the Lismore Workers Club or Seagulls Club in Tweed, people just flocked to him, loved him and it was a two-way relationship he had with the

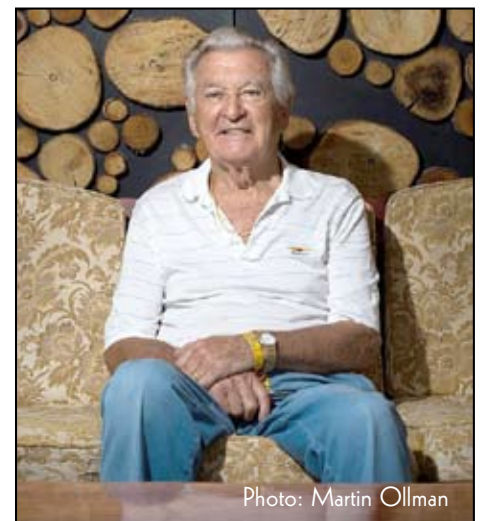


Photo: Martin Ollman

Australian people.

He had a massive influence on the Labor movement, and the partnership he forged with Paul Keating, the architect of economic reform, was one of a kind and enduring – the accord, boosting productivity and superannuation.

I give the late Hazel Hawke enormous credit for being such a gracious first lady during the Prime Ministerial years, and for supporting Bob's union and political career.

He also found true happiness with his second wife Blanche d'Alpuget and I offer my sincere condolences to her and Bob's family.

# The James Ricketson story

by Chibo Mertineit

At the end of May, David Bradbury (frontlinefilms.com.au), acclaimed local filmmaker with over 20 films and national/international awards, invited independent filmmaker James Ricketson for public talks in Mullum and Byron.

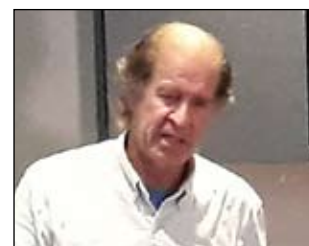
James was imprisoned in Cambodia on 3rd June 2017, after filming a rally by the opposition party with a drone the day before in Phnom Penh.

James has an over 24-year connection to Cambodia, supporting a former street kid for over 20 years and an outspoken critic of government, opposition and some NGOs (Non-Government Organisations).

He ended up in a 10 by 10 metre cell with 140 prisoners, while filming with a drone outlawed three months later. After six days of investigation it was clear that the filming was just a pretext and he was charged with espionage.

He followed advice not to go to the media, not to challenge the judiciary etc., recommended by the Australian embassy and lawyers, and let quiet diplomacy run its course. As James said, "I do my job and pay my taxes, the government does theirs and looks after my rights."

He saw an Australian



inmate die in September, Giuseppe Niclosi, weighing 35kg, being in gaol for nearly six years on dodgy charges, without any support of the Australian government.

Even when James informed them about the ill health, they wrote back that this was not their responsibility.

In December he realised that he could not expect any help, and so a campaign started on [change.org](http://change.org) Family, media and 106,000 signatures later put pressure on Julie Bishop, minister for foreign affairs, who Ricketson said, "...allowed her staff in February/March to tell the media that she will intervene in my case."

They were all happy and two days later he was visited by officials of the Cambodian ministry of Interior, asking about his health, not wanting him to die like Giuseppe.

While James hoped to get released, the officials showed him a letter from minister Bishop to the Cambodian Foreign minister stating, "We will not intervene for Mr. Ricketson and we would like you to take care of his health please." This letter,

which ministry of the Interior officials showed James, was never released to the family, his lawyers or him.

At this point James started to organise his defence to fight the charges, which wasn't really difficult, but cost him \$100,000.

As he found out once he was released, the Australian prime minister Malcolm Turnbull entered into an agreement with Hun Sen, prime minister of Cambodia, that James would go to trial, be found guilty and then would be pardoned. The funny thing was that the prosecutor dropped the charges after James was found guilty.

ABC-TV aired his story on *Australian Story* in December 2018 (still available on the net). Over the last 20 years he has been looking after Shanti and the now nine children and her husband. He made the film *Sleeping with Cambodia*, and has started his own organisation: [familybyfamily.org.au](http://familybyfamily.org.au)

James is aiming to go back to Cambodia soon to visit his 'adopted' family.

In the end it comes down to us to help journalists, at a time when there have been so many killed or incarcerated over the last two years. Who will risk their life and write the truth when you might end up with a long prison sentence these days?

Let's protect investigative journalism now, while we can.





# Council responds to NAG on Cecil St and walking trail

by Diana Roberts

Following the recent tragic death of Tonia Jansen and serious injury of her partner on Cecil Street I wrote to Council, Councillors, the Police, our local State Member and others seeking their support to address pedestrian safety on Cecil Street.

The letter was endorsed by ten significant community organisations. It is with a heavy heart I write this article as I am now firmly of the belief Nimbin does not have a voice on Council and our needs are not being adequately represented or heard by anyone purporting to represent us, no matter what their political persuasion.

While many streets in Nimbin could be deemed unsafe I believe Cecil Street should be the priority for action for many reasons. Since the early 1990s the traffic on Cecil Street has increased exponentially as a direct consequence of Council approved development including:

- Creation of Jarlanbah – a 43 lot community title subdivision;
- Approval of camping at Nimbin Showground – an increasingly utilised facility, especially during festivals;
- Subdivision resulting in approximately 25 new rural residential lots;
- Provision of a weekly garbage collection;
- Establishment of Djanbung Gardens, a rural tourist facility operating as a Permaculture College and environmental education centre;
- Provision of school bus transport;
- Approval of secondary dwellings within the village zone and detached dual occupancy in the rural area compounded by approval of duplexes and the



Photo: Chibo Mertineit

- establishment of airBnBs;
- Establishment of Nimbin gym;
- Approval of a new development application for Nimbin Pre-School;
- Construction of DE Williams dam to augment Nimbin's water storage;
- Light industrial development (Nimbin Hemp Growers, Nimbin Garden Furniture);
- Establishment of Nimbin Youth Activities Services housing;
- Increased utilisation of Nimbin Headers Sportsfield

In the near future, Alternative Way will be opened up to Cecil Street providing an alternative route from Sibley Street through to Cecil Street, thereby avoiding Cullen Street. Even more traffic will be directed to Cecil Street as it becomes a defacto bypass.

Council has collected considerable funding from these developments for local roads but monies have not been directed to Cecil Street and instead have found their way into general funds available for roads throughout the Council

area. Following Tonia's death Council automatically became eligible for Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) funding.

Council has now allocated \$82,000 in next year's draft budget towards provision of a pedestrian bridge over the creek in Cecil Street (estimated to cost \$132,000). It is anticipated that RMS funding will cover the balance.

It will be a footbridge to nowhere as the bridge will direct pedestrians back onto the road but it is a start.

The community is demanding more. We want the traffic-calming device, installed last year, removed.

This is not on Council's agenda as the "experts" on the Traffic Advisory Committee, (membership consists of Council, the Police, RMS and our local State member) have determined the device we all consider dangerous has made the road safer.

Council also informed us it does not fund footpaths and lighting is no longer their responsibility. There is a footpath/cycleway plan for Nimbin that could have

been used to attract funding for Cecil Street but has never been acted on.

The Nimbin walking trail, providing an alternative pedestrian route from Cullen Street to Alternative Way, is also identified in the footpath/cycleway plan for Nimbin village.

This project has been removed from Council's planning due to objections from the owners of Nimbin Habitat Gardens in Cecil Street.

Opposition to the right of way that encumbers the far end of this property, makes construction of the necessary footbridge over the creek to the Headers' ground very difficult.

This is a travesty given the funds and energy expended on this project to date. The legal right of way will be retained and maybe supportive property owners found one day.

Council's ditching the project also means stage two running through the gully alongside Alternative Way will not be pursued as any project not in Council's delivery plan will not have any staff resources directed to it.

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## Rental Vacancies at Nimbin Community Centre



**Room A3, Acacia**  
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**Room C3, Figtree**  
A large (85.34m<sup>2</sup>) 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 one of these rooms, 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](mailto:ncci@nimbincommunity.org.au) You will need to provide 2 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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NGT is published by the Nimbin Aquarius Foundation, 81 Cullen Street, Nimbin.

**NEXT DEADLINE:**  
**Wednesday 26th June**

Email [nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com](mailto:nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com) or put stuff in our pigeonhole at the Nimbin Community Centre.

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On the same **PAGE**

Kevin Hogan MP  
Member for Page

I am very humbled by the strong support shown in the Federal election.

I thank you for putting your faith and trust in me to be our community's representative in Canberra.

We are a wonderful community in a beautiful part of this great country. I will continue to do everything I can to further jobs growth and keep this

region as special as it is.

I acknowledge the other candidates who were all good people.

Again my heart-felt thanks. I will now start delivering on the commitments I made.

The expansion of Norco's ice-cream factory will create new jobs, thanks to a \$15 million grant.

I am also excited about the \$4.5 million investment in Lismore Airport. This involves the installation of an Instrument Landing System (ILS). This will allow pilots to safely

land in foggy conditions.

It also means we can attract Pilot Training Schools to relocate from more expensive airports like Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

This is about attracting jobs and investment to our region.

We will also invest \$3 million in the Farming Together Program at Southern Cross University to help build co-operatives.

Fourteen more wooden bridges will also be replaced around Kyogle, thanks to a \$4 million package.

## Addressing the scourge that is 'ice'

by Janelle Saffin  
Member for Lismore

Firstly, I want to say it is an honour to be your representative and I will do everything I can to improve the lives of all residents of Nimbin and district, and across the electorate of Lismore.

I said in my inaugural speech that I am in Parliament because I am proudly an activist, not a career politician, and to make a real difference for our communities I will advocate for people as fearlessly as I can.

The Premier's Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice' would not allow me to present in person when it sat in Lismore recently, so what follows are excerpts from my written submission to chart a better way for responding to drugs more effectively and safely.

The current way clearly is not working.

Having been a community advocate for some 40 years here in Lismore and in the broader region, I have seen a distinct increase in the use of the drug Ice, its local manufacture, its distribution, the increasing number of charges, paralleled by its increasing usage, the mayhem it causes the addicts themselves, their families, their communities, and the impact on the health system.

We simply are not coping nor responding, with approaches that are helping to decrease its use.

Our primary societal response is to charge and sentence and not provide rehabilitation. There is discourse over whether rehabilitation works if imposed and I am of the view 'just do it', whilst others are not.

That can be argued out, but the fact is, we simply do not have the rehabilitation services available to



Janelle at her swearing-in ceremony

respond to this. I am told that the waiting list at 'The Buttery' is some four to six months.

A recent inquiry conducted by the NSW Legislative Council heard from the Northern New South Wales Local Health District that the drug of choice continues to be alcohol 38 per cent, followed by opioids 24 per cent, amphetamines 15 per cent then cannabinoids 10 per cent. The inquiry also heard that whilst amphetamines use was lower than others that were known to the health district, the resulting mayhem was exponentially greater.

I am aware that there is a Drug Court operating quite successfully, and there is a glaring need to have one here and elsewhere in the region. Regions should not be disadvantaged justice wise due to geography.

I am aware that some will say it must be purpose built and have specialist judges, yet it need not be so.

Judges who preside over Magistrates Courts see the entire gamut of matters day in and day out and know well about therapeutic justice. Ninety-two per cent of all matters go before our local

courts, and given that figure, it is sui generis that they could respond well sitting as a Drug Court.

I say this aware of the jurisdictional issues. We do not need to build 'Taj Mahals' every time we need a particularised service approach. This applies whether it be a Drugs Court, Children's Court or a Youth and Adult Koori Court, all needed.

A local court can be deemed a Drugs Court if empowered to do so. It does however need the concomitant services to sit alongside it and that is what we do not have.

I wish to note and promote here the solid work done by the Lismore City Council's Social Justice and Crime Prevention Committee, conceived and chaired by Cr Edwina Lloyd. It has yet to tender its final report to council.

I was privy to its last meeting and the findings and recommendations going forward and agree with the findings and endorse the recommendations.

I would hope that the Special Commission will find that the language used such as the 'War on Drugs' is not helpful and is in any case a war that has failed us all. It is akin to declaring war on our kids albeit many adult kids, and their families.

The best approach will be one that recognises Ice and drug use is a major health and social issue, and responds accordingly.

I wanted to at least put forward in very general terms the voices, pleas and extreme urgency to better respond, better service and re-orient how we address this.

October will seem a long way off, to many struggling with addiction, to families struggling to cope and to services stretched to the limit and not able to respond, but I look forward to the Special Commission's final report being tendered at this time.



# From the mayor's desk

Cr Isaac Smith, Lismore City Council

I don't know how MardiGrass comes and goes so quickly, but it almost seems like a distant memory last month. Then again, so many things do these days.

This year's event was another success and I was very excited to see the attention paid to waste both during and post-event.

Some really inventive souls made sure that it was the most sustainable MardiGrass yet, which I believe really goes to show that there is a maturity, that comes with living in Nimbin, which most people do not appreciate. Thank you to all the amazing organisers who worked to make it a safe and successful event.

I had the pleasure of judging the Aquarius legends singing competition again this year (see story below) and as always there were some amazing singers channeling their heroes from the 60's and 70's.

I may have also implied that I was good to belt out a tune with the band, so there is something for everyone to look forward to next year. (Please note the looking forward bit in the previous sentence was tongue-in-cheek).

Council is working as quickly as possible to improve local infrastructure on Cecil Street following Tonia's tragic death back in April. Sadly, the process in place with the state government allows for action to be taken and some funding to flow after a tragedy occurs.

While this seems back-to-front to me, it is what we have so there will be some work done at this location in the coming months.

I didn't know Tonia, but from the stories I have been told, I know the community is left poorer for her passing. Everyone connected to this tragedy is in my thoughts and prayers.

Nimbin is set for growth in the coming few years as one of the fire site DA's appears to be moving forward, as do a number of village

expansions on Alternative Way and Blue Knob Road.

Developments never receive a lot of support from neighbours, as most want things to stay the way they are. So it is critical that feedback and discussion takes place so that better outcomes can be found. It is not always the case that people's ideas can be accommodated by planning regulations and developer goals, but without any discussion there is definitely no case for change.

The overarching intent of all development around Lismore and its villages in recent years has been about sustainability. We did not want to see big green field sites and distant car-reliant estates becoming the norm. We instead chose to promote infill in the Lismore urban area and village growth that allowed for walkability.

This is actually a much harder path to take. Simply put, the more neighbours to a development, the more opposition there is. But our community strategic plan, created and owned by our residents, asks us to become more sustainable and show leadership.

So we ask for patience, feedback and above all respect, as we navigate through these changes. Living in the best part of Australia is always going to be about trying to protect the best of what we have, while still making it possible for others to join us here!

Speaking of feedback... we would love yours as Council has its 2019/20 budget out on exhibition till the 21st of June. Staff have done a wonderful job in turning our \$6 million dollar deficit from February into a \$1.2 million dollar surplus with this proposed budget setting out all our spending for the coming year. If it ain't in there, it's not happening.

So make sure you have a look at: [www.yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au](http://www.yoursay.lismore.nsw.gov.au)

## Flannery comes to Writer's Fest to talk environment

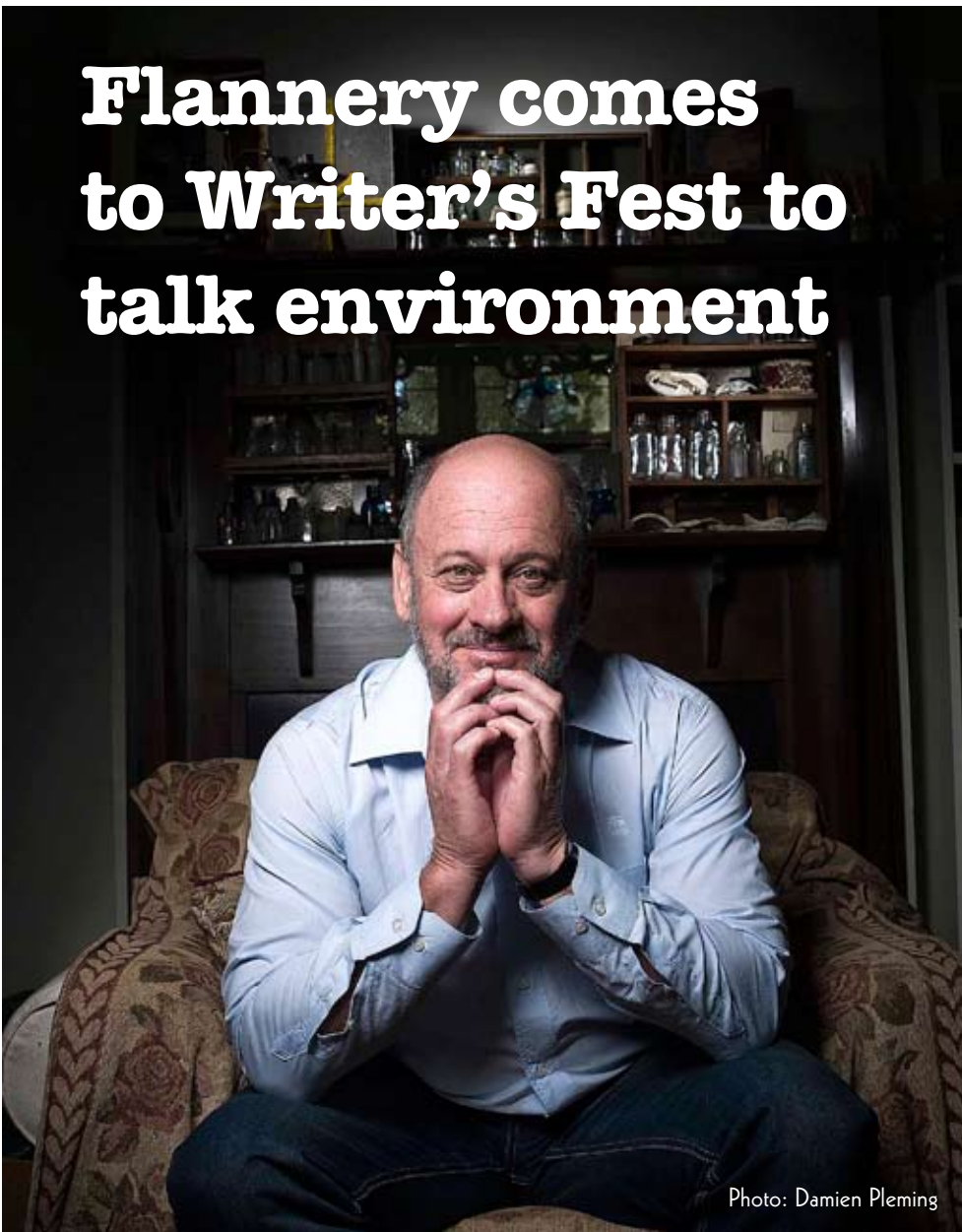


Photo: Damien Pleming

Byron Writers Festival 2019 (2nd-4th August) has revealed a powerful program featuring more than 140 Australian and international speakers spanning fiction, memoir, crime, environment, society, politics, poetry, art, comedy and music.

"Now more than ever our world needs writers, environmentalists, poets, commentators, politicians and artists who together can shape stories of hope, courage and change," festival director Edwina Johnson said.

"Byron Writers Festival, now in its 23rd year, embraces audiences and authors from far and wide for three unforgettable days that celebrate the power of words and storytelling, creating lasting memories for all who attend."

This year's line-up includes leading writer on climate change, palaeontologist and conservationist Tim Flannery who will discuss the first 100 million years of European history.

Flannery's books include the award-winning international bestseller *The*

*Weather Makers, Here on Earth and Atmosphere of Hope*. He is currently chief councillor of the Climate Council. His latest book is *Europe: The First 100 Million Years*.

The Environment and Science part of the festival will also feature Bruce Pascoe (*Young Dark Emu*), Alice Gorman (*Dr Space Junk vs The Universe*) and filmmaker Damon Gameau (*2040: A Handbook for the Regeneration*) who will come together to consider environmental solutions.

*The Gourmet Farmer's* Matthew Evans will bring gastronomic passion and forensic research to the question of how to be an ethical carnivore, while Sophie Cunningham, Harry Sadler and Lisa-ann Gershwin will talk trees, birds and jellyfish.

At the angular end of the festival, the wonderful Eddie Woo will crunch numbers with Adam Spencer in a session called Amazing Maths.

For the full program and tickets (including Sunday locals passes) visit: [www.byronwritersfestival.com](http://www.byronwritersfestival.com)

## It feels good

A busker from Wollongong was glad he made the trip north to MardiGrass, especially after winning the icon tribute competition, Aquarius Legends.

Alex, pictured with Lismore mayor and Aquarius Legends judge Isaac Smith, performed James Brown's 1965 classic, 'I Got You (I Feel Good)' with gusto on an acoustic guitar, utilising both percussive and acrobatic elements, setting him apart, and sending the chai tent jumping into overdrive with joy.

Aquarius Legends creator Billy Cliff said this year's tribute competition was again of a high standard, especially the solid performances by last year's co-winners, Wendy Ford (aka Jefferson Airplane) and Amulet (aka Bob Dylan).

"Janis Joplin, Joni Mitchell, Stevie Nicks, Neil Young and John Lennon were all well represented too," Mr Cliff said.

Billy Cliff also paid tribute to mayor and judge Issac Smith, saying, "Most of our elected representatives and so-called community leaders wouldn't be seen dead anywhere near MardiGrass, but Isaac Smith lends his support each year, acknowledging that people who use marijuana,



either medicinally and recreationally, their lives matter."

The Aquarius Legends show was closed by local party band, The Cliffhangers, who ended with a blistering rendition of Peter Tosh's 1975 cult reggae anthem, 'Legalize It',

pumping up the ganja fairies for the protestival before the main parade, which followed immediately after.

Aquarius Legends, the talent show which celebrates the counterculture music of the 1960s and 70s, will be back again bigger and better next year.

I looked at my car this morning and I swear it is exactly the same one I traded in last month.

It's a horrible feeling – feeling duped.

I'd taken it in to trade it for a working vehicle to Liberty or Bust Auto.

Mine had serious issues; the gears were stuffed, I couldn't get it out of first particularly in hot weather (truly useless in a climate crisis).

The storm damage was intense, everything was cracked and coming apart. None of the doors opened properly and it sucked the gas and spewed pollution from every orifice at an ever-increasing rate.

It had to go. The portly gentlemen in specs who gave me the trade-in, waved his hands in the air and cried



### Revenge of the Loon

by Laurie Axtens

"Hallelujah brother, I'll have a brand spanking 'new' car for you in a couple of days." And then he patted me on the back and said, "You know you only get back what you put in, in this life."

Anyway so he ended up selling me the same brand

and age of car. Subaru 360 American version for 5k minus the \$200 trade.

The doors were also a bit jammy and the gears were a bit sticky – it was late on Saturday night when he sealed the deal.

He said it doesn't have great mileage but it's consistent if not reliable.

Now that's a bill I shouldn't have paid.

I looked at it this morning and I swear it is exactly the same car – a shitbox – but lucky for me there is an ombudsman who may in the next two years intervene on my behalf.

Sadly, when it comes to elections, there is no ombudsman and you get stuck with what 50 million dollars worth of misinformation buys.

Happy motoring.